

Meanwhile, the opening prepositional particle **בְּ** and the demonstrative pronoun **זֶה** attest to the figure of time. According to Childs, the expression **בְּיָוֶם הַזֶּה**, indicates a profound theological interpretation of the departure and journey that is “marked as a special day to be remembered”.¹⁸² Winther-Nielsen agrees that **בְּיָוֶם הַזֶּה** makes a specific point of time that is prominent for the following events. He continues to argue that over-coding device no doubt divides the Book of Exodus into two major halves, and also it sets the stage for the new story on the events that occurred at Mount Sinai.¹⁸³ For Rivard, the identification of a temporal punctuation **בְּיָוֶם הַזֶּה** establishes a structuring operation of time.¹⁸⁴ It must be emphasized that the reference to **בְּיָוֶם הַזֶּה** in v.1 gives us an indication of Israel’s past from Egypt and their present situation at Sinai because of the specific reference to the time of arrival at the mountain.

Moreover, in v. 2, the reader is introduced to another mainline clause **וַיִּסְעוּ מִרְפִּידִים** which contains a *wayyiqtol*, that forms the backbone of the narrative flow, indicating a consecutive activity that occurs and moves the narrative forward. Thus, the presence of the *waw*-consecutive clause is to inform the reader of what preceded in v. 1. Alexander comments that “v. 2 picks up the itinerary of the Israelites journey making reference to a new starting point Rephidim (17:1; 17:8)”.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, the text suggests that after they had departed from Rephidim, they camped in the wilderness of Sinai with reference to **וַיִּנָּחֵם בְּהַר הַזֶּה**. Johnstone argues convincingly that the “repetition of the verb ‘encamped’ is explained by the fact that 2a is a parenthesis on the route taken since the last route taken

¹⁸² Childs, *Exodus*, 366.

¹⁸³ Winther-Nielsen, “Towards the Peak of Mount Sinai,” 1-19.

¹⁸⁴ Ricard Rivard, “Rereading of Exod. 19 and 20: Semiotic Analysis of Exod. 19:1-8,” *Science and Spirit* 3, no. 3 (1981): 335-356.

¹⁸⁵ Alexander, “The Composition of the Sinai narrative,” 2-20.

occurred in 17:1, 2b and continues the narrative of 1”.¹⁸⁶ For Sailhamer, the repetition of the clause ‘they camped’ in the Hebrew text implies that they set up a new camp.¹⁸⁷ To this last statement, Winther-Nielsen affirms that the clause **וַיִּחַן-שָׁם** clearly brings the movement of the journey to a rest.¹⁸⁸ According to Winther-Nielsen, these clauses in the text form the “overall textual context that emphasize a new central location **נֶגֶד הַהָר**, already introduced as the scene of future events.¹⁸⁹ In other words, these temporal clauses in vv. 1-2 serve to introduce the ‘mountain’ as the context for what follows.

Scholars, however, are uncertain about the exact geographical location of the mountain. For Brueggemann, any attempt to try and identify it is an exercise in futility.¹⁹⁰ Perhaps, the intention of the author was not so much with the geographical location but rather how he could convince the reader to envisage the uniqueness of the mountain as the abode of Yahweh’s presence. In buttressing this point, Brueggemann affirms that, “the mountain is the place where earth touches heaven, where the human realm makes contact with the abode of God”.¹⁹¹ As for Davies the uniqueness of the mountain is not necessarily the location but rather the “divine encounter depicted”.¹⁹²

In summary, the focus of these two verses as analyzed is the emphasis on the place of the mountain as the climax of the Israelite’s journey through the wilderness. However, the emphasis on **בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא** serves as a pointer to alert the reader that what is going to happen would be crucial to the life of Israel. Although, no consensus has been reached as to the exact location of the mountain yet the reader is given an indication of its significance as

¹⁸⁶ William Johnstone, *Chronicles and Exodus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 182.

¹⁸⁷ John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch As Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 281.

¹⁸⁸ Winther-Nielsen, “Toward the Peak of Mount Sinai,” 2-19.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Brueggemann, *Exodus*, 834.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 35.

the place where YHWH chooses to manifest his presence and the subsequent event that follows. Thus, the introduction of the *waw*-consecutive or *wayyiqtol* clauses in vv. 1-2 serves as a reminder for the reader to understand that the existence of Israel for the desert generation and for future generations is a journey from a ‘service’ that is slavery to a ‘service’ that is freedom.¹⁹³

3.3.2 God’s Covenant with Israel Announced (vv. 3-6)

Some scholars consider the poetic significance of vv. 3-6 to be the introduction which set the tone for the divine speech, and the covenant relationship between Israel and Yahweh. Childs correctly observes that vv. 3-8 exhibit an “elevated style of prose, which approaches poetry in its use of parallelism and selected vocabulary”.¹⁹⁴ Davies also reports several characteristics within these verses which are indicative of poetic style, including *parallelism membrorum*, paratactic syntax, and metaphorical imagery.¹⁹⁵ As for Cassuto the “divine utterance is composed in true poetic style, having the rhythm of verse and being marked by parallelism between its parts”.¹⁹⁶ In a similar vein, Muilenburg suggests that “whoever has undertaken a study of Hebrew literary composition and rhetoric will be quick to see that such phenomena are by no means fortuitous and that they may be illustrated by scores of examples, not least of all, in the context of the covenant message”.¹⁹⁷

a. Yahweh’s proposal to Israel (vv. 3-6)

The rhetorical speech of YHWH to Moses in vv. 3-6 forms an inclusion:

(v. 3c) כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבַיִת יַעֲקֹב וְתִגִּיד לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

¹⁹³ Brueggemann, *Exodus*, 834. He categorically speaks of freedom from Pharaoh to Yahweh from one master to a new one.

¹⁹⁴ Childs, *Exodus*, 366.

¹⁹⁵ Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 37.

¹⁹⁶ Cassuto, *Exodus*, 226.

¹⁹⁷ James Muilenburg, “The Form and Structure of the Covenantal Formulations,” *VT* 9 (1959): 347-65.

“Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel”

(v.6c) אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תְּדַבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.

The episode opens with the first of Moses ascent אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים (to God) on the mountain.

The syntax of this verse follows the same pattern in the preceding verse. The reader is immediately introduced to the *waw*-consecutive pattern. Only that in v.3 it is *waw* + perfect verb. For this reason the reader is preempted to see this construction as beginning a new narrative unit or a shift in the episode. For example, in verses 1-2 whereas the attention of the narrator was on the time and place of the Sinai encounter, the *waw* + perfect construction indicates an unusual shift from place and time to Moses’ ascent to God. Durham argues that the prepositional phrase בְּיֹם הַיָּהוּה בָּאֵן in the preceding v. 1 has close connection with the phrase וּבַיּוֹם הַהוּא עָלָה in v. 3.¹⁹⁸ He, however, contends that “the urgency of this completely narrative touch has been obscured by the insertion of what amounts to a parenthetical note designed to connect this sequence also with the geographic itinerary”.¹⁹⁹

Although, Durham’s argument is to indicate that the reference to “on the very day they came” obscured the smooth flow of the narrative, the researcher does not think that the implicit or explicit idea of the writer is utterly lost since in both instances the writer clearly highlights the point of departure by alluding to specific markers to orient the reader to the progression of the line of story.

Rivard intimates that the ‘rise’ of Moses to God and ‘call’ of him represent the distance between God and Moses, even so more, that of the people to God, but at the same time

¹⁹⁸ Durham, *Exodus*, 261.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

Moses is positioned as a mediator between one and the other.²⁰⁰ In other words, Moses' role is heightened at this point because he is the only one who can ascend to Yahweh and make communication possible to the people. Davies rightly observes that “the divine encounter which Moses is said to have experienced in v.3, has its counterpart in the experience of the people disclosed in the divine discourses in v. 4”.²⁰¹ He continues to argue that “the privilege of nearness or access (בוא) to the presence of God (perhaps as King might invite his favored courtiers to draw near to him) which serves as a setting for the declaration of vv. 5-6”.²⁰²

Consequently, the reader is prepared by the qal imperfect verb וַיִּקְרָא to indicate that Moses ascent to the top of the mountain was God's own initiative of communing with him in order that he might hear Yahweh's voice and declare his ultimate intentions to the children of Israel.²⁰³

The opening in v. 4 summarizes the entire Exodus story and wilderness experience from the action of God as a deliverer and initiator of the relationship with Israel. The paradox of the exodus story is built into the very phrase אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְמִצְרַיִם (you have seen what I did to the Egyptians). The phrase begins with a personal pronoun אַתֶּם.

The pronoun אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם is expressed in an emphatic manner because it places the people in a position of having prior knowledge of what God had done in the past and for

²⁰⁰ Rivard, “Analyse Semiotique,” 335-56.

²⁰¹ Davies, *Royal Priesthood*, 41.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ The repetition of the parallelism תִּאמַר לְבַיִת יַעֲקֹב וְתִגִּיד לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל is a clear indication of the poetic nature of these verse. Thus, the name of Jacob has the effect of linking the people who are present at Sinai with the descendants of Jacob mentioned at the outset of the Exodus story in chapter 1:1; 5. But, here the parallels in 19:1, 3 and 4 demonstrate that the emphasis was on the children of Israel and not house of Jacob.

which they were the recipient.²⁰⁴ Childs points out that “the invitation to a covenant is predicated on the great divine acts of the past which Israel had herself experienced”.²⁰⁵ Israel was therefore being reminded of the mighty deeds of Yahweh and his care for them throughout the wilderness experience. As stated by Davies that this “activity is summed up in three cola marked by the verbs עָשִׂיתִי (‘I did’), וָאֲשָׂא (‘I lifted’) and וָאָבֵא (‘I brought’).²⁰⁶ Consequently, the phrase וָאָבֵא אֶתְכֶם אֵלַי begins and ends with God. It can be stressed that the one who was encountered at the destination was also the initiator who shared the journey all along. Davies suggests that the phrase וָאָבֵא אֶתְכֶם אֵלַי (‘I brought you to myself’) is without parallel in the Tanak. For him, the inherent tension within the passage is not only God’s accompaniment of the Israelites on their journey, but also the goal of the journey.²⁰⁷ On the other hand, Brueggemann agrees with the thinking that “the flight out of Egypt” has not had as its destination the mountain, the land, or any other place, but אֵלַי (‘to me’); thus, the goal of the Exodus is presented as a “flight from Pharaoh to Yahweh, from one master to a new one”.²⁰⁸ According to Gutierrez, “the search for union with the Lord governs the entire process of liberation and constitutes the very heart of this spiritual experience of an entire people”.²⁰⁹ This implies that God’s deliverance for the people and bringing them to himself from the Egyptian oppression to Sinai is a clear manifestation of unveiling his presence and closeness to the people.

Interestingly, the opening metaphor in v. 4b employs the image of an eagle to describe Yahweh’s role with Israel. The comparison of this metaphor is probably to re-enforce the

²⁰⁴ Rivard, “Analyse Semiotique,” 355-56.

²⁰⁵ Childs, *Exodus*, 366. The reference to the deliverance from Egypt, phrased in v. 4 in terms of the negative effect on Egypt (Deut 11:3)

²⁰⁶ Davies, *Royal Priesthood*, 41.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Brueggemann, *Exodus*, 834.

²⁰⁹ G. Gutierrez, *We Drink from Our Own Well: The Spiritual Journey of a People* (London: SCM, 1987), 77.

value of אֵלַי (‘to me’) to enable the reader or listener to understand the parallelism in the comforting statements from YHWH to his people. The description appears to portray Yahweh as an eagle who watches over its fledglings until it lands safely on the ground. For example, the symbol of this great bird is vividly illustrated in Deut. 32:9-12:

For the LORD's portion are his people, Jacob his allotted heritage. He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions, the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no foreign god with him.

For Enns, the eagle imagery in this text portrays how a vulture teaches its young ones to fly by throwing them out of its nest, swooping down to hover over its young and carrying them off to safety.²¹⁰ It demonstrates God's passion in reaching out to the people of Israel. Enns argues further that, “the metaphor of the eagle should not be taken in the sense of Yahweh teaching Israel how to fly, it only makes sense to view this passage in comparison with v. 4b as God's divine providence of bearing Israel from Egypt to Sinai”.²¹¹ Meyer argues that the towering image of the people of God who were brought out of Egypt on the “wings of eagles” likely taps into the notion of the maternal passion of these swift creatures. He further noted that though biblical poetry often uses the speed of eagles to denote rapidity, one archaic poetic text (Deut. 32:10-14) draws upon the way eagles protect their young to show God's care for the Israelites (called “Jacob” in Deut. 32:9 and 15) on their journey.²¹²

In other words, the classic metaphor is “YHWH is an eagle” this assertion brings to bear on the reader the tendency to associate the character of an eagle with YHWH. In a sense the pattern is simply YHWH being like an eagle. The metaphor works like an enthymeme in that the reader is asked to participate by furnishing the characteristics of an eagle and

²¹⁰ Enns, *Exodus*, 412.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² Carol Meyers, *Exodus*, 146.

drawing the comparison between eagle and YHWH. The metaphor, by suggesting an association, triggers a pattern of thinking in which comparisons are changed out.²¹³

More often than not, readers make the association in their minds to enable them have a better perception or understanding of YHWH. Thus, Davies suggests that the best way to understand such metaphor is to see it in the light of the vulture iconography of the ancient world.²¹⁴ If this statement is true then perhaps by not mentioning the reality behind the metaphor, the author of the book of Exodus gives the image greater rhetorical power. After this memorable moment of Israel's experience with Yahweh, we now turn to look at the condition for Yahweh's proposal. It must be noted that vv. 5-6 form the crux of the text being analyzed.

a. Conditions for the proposal (vv. 5-6)

וְעַתָּה אִם-שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקֹלִי וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת-בְּרִיתִי וְהָיִיתֶם
 לִי סֹגְלָה מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים כִּי-לִי כָּל-הָאָרֶץ:
 וְאַתֶּם תְּהִיוּ-לִי מִמְּלֶכֶת כְּהֹנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ אֱלֹהֵי הַדְּבָרִים
 אֲשֶׁר תִּדְבַּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

The text begins in v. 5a with a decisive וְעַתָּה (and now) to call attention to the change in Israel's past experience in the wilderness to their present and future relationship which is about to unfold. One would have thought that YHWH after bringing his people from Egypt to the top of the mountain would hurriedly announce their position in relation to him. On the contrary, Israel's bid in becoming 'priestly kingdom' is phrased in a conditional clause אִם (if) which expresses Israel's immediate responsibility in a long stretch of infinitive absolute אִם-שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקֹלִי. This seems as though Israel's future is framed within

²¹³ Martha Cooper, *Analyzing Public Discourse* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1989), 111.

²¹⁴ Davies, *Royal Priesthood*, 41-42.

this infinitive absolute.²¹⁵ Meanwhile, the people are called by these action verbs (שמעו, to hear and שמרתם to keep) in anticipation for the covenant. For Wells, the construction of vv. 5-6 differs from the aspect of ‘conditional promise’ in that the relationship of protasis (the statement of condition) to apodosis (the result of meeting the condition) is not consequential.²¹⁶ As for Patrick, “the protasis, or conditional clause, is a definition of the requirements of the position or vocation designated by the titles of the apodosis”. He paraphrases by alluding to the fact that “Being Yahweh’s own possession, his holy nation and kingdom of priests, entail submitting to his will”.²¹⁷ Accordingly, if the reader takes v. 5 to be a conditional protasis, v. 6 can hardly be the apodosis of v. 5. As such the reader could assume that v. 5 is part of a larger conditional structure formed by a protasis in v. 5 and 6, and an apodosis in v. 8.

Brueggemann in adding his voice to the general perception of conditionality in the text expressed that “Israel’s future is conditional”. He, however argues that Israel’s “holy distinctiveness depends on moment-by-moment listening to the God who commands and authorizes”.²¹⁸ It is hard to overemphasize Israel’s relationship with God on the basis of reciprocity. What this means is that failure on the part of Israel could attract a punishment or severe consequences in her future of becoming a ‘priestly kingdom and a holy nation’. As for Wells, this condition describes a “logical relation between responsibilities and

²¹⁵ The syntax of this infinitive absolute in vv. 5-6 has raised a lot of debate among scholars. Muilenburg speaks of ‘special covenant Gattung’ which spelt out a reward on the basis of obedience. “The Form and Structure of the Covenantal Formulation,” 347-56.

²¹⁶ Wells, *God’s Holy People*, 32.

²¹⁷ Patrick, “The Covenant Code Source,” 145-157.

²¹⁸ Brueggemann, *Exodus*, 834.

privileges, in which Israel is invited to participate.²¹⁹ But Fretheim is of the opinion that obedience is already an integral component in that condition.²²⁰

In v. 5a, the phrase **וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־בְּרִיתִי** (and you keep my covenant) which begins with *waw* and a direct object marker with pronominal suffix, probably indicates that the whole idea of ‘covenant’ is not entirely new to the people of Israel. Fretheim suggests that “my covenant” (v. 5) is no different from that of 6:4-5. He continues to say that the covenant at Sinai is a specific covenant within an already existing covenant with an elected, redeemed, believing, worshipping community.²²¹ According to Davies, the phrase **אֶת־בְּרִיתִי** **וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם** occurs elsewhere with “reference to the human response appropriate to a divinely initiated arrangement; it is an already established covenant which is in view (Gen 17:9, 10; 1 Kings 11:11; Ezek. 17:14, Ps. 78:10; 103:18; 132:12)”.²²² In this case, Israel’s call to hear the voice of God is wrapped in their commitment to the covenant which has foreshadows in the Abrahamic covenant. Kleinig in advancing this point asserts that “listening to the voice of God and keeping his covenant, Israel fulfills her vocation as nation”.²²³

Consequently, the reader is made to understand that the choice of Israel’s covenant depends solely on their understanding of what YHWH has accomplished for them in the light of their freedom from slavery in Egypt. Myers correctly observes that “to free Israel from political and economic slavery at the time required an act of God, but to remain a freed man not subject to selfishness, greed, and passion demanded a covenant with the

²¹⁹ Wells, *God’s Holy People*, 32.

²²⁰ Terrence E. Fretheim, “The Redaction of Creation Redemption and Law in Exodus,” *Int* 45 (1991): 229-39

²²¹ Terrence E. Fretheim, *A Commentary on Exodus* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 209.

²²² Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 50.

²²³ John W. Kleinig, “On Eagles Wings’: An Exegetical Study of Exodus 19:2-8,” *LTI* 21.1 (1987): 16-27.

God of their salvation”.²²⁴ He continues that “it is perfectly clear that the tradition regarded the deliverance from Egypt as antecedent to the giving of Torah”.²²⁵ At this stage one can accordingly postulate some close resemblance of the law to the covenant. Such apparent resemblance is difficult to gloss over because Israel’s continual relationship (covenant) with YHWH stemmed from their effort in maintaining the Law. Childs concurs that the historical tradition in Exodus and Deuteronomy is unified in seeing the covenant as YHWH’s gracious initiative that stemmed from an act of God. Israel therefore, did not achieve the covenant status, nor was it granted in a form that was conditional on her fulfilling certain stipulations. Nonetheless, once Israel became the covenant people, the imperative for obedience followed, and the covenant blessings were conditioned upon faithful response.²²⁶

More so, with respect to the syntactical function of שְׁמַרְתֶּם בְּרִיתִי (keep my covenant), the translation into English reflects completed action carried out in the future. Thus, it would be inappropriate to consider the covenant in this text as outlining a specific law. The best we could account for is to read it in the perspective of a general guideline through which Israel’s relationship with God can be grounded upon. Also, the fact that this phrase is used in correlation with the Abrahamic covenant does not ultimately make the covenant at Sinai conditional. The question arises as to the intention of YHWH relying on the conditional clause וְאִם in a construction which begins with a *waw*-consecutive and perfect verb, places emphasis on the apodosis (concluding or “then” section) of the conditional sentence. Is it the case that YHWH assumes that the action of the people makes the condition valid or invalid?

²²⁴ J. M. Myers, *Grace and Torah* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 15.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

²²⁶ Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 214.

Next, YHWH makes an interesting statement as he reveals the purpose of these slaves whom for a long time had been waiting in anticipation for the paternal relationship that exists between a father and a child. The divine speech of Yahweh is captured as follows:

<p>A וְהָיִיתֶם לִי סִגְלָה</p> <p>“you shall be my own possession”</p>	<p>B מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים</p> <p>“among all peoples”</p>
<p>A כִּי־לִי כָּל־הָאָרֶץ</p> <p>“for all the earth is mine”</p>	<p>B וְאַתֶּם תְּהִיוּ־לִי מְמַלְכֵת פְּהָנִים וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ</p> <p>“but you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”</p>

The table illustrates Yahweh’s ‘paternal’ affection for the people of Israel. The phrase וְהָיִיתֶם לִי סִגְלָה has the characteristics of *waw* + subject + verb which introduces a clause that is juxtaposed with a preceding clause מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים to indicate a synchronic action.²²⁷ In relation to A and B, the sentence is progressive because it describes the intended purpose of the action of Yahweh framed within the emphatic וְהָיִיתֶם just like the closeness expressed in v. 4. Again, the preposition with pronominal suffix in the construction makes the statement more personal. Consequently A and B¹ are reiterative because they seem to use synonymous terms which are common to both.

The expression וְהָיִיתֶם לִי (you shall be my) in A is parallel to תְּהִיוּ־לִי (shall be to me) in B¹. In the same manner A¹ is an explanation to B, which gives an underlying reason for the main action. The introduction of the כִּי clause with pronominal suffix functions as explanatory clause to the earlier point suggesting the personal intention of Yahweh in calling Israel as his ‘treasured possession’. Conversely, B shows signs of exclusive

²²⁷ Robert B. Chisholm, *From Exegesis to Exposition* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 1998), 126.

relationship between Yahweh and Israel. With regard to A¹ and B¹ they neither explain nor reiterate each other in the sentence construction since the clause begins with **וְאַתֶּם** which precedes the main verb **וַיְהִי**. The inclusion of the pronominal suffix to the preposition **לְ** functions as emphatic signal just like the **וְאַתֶּם** in v. 4. Beryelin in arguing from this conceptual layered text suggests that vv. 5-6 portrays a picture of Israel's election based on the sovereignty of God ('the whole earth is mine').²²⁸ As for Davies, the clauses in vv. 5a-5b (or 5a-6a) are on this view, more in the nature of a proclamation of favor- an offer which the people are expected to embrace.²²⁹ He continues to note that "emphasis on this reading falls on the divine initiative, not on a quid pro-quo arrangement".²³⁰ In this case, YHWH affirms the already existing relationship of Israel as highlighted in B¹. Following the table above, the reader is able to identify the seeming parallelism in vv. 5-6 which clearly demonstrates that the covenant blessings of Israel hinge around these key terms. Thus, the following section seeks to analyze what it means to become YHWH's **סִגְלָה**, **וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ**, and **מִמְלַכְת פְּהִנִּים**.

b) Semantic Analysis

As noted previously, since the tension in this passage revolves around some key terms, it is important to analyze how they function within vv. 3-6, in order to help the reader to understand the image of Israel's privileged position or relationship with YHWH.

(a). **סִגְלָה** (v.5b)

The word occurs about six times in the immediate context of Exod. 19. It has other parallels in Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; 1 Chr. 29:3 Mal 3:7 to express the idea of

²²⁸ Walter Beryelin, *Origins and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions*, trans. S. Rudman (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 75.

²²⁹ Davies, *Royal Priesthood*, 43.

²³⁰ Ibid.

‘possession’.²³¹ In the Akkadian language the word *sikiltu*, as in the cognate סְגִלָּה, is used to denote the treasures of the wealthy and of kings. Interestingly, in the LXX, the term takes the form of an adjective (περὶούσιος) which has the notion of “above and beyond all people”.²³² In this case, both the Tanak and the LXX expressed a similar idea. Thus, it presupposes that Israel’s designation as ‘treasured possession’ ultimately earns her the privileged position before YHWH. In other words, YHWH is metaphorically identified as wooing Israel to himself from among all the other nations (Isa. 62:3). Kleinig in buttressing this point attest to the fact that “the metaphor סְגִלָּה, does not fit God’s possession of Israel, since God is the owner of everything”.²³³

However, Sheriffs posits that סְגִלָּה has the nuances of a “positive value, rather than claim and demand only. This is evident from the associated phrases connoting selection and the status of ‘priesthood’ and holiness”.²³⁴ In addition, Davies states that the position of סְגִלָּה is not something Israel might attain by future acts of obedience, but something which is theirs by “divine favour and which is manifested in the relationship which involves an unwavering loyalty”.²³⁵ This interpretation is not without its limitations, as Winger recognizes:

The danger of applying such a distant language Hebrew is clear. Furthermore, one must first accept the application of the Hittite suzerainty treaty to God’s covenant with Israel before the *Akkadian* use of *sikiltum* in such treaties is deemed relevant. Since סְגִלָּה appears in many different contexts in the Old Testament which do not deal with such a treaty, one must recognize that סְגִלָּה is far broader in use of

²³¹ R. Laird Harris et al, *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1980), Bible works e-book.

²³² Daniel M. Gurtner, *Exodus: A Commentary on the Greek Text of Codex Vaticanus* (Leiden, Koninklijke Brill, 2013), 369.

²³³ Kleinig, “On Eagles Wings,” 16-27.

²³⁴ Deryck Sheriffs, “Moving on with God: Key motifs in Exodus 13-20,” *Themelios* 15, no.2 (1990): 49-60.

²³⁵ Davies, *Royal Priesthood*, 46.

sikiltum in Hittite treaties does not inform the meaning of סְגִלָּה in Exod. 19:5, unless it is first determined that Exod. 19:5 is such a treaty.²³⁶

Therefore, Israel's status should be seen in the light of YHWH's own internal struggle over his exclusive relationship with the people which is expressed in the statement יְהוָה אֱרֶץ כָּל כִּי־לִי (‘for all the earth is mine’). However, a clear distinction should be drawn that Israel's separation as “treasured possession” does infer that YHWH favors them more than the other nations (4: 23).

(b). מַמְלַכַּת כֹּהֲנִים

As noted earlier, this metaphor is a *hapax legomenon*. The combination of the two nouns poses great challenges and, not surprising, different interpretation has been given to this metaphor. There are a considerable number of variations in the ancient text²³⁷ but for the purpose of the present section, attention will be given to those that have direct relevance to the text being analyzed. The expression ‘kingdom of priests’ (מַמְלַכַּת כֹּהֲנִים) has been rendered in the LXX as βασιλείον ἱεράτευμα (‘royal priesthood’); Aquila reads more literally as ‘kingdom and priests’; the vulgate renders it as *regnum sacerdotale* (‘priestly kingdom’); Targum Onkelos also renders it as ‘kings, priests’; the Syriac Peshitta ‘kingdom and priests’.²³⁸

With respect to the syntax of מַמְלַכַּת, it functions as a construct noun and renders the meaning as ‘kingdom of priests’. However, the LXX in keeping the Hebrew construct ‘kingdom of priests’ employs two nouns βασιλείον ‘kingdom and ἱεράτευμα ‘body of

²³⁶ Thomas M. Winger, “Royal Priesthood of All the *Baptized*” (Master’s thesis., Concordia Seminary, 1992).

²³⁷ Symmachus and Theodotion renders it as βασιλεία ἱερεῖς, Samaritan Targum מַמְלַכַּת כֹּהֲנִים, these variation clearly illustrate the difference in interpretation scholars have assign to the term kingdom of priests.

²³⁸ Wells, *God’s Holy People*, 37. Cf. Elliot, *The Elect and the Holy*, 82-88; Propp, *Exodus*, 157; Davies, *Royal Priesthood*, 1.

priests' (not 'priesthood'). Thus, it may be possible to render the LXX as "you shall be to me a kingdom of (royal residence) a body of priests, and a holy nation".

Scholars are of the opinion that both words should be taken as substantives. Davies reiterates the argument of Elliot saying that βασιλειον ιεράτευμα may be understood either as a single constituent (adjective plus noun): 'a royal priesthood', or as two nouns in apposition: 'a royal residence, a priesthood'.²³⁹ In a similar vein, Wells rightly argues that the construct מִמְלָכָה should be taken in two ways, namely: (a) the first noun can express an attribute of the second, resulting in the LXX rendering 'royal priesthood', (b) alternatively, the second may describe the first, which is more common, as in the vulgate translation, 'priestly kingdom'.²⁴⁰ It is worth noting that the Greek word ιεράτευμα, occurs about 3 times in the LXX (Exod. 19:6; 23:22; 2 Macc. 2:17) as compared to the Greek word ιερατεία which occurs about 435 times in the LXX to describe מִמְלָכָה כֹּהֲנִים in terms of priestly office.²⁴¹ It seems reasonable to assume that since βασιλεία has the idea of 'ruling', the LXX preference of ιεράτευμα over ιερατεία can be as a result of keeping the construct formation of the translation in the Tanak.

Furthermore, because the term מִמְלָכָה from the root מִלַּךְ connotes the idea of sovereignty or ruling, Israel as YHWH's 'treasured possession' automatically becomes a nation under his direct influence and control. In consequence, Israel's allegiance to these honorific designations is ensued in their obedience and willingness to keep the covenant of YHWH (v. 5). For Durham, "the noun construct in relation to כֹּהֲנִים describes Israel as a

²³⁹ Davies, *Royal Priesthood*, 66.

²⁴⁰ Wells, *God's Holy People*, 37.

²⁴¹ F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick William Danker, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), Bible works e-book.

kingdom run not by politician depending upon strength and connivance but by priests depending on faith in YHWH, a servant nation instead of a ruling nation”.²⁴²

According to Davies, the priesthood described here is doubtless influenced to a large extent by cotemporary political events, and it seems clear that there is allusion to the LXX text of Exod. 19:6.²⁴³ Davies concludes that taking a cue from the contextual consideration might include the fact that the words *καὶ τὸ βασίλειον καὶ τὸ ἱεράτευμα καὶ τὸν ἁγιασμόν* appears to be epexegetic of the preceding *κληρονομίαν πᾶσιν* (‘an inheritance for all’). Thus, *קָדוֹשׁ וְגוֹי מְמַלְכֶת כְּהֹנִים* should probably be considered epexegetic of *סְגֻלָּה*.²⁴⁴ Therefore, the study seems to suggest that both the LXX and Tanak envisage the phrase ‘priestly kingdom’ to mean Israel as a collective body and not as individual priesthood.

(c). *קָדוֹשׁ וְגוֹי* (v.6)

The phrase is a *hapax legomenon*. It is not surprising scholars have suggested that the phrase be taken in parallel with *מְמַלְכֶת כְּהֹנִים*.²⁴⁵ This clearly demonstrates the *prima facie* of this metaphorical phrase. In spite of its uniqueness, however biblical writers use a similar expression *עַם קָדוֹשׁ* very common in the Tanak and especially in the Deuteronomy. It is plausible that the author of Deuteronomy prefers *עַם קָדוֹשׁ* (Deut. 7:6; 14:21; 26:18, 28:19) in order to make a clear distinction between Israel (*עַם*) and the foreign nation (*גוֹיִם*). Again, the parallelism between these two expressions opens the eyes

²⁴² Durham, *Exodus*, 263.

²⁴³ Davies, *Royal Priesthood*, 65.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ Avowedly, *קָדוֹשׁ* the singular adjective masculine occurs about 56 times in the Tanak. More so, the masculine singular absolute occurs only 4 times in the Tanak.

of the reader to envisage that though סְגֻלָּה is found in Deuteronomy, it is rather expressed as עַם סְגֻלָּה than וְגֵוִי קָדוֹשׁ.

Wells has examined the parallel in some detail, demonstrating how the syntagm וְגֵוִי may be construed by the reader in this context rather than עַם. However, Wells echoes that Israel becoming וְגֵוִי קָדוֹשׁ was for the purpose of reaching out to the other גֵּוִיִּם.²⁴⁶ For him, the use of וְגֵוִי rather than עַם bears significance since the two terms are not used interchangeably in the Bible.²⁴⁷ He, however, attests to the fact that עַם is found hundred times with pronominal endings, suggesting it is something subjective and personal. וְגֵוִי is rather objective and impersonal.²⁴⁸ Although, וְגֵוִי in the immediate context of the text does not express the notion of a personal language, it can probably be inferred that Israel as a ‘holy nation’ is to enable the reader to deduce whether Israel’s holy character stands in parallel to the ‘other nations’. According to Davies, the term עַם is sometimes felt to be a kinship term, hence not an expected word for that which a group becomes. A group or individual progenitor may, however, become a גֵּוִי.²⁴⁹ In this instance, we may assume that Israel’s call to be holy does not necessarily refer to the individual members of the community but rather a group of people who have been clearly distinguished by YHWH as priestly. Thus, עַם could refer to a “discrete group of persons (composed of individuals),

²⁴⁶ Wells, *God’s Holy People*, 39.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Davies, *Royal Priesthood*, 100.

whereas **יְהוָה** is a collective, regimented body whose indivisible unit is the **אָדָם**, i.e. the mortal who is merely one of a crowd, a stistic”.²⁵⁰

In essence, **יְהוָה קָדוֹשׁ** may be construed by the reader as a designation to set aside Israel for YHWH’s own purpose spelt out in their mission and vocation. Thus, in order for this nation to have complete access to YHWH’s presence they need to become a priestly nation whose comparison is second to none. Although, the description echoes future consequences, the immediate context of Exodus seems to suggest some sort of commitment between Israel and YHWH which is reenforced in the designation ‘holy nation’. Wells is careful to admit, rather than substantiate that the adjective **קָדוֹשׁ** describes that with which God’s presence abides, or that which belongs to YHWH. For Israel to be a holy nation, founded by YHWH, it must live in his presence and be his.²⁵¹ At first glance, it seems Wells is confirming the idea that to be ‘holy’ has a quality of describing Israel as a nation belonging to God in terms of relationship alone. On the contrary, he concludes by saying that **קָדוֹשׁ**, does not only indicates a sense of “belonging to YHWH but also a quality of relationship with him that denotes a religious dimension in the manner of priests (although we are yet to establish a theological understanding of ‘priest’)”.²⁵² In a similar vein, Fretheim posits that “the phrase looks not inward but outward, beyond the self or the community.”²⁵³

The subunit perhaps is a way of making the reader to identify the covenant ratification and YHWH’s intention enshrined in the designation of Israel as ‘priestly kingdom and holy nation’. Yet, the people’s response to these covenant titles can probably be made plausible

²⁵⁰ Wells, *God’s Holy People*, 40.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ Fretheim, “The Reclamation of Creation,” 355-7.

by their obedience to YHWH. For Chirichigo, the “state of equilibrium is presented, although Yahweh’s offer to Israel is contingent upon their acceptance and obedience which are important elements in the development of the notional (or plot) structure of the Sinai pericope”²⁵⁴ We now turn to look at the details of the response of the people to YHWH’s proposal in the next section.

b. Israel’s response to YHWH’s proposal (vv. 7-8)

7 וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וַיִּקְרָא לְזִקְנֵי הָעָם וַיִּשֶׁם לְפָנֵיהֶם אֵת
 כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּהוּ יְהוָה:
 8 וַיַּעֲנוּ כָל־הָעָם יַחְדָּו וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר יְהוָה נַעֲשֶׂה
 וַיִּשָׁב מֹשֶׁה אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הָעָם אֶל־יְהוָה:

The section begins in v. 7 with וַיָּבֹא (‘so...came). The verb appears in the preterit which alerts the reader to a paradigmatic shift in the scene from the meeting between Yahweh and Moses on the mountain episode in the preceding vv. 3-6 which form an inclusion. In addition, the prefixed *waw*-consecutive functions as a coordinating conjunction linking v. 7 with the previous verse, thereby showing the relationship between God’s imperative to Moses in vv. 4-6, to the people’s response in v. 8.²⁵⁵ In other words, the divine declaration which has Israel’s designation as ‘priestly kingdom’ is conveyed through Moses with the prepositional prefix לְ before the noun (elders) perhaps to indicate the crucial role they play within the community. The relative particle אֲשֶׁר ends and the thought process resumes with the insertion of וַיַּעֲנוּ indicating that the action of Moses had the support of the elders.

²⁵⁴ G .C. Chirichigno, “The Narrative Structure of Exod. 19-24,” *Biblica* 68, no. 4 (1987): 457-479.

²⁵⁵ According to Chisholm, *From Exegesis to Exposition*, 90, when the *waw*-consecutive is prefixed to an imperfect verb, which is in fact the form of וַיָּבֹא, the construction points towards a progression in the narrative. On the other hand Amit admits that the progression or contrivance organize the data for the author in a multi-phased, hierarchical structure, where the elements are arranged in an ascending or descending order: from general to the particular or from minor to major, or the reverse. Y. Amit, “Progression as Rhetorical Device in Biblical Literature,” *JSOT* 28 (2003): 3-32.

The phrase כָּל־הָעָם in the nominative singular employs the adverb יְהִי to describe the collective response of the people expressed with two future verbs (נַעֲשֶׂה, דַּבֵּר).

According to Fretheim, “if obeying God’s voice and keeping covenant is a wider and deeper matter than obeying the Sinai commandments, then v.8 clearly is a commitment to obey whatever words God may command over the course of Israel history”.²⁵⁶

Scholars are of the view that Israel hurriedly responded to Yahweh’s proposal. For Fretheim, “the concert of the people entails a high level of confidence in God himself, that what God may have to say in any future is in their best interest that they are under the care of a mother eagle in all of their undertakings”.²⁵⁷ In discussing the affirmative response of the people, Jacob intimates that “this marked the first occasion in which the people were united in their decision, and it equaled 24:3. This was the grandest hour in Israel’s life: Israel willingly accepted the task of being God’s people”.²⁵⁸ In a similar vein, Brueggemann posits that, “through the self-disclosure of Yahweh, the formation of a new community of radical obedience occurs”.²⁵⁹ Patrick remarks that “surely when the people respond ‘all that Yahweh has spoken we will do,’ it can only be understood as a commitment to obey the covenant law and thus clearly presupposes v. 5a”.²⁶⁰ Patrick maintains that the pledge of the people puts the relationship into effect.²⁶¹

In other words, all the people become YHWH’s possession, his priestly kingdom and holy nation, at the pledge of their obedience. As Beyerlin observes, “the essential connection of Israel’s acceptance of her sovereign’s terms (Sinai) is the preceding mighty act (of God)

²⁵⁶ Fretheim, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 211-12.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Benno Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus* (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, 1992), 530.

²⁵⁹ Brueggemann, *Exodus*, 830.

²⁶⁰ Patrick, “The Covenant Code Source,” 145-157.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

which furnishes the motive”.²⁶² After, having received the favourable response from the people, with the repetition of the relative clause concluding Moses’ statement, YHWH instructs Moses regarding the preparation necessary for the theophany.

3.3.3 Preparation for Yahweh’s Appearance (vv. 8c-15)

The opening clause **וַיָּשָׁב** in v.8c begins with the same *wayyiqtol* form indicating a shift in Moses return to Yahweh. Amazingly, the reader is not given any prior information for this second return. In this instance, the only information the reader is privy to is that YHWH announces his coming to Moses in a thick cloud with an interjection **הִנֵּה**. The emphatic personal pronoun **אֲנִי** conveys the progressive action of YHWH in the verb **בָּא** (qal active participle). Conversely, the prepositional phrase **אֵלַי**, with the pronominal suffix is to indicate YHWH’s action in the future. From the statement of v. 8b, YHWH’s actions is carried through the adverbial prepositional phrase **בְּעַבְ הָעֲנָן** to Moses in the second singular pronoun (**אֲנִי בָא אֵלַי**) in v. 9b.

For Winther-Nielsen, the theophanic cloud is designed to clarify the status of Moses in relation to the impression he is to make on the people as the over hearers of direct communication between God and Moses.²⁶³ Davies, in his comparative studies of Ancient

²⁶² Beyerlin, *Origins and History*, 75-76.

²⁶³ Winther-Nielsen, “Toward the Peak of Mount Sinai”, 1-19. With reference to Exod. 14:31, Deut. 34:10. Arguing on similar direction, Fretheim, posits that “the public display of YHWH coming down to Moses in such a dramatic fashion was for the people to be convince that Moses is a mediator of the word of God and not just his own opinion. He argues further that “the divine determination of YHWH to accentuate the credibility of Moses lifts up the importance of leadership”. *Exodus*, 215. Brueggemann observes that “the intention of of YHWH’s speech to Israel was not one of obedience; rather it was to certify and legitimate Moses, so that the people may “trust” Moses words”. *Exodus*, 835. Meyers augment that YHWH’s coming in the dense cloud is to be seen as ‘the marker of divine presence which apparently intended to hide God’s physical manifestation, for the people are meant to hear, but not to see the deity, who is the epicenter of holiness’. *Exodus*, 150. What is more, Moses is place in a position so as to have influence in the lives of the people in order to make YHWH’s voice visible to the people. The heightening of Moses mediatorial role runs through the entire exodus narrative. Childs shares in the opinion that “this verse testifies that

Near Eastern literature, points out that the “theophany accounts suggest that they are in part, designed to enhance the status of the one receiving the theophany”.²⁶⁴ McKenzie refutes this claim by arguing that the theophany is distinctively Israelite and cannot be seen as being derived from ANE storm mythologies. He, however, maintains that “the theophany is an appearance or manifestation of YHWH in character and attributes which reveal His divinity and power, and is thereby distinguished from other appearances in which He is known as the revealer.”²⁶⁵ As for Philips, theophany and Law were thereby brought together: the gift of the commandments came to Israel as part and parcel of her election.²⁶⁶

In addition, the repetition in v. 9b introduces what Israel’s response is to be regarding the news of YHWH’s dramatic appearance. The parallelism in the preceding v. 8c and 9c is often regarded by source critics as a complete gloss, since they both carry the same notion. For Chirichigno, “the repetition of the two similar clauses also acts as a pause which indicates that Moses first brought back the reply of the people to YHWH, but could not actually report the words of the people to Him in 9c until YHWH had finished speaking to Moses”.²⁶⁷ Chirichigno maintains that “while the preposition of Moses address to YHWH in v. 9c is not included in the first sequence, its addition does not disrupt the succession of the narrative”.²⁶⁸ Furthermore, in vv. 10-15 the clause begins with a *waw*-consecutive which is linked to the main verb **יִאמֶר**. The inclusion of the independent pronoun **אֲנִי** matches the prepositional noun **אֶל-מֹשֶׁה** in gender and number to direct attention to the role of Moses in the preparation process culminating in YHWH’s presence on the ‘third

mediatorship of Moses did not arise as an accidental afterthought, but was intended from the start”. *Exodus*, 368.

²⁶⁴ Davies, *Royal Priesthood*, 107.

²⁶⁵ J. L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Chicago: Bruce 1966), 884.

²⁶⁶ Anthony Phillips, “A Fresh Look at the Sinai Pericope,” *VT* 34 (1984): 39-52.

²⁶⁷ Chirichigno, “The Narrative Structure of Exod. 19-24,” 457-479.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

day'. In addition, it can be assumed that the reference to the 'third day' manifestation of YHWH's presence in vv.10-15 connects the preceding vv. 1-2 to assist the eye of the reader in identifying the parallel idea and thus be able to relate it to specific time markers in the story line. However, Alexander intones that "the preparation is contingent upon the people having expressed their willingness to accept their role as outlined in vv. 4-6".²⁶⁹ It presupposes that the people's unwillingness to accept or reject the covenant condition could have rendered the preparation process implausible.

Consequently, for Israel to become a priestly and holy nation, Moses had to carry on the responsibility of YHWH by consecrating (קִדְּשָׁתֶם) the people (v.10). Meanwhile, with the introduction of the piel form וְקִדְּשָׁתֶם with the third masculine singular suffix coordinates the remaining action verbs to the process of preparation in anticipation for YHWH's presence. In essence the piel stem is perhaps deliberately positioned to enable the reader to experience the intensity of the verb.²⁷⁰ In other words, the identification of Moses as the subject of the main verb further illuminate the weight of the responsibility which YHWH lays upon Moses with regard to a consecrated or holy status of the people. Moses, however, lists the preparation necessary for the encounter, as washing of clothes, which must be done in two days. This practice is often suggested to be common in the Tanak as people encounter God in any solemn event.²⁷¹ For Meyers, Israel's cleanliness is

²⁶⁹ Alexander, "The Composition of the Sinai Narrative," 1-20.

²⁷⁰ Bruce K. Waltke, and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbranus, 1990), 10.

²⁷¹ Gen 35:2, where Jacob instruct his household and all who were with him, to 'Get rid of the foreign gods and purify themselves and change their clothes. In contrast, Gentry argues that although the element of purification is certainly present in this text but one cannot equate consecration and purification in strict terms, and the root טָהַר (purify) is not used. Peter J. Gentry, "The Meaning of "Holy" in the Old Testament," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 170 (2013): 400-17. However, it is necessary to allow the inner-biblical text shows the direction for the reader to decipher the context in which the word is situated.

a condition of holiness, not so much as a removal of her dirt as restoring of garments to their pristine state.²⁷²

In buttressing this point, Childs makes a useful and important distinction between the promise of becoming a ‘holy nation’ and the demand to ‘purify oneself’ as the profound connection between the people and God who has laid claim upon them and thus it emerges in the process of preparation.²⁷³ Durham further elaborates the point that “the preparation of the people in vv. 9-15 is a parenthesis besides the main event of the giving of the Decalogue”.²⁷⁴ In other words, the reader is given an indication to the seemingly importance of the Decalogue, which serves as the springboard for the consecration of the people.

In addition, vv. 12-13 begins with the same *waw*-consecutive clause: The progression of the narrative is seen in the imperative **וְהִגַּבְלֶתָּ** in relation to the noun or substantive to indicate the function of the verbal idea.²⁷⁵ In this instance, the hiphil verb **הִגַּבְלֶתָּ** “you shall set bounds” relates to the noun **עַם** “people” (v.12).

Also, in vv. 12-13, the author moves the flow of the narrative from the initial imperative address to the people to a more specific instruction contained in the phrase **וַיִּנְגַע בְּקִצְהוֹ** **וַיִּנְגַע** **בְּקִצְהוֹ**. For Winther-Nielsen, “the initial imperative of this embedded phrase is backed by an elaboration that they are not to touch the edge or foot of the mountain”.²⁷⁶ However, the people are told not to approach the mountain until the sound of the **הַיִּבֹּל** (trumpet) was heard. The dramatic description of the mountain is even

²⁷² Meyers, *Exodus*, 154.

²⁷³ Childs, *Exodus*, 368.

²⁷⁴ Durham, *Exodus*, 268.

²⁷⁵ Chisholm, *From Exegesis to Exposition*, 83.

²⁷⁶ Winther-Nielsen, “Toward the Peak of Mount Sinai,” 1-19.

heightened in the syntactical function of the infinitive absolute **יִגְזַרְזַר**. Gentry sums up the import of these verses succinctly and accurately by contending that the “ban, interdiction, prohibition” (or taboo) are not to be equated to consecration. According to him, “a consecrated mountain” is not “a forbidden mountain”: such an interdiction is as a result of the consecration which does not define consecration itself. In his view, consecrating the mountain is to prepare it for the coming of God. To do this, Moses must place boundaries there in order not for the people to approach it.²⁷⁷

Presumably, the boundary set by Moses was not necessarily intended to prevent the people from approaching the mountain. Some scholars argue for an absolute prohibition of the people drawing near the mountain. Alternatively, Sailhamer commenting on the prohibition of the mountain intimates that the warning could simply be ‘watch yourselves going up’ as ‘beware not to go up’.²⁷⁸ He argues further that the warning in v. 12 is merely a warning not to enter the mountain until the appropriate time.²⁷⁹ On the contrary, Gentry avers that “the invitation to the people to participate in theophany is for consecration and not as spectators; the place and the people are ready to receive God because they belong to Him”.²⁸⁰

Thus, as a people who belong to YHWH, they are to be consecrated in anticipation of the ‘third day’ appearance of YHWH. Winther-Nielsen, however, notes the contrast between the prohibition not to go up for two days, and at the enduring trumpet signal on the third day to go up.²⁸¹ On the contrary, Wells points out that “the presence of the holy God in their midst means that any departure from the people’s consecrated state will endanger

²⁷⁷ J. Gentry, “The Meaning of “Holy” in the Old Testament,” 400-17.

²⁷⁸ John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Press, 1995), 284.

²⁷⁹ Sailhamer, *Old Testament Theology*, 285.

²⁸⁰ Gentry, “The Meaning of Holy in the Old Testament,” 400-17.

²⁸¹ Winther-Nielsen, “Toward the Peak of Mount Sinai,” 1-19.

their continued existence, because the holiness of God cannot coexist with what is unholy, what is impure or unclean”.²⁸² This presupposes that Israel’s consecration was a major requirement for their preparation in approaching the sanctuary of God.

In the next textual unit (vv. 14-15), the parallelism with the preceding vv. 10-13 is obvious. Beekman and Callow, commenting on repetition and continuity in themes, intimate that “when referents and key thematic words are repeated throughout the text, they help the reader keep in view the thematic goal of the text”.²⁸³ It presupposes that the bounding of the mountain in vv. 12-13 and the consecration of the people are to highlight to the reader the holiness of YHWH which cannot be taken for granted. Thus, it seems that the last statement by YHWH is framed in the phrase “do not go near a woman” perhaps to connect well with the directives in vv. 10-13. As for Childs, “the required sanctification summarizes God’s command with a specific, concrete injunction ‘do not go near a woman!’²⁸⁴

Therefore, one can perhaps envisage that Israel’s call to be holy and priestly is grounded on the continuous obedience to YHWH’s directives ensued in the consecration process which leads to the meeting with God on the third day. It is also imperative to mention syntactically that the chain of *waw* consecutive which began in v. 3 continues into v. 15. As such, it can be assumed that the first two episodes from vv. 3-8b and 8c-15 are presented together as one preparatory unit to help the reader make an informed decision as

²⁸² Wells, *God’s Holy People*, 64.

²⁸³ John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 79-80.

²⁸⁴ Childs, *Exodus*, 368-9. Durham sees in this phrase “a euphemism for sexual intercourse”. He argues that the prohibition is parallel to the prohibition against touching the isolated area of Mount Sinai: a man’s semen rendered both the man and the woman with whom he was having intercourse unclean and therefore culturally unacceptable for specified period. *Exodus*, 265. G. J. Wenham, “Why Does Sexual Intercourse Defile (Lev 15:18)?” *ZAW* 95 (1983): 432-34. Argues that “God who is perfect life and perfect holiness, can only be approached by clean men who enjoy fullness of life themselves.” What this means is that when the semen of the men is intact then he becomes holy but when discharge takes he is considered as unclean. One wonders whether that polarity between the sacred and profane is exactly the understanding the author of Exodus is painting. In my opinion the sacred space is created to enable the people realize that they cannot toil with the holiness of YHWH and such the only way to keep the relationship going is the daily consciousness of one’s state.

to the implication of belonging to YHWH entails in the designation to be ‘priestly kingdom and a holy nation’.

3.3.4 YHWH’s Dramatic Appearance (vv. 16-19)

16 וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בְהֵיטֵב הַבֶּקֶר וַיְהִי קֶלֶת וּבְרָקִים וְעָנָן
 כָּבֵד עַל-הַהָר וְקֵל שֹׁפָר חֲזָק מְאֹד וַיִּיחָרֵד כָּל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר
 17 וַיּוֹצֵא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הָעָם לְקִרְיַת הָאֱלֹהִים מִן-הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּתְיַצְּבוּ בַּמַּחֲנֶה:
 18 וְהָרַסְנוּ סִינַי עֵשָׂן כָּלֹּ מִפְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר יָרַד עָלָיו יְהוָה בְּאֵשׁ וַיַּעֲלֶבֶת חַתִּית הַהָר:
 עֵשָׂנוּ כְּעֵשָׂן הַכַּבֹּשֶׁן וַיִּיחָרֵד כָּל-הַהָר מְאֹד:
 19 וַיְהִי קוֹל הַשּׁוֹפָר הוֹלֵךְ וְחֲזָק מְאֹד מֹשֶׁה יְדַבֵּר וְהָאֱלֹהִים
 יַעֲנֶנּוּ בְקוֹל:

Yet, on the long awaited third day, the people in anticipation to meet YHWH are assembled at a distance from the mountain. YHWH descends as promised in the thick cloud, but the events are erupted as well by the presence of thunder, lightning, the cacophonous blast of a loud trumpet, smoke fire, and the violent trembling of the mountain. This culminates in the event of the third day mountaintop divine theophany (vv. 16-19).

Coming back to the text, with the introduction of the transitional marker וַיְהִי the reader is signaled to a new scene in the unfolding narrative of the third day event in v. 16.²⁸⁵ According to Winther-Nielsen, “the sequence of the verb וַיְהִי followed by two more forms of this verb is an indication of the temporal expressions specifying the exact time of the day and the third day, one in an eventive sense of ‘they came’ occurred, was’ in combination with natural forces of nature”.²⁸⁶ After, the narrator in specifying the morning of the third day event, the narrative is further heightened with the force of the adjectival and adverbial description of YHWH’s mountaintop manifestation.

²⁸⁵ Alviero Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 48. The linguistic understanding of וַיְהִי into the main narrative enforces the position of the narrative, so that that position becomes an integral and important part of the account. Thus, in this regard, the reader is able to grasp that perhaps the entire narrative in Exod. 19 is about the theophanic manifestation and awesome presence of YHWH.

²⁸⁶ Winther-Nielsen, “Towards the Peak of Mount Sinai,” 1-19.

With vv. 16b-17, the narrator introduces a similar pattern to describe the mountain vv. 10-13 and to highlight again the significance of the meeting place with YHWH. However, in v. 18, a *waw* + non verb is used, to indicate to the reader a shift in scene from the camp and the foot of the mountain, to the mountain itself, upon which YHWH descended.²⁸⁷ The mountain at this time is characterized as fuming with billowing smoke and fire. Following the metaphorical description of the mountaintop manifestation, “the storm and fire imagery of vv. 16-19a is an attempt to describe the indescribable experience of the coming of YHWH. It is language recurrent in OT theophany accounts, and language rooted in Canaanite description of the arrival of a deity”.²⁸⁸ Durham maintains that “the reference to the increasing sound of a ram’s horn following each of the two verses using the storm and fire imagery (vv. 16, 18) and the reference between those two verses to the positioning of Israel binds the verses together into a unity of rising intensity”.²⁸⁹

Moreover, in v. 19 the narrator uses a similar construction (v. 16a) only that in this case the focus is not on the fuming mountain but rather on the dialogue between Moses and YHWH. The reference to Moses speaking and YHWH answering him is framed in the use of the imperfect verb (יַעֲנֶנּוּ, יִדְבֹר) to indicate a repeated action. According to Hyatt, the repeated action of the imperfect verbs should be rendered: “And as the blast of the trumpet (קוֹל הַשּׁוֹפָר) grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and YHWH answered him in thunder (יַעֲנֶנּוּ בְקוֹל)”.²⁹⁰ According to Winther-Nielsen, “the function of these two imperfective verbs is extremely unorthodox configuring with Moses speaking and YHWH answering

²⁸⁷ According to Niccacci, the breaking of the narrative chain focuses, the reader attention to something that the writer considers important. Niccacci, *Classical Hebrew Prose*, 48.

²⁸⁸ Durham, *Exodus*, 270. On the other hand, some see the ‘ensuing theophany as the most significance appearance of YHWH in the entire Hebrew Bible couched in a language of powerful phenomena of nature’ Meyers, *Exodus*, 154.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ J. Philip Hyatt, *Commentary on Exodus* (Marshall: Morgan & Scott Ltd, 1971), 202.

(v. 19b)".²⁹¹ Thus, in this case the narrator leaves the reader in a state of confusion as to the content of the message between Moses and YHWH. On this issue, Chirichigno suggests that "the people may have heard the Decalogue in the ensuing speech of YHWH".²⁹² A scholarly debate arises as to whether YHWH spoke or thunder.²⁹³ It is probable that the double entendre of קול in v. 19 is to indicate to the reader that Israel heard YHWH in thunder.²⁹⁴ Yet, at the increasing sound of the trumpet Moses stands alone with YHWH speaking whilst the people remain at the foot of the mountain. This presupposes the reason the text envelopes Moses as the only one who could mitigate the voice of YHWH. According to Chirichigno, "the awesome nature of the event was too much for the people to take, which thus led to their request for mediation".²⁹⁵ As for Alexander, "the chronological notice in v. 16 referring to 'third day' not only marks the beginning of a new episode, but immediately links this section to the preceding (vv. 11, 15) by indicating that YHWH's promise to Moses in v. 9 is about to be fulfilled in v.19".²⁹⁶

Van Seters refutes such a claim that "there is no public legitimization of Moses as suggested in v. 9 as the point of Moses' role in the theophany, only reprimand".²⁹⁷ If indeed this is the case why does the narrator continue to highlight Moses as the only one who could mediate on behalf of the people? Presumably, one would have thought that since Israel had been designated 'kingdom of priests and a holy nation', it is plausible to envisage the people playing equal role at the divine manifestation of YHWH. On the

²⁹¹ Winther-Nielsen, "Toward the Peak of Mount Sinai," 1-19.

²⁹² Chirichigno, "The Narrative Structure of Exodus," 457-479.

²⁹³ The Tanak renders it as voice, whereas the LXX renders 'sound' and the vulgate 'voce'. Since the Hebrew *lAqã* has some ambiguities, gaps, strange repetition and apparent contradiction, it makes it difficult to determine what exactly the author meant in these verses.

²⁹⁴ Childs, *Exodus*, 343.

²⁹⁵ Chirichigno, "The Narrative Structure of Exodus," 457-479.

²⁹⁶ Alexander, "The Composition of the Sinai Narrative," 2-20.

²⁹⁷ Van Seters, "Comparing Scripture with Scripture: Some Observations on the Sinai Pericope in Exod. 19-24," Quoted in Alexander, "The Composition of the Sinai Narrative," 1-20.

contrary, Wells posits “the parallels are indicators for ‘identifying Moses as a priest: the essence of the role of the priest is to draw near to YHWH, thus Moses is depicted as the ultimate priest’”.²⁹⁸ This is because Moses is the only one in the story who could cross the boundary set by YHWH.

Thus, what seems to be the climax of Israel’s anticipation to meet YHWH is perhaps erupted by the natural phenomenon (lightning, thunder, fire and smoke) which accompanied the divine manifestation of YHWH, thus placing fear on the people to stand at a distance. Perhaps, the intention of the narrator in the divine manifestation of YHWH is to capture the eye of the reader to appreciate the authority of YHWH in Israel’s past experience in Egypt and the progressive action of YHWH in the future.

3.3.5 Yahweh Instructs Moses to Warn the People (vv. 20-25)

20 וַיֵּרֶד יְהוָה עַל-הַר סִינַי אֶל-רֹאשׁ הַהָר וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה לְמֹשֶׁה
 אֶל-רֹאשׁ הַהָר וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה:
 21 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה רֵד הַעֵד בְּעַם פְּנֵי-יְהִרְסוּ אֶל-יְהוָה
 לְרֹאוֹת וְנִפְל מִמֶּנּוּ רַב:
 22 וְגַם הַכֹּהֲנִים הַנֹּגְשִׁים אֶל-יְהוָה יִתְקַדְּשׁוּ פְּנֵי-יַפְרִיץ בָּהֶם יְהוָה:
 23 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוָה לֹא-יִוָּכַל הָעָם לַעֲלֹת אֶל-הַר סִינַי
 כִּי-אַתָּה הֶעֱרַתָּ בְּנוֹ לְאֹמֶר הַגִּבֹּל אֶת-הַהָר וְקִדְּשָׁתוּ:
 24 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה לְךָ-רֵד וְעֲלִית אִתָּה וְאַתְרֵן עִמּוֹךְ
 וְהַכֹּהֲנִים וְהָעָם אֶל-יְהִרְסוּ לַעֲלֹת אֶל-יְהוָה פְּנֵי-יַפְרִיץ-בָּם:
 25 וַיֵּרֶד מֹשֶׁה אֶל-הָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם: ס

In v. 20, the narrative resumes. The preposition **עַל** indicates YHWH’s presence on top of Mount Sinai. In addition to the description of the mountain, the narrator employed three action verbs (**עלה, קרא, ירד**) which agree both in gender and number, to further describe the repetitious ascent and descent of Moses on the mountain. However, in v. 21 the

²⁹⁸ Wells, *God’s Holy People*, 107.

narrator shifts the attention from the third person to the second formula to frame the dialogue between Moses and YHWH. The use of **רַדְּ** functions as a direct command from YHWH to Moses to carry out his mediatorial responsibility. Moses' mediatorial role is further heightened by the use of **עֹר**, to carry out the responsibility of YHWH in a summary of warning to the people.

Winther-Nielsen points out that “the use of the imperative has a menacing force commanding Moses to witness against the people in v. 21b”.²⁹⁹ This is perhaps seen in the phrase **לְפָנֵי יְהוָה** which linked the qal infinitive construct **רָאוּת** with the prepositional **לְ** to describe the punishment on the people. Childs argues that “the warning is given for the sake of the people, who have no experience as yet of the dimensions of divine holiness and warned lest they destroy themselves”.³⁰⁰ Alexander, however, posits that “the command to warn the people against ascending the mountain implies that some of them may tend towards disobedience rather than compliance”.³⁰¹ He argues further that “the warning in vv. 20-25 casts a dark shadow across the positive response of the people in v. 8”.³⁰² Although, Israel willingly accepted the covenant blessings, it was their obligation as a people to continually demonstrate that obedience by submitting to sovereignty of YHWH.

Furthermore, the adversative particle **וְ** in v. 22 shifts the warning from the people to the priests perhaps to introduce to the reader for the very first time that the priests, who were supposedly enjoying some access to YHWH were forbidden to enter the presence of the ‘holy mountain’ without the necessary priestly consecration. As a result, the priests as well

²⁹⁹ Winther-Nielsen, “Towards the Peak of Mount Sinai,” 1-19.

³⁰⁰ Childs, *Exodus*, 370.

³⁰¹ Alexander, “The Composition of the Sinai Narrative,” 1-20.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

as the people were mandated to undertake the consecration process. The repetition of פְּנִי־יְפָרֵץ (v. 22) clearly serves as a link to the preceding v. 21.

The rhetorical question is, why were the priests exempted from the general consecration until this time? In buttressing this point, Davies comments that “the status of these priests as those who enjoy a more inherent degree of sanctity might have exempted them from the general prohibition”.³⁰³ As for Perkins, “the priests who draw near to YHWH are warned to consecrate themselves. Presumably if they draw near in an unconsecrated state, YHWH will remove some of them.”³⁰⁴ In my view, the statement made by Davies seems more convincing but the inclusion of the priests in the consecration process is probably to place equal demand on them just as the people in order not to take the presence of YHWH for granted.

The position of this verse has generated scholarly arguments. According to Durham, “the necessity for priests to respect the holiness of YHWH’s presence, attached to the Sinai narrative as an illustration of the seriousness of the restrictions made by that holiness, is anachronistic even to the sequence of exodus”.³⁰⁵

Furthermore in vv. 23-24, the *waw* + imperfect construction is used by the narrator to refer to the preceding vv. 12-13 to further relay YHWH’s instruction to the people. The parallelism in both verses is that whilst in vv. 12-13 Moses and the people were directly responsible for maintaining the boundary, in vv. 23-24 YHWH himself is the one to “break out against them”. According to Perkins, “the warnings and preparation that YHWH

³⁰³ Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 110

³⁰⁴ Larry Perkins, “The Greek Translator of Exodus,” *Journal of the Study of Judaism* 44 (2013): 16-56.

³⁰⁵ Durham, *Exodus*, 273. Reference to ‘priests’ seems strange in this context since the Aaronide priesthood was not yet established. Source oriented commentators tend to see an anachronism here due to a secondary insertion of vv. 20-25. Childs, *Exodus*, 375. Suggests that a ‘traditional resolution of this problem is to understand the priests to refer to the first born sons of every family who were specially dedicated to God (Exod. 13:2; 22: 28). I share in the opinion of both scholars, but in the immediate context of Exodus, I believe the suggestion made by Childs is plausible.

communicates to Israel are considered then a means of evaluating their willingness to obey”.³⁰⁶ On the other hand, Durham alludes to the fact that “the repeated warning about the boundaries provides a further means of emphasizing both the restrictions regarding the boundaries and the uniqueness of Moses’ role”.³⁰⁷ It is presumably not surprising that Moses continues to play the intermediary role on behalf of the people. However, whilst on the mountain, Moses receives the command to come with Aaron (v. 24). This verse also raises concern for scholars, since Aaron does not ascend with Moses in the immediate context of the text.

As Childs mentions, “the section is considered anticlimax and has been the subject of discussion and conjecture mainly because it disturbs the ongoing movement of the chapter.”³⁰⁸ This unusual ascent of Moses makes it difficult to link it to the preceding verse. Thus, in contributing to the discussion, Alexander argues that vv. 20-25 complement the description of the theophany by focusing on the theme of holiness. According to him, “the complimentary nature of the two scenes probably explains why these verses make no reference to the signs of the theophany”.³⁰⁹ On the other hand, Childs maintains that “the point of preparation emerges from the repetition of phrases, ‘warn...lest they break through’ (vv. 21, 24). He, however, contends that the preparation was necessary “for the deliverance of the Law”.³¹⁰ Similarly, Fretheim tends to believe that vv. 20-25 are integral parts of the overall structure of Exod. 19, thus, forming “an interlude between 19:19 and 20:1”.³¹¹ Similarly, Alexander asserts that “the chapter may be read as a continuous account, with later verses building upon those which have gone before”.³¹² On this, Hampel argues that the procedure of building up a narrative out of small self-contained

³⁰⁶ Perkins, “The Greek Translator of Exodus,” 16-56.

³⁰⁷ Durham, *Exodus*, 273.

³⁰⁸ Childs, *Exodus*, 369.

³⁰⁹ Alexander, “The Composition of the Sinai Narrative,” 2-20.

³¹⁰ Childs, *Exodus*, 370.

³¹¹ Fretheim, *Exodus*, 219.

³¹² Alexander, “The Composition of the Sinai Narrative,” 1-20.

scenes survived as an artistic purpose, and made possible a change of scene and of actors that increased suspense by marking time now and again, thus, permitting the representation of contemporary events in different places without making the narrative too retrospective.³¹³

Therefore, by the double invitation, the reader is propelled forward to see that the parallelism in these verses provides a link to the preceding verses and subsequent events that might take place in order for the reader not lose track and to be able to identify with the line of story. Therefore, the reader is able to see that the repetitions in vv. 20-24 provide a detailed summary on the restrictions of the boundary and the exceptional access Moses enjoys, as the only one who can cross the boundary to receive YHWH's words and communicate to the people. However, by the explicit description of the priest's involvement in the consecration, it does seem that there are no special privileges for them to enjoy even though they should be closer to YHWH. The reader may assume in this case that the priests as well as the people can continue to enjoy access to the presence of YHWH by submitting to his voice.

3.4 Conclusion

It is significant to note, how the author employed the features of repetition, parallelism, syntactic construction and metaphorical images to guide the reader to navigate the smooth transitional flow of scenes and plots in the narrative. Admittedly, the researcher agrees with Alexander, Childs and Fretheim that the narrative of Exod. 19 is a carefully crafted artistic work without any recourse to editorial insertion. However, in dialogue with the reader we realize that there are some tensions in the text. For example, the question arises whether the Decalogue was contained in the words spoken or thundered by YHWH. As

³¹³ Johannes Hampel, *Die althebraische Literatur und ihr hellenistisch-Judisches Nachleben* (Wildpark-Postsdam: Anthenation, 1930), 35.

mentioned earlier, although the people did not hear the words spoken, presumably because of the accompanying signs of natural phenomenon (lightning, thunder, smoke etc...), Moses seems to have mediated the words of YHWH to the people upon his return from the mountain.

As such, for Israel to continue to enjoy unhindered access to the presence of YHWH and to catch a glimpse of his glory, it behooves on them to submit to the priestly consecration of YHWH. Notwithstanding, the process leading to the very revelation of the holiness of YHWH is of great importance to the writer of the book of Exodus because what might be a memorable event in the life of Israel may turn out to be an ambivalent encounter with the presence of YHWH, such that approaching his presence could result in pain and death. However, as a result of the devastating presence of YHWH, the people could not meet YHWH directly to catch a glimpse of his presence.

Of course, it is not surprising that Moses' mediatorial role becomes much more extraordinary because he is the only one who could approach the holy mountain on behalf of the people, and communicate to YHWH and relay back YHWH's words to Israel. As Davies concludes "the reader should not lose sight of the fact that mediation is a means to an end. It serves the interest of the higher and ultimate goal that Israel should be a people who as a whole should enjoy access to God in some form of priestly service".³¹⁴

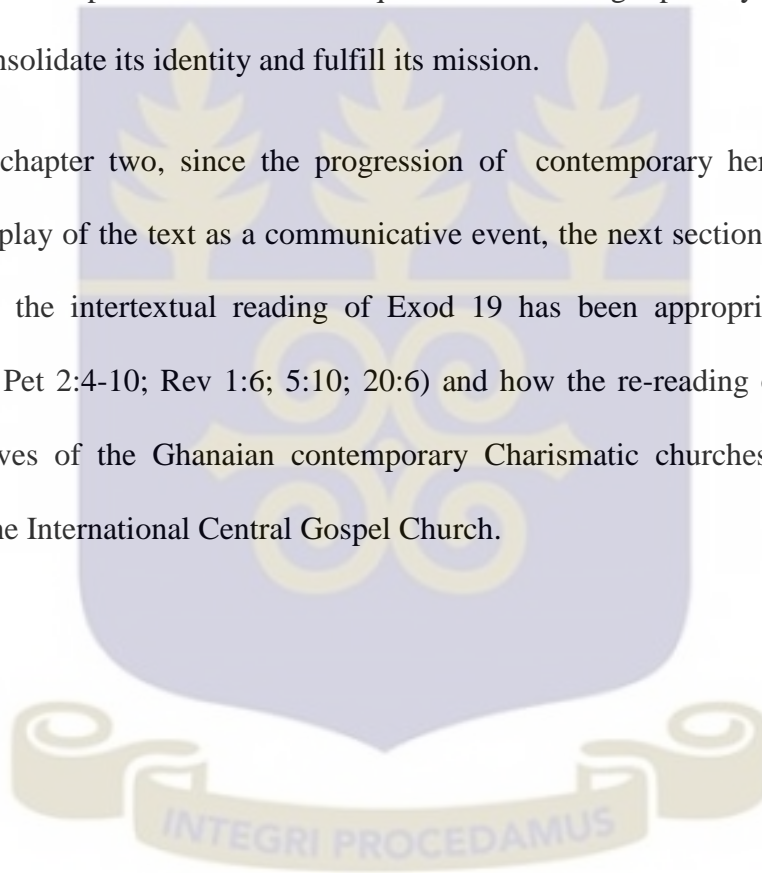
The analysis has further demonstrated that in all of Israel's progressive history, YHWH's self-disclosure at Mount Sinai was unique because it was here that YHWH entered into a covenant relationship with the entire nation. In consequence, for these wandering slaves this outlook brings a fresh impetus to their identity and mission as a people. Thus, it is

³¹⁴ Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 111-12.

worth noting that the theophany at Sinai was the recognition of YHWH as Israel's king and thus rightly the bestowal of his will through his law.

Therefore, we can conclude that the call to action is perhaps to suggest to the reader that the goal of Israel's journey from Egypt to Sinai is predicated by their continuous relationship with YHWH who delivered them from slavery to freedom. Thus, the honorific designation of being priestly and holy is affirmed by submitting to the will of YHWH. It means, Israel was expected to fulfill the requirements of being a priestly and a holy nation in order to consolidate its identity and fulfill its mission.

As stated in chapter two, since the progression of contemporary hermeneutics is the dynamic interplay of the text as a communicative event, the next section of this work will examine how the intertextual reading of Exod 19 has been appropriated in the New Testament (1 Pet 2:4-10; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6) and how the re-reading of these passages impact the lives of the Ghanaian contemporary Charismatic churches, with particular reference to the International Central Gospel Church.



CHAPTER FOUR

READING AND RE-READING OF EXOD 19:6

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we analyzed Exod. 19 in its immediate and remote context, and the pre-understanding the implied reader brings along in understanding the priesthood of Israel. It must be emphasized that the text does not only elaborate the meaning of royal priesthood and holy nation, but also lets the reader to understand the continuation of the text in other parts of the Old Testament. Davies, in his monumental studies, applied the concept of royal priesthood in Exod. 19:6 to other passages such as Hosea 4:4-9, Isa. 61:6 and Zech. 3 in order to trace the historical understanding of this concept in the Tanak.³¹⁵

As the people of Israel, the followers of Jesus Christ have continued to read the text and to contextualize its message in the new situations in which they were living. The reflection on Exod. 19:6 did not end with the closure of the canon but continued in the Christian communities along the centuries. The most widely known intertextual connection relating to Exod. 19:6 is 1 Pet 2:9: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people.” The author of Revelation referred in three occasions to the Old Testament texts (1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

In this light, the chapter explores how Exod. 19:6 was appropriated by the New Testament writers (1 Pet 2:1-10 and Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:16), and the significance of the texts to the contemporary Christian community, especially the Charismatic fraternity in Ghana.

³¹⁵ Davies, *Royal Priesthood*, 189-273.

4.2 Reading 1 Peter 2:1-10

4.2.1 Background of the Text

To understand the letter, it is important to explore the situation in which Peter wrote this epistle. The reader is immediately introduced as “the chosen resident, foreigners of the Diaspora in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia” (1:1). Hillyer rightly observes that “1 Peter describes the readers in three ways: as ‘God’s elect’, ‘strangers in the world’, and ‘scattered throughout’”.³¹⁶ The majority of scholars suggest that the epistle was written to Gentile Christians.³¹⁷ On the contrary, Watson and Callan point out that “the exilic perspective of the letter coupled with the heavy Old Testament quotations, allusions, and historical references seem to indicate that the recipients are Jewish Christians”.³¹⁸

It may be plausible to state that the author intentionally draws up the Old Testament parallelism in order to affirm its relevance for the suffering Christian communities in Asia Minor. Michael asserts that “the identity of the recipients is a more central concern to the author than his own identity”.³¹⁹ It is obvious that the author presumably wanted to highlight to the readers the identity of this community as “people living in a small communal organisation scattered among the peoples and waiting expectantly for its ingathering in the eschaton”.³²⁰

Yet, the Christian community faced severe hardship probably because they were unwilling to take part in the religious activities of their society. In relation to their impending suffering, Elliot points out that the “incomprehensible language, strange habits, and the worship of foreign deities put the civic loyalty of such aliens into grave question. Thus,

³¹⁶ Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992), 25-26.

³¹⁷ Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter* (Leicester: IVP, 1988), 38. The statement in 1:18 makes it extremely difficult to perhaps attribute it to the Jewish Christians.

³¹⁸ F. Watson and Terrance D. Callan, *First and Second Peter* (Grand Rapids; MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 7.

³¹⁹ J. R. Michaels, *1 Peter* (WBC 49; Waco: Word, 1988), 6.

³²⁰ L. Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 66.

restrictions were placed on their legal and social rights, and they bore the brunt of covert as well as overt social discrimination”.³²¹ This awful situation that the believing community were faced with might have caused them to become vulnerable and insecure about their faith in the Lord (4:6). Thus, this marginalised Christians may not have the confidence to express their faith in a manner that is deemed fit. Perhaps the author, after witnessing the inhumane treatment of the Christian community, wrote his epistles “to exhort the faithful to a denial of the world and contempt of it...that being elevated by hope, supported by patience, and fortified by courage and perseverance, they might overcome all kinds of temptations...”³²² It is probable that 1 Pet 2:1-10 was construed by the author to alert the reader to the deeds of God and thus offer the suffering community a deeper meaning for their hardship.

4.2.2 Analysis of the Text

⁹ Ὑμεῖς δὲ γένος ἐκλεκτόν, βασιλείου ἱεράτευμα, ἔθνος ἅγιον, λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν, ὅπως τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐξαγγείλητε τοῦ ἐκ σκοτοῦς ὑμᾶς καλέσαντος εἰς τὸ θαυμαστὸν αὐτοῦ φῶς· ¹⁰ οἳ ποτε οὐ λαὸς νῦν δὲ λαὸς θεοῦ, οἱ οὐκ ἠλεημένοι νῦν δὲ ἐλεηθέντες.

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy”

The term ἱεράτευμα is used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word כֹּהֲנִים. This is the only occurrence in the New Testament. However, instead of keeping to the plural (priests) noun present in the LXX the author prefers to use the singular ἱεράτευμα

³²¹ John Elliot, “Salutation and Exhortation to Christian Behavior on the Basis of God’s Blessings (1:1-2:10),” *Review and Expositor* 79, no.3 (1982): 415-425.

³²² John Calvin, *Commentaries on The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1999), 21.

(priesthood). The term ἱεράτευμα occurred about six times prior to the New Testament: Exod. 19:6; 23:22 (LXX), Greek fragment 67, 2 Macc. 2:17, and Philo (2x).³²³ It is probable that the idea echoing from these passages could be traced to the appropriation of Exod. 19 in 1 Pet. 2.

The placement of ἱεράτευμα in the New Testament is so crucial that one cannot gloss over it. Elliot discusses the connection between ἱεράτευμα and βασιλείον as the “Exodus Formula”. Vanhoye, in examining the term posits that “the suffix -μα, indicates neither a quality nor a function, but the product resulting from an action or, an ensemble of things or of persons in relation to this action”.³²⁴ It implies that the suffix -μα attached to the noun (ἱεράτεῦ) neither signifies a quality nor a function of the priest.

The crux of the issue perhaps lies with the root -ιερ which indicates “the sphere of the sacred”, and the suffix ευσ which attaches to a ‘*nomen actionis*’, naming one who does a specific function. In this regard, the term ἱεράτευμα connotes “a certain concrete reality with relation to sacred function”.³²⁵

In relation to the meaning of words ending in ευμα, Vanhoye identifies three classes of words which represent a group of persons exercising a specific function: βουλέμα (a group of senators), τεχνηνιτεύμα (corporation of artisans), πολιτεύμα (collectivity of citizens). These words can be understood in three ways namely (1) they apply to persons; (2) not considering them as individuals but as forming a group; (3) this group is characterized by specific function. This classification implied that this group of words ending in ευμα is not necessarily limited to individuals but rather designates a larger group of people. In elaborating further on this point, Vanhoye demonstrates that “this personal, corporate and

³²³ Elliot, *The Elect and the Holy*, 64.

³²⁴ Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 249.

³²⁵ Ibid.

functional sense corresponds exactly to the context of Exod. 19:6, which applies *ιεράτευμα* to the Israelites as a whole”.³²⁶ Thus, in keeping to this translation, the Septuagint “extended to the priesthood the corporate aspect which was expressed in Hebrew by the terms of the context ‘kingdom and nation’”.³²⁷ It is worth noting that the word *ιεράτευμα* may have more than one meaning, however, the context may determine whether it is “priestly organism or priestly functioning”.³²⁸ From this analysis, the attention of the work turns to compare the meaning of the sentence ‘royal priesthood and holy nation’ in Exod. 19:6 and 1 Pet. 2:1-10.

4.2.3 Intertextual Reading of *ιεράτευμα*

With regard to the similarities in the two texts, the following observations were made about their respective larger contexts. The term *ιεράτευμα* and its related semantics words describe a group of people as opposed to a certain category of persons. However, the construction of the Greek word “but you” (*ὑμεῖς δὲ*) with its accompanying designations *βασίλειον ιεράτευμα, ἔθνος ἅγιον*, ‘royal priesthood and holy nation’ in v. 9 corresponds with that of Exod. 19:6. Thus, in both instances the emphasis on the personal pronoun ‘you’ signifies the collective identity of the people. Although the collective idea is sometimes stressed above the individual participation, Elliot is careful to admit the individual classification of the term *ιεράτευμα*. This notwithstanding, Elliot alludes to the observation that:

It is semantically inadmissible to attempt to reduce either of these words to an individual-distributive classification and thereby to suggest that each individual believer is being depicted as a “king” and a “priests”...As the other corporate predicates, both *βασίλειον* and *ιεράτευμα* are only ascribable to the community *qua* community and only relevant in this context *qua* substantive corporativa.³²⁹

³²⁶ Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 249.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 250.

³²⁸ Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 250.

³²⁹ Elliot, *The Elect and the Holy*, 69.

Additionally, the two sentences βασιλειον and ιεράτευμα have indistinguishable beginnings and titles. They present these persons as a group endowed with a certain unity because of it being singular and functioning as a unifying element of the common relationship to a sacred function.

Apart from the resemblance, Exod. 19:6 and 1 Pet. 2:9 fixate some differences which are not farfetched from one another. Whereas in the Septuagint reading of Exod. 19:6 the voice that addresses the community of Israel is YHWH himself, in 1Pet. 2: 9a a leader speaks to this suffering community. The function of the text was to educate the community to read their situation through the lens offered by the word of God (Exod. 19:1-6). In other words, Peter was helping them to read their situation not with human eyes but theologically. The difference functions of the text in the narrative context, is testified by the use of different tenses. Accordingly, the significance in both texts is the change in tense, audience and the conditions attached.³³⁰ In Exodus the future middle tense ἔσεσθε is used to contrast the Israelites from the pagan nations having a conditional proposition preceding it. But in 1 Peter, it is affirmed to a present people who have already been drawn from the pagan nations without any condition as in the expression (ὕμεις δὲ) followed by the various adjectival constructions.

Again, it appears that according to New Testament reading the divine declaration to Israel in Exod. 19:6 finds its fulfillment in the phrase 'you are a royal priesthood' in 1 Pet. 2:9. This attests to the fact that the divine speech of YHWH in Exod. 19:6 is realized in the aforementioned proclamation in 1 Pet 2:9. In consequence, it is no more a promise but a definite proclamation indicating a fulfilled plan of God. Although scholars argue that the absence of the Greek verb in 1 Pet. 2:6 disproves the affirmation of a fulfilled promise to

³³⁰ Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 251.

the term priestly kingdom and holy nation in Exod. 19:6, Vanhoye indicates that the preceding verse affirms it by contrasting their past situation with their present situation.

Consequently, it must be emphasized that 1Peter does not only rely on the text of Exodus but expands the OT text by adding to it an expression from Isa. 43:20-21 “my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise”. On this last phrase “so that they might narrate my praiseworthy deeds”, Bartlett reminds us that “1 Peter instead suggests that the faithful celebrate God’s praise in doxology”.³³¹ In advancing the argument further, Vanhoye suggests that “Peter adapts these titles to his expressions and by so doing obtains a more impressive series of laudatory titles, which exalt the dignity of the Christian people”.³³² Manson in discussing the use of the Old in the New intimates that “once the Old Testament was reached it becomes clear duty to express it; and accurate reproduction of the traditional wording of the Divine oracles took second place to the publication of what was held to be their essential meaning and immediate application”.³³³

Also, from the perspective of the New Testament, the word *ἱεράτευμα* brings out the corporate identity of the people more clearly than Exod. 19:6. These collective identity attributed to the community of believers is seen in the distinctive use of the author drawing up words such as “race, nation, and people” to describe the believers in the community. Most scholars argue that these collective terms in their immediate context do not necessarily indicate a priestly function.

Elliot concurs with this statement and notes that “the significance of *ἱεράτευμα* lies not in its cultic connotations, but together with *βασίλειον* in its designations of the electedness

³³¹ David L. Bartlett, *The New Interpreter’s Bible: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 266-267.

³³² Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 251.

³³³ T. W. Manson, “The Argument from Prophecy,” *JTS* 46 (1946): 129-16.

and holiness of the Divine Regent’s community”.³³⁴ This implies that the idea of priestly function is perhaps not really what the author of 1 Peter intended for his readers. The reader can infer from the reading of 1 Peter that the emphasis is more on the electedness and holiness of the community of believers than priestly duties or function. Elliot adds that “nowhere in the NT does the theme of election assume the dominating significance that it has in 1 Peter”.³³⁵

Notwithstanding, the prepositional phrase “in order to proclaim the mighty acts...” seems to suggest something of a cultic practice of the priesthood. Related to the idea of *ἱεράτευμα* and *ἐξαγγείλητε* in v. 9b, Vanhoye remarks that “the act of proclaiming is, in fact, the only one mentioned here, and, on the other hand, among the four titles attributed to the Christian community, that of *ἱεράτευμα* is the only one which directly implies an activity”.³³⁶ Undoubtedly, it is likely that Peter buttresses this point with the addition of Ps. 22:23, “in the full assembly I will praise you,” so that his readers will be conscious of the fact that in spite of their marginalization in the pagan community there is always the need to praise God for what he has done for them as a people. Thus, as Gentiles, “they once were not a people, but now they are God’s people; once they had not received mercy, but now they received mercy’ in order to ‘proclaim the mighty acts of God” (vv. 9-10).

The meaning and function of the word *βασίλειον* in both the Septuagint and the Masoretic text have varied (meanings and) interpretations. In fact, the term *βασίλειον* is often rendered as ‘royal’ when used as an adjective and as ‘royal possession’ when taken as substantive. Whereas in the Septuagint it is often used as substantive, in the text of Exod. 19:6, it becomes problematic to consider *βασίλειον* as a noun. Since it is presumably followed by *ἱεράτευμα* with a coordinating *καί* and introduces a series of parallel

³³⁴ Elliot, *The Elect and the Holy*, 223.

³³⁵ John H. Elliot, *1 Peter* in Anchor Bible Commentary, Vol. 37b (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 446.

³³⁶ Vanhoye, *Old Testament priests*, 252.

expressions; βασιλείον ιεράτευμα and ἔθνος ἅγιον.³³⁷ It renders the translation as ‘royal priesthood and holy nation’. This notwithstanding, for βασιλείον to be considered a substantive, it obviously needs to be coordinated by καί to the term ιεράτευμα. On the contrary, the situation seems different in 1 Pet. 2:9, where the sentence was constructed without the coordinating conjunction, καί it presents in Exod. 19:6. These adaptations suggest that the author did not solely depend on the text of Exodus to encourage this suffering community in exile.

Therefore, it is significant to note that in Exod. 19 the promise made to Israel was fulfilled by their obedience to the conditions stipulated in the covenant. In Elliott’s thesis, the *proprium* of ‘priesthood’ is holiness. Thus he applies Exod. 19:6 directly to 1 Peter:

When Israel is faithful to the covenant then she shall be a kingdom of priests, that is, a holy nation sharing the holiness of her holy God and enjoying the access to Him which is typical of priests. . . . An emphasis not upon priestly function but rather upon a priestly relationship to YHWH is the concern.³³⁸

In this regard, by fulfilling the condition through faith, the royal priesthood has been granted to the community of faith (church). Those who follow Christ through faith are therefore the ‘royal priesthood’ in the re-reading of Peter. Faith, then, becomes the new condition that allows human beings in their imperfect state to exercise sacred functions and as priests enter into the service of God.³³⁹

4.2.4 Adherence to the Spiritual House (1 Peter 2:4-5)

⁴πρὸς ὃν προσερχόμενοι λίθον ζῶντα ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων μὲν ἀποδοκιμασμένοι παρὰ δὲ θεῷ ἐκλεκτὸν ἔντιμον,⁵ καὶ αὐτοὶ ὡς λίθοι ζῶντες οἰκοδομεῖσθε οἶκος πνευματικὸς εἰς ἱεράτευμα ἅγιον ἀνεύγκαι πνευματικὰς θυσίας εὐπροσδέκτους [τῷ] θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

³³⁷ Vanhoye, *Old Testament priests*, 253.

³³⁸ Elliot, *The Elect and the Holy*, 62.

³³⁹ Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 254.

“Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

In a critical analysis of 1Pet 2:9 together with 2:4-5, the idea of priesthood of believers appears in its full picture. Remarkably, in describing the adherence to the living stone, Peter used the present participle προσερχόμενοι to affirm the believer's spiritual advancement to an adherence to faith. Vanhoye posits that “the believer's profession of faith applies to Christ in as much as he has become, by his passion and resurrection, the foundation of new relationships between people and the principle of a new solidarity.”³⁴⁰

Christ as the living stone becomes the bond for the construction of a new communion which unites people with one another and brings them into constant unity with God. Thus, by adhering to the risen Christ, Christians do not only enter the sanctuary being built by humans but they become its living stone by partaking in the divine nature of God through Christ. Although, Christ, who is the living stone seems to have been rejected by humanity as unworthy, God has chosen this stone as living and valuable. According to Bartlett, “the stone is also chosen, elect, as the Christians to whom the letter is written are elect as exiles (1:1); that is to say that Christians, like Christ, are rejected by their pagan neighbours, but are elected and precious in the sight of God”.³⁴¹ This is perhaps to demonstrate to the readers that their lives as the rejected stone are chosen and deemed as precious by God.

Thus, the suffering Christians can obtain comfort in this pagan society only by coming to Christ. In this regard, Achtemeier asserts “they too, though rejected and alienated in their culture, nevertheless have God on their side and will ultimately be vindicated”.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 257.

³⁴¹ Bartlett, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 265.

³⁴² Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 154.

Furthermore, in relation to the living stone, Elliot posits “as Jesus Christ is the elected stone (v. 4d), as was Israel’s messiah (v. 6b), so do his followers constitute an ‘elect people’”.³⁴³ In other words, there exists a close relationship between Christ and the believing community that “contrasts the honour given by God to the faithful (v. 7a) with the shame experienced by the non-believers (vv. 7-8)”.³⁴⁴ This presupposes that the believers, in aligning with Christ, are separated and distinguished from those who continued to reject the living stone as the foundation of the building. It is significant to mention that the parallel expression ‘precious’, ‘elect’ are terms that the author might have intentionally developed from the Old Testament texts of Isa. 28:16; Ps. 118:22 and inculcated into his writings by adding the adjective ‘living’ to draw out the distinction for his readers to envisage the active work of Christ on behalf of the persecuted believers.

Furthermore, to express the building in relation to the life of the believing community, Peter employs the metaphor of a house. Though the term οἰκοδομεῖσθε used by the Apostle has been contested by several scholars,³⁴⁵ the doctrinal point of view reveals that Christians are implicitly called upon to approach Christ through faith so that they will be built into Christ who is the living stone, by becoming part of the spiritual house. Vanhoye contends that no physical building could assure mankind of an authentic relationship with God, for “God is spirit” (John 4:24). The French scholar, however, affirms that the spiritual house owes its construction and cohesion to the action of the sanctifying spirit.³⁴⁶ In this sense, the believers are reminded to envisage their connection to the spiritual house as purely a divine work of the spirit and not on the merit of human achievement.

³⁴³ Elliot, *1 Peter*, 435.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 255. Whereas some scholar’s renders οἰκοδομεῖσθε as imperative thereby making the sentence an exhortation or an affirmation, Vanhoye believes that the form in the Greek does not allow for neither determination because the form is identical in both cases.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 259.

Meanwhile, the construction of the sentence in v.5b by combining the participle with the main verb highlights certain fundamental traits of the doctrine of priesthood of believers. It seems to suggest that the concept is indirectly imbedded in the mediation of Christ and continued union with him. Vanhoye comments that “the first point of this doctrine is the absolute necessity of the mediation of Christ and of continual union with him. It is only in the measure they adhere to Christ that believers may become a priestly organism”.³⁴⁷ On the contrary, Elliot reiterates that “there is no foundation for the common assumption that in 1Peter the community is a body of priests by virtue of participation in the priesthood of Christ”.³⁴⁸ Vanhoye in arguing further rightly demonstrates that “the mention of priesthood in 2:4-5 is indissolubly united with the person and work of Christ. The priestly organism exists only by virtue of an adherence to Christ (you approaching him) and it performs its function of offering sacrifices only by virtue of the mediation of Christ”.³⁴⁹

In this regard, the union between the believer and Christ affords him the opportunity to become part of the ‘spiritual house’ and the ‘holy priesthood’ (v. 5b). The flashback of the term *ἱεράτευμα*, in v. 5 perhaps indicates the priestly character of the community. Nonetheless “the presence of *εἰς* obliges us, however, to give the word *ἱεράτευμα* a slightly different meaning, for it is no longer on the same footing with spiritual house, and no longer directly qualifies the believers”.³⁵⁰ Michaels, however, suggests that the addition of the preposition *εἰς* to the Septuagint ‘a people of possession’ reminds the readers that the fullness of their belonging to God is still reserved for the eschatological future.³⁵¹

On the issue of the relation between ‘holy priesthood’ and ‘spiritual sacrifice’, Vanhoye maintains that “the verbal locution that follows, placed simply in apposition with

³⁴⁷ Vanhoye, *Old Testament priests*, 256.

³⁴⁸ Elliot, *The Elect and the Holy*, 220.

³⁴⁹ Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 256.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 260.

³⁵¹ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 108.

ἱεράτευμα, specifies the function of ‘offering spiritual sacrifices’³⁵² On the other hand, Elliot in commenting on the “spiritual sacrifice” expounded the saying:

Complementary to this verbal witness and related as to both origin and purpose is the offering of sacrifice, i.e. the leading of a holy way of life...witness in word and in deed is not alternatives but collapse a double task in which the latter complements and corroborates the former. In each case, the proclaiming of God’s mighty deeds and the sacrificing of the holy life, the witness is not primarily inner-directed but outer- directed.³⁵³

In a similar view, Bartlett confirms that “spiritual sacrifice is surely a reference to the whole shape of the faithful’s life-the life of holiness”.³⁵⁴ In this sense, the believers as a body of priests are required to portray a life of faith and love to God in sacrifice. It is perhaps on the basis of this that Peter emphasizes the evangelistic effect of such godly living: “Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge” (v.12).

What the author seeks to achieve by this encouragement is to challenge his readers to endure persecution as a consequence of their new faith in Christ. Though the situation makes it difficult for the believer to express an active verbal witness of his or her faith, it is in these circumstances that believers must demonstrate the tenacity of their faith as people of God in relation to society at large.

4.2.5 Summary

Intertextual reading is exhibited in Peter’s use of Exod. 19:6 in 1 Pet. 2:9. The author employed the term royal priesthood and holy nation from Exod. 19:6 and applied it in his teaching to the marginalised Christian community in the diaspora. It is noteworthy that Peter uses Old Testament concepts and expressions to provide these Christians with a new identity and building a new character.

³⁵² Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 260.

³⁵³ Elliot, *The Elect and the Holy*, 186.

³⁵⁴ Bartlett, *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, 265.

The direct quotation from Exod. 19 echoes back Israel's experience in Egypt and how God brought them out on eagle's wings. Ultimately, this idea builds to the climax of 1 Pet. 2 perhaps to highlight to these suffering Christians that the promise made to the people of God in the Old Testament finds its fulfilment in the New Testament. As Vanhoye puts it "what Peter brings out magnificently is the constructive dynamism that proceeds from the mystery of Christ, the movement of offering connected with it and the eminent priestly dignity which results from it for the entire community of believers".³⁵⁵ Elliot has also maintained similar sentiment by alluding to the fact that in general the letter offers consolation and encouragement to Christian resident aliens and strangers suffering from local hostility, slander and unjustifiable abuse.³⁵⁶

To this end, the researcher agrees with Elliot that the sentence in vv. 9-10 and v. 5, does not only point the reader to the corporate identity of the community, but it also affirms God's intention for the marginalised Christian community who perhaps through intense persecution and abuse are encouraged not to lose hope in their newly found identity as holy and elect members belonging to priesthood of Christ.

4.5 Reading Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6

The aim of this section is to explore how the author of Revelation contextualised Exod. 19:6. In doing so, it is noteworthy to underscore the point that whereas in 1 Peter the term *ἱεράτευμα* is attributed to the suffering of believers in the diaspora, in Revelation the term is assigned to the individual Christians, to affirm their priestly and royal dignity.

³⁵⁵ Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 273.

³⁵⁶ John H. Elliot, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 65.

4.5.1 Background of the Book

The socio-political context of Revelation falls within the period of the rule of Domitian, one of the emperors of Rome. His rule was characterised by extreme persecution of the churches in the province of Asia because of their refusal to participate in the imperial cult (worship). In his reign, Christians were arrested and condemned on account of disrespect to the Roman state.³⁵⁷ John Stott asserts that Revelation counteracts fear in the face of systematic persecution under Roman-emperor Domitian through a vision of God's reign.³⁵⁸ In his opinion, the book provides an eternal perspective by highlighting themes such as persecution of the church and antagonism of the world in rebellion against God.

The majority of scholars agree with Stott's opinion. However, there are dissenting voices. For example, Johnston intimates that the theological agenda of Revelation consists of John's own profound development of Jewish and Christian traditions woven together into a tapestry whose picture of the imminent future was at once beautiful to look at and horrifying to ponder over.³⁵⁹ As such, the first readers were rather cautioned concerning the impending heresy that was gradually creeping into the church instead of the political situation of the community.

In the writer's opinion, the book exhorts Christians to be ready to face death for Christ's honour and to await in hope his imminent return. Belonging to his eternal kingdom is worth more than the present sufferings of the communities.

4.5.2 Royal Priesthood of Christians (Rev. 1:6)

Ἔκαὶ ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ, αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας [τῶν αἰώνων]· ἀμήν.

³⁵⁷ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Downers, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 727.

³⁵⁸ John Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 127-28.

³⁵⁹ Allan Johnston, *The Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Press, 1981), 399.

“And made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever”.

The introduction of the conjunction with the finite verb (καὶ ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς) clearly indicates a change in emphasis. It tends to modify the previous verse which states “To him who loves us, and who has released us from our sins in his blood...” This doxology perhaps gives the reader a clue that the author’s focus is on the “induction of blood-freed sinners into Christ’s ‘kingdom’ and priesthood.”³⁶⁰ It is, therefore, significant to note that the allusion to Exod. 19:6 does not completely bring out the meaning as exhibited in the Septuagint and the Masoretic text.

Unlike 1 Peter, where the quote was lifted verbatim to express the dignity of the marginalized community, in Revelation the aorist verb λύσαντι (v. 5) points the reader to a completed action of Christ on behalf of his people. Elliot, in commenting on this, reiterates that “the important fact is that the Exodus Formula has not been used to develop any concept of the royalty or priesthood of the believing community but rather to describe one facet of the saving work of Jesus Christ”.³⁶¹ This saving work of Christ is not predicated either by a condition or a fulfillment of faith in Christ, but rather assumed an absolute affirmation of the state of the believer, thus, set free through the blood of Christ. It is in the light of this redemptive work of Christ that the believer’s priestly designation comes into full manifestation.³⁶²

Moreover, the Christological dimension of the redemptive work of Christ offers fresh meaning to the priesthood of Christians. Since the priestly dignity of the believer is solely

³⁶⁰ Johnston, *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, 422.

³⁶¹ Elliot, *The Elect and the Holy*, 110.

³⁶² This notwithstanding, it must be emphasize that the work of Christ does not only gain it rightful place among humanity but also expressed in Christ love for his Father (v. 6). According to Vanhoye, it is a proof of final love, for it clearly leads to the glory of God the Father. Thus, priests are, in fact, people who are given the task of rendering worship to God. Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 286.

founded on Christ, the expression “and made us priests” seems to suggest a certain degree of freedom of each individual Christian. It is notable to note, however, that perhaps the intention of the author was not necessarily to portray the individual priesthood over and above the entire community. This point is reinforced by the emphasis the author laid on the pronoun ἡμᾶς.

Vanhoye depicts one of the most distinctive thoughts of the Christian priesthood in Revelation as follows:

In these diverse passages the title of “priests” fits very naturally into the Book’s movement and design, for Revelation has a very decided cultic orientation throughout and makes free use of liturgical terminology. It often mentions the sanctuary and the altar; it presents personages clothed in liturgical garments who pronounce acclamations or intone canticles, and it describes scenes of adoration.³⁶³

In other words, the cultic orientation suggests that believers “perform the priestly functions of offering sacrifices of thanksgiving, worship, and praise to God”.³⁶⁴ To Vanhoye, the form of this liturgical dialogue is seen in the “greeting pronounced by a celebrant who transmits to the faithful ‘grace and peace,’ gifts of the eternal God, of the sevenfold Spirit and of Jesus Christ, the assembly responds by praising Christ”.³⁶⁵ This underscores the responsibility of the believer to the Christian community. Accordingly, the priesthood of all the redeemed in this context probably suggests that believers come immediately to God, offer to him their prayers, and present themselves uniquely to him in holy obedience and spiritual service.

4.5.3 Christ Rule and the Priestly Royalty (Rev 5:10)

¹⁰καὶ ἐποίησας αὐτοὺς τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν βασιλείαν καὶ ἱερεῖς, καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will

³⁶³ Ibid., 280.

³⁶⁴ George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), 92.

³⁶⁵ Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 283.

reign on earth” 5:10 seems to draw out the same parallel expression from v. 6. Meanwhile, in the preceding vv. 8-9 the reader is first introduced to the Lamb, who is identified with Christ, having the right to open the seals. The Lamb’s role in opening the seals is orchestrated by the four living creatures and the twenty four elders’ outburst of praise to God:

You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation, you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth (vv. 9-10).

It appears that the song is sung based on the worthiness of the lamb, through his redemptive work. This same idea emanates from the doxology in v. 6, where the believers offer adoration in their liturgical service to God. Rowland, in agreeing with this interpretation in v. 9, suggests that “it is a new song, celebrating a new departure in salvation history with the lamb’s receipt of the scroll”.³⁶⁶ Rowland adds to the argument that “the right to take the scroll is based on the fact of the lamp’s slaughter, the consequence of which is the liberation of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation”.³⁶⁷ It is perhaps in this universal call that the royalty and priestly dignity of the redeemed is fully given its rightful place or expression.

On the other hand, Vanhoye comments that “the priestly qualification retains its full importance, and what characterizes the position of Christians is not their royalty, but the union of royalty and priesthood”.³⁶⁸ In other words, Christian royalty obtains its fulfillment in the priesthood achieved through an authentic relationship with God. Conversely, the author appears to be reminding his readers that in spite of the impending persecution,

³⁶⁶ Christopher C. Rowland, *The New Interpreter’s Bible: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 604.

³⁶⁷ Rowland, *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, 604.

³⁶⁸ Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 294.

distress, and estrangement that confront them, Christ unfailing love continues to be demonstrated through their “reign over the earth”.

In drawing the distinction between this text and chapter 1:6, Ladd perceives that “the idea of kingdom means that the redeemed will not merely be God’s people over whom he reigns; they will actually be granted the privilege of sharing his reign”.³⁶⁹ In connection with these individual rights and privileges, Elliot thinks that to interpret the first Exodus Formula in the general terms of ‘royal freedom’ and ‘a right to rule’ is out of place.³⁷⁰

Though, the researcher agrees with Elliot on this point, it appears that he oversimplifies the situation within the context of the text. A careful reading of the passages seems to suggest an implicit idea rather than categorizing it. It may be the reason why the author intentionally remained silent on the theological distinction, so that the reader in coming face to face with the text can deduce the intended purpose of the text.

Thus far, we can reconcile that the reference to ‘priest’ in 1:6 and 5:10 probably connotes the idea of priestly service for God as a result of his atoning blood that gives the lamb the authority to open the seals. Nonetheless, it appears that the notion of reigning is obviously different from the allusion to Exod. 19:6. It is also possible that the author deliberately employed terms from Exodus in order to encourage his audience to respond positively to their new found identity in Christ. He may have used such terms to also assure the believers of their impending glory both now and in the future reign of Christ. It is for this course that the believers are to hold on to the Lord, no matter the magnitude of their persecution.

³⁶⁹ Ladd, *A Commentary on Revelation*, 92.

³⁷⁰ Elliot, *The Elect and the Holy*, 113.

4.5.4 Christian Priesthood and Reign of the Saints (20:6)

μακάριος καὶ ἅγιος ὁ ἔχων μέρος ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει τῇ πρώτῃ· ἐπὶ τούτων ὁ δεύτερος θάνατος οὐκ ἔχει ἐξουσίαν, ἀλλ' ἔσονται ἱερεῖς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν μετ' αὐτοῦ [τὰ] χίλια ἔτη.

“Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him a thousand years”

The context of priesthood in this verse does not correspond with that of the previous ones. Unlike, 1:6, and 5:10 where it retains the two expressions ‘kingdom’ and ‘priests’, in this section only ἱερεῖς is featured. Again, it is likely that the author’s concern in this verse was not necessarily to recount what Christ has accomplished for the believers but rather to highlight to his readers an eschatological future where they will have the privilege of exercising their priestly and royal dignity with the exalted Christ. Meanwhile, the reader is immediately put in an ecstatic situation to wonder what it means to share in the first resurrection, the second death and the thousand years of reign with Christ.

Vanhoye in looking at the preceding contexts (vv. 4-5) points out that “this resurrection is not a general one; it is limited to the martyrs and to the Christians who have not submitted to the Beast”.³⁷¹ This presupposes that the beatitude remains a special reserved for those Christians who suffer martyrdom. Vanhoye asserts theologically that “the beatitudes of Rev. 20:6 is intended to help Christians to develop in themselves an attitude of intransigent fidelity, and with this in mind it opens up before their eyes the prospect of a great hope”.³⁷² It is perhaps this hope that foregrounds the believer’s priesthood and victory over death. In

³⁷¹ Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 298.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 299.

discussing the special privilege given to the first resurrection and the reward of the believer, Vanhoye aptly writes:

In fact, even supposing that the priestly and royal dignity promised to Christians after their resurrection were not different in any way from the dignity possessed by all Christians through their baptism, it would still be an astounding innovation to find it to have endured beyond death...A dead man cannot render worship to the God of life...Revelation therefore is not lacking in logic when it presents as new motives of blessedness the exercise of priesthood and that of royalty on the side of death and when it relates this to a first resurrection. In order to be priests and to reign, one must first live again.³⁷³

Thus, it is this sense of uncompromising hope that the author of Revelation portrays to his readers to understand their new position over death and the joy that comes in rendering worship to God and Christ.

4.6 Conclusion

It is worth noting that in two separate socio-political situations, two New Testament writers re-read the Old Testament to give their respective readers their perspectives on the nature of the Christian community, their identity in Christ, their belonging to the faith, and their eternal hope in Christ. Thus, whereas in 1 Peter the believers are reminded to remain steadfast in their priestly election and holiness through faith in the mystery of Christ's resurrection and passion, Revelation calls to action, for the reader is to offer to the redeemer a moment of thanksgiving and praise for what Christ has accomplished for the believer. In other words, the author cumulatively builds the consciousness of his readers to the fact that they are 'kings and priests' through their relationship with Christ. For this reason, Christians who are persecuted for identifying with Christ will share in the priestly blessings of the Lord. Thus, the royalty of the priesthood in Revelation is envisaged through the progressive liturgy of the redeemed. It is a concrete realization of Christ's promise to the believer devoid of human endeavor but achieved through the redemptive work of Christ. This awareness to a large extent strengthened the feeling of the church as

³⁷³ Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 300-1.

being ‘worthy’, in a situation of discrimination and persecution, because they belong to the royal family of Christ.

The re-reading of the Old Testament texts did not finish with the closure of the canon, but continued in the life of communities that applied the text to their own understanding of their identity and mission. A typical example is the use of the text in Ghanaian contemporary charismatic churches, especially the I.C.G.C. and how the texts are appropriated in their corporate Christian identity and faith are discussed below.

4.7 I.C.G.C. Appropriation of Exod. 19

The charismatic movement is part of the umbrella of Pentecostalism in Ghana.³⁷⁴ The movement, which is often considered as neo-Pentecostals, includes some independent churches, referred to as the charismatic ministries. According to Omenyo and Atiemo “this movement has ethos, style, and emphases that are supposedly Pentecostal, yet they part markedly from mainstream Pentecostal traditions”. As such, they deserve to be in their own category.³⁷⁵ The charismatic movement, which began in Ghana in the 1970s, emphasized the gifts of the Holy Spirit and personal salvation. However, Asamoah-Gyadu comments that the Charismatics also exhibit a number of unique characteristics:

... a special attraction for Ghana’s ‘upward mobile youth’; a lay-oriented leadership; ecclesiastical office based on a person’s charismatic gifting; innovative use of modern media technology; particular concern with church growth; mostly urban-centred congregations; a relaxed and fashion-conscious dress code for

³⁷⁴ Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Blessed Publication, 2001), 301. Larbi, postulates Pentecostalism in Ghana into twofold, they are the Classical and neo-Pentecostalism. The inception of Pentecostalism in Ghana can be traced to Peter Anim, and his Tabernacle Church. As for Larbi “out of this organization emerge three of the four leading classic Pentecostal churches in the country: the Christ Apostolic Church, the Church of Pentecost, and the Apostolic Church”. Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, 69. However, he argues further for another two groups of neo-Pentecostals on the basis of theological emphasis and over-simplification. The first among them are those who place unnecessary emphasis on material prosperity and physical well-being of the believer. This group of people has come to be associated with the term ‘prosperity gospel’. The other groups are those who in addition to the above exhibit immense concern for deliverance of people from demonic forces. They are popularly known as the ‘Deliverance ministries’.

³⁷⁵ C. N. Omenyo and A. O. Atiemo, “Claiming Religious Space: The Case of Neo-Prophetism in Ghana,” *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 1, no. 1, (2006): 55-68.

members; absence of religious symbolism in places of worship; English as the principal mode of communication; and an ardent desire to appear successful....³⁷⁶

As a movement that emerged within the economic and social difficulties at the time, it popularized its message and worship style by focusing on the preaching of the ‘prosperity Gospel.’³⁷⁷ It also vigorously addressed the questions of the African past and traditional religious spirituality.³⁷⁸ Actually, it was at the heart of these socio-economic crises that the I.C.G.C. was birthed. As Otabil intones “the church was born at the time of great difficulty, political uncertainty and economic depression”.³⁷⁹

The I.C.G.C. is an evangelical Pentecostal charismatic church. It was officially inaugurated on 26th of February, 1984, in Accra (Ghana). The I.C.G.C. known for being a word based church, shares largely in the ideals of raising leaders, shaping vision, and influencing society through Christ. Primarily, the vision of the I.C.G.C. is fundamentally based on Acts 2:42; thus to establish the house of God through the development of model New Testament Christians and churches.³⁸⁰ Hence, the goal of the I.C.G.C. is to provide a dynamic and healthy ministry to the whole person.

It is against this background that the contemporary Ghanaian charismatic Christianity appropriated Exod. 19:6 and read through the NT interpretation offered by 1 Pet. 2:9, and Rev. 1:6; 5:10, 20:6. In the spirituality of I.C.G.C. these texts were appropriated more often than not in popular worship and praise songs. An example is the following song composed by North American Charismatics on the priesthood of believers which featured prominently in I.C.G.C. worship and praise services:

³⁷⁶ Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatic: Current Development within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Achimota: African Christian Press, 2005), 31.

³⁷⁷ Paul Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity* (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), 113-139. It talks about the prosperity Gospel of Mensah Otabil as a new cultural adjustment phenomenon in Ghanaian Pentecostalism.

³⁷⁸ Simon Kouessan Degbe, *Scripture in Contemporary African Pentecostalism: An Illustration* (Saarbrücken: Scholars Press, 2014), 14.

³⁷⁹ Otabil, made this point in his message delivered on the 26th February 2013 on the occasion of the 30th anniversary celebration of I.C.G.C at the Accra Sports Stadium.

³⁸⁰ ICGC website page, accessed May 20, 2015, <http://www.centralgospel.com>.

We are a chosen generation,
A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people,
That we should show forth the praises of Him
Who has called us,
Out of darkness (3x)
Into His marvelous light (2x)

Interviews with key individuals, who have been associated with I.C.G.C. during its beginnings till date, stated that their appropriation of these texts through the above song revolutionized their Christian life and experience. They emphasized that when they sang this song in those days, it reminded them of their past, and their new status as children of God who have been liberated from the bondage of darkness into his marvelous light. In fact, it was a celebration of their salvation in Christ Jesus who through his blood has redeemed them from spiritual bondage, poverty, sickness, hardships and all deficiencies. In other words, it perhaps ignited a whole new discovery of new realities in Christ the Lord of life. They as African charismatics no longer consider themselves as aliens or foreigners but as people representing the progressive history of Israel. This reinforces their position as the real people of God, who have triumphed over their past challenges, and expecting to be reunited with Christ in eternity one day, where there will be no more sickness, diseases, poverty to restrain us.³⁸¹

In a similar interview, a pastor observes that the text highlights the salvation history of Israel as kingdom of God, which has its fulfillment in the Church in the present age. According to him, the term royal priesthood and holy nation simply defines the uniqueness of the Christian, the behavior and testimony they bring to light in imitating Christ. He, however, indicates that the failure on the part of charismatics is that, they often claim these

³⁸¹ This was an interview conducted with Simon Degbe, President of Maranatha University College in his office on 22nd April, 2015, at 5:00pm. In the course of the interview we contacted Seraphim Esi Otabil, who was a founding congregation member of the choir in those days. She confirms the song, and also attested to the understanding and appropriation the song and the 1 Peter text where the song was taken from.

promises but ignore the essential aspect of living right and depicting the example of Christ.³⁸² Another pastor emphasized that this song was part of the church's inception, which gave them a sense of belonging, identify who they are in Christ, and since they were coming out of the mainland churches at that time, they needed to hold on to something which will no longer hold them captive. He believes that embracing this song at the time empowered them spiritually and physically. In reality, they no longer considered themselves as mushroom churches sprouting out of the mainland churches but as new creation realities motivated to do greater works.³⁸³

From the comments above, the following themes clearly emerged and therefore need further elaboration: salvation, liberation from the past, people belonging to God, and triumphant living.

4.7.1 Salvation in Contemporary African Charismatic thought and life

The concept of salvation in the Pentecostal-Charismatic self-understanding entails the totality of human life and well-being. It does not only depict wellness in the hereafter but fullness of life in the present realities. This includes salvation and deliverance for the spirit soul and body. The spiritual aspect of salvation has to do with the new birth and the renewal of the human spirit and mind. This, in Charismatics thought, is the fruit of the new birth as the spirit of God indwells the human spirit. As stated in Rom 8:16, "it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God". The new birth experience enables the believer to completely break from the past. It is described as a "voluntary act of personal choice to break with one's past religious beliefs and practices,

³⁸² An interview conducted on phone with Addo Sampong, one of the leading members of the presbytery, who is also the Director for the Central University College Distance Education affirms the understanding of this song in line with the Old Testament which was quoted directly from the 1Peter text. The contact was done on 23rd April, 2015, at 12:00 noon.

³⁸³ This interview was conducted personally with Fred Brako on 16th April, 2015 in his office at Miotso at 2:00pm. Brako is one of the founding members of the church, and currently in charge of Counseling Unit of the International Central Gospel Church and the acting Chaplain of Central University College.

values, behavior, and mindset which are the first and non-negotiable principle that ushers anyone into the Pentecost-Charismatic spirituality and the ‘born again’ family of God’s children”.³⁸⁴ Asamoah-Gyadu explains:

In most cases, references were first made to a transformative encounter with God leading to a ‘new life in Christ’ or being ‘born-again’. People then spoke of some pneumatic experience like ‘speaking in tongues’, or sudden realization that one is manifesting the gift of healing, or receiving messages from God... in almost every case, people develop an insatiable desire to read the Bible, to pray and to join in fellowship with like-minded believers.³⁸⁵

Thus, in typical charismatic setting like the I.C.G.C. after the individual has accepted Christ as the Savior, he or she is made to undergo a period of probation. During this period ‘new converts’ are taken through what is popularly term the ‘ABC and Maturity’ class of the church. This training is usually run for a period of nine weeks after which individual participants are given a certificate as fully fledged members of the church. In fact, upon completion individuals become confident and proud of being members of the I.C.G.C. family. Omenyo rightly observes that “the practical benefit of this is the fact that the renewal activities of the various charismatic groups are engendered by it...their zeal for evangelism stems from the fact that they believe they are regenerated. Therefore it is incumbent upon them to call on others to have this experience”.³⁸⁶

In this sense, those who accept Christ as their Savior eventually partake in every blessing that comes along with their position as ‘kings’ and ‘priest’ and that includes exercising authority and dominion. They no longer consider themselves as ‘second fiddle’ Christians. Thus, just as YHWH brought Israel to himself, Charismatics Christians also believe that

³⁸⁴ Simon K. Degbe, “Generational Curses and the Four Horns: Illustrating the Shape of the Primal Worldview in Contemporary African Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality,” *JPT* 23 (2014): 246-265.

³⁸⁵ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Africa Charismatic Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Accra, Ghana: ACP, 2005), 13; Cfr. Simon Degbe, “Generational Curses and the Four Horns: Illustrating the Shape of the Primal Worldview in Contemporary African Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality,” *JPT* 23 (2014): 246-265

³⁸⁶ Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainland Churches in Ghana* (Netherlands: Boekencentrum Publishing House, 2006), 239.

they are “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:16). This new status affords them the privilege of entering the presence of God without any restriction. Charismatics believe that the regeneration brings personal intimacy between them and God; they also believe that one cannot be saved and thus live in poverty. It is sometimes regarded as sinful for a believer to be poor. Interestingly, Charismatic Christians are sometimes subjected to deliverance sessions in order to free their spirit from any demonic possession that might be holding them captive even after their ‘new birth’.

Although, the ‘new birth’ brings out the self-consciousness of the charismatic Christians, it is sometimes over appropriated. The process and stages of discipleship are tailored in a manner to consolidate the salvation of the new community and those who do not participate in it are considered as not ‘real members’. According to Omenyo, “the way it is presented creates the impression that there is an archetypal ‘new birth’ experience to which every Christian must submit”.³⁸⁷ In this regard, it must be stressed that Christian regeneration experience does not necessarily depend on a conventional structure for which every Christian must submit to. Moreover, the Charismatic understanding that they are the true children of God makes it difficult for them to appreciate and embrace people of other faith, not to mention Christians from other churches. Again, the perception that salvation automatically comes along with material wealth clearly distorts the element of Christian suffering.

The fact is that, just like the Christians in Asia Minor, suffering, disappointment, estrangement must be considered as inevitable and must rather empower charismatic Christians to hold on firmly to Christ who has decorated them as “kings, priests” to share in his fellowship. After all, it is not incumbent for every Christian to become rich, once they accept the Lord as their savior. There are Christians who are rich but do not pride

³⁸⁷ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 239.

themselves in richness; they are committed to the things of God, and living a more simple life to the glory of God. The researcher believes that if this idea of misconception between saved and poverty, unbeliever and believer, I belong to church 'A or B' is addressed critically in the Charismatics' settings in Ghana, we would be able to overcome this 'conversion crisis' and live as mature Christians who no longer depend on "milk as new born babes" but rather crave for "bones" (1 Pet 2:1-3).

4.7.2 Liberation from the Past

The Contemporary Ghanaian charismatic theology and praxis of liberation from the past is understood within the total context of their understanding of their priesthood status in Christ. The notion affirms their understanding and profession in the fact that they have been "called out of darkness into his marvelous light". The use of light and darkness in 1 Pet. 2:9 and how that is expressed in their priestly song do not only attest to their African past but how that past actually forms part of Israel's salvation history. In that sense, just as Israel was in 'darkness' in Egypt, being enslaved and oppressed because they were strangers on a foreign land, so also the Charismatics of Africa understand their past of poverty, misery, oppression, spiritual blindness and worldliness.

Thus, the liberation of Israel and their transformed status into a 'kingdom of priest' is read as a symbol of what God had accomplished on their behalf in the past, materialized in their salvation in Christ. Thus the African Charismatic understands their liberation within the context of the past, present and future. Liberation is a 'total' experience in African charismatic spirituality. This liberation leaves no part of life unaffected by Christ: It

implies social, economic cultural, spiritual and political freedom from the “forces of darkness” which Egypt represented in the salvation history of Israel.³⁸⁸

Therefore, for contemporary African Charismatics the liberation experience with its new status, power and authority as children and priest of God is a reality “that requires a continuous struggle to protect, proclaim and practice within the context of growing political instability, personal insecurity, economic difficulties, moral depravity, and spiritual darkness”.³⁸⁹ This view about the continuity of the liberation struggle is linked by contemporary African charismatics to the struggles of Israel even after their liberation from Egypt as they had to fight enemy nations in order to protect the land, secure the faith and declare the sovereignty of YHWH.

Thus, in I.C.G.C., the church programs, activities and itineraries, prayers, songs and intercessions, sermons, ministries and prophetic declarations are expressive of the liberation struggle against spiritual forces, economic hardships, social dislocation, and negative political policies that militate against the prosperity of the people God. In view of this the I.C.G.C. church in its quest to bring hope to the members organizes two major programs (‘Greater Works’ and ‘Destiny Summit’) in the course of the year in order to uplift the physical and spiritual wellbeing of the congregations. Preachers from different countries are invited to minister on this platform. Most of the messages address also issues of political, social, economic, physical nature. One can hardly hear a complete message on salvation without reference to the ‘prosperity gospel’.

It is worthy to note that the perception of African charismatic Christians that everything about African Traditional Religion is evil or demonic is unfortunate. This perception has

³⁸⁸ Ogbu U. Kalu, “Preserving a World-View: Pentecostalism in the African map of the Universe,” *Pneuma-The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* Vol. 24 (2002): 123-128.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

led for example to several clashes among the Charismatics churches and the Ga traditional council during a ban on drumming and dancing leading to the celebration of the Homowo festival which in most cases results in bloody encounters. Because Charismatics believe that they have been set free by the Lord, they no longer want to obey any rules that contradict their faith. In addition, this belief by charismatics that their past is demonized, forces most charismatic Christians to abandon friends, families, relatives, and marriage, all in the name of God. Some people even believe that travelling to their home towns will expose them to these demonic forces and therefore try to avoid any contact with close family members. There is no way our liberation in Christ should cause us to abandon our families, friends and relatives. It could be true that certain practices in ATR may be incompatible to Scripture; however, there are aspects of it that can be emulated and contextualized. If indeed, we have been called to declare the praises of him who has called us, then it is our responsibility as Christians to make sure that others are delivered from the darkness into the marvelous light of Christ (1 Pet. 2:9).

4.7.3 People Belonging to God

The belief that charismatics ‘belong to God,’ are a chosen people, a royal priesthood and a holy nation is a spiritual inheritance that all African Pentecostals and Charismatics treasure and cherish. In their attitude the ‘priesthood status’ and all the benefits that come with it were achieved through the death of Christ on the cross on behalf of all humanity. And so, in their self -perception of being the true people of God, they depart sharply from the priesthood status of Israel in the Old Testament which was secured for them through the covenant.³⁹⁰ Since Christ fulfilled the law and made the old covenant of no effect, the new

³⁹⁰ The numerous interviews conducted regarding the singing of the priestly text in first Peter amongst Ghanaian Charismatics particularly the ICGC seemed to support this notion.

way provided by Christ through the atonement which was once for all for anyone who believes, they have become the new Israel, the new priestly kingdom of the new order.³⁹¹

It is in this spirit that Exod. 19:6, as re-read in 1 Pet. 2:9, is appropriated in the contemporary African Charismatic theology. In that sense of belonging to God, most Ghanaian Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians set themselves against those who are perceived as not belonging to God. Such ‘people’ include people of other faith and particularly African traditional religion. This privilege of belonging to God is not primarily interpreted on the basis of social, economic and cultural terms. It is first of all a spiritual and psychology leap into a new realm of self -appreciation and estimation.³⁹² It gives birth to a new self- identity and history that runs from the Old to the New Testaments. The sense of belonging to God makes Christ personal to the contemporary charismatic believer, as Lord and savior, shepherd, master, provider, and sustainer, thereby drawing the believer into a total radically relationship with Christ.³⁹³

In this relationship, Christ is the first in all things not even family, brothers and sisters, but Christ even unto death. It is in relation to this self- perception that Brako affirms that “this song was part of the churches inception, which gave them a sense of belonging, and identified who they are in Christ”.³⁹⁴

On the other hand, this statement is reinforced by the following Akan songs which clearly speak to their situation as people who now share in the inheritance of Christ:

Amanfrafoo yenni kyefa

Gentiles outside the commonwealth,

³⁹¹ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 238-240.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 239.

³⁹³ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 38.

³⁹⁴ Brako, (Coordinator for the Counselling Units in I.C.G.C, and acting Chaplain of Central University College), in an interview at his office in Miotso on 16th April, 2015, at exactly 2:00pm.

Woayo yen aheman ne asofoo	You have made us a kingdom and priesthood
Ama yen Agya Onyankopon	For our Father God;
Hyra nka Wo daa	Blessed be his name,
Hyra nka Ne din	Blessed be his name,
Ayeyie nka Ne din	Praise to his name;
Woaye yen oman kronkron	You have made us a holy nation,
Hyra nka No daa	Blessed be his name.

Thus, they believe that this newly found position as people belonging to God gives them the authority over every evil situation. In other words, they have the boldness, and the confidence to go into the presence of God and ask for anything in prayer without unhindered. The idea that each person belongs to God is seen in the democratization of roles. Indeed, in the I.C.G.C. the ministry of the church revolves around lay leaders, even though the pastor is seen as the leader of the church. In fact, in the I.C.G.C. communities there is some sort of ‘evolution of ministries’ because it is believed that every member shares in the priesthood of Christ and that gives them the opportunity to lead prayers, intercession, and play other roles of the church.

Unfortunately, the people who share the sense of belonging to God have become antagonistic toward each other, just because they do not belong to the same church. This disparity is common among Ghanaian charismatic churches in that they tend to relate well to people of the same faith but behave differently toward people of other faith. The assumption that “when you belong to God your prayer will go unhindered” is something that is overemphasized among Ghanaian charismatics. This has created many problems for charismatic Christians because they believe that once their prayers are not answered then there is a demonic force operating against them. So, even though they are saved they still

believe evil forces have the power to fight against them both spiritually and physically. This dilemma has influenced charismatic Christians to exhibit strange behaviors regardless of their priestly identity as people belonging to God, to the neglect of the larger society.

It is about time today's African charismatics recognized the fact that responsibility to the larger society is as important as their salvation and spirituality. For even Peter again exhorted the believers in Christ to live an exemplary life among the pagan society despite the fact that they were marginalized and considered wrong doers. It is for this reason that charismatic Christians must strive hard to show respect, love for the believing community, and reverence to God and those in authority (1 Pet. 2:12- 17)

4.7.4 Triumphant Living

The triumphant living is actually the showing forth of the praises of him who has “called us out of darkness into his marvelous light”. In contemporary African charismatic thinking the triumphant living is the celebrative manifestations of the priesthood status in Christ. This underlies the prosperity gospel preaching. It is often normal to hear a prosperity message addressing matters of politics, demons, salvation, family life, marriage, and self-development.³⁹⁵ It is against this background that the triumphant living aspect of the priesthood which is the showing forth of the praises of Christ embodies the totality of the priesthood experience.

It is as if the priesthood life ought to necessarily manifest in material and social status benefits such as cars, building of huge mansions, financial sufficiency, being successful in all that one does, living a happy and healthy life and having unlimited access to everything

³⁹⁵ Joseph Quayesi Amakye, *Christology and Evil in Ghana: Toward a Pentecostal Public Theology* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 40.

one desires in life. Larbi describes the triumphant living vision of contemporary African Charismatics as “living the abundant life”.

The quest for triumphant living is deeply entrenched in every doctrine of African charismatics. The abundant life theology provides the hermeneutical key for appropriating Scripture. Once the hermeneutical key is discovered, the Torah, the prophets, the writings and all of the New Testament are subjected to specific contextualization to suit the African needs, concerns, fears, and the ultimate quest for prosperity and living abundantly in Christ.³⁹⁶ It must be noted without doubt that one of the reasons why contemporary charismatic are growing in ‘lips and bounds’ in Africa is because they have become proclaimers of the message of hope in the midst of desperation, hardship and insecurity on the continent of Africa. At the core of all of this, is the priesthood status which Yahweh pronounced on Israel in Exod. 19:6 and became the inheritance to all those who accept Christ as their Lord and savior.

The presupposition that triumphant living can be seen in the number of cars, mansions, accident free life, good health, and wealth seems unrealistic to the Christian faith. It must be stressed that living a successful life as a Christian is not completely devoid of suffering and pain. These elements are part and parcel of human life and must be seen as adding value to our lives as Christians. The reader in coming face to face with the text is made to realize that the journey from Egypt was symbolic and focuses on having a relationship with God. It is in view of this that Charismatic Christians must understand that living a triumphant life does not mean they will become rich overnight. If this understanding is achieved, it will help Charismatic Christians in Africa to exercise a life of self-restraint in order to have a proper perspective about life and its totality.

³⁹⁶ Degbe, *Scripture in Contemporary African Pentecostalism*, 37.

4.8 Conclusion

The phrase “royal priesthood and holy nation” was not only appropriated in the New Testaments but it is still appropriated in the contemporary Ghanaian charismatic churches. The importance charismatic Christians attach to the royal priesthood is seen in their worship and praise songs. These songs clearly portray their identity as people who have been saved, liberated from their past, present and future. It is this sense of hope that affirms their priestly relationship with the Lord. However, for charismatics this new identity is not only to bear witness of the praise of God but it is also made evident in the very fabric of their daily life situations. In other words, this new status as “kings and priests” of the Lord offer charismatic Christians the privilege of living honorable and respected life in the society.

As priests, they are not to be poor, they are to live a wealthy lifestyle, have the courage and boldness to approach and ask God for anything in prayer. The work also demonstrated that the fundamental trait underlying the designation of Israel and the Christians in Asia Minor as God’s elect and holy people comes with the responsibility of appreciating that their persecution and suffering will not only yield for them an immense benefit here and now but also in the future reign of the Lord on earth. It is underscored that charismatic Christians must understand that suffering and persecution are not a means of punishment from God but rather avenues to strengthen their faith. On this note, the researcher agrees with those who make the argument that charismatics have allowed their experience and feelings to override their understanding in the way Scripture is appropriated. However, the researcher believes that if a new hermeneutical approach is adapted by charismatic Christians to the reading of Scripture it might enable them have a holistic view on how Scripture should be interpreted. The chapter that follows is a summary and conclusion of

all that have been discussed in this work. It will also offer some recommendations for consideration for future study and research.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The statement “kingdom of priests and holy nation” (Exod. 19:6) is at the centre of an intense scholarly debate about its interpretation and its narrative role in respect to the Exodus narrative. Moreover, New Testament texts appropriated Exod. 19:6 and utilized it as hermeneutic keys to read their reality theologically (1 Pet. 2:1-10, Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). The process did not end with the closure of the canon. Even today, contemporary Ghanaian churches read the text to find support, and inspiration in their preaching, teaching and worship.

On this background, the research analysed Exod. 19:6 in its literary context (Exod. 19:1-25) and explored its appropriation by two New Testament writers and a Ghanaian Charismatic church, namely I.C.G.C.

The second chapter discussed the crucial role the ordinary reader brings to bear in the communicative process of the text. It is pointed out that stories by their very nature usually project a constructing world that provides the reader with the necessary information from which he or she can decipher meaning. This is explicitly made possible because the author intentionally inserts into the text an implied reader who comes face to face with the real reader as they journey along in the reading process. Eco explains that the author of the text is nothing more than a textual strategy establishing semantic correlations and activating the model reader.

The study reveals that the collaborative dialogue between the text and the reader makes the reading process exciting and innovative. It establishes that the ordinary reader is not only

able to enter into the world of the author but he is also able to understand his own world in order to make critical and informed decisions of his choice.

The study observes that using this approach offers the reader a better perspective of the inception of the story in Exodus before it reaches the climax at Mount Sinai (Exod. 19). For example, the illustrating manifestation of the burning bush and the divine encounter with the people (3:1-12) are indications of Israel's experience leading to Mount Sinai and also finds its expression in the priestly encounter with YHWH. The study reveals that the ability of the reader to collaborate with the text helps him or her to move backward and forward in the story line in order to appreciate Israel's covenant relationship with YHWH.

The third chapter focused on the exegetical analysis of the text with particular emphasis on v.6 as it relates to the vocation of Israel as 'priestly kingdom and holy nation'. The designation of Israel's priesthood holds an important position in the covenant ratification with YHWH. The findings reveal that the notion of priesthood in the narrative of Exodus begins with the divine revelation of YHWH at Mount Sinai. The divine revelation at Mount Sinai foregrounds the redemptive work of YHWH in delivering Israel as a nation from Egyptian bondage and oppression. The use of the expression "I brought you to myself" (v.4) describes what has been accomplished for Israel in the light of her struggle in Egypt. Conversely, the statement "treasured possession" (v. 4) affirms that Israel's uniqueness is not only seen in the deliverance from the rigorous hands of the king of Pharaoh but also drawn to the loving and protective hand of YHWH, Israel's king and deliverer. The phrase "from among all people" indicates YHWH's special interest in selecting this one nation and making his plan known to them. Israel was to belong to YHWH in a special way, and be 'priestly kingdom and holy nation'. The study establishes that Israel's relationship with YHWH forms part of an already existing relationship which

is given much weight because of YHWH's initiative to enter into a covenant relationship with the people of Israel and to spell out how they are to relate with him.

After the rhetorical speech by YHWH, the response of the people "all that YHWH has spoken we will do it" (v.8) clearly demonstrates the urgency of the people's willingness to accept YHWH's covenant relationship without question. Though Israel unanimously responded to the condition without taking into consideration the terms of the relationship, the study observed that their pledge to become YHWH's treasured possession, priestly and holy nation puts the covenant relationship into effect. The study, however, establishes that the only way Israel could share in the priestly identity and election was through their obedience and readiness to submit to YHWH.

Moreover, even though the goal of Israel leaving Egypt was in anticipation to meet YHWH (3:1-12), before the people could come face to face with YHWH, Moses was instructed to consecrate the people. The command to 'wash their clothes' and 'abstain from sexual intercourse' affirms the seriousness YHWH attaches to the consecration process (vv. 8-15). Cassuto explains that the cleanness of the clothes symbolizes the inner purity of the soul. The symbolic act unequivocally describes the priestly character of the people as they draw near to worship YHWH. It is shown that YHWH's instruction to Moses to consecrate both the people and the priests indicates that the nation as a whole succumbs to the consecration process, none was exempted from the process. Therefore the research indicates that the corporate consecration of the people of Israel may have given them the privilege of becoming priestly and holy.

The divine instruction to Moses to 'set bounds around the mountain lest I break against them' (vv. 8-15, 16-19) describes the intense nature of YHWH's command which demands complete obedience of the people of Israel. According to Wells, the phrase 'lest I

break against them' indicates that the holiness of God cannot coexist with that which is unholy, impure or unclean. Just as the priests were set apart among the Israelites so was the nation requested to be holy to YHWH. The study establishes that the consecration of the people on the 'third day' indicates their preparedness in approaching the sanctuary of YHWH.

The analysis has shown that one of the driving forces of the Exodus narrative is the presence of YHWH. However, in the theophanic encounter of YHWH on Mount Sinai, the study reveals the people could not withhold the awesome nature of YHWH. The expression the 'people stood at a distance' confirms the frustration and uncertainty about the people in their desire to encounter YHWH face to face. They were terribly afraid to draw near to YHWH. In the outcome of their fear they pleaded for the mediation of Moses, whose role in the book of Exodus is portrayed as having an extraordinary access to YHWH. As a result of the awesome nature of YHWH, the people asked for the mediation of Moses. Davies explains that the mediation of Moses was to serve the interest of a higher goal so that the people as a whole could have access to God in some form of priestly service. The study further reveals that Moses' role as the one who could mitigate between the people and YHWH opens the door for Israel's constant relationship as far as the nation remained faithful to the covenant relationship.

Therefore, the result of the analysis in the third chapter reveals that the divine declaration of Israel as 'priestly kingdom and holy nation' was to draw the attention of the reader to an intimate relationship that can only be achieved through Israel's obedience and submissiveness to YHWH, who brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt into freedom at Mount Sinai. It also establishes the corporate identity of the people of Israel rather than their mediatorial function to the other nations.

The fourth chapter of the study discussed the re-reading of Exod. 19 within the New Testament passages (1Pet. 2:1-10; Rev. 1:6, 5:10, 20:6) and in one of the contemporary Ghanaian Charismatic churches, namely, the I.C.G.C. It was first established that there is similarity of thought in the NT and the contemporary Charismatic appropriation of the text. In two different socio-political situations, Peter and John used the Old Testament priestly passage to exhort and encourage the elects to faithful conduct in a marginalized society. It was further shown that the believers' identity as priests and kings are affirmed through the redemptive work of Christ (Rev. 1:6, 5:10). The findings reveal that the believer's affirmation of Christ brings a new understanding to their dignity as priest and royals to cope in the midst of persecution and to maintain an attitude of thanksgiving to God.

Finally, in showing how the texts of the study are appropriated in the spirituality of I.C.G.C. it was discovered that the statements 'royal priesthood and holy nation' are not just deeply embedded, but significant in their theology, worship and practices. It was demonstrated that Ghanaian Charismatic Christians do not only see themselves as continuing the progressive history of Israel but also believe that the statement has its fulfilment in their given context.

Furthermore, Ghanaian charismatics in their appropriation of the priestly text of Exodus, with the lens of 1Peter, tend to look at the Exodus text from the perspective of their salvation, liberation from their past, belonging to God and living triumphantly. It is obvious that in appropriating the text to their given context, they tend to be too materialistic, discriminatory, and they overemphasize individual challenges and expectations as though their priestly theology has no relevance for the entirety of society.

5.2 Conclusion

This research set out to ascertain the theological understanding and implications of Israel's priesthood in the narrative of Exodus and its relationship to the intertextual readings in the New Testament passages of 1 Pet. 2:4-10; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6. To achieve this purpose the study employed a rhetorical critical analysis. This method was employed because it presented a lucid and systematic way of doing exegesis, and is adequate for the literary genre of the text. Following this method the analysis deals with the rhetorical question of the text as it relates to the issue of Israel's priestly identity and mission to the other nations.

The study reveals that YHWH's covenant relationship with Israel places the nation corporately at a favoured position among the other nations. The Israelites' distinction from the other neighbouring nations is what constitutes their designation as 'priestly kingdom and holy nation'. As a result of this new identity established through special intimate relationship with YHWH, the people as well as the priest of Israel may now have access to the presence of YHWH through a life of obedience. The declaration meant that the people of Israel did not manufacture or arrogate to themselves the priestly quality, but rather, it was a declaration of a privilege that was anchored in YHWH's revelation at Sinai. It is obvious that the divine declaration of YHWH to the people of Israel outlined how the nation was to relate to YHWH, the God of the whole world. The study therefore proposes that the priestly designation of Israel does not necessarily have direct influence on the other nations, even though the reader would want to see the human relation which undergirds Israel's election as priestly and holy.

As the people of Israel, this concept of the nation's status as royal priesthood is developed through the New Testament and continues to be relevant in our contemporary times. Reading Exod. 19:6, the readers in the first century church were reminded of their identity

construction in the mediatory work of Christ. The truth of this is what is seen in the New Testament priesthood provisions, declaration, access and vision which were inaugurated in Jesus Christ for all who accept him as Lord and personal saviour. The study underscores that in Jesus Christ the one who fulfils all the aspirations, all the types, all the institutions, and events in the Old Testament, Israel's priesthood became a universal heritage for anyone who would believe in the person and work of Christ himself. The redemptive work of Christ brings a profound transformation to all mankind across the globe and introduces them into an intimate relationship with God. It was this identity construction that Peter and John amplified, to encourage gentile readers, who because of their faith in Christ, were being persecuted or marginalised in the society to strive to live in a manner worthy of their new identity. Thus, those marginalised Christians are to recognize that it is in this reality of life that their priestly relationship with Christ could fully be attained.

In contemporary times a new community namely, I.C.G.C. reads this text and redefines it to suit its given context. It is revealed through the study that these strands of Christians do not only see themselves as continuing the progressive history of Israel but with the lens of 1 Peter also believe that the common priesthood brings real transformation to their very existence in life.

The contemporary church in Ghana, like the first century church, identifies their priestly calling as those who have been saved, liberated from their past, belong to God in a special way and are called to live triumphant life. So, for them, the statement 'royal priesthood and holy nation' is not just rooted deeply in their teaching and preaching but also realised in their singing and liturgical service to God.

However, their understanding of the priestly identity takes on a new definition. For example, the presupposition that the triumphant living aspect of the Christian ought to

necessarily manifest in material and social status benefits such as cars, building of huge mansions, financial sufficiency, being successful in all that one does, living a happy life, and having unlimited access to everything one desires in life seems too unrealistic to the Christian faith. It is no wonder, contemporary Christians resort to any dubious means just to become financially independent and in so doing abuse their fellow human beings.

The study again has established that the clarion call to the church and the congregation is to understand that the priestly privilege and status in Christ is a real transformation of their existence. Contemporary Christians should see their transformation as a special intimate relationship with the Lord, who through Christ's mediation has given humankind access to his sanctuary. In this sense, it does not mean that by this achievement Christ has done away with the priestly calling of Israel, rather, through Christ the fullest dimension of the priestly calling as envisaged in the Old Testament has become materialized in all of its historical, cultural, ethnic, social, and political experience.

5.2 Recommendations

From the following discussion, I would like to make some recommendations for future studies on the subject of Israel's priestly identity in the narrative of Exodus and for the contextualization of the text in pastoral practice.

The following suggestions could be considered for future researches:

- a) The theology of the priesthood of believers among contemporary Ghanaian charismatics.
- b) A comparative study between the Old and New Testament concept of priesthood should be further explored for a better understanding of the common priesthood of Christians from a Charismatic perspective.

From pastoral perspective, I recommend that African Charismatics and their leaders in their preaching, teaching and worship emphasize the integration between life's realities and the Christian's relationship with the Lord.

I further recommend that Christians bear in mind that their new found identity as 'royal priesthood' and 'holy nation' is to enable them live a life worthy of their calling. They should recognise that God saved them so that they would have a relationship with him. This calls for rigorous and practical steps among the leadership of the church to help the congregation to develop interest in the word of God.

Christians should also understand that their deliverance from darkness into the marvellous light of Christ is not so much dependent on their physical prosperity but rather a life of intimacy. Just as the text of Exodus makes us aware that the goal of Israel leaving Egypt was not necessarily the land but to meet God face to face (3:12), I recommend that the church ground the faith of its members in God.

Again, since holiness was required from the priests and the people as indicated in the text, the church in contemporary times should understand that holiness before YHWH is fundamental to their priestly identity, life and mission. In view of this, the study recommends that the church should encourage its members to lead exemplary lives.

The study also recommends that charismatic leaders and their members demonstrate a true sense of biblical understanding of the priesthood for their own self-criticism, examination, improvement and growth. Charismatic leaders in this respect should show some level of interest in intellectual development by allowing themselves to be trained for their profession and career paths. I recommend that charismatic Christians desist from over reliance on feeling and experience in their quest for higher spirituality by availing themselves to sound biblical scholarship. The issue is that if the hermeneutical approach to

studying scripture is truncated and distorted it will affect the correct application of scripture.

Finally, I recommend that charismatic preaching and practice should highlight the aspect of priesthood and suffering as part and parcel of the mysteries of those who are called by His name and for His service; the perception that once a person becomes ‘born-again’ he or she is free from pain and suffering should be re-examined.



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