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Yahweh's Lament on Judges in Isaiah 59: 14 And Its Reflections in Nigerian Judicial System

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Abstract
Equity and justice for all and sundry are traits of Yahweh. This study examined Yahweh's displeasure to injustice perpetrated by the judiciary in the time of Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah 59: 14 is chosen as a text of investigation to establish how Yahweh expressed his disappointment in those saddled with judicial matters in the discharged of the duties of their office. As a corollary, the study explored how the judiciary in Nigeria have been appointed by God to dispense justice and the need to for them to be fair to all and sundry. African Biblical Hermeneutics which provides that biblical text be read in African Context so that the Bible can be relevant in African situations and times was used. The study revealed that Judges in ancient Israel and Nigeria are divinely appointed. Judges have betrayed the confidence repose in them by Yahweh and the Nigerian People. They compromised justice and this led to anarchy, rebellion and these have brought the noble profession to disrepute. As there were corrupt judges in ancient Israel, the same is applicable to Nigeria. Judges in both contexts pervert justices, take bribes, oppress the poor and show no respect or regard to the rule of law.Judges in Nigeria are to make justice and equity their watchword at all times. It is only with this that we can build a strong and virile nation.

I. Introduction

In ancient Israel, the Judges play crucial roles in the life and development of the nation. Judges like the Prophets were considered as the mouth piece of Yahweh. Judges were seen as representatives of Yahweh on civil matters. They were expected to be fair to all and sundry in matters brought before them. In fact at a particular time in the life of Israel, Prophets and Political leaders in Israel were called Judges. The book of Judges in the Old Testament is full of names of Judges who were political leaders during the development of the nation of Israel.

This study examined Yahweh's displeasure to injustice perpetrated by the Judges in the time of Isaiah. Isaiah 59: 14 was chosen as reference text to determine how Yahweh felt on the issue of injustice in ancient Israel and its implications on Israel and the contemporary Nigeria. African Biblical Hermeneutics which provides that biblical passages be examined in the African context was used (Adamo, 2015: 31-52).

The Book of Isaiah

For a long time, most Scholars in Old Testament have always believe that Isaiah the son of Amoz authored the book. According to Allis, "For about twenty five centuries probably from the life time of Isaiah to the beginning of 19th century no one dreamt of doubting that Isaiah the son of Amos was the author of every part of the book that bears his name" (1950: 41). In fact the Jewish Talmud (Tradition) ascribed the authorship to Isaiah the son of Amoz (Awojobi, 2015: 99). However, this position has been challenged by modern day scholarship. Today Scholars are divided into camps on the authorship of the book of Isaiah. Studies on the book of Isaiah revealed that towards the end of the eighteenth century A.D. there was serious debate on the writer of this book among scholars. Notable scholars that championed this debate are Johann C. Doderlein (1783) and Gottfried Eichhorth (1783). They gave reasons why the entire books cannot be written by one person (Dallard, 1995: 269). They claimed that the first 39 chapters refer to the time when Judah was being troubled by Assyria (from about 742 to 688 BC). Assyria and the Assyrians are mentioned many times (Isa. 7: 18; 10: 5; 14: 25). Sennacherib, king of Assyria, is mentioned in Isaiah 36: 1 and three times in Isaiah 37. In the final 27 chapters of the book, Assyria is only mentioned once, and then only as part of the past history of Judah (Isa. 52: 4). Instead, these chapters are about Cyrus, king of the Persian (550-530 BC) (Isa. 44: 28; 45: 1). In this part of the book the prophecies gave hope to Israel that Babylon will be destroyed, and that the Israelites will be free to return to their own land in the near future (Isa. 48: 14-20) (Hinson, 2017: 127-128). They proposed at least three authors for the book. They are: Isaiah the son of Amoz (Chps. 1-39), Deutro or second Isaiah (Chps.

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40-44) and Trito or third Isaiah (Chps. 45-66). The other persons proposed as the author of the book are Babylonian Isaiah and the Great unknown (Awojobi, 2015: 99; Torrey, 1928, 20-21; Archer Jnr, 1994: 366-67). The proof that Isaiah is not the author of the entire book lies in the fact that a large part of the book was written at least two centuries after his life time, and some of it later (Gray, 1980: xxx). These scholars conclude that the book of Isaiah is a work of a redactor (Torrey, 1928: 20-21). In other words, the book is a composite work written by at least three and probably more unknown authors (Buksbazen, 1971: 52). It is a compilation of the post-exilic period containing oracles of Isaiah and in large quantity prophecies and narratives of much more recent date (Gray, xxxi)

It should however be noted that contrary to scholars who claimed that there are multiple authors to the book, some modern scholars have ascribed the authorship to Isaiah the son of Amoz on the grounds of its historicity (Young, 1958: 16; Young, 1980: 41; Allis, 1980: 41; Berges, 2010: 549-575). Also, the period of Isaiah as around the reign of some kings (Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah) was a period of political turmoil in Israel and Isaiah the son of Amoz played key roles in the political sphere of the nation. He delivered oracles of warning to kings whose policies were oppressive in nature (Baba, 2013: 85).

Despite the ongoing debate on the authorship of the book, the unity of the book cannot be denied. The central theme of the book revolves around "the holy one of Israel" (Kohlenberger III, 1994: 1043). In line with this submission, it has been observed that most in this book were devoted to attacks on the social and ethical situation in the land contrary to those who interpreted the book as diachronically. Also the ministry of Isaiah bore the fundamental theme which he expressed when he called "Yahweh as the holy one of Israel (6: 3) who will not entertain what judges are doing whenever they sit in judgment. Isaiah maintained that it is a sin for anyone to oppose the Sovereign and the Holy one of Israel because it will attract condemnation from Yahweh (Baba, 2013: 85).

Literary Analysis of Isaiah 59: 14

The verse in Hebrew language

14 וְהֻסַּג אָחוֹר מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה מֵרָחֹוק תַּעֲמֹד כִּי־כָשְׁלָה בָרְחוֹב אֱמֶת
וְנְכֹחָה לֹא־תוּכַל לָבֹוא׃
5

(Isa 59:14-15 WTT)

The Verse in English Language

Hermeneutical Study of Isaiah 59: 14

Attempt is made in this section of the paper to consider what the text meant to the original recipient of this passage. We are going to pick and interpret some words and phrases in the verse under consideration.

In the previous verses in this chapter Yahweh expresses his disappointment on the leaders of his people who made the nation to sin against him. The nation through the leaders have abandoned Yahweh. There was rebellion, revolt, oppression and all forms of vices in the land. The verse under review is continuation of Yahweh's displeasure on leaders especially Judges in the land. The verse started with the phrase מִשְׁפָּט אָחוֹר וְהֻסַּג (Isa 59:14 WTT) "so justice is driven back". In this phrase, justice is likened to a vehicle that was put at a reverse gear or made a U-turn. Instead of the operators of justice in the land to engage the usual gear that will move justice forward, they engaged reverse gear. This expression suggests a situation of justice that was original going forward and all of a sudden reverted back. Justice in this context is presented as a vehicle driven by human and has the ability to move forward and backward. This is an expression of lament, disappointment, and regret on leadership. This shows that the Judges were not living to expectations. As far as Yahweh is concerned, the opposite justice is what is happening in the land. Justice has not taken its rightful place in the land.

The Hebrew word וְהֻסַּג (Isa 59:14) "to turn backward", "backslide", "to displace", or "to fence about" used in the text should be noted. It is qal perfect 3rd person masculine singular homonym 1. The primary meaning of the root is "turn back." The root is usually employed in hostile contexts. Thus, Jeremiah predicts that Zedekiah's friends will ultimately turn back from him (Jer 38:22) and that Egypt, far from being a help to him, will itself fall back before the forces of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 46:5). Isaiah (Isa 42:17) and Zephaniah (Zep 1:6) prophesy that the apostate idolaters will be turned back and thoroughly shamed. The Psalmist (Psa 53:3) avows that the natural heart condition of the unregenerate man is one of turning aside from God. Like an apostate Israel, it is in need of divine intervention, if it is to be saved (Psa 80:14-19). In this context, the opposite of what is expected is happening. There is the need for those saddled with justice to return to Yahweh in repentance.

The Hebrew word מִשְׁפָּט **justice, ordinance must be noted.** The primary sense of שָׁפַט is to exercise the

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processes of government. Since, however, the ancients did not always divide the functions of government, as most modern governments do, between legislative, executive, and judicial functions the common translation, "to judge, " misleads us. For, the word, judge, as שָׁפַט is usually translated, in modern English, means to exercise only the judicial function of government. Unless one wishes in a context of government, civil, religious, or otherwise consistently to translate as "to govern or rule," the interpreter must seek more specialized words to translate a word of such broad meaning in the modern world scene.

The meaning of שָׁפַט is further complicated by the fact that although the ancients knew full well what law-whether civil, religious, domestic or otherwise-was, they did not think of themselves as ruled by laws rather than by men as modern people like to suppose themselves to be. The centering of law, ruler ship, and government in a man was deeply ingrained.Hence the following analysis of use of this 1. To act as ruler. This might be done by the congregation of Israel (Num 18:22-28), by individual judges (Deut 1:16; Jud 16:31; 1Sam 7:16, 17), by a king (Jud 8:20); by Messiah (Psa 72:4) or even God himself (Psa 96:13). God alone can exercise the true ultimate rulership for, he is "the one judging all the earth" (Gen 18:25). But Moses deciding cases (whether criminal, domestic, religious or otherwise) acts for God and by divine authority (Exo 18:13, 15) and the same is true of other rulers in the OT theocracy (Deut 1:17).

2. By way of eminence, שָׁפַט means to decide cases of controversy as judge in civil, domestic, and religious cases, In such cases it was the judge's duty specifically to judge with, justice and צֶדֶק righteousness (see Psa 72:2-4) and in case of charges "they shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked" (Deut 25:1).

3. Inasmuch in a situation of government by persons rather than merely of laws, the civil officer or "one judging" had the executive as well as judicial powers. He also executed or caused to be executed judicial decisions. Hence, for example, in David's appeal to God as judge in his controversy with Saul he declares, "The Lord Will be a judge and he shall judgeשָׁפַט between me and you and he will see and will plead my case and he will judge me i.e. "deliver me" out of your hand" (1Sam 24:15). Hence such words as deliver, vindicate, condemn, punish, and related words of judicial executive import are justly used in the translations.

4. Because all true authority is God's and he shall ultimately act as judge of the world in the last great assize, he is pre-eminent (Psa 96:13; Psa 50:6; Psa 75:8 and meanwhile through providence he is always supreme (Psa 94:2; cf. Psa 103:19) of the universe.

Another word to be underscored in our study is the Hebrew word וּצְדָקָה (Isa 59:14 WTT) meaning “and righteousness”. It is from the wordצָדַק, “be **just”, “righteous”. It has the same root with the Hebrew word**צַדִּיק that means **just, lawful, righteous.**צָדַק is a denominative verb.This root basically connotes conformity to an ethical or moral standard with the idea of something being right or straight. Words having a secular origin often are baptized into special meanings and a word originally meaning straight may develop easily into a moral term just so canon "rod” "measuring rule" becomes a standardized list of sacred books. צֶדֶק, then, refers to an ethical, moral standard and of course in the Old Testament that standard is the nature and will of God. For instance, the Bible declares: "The Lord is righteous צַדִּיק in all his ways and holy in all his works" (Psa 145:17).

The masculineצֶדֶק occurs 118 times, the feminine צְדָקָה 156 times. The two forms do not differ in meaning. The earliest usages of צֶדֶק or צְדָקָה (except Gen 15:6; Gen 18:19; Gen 30:33; צְדָקָה occur in relation to the functions of judges. All of their deliverances or decisions are to be according to the truth and without partiality (Lev 19:15). It is applied similarly to weights and measures (Lev 19:36). Commercial fraud and deception are not allowed. In both these usages is seen the basic sense of "not deviating from the standard." The word describes three aspects of personal relationships: ethical, forensic, and theocratic.

The ethical aspect involves the conduct of men with one another. It is held by some scholars that righteousness is the quality of relationships between individuals. What follows from this view, however, is that righteousness is a matter of current norms. Actually, righteousness is exhibited only through conformity to standards set out in the word of God.

The phrase וּצְדָקָה מֵרָחוֹק תַּעֲמֹד (Isa 59:14 WTT) “and righteousness stands at a distance” is worthy of note. Righteousness is said to stand aloof. It expresses a situation where righteousness kept a wide distance from the operators of justice in the land. In other words, there

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was a wide margin between the Judges in Israel and righteousness. To stand at distance is to disassociate oneself from happenings around. Righteousness is presented as human that can stand and watching events from a far. The Hebrew phrase מֵרָחוֹק תַּעֲמֹד (Isa 59:14 WTT) "stands at a distance" should be underscored. To standתַּעֲמֹד connotes being upright. This basic term for "stand," "to lean against, stand, place, "and "to prop up, support, "is very common in the Hebrew Old Testament and used over five hundred times. The verbעָמַד is used so extensively in the OT of the physical act of standing as to preclude a complete analysis in this work, but the reader is referred to the full categorizations in BDB and KB. Attention should be given to certain key passages, particularly those with significant theological import, one such expression is "to stand before Yahweh, " used, for example, of Abraham in Gen 18:22 (cf. Gen 19:27) and Moses in Deut 4:10 (cf. Jer 15:1, of Moses and Samuel). "To stand before Yahweh" (construed with lipnê [q.v.]) in these instances is a posture of prayer and intercession. That men have felt a need for Yahweh's help is not surprising. But the fact that men may "stand" before the Creator of eternity and make intercession is utterly remarkable.

Another nuance to the expression, "to stand before Yahweh, " is afforded by a passage such as Deut 19:17. In this context litigants "shall stand before Yahweh, before the priests and the judges who will be in office in those days" (cf, Jer 7:10). Such presentation was for judgment. Standing before Yahweh and his ministers in the sanctuary portends the ascertaining of truth and justice. At times the nation as a whole was called to come to the central sanctuary and "stand before Yahweh" in solemn assemblies for sacrificial acts (e.g. Lev 9:5). Servants of Yahweh "stand before him" as an expression of dedication, allegiance, and servitude. This terminology is used of priests (e.g. Ezek 44:15), and particularly of genuine believers during the period of Israel's decline and apostasy (Elijah, 1Kings 17:1; 1Kings 18:15; Elisha, 2Kings 3:14; and Gehazi [with reluctance], 2Kings 5:16).

At this juncture, it is expedient to consider the word רָחַק (rˈμaq) "distant". It is a common Semitic verbal root found in all later Semitic versions of the Old Testament, such as Syriac and Ethiopic. The meanings vary with the stem in which the root appears. However, the variation follows the typical usage of Hebrew grammar. An important participle is also formed from the rootרָחַק and appears throughout the Old Testament.

The verb appears over fifty times in the text and occurs in every section of the Hebrew Bible and in all types of contexts. The primary meaning of the Qal stem expresses the state of a person or thing as being "far" from someone or something else. In many passages there is also the notion of "being too far" as if the person or object was unreachable (Deut 12:21), or too distant to be heeded (Gen 21:16). The root is given an ethical and religious connotation in such passages as Exo 23:7 where the Israelites are commanded to stay "far away" from wicked peoples and alien cults, The same root is used to describe the exile which resulted from Israel's disobedience (Jer 27:10; Mic 7:11). The verb thus describes Israel's removal from the land.

TRUTH

The Hebrew word אֱמֶת (Isa 59:14) truth, firmness, or faithfulness should be noted. According to Isaiah the truth stumbled in the street. The truth is presented here as human, who fell or stumble in the street and people around noticed it. This expresses a condition of truth that stood and later fell. This is an indication that the judges or leaders who were known for standing or saying the truth have compromised their original position perhaps for pecuniary benefits. The verb is usually used of physical falling, but numbers of times the figurative use of failing or ruin occurs (Psa 64:8; 2Chr 25:8). However, the root is rarely used in the sense of the NT scandalize "cause one to fall into sin." The nearest to this is Mal 2:8 where the priests by their teaching "have caused many to stumble" (NIV). In Jer 18:15 it says the idols made the people "stumble in their ways," but here the figure is the frequent one of a path representing the path of life. Proverbs 4:16 says the wicked cannot sleep "till they make someone fall" (NIV) which probably, like Jeremiah, refers to stumbling in the path of life. It is perhaps from this figure that the idea of causing someone to stumble into sin arose in the NT and in the Syriac usage of this root. In this context **it means that the truth has fall and it is being trample upon by humans. The judges in Israel had no regard for the truth anymore.**

This very important concept in biblical doctrine gives clear evidence of the biblical meaning of "faith" in contradistinction to the many popular concepts of the term. At the heart of the meaning of the root is the idea of certainty. The basic root idea is firmness or certainty. In the Qal it expresses the basic concept of support and is used in the sense of the strong arms of the parent supporting the helpless infant. The constancy involved in the verbal idea is

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further seen in that it occurs in the Qal only as a participle (expressing continuance). The idea of support is also seen in 2Kings 18:16, where it refers to pillars of support. In the Hiphil (causative), it basically means "to cause to be certain, sure" or "to be certain about," "to be assured." In this sense the word in the Hiphil conjugation is the biblical word for "to believe" and shows that biblical faith is an assurance, a certainty, in contrast with modern concepts of faith as something possible, hopefully true, but not certain. In the Niphal conjugation the meaning is "to be established" (2Sam 7:16; 1Chr 17:23; 2Chr 6:17; Isa 7:9). The Niphal participle means "to be faithful, sure, dependable" and describes believers (Num 12:7; 1Sam 2:35; Neh 9:8). This form is also used to describe that upon which all certainty rests: God himself (Deut 7:9), and his covenant (Psa 89:28 [H 29]).

The various derivate of the word likeאָמַן, **to confirm, support, uphold (Qal); to be established, be faithful (Niphal); to be certain, i.e. to believe in Hiphil),אֱמֶתfaithfulness.** אֲמֵן , **verily, truly, amen,**אָמֵן , **steady-handed one, artist,**אֲמָנָהfaithful, **trusting,**אֱמוּנָהfirmness, fidelity, **steadiness,**אָמְנָם**verily, indeed,**אָמְנָם, **verily, truly,**אֱמֶת (°§met) **firmness, truth reflect the same concept of certainty and dependability.** The derivative °¹m¢n "verily" is carried over into the New Testament in the word am¢n which is our English word "amen." Jesus used the word frequently (Mt 5:18, 26 etc.) to stress the certainty of a matter. The Hebrew and Greek forms come at the end of prayers and hymns of praise (Psa 41:13 [H 14]; Psa 106:48; 2Tim 4:18; Rev 22:20 etc.). This indicates that the term so used in our prayers ought to express certainty and assurance in the Lord to whom we pray. **Truth**, אֱמֶת (Isa 59:14) used in various senses in Scripture. In Pr 12:17,19 it denotes that which is opposed to falsehood. In Isa 59:14,15 Jer 7:28 it means fidelity or truthfulness. The doctrine of Christ is called "the truth of the gospel" Ga 2:5 "the truth" 2Ti 3:7 4:4 Our Lord says of himself, "I am the way, and the truth" Joh 14:6.
The Hebrew word נָכֹחַ means honesty **lying straight ahead or what is straight. Isaiah declares that honesty cannot enter. Since honesty means straight, justice is driven back, righteousness stands at a distance and the truth has stumbled it became difficult for honesty to enter and take its place. This is an indication that the leaders of God's people are crooked in every ramifications.** The word נָכֹחַ occurs eight times. It is used mainly as an adjective (straight, right, and plain) and as a noun (what is straight, right, upright). Most of the examples cited below illustrate that,נָכֹחַ, primarily stresses the ethical quality of life in actions involving both personal and national morality.נָכֹחַ, is used adverbially in one instance (Isa 57:2) meaning "straight forwardly." In this context, the righteous man dies in peace (sh¹lôm), for he has walked a straight path through life. Several passages employ n¹kœaµ adjectivally. In 2Sam 15:3 it stands beside the word "good" in reference to a legal case. Another occurrence (Prov 8:9) states that words of wisdom "are all straight to him who understands"; they are not "twisted or crooked" (cf. v. 8). To give a "right" answer in a legal matter is to give an honest or straightforward reply (Prov 24:26).

Nigerian Experience of Isaiah 59: 14
The Nigerian experience was examined under the following sub headings.

Justice

In Nigeria, the judiciary is saddled with the responsibility of dispensing justice for all and sundry. Justice and equity are expected to be the watch word of Judges in Nigeria but the reverse is the case. The term justice has been described as "lawful or just actions are those which are for the common good or good of others" (Buksbazen, 1971: 52). Justice is "the virtue which dictates that a man should treat his neighbor fairly" (Young, 1980: 41). In other words, justice is given another person his or her due. Nigeria is currently like the ancient Israel where "justice is driven back". Justice has a price tag and it is for the highest bidder. Like in ancient Israel, rulers and judges in Nigerian judiciary are most of the times under pressure by those in the corridor of power or men and women of straw to prevent the course of justice. Commenting on the level of corruption in the Nigerian Judiciary, a former Chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association, Joseph Dauda said "we are all guilty". He confirmed that the legal profession in Nigeria is having a problem. He stressed that injustice in Nigerian judicial system is now a hydra-headed monster (2011: 20). The situation is such that those we expected will sanitize our decaying society are themselves caught up in what is becoming a ground norm. In Nigeria at the moment, there are issues bordering on attempts to prevent the course of justice by those who should dispense it. Also, there are allegations of corruption of the judges as well as corruption in the Nigerian judicial system (Baba, 2013: 82).

Besides, there has been an atmosphere of injustice in the settlement of disputes in the contemporary judicial system in Nigeria. The

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public through the print and electronic media has revealed the atrocities allegedly committed by the Nigerian Judges who are supposed to umpire of justice and equity. One of such cases is that of James Ibori, a former Governor of Delta State whose case of corruption was dismissed by Nigerian Judiciary in 2007. However, the London's Southward Crown court sentenced Ibori to 13years imprisonment on the same case (Adeyemi, 2012: 52-54). This issue speaks volumes on the level of corruption in Nigerian Judiciary and it calls for serious concern. Commenting on the state of affairs in the Nigerian judiciary, a former Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Mustapher was reported to have said: "As it stands, today, it appears that the society we serve is not entirely satisfied with our performance. Hard as it may be to accept, we feel it is less important to focus on whether this assessment is fair or not. The important thing is for us to transcendently come to terms with the prevailing realities, accept the gaps in expectations and do our utmost to bridge it" (Mumuni, 2012).

The Nigerian judicial system is not different from that of the ancient Israel when the poor who could not offer any money for bribe are denied justice.

Righteousness

To be righteous is to be morally right and good (Hornby, 2015: 1335). Righteousness צַדִּיק *ƒ*edeq is used attributively when applied to God himself as to his character. The Lord is the just judge (2Chr 12:6; Psa 11:7; Jer 12:1; Lam 1:18) even to the utmost degree as the judge of all the earth (Deut 32:4; Psa 119:137; Isa 5:16). Therefore his standards, his judgments set out in his word are righteous (Psa 119:144, 160, 172). Being everlasting, they are the confidence of his people and will not fall. God's hate of sin and love of righteousness (Psa 45:7) express his essential righteousness. Therefore righteousness and judgment are the habitation of God's throne, (NIV) i.e. they always characterize his actions (Psa 97:2).

The man who is righteous tries to preserve the peace and prosperity of the community by fulfilling the commands of God in regard to others. In the supreme sense the righteous man צַדִּיק is one who serves God (Mal 3:18). Specifically, he, like Job, delivers the poor and orphan, helps the blind along the way, supports the weak and is a father (provider) to the poor (Job 29:12-15). But the "righteousness" consisted in obedience to God's law and conformity to God's nature, having mercy for the needy and helpless. The forensic aspect of righteousness applies to the equality of all, rich and poor, before the law. The righteous one, the צַדִּיק, is not to be put to death (Exo 23:7) for the law does not condemn him. The man who has the position of right צַדִּיק in litigation must not be turned aside, (Isa 5:23). It should be emphasized that in Israel's law the judge was not considering a man's innocence with regard to breaking a human law, but a man's righteousness in regard to God's law.

Judges and rulers in ancient Israel were expected to be morally right and good but reverse was the case. There were cases of corrupt in the performance of the duties of their office. The Prophet looked back and discovered that the leaders that shun unrighteousness in the past have now embraced it.

According to the author of the book of Isaiah, "righteousness stands at a distant". In other words, there was a wide margin between the leaders or judges and righteousness. This suggests that the judges or leaders were alien to righteousness. Their modus of operandi were far away from anything that is morally good or right. It was the attitude of the Judges by perverting justice and honouring thieves that led the people to rebel against God (Baba, 2013: 87). The word "distant" or "distance" as used in the text should be underscored. In some passages the root describes the parting or separation of two previously joined objects. One of the best known of such occurrences is in the difficult verse (Eccl 12:6), KJV "be loosed, " RSV "snapped" and adds the note, Syriac Vulgate compare Greek: Hebrew is "removed." While many scholars have emended the verb, it is unnecessary since it merely means, "be removed."

In the prophets the word is developed to its fullest theological significance. Jeremiah uses it once only (Jer 2:5) to describe the state of those who have rejected God's law as "to go far from him." Isaiah gives the rootרָחַק (r¹µaq) its most profound meaning in the five occurrences which appear. In the first usage (Isa 46:13), God's righteousness will not "be far," in the second (Isa 49:19) the enemies which had troubled Judah during her affliction shall be "far away" so as not to trouble her any more. In the third usage (Isa 54:14) oppression itself shall be removed "far off." In the last two occurrences (Isa 59:9, 11), God's judgment is again in view and the root refers to the separation which sin causes to come between God and his people.Judges or leaders in the days of Isaiah were separated from Yahweh and consequently from righteousness. In this context it was the attitude of the Judges by perverting justice and honouring thieves that led the people to rebel against God (Baba, 2013: 87).

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In the same fashion, some judges in Nigeria are like their counterparts in ancient Israel. They collect money from people before they give judgment in the Court. This made the judges susceptible to diverting judgment or given the poor fair hearing because they have no money to give to the judge. Righteousness is missing in the Nigerian judicial system. There is the need for purification, refining and transformation and total overhauling of the entire system. Nigerians are looking forward for the redemption of the judicial system that will come through justice in place of injustices and righteousness in the place of unrighteousness.

The above discussion elucidates the message of the prophets, whose cry for righteousness rang throughout the land. Amos cried for justice in the gates (Amos 5:15, 24) that is, that right institutions be rightly administered. All who function in public areas are to be righteous in all they do-not for all they do. Beautiful singing will not persuade God to accept corrupt religious practice (Amos 5:23-24). Jeremiah declares that justice and righteousness together means to deliver the weak, to do no violence to them, nor to shed innocent blood. This righteousness will preserve the city (Jer 22:1-4). Whether by nations or individuals, righteous conduct can only be secured by plowing up fallow ground, sowing in righteousness, and reaping in mercy, i.e. making a new base for righteousness (Hos 10:12). All must become new persons whose actions are governed by the law of God. Righteous conduct issues from a new heart (Ezek 36:25-27). Habakkuk puts it another way: the just shall live by his faith (Hab 2:4). Isaiah (Isa 32:15-17) couples righteousness with the work of the Spirit, all resulting in peace and therefore eternal, assured quietness. It is possible that this thought lies behind the figure in Psa 85:10, "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Because there has been reconciliation between man and God, peace comes to bless his way. Isaiah apparently refers to the state of these people: "thy people shall all be righteous." True ethics derive from imparted righteousness.

Truth

The truth is anything that is fact rather than things that have been invented or guessed (Hornby, 2015: 1678). It is something that is correct, right, real, exact or curate. The opposite of the truth is lies. According to the text under review “truth has stumbled in the streets”. In other words, the truth has falling in Israel. The verb is usually used of physical falling, but numbers of times the figurative use of failing or ruin occurs (Psa 64:8 [H 9]; 2Chr 25:8). However, the root is rarely used in the sense of the New Testament scandalized "cause one to fall into sin." The nearest to this is Mal 2:8 where the priests by their teaching "have caused many to stumble" (NIV). In Jer 18:15 it says the idols made the people "stumble in their ways," but here the figure is the frequent one of a path representing the path of life. Proverbs 4:16 says the wicked cannot sleep "till they make someone fall" (NIV) which probably, like Jeremiah, refers to stumbling in the path of life. It is perhaps from this figure that the idea of causing someone to stumble into sin arose in the New Testament and in the Syriac usage of this root. Stumbling-block, means or occasion of stumbling: Lev 19:14; Isa 57:14; obstacle, cause for guilt, occasion of stumbling (Job 7:19; Job 14:4; Ezek 7:19; Ezek 14:4). Or: defense of the heart (1Sam 25:31); “a rock of offence.". The text suggests that the truth is now being trampled by human on the streets. No one seem to regard the truth as an essential tool for daily living. Prophet Isaiah draw the attention of the people especially the leaders and judges in Israel to the fact that there is the need to raise the truth up.

In the same way, judges and leaders in Nigeria are like the once in the days of Isaiah. Even when some of them know the truth, they try to circumvent it. Some judges in Nigeria are influence by money. Some of the Judges and judicial officers in Nigeria are corrupt, dishonest and disobedient to both the rule of law and judicial ethics. There are cases of unfair treatment of the underprivileged by some officers of the judiciary on the grounds that they have no money to offer as bride to judges (Baba, 2013: 104). It appears “truth has stumbled in the streets” in Nigeria. Lying is the order of the day in leadership especially among the politicians. They say one thing during campaign and do another thing when they are elected into office. Some judges in Nigeria are in the habit of looking for lacuna in cases brought before them by the poor so prevent the course of justice since the poor has no money to offer as bribe. To rule on behalf of the wicked for a price is perversion of righteousness, for it takes away the righteousness of the righteous (Isa 5:23). The source of all this righteous conduct is the bestowal of God's judgments (or laws) and righteousness on his people (Psa 72:1-2).

As far as some Nigerians today, judges and lawyers are liars. Judicial officers in Nigeria are believe to be making a lot of money from bribery by politicians, industrialists, and people in the corridor of power who want to have their way in civil matters. Once they “settle” the judiciary the case will be determine in their favour. There is the view

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that average Nigerian judges and lawyers are liars. Consequently the profession's name has been brought to disrepute.

Honesty

To be honest is to always tell the truth, and never stealing or cheating. It is not hiding the truth about something or person (Hornby, 2015: 755). An honest person is said to be frank, direct, outspoken, straight and blunt. Honesty is said to be the best policy. These are supposed to be the qualities of a leader or a judge. According to Prophet Isaiah in the text under review, "honesty cannot enter". This suggests that the doors have been shut against honesty in leadership in ancient Israel. It became very difficult for honesty to pass through the leadership especially the judiciary because barriers have been planted by the operators of the system. Justice is difficult to achieve because the operators of the system are not honest.

II. Conclusion

From the foregoing, attempt was made in this study to expose the corrupt judicial system in ancient Israel with reference to the days of Prophet Isaiah and the contemporary Nigeria. Yahweh expressed his displeasure and disappointment on the way and manner the Judges conducted themselves. According to Yahweh: "justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, and honesty cannot enter". The same situation exists in Nigeria today. The judges who are supposed to be the umpire of justice have compromised the standard. They prevent the course of justice for pecuniary benefits. Judges in Nigeria should rise up to their divine responsibility by discharging their duties without fear of favour. They should be seen to be righteous, truthful and honest in the discharge of their duties. They are to make justice and equity their watchword at all times. It is only with this that we can be able to build a strong and virile nation.

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