

## Jeremiah's Royal Oracle: A Contextual Reading of 23:1-8 and 33:14-26 in the African Leadership Situation

JOSEPH N. MAVINGA (UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL)

### ABSTRACT

*The royal oracle in Jeremiah (23:5-6; 33:14-16) intervened in the Judean context as a real challenge with regard to a "loyal leadership" capable of restoring social justice in the community. This challenge is of significance to the current African leadership, particularly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This paper, firstly, analyses the נמצ texts of Jeremiah in their contexts. Secondly, it discusses the context of African leadership. Thirdly, in considering the two contextual poles as two sets of protagonists which mirror in each other, the African leadership situation is brought to Jeremiah's texts in their contexts. In this regard, an appropriative process of the texts in their contexts is realised which provides the African leadership with insight on how to be "loyal" in managing public affairs.*

### A INTRODUCTION

Jeremiah's oracle on a "loyal leader" to come is confined to the period of the last five Judean kings "from Josiah (640-609 B.C.E.) to Zedekiah (597-587 B.C.E.)."<sup>1</sup> This time was marked by a lack of social justice due to the corrupt behaviour of the ruling class in Judah. This particular context of the leadership failure in Jerusalem had elicited Jeremiah's dynastic oracle on נמצ. In its use of the metaphoric sense, this royal oracle on a "branch" refers to the arrival of a "loyal leader" in the context of corrupt kings who were unable to promote social life in the Judean community. The Judean kings' incompetence was mainly due to the fact that they had run away from God's instructions. In connection to this, they failed to promote social justice in the midst of the Judean people. Just such a failure is that of the leadership of most African countries, particularly, the Democratic Republic of Congo (hereafter DRC). Corruption and division within the leadership are root causes of leadership failure. These

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<sup>1</sup> The last five Judean kings who ruled over Judah in Jeremiah's time were "Josiah (640-609 B.C.E.); Jehoahaz (three months in 609 B.C.E.); Jehoiakim (609-598 B.C.E.); Jehoiachin (598-597 B.C.E.) and Zedekiah (597-587 B.C.E.)." Cf. Jerome T. Walsh & Christopher T. Begg, "1 – 2 Kings," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (eds. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy, Bangalore: Theological Publications, 2005), 162.

two factors have hindered social development of many African countries, especially the DRC.

In this article, I intend to analyse the socio-political context which motivated Jeremiah's oracle on the "branch." In this regard, firstly, I analyse the *נֶמֶז* texts in Jeremiah duly considered in their respective contexts. Secondly, I discuss the current leadership context in Africa (the DRC). Thirdly, an appropriate reading of their texts on the "branch" will provide the African (Congolese) leadership and people with the right vision and commitment to manage public affairs in the community.

## **B JEREMIAH'S ROYAL ORACLE IN ITS CONTEXT**

Jeremiah's oracle on the "righteous branch" (23:5-6) and the "branch of righteousness" (33:14-16) elicited a response from the situation of the leadership failure in Judah. I do not discuss the outline of the book of Jeremiah which I consider from the prophet via some scribes, such as Baruch. Indeed, some "sections of the book would have been written with minor editorial comments by scribes but pointing to Jeremiah as the original speaker, author and producer of the book as we have it today."<sup>2</sup>

I discuss the socio-political and religious context of Jeremiah's dynastic oracle in 23:5-6 and 33:14-16. In this regard, I explore the meaning of the oracle duly considered in its context.

### **1 Jeremiah 23:1-8**

The first oracle on the "rightful branch" (23:5-6) is part of the larger unit in 21:11-23:8. It comprises some prophetic sayings regarding the monarchy. This oracle belongs particularly to Jer 23:1-8 which counts three oracles on the Judean kings presented in a specific order in the unit. The oracle in vv.1-4 is addressed to irresponsible leaders. In this respect, it has a threefold aspect: an

<sup>2</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Home Coming* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 117. In addition, Robert Carroll says that "Jeremiah is seen as a poet in the first instance. Hence, the majority of poems in part one (chapters 1-25) are accepted as his work but the few in chapters 30-31 and 46-51 are more difficult to attribute." Cf. Robert Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1986), 47. Certainly, these difficulties are due to the change of circumstances and in some cases to the hand of the prophet's amanuensis. In this regard, I recognise the complexity of Jeremiah's book. But, I do not focus on the details of the origins of the texts. Furthermore, "the book of Jeremiah is well known for presenting many differences between the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Old Greek version (LXX). The latter is shorter than the former by one fifth and differs in its arrangement." Cf. Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, "Qui exerce la royauté dans le livre de Jérémie (et Baruch 1-5)? Du trône de Dieu dans sa ville," in *The Septuagint and Messianism* (ed. Michael A. Knibb, Leuven: University Press, 2006), 386.

indictment, judgment and hope for a better future. The Judean ruling class was blamed for its lack of obedience to God's instructions in its exercise of authority. Robert Carroll argues that different leaders were responsible for the disaster in Zion-Jerusalem. The kings, priests (Jer 6:13; 23:11) and prophets (23:9; Isa 56:10; Mic 3:11), the wise and the people were all responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem. This situation has provoked Yahweh's wrath (2 Kgs 24:19-20; 25:1-5) who finally sent them into the exile.<sup>3</sup>

The oracle in vv. 5-6 suggests a removal of the current Judean kings. The "branch" from the Davidic line, which shall sprout forth, brings social order and justice in ruling over Zion-Jerusalem (2 Sam 7:8-14). This efficient leadership to come shall promote a socio-political, economic and religious life in Zion-Jerusalem. "Such leadership, acting on behalf of Yahweh's rule, highlights Jeremiah's consideration of kingship."<sup>4</sup> To achieve the assigned purpose, the king would collaborate with other leaders such as "prophets, priests and elders" (2 Kings 24:8).<sup>5</sup> But, because of the kings' self-seeking attitude on their part to ensure political power and the external powers which were set on conquering Judean soil for its strategic position in the Ancient Near East, social justice in Zion-Jerusalem was ruled out. As a result, the leadership and people were sent into the exile. The exile became a learning experience for the leadership and people and as a result of their change of mind and heart led to the return to their homeland (cf. vv. 7-8).<sup>6</sup>

Verse 2 is an introductory formula of the vv. 1-8 which announces a coming judgment. The term לכן meaning "therefore," is often translated as

<sup>3</sup> Robert P. Carroll, "Halfway through a Dark Wood: Reflections on Jeremiah 25," in *Troubling Jeremiah* (eds. Pete Diamond, Kathleen O'Connor & Louis Stulman. Stulman. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 77.

<sup>4</sup> Klaus Nürnberger, *Biblical Theology in Outline: The Vitality of the Word of God* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004), 119.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Ackerman, "The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112/3 (1993): 391.

<sup>6</sup> Bogaert says that "the vv.7-8 following the dynastic oracle in the MT are found at the end of the chapter in the LXX, after v. 40." He further affirms that differences between the place of this text in the LXX and the MT show that "after Jeremiah there must have been still some editorial activity going on; an indication of the importance of these sayings in the early tradition of the text of Jeremiah." Thus, it is perceived that "there are some variants between the MT of Jeremiah 23:5-8 and its correspondent in the LXX." Parke-Taylor had already sustained that the LXX, vv.7-8 are located at the end of the chapter after v. 40 MT. Furthermore, Jeremiah 23:7-8 and LXX have duplicated texts in Jeremiah 16:14-15 MT and LXX." An interesting proposal made on the MT order of 23:1-8 was at one time 1-4, 7-8, 5-6. Geoffrey H. Parke-Taylor, *The Formation of the Book of Jeremiah: Doublets and Recurring Phrases* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 55, 73; Bogaert, "Qui exerce la royauté dans le livre de Jérémie (et Baruch 1-5)?" 398.

"woe...therefore" announcing judgment after an indictment for wrongdoing. Verses 3-4 present an emphatic pronoun of the first person "I" which relates to the use of the emphatic second person "you." "If you' (leaders) have dispersed my people, then 'I' (Yahweh) will assemble the rest of my people." In a poetic form, the unit (vv. 1-4) describes, in narrative style, the behaviour of the shepherds of the time.<sup>7</sup> Verses 1-4 underscore the restoration in Judah of the leadership, the people and the land following the disaster of the Exile. A judgment speech addressed to the leaders in v. 2 expresses the way Yahweh treats the dispersed people. Later, he will assemble them and bring them home again. This is a specific announcement of restoration, thereby producing hope for a better future.<sup>8</sup> It implies that Yahweh is able to take over the shepherding from irresponsible shepherds and appoint loyal shepherds who should shepherd responsibly (vv. 3-4).

The phrase ולא יפקדו is translated as "they will be missing or lacking;" a word-play on the nuances of פקד is also present in v. 2b. It underlines that even though the leaders have "tended" to the people, Yahweh was about to "attend" to them for their evil. The expression of vv.2 and 4 presents a syntactic style with a double use of 'shepherds who shepherd.'<sup>9</sup> It expresses a particular significance emphasising the way "a loyal leadership" would be caring for the people.

This phrase relates to that in v. 3 מכל הארצות which means "from all the hands."<sup>10</sup> The point at issue in v. 2 is that the shepherds (leaders) have dispersed the flock, while in vv. 3 and 8, it is Yahweh who has driven them away. Indeed, the responsibility of being sent away from their homeland "was incumbent upon the leadership and the people themselves."<sup>11</sup> In the MT, the *niph'al* of פקד gives the sense of "be missing." Expressed in a metaphoric sense, this verb indicates the sheep that will be mustered and accounted for. In this regard, "none shall be missing." Furthermore, the repetition of פקד in these oracles suggests that punishment as a learning experience will be over and the covenant Yahweh made with his people is renewed. The people will no longer experience a painful situation.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1-25* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986), 443; Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (London, NY: Doubleday, 2004), 165.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 36.

<sup>9</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 613.

<sup>10</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 614; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 169.

<sup>11</sup> Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 168

<sup>12</sup> Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 169.

Yahweh will "sprout forth 'a loyal leadership' from the Davidic line" (v. 5). The arrival of such a leadership gives hope to the people in the community. The phrase *וְלֹא יֵאמְרוּ עוֹד* in v. 7 means "and they shall no longer say." A similar expression is found in Jeremiah 16:14 in a passive singular which is translated as "it shall no longer be said."<sup>13</sup> In Jer 23:8, the phrase *אֲשֶׁר הֵעִלָּה וְאֲשֶׁר הֵבִיא* meaning "who brought up and led" is found in 16:15 in a short form *אֲשֶׁר הֵעִלָּה* which means "who brought up." These expressions refer to the *אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל*, "the people of Israel," as indicated in v. 7. Furthermore, this latter phrase has a close meaning, underlining the coherence of v. 7 within the unit. Indeed, the "people of Israel," the "house of Israel" and the "sons of Israel" have the same meaning. The "people of Israel" or "children of Israel" will be brought out of the nations where they were scattered (vv. 7-8). Verse 8 presents two movements expressed by two verbs. Firstly, we find the phrase *הִדְחִיתִים* meaning "I have driven them." Secondly, in the same verse, the phrase *וַיֵּשְׁבוּ*, "and they will dwell" suggests a reversal movement in which God brings his people back home. God's providence brings back his people to dwell in their homeland. In other words, Yahweh manifested his power by restoring the leadership, the people and their land.

The social justice which will be established according to Jer 23:5-6 recovers its full meaning which includes God's providential action for a moral education of his people.<sup>14</sup> It points back to "a loyal leadership" as it was chosen by Yahweh in order to realise social justice in the community. The latter social conditions derive from the leadership's obedience to God's instructions as *a sine qua non* condition to maintain the covenant Yahweh made with his people. Therefore, the restoration of the Davidic dynasty in Jeremiah refers to political, religious and moral requirements that maintain the covenant Yahweh made with his people.

<sup>13</sup> In both passages the LXX reads *καί οὐκ ἐροῦσίν ἐτι* which means "and it could not yet be said" (cf. 3:16 LXX; 7:32 LXX). In 16:15 LXX, the phrase *ὅς ἀνάγηγε* refers back to *ὁ ἀνάγαγων* in 16:14, but a translation for the phrase *אֲשֶׁר הֵעִלָּה* in 23:8 is missing in the LXX in most manuscripts, where *ὅς σπνγηγέν* probably represents *אֲשֶׁר הֵבִיא*, "who led." The Vulgate follows the MT *qui eduxit et adduxit* meaning "who brought up and led" (23:8). A similar phrase is read in 16:15 LXX, *τόν οἶκον ἰσραελ* meaning "the house of Israel" which is not found in Jer. 16:15 MT in which we read *בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל*, "people of Israel" or "sons of Israel" as in 23:7. Parke-Taylor, *The Formation of the Book of Jeremiah*, 72.

<sup>14</sup> Guy P. Courrier, "Jeremiah," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (eds. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy, Bangalore: Theological Publications, 2005), 284; cf. also Judg 5:11; 1 Sam 12:7; Isa 45:24; Ps 103:6.

## 2 Jeremiah 33:14-26

Eight oracles compose chapter 33 of Jeremiah in which we find the royal oracle (vv. 14-16). Eight other oracles are located in chapter 32.<sup>15</sup> Two groups of four arrange these eight oracles of chapter 33 as well as of chapter 32. The first group (33:2-13) comprises two single oracles (vv. 2-3 and 6-9) and is followed by a pair of similarly structured oracles (vv. 10-11 and 12-13). The first two single oracles announce the destruction of the Holy City. The third and fourth oracles refer to the situation following the destruction of Zion-Jerusalem. The second group constitutes two other single oracles (vv. 14-16 and 17-18) "and a pair of similarly-framed oracles concluding the collection and also the enlarged Book of Restoration" (vv. 20-22 and 25-26). "The fifth oracle in vv. 14-16 repeats the oracle in 23:5-6 with minor changes which the majority of scholars credit to Jeremiah."<sup>16</sup>

A main break in the chapter, so far as oracles are concerned, comes after v. 13, where the LXX omission begins. In spite of the views which would see this section (vv. 14-26) as a later addition, I nevertheless see it as part of the prophetic message proclaimed around 587 B.C.E. as indicated in 32:1-2 and 33:1. In this regard, the three superscriptions establish a coherent frame of chapter 33. The first of the three superscriptions is found in v. 12 which would tie vv. 12-18 together. Thus, I present schematically the section as follows:<sup>17</sup>

- (i) Verse 12, "this is what יהוה Almighty says through Jeremiah," introduces vv.13-16 and 17-18.
- (ii) Verse 19, "Jeremiah received the word of Yahweh," introduces vv. 20-22.
- (iii) Verse 23, "Jeremiah received the word of Yahweh," introduces vv. 24-26.

These "three superscriptions of oracles," in my view, establish a coherent frame of chapter 33 which is part of Jeremiah's book. "The date of the eight oracles on the restoration of Jerusalem and Judah is around 587 B.C.E., as indicated in 32:1."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 530.

<sup>16</sup> Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 527.

<sup>17</sup> It is not necessary to prove here that the section is a later expansion. "If there are later expansions, it does not mean there is agreement of scholars;" nevertheless, I indicate "a connection with the superscriptions in vv.19 and 23. From a compositional point of view, there are three identifiable segments in chapter 33." Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 527.

<sup>18</sup> Courier, "Jeremiah," 291.

### 3 A Comparison of Jeremiah 33:14-16 with 23:5-6

It is well known that the oracle in 33:14-16 looks back to that in Jeremiah 23:5-6. The former repeats the latter "with some minor changes."<sup>19</sup> Verses 5-6 describe צמח צדיק which means "just or fair branch" It means that the "branch" sprouting forth from the Davidic line possesses genuine characteristics of just and fair leadership to come. The term והקמתי in 23:5 means "I will bring forth" to David "a rightful branch." In 33:15, the oracle refers צמח to צדקה as a determinative word which means "righteousness," "fairness" or "justice." This word emphasises the way the "loyal leadership" will be acting in the community. Furthermore, "Israel" in 23:6 is substituted for "Jerusalem" in 33:16 which now is called by a play on words, יהוה צדקנו, "Yahweh our righteousness." It underlines here that the restoration is not so much for Israel and Judah as for the holy city, Zion-Jerusalem."<sup>20</sup> The two units (23:5-6 and 33:14-16) "infer the same assurance for the Davidic dynasty and the Levitical priesthood. There is a link between the restoration of Israel and Judah, and the enduring validity of the institutions in the restored land."<sup>21</sup> The two oracles complement each other. They constitute therefore two sides of the same coin. In this regard, we can consider them as one oracle.

### 4 A Comparative Analysis of 23:5-6 and 33:14-16

A divine call to attention introduces v. 14 "see, time is coming, when I shall perform the good word..." Such a call often characterises a poetic oracle as found in 23:5-6 and 33:14-16. "The style moves and extends into a descriptive and narrative statement; Yahweh is performing a 'good word' spoken to Israel and Judah with regard to their future (29:10; 33:26)."<sup>22</sup> This "good word" refers to צמח צדקה or צמח צדיק in 33:15 or 23:5. The verb והקמתי in *hiph'il* perfect tense with converse ו gives an imperfect tense in the first person singular. It emphasises the causal action of sprouting forth of a "righteous branch" by Yahweh himself. Yahweh says צמח צדקה לדוד אצמי meaning "I will cause to sprout for David a true shoot of righteousness."<sup>23</sup> This oracle was announced by Jeremiah in a specific context of the Judean leadership failure.

<sup>19</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah*, 318.

<sup>20</sup> Couturier, "Jeremiah," 291.

<sup>21</sup> Pete A. Diamond, "Jeremiah," in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (eds. James D. G. Dunn and John Rogerson, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 592.

<sup>22</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 637.

<sup>23</sup> Some Hebrew manuscripts add the phrase "he would rule over the people justly." Parke-Taylor, *The Formation of the Book of Jeremiah*, 56; John Hill, "The Book of Jeremiah (MT) and its Early Second Temple Background," in *Uprooting and Planting: Essays on Jeremiah for Leslie Allen* (ed. John Goldingay, London: T&T Clark, 2007), 160.

The phrase "those days which marked the time" (v. 15) is a combined formula which is missing in 23:5. It occurs elsewhere, for example, in Jeremiah 3:16, 17: "In those days..." (v. 16), it is "a time during which Jerusalem would be called the throne of Yahweh" (v. 17). These formulas are common to the OT expressions and appear in Jeremiah, especially in this royal oracle (33:15). The purpose is to draw attention to the fact that the holy city shall attract Israel and Judah on the one hand, and all peoples on the other. The worship of Yahweh shall be the result of the restoration of Israel and Judah assembled in Zion-Jerusalem.<sup>24</sup>

צדיק, "righteous" or "rightful" characterising the "loyal leadership" to come, insinuates an indirect criticism of the Davidic leadership of the time.<sup>25</sup> The adjective צדיק, "just," describes Yahweh's genuine quality which demonstrates his צדקה, "justice," in the land. In his justice, Yahweh acts in order to punish his people for their wrongdoings and bring them back to obey of God's instructions. As God remains צדיק, the people can hope to be restored or re-established in their rights. In this connection, Jeremiah (23:5) predicts the arrival of "righteous leadership" who will rule with wisdom and implement justice and fairness in the land<sup>26</sup>. This arrival of a "legitimate leadership" suggests not only an efficient ruler on the throne who will reflect God's justice, but also a removal of the current Davidic rule. Israel "will dwell in security" in 23:6 is substituted for Jerusalem "will dwell in security" in 33:16. It means that the restoration of Zion-Jerusalem impacts on that of Israel and Judah. In other words, from Zion-Jerusalem, Yahweh's blessings overflow upon Israel and his people. Zion-Jerusalem's security is that of Judah and its people.

The promise in 33:17-18 announces that "the royal and priestly lines" in Judah will suffer a painful situation. In spite of such circumstances, "there shall not be cut off for David a man who sits upon the throne of the house of Israel" (v. 17). This promise is also found in v. 18 and both are based on the unconditional covenant given to David (2 Sam 7:12-16). This priestly promise is understood in the context of restoration in Judah (Zion-Jerusalem being a socio-political, economic and religious centre of the Israelites' life) as Yahweh helping priestly lives to turn back close to him and to be "satisfied with abundance" (31:14; cf. Isa 61:6). This underlines not so much the state of reconciliation of the people with Yahweh as their reconciliation with one another in the community.

<sup>24</sup> Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (London, NY: Doubleday, 1999), 314-315.

<sup>25</sup> David Reimer, "צדיק," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis 3* (ed. Willem A. van Gemeren, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 744.

<sup>26</sup> Lund Johnson, "צדיק," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament 12* (eds. Johannes G. Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 257.

The Hebrew term וַיִּמָּאֲסוּם, "were rejected" (v. 24), expresses the fate of Israel and Judah. They suffered disaster as a result of a divine discipline that would turn them back to Yahweh, through a change of mind. Yahweh once again "chose" or "loved" (בָּחַר) his remnant people.<sup>27</sup> Yahweh would have "mercy" (רַחֵם) on them and their fortunes would be restored. This opened a new perspective for a better future. The remnant people of God, through the devastating situation due to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, had the opportunity to be restored in their understanding and attitude. This gave them hope for better social conditions in the land.<sup>28</sup>

## 5 A Survey of Socio-historical Context of Jeremiah's Royal Oracle

Although I am not able to provide an original historical context of the dynastic oracle, I nevertheless give a brief description of its general historical context.

The Judean leadership of the day had failed to do people justice as Yahweh commanded them. God addressed, by Jeremiah, indictments against the Judean monarchy (21:11-23:8). This becomes evident when the following Judean kings are blamed: Jehoahaz (22:10-12), Jehoiakim (22:13-19) and Jehoiachin (22:24-30).<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the Judean kings failed to fulfil their responsibility because of their self-seeking attitude to secure political power and because of the interference of external powers which were set on conquering Judean soil. Upon the death of Josiah, for instance, his son Jehoahaz was enthroned as king by the Judean people. This elevation was made by popular acclaim (2 Kgs 23:30). After a brief three months, his reign was revoked by Pharaoh Necho, whereupon he was sent into exile to Egypt. Necho replaced Jehoahaz with Eliakim. He changed his name to Jehoiakim, as king of Judah.<sup>30</sup>

Subsequently, Judah was taken over by Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon (2 Kgs 24:7; Jer 46:2), who had gained military and political control throughout the area.<sup>31</sup> Necho changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim and Nebuchadnezzar changed Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah. This name change, respectively by Pharaoh of Egypt and the king of Babylon, symbolised their control over Judah and her kings.<sup>32</sup> This socio-historical situation elicited

<sup>27</sup> John Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 603.

<sup>28</sup> Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, 36.

<sup>29</sup> Diamond, "Jeremiah," 574.

<sup>30</sup> Elmer Leslie, *Jeremiah: Chronologically Arranged, Translated, and Interpreted* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), 110.

<sup>31</sup> Addison Wright, Roland Murphy and Joseph Fitzmyer, "A History of Israel," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (eds. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy; Bangalore: Theological Publications, 2005), 1236.

<sup>32</sup> William Schniedwind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualisation of the Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 149.

apparently two dynastic oracles in Jeremiah (23:5-6 and 33:14-16), which complement each other. In this particular devastating social context in Zion-Jerusalem, the dynastic oracle predicted the restoration of the people following the Exile. Nürnberger argues that the devastating event in the holy city referred really to "the whole country."<sup>33</sup>

In this specific context reflecting on the Judean leadership failure, the key role-player is Yahweh who renews his covenant with the remnant people in providing them with a true leadership.<sup>34</sup> This renewal is symbolised by the socio-political, economic and religious prosperity reflected on Zion-Jerusalem as the representative of the whole country. Such social conditions are derived from the leadership's cultural and moral values as a result of their obedience to God's instructions. The new name (Yahweh our righteousness) refers to the moral qualities of the "loyal leadership" to come. Furthermore, it suggests "a close connection between" the civil and priestly leadership (vv. 17-22).<sup>35</sup> I do not discuss the dating of this dynastic oracle as this issue does not impact on its fulfilment.<sup>36</sup> It means that dating this oracle is still a debate. Verses 23-26, at the end of the section, give a disillusioned closing note when the hope of the people is stirred up. This view is argued by McKane when he says<sup>37</sup> that these verses may refer to a reminder by Jeremiah with regard to the past events that the Judean people experienced. Therefore, this suggests that the repeated dynastic oracle in 33:14-16 should be dated in Jeremiah's time and be understood as an oracle received by the prophet himself.

<sup>33</sup> Nürnberger, *Biblical Theology in Outline*, 126.

<sup>34</sup> Couturier, "Jeremiah," 284; Tiberius Rata, *The Covenant Motif in Jeremiah's Book of Comfort: Textual and Intertextual Studies of Jeremiah 30-33* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 80.

<sup>35</sup> Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 526.

<sup>36</sup> William McKane (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah XXVI-LII* Vol 2 [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996], 862-863) asserts "that one should suggest that the long section in Jer 33B is earlier than the time of Ezra and Nehemiah and gives no indication of date." He says that Streane, Peake and Rudolph locate the passage in Ezra and Nehemiah's time or later and Duhm in the Maccabean period. Considering the statement: "David will never fail to have a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel" (v. 17), McKane refers to Giesebrecht and Duhm who suggest that the text seems to ignore circumstances when the Davidic monarchy was "cut off" during the Babylonian exile from 587/586 B.C.E.. The oracle does not deny the historical circumstances, but it predicts a restoration and then an unbroken continuance in the future. McKane cites Peake who asserts that the oracle was written at the time when there was no king. Duhm, on the other hand, McKane says that he dates Jer 33B in the Maccabean period and supposes that a restoration of the monarchy is the background of v. 17. Nevertheless, as the dynastic oracle usually refers to the exilic time, it should be difficult to relate it to the Maccabean period in the second century B.C.E..

<sup>37</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah XXVI-LII*, 862.

## **B THE CURRENT CONTEXT OF THE AFRICAN LEADERSHIP**

It is quite difficult to describe a broader context of the African leadership. Nevertheless, I would like limit myself to one aspect of its root paradigm which is common to African leadership. Although this root paradigm determines the African leadership's status today, nevertheless, it has been interwoven with other values over time. Indeed, the identity of African leadership has seriously been distorted throughout its history. This is confirmed by Terreblanche who argues that Portuguese traders and missionaries bought more than five million slaves mainly from the Congo, Angola and Mozambique and re-sold them to America.<sup>38</sup> That situation went on from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and it certainly affected people's minds as well as the way they organised leadership within African communities. Furthermore, colonial rule in the African continent had a direct effect on its leadership model.<sup>39</sup> How could one expect an adequate level of the African leadership when its process of improvement had been obstructed by colonial rules for generations? In fact, the exercise of power requires leadership ability to achieve the assigned purpose. Ability or skill could be developed from an inborn talent and be improved through training and learning experiences. In Africa, this indispensable process presented a real discontinuity over time. For this reason, Adeyemo recognises that "genuine leadership values (as they were previously found in the African tradition) were affected over time."<sup>40</sup> The question arises: what are the genuine values of leadership in the African tradition?

### **1 Leadership in the African Tradition**

It is not easy to reconstruct the way leaders assumed their responsibility in early African society before the coming of Westerners. Africans had a specific "way to apprehend life" according to the system under which they lived. This view is sustained by Ukpong and Snyman who indicate four features that define the African worldview:<sup>41</sup>

- i. There is continuity between the visible and invisible world;
- ii. Africans believe in a divine origin of the universe;

<sup>38</sup> Sampie Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002* (Sandton: KMM Review Publishing Company, 2002/2003/2005), 153.

<sup>39</sup> Abraham van Rensburg, *Africa's Men of Destiny* (Pretoria: De Jager-Haum, 1981), 415; Philip Borel, "Zaire," in *New Africa Year Book* (eds. Linda van Baren and Alan Rake, London: Carlton House, 1992), 368-369.

<sup>40</sup> Tokunboh Adeyemo, "Leadership," in *Africa Bible Commentary* (eds. Tokunboh Adeyemo, Solomon Andria, Issiaka Coulibaly, Tewoldemedhin Habtu, Samuel Ngewa, Nairobi: WordAlive, 2006), 546.

<sup>41</sup> Justin Ukpong, "Re-reading the Bible with African Eyes: Inculturation and Hermeneutics," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 91 (1995): 8; Gerrie Snyman, "Hermeneutics, Contexts, Identity: A Critical Discussion of the Bible in Africa," *Religion & Theology* 10/3-4 (2003): 383.

- iii. The African existence is defined in a community;
- iv. Africans apprehend a concrete reality rather than an abstract one.

I focus in this section on the African worldview that considers a person as composed of a visible and invisible dimension. It means that Africans do not separate matter from spirit, secular from religious. There is continuity from the living-dead to the living. *Bakongo* people, for example, in the Lower Congo Province (the DR Congo), affirm "*bafua bena yeto kituadi*"<sup>42</sup> which means "the dead are always with us."<sup>43</sup> In the African tradition, leadership was respected because it was believed to be in contact with the spirits of ancestors.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, it is even suggested that a leader's power comes from the supernatural forces which interact with the visible world. There is continuity between the invisible and visible world.<sup>45</sup> This traditional belief was meant mainly to motivate the leadership to serve the people in the community. These moral values were distorted over time when African cultures were subdued by Western religions which intertwined with the colonial rules. Colonial rule in Africa impacted on people's minds, which finally were affected. At the time of independence of the African States, the first politicians had no other leadership model but that of the former colonisers. The latter was based on social injustice with a particular organisation that marginalised the people. These main features of leadership would not promote social change in most African States in copying the approach of colonial rule.

## 2 The Current African Leadership

The current situation of leadership throughout Africa remains complex. It is quite difficult to articulate its characteristics. Indeed, African cultures were interwoven with several forms of colonial systems that influenced the leadership as we have it today. In Africa, colonisers interconnected the spirits and socio-political administration in order to establish their colonial power. That administration often related to missionary ministries in colonies on the one

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<sup>42</sup> This language is "*KIYOMBE*," one of the *Bakongo* ethnic group languages in the Lower Congo Province, DRC, but also in South-East of Congo Brazzaville and the North of Angola. *Kiyombe* language is my mother tongue.

<sup>43</sup> Teresa Okure, "Belief in the Holy Spirit and in Ancestral Spirits," *Grace and Truth* 15/3 (1998):10; Justin Ukpong, "Inculturation Hermeneutics: An African Approach to Biblical Interpretation," in *The Bible in a World Context* (eds. Walter Dietrich and Ulrich Luz, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 15.

<sup>44</sup> Adeyemo, "Leadership," 546.

<sup>45</sup> Okure, "Belief in the Holy Spirit and Ancestral Spirits," 10; Justin Ukpong, "Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Directions," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 108 (2000): 16-17.

hand, and to the local customary system on the other. In this respect, colonisers solely aimed at establishing and centralising power in the colony.<sup>46</sup>

Today, the State leadership, in most of African countries, employs customary chiefs as the means of submitting the rural population to its political ideology. Furthermore, such customary chiefs are seen as the key persons interacting with the "spirit world." Customary chiefs would be efficient to sustain the power of politicians in order to keep them in office.<sup>47</sup> This has influenced the conception of the African leadership with regard to the way it assumes its responsibilities in any institution. African leadership pays particular attention to the spirit world as a source of authority and power.<sup>48</sup> Without denying this practice, I indicate that Africans need to distinguish the spirit reliance from their responsibilities to achieve social change in the community. Consulting "religious" or "spiritists" or traditional healers in the African context should not prevent the leadership from working hard in order to improve the public life of the people in Africa. The spirit reliance alone does not enable the leadership to bring social change in developing African communities. On the contrary, this traditional practice now affects the leadership's mind and takes it away from cultural values which had characterised the leadership in the African tradition.<sup>49</sup> Mungazi names these moral values as follows:

respect for democracy, integrity and honesty, essentials of personal character, commitment to principles of good government, confidence and trust of the people, faithfulness to procedure, respect of the views of other people, tolerance of diversity of opinion on national issues, respect for national constitutional law as defined by the legal system of the country, and respect of the input of the people in national programs.<sup>50</sup>

These cultural and moral values would have determined the African leadership style. Without these values, a leadership cannot be efficient in promoting a good society for all, free of corruption and violence against children and women. Today, it is well known that leadership, in most African countries, is characterised by mismanagement, bribery and corruption, and by favouring tribal circles for power sharing. In fact, the leadership's reliance on spirits turned it into an illusory self-protection, self-service and self-promotion.

<sup>46</sup> Emmanuel Katongole, "Violence and Social Imagination: Rethinking Theology and Politics in Africa," *Religion & Theology* 12/2 (2005): 146-147.

<sup>47</sup> Philip Borel, "Zaire," in *New Africa Year Book*, (eds. Linda van Baren and Alan Rake, London: IC Publications, 1996), 460.

<sup>48</sup> Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie ter Haar, *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2004), 3-4.

<sup>49</sup> Adeyemo, "Leadership," 546.

<sup>50</sup> Dickson Mungazi, *We Shall Not Fail: Values in the National Leadership of Seretse Khama, Nelson Mandela, and Julius Nyerere* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2005), xiv.

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Thereby, most leaders in Africa develop a selfish ambition that pushes them to desire remaining in office at the expense of the people and State.

Currently, leadership in most African countries fails to establish social justice in the community. Two reasons are at the base of this situation:

- i. A short-sighted leadership vision in which people from their tribal circles are brought into the inner circle in office.
- ii. They rely on Western powers in order to be secured in their political position.

In turn, these Western powers draw their reward from the countries' mineral resources. Since the time of independence, Africans have been waiting, in vain, for efficient leadership. Referring to Sun Tzu, Meyer argues that "leadership is a matter of intelligence, trustworthiness, humaneness and courage."<sup>51</sup> These moral values are still far from being experienced in most African countries. Today, the widespread poverty, malnutrition and disease as exemplified in the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria fever, blood pressure and other killer diseases are direct consequences of bad governance with a prevalent level of injustice and corruption in most countries in Africa.<sup>52</sup> A social devastation in some areas of Africa is caused primarily by Heads of State with their associates in power. A typical example of mismanagement is that of the Mobutu leadership in the Congo. Oyeshile further affirms:

the world champion grafter had to be Zairean dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. Until his dismissal in May 1997, he plundered his country's treasury to the extent of perhaps more than one billion American Dollars during the 32 years he ruled and bankrupted his country.<sup>53</sup>

To some extent, African leadership constitutes the cause of the devastating social situation in Africa as perceived in most of the States. To reverse such a situation, African leadership is in dire need of recovering moral values which characterise a country's leadership level as it previously existed in the African tradition. In this regard, Boon argues:

the heritage of the philosophy that comes to us through our traditional African roots is *ubuntu*: morality, humaneness, compassion, care, understanding and empathy. It is one of sharing and hospitality, of honesty and humility. Simply put, it is the ethic and interaction that occurs in the extended family. In Africa, it draws on all the

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<sup>51</sup> Terry Meyer, "The Nature of Leadership: Perspectives," in *Conversations in Leadership: South African Perspectives* (eds. Terry Meyer and Italia Boninelli, Randburg: Knowledge Resources, 2004), 3.

<sup>52</sup> Olatunji Oyeshile, "Communal Values, Cultural Identity and the Challenge of Development in Contemporary Africa," *Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies* 29/3 (2004): 291.

<sup>53</sup> Oyeshile, "Communal Values," 292.

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people. In this family, there is a community of shared values and equality.<sup>54</sup>

It means that the way the current leadership is exercising its authority over the African people does not meet the required conditions of "a responsible leadership." The question arises: to what extent is African leadership aware of the devastating social conditions of the people they lead? If the current African leadership fails in the exercise of its authority, it is mainly due to the fact that it does not promote social justice and solidarity of the people in the community.<sup>55</sup> Even though the leadership refers to the "spirit world" or spirits of ancestors, nevertheless, this reliance should not be corrupted into a mere means of self-protection.<sup>56</sup>

Today, African leadership's reliance on spirits has become solely a means to manipulate the associates of leaders and the people.<sup>57</sup> Such a practice has become a root cause of poor and short-sighted leadership in Africa.<sup>58</sup>

### **C RESEMBLANCES BETWEEN JEREMIAH'S TEXTS ON צֶמַח IN THEIR CONTEXTS AND THE AFRICAN LEADERSHIP SITUATION**

The Judean ruling class who governed the kingdom in Jeremiah's time was blamed for its wrong-doing. The announcement of the arrival of "a loyal leader" suggests the removal of the previous Davidic leaders. In fact, the Hebrew metaphor (as expressed in the oracle on the "branch") symbolises the sprouting forth of a "loyal leadership" from the Davidic line.<sup>59</sup> This true leadership to come would be morally efficient to care for the people and to develop a good society for all, free of corruption and violence.

The question arises: how do these issues relate to the current African leadership situation? The answer to this question underlines resemblances between the leadership context in Jeremiah's time and the current African [Congolese] leadership situation. This prepares a common ground which focuses on two contexts as poles that determine the interpretive instruments in the

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<sup>54</sup> Mike Boon, *The African Way: The Power of Interactive Leadership* (Wynberg: Zebra Press, 1996), 31.

<sup>55</sup> Boon, *The African Way: The Power of Interactive Leadership*, 32.

<sup>56</sup> Meyer, "The Nature of Leadership: Perspectives," 3.

<sup>57</sup> Ellis and Ter Haar, *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa*, 3-4.

<sup>58</sup> McGrath Skinner, "Political and Governmental Corruption," in *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, (ed. Edgar F. Borgatta, London, NY: Macmillan, 2000), 2133.

<sup>59</sup> Martin Abegg, "צֶמַח," in *New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis 3* (ed. Willem A. Van Gemeren, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 816.

contextual reading process.<sup>60</sup> My particular use of Ukpong's contextual reading of Jeremiah's texts (duly considered in their contexts) takes into account Draper's third pole in the appropriative process.<sup>61</sup> I consider the texts on *šemah* in their contexts and the context of leadership in Africa as two sets of protagonists which mirror in each other.

## 1 The Failure of the Leadership in Judah in Jeremiah's Time

Jeremiah's time was marked by the rule of five kings (from Josiah to Zedekiah) who successively sat on the Judean throne. It was a particular epoch characterised by a stranglehold of the great powers over Judah. Powerful empires of the day conquered Judah for its strategic position in the Ancient Near East. Furthermore, the personal attitude of kings who were relying on these great powers turned them away from social justice and fairness in the community. Hence, in seeking their short-sighted outcomes, the Judean kings neglected their responsibilities over the people.<sup>62</sup> It had become common in Jeremiah's time that Judean kings (as individuals) follow their own personal benefits. This had no doubt damaged the interests of the entire community.<sup>63</sup>

Such behaviour (in every high level of the State leadership of the day) brought about the debacle in terms of social disorder in the Judean community. Judean kings, having turned away from God's instructions, became proud and self-minded leaders so that they often followed their own political line. The way they exercised authority over the people led them to develop a personal "political culture" which brought about social destruction.<sup>64</sup> It means that Judean kings became inefficient in caring for the people and developing a good society for the people. In fact, the moral values as required of the Judean ruling

<sup>60</sup> Justin Ukpong, "Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa," 16; Jonathan Draper, "Reading the Bible as Conversation: A Theory and Methodology for Contextual Interpretation of the Bible in Africa," *Grace and Truth* 19/2 (2002): 18.

<sup>61</sup> Draper, "Reading the Bible as Conversation," 18; Gerald West, "Interpreting 'the Exile' in African Biblical Scholarship: An Ideo-Theological Dilemma in Post-colonial South Africa," in *Exile and Suffering: A Selection of Papers Read at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meeting of the Old Testament Society of South Africa, Pretoria August 2007* (eds. Bob Becking and Dirk Human, Leiden: Brill, 2009), 250-252.

<sup>62</sup> Jimmy J. M. Roberts, "In Defence of Monarchy: The Contribution of Israelite Kingship to Biblical Theology," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honour of Frank Moore Cross* (eds. Patrick Miller, Paul D. Hanson and Dean S. McBride, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 383.

<sup>63</sup> Shah Tarzi, "International Norms, Trade, and Human Rights: A Perspective on Norm Conformity," *Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies* 27/2 (2002): 187.

<sup>64</sup> Mehran Kamrava, "Intellectuals and Democracy in the Third World," *Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies* 14/2 (1989): 228.

class had been gradually affected.<sup>65</sup> The lack of cultural and moral values led kings to fail to establish social justice in the community. A "loyal leadership" (symbolised by the metaphor of  $\eta\mu\zeta$  in Jeremiah's oracle) was being sprouted forth by Yahweh as a result of removing the preceding Davidic kings from the Judean throne. In a similar way, most of the peoples in Africa are longing to see their nations' and States' situations be transformed. This desire suggests a situation of leadership failure in most African States.

## 2 The Failure of Leadership in Most African States

The story of Judean leadership's experience resembles that of the leadership in Africa. Leadership in most African States remains under the control of Western powers. This dates back to the time when African States became independent from their previous colonial masters. In many African countries like the DRC, Western powers manipulate even local ruling classes to assassinate politicians who do not sustain their interests and political vision. This happened when President Kasa-Vubu and Mobutu were influenced to eliminate one among them in office at a specific time of conflict within the ruling class of the day. They directed the assassination of Lumumba with the support the United States of America through its Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).<sup>66</sup>

This kind of killing just to stay in office has hindered Africa from progress with regard to leaders' tolerance of other politicians' views. Diversity of views among leadership is not well perceived so that democracy remains a struggle within the State or church leadership in Africa. African leadership would improve if it should start considering the ethnic, cultural and moral diversities that could build a good society for Africans. A lack of tolerance characterises the leadership whether for the State or any other institution in Africa. This brings about conflicts that render it difficult, for African leadership, to reach a consensus on matters regarding the administration of justice in the community.

## D AN INTERACTIVE READING OF THE $\eta\mu\zeta$ TEXTS IN JEREMIAH WITH THE AFRICAN LEADERSHIP CONTEXT

In this section, Jeremiah's texts on the "branch" in their contexts and the context of the African leadership are put into dialogue. In this process, I play a specific role as a third pole supervising the conversation of the two aforemen-

<sup>65</sup> Kamrava, "Intellectuals and Democracy in the Third World," 229; Jesse Mugambi, "Africa and the Old Testament," in *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa: Papers from the International Symposium on Africa and the Old Testament in Nairobi, October 1999* (eds. Mary Getui, Knut Holter and Victor Zinkurature, New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 17.

<sup>66</sup> Van Rensburg, *Africa's Men of Destiny*, 421

tioned contexts. As a result, a new insight arises in order to show to the African leadership a way of managing public affairs and developing States.<sup>67</sup>

## 1 The Royal Oracle in Jeremiah 23

Jeremiah 23:1-8 introduces the dynastic oracle by announcing a "judgment on the Judean leadership for their corrupt behaviour which had characterised their rule." A poetic oracle is mingled with a narrative prose which parallels, supplants and explains the oracle. The narrative prose, indeed, presents the indictment against Judean leadership and hope for a better future (Jer 22-23).<sup>68</sup> This literary style challenges Judean leadership to practise social justice in the community. Furthermore, it encourages the leadership to care for the poor and needy in society. This underlines a good administration of justice that should have characterised the kings' rule in Judah (Jer 22:3, 15-16).

Jeremiah speaks against the oppression of the poor as a key issue addressed in Zion-Jerusalem (Jer 6:6; Amos 4:1). In fact, the message against crime in Jeremiah (22:3) is also indicated in 22:17 where Jehoiakim is found victim of this behaviour. Jehoiakim had murdered Uriah who prophesied, in the name of the Lord, against the holy city and the land as Jeremiah did (Jer 26:20-23).<sup>69</sup> This context of leadership in Judah had motivated the oracle on the "branch," particularly in Jeremiah. Its metaphoric sense "symbolises the sprouting forth of a 'loyal king' in the Davidic line" (Jer 23:1-8). This king is expected to be efficient to care for the people in doing them justice (vv. 5-6).

In a similar way, most African leaders are blamed for their lack of justice and fairness in their rules. Leadership, most of the time, witnesses a lack of responsibility to the people it leads. This is due to the fact that African leadership gives much attention to things that do not promote social justice in the community. In fact, ruling classes in most African States become richer while their peoples' right is ruled out to their short-sighted benefit. The gap between both categories of social lives suggests not only a mismanagement of the States' wealth, but also a short-sighted vision based on the leadership's self-centred interests. Such selfishness led to an abuse of power in terms of murdering the associates in office. This happened when the first President of the Congo, Joseph Kasa-Vubu for instance, with the connivance of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) on behalf of the USA, arranged to assassinate Patrice Lumumba. Such crimes hindered social justice and the development of the Judean community during the rule of most of the Judean kings in Jeremiah's time. Jehoiakim murdered the prophet Uriah, whose socio-cultural and religious vision of the day had not met that of Jeremiah challenging the king. This lack of flexibility due to the intolerance of other leaders' viewpoints

<sup>67</sup> Draper, "Reading the Bible as Conversation," 16.

<sup>68</sup> Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, 35.

<sup>69</sup> Christl Maier, "Jeremiah as Teacher of Torah," *Interpretation* 62/1 (2008): 27.

has led to the assassination of many innocent leaders; be it in the Judean socio-political context. In Africa, this leadership attitude has created among them the fear of being eliminated. In this regard, it hinders democracy and "freedom of expression" which are "a basic human right."<sup>70</sup>

Freedom can be realised in every African State if the ruling class could assume an alternative way of practising social justice, fairness (in its exercise of authority) with regard to the administration of public affairs. In moments when the current situation seems hopeless, Yahweh would raise up "loyal leaders" in order to establish a suitable social organisation and development in African States. This is not impossible if Africans themselves are aware of their situation and take heart to work out their devastating social situation in establishing peace and harmony in the community. This was the process of restoration of Zion-Jerusalem after the Judean learning experience from the Babylonian Exile. Lane asserts that a negative experience can arouse the "power" or "capacity" which "provokes" hope in the people in need.<sup>71</sup> Negative experiences Africans have from their leadership's rules can thus "generate a movement of hope" among them.

A hopeless social situation in most countries in Africa could be restored in a similar way as happened in Judah in Jeremiah's time.<sup>72</sup> A prophetic voice recognised God's saving presence in the situation. It means that when Yahweh punished his people, it was a process of bringing them back to the covenantal obedience. Indeed, God's judgment brings hope for a better future in people's lives in the community. Stromberg says that the "raising up" of the "branch"

<sup>70</sup> Elisabeth Walter, ed., *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 494.

<sup>71</sup> Dermot Lane argues that "such experiences include the awareness of human historicity and the contingency of life as well as the realities of suffering, injustice and death itself. The experience of evil, the reality of suffering and the omnipresence of death bring the individual to the limits of life....It is at this juncture that the base of hope for a better life begins to assume a religious colouration by affirming the presence and the existence of a transcendent dimension to life itself....The act of hope concerns trust and self-surrender to the direction implied within the experiences of self-transcendence. Hope is about allowing ourselves to be drawn in the direction of self-transcendence in the expectation that we will not be disappointed and in the belief that there is a source animating the movement of the human spirit." It is therefore a positive attitude that brings about hope in a hopeless situation. Cf. Dermot Lane, *Keeping Hope Alive: Stirrings in Christian Theology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996), 66. Despite the weak and corrupt leadership in the Congo, in particular, and in Africa in general, there is hope for a "loyal leadership" that would set up social justice in African States.

<sup>72</sup> Bernard Robinson, "Jeremiah's New Covenant: Jer. 31:31-34," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 15/2 (2001): 182.

from the line of David concerns every person in the world.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, this promise and its story, in Judean life, bring hope to [Africans] in terms of God providing the [Africa] with a "loyal and efficient leadership." A "loyal leadership" in Africa will drive societal transformation.

## 2 The Royal Oracle in Jeremiah 33

Jeremiah 33:14-26 presents a real link between the civil and priestly leadership in the process of restoration of Zion-Jerusalem. It means that these two categories of leadership had to collaborate for a social change in the community.<sup>74</sup> Such collaboration would promote a united nation and establish "peace and security" in African States. This leadership disposition would be of significance for the current African situation. Such a disposition would strengthen a moral education which African leadership needs in promoting a good society for all. A moral education was a key factor which led the civil and priestly leadership, after the Babylonian Exile, to restore the social situation in Zion-Jerusalem.

Jeremiah announces the beginning of social restoration in terms of a promise. This is expressed as a "sprouting forth" of a "branch."<sup>75</sup> This "branch" has some specific characteristics which presents the quality of being "just" on the one hand; and has the ability to do people "justice" (Jer 23:5; 33:15) on the other. These qualities and abilities are yet expected in African leadership to achieve social change in the community. Particular tenses expressed by the verbs of the aforementioned *הצמח* verses in Jeremiah describe a causal action. It consists of a "sprouting forth" of an "upright leader" who would be efficient at bringing about social transformation. This social change expresses leadership competency on behalf of Yahweh who empowers them.

This oracular section presents an "internal literary coherence" and a "syntactic change" which "suggests" the capital city, Zion-Jerusalem, being a "central point from which the Judean restoration was made" (33:16).<sup>76</sup> In Africa, social organisation and development of the capital city reflect not only the country's leadership standard, but also the social development of the country. The contrary is true as well. One of the facts characterising the restoration of Zion-Jerusalem was that "Jerusalem shall be the throne of Yahweh" (Jer 3:17).<sup>77</sup> The capital city of Judah, Zion-Jerusalem, ought to be a twofold representative; the throne of Yahweh on the one hand, and the presence of the king

<sup>73</sup> Jacob Stromberg, "The 'Root of Jesse' in Isaiah 11:10: Postexilic Judah, or Postexilic Davidic King?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127/4 (2008):655.

<sup>74</sup> Diamond, "Jeremiah," 592.

<sup>75</sup> William Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2002), 142.

<sup>76</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 636; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 537-544.

<sup>77</sup> "In those coming days, Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety, and be called Yahweh our righteousness" (Jer 33:16 NIV).

on behalf of Yahweh on the other. Indeed, the oracles in vv.14-26 refer to royal and priestly offices.<sup>78</sup> This suggests that a moral education is required for a State leadership level on the African continent as it was in the Judean context of social transformation after the Exile. Currently, the devastating social situation in most States in Africa is perceived through social disorder in their capital cities which reveal a poor and short-sighted leadership. This current leadership situation, in most African States, opens a perspective of hope for a "morally" and academically educated leadership.

## E CONCLUSION

Leadership in most African States is failing to develop public responsibility in the community. It is like the Judean leadership in Jeremiah's time who failed its administration of justice in the southern kingdom. One of the reasons for its failure was that the ruling class in Judah was seeking political support from the great powers of the day. Furthermore, these great powers, namely Egypt and Babylon, were conquering Judah for its strategic position in the Ancient Near East. This twofold reason turned the Judean ruling class away from God's concern for justice. These instructions had been the condition for the people of God to maintain the covenant Yahweh made with them.

Even though Yahweh provided his people with kings to rule over them, they would have to govern over the people on his behalf. Yahweh had remained the true king ruling over his people through the kings. In turning away from Yahweh's instructions, kings disregarded the constitution that would have led them to administer justice in the community. Thereby, the ruling class became unable to promote public life and improve social justice in the Judean community. This brought about the debacle of the Exile as a punishment Yahweh inflicted on his people. This judgment over the people turned into a learning experience which brought them back to renew their covenantal relationship with Yahweh. As a result, a "loyal leadership" who was morally educated rose up as God's providential action. This leadership was efficient in rebuilding a good society for all; free of corruption and social injustice. A new perspective for social change was then opened in the Judean community after the Exile.

This story is of relevance for the current struggle for a "loyal leadership" in most African States. Our current suffering in our own land, as a learning experience which the people of God faced into the Exile, opens hope for good governance in African States. From morally and academically educated people, God would always be available to "sprout forth," for African States, good and efficient leaders. A "loyal leadership" in Judah had been God's providential action through a suffering exile. In a similar way, the current suffering of the African people opens hope for good leadership for States on the African continent. This dream can be fulfilled when Africans are committed to working out

<sup>78</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 638

their social situation in order to meet the requirements that make good and efficient leaders.

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Dr. Joseph N. Mavinga, University of KwaZulu-Natal, P.O.Box 101295, Scottsville 3209, South Africa. *Email*: mavinga\_j@yahoo.com.