

THE OLD TESTAMENT BABYLONIAN EXILE :

A SOCIO-POLITICAL STUDY

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study is a materialist literary analysis of the Deuteronomistic History, with particular reference to the Elijah-cycle which culminates in the Naboth Episode (IKings 21), and its appropriation by the oppressed in their situation and experience of oppression in contemporary societies.

The materialist literary criticism which is adopted in this thesis, requires an approach to the Bible which views it as a text and at the same time a social activity. This requires that the contemporary oppressed must inquire into the social class of the writers of the Deuteronomistic History in order for them to appropriate it properly to their situation.

The thesis of this study is that the contemporary oppressed misappropriate the Naboth Episode (IKings 21), the focus of the Elijah-cycle, to their situation and experience of oppression in contemporary societies. The social class represented by the historian and the interests secured by the text are not those of the ruled classes but the ruling classes of Israelite society who were taken to the Babylonian exile. The Deuteronomistic History is a useful text for the group of contemporary ruling classes who might one day find themselves in exile.

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PREFACE

One of the major questions in Biblical Studies today is the question of redaction in the Bible. This question is nowhere more pressing than in the books of the Old Testament, collectively called the Deuteronomistic History; namely, Deuteronomy, Judges, First and Second Samuel and First and Second Kings. The standard approach of the redaction literary criticism of the Old Testament is to locate the redaction in their historical context, for example, the monarchy or the exile. In this approach, the material of the Deuteronomistic History is explained in terms of the period in which it was written. The historical dimension of the Deuteronomistic History also plays a decisive role in its appropriation by the contemporary oppressed to their situation and experience of oppression in contemporary societies. The contemporary oppressed have often assumed that they can draw a parallel between their forced removals, banishments and exiles and the Babylonia exile as portrayed in the Old Testament. They have, however, not asked who were the people taken to the Babylonian exile. The need to ask this question becomes even more pressing in contemporary societies where the oppressed are exiled at home and away from home. They have not inquired into what social class was represented and the interests secured by the exiles when they were in the land, before they were taken to the Babylonian exile. It appears, therefore, that there is a need to analyze the social class of the biblical exiles even before the relevance of the Deuteronomistic History in the struggles of the contemporary oppressed can be asserted.

This thesis is a contribution to such an inquiry. In it an attempt is made to introduce the materialist literary paradigm in a quest for the social class represented and the interests secured by the Deuteronomistic History as the text of the Babylonian exiles.

I am deeply indebted to many people, individually and collectively, for the support in the analysis of the struggles of the oppressed as portrayed in the Old Testament. I sincerely wish to express my gratitude to my mother, Kedirileg, my sister, Pinkey, Mpho and Mannyane, and my brother, Bookholane. They have provided the immediate family and a base for the broader social context wherein to pursue this inquiry. For this I am also indebted to the family of Dr. I.J. Mosala during my stay in Cape Town for their encouragement, concern and trust in me. A special word of thanks go to Dr. I.J. Mosala for his support, academically and financially, over the past four years, his advice deserves special mention. To the members of the Department of Religious Studies, staff and graduate students, I wish to say thank you and express the hope that they will forever continue with the good work they have done up to now. Dr. C. Villa-Vicencio arranged for a supplementary bursary assistance from the Methodist Church and constantly reminded me that I have to meet the dead line, Dr. Bill Domeris supervised this thesis in its initial stages. To both go my thanks. I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. C.A. Wanamaker, my supervisor, for his expert guidance, sharp and critical as it was, is highly appreciated. Despite the urge and need to do justice to academic standards, you at all times remained understanding and willing to help me cover my bare academic

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Among the most important questions in theology today is the way the Bible is to be understood, namely, the hermeneutical starting point and the decisive symbol in theological interpretation. This question is nowhere more pressing than among the oppressed who are struggling to understand the Bible in the light of their situation and experience of oppression. In particular, it is a problem for South African Blacks who are in exile abroad and as well as Blacks who have become exiles in the land of their birth. The oppressed are struggling to understand that God sides with the oppressed in their daily experience of oppression. Such an understanding of the Bible forms what can be called the two poles of the biblical hermeneutics of liberation of Black Theology in South Africa. These structuring poles of the biblical hermeneutics of liberation are decisive for Black Theology of liberation as J.H. Cone has demonstrated. He writes:

The Bible is the witness to God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ. Thus the black experience requires that Scripture be a source of Black Theology. For it was Scripture that enabled slaves to affirm a view of God that differed radically from that of the slave masters. The slave masters' intention was to present a 'Jesus' who would make the slave obedient and docile. Jesus was supposed to make black people better slaves, that is, faithful servants of white masters. But many blacks rejected that view of Jesus, not only because it contradicted their African heritage, but because it contradicted the witness of Scripture. (1975:31)

The relationship of these two poles have become the subject

of fierce debate in reading the Bible in the interest of the oppressed communities in contemporary societies. The debate is whether the decisive authority in biblical hermeneutics of liberation should be the situation of the oppressed readers in contemporary societies or the oppressed classes as revealed in the Bible as the word of God, in general, and in the Deuteronomistic History as the historical record of the exiles in the Old Testament, in particular. The Deuteronomistic History will be used in this thesis to refer to the following books of the Old Testament: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, First and Second Samuel, and First and Second Kings.

Black Theology in South Africa has traditionally asserted the superiority of the situation of the oppressed classes as revealed in the Deuteronomistic History over that of the oppressed in contemporary societies by using the Exodus as a fundamental symbol for a theology of liberation (D.M. Tutu 1983:74). This assertion, representative of similar assertions in theologies of liberation (G. Gutierrez 1974:155; J.S. Croatto 1981:15), not only assumes the similarity of the social class of the exiles revealed in the Deuteronomistic History with that of the exiles in contemporary societies but also severs religious consciousness from the material conditions upon which it arises. This assumption of similar social class positions between the Israelite and contemporary South African exiles finds particular expression in the separation of religious consciousness from the rest of social consciousness, and

presupposes distinct material origins for both forms of consciousness among the Biblical and contemporary exiles. This position is not only untenable for the analysis of the situation of the contemporary exiles but also for the analysis of early Israelite religion and society which serves as the model for understanding the contemporary experience of exile. In his analysis of the emergence of Israel in Palestine N.K. Gottwald makes this point when he writes:

Such a separation is not only questionable; it is absolutely contradictory to the intimate union of religion and the social order in early Israel. The Israelite social revolution and Israelite Yahwism constituted an inseparable whole from which no nonsocial, nonrevolutionary, or solely "religious" elements can be isolated even for purposes of analytical convenience. Of course, one can focus on the explicitly religious dimensions of ideology and cult in early Israel, but in doing so there is no way of avoiding the fact that one is analyzing the ideology and cult of a social revolution (1979:594).

The common origin of the religious consciousness and the rest of social consciousness from the material conditions in any society is a reminder that the consciousness of one society cannot be uncritically appropriated to another, anymore than that the consciousness of one social class can be uncritically appropriated to another social class. The consciousness of the exiles that we read about in the Deuteronomistic History cannot be uncritically appropriated by the exiles in contemporary societies. Rather, that consciousness must be critiqued in the light of the social class of the exiles and the material conditions of their world in order to empower the contemporary oppressed and

exiled in their struggles.

The text of the Deuteronomistic History as it stand is at best ambiguous and at worst supportive of the oppressor of the Israelite society. The ambiguity finds particular expression in the ruling class ideology in which it is cast. Its reactionary nature finds particular expression in the way it supports the once ruling class who are now in exile in their anticipation of returning to the land. Furthermore, the Deuteronomistic History supports the contemporary ruling classes in their allegation of abuse of power against the demand of the oppressed classes for social equality and justice. In his analysis of the social consciousness and the material basis of early Israel, N.K. Gottwald highlights the dominant ideology and social organization of early Israel when he writes:

Anti-statism in tribal organization form is never a rejection of power, but rather the rejection (or nonattainment) of particular forms of political power organized and exercised hierarchically. In place of centralized power in the state, the tribal or intertribal community distributes power on a more egalitarian design (1979:600)

The Deuteronomistic History appropriates this social consciousness of early Israel to the situation of the Israelite exiles at the expense of and against the remnants of Israelite society in the land. The social class and the ideological interests of the Deuteronomistic Historian have eluded the theologies of liberation in their appropriation of the Deuteronomistic History. The advocates of theologies of

liberation have uncritically assumed that they could correlate the experience of oppression in the text of the Deuteronomistic History with their own situation of oppression in contemporary society. This is a fundamental mistake because they fail to recognize that the Deuteronomistic History was written from the perspective of the ruling class who wish to return to their position of social privilege and political power in the land (G.V. Pixley 1981:56). This thesis will attempt to demonstrate that the plight of the exiles in the Deuteronomistic History is cast within a ruling class ideology and therefore that it cannot be directly appropriated by the exiles of the oppressed classes in contemporary societies.

This thesis is located within the broad framework pioneered by N.K. Gottwald (1985) in his The Hebrew Bible A Socio-Literary Introduction and draws on the materialist literary criticism. This thesis will attempt to make a contribution to this new approach to biblical studies on two levels: the theoretical and the analytical. On the theoretical level it introduces a materialist literary approach to the notion of the Old Testament Babylonian exile and seeks to refine the work that has gone before by arguing that the ideological and the social class presentation of the exile can only be properly appreciated when a materialist approach is applied. On the analytical level it will attempt to analyze the appropriation of the Old Testament Babylonian exile by contemporary Black and Liberation Theologies in order to demonstrate their methodological problematic (Bonino 1975:86-

108; J.L. Segundo 1976:7-38) of their use of the material.

This thesis argues that the Babylonian exile is the culmination of social and political judgment against the ruling classes of Judah in Israelite society in general. The judgment is in response to the violation of the precepts and principles of socio-political equality among the Israelite, and in relation to neighbouring societies. The underlying assumption of this thesis is that the oppressed of Israelite society who were left to remain in the land where exiled in the Promised Land. Furthermore, this thesis presupposes that the conflicts and the contradictions between the ruling classes and the ruled classes before the exile and during the exile, are literarily concealed in the Deuteronomistic History, emphasizing the racial harmony, classlessness and sexism free nature of Monarchical Yahwism while underplaying the significance of the social and ideological element of Pre-Monarchical Yahwism.

I propose to demonstrate my thesis by locating the Israelite exiles in the context of Israelite society before the Babylonian invasion, by showing, in the second chapter, that it was primarily the ruling classes who went into exile and that they were responsible for the production of the Deuteronomistic History. The third chapter is an analysis of the Elijah-cycle as it culminates in the Naboth Episode

(IKings 21), as an example of the Deuteronomistic Historian's literary manipulation of history of early Israel for ruling class interests. This example has been chosen because this text is often uncritically appropriated in the contemporary struggles. The fourth chapter is a critique of the Deuteronomistic History's notion of exile/captivity from the perspective of a Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation. The conclusion wraps up the argument of this thesis that the appropriation of the Old Testament notion of exile by the contemporary societies is eluded by the Deuteronomistic Historian's literary resolution of material conflicts between the oppressors and the oppressed remnants who were exiled in the Promised Land. At the beginning of the analysis of the Deuteronomistic History, I would like to set forth the notion that what is ideologically valid for the Deuteronomistic History can be extended to the literature of the Old Testament. Both owe their ideological critique to the ruling classes. With that I come to the methodological framework which underlies the argument of this thesis.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological framework which will be adopted in this thesis is grounded in the redaction critical study of the Old Testament. Redaction criticism, as is well known, is itself based on the assumptions and results of literary and form critical studies. The approach of literary criticism in the Old Testament is helpfully discussed by N.C. Habel (1971) and that of form criticism by G.M. Tucker (1971). The advantages and limitations of the literary and form criticism are well illustrated by C.E. Armerding (1983). The literary criticism of the Old Testament have traditionally accepted that the historians of the Deuteronomistic History used oral and written sources in their edition of the history of the twelve tribal confederacy of Israel. These documents have been identified as the Yahwist (J), the Elohist (E), the Deuteronomic (D) and the Priestly (P) sources. Form criticism of the Old Testament has revealed that the editors of the material used literary forms as the medium of conveying their message. The historians of the Deuteronomistic History used the material from these documents and the literary genres in their edition of what we now have as the Deuteronomistic History (E.T. Mullen, Jr. 1987). The Deuteronomistic History contains not only the traditions of the Southern Kingdom but also those of the Northern Kingdom of Israel which were kept in the Southern Kingdom of Israel from the time of the Assyrian exile in 722 B.C.

N.K. Gottwald in his The Hebrew Bible A Socio-Literary Introduction (1985:301) observes that in their edition of the material, the historians of the Deuteronomistic History had clear social class interests and ideological commitments. The social class and its interests secured by the historians is betrayed by their ambiguous position on, among other things, their understanding of obedience to the covenant with Yahweh and its implications for social justice and religious purity. In other words the text of the Deuteronomistic History as we now have it is not a product of divine inspiration as it has traditionally been maintained. It is rather a theological response of the sixth century B.C. to the fate which had befallen the "chosen people" in the Babylonian conquest and exile.

The redaction of the Deuteronomistic History has traditionally been explained in terms of the historical period in which each edition took place, namely, the Josianic redaction was undertaken after the fall of Samaria by the editors of Judah whose kingdom was still surviving; the exilic redaction was undertaken during the Babylonian exile. In this thesis however, an attempt will be made to explain the redaction of the Deuteronomistic History within the social class context of the redactors themselves. In order to demonstrate the argument of this thesis we will adopt a materialist literary analysis. The materialist literary analysis asserts that the literary forms, as the medium

through which the writers convey their message, and the message itself are both ideological: ideology gives the literary forms content while at the same time giving content form. An attempt will be made to demonstrate that the editors were not offering a theological explanation of what has happened but were asserting their social class and attempting to secure their interests through this theological explanation.

CHAPTER 2

This study will attempt to demonstrate the importance of the Old Testament notion of exile to the understanding of the Old Testament in general (P.R. Acroyd 1968), and the struggles of the oppressed (E. Tamez 1982; D.M. Tutu 1983) in South Africa, in particular. No attempt will be made to discuss the viability of the exile as a strategic option in the human liberation movement. The importance of the Old Testament notion of exile to the understanding of the struggles of the oppressed becomes crucial when the oppressed cite the Bible - the Old Testament in particular - in their insistence that God is on the side of the oppressed in their situation and experience of oppression. D. Tutu corroborates this contention in his lamentation over the way this fact has not been taken seriously. He writes:

Thus the theology we have purveyed has often been disastrously cut off from real life. We have acquiesced in the denial of the authenticity of our life experiences or our distinctive selfhood, the agenda of which has been determined by the Westerners. (1973:271)

The "Westerners" may be justifiably accused for setting the agenda in underplaying the importance of the situation and experience of the oppressed in contemporary societies, in their theological practices. The contemporary oppressed may also be faulted for assuming that they can uncritically relate the struggles of the oppressed in the Bible to their own situation. The text of the Old Testament, particularly the Deuteronomistic History, explicitly states that Yahweh is on the side of the oppressed in their situation and experience of oppression, especially the exile. Such a

reading of the Deuteronomic History in particular, and understanding of the Old Testament in general is in agreement with the contemporary oppressed in their citation of this text. However, if the Deuteronomic History is to be read in the interests of the contemporary oppressed in their assertion that Yahweh sides with the exiles, we need to ask the question: who are the oppressed in the Deuteronomic History, what is their historical social class position in the Israelite social structure? The struggles of the biblical exiles suggests that the assertion that Yahweh sides with the oppressed in their situation and experience of oppression be clearly articulated in the Old Testament in general, and the Deuteronomic History in particular. The fact is, however, that the assertion that Yahweh is on the side of the oppressed in their situation and experience of oppression, reveals the social class and ideological interests against the existing social structure and the dominant ideology for which such allegations are made. B. Goba (1978:20) makes this point eloquently when he asserts that the situation of oppression and the African worldview must be taken seriously in the reading and teaching of Biblical studies.

In order to help correct the situation this study will critically analyze the appropriation of the Old Testament by the oppressed in South Africa in their struggles against social inequality and political injustice. In this chapter an attempt will be made to analyze the social class of the Old Testament Babylonian exiles and to demonstrate that their

historical social class position is wrongly taken for granted by the contemporary exiles.

The contemporary oppressed have traditionally asserted the importance of their situation and experience of oppression in the understanding and teaching of the Bible. For the purpose of analysis this assertion can be articulated as follows: The African worldview must be taken seriously in the reading of the Bible. The African worldview is conceptually parallel with the worldview of the oppressed revealed in the Bible. God sides with the oppressed in their situation and experience of oppression. It must also be deduced from these assertions that the contemporary oppressed have too easily presupposed a similarity of social class between themselves and the oppressed in the Old Testament, especially the Deuteronomistic History. But who are the oppressed and exiles we are reading about in the Deuteronomistic History? The contemporary exiles have traditionally not asked the question: what social class produced the text of the Deuteronomistic History, and what are the class interests served by the text? They have failed to ask what social class ideological perspective is implicit, and what social class ideological perspective is explicit in the presentation of the Babylonian exile in the Old Testament in general, and the Deuteronomistic History in particular? It will become clear that the contemporary exiles appropriate the Old Testament notion of exile outside the social class and ideological context of their existing material conditions

today. For this reason we will take our cue from the words of Friedrich Engels when he writes:

In order to develop their revolutionary energy, to become conscious of their own hostile attitude towards all other elements of society, to concentrate themselves as a class, the lower strata of society must begin by stripping themselves of everything that could reconcile them to the existing social system; they must renounce the few pleasures that make their grievous position in the least tolerable for the moment, and of which the severest oppression could not deprive them. (1984:471)

In this case, what 'reconciles' the contemporary exiles to the dominant group in the status quo is in their appropriation of the Old Testament to their situation, to take for granted that they have a common plight with the Babylonian exiles. The 'few pleasures' is the allegation that the God of the Babylonian exiles is also on their side and similarly supports their struggles. In his contention of the biblical foundation of the African worldview, Tutu confirms this suspicion when he asserts the conceptual parallelism between the African and the biblical worldview. He writes:

Those who denigrated things African would probably be surprised to discover that the African way of life, his Weltanschauung, his thought forms, are those, not only of the Old Testament but those of the entire Bible, since the New Testament is based so firmly on the Old Testament. (1972:19)

The conceptual parallelism asserted between the African and the Biblical worldview is crucial to the understanding of the Old Testament notion of exile and the struggles of the oppressed in South Africa. This conceptual parallelism

reaches its climax in the assumption that the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles have as their contemporary counterparts the exiles in Lusaka and elsewhere. Such contentions raise hopes to the effect that Yahweh is on the side of the oppressed in their struggle against the existing social structure and the religious ideology in which it is cloaked in the same way as S/He is presented as being on the side of the oppressed in the Deuteronomistic History. It is also contended that Yahweh will restore contemporary exiles to their land in the same way that S/He restored the biblical exiles to the Promised Land. D.M. Tutu corroborates this view in his appropriation of the Old Testament notion of the Babylonian exile, and the promise of restoration in the Priestly (P) document, in order to inspire the hope of the banished in South Africa. He writes:

And it is out of such a slough of despond [sic] that this marvelous theological tract arises and it is addressed precisely to the Jews who were without hope. It is a tremendous credal statement designed to keep the embers of hope in the breasts of the Jews from going out completely. (1983:25)

The conceptual parallelism between the Biblical world view and the African world view is not a historical guarantee that God sides with the oppressed anymore than it is an assurance of the certainty of future liberation. The point I want to stress here is that there is a need to look critically into the social class of the Babylonian exiles in the text of the Old Testament. This is the literary battle the oppressed have to win in order to appropriate the Babylonian exile to the class and ideological struggles in contemporary societies. It is not enough to point out to the congruence

of the thought forms of the contemporary oppressed to that of the scriptures. Sergio Rostagno aptly describes this attitude and method of appropriating the scriptures when he writes:

Affirmations to the effect that Yahweh is on the side of the poor have given rise, strangely enough, to interpretations such as "the poor [wo]lman is closer to God". With this poverty becomes sacrosanct (there will always be poor people), which is in stark contrast to the sense of social justice which runs through the great prophetic witness and is at the root of the legislation. Once the state of poverty is considered a privileged situation, the way lies open to quietism. (1983:64)

It is equally important to enquire into the social class and ideological interests secured by the presentation of these thought forms and the perspective from which the "prophetic witness" is presented in the Old Testament in general, and the Deuteronomistic History in particular. It cannot be contested that the contemporary exiles are a force to reckon with in finding a solution to the contemporary crises in South Africa. In his discussion of the situation and the factors that are necessary to bring about peaceful social relations and administration of justice, C. Villa-Vicencio explicitly expresses this view. He is probably representative of the opinion of the majority of the South Africans when he declares:

The third reality is that two major liberation movements exist in exile, a fact that simply cannot be ignored in any serious quest for peace in the country. (1985:14, 1987:3)

However, the notion of exile as a symbolic weapon for the struggle, has not yet become founded on and informed by the social class and ideological conflicts in contemporary societies. To this extent it is a symbol that is not

informed by the situation and experiences of oppression of the struggling black masses. Mosala aptly describes this experience when he asserts:

This forcible removal of blacks from ownership, control and access to land and cattle is the foundational condition of their oppression and exploitation. Without it oppression and exploitation would be difficult. It is the principle upon which the control and regulation of the lives of blacks by whites rests. And this is the explanation for the pervasiveness of forced removal to this day. (1987:22)

The notion of exile has served its purpose well as a symbol of biblical condemnation against the existing social structure and values. That 'consciousness', however, does not exhaust the need for 'stripping themselves of everything that could reconcile them to the existing social system'. The major reason why the notion of exile has not exposed the plight of the contemporary oppressed may lie in the fact that it is forgotten that those remaining in South Africa are also in exile at home. This fact is crucial for the understanding of the contemporary oppressed in the same way as it is for the understanding of the oppressed in Biblical times. In order for the notion of the exile to be firmly grounded in the daily experiences of the oppressed, it must encompass the whole being of such experiences in South Africa. This includes among other things: firstly, memory of the dead whose lives have been characterised by the struggle; secondly, acknowledgement of the continuity of that struggle in the lives of the oppressed who are exiled abroad and in the land of their birth; lastly, and by no means least,

recognition and acceptance of the continuity of the spirit of the oppressed in the lives of those who will be born into the life of exile. This situation and experience of oppression in the life of the oppressed in South Africa need not necessarily be based on the Bible in order to make them authentic and convincingly oppressive (D.M. Tutu 1973:21). The presentation of oppression in the biblical text is at best very ambiguous and at worst undermines the struggles of the oppressed. The oppression we read about is the oppression viewed outside the internal social class contradictions within the Israelite society. This text cannot be uncritically appropriated by the oppressed and invoked against oppression in contemporary societies. The importance of the Old Testament notion of exile and its appropriation to the contemporary struggle finds expression in the demand it presupposes for an enquiry into the social class of the Biblical exiles. This fact elude us more often than not in the same way as the interests served by the text of the Old Testament. The contemporary exiles are the ruled class. They are in exile because of their unheeded call for social equality and justice. They are daily driven to exile for making such a call. An analysis of the social class of the Old Testament Babylonian exiles will show that these exiles were not from the lower classes. A social class analysis of the Babylonian exiles include: the identification of the elements of racism, ethnicity, and sexism in the presentation of the oppression of the exiles in the Deuteronomistic History. An attempt will be made to highlight these struggles involved in the Old Testament text.

The notion of the exile in the Old Testament is important in the way in which it exposes the common social class position of the Assyrian exiles in the Northern Kingdom and the Babylonian exiles in the Southern Kingdom. However, this social class identity is concealed in the Deuteronomistic History by contrasting the Babylonian exile with the Assyrian exile. The Assyrian exile retrospectively serves as the focal point around which the history of the Kingdom of the ten tribes of Israel, namely Israel, is written by the Deuteronomistic Historian in that its history culminates in the exile. Yahweh has forsaken them. Exile in their case is interpreted as divine and eternal condemnation, and they are not seen as repentant when they are in exile:

19 Judah also did not keep the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the customs which Israel had introduced. 20 And the Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel, and afflicted them, and gave them into the hand of the spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight. 21 When he had torn Israel from the house of David they made Jerobo'am the son of Nebat king. And Jerobo'am drove Israel from following the Lord and made them commit great sin. 22 The people of Israel walked in all the sins which Jerobo'am did; they did not depart from them, 23 until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day.
(RSV II Kings 17:19-23)

Similarly the Babylonian exile is retrospectively the culmination and the perspective from which the history of the Kingdom of the two tribes of Israelite tribal confederacy, namely Judah and Simeon, is written. The Old Testament also reveals the central point occupied by both Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile in the presentation of the history of both the Assyrian and the Babylonian exile. Hence the importance of the Babylonian exile in the Deuteronomistic History:

26 Still the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manas'seh had provoked him. 27 And the Lord said, "I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city which I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there." (RSV IIKings 23:26,27)

However, in contrast to their counterparts in the Northern Kingdom, exile to the Judean exiles meant divine chastisement. They responded with repentance when they are in exile, and therefore they expect that Yahweh will bring them back from exile. A show of humility to Yahweh by an Israelite or Judean king could arouse Yahweh's compassion and forgiveness and thus postpone a decree of chastisement in the land (cf. Josiah, IIKings 22:19ff; Ahab IKings 21:29; Hazael IIKings 13:23; Elisha IIKings 6:8-23). But when they are in exile Yahweh's compassion and forgiveness and termination of chastisement is aroused only by the humility of the exiled Judean king and people (W. Brueggemann 1973:241-242):

27 And in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoi'achin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, Evil-mero'dach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, graciously freed Jehoi'achin king of Judah from prison; 28 and he spoke kindly to him, and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. 29 So Jehoi'achin put off his prison garments. And every day of his life he dined regularly at the king's table; 30 and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, every day a portion, as long as he lived. (RSV IIKings 25:27-30)

The Old Testament understood in this sense, the Deuteronomistic History in particular, is a literary response to the events of the Assyrian and the Babylonian exiles. The Deuteronomistic History may be understood, therefore, as a presentation of the events which led to the exiles. It is also a presentation of alternatives which ought to have been

followed by both the Northern and the Southern Kingdom in order to avoid the respective exiles. In particular, the Deuteronomistic History presents commandments which have been transgressed and which ought to have been obeyed in order to avoid the Babylonian exile. Above all the Deuteronomistic History presents the Assyrian and the Babylonian exiles as sacred punishment against the whole nation of Israel. The notion of exile, therefore, becomes the link in the appeal for textual coherence in the Deuteronomistic History.

These and other considerations demand an analysis of the social class of the Babylonian exiles within the ideological framework of the Deuteronomistic History. It is within this framework where the social class contradictions are literarily concealed. I.J. Mosala states this fact admirably when he asserts:

Ideology is not a lie. It is rather a harmonisation of contradictions in such a way that the class interests of one group are universalized and made acceptable to the other classes. Also, ideology is not a selection process or filter through which certain facts only pass. On the contrary it is a process by which the presence of certain facts is constituted by their absence.
(1986:194)

The social class and ideological reading of the text includes first, identifying the class position and the interests which the text secures, the racial prejudice and the sexist presuppositions in the text. It includes secondly, unmasking

the classlessness, racial harmonization and gender neutrality in the presentation of the text. The textual harmonization and neutrality being only a conceal of the sectional, racial conflict and sexist nature of the interests secured by the text. The social and the ideological reading of the text includes thirdly, engaging the text in the struggle against contemporary class interests, racial prejudice and sexism. The Babylonian exile has a negative importance since it serves as a reminder that it is dangerous to draw parallels between the Old Testament notion of exile and the experience of contemporary exiles. To do so runs the risk of confusing the ruling class' struggles of the Bible with the contemporary struggles of the oppressed classes, and also stands in danger of being implicated as an accomplice in the oppressors' theft as Henri Mottu succinctly pointed out:

Reification occurs when certain people "steal" the praxis of others, which is the case when Hannaniah "steals" (Isa.9:4) from Isaiah and simply transfers a word said in a given situation into a quite different one. (1983:242)

The contemporary exiles in their call for social equality and justice against the present ruling class, do not need the praxis of the Jerusalem ruling elite who were the beneficiaries of the Deuteronomistic History, or the praxis of any other ruling class for that matter. Apart from these apparent class struggles in the text, there are other struggles that are concealed and easily elude us in the appropriation of the text. Firstly, there is the struggle for recognition between the indigenous deity (Yahweh represented by the Israelite) and the foreign deity (Ba'al represented by the non-Israelite). At issue is whether the indigenous ruling class need an indigenous or foreign deity

to keep their subjects in perpetual oppression. Both versions of the deity spelled doom for the oppressed during the monarchy. Mosala succinctly makes this point when he asserts:

But as any hermeneutic that derives from the crucible of class struggle will attest to, the biblical truth that God sides with the oppressed is only one of the biblical truths. The other truth is that the struggle between Yahweh and Baal is not simply an ideological warfare taking place in the minds and hearts of believers, but a struggle between the God of the Israelite peasants and subdued slaves and the God of the Israelite royal, noble, landlord and priestly classes. (1986:178)

In addition to the class struggles in the text, there is also the racial prejudice that eludes us so often. It is the struggle between the race represented by the Israelite and that represented by the non-Israelite in the text. The racial prejudice finds particular expression in the marriages sealed between the Israelites and the non-Israelites. These marriages were part of the policy of gaining allies (J. Bright 1980:241-242). However, these marriages are in retrospect solely judged by the Israelite purity laws. The Deuteronomistic Historian emphasize in the text that the Israelites were married to those who even nominally did not stand in the Yahwist tradition. Indeed these non-Israelites worshipped their 'foreign' deities. Temples were built to these deities and the 'foreign' cults contested with the indigenous official court religion for supremacy. Furthermore, their prophets also sought for royal recognition along with the prophets of the indigenous deity:

5 For Solomon went after Ash'toreth the goddess of

the Sido'nians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father has done. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. 8 And so he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. (RSV IKings 11:5-8)

The marriages of the Israelite elite to the non-Israelites can be compared to what today we would describe as the marriage of whites to blacks in South Africa. Such marriages are circumscribed by the provisions of the racial laws of the country which are meant to preserve white purity and privilege. Hence such marriages are celebrated as important steps in breaking the racial barriers. It cannot, therefore, be contested that although such marriages are celebrated as an important exercise in the development of a concept of consensus between on the one hand, Israelites and non-Israelites in the Old Testament and, on the other hand, reconciliation between Whites and Blacks in South Africa today, the non-Israelites and the Blacks are retrospectively condemned for the racial contamination of the Israelites and the Whites respectively. Just as the non-Israelites were blamed for the syncretism (R.E. Friedman 1981:28) of the Israelites, and so too Blacks are suspected for "syncretism" among whites. For the Israelites, their subsequent rejection, and ideologically perceived threat of falling from the gracious election by Yahweh was attributed to this syncretism. The same is true in South Africa. C. Villa-Vicencio writes:

The less doctrinaire and less ideological English-speaking whites have, in turn, under the threat of hearth and home, slowly moved further and further into alliance with the Afrikaner. While never having shared the Afrikaner's religious ideology of divine favor, their socioeconomic pragmatism has strengthened the white laager and perhaps, as more traditional Afrikaners contend, gradually diluted their spiritual will to resist. (1985:16)

The gender element in the text concludes the trio that elude us in the appropriation of the text. It is more than a coincidence that the evil one in the text is the woman and that she is the one who leads the man to sin. It is more than coincidence that her husband's loyalty to her means being against the interests of his nation. It is strange that the 'foreign' female's participation in the Israelite affairs are condoned whenever such participation helps the Israelite nation to inherit the land, for example, the Canaanite harlot, Rahab (S.B. Frost 1964), who Joshua's spies assure:

Our life for yours! If you do not tell this business of ours, then we will deal kindly and faithfully with you when the Lord gives us the land. (RSV Joshua 2:14)

But such participation is condemned in retrospect when the nation is threatened with exile from the land. Of particular interest here is the fact the marriage of Ahab to Jezebel is condemned in retrospect for leading to the Assyrian exile (H.W. Wolff 1973:262-263). For this same reason similar marriages of the Judean kings to foreigners are condemned for leading to the Babylonian exile.

The ideological motivation in the textual presentation of the Assyrian and the Babylonian exile in the Deuteronomistic History, the social class position of the exiles and their perception of the exile, underlie the fact that the Assyrian and the Babylonian exile cannot be studied from the perspective of individual isolated texts dealing with those exiles. Rather, these factors presuppose that the study must be undertaken within the whole framework of the Deuteronomistic History itself.

(i) Mono-Yahwism and Sociopolitical Egalitarianism
in Early Israelite Society

In order for us to appreciate the literary ideology of the Deuteronomistic History we must first acknowledge the relationship between social structure (N.K. Gottwald 1979:613-614) and the religion (N.K. Gottwald 1979:618) of all the liberated slaves (H.W. Wolff 1973:261) of early Israel. N.K. Gottwald (1979:611-618) argues that there was a close and interdependent relation between how society was ordered and the religion that maintained that social order. In other words a change in the factors that make for a particular ordering of society would of necessity bring about a change in the factors that dictate the religion that sustain that social ordering. These factors include external social systems and the internal social tendencies. During this period, early Israel was fighting against both the external social systems of the Canaanites and their internal social tendencies, in order to establish the sociopolitical

egalitarianism through Mono-Yahwism. The history of the slaves from Egypt was appropriated to all the liberated slaves. M. Clevenot identifies two groups which settled at different times in Palestine (1985:4,6). These two groups led to the division of Israel into two kingdoms at the death of Solomon: the kingdom of Judah in the South and the kingdom of Israel in the North. On the basis of Joshua 24 (1985:6,29-31), Clevenot locates the origins of Yahwism, presumably Mono-Yahwism, in the kingdom of Israel in the North. This understanding of Yahweh and the division of the monarchy is in contrast to the traditional understanding of the history and developments of Mono-Yahwism in the Deuteronomistic History. Clevenot's assertion is crucial for understanding the presentation of Mono-Yahwism and the monarchy in the presentation of the Deuteronomistic History. The Deuteronomistic History presents the kingdom of Israel as rebellious for having broken away from the South (H.W. Wolff 1973:262). The rebellion of the kingdom of Israel is presented as having earned them eternal condemnation of Yahweh. The exile of the kingdom of Israel in Assyria in 722 B.C. is proof of their rejection by Yahweh (M. Cogan 1978:43). It will become clear later how the Deuteronomistic History presents the history of the united monarchy under David, the division of the monarchy due to his son and heir, Solomon's, apostasy (IKings 11) and the revolt against the enslavement of the house of Joseph (IKings 12)

(ii) Mono-Yahwism and Sociopolitical Egalitarianism
and the advent of the Israelite Monarchy
in the Deuteronomistic History

With the advent of the Israelite and Judean monarchies and the subsequent change in the social organization, Mono-Yahwism was adapted in order to meet the challenges and demands facing the survival of the new form of social ordering (W. Brueggemann 1979:172; M. Clevenot 1985:30; H.W. Wolff 1973:262). These included: (i) the contemporary social systems externally and (ii) the internal social tendencies of former sociopolitical egalitarianism. The point needs to be made here that whereas in the pre-monarchical Israel, sociopolitical egalitarianism was struggling against other social orderings, during the monarchical period sociopolitical egalitarianism was struggled against. The text of the Deuteronomistic History is a record and a site of these struggles at this level. In his analysis of the shift in emphasis on the covenant made by Yahweh with early Israel, due to the change in sociopolitical structure, I.J. Mosala notes:

The social system presupposed by Yahwism, and especially the covenant with Yahweh, had been superceded by another. The situation seems to have arisen whereby Yahwism had either to be adapted to the new set-up, or a new ideology sought. The former path appears to have been chosen. (2 Sam 7) (1980:197)

If we agree with Clevenot that Yahweh was originally the deity associated with the traditions of Israel, it is suprising that during the monarchy these traditions are identified with Judah exclusively. The Deuteronomistic

History presents Judah as the only custodian of the right cult and ritual acceptable to Yahweh. This is presumably in line with the war among the ruling classes (M. Cogan 1978:43; M. Clevenson 1985:13-16) the Deuteronomistic History is waging against Israel in the presentation of the history of the divided monarchy. The war of the Judean ruling classes against the ruling classes of Israel is extended to the Judean lower classes in the Deuteronomistic History.

Mono-Yahwism and Sociopolitical Egalitarianism
and the Babylonian Exile
in the Deuteronomistic History

The war which the Judean ruling classes were waging against Israel during the monarchy is transformed in the Deuteronomistic History into the war between the exiled Judean ruling classes and the exiled Israelites. The Deuteronomistic History in its presentation of the fate of the exiled Israelites does not anticipate their restoration to their land (II Kings 17:23). M. Cogan notes this literary tendency of the Deuteronomistic History when he concludes:

How different from the prophetic viewpoint proclaimed by his contemporary Jeremiah: The Israelite remnant, cleansed by the rigors of exile, will be repatriated and resettled in Mt. Ephraim (Jer 3:6-13, 19-25; 31, passim). But then, this is not the only point upon which deuteronomistic historiography dissents from that of literary prophecy. (1978:43-44)

The prophets insisted on social justice but their insistence was not based on an analysis of social class conflicts. They did not couple their analysis of the monarchic-Yahwism with the analysis of the monarchic social structure. The insight of J. Barr into the early prophets is also applicable to the classical prophets in this case. About Elijah's condemnation of Ahab's murder of Naboth, he observes:

In all the story there is no new approach to morality: the old morality is presupposed throughout, and what the prophet insists on is the drastic character of the punishment that will follow when the old morality is transgressed.
(1980:101)

Richard Elliot Friedman (1981) argues among other things that there are two redactions in the Deuteronomistic History viz. the Josianic and the Exilic redaction. The Josianic redaction is a reinterpretation of history inter alia the Assyrian exile in the Northern Kingdom and the finding of the lawbook in the temple in the Southern Kingdom and the subsequent Josianic reform. This redaction and the reform initiated by the lawbook is called Josianic because king Josiah plays a central role in the presentation of this history. The Exilic redaction on the other hand is a retrospective reinterpretation of history in the light of the Babylonian exile. In this redaction the people who were led into exile are central to the presentation of this history, a fact which raises several important issues. Firstly, who were the people were led into exile? Was it all the people of Israel or a particular group of people only

? Secondly, if it was only a particular group of people, why is the text generally silent about those who were left in the land, but particularly eloquent about them when they are condemned as the cause for the exile ? Thirdly, how is the reading and appropriation of the Deuteronomistic History relevant to contemporary exiles ? How is the balanced tension between silence and eloquence about the remnants in the Land obscured by the identification of those who were led to exile ? Furthermore, how has this tension eluded the appropriation of the Deuteronomistic History to the struggle against social class stratification, racism and sexism in our contemporary societies. An attempt will be made to illuminate the social class nature, the racial category and the sexist element of the Old Testament text. This insight will reveal how the Deuteronomistic history conceals in the individual isolated texts, the identity of the exiles themselves and the remnants and also balances the tension between the silence and eloquence about the latter.

According to John Bright (1981), the Babylonian exiles were what today we would call the 'ruling class' of Jerusalem. This means, among other things that the Exilic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History is the presentation of the exile reality from the perception of 'the ruling class', that is, the exiles. The Exilic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History becomes a ruling class text basically at this point, because the Jerusalem ruling class are voicing their oppression in Babylonia through the text. The Babylonian injustice that we read about is the punitive measures meted

out against those who were oppressors in the land, who are now the oppressed in exile.

It is on account of these and other considerations that the Josianic and Exilic redactions of the Deuteronomistic History will be taken as presentation of the exile reality from the point of view of the ruling class. The motive behind this is nothing other than the ideological interests of the ruling class. It is also for this same reason that the text of the Deuteronomistic History will be treated within this ideological framework as a unit. The voice of the one time oppressors but now oppressed is not only captured in the Exilic redaction, but it is also echoed in the Josianic redaction, that is, the whole Deuteronomistic History reflect it. The redactions are therefore not mutually exclusive in the final form in which the Deuteronomistic History has them now. Temporarily they represent two historical perspectives but ideologically they are intertwined with each other. They overlap and intersect with each other. Textually the Assyrian exile anticipates the Babylonian exile and the latter inform the former (E.T. Mullen, Jr. 1987:231).

In the process it will become clear that the Old Testament notion of exile is a more suitable instrument of struggle for the next generation of the ruling class who may find themselves in exile. Many people assume that the Old

Testament notion of exile represents the most powerful literary critique against social injustice and inequality. But such people fail to recognize that this critique comes from the once ruling classes who are now the oppressed and exiled. Therefore it is necessary for the contemporary oppressed people to struggle against enormous literary difficulties. The difficulties find particular expression in the separation between literary genres, between prose and poetry, between historical fact and literary fiction. The difficulties find expression also at another level, namely the separation between the writer(s) and the reader(s). The separation between the writer and the readers is crucial for this thesis. This thesis emphasize the fact that the contemporary readers have gone through a historical materialist development parallel to and under the pressure of the economic situation, without however, having been able in a historical materialist way to think through their reading of the Bible and its relation to the material basis of their own situation. In short, the contemporary readers have not adequately adressed the question of their religious consciousness and its relationship to the material basis of that cosciousness. By the example of the appropriation Deuteronomistic History by contemporary societies, I want to show that however biblical this religious consciousness may appear, it actually functions in an ambiguous manner and supports the ruling classes, as long as the readers experience their solidarity with the social consciousness based on the material conditions of the Old Testament exiles, rather than their own contemporary material conditions. The Deuteronomistic History is an example of the correlation between the religious consciousness and the material

conditions from which that consciousness arises. Therefore, any study of the correlation between the religious consciousness of the exiles must deal with it.

But we cannot remain at the point of correlation between the religious consciousness and the material basis in the Deuteronomistic History. The hope of the exiles in the Deuteronomistic History is to return to the land, and this meant a return to their social class position (J. Bright 1980:351). They were not motivated by a desire to bring about social equality and justice for all in the land. By the analysis of the social and political structure of the Israelite society in the Deuteronomistic History, I want to show that there is tension between those who were taken into exile and those who were left behind in the land. This tension reflects the tension which existed between the ruling classes and the ruled classes before the exile. The emphasis here is that the contemporary readers in their choice of which side to identify with in the resolution of this tension, have always chosen the wrong side, namely the side of the exiles (W. Brueggemann 1987:12). The problematic of this choice is that through it, the contemporary oppressed are eluded by the fact that those who were left behind in the land were exiled in the Promised Land.

The resolution of the conflict in the Deuteronomistic History between the ruling classes and the ruled classes in the land, and the exiles and the remnants during the exile is nowhere more pressing than on the question of the land. In the Old Testament the land is closely associated with the exile (M. Cogan 1978:43). The association of the exile and the land is crucial for the appropriation of the Old Testament notion of exile by the contemporary societies. This association finds particular expression in the way both the land and the exile become two sides of the same coin to both the Babylonian exiles and contemporary exiles. The former are presented in the Deuteronomistic History in particular and in the Old Testament in general as led away from the land they possessed by inheritance. The latter are driven away from the land they possess by birth right. The conflict about the land between the remnants and the exiles is resolved in the Deuteronomistic History. But we should ask the question: whose interests are secured by the resolution of the Deuteronomistic History? By the example of the Deuteronomistic History I want to show that however the literary tendency of the Deuteronomistic History appear to be securing the interests of the remnants, it actually secures the interests of the once ruling class who are exiled as long as the text experiences its solidarity with the remnants literarily and not ideologically, based on the material conditions of the remnants. The Deuteronomistic Historian(s) must be understood in the context of the ideology of the Deuteronomistic History of which he/they is/are part. The royal ideology of the Deuteronomistic History has as its central tenets: the eternal inheritance of the promised land by the chosen of the Lord; the inviolability of Jerusalem,

the capital of the promised land; the centralization of worship at Jerusalem, the central place of worship; the institution of kingship which provided the constitution which the kings had to follow if they were to inherit the promised land eternally; the promise of restoration to the promised land in the event of the king or kings turning away from the constitution provided for in the constitution of kingship and find themselves in exile. These tenets within the broad framework of the royal ideology of the Deuteronomistic History finds particular expression in the way the conflicts about land between the ruling classes and the ruled classes before the exile are resolved literarily and not materially. During the exile these conflicts are transformed into conflicts between the exiles and the remnants and they are to be resolved literarily and not materially. We need to ask the question: whose interests are secured by the literary resolution of the conflict about the land? This question is pertinent when we realize that those who were led to exile were the ruling classes in the land.

The antecedents of the fate of the two kingdoms is the violation of the tenets of the royal ideology according to the Deuteronomistic History. The Assyrian and the Babylonian exiles are literarily, and not materially, blamed on the ruling classes' violation of the royal ideology of the Deuteronomistic History. The Deuteronomistic History is a literary condemnation of ruling class practices which

brought about the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles. This condemnation of individual kings is paralleled with applause of other individual kings who lived up to the constitutional standards of the Deuteronomistic royal ideology. The materialist and the ideological antecedents of the Assyrian and the Babylonian exiles are underplayed in this version of the Deuteronomistic History in particular and in the Old Testament in general. These social historical and ideological antecedents of the Assyrian and the Babylonian exiles are crucial for the contemporary societies in their appropriation of the Old Testament notion of exile.

Chapter 3

THE NABOTH EPISODE IKINGS 21:1-19

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ELIJAH CYCLE IN THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY

Introduction

The study of the confrontation between the prophet and the king in the Old Testament is well established and known to both professionals and laypersons in biblical studies. Studies of the conflict between an Israelite prophet and an Israelite king (IKings 14;21) on the one hand and on the other hand an Israelite prophet and a non-Israelite king (IIKings 6:8-23) have played a role in the struggles of the contemporary oppressed against unjust rule. It cannot be contested that the study of the prophet-king confrontation in the Old Testament as portrayed in the Deuteronomistic History, is important in the quest for social equality and justice in contemporary societies. Nevertheless, the study of the prophet-king confrontation in the Old Testament raises suspicion of the social class interests served by the presentation of the prophetic movement in the Deuteronomistic History which condemns the king. The social class and interests secured by such condemnation often turns out to be the interests of the king and the members of the class s/he represents. The Elijah-cycle which culminates in the Naboth Episode (IKings 21:1-19) is an example of the way in which the prophet-king confrontation within the Israelite society in the Northern kingdom is used in the Old Testament to support the struggles of the ruling classes. The prophet-

king confrontation in the Northern Kingdom applies also to the Judean society of the Southern Kingdom. The prophet-king confrontation in the Deuteronomistic History, therefore, is the prophetic condemnation of 'bad examples' of kingship in the land, which reaches its climax in the priestly condemnation of the institution of kingship during the Old Testament Babylonian exile (F.E. Deist & I. Du Plessis 1981:75).

In the Deuteronomistic History the various prophets confronts the king with the law of Yahweh which the king has transgressed in several ways. First, the prophet reproaches the king for departing from the law which prohibits marriage of foreign women. The people are warned against marrying foreign women because they will influence them against the will of Yahweh for his people (Deuteronomy 7:3-5). Second, the prophet confronts the king for introducing the worship of foreign deities (IKings 11:1-13). Third, the prophet condemns the king for accumulating wealth for himself by extracting land from the people of Yahweh. The prophet intervenes on behalf of the oppressed by condemning the king for transgressing the law which govern land tenure (IKings 21). The Deuteronomistic History's condemnation of the king reaches its climax in the rejection of the institution of kingship by its priestly redactor in the period of the Babylonian exile. Just as the Josianic redactor, the priestly redactor of the Deuteronomistic History appropriate the traditions of the liberated slaves from Egypt, to the ruling classes. In the case of the Josianic redactor, the

ruling class were still in the land, in the case of the Priestly redactor, they are in exile. In his analysis of the use of the system of gift by the Priestly redactors in order to introduce their system of purity, M. Clevénat observes this tendency in the Deuteronomistic History when he writes:

Thus the powerful dynamism of the prophetic accounts from Abraham to Elijah was enclosed in cultic legalism. In that way the ideology of the dominant class finally succeeded in imposing itself.
(1985:40)

The point needs to be made here that the identification of the system of purity with the ideology of the ruling classes does not warrant the association of the system of gift with the ideology of the ruled classes, at least in the Deuteronomistic History. The system of gift, like any other sociopolitical system, is never practiced in abstract but rather it is always in the context of social class conflicts. In terms of the social class conflicts it may be practiced in order to ensure equal access to the basic means of production, that is, land. M. Clevénat associates the system of gift with the kingdom of Israel in the North and suggests that it was the standard by which the prophets judged the kings. He writes:

For those peasant clans which kept alive the memory of the life in the desert and which waited upon heaven for the sun and rain, life was first of all a gift. And social life - the possibility of living in peace among the clans - depended on reciprocal giving. Because Yahweh had given the country to his people, no one could take over the land: "that there will never be any poor among you" (Deut. 15:14) (1985:32).

It cannot be contested that the system of gift was practiced by the confederacy of the twelve tribes of Israel and that

the prophetic condemnation of the ruling classes during the monarchy, and the view of restoration to the land of the exiles by the priestly caste, was based on this system of social organization. However, we need to ask the question: which social class owned the land in the period of the monarchy, during which the first redaction of the Deuteronomistic History began? The Elijah-cycle records the events which are covered by the first redaction of the Deuteronomistic History. Furthermore, which social class lost the right to the land (G.V. Pixley 1981:56) in the period of the Babylonian exile, during which the second redaction of the Deuteronomistic History began. I Kings points to the causes of the Assyrian exile in the Northern Kingdom and warns about the Babylonian exile in the Southern Kingdom. It is also in this period of the exile that the priestly caste began their Priestly (P) code. It is the ruling classes who were owning and extracting more land from the ruled classes during the monarchy, and whose interests are secured by the system of gift. It is the ruling classes who were taken into the Babylonian exile and whose interest are secured by the system of gift. It is in this sense that the system of gift presupposed in the Elijah-cycle as it culminates in the Naboth Episode (IKings 21:1-19) must be understood. Z. Zevit corroborates this contention in her analysis of IKings 12-IIKings 17 when she asserts that in the Deuteronomistic History the social class position of the dynasts is not questioned for the extraction of landed property from the ruled classes. According to Zevit the issue is their royal policies regarding the temple, and that the historian's social analysis of the class conflict is

similar to that of his counterparts in other societies. She sheds light on the social class and the interests of the Deuteronomistic Historian when she writes:

He wrote however, after the policies of the reformers had been partially reversed by Jehoahaz (609 BC) and his writing posture, therefore, was that of a disenfranchised loser. Connecting the political and the military collapse of Israel and the imminent demise of Judah with what he considered the errant temple policies of legitimate dynasts - never did he condemn priests or Levites for any wrongdoing in the sacred precincts - he drew conclusions which resulted in a monolithic, but not unique, historiography. (1985:58)

The Naboth Episode as the focus of the Elijah-cycle is a paradigm used by the Deuteronomistic History whereby the historian literarily employ the system of gift in order to conceal the accumulation of wealth for themselves by alienating the ruled classes from the land. This literary tendency in the Old Testament has always eluded the contemporary oppressed who acquiesce to the literary undermining of the struggles of the ruled classes. The contemporary oppressed have traditionally assumed that they can relate the biblical struggles to their own situation in their appropriation of the Naboth Episode to contemporary forced removals and expropriation of land by the ruling classes. They have often made the choice between the options given in the text, namely, Elijah and Naboth against Ahab and Jezebel, and uncritically chosen Elijah and Naboth assuming that they represent their social class and interests. They have also presupposed that Elijah and Naboth in the text represent the oppressed with whom God sides. The sociopolitical system of gift of the tribal confederacy of

early Israel was not superseded by the sociopolitical system of the monarchy and the purity system of the exile, anymore than it is literally concealed in the prophetic condemnation of the ruling classes in the Deuteronomistic History and the Old Testament in general. In order to correct this situation we will attempt a social class analysis of the Elijah-cycle as it culminates in the Naboth Episode (IKings 21:1-19) in the context of the Deuteronomistic History in particular, and the Old Testament in general. In her analysis of royal responsibility towards the temple worship within monarchic Israel and the royal responsibility of the cultural milieu, Z. Zevit associates the social class position of the Deuteronomistic Historian with the class which benefited from the royal-temple allegiance. She concludes:

In as much as he used the past to address issues of his day and to implicitly advocate specific patterns of cultic allegiance and behavior, Dtr [Deuteronomistic historian] was a propagandist, and his work may be considered propaganda. (1987:59)

R. E. Friedman identifies four central issues in the Josianic edition of the Deuteronomistic History as (i) the Torah (ii) the centralization of worship (iii) the prohibition of foreign worship and (vi) chastisement (1981:30). Looked at from the perspective of the Josianic and the exilic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History, the Elijah-cycle (IKings 17-21) exhibit all these central issues. It is surprising then that it is not treated like all the other texts of the Josianic edition, let alone the exilic edition. This text is no less exilic than the other texts identified as such. This is nowhere the case than in its allusion to the law of land tenure in early Israel. The issue of land is no less central

to the Naboth Episode than to the Babylonian exiles. Furthermore the issue of land is central to both the Biblical exiles and the contemporary exiles. Access to the land as the decisive determinant of freedom or enslavement to both the biblical exiles and the contemporary oppressed and exiled has been the subject around which early Israelite social institutions were reinterpreted. The classic text in the Old Testament on the basis of which the issue of land has been resolved by the biblical exiles and traditionally invoked by the contemporary oppressed is Leviticus 25:23-24 :

23 The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me. 24 And in all the country you possess, you shall grant a redemption of the land.

This text belongs to the corpus known as the Priestly (P) Code which is an editorial product of the Babylonian exiles in their prospect of restoration to the promised land (G.V. Fixley 1981:55-63).

THE ELIJAH-CYCLE AND THE PROSPECT OF RESTORATION OF THE BABYLONIAN EXILES

(i) The Torah as standard for the nation

The system of sociopolitical egalitarianism and the law of Yahweh as the principle governing social relations within the pre-monarchical system of tribal Israel was replaced during the monarchy. The law of Yahweh was nominally adopted as the guiding principle governing social relations within the new monarchical social system, because Yahweh became personified in the monarch the religion of tribal Israel was

co-opted by the royal ideology. In the Deuteronomistic History it is the law of the king of Judah in Jerusalem which serves as the standard for both the people of Judah and the Kingdom of Israel in the North. It is on the basis of the law of the king of Judah in Jerusalem that the priests in the Priestly code (P) explain the exile and express their hope of restoration to the promised land.

The torah, or law of Yahweh as a guiding principle of the people of Yahweh became a well established principle which governed the ruling classes and the ruled classes. The law of Yahweh regarding the rulers, the prophets and the ruled people play a decisive role in the search for understanding the law of Yahweh in contemporary societies. The law of Yahweh is certainly important in the quest for understanding the biblical notions used in contemporary societies. However, the law of Yahweh regarding the rulers, the prophets and the ruled people is not an abstract notion: The law of Yahweh is a product of a historical epoch; the law of Yahweh is a guiding principle which the nation of Israel invoked to establish the sociopolitical egalitarianism systems during their settlement in the Promised land but it is also the standard which governed the social relations during the monarchy. In short, in the Old Testament the law of Yahweh is a product of a historical epoch, is a result of historical social class struggles and takes place in a social system. The law of Yahweh is the principle upon which the slaves were delivered from the Egyptian bondage and commanded to not

return there. It is the foundation of the law which governed access to the basic means of production, namely land, during the settlement of the liberated slaves in the Promised land. It is the law which governed land tenure among the liberated slaves in the Promised land:

16 Only he must not multiply horses for himself, or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply horses, since the Lord has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again'. (RSV Deuteronomy 17:16)

The law of Yahweh is the standard whereby the prophets condemned the rulers during the monarchy for accumulating wealth for themselves by extracting land from the ruled people. The law of Yahweh is the standard whereby the priests during the exile condemn the institution of the monarchy for the impurity of the worship of Yahweh. W. Brueggemann observes the central position of the law of Yahweh in the Deuteronomistic History when he writes:

The Deuteronomic corpus, either shaped or revised in the exile, represents an insistence upon the Mosaic way of discerning reality and its insistence on radical obedience. It is a call for radical obedience to torah, an embrace of Yahweh's will for justice with appropriate sanctions (positive and negative) for obedience. Thus it continues the urgent call for purity (2 Kgs 17:7-4) with its militant, uncompromising social vision. (1979:175)

The law of Yahweh in social class struggles could be invoked to distribute the basic means of production equally among the people of Yahweh. However it could also be used to legitimate extraction of land by the ruling classes from the ruled classes. In this sense the law of Yahweh turned out to be the law of the king and represented the interests of the king and the ruling classes against the ruled classes.

It will be demonstrated in this section that the law of Yahweh in the Deuteronomistic History was used in order to legitimate extraction and alienation of land from the ruled classes by the ruling classes. The law of the king disguised as the law of Yahweh in the Deuteronomistic History has more often than not eluded the contemporary oppressed who have assumed that they can relate the law of Yahweh of the Deuteronomistic History to their situation and experience of oppression in their struggles against the ruling classes. They often assume that they can relate the law of Yahweh in the Deuteronomistic History to the forced removals and extraction of their land by the ruling classes in contemporary societies, but this is mistaking the struggles of the ruling classes for the struggles of the oppressed.

The Naboth Episode (IKings 21:1-19) as the focus of the Elijah-cycle is a classical example in the Deuteronomistic History where the law of Yahweh is used to legitimate the extraction of land from the ruled classes. It is a classic example of the way the law of the king and the ruling class interests it secures is concealed as the law of Yahweh. It is a classic example which represents the appropriation of the Deuteronomistic History by the contemporary oppressed where they mistake the struggles in the text for their struggles against forced removals and extraction of their land by the ruling classes in contemporary societies. This is particularly the case in South Africa. In order to correct the situation an attempt will be made to critically analyze

the social class struggles in the Elijah-cycle. It will become clear how the law of the king is literarily concealed as the law of Yahweh for the interests of the ruling classes in the Deuteronomistic History.

The law of Yahweh is invoked by Naboth in his rejection of Ahab's offer to buy or barter his vineyard (IKings 21:3) and by Elijah in pronouncing judgement against Ahab for the murder of Naboth (IKings 21:18-19). In his analysis of social class relations in the Old Testament, H.W. Wolff observes the application of the law of Yahweh in social class struggles when he writes:

This statement is a magnificent indication of the free Israelite peasant's independence over against the king. His freedom is based on Yahweh's gift of the land. (1973:262)

But to see the social class struggles in the Old Testament in general, and the Deuteronomistic History in particular as represented in the Elijah-cycle as a struggle between the ruling classes and the ruled classes is to mistake the interests of the ruling classes for the ruled classes. The ruling classes of the kingdom of Israel in the South are using the law of Yahweh in the Naboth Episode - a text of the Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History - to condemn the ruling classes of the kingdom of Israel in the North. They explain in retrospect the practices of the ruling classes of the kingdom of Israel in the North as the antecedent causes of the Assyrian exile. W. Brueggemann observes that a tension exists in the Deuteronomistic History

between the theme of Yahweh's promise to the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel and the theme of obedience to the covenant made with Yahweh. He sheds considerable light on the use of the law of Yahweh, especially the covenant of Yahweh, by the ruling classes to secure their interests in the Deuteronomistic History when he writes:

From the perspective of the normative literature of the OT, the pre-exilic period is dominated by the Mosaic trajectory, with the royal alternative subordinated (though undoubtedly flourishing in practice). With the exile, we may in broad outline speak of an inversion of the traditions so that the Mosaic theme is in crisis and is apparently less germane, while the promisory royal tradition now becomes the dominant theological mode for Israel. (1979:175)

It needs to be pointed out that it is not so much a tension between the promise of Yahweh to Israel and the obedience of Israel to the conditions of the promise, but that the agent of the promise changes during the monarchy. It is no longer Yahweh who promises and demands obedience from Israel but the king. In the Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History the standard of judgment is the king of the kingdom of Israel in the South. Z. Zevit (1985:59) observes that the writer(s) of the Deuteronomistic History used the cultural traditions of the tribal confederacy of the Israelite nation with Yahweh to resolve the social class struggles during the monarchy. An example of cultural traditions used as such is the law of Yahweh. The point needs to be made that the cultural traditions are not only used in the Deuteronomistic History but they are given new content: first during the monarchy and later during the exile. The law of Yahweh during the monarchy becomes the law of the king.

The word of the prophets of Yahweh during the monarchy becomes the word of the prophets of the king. R.E. Friedman notes that in the Deuteronomistic History the immanence of Yahweh gives way to human activity in miracles. The miraculous deeds of the prophets of Yahweh are made subservient to the interests of the king and the ruling classes. He observes that the confrontation between the prophet of Yahweh (Elijah) and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (IKings 18) as portrayed in the Deuteronomistic History was a struggle of the indigenous ruling classes and the foreign ruling classes and not against the ruled classes. He concludes:

To explain this as a stylistic difference between narrators is not sufficient. The difference is not merely one of character development; it is rather of the degree to which a human participates in and controls the miraculous event, divine control decreasing inversely. Without denying that YHWH continues to be the source of the power behind miracle, one observes that in Dtr1, [Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History] in qualitative sense, his role diminishes. (1981:39)

Yahweh is not so much relegated to the background in the Deuteronomistic History, as personified in the king. This is not paradigmatic in the miracles performed by the prophets anymore than in the law of the king as the standard for the nation during the monarchy. M. Clevénat makes this point in his analysis of the shift from the law of Yahweh to the law of the king as the standard for the nation during the monarchy. He concludes:

But what interests us particularly is that this unity of standards is indicated as fixed by the king: that means that the birth of the Davidic monarchy was marked here on the economic level by the fact that all the exchanges were henceforth to be controlled by the royal power. (1985:17)

The law of Yahweh as standard whereby the liberated slaves were governed was adapted to the new social system of the monarchy. The law of Yahweh was nominally adopted as the guiding principle for social relations during the period of the monarchy. Yahweh as the subject of the law was given new content: s/he became personified in the human king. In the redaction of the Deuteronomistic History Yahweh is personified in the king of the kingdom of Israel in the South. The law of the king of Jerusalem became the standard for the nation of Israel. Jerusalem became the official residence and the central place where access to Yahweh could be gained: (i) the official residence of the legitimate representative of Yahweh (ii) the place of the temple of Yahweh where the law of Yahweh is kept (iii) the place where the exclusive worship of Yahweh is enforced and worship to foreign deities strictly forbidden. These and other considerations in the Deuteronomistic History must be taken into account in the reading and appropriation of the Elijah-cycle in contemporary societies. In the Elijah-cycle, Ahab and the kingdom of Israel in the North is condemned in the Deuteronomistic History on the basis of these conditions. It is in this sense that the condemnation of the king in the Elijah-cycle represents a struggle of the ruling classes and not the ruled classes. The ruling classes of the the kingdom

of Israel in the South are condemning the ruling classes of the kingdom of Israel in the North for the same practices they are also guilty of. It is possible that the ruling classes of the South are condemning the ruling classes of the North for not being committed to the interests of the ruling classes: the division of the monarchy into North and South and the condemnation of the breakaway of the North as rebellion in the Deuteronomistic History. An attempt will be made to demonstrate how the interests of the ruling classes of the kingdom of Israel in the South are legitimated in the Deuteronomistic History.

(ii) The centralization of worship

The temple in Jerusalem as the central place of worship and the Davidic monarchy is crucial to the understanding of the prophet-king confrontation in the Deuteronomistic History as represented in the Elijah-cycle. The division of the monarchy into Israel in the North and Judah in the South did not decentralize the place of worship anymore than it introduced foreign worship along with the worship of Yahweh. Z. Zevit asserts that Jerusalem as capital of the monarchy and the official centre of worship where the temple of Yahweh was situated was not affected by the division of the monarchy. The temple of Jerusalem was the official abode of Yahweh where the law of Yahweh as standard for the nation was kept. The law of Yahweh in the Deuteronomistic History as standard governing the acceptable worship to Yahweh is kept in the temple in Jerusalem and it determines the fate of the

kingdom of Israel and Judah. She makes this point succinctly when she writes:

The formal political distinction between Israel and Judah did not, according to Dtr's [Deuteronomistic historian] historiosophy, free the northern kingdom from its obligation to the Jerusalem temple. The temple, under the protection of the Davidic monarch reigning in Jerusalem, was to have become the recognized center of a pan-Israel amphictyony. (1987:60)

The centralization of worship in the capital of Judah is crucial to the understanding of the prophetic condemnation of the king in the Elijah-cycle. The kings and kingdom of Israel in the Deuteronomistic History are judged from their relationship to the central place of worship in Jerusalem. The policies of worship of the kings and kingdom of Israel are judged from their relationship with Jerusalem as the place where the sole worship of Yahweh as the deity of Israel was established. According to the Deuteronomistic History, Ahab, like his predecessors, did not only decentralize the place of Yahweh but he also introduced foreign worship in Israel and established centres of worship for the foreign deities. The condemnation of Ahab and the kingdom of Israel must be understood from the perspective of the centralization of worship in the Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History. From this perspective the centralization of worship must be seen within the centralization of the monarchy (1 Kings 12:26-27). The centralization of worship in the Deuteronomistic History reveals the social class and the interests secured in the condemnation of Ahab and the kingdom of Israel in the Elijah-cycle as when Z. Zevit writes:

His concern was not with their social, military, or economic policies, but with their policies affecting the centrality of the Jerusalem temple as the single shrine at whose altar expiatory sacrifices could be presented, and as the single shrine where only what he considered legitimate Yahwistic ministrants and appurtenances should be found. (1985:57)

The divine causality is given new content: it is personified in the human king. The central temple in Jerusalem as the only legitimate channel to gain access to Yahweh is the channel whereby the ruling class interests are secured religiously.

(iii) The prohibition of foreign worship

According to the Deuteronomistic History, the Northern Kingdom transgresses the injunction to worship Yahweh as the only deity in terms of both place and along with other local deities. Their worship of foreign deities is blamed upon their marriage to foreign women who are presented as causing them to rule contrary to Israelite notion of kingship and laws governing the land. Ahab murdered Naboth because of the foreign influence of Jezebel about kingship, the laws governing the land and the people under her (IKings 21:25-26). In the Deuteronomistic History the sins committed by Ahab in the North are paralleled with those committed by Manasseh in the South because of whose practices the prophetess Huldah announces the destruction of Judah and the subsequent Babylonian exile (IIKings 21:10-15). The prohibition of foreign worship is directly linked to the centralization of worship in the temple as the religious

center at Jerusalem. It is also linked to the attribution of the role of sovereignty and leadership to the king during the monarchy. In order to legitimize the monarchical policy of centralization of both worship and the state under the Davidic dynasty in Jerusalem, the Deuteronomistic historian employed the covenant traditions of the tribal confederacy of Israel (Deuteronomy 12:5). In this case loyalty to the covenant with Yahweh meant that the king and the people were expected to worship Yahweh at no place except at the temple in Jerusalem. The king's responsibility to the covenant of Yahweh meant that he must see to it that the purity of the worship and obedience to Yahweh is enforced amongst the people. According to the Deuteronomistic History, the internal disintegration and the ultimate division of the Davidic monarchy was the result of Solomon's disobedience to the conditions of the covenant (IKings 11). The historian employs these conditions in his condemnation of the reign of Jeroboam in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. In the Deuteronomistic History, Jeroboam is presented as having sinned in various ways. Firstly, he is presented as consolidating his rebellion against the centralization of the monarchy under the Davidic monarchy in Jerusalem (IKings 12:26-27). Secondly, he is portrayed as introducing rival places of worship at Dan and Bethel to compete against the temple in Jerusalem (IKings 12:28). Thirdly, he is presented as appointing rival priests against the priests who served in the temple at Jerusalem and establishing high places of worship (IKings 12:31). The historian portrays Jeroboam as having set a standard of behaviour for the succeeding kings of Israel one of whom was Ahab, who according to the

historian continued in the sins of Jeroboam (IKings 16:31).

W.E. Rast makes a similar point when he writes:

The age of David seems to have been subjected less to such tendencies, although Solomon's age became more ambiguous (IKings 11:4). The entire period following the latter king was one in which rampant syncretism was carried on according to the historian. His special interest in the account of Elijah's contest on Mount Carmel (IKings 18) is symptomatic in this regard. (1978:96)

The Deuteronomistic Historian presents the tolerance and subsequent practice of foreign worship in Israel as the cause which led to their rejection by Yahweh who subsequently gave them up to their enemies (IIKings 17:21-23). However, the execution of the condemnation did not take place during the reign of Jeroboam.

(iv) Chastisement

The condemnation of Ahab by Elijah was a prophetic announcement of chastisement against Ahab as king and the kingdom of Israel. The chastisement reached its climax in the exile of Israel by the Assyrians in 722 BC. The fulfillment of this prophecy against the king and the kingdom of Israel in the North have striking similarities with the prophecy against the king and the kingdom of Judah in the South:

10 And the Lord said to his servants the prophets,

11 "Because Manas'seh king of Judah has committed these abominations, and has done things more wicked than all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols; 12 therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing Jerusalem and Judah such evil that the ears of every one who hears of it will tingle. 13 And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samar'ia, and the plummet of the house of Ahab; and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. (RSV IKings 21:10-13)

In order for us to appreciate the relevance of Elijah's condemnation of Ahab (IKings 21:17-19) as announcement of exile against the king and the kingdom of both Israel and Judah we need to put the condemnation in the context of chastisement in the Deuteronomistic History. The curse of Elijah to Ahab in the Deuteronomistic History highlights the fact that the contemporary oppressed and exiled cannot uncritically relate their struggles with the biblical struggles. The confrontation in the Naboth Episode between Elijah and Ahab, like similar confrontations in the Deuteronomistic History between prophets and the kings, supports the ruling classes and undermines the struggles of the ruled classes. This will be demonstrated by the analysis of Elijah's intervention, to which we now turn.

The confrontation between on the one hand Elijah and Naboth and on the other hand Ahab and Jezebel has traditionally been seen as a confrontation of social class tendencies: (i) the ruling classes against the ruled classes within an existing social order. (ii) the ruling classes against the ruled classes because the former are imposing a new form of society against the interests of the latter. We need to point out here that the explanation of the Elijah-cycle in the

context of the Deuteronomistic History demands that we see the confrontation as a literary device employed to develop a standard of social order against both social tendencies internal and social systems external. The historian presents the prophet as demanding social equality for all by confronting the ruling classes who accumulate wealth for themselves by exploiting the ruled classes. The prophet is presented as reminding and reproaching the ruling classes who are departing from their divine office. E. Tamez is probably representative of this view when she concludes:

According to this story, the oppressor is a thief, a man who abuses his authority, a murderer, and a liar. (1982:47)

It is important to note here that the standard by which Ahab, and the ruling classes are judged is drawn from the ideal view of the king in the Deuteronomistic History (Wolff 1973:263-264). This fact is often overlooked in the social class analysis of the Naboth Episode. It is crucial for understanding the episode as supporting the struggles of the ruling classes and undermining the struggles of the lower classes. The contemporary oppressed have not taken this fact seriously in their appropriation of the Naboth Episode to their situation. D.M. Tutu expresses this shortcoming when he relates the predicament of the oppressed in South Africa to that of Naboth. He concludes:

There is enough land for everybody in South Africa. It is just that some people are greedy and at the moment they are so powerful and so they can satisfy their greed at the expense of others whom they think to be unimportant and without power. But these are they whom God supports. South Africa, please remember the story of Naboth's vineyard. (1983:88)

The failure to realize that the perspective from which the confrontation in the Deuteronomistic History between the prophet and the king is written from the view of the ruling classes and secures their interests manifests itself at another level. It is at the level of perceiving the confrontation as a clash between two different dominant social orders in the Old Testament (W. Brueggemann 1979). For the sake of analysis the conflict of two different dominant social orders will be grouped into two categories: (i) The conflict between a foreign kingdom and either the kingdom of Israel in the North or the kingdom of Judah in the South. (ii) The conflict within Israel and Judah between sociopolitical egalitarianism of the tribal confederacy of early Israel and the monarchical social order. These two categories have one thing in common, namely, in them the prophet is the main actor and s/he is the one who intervenes. An analysis of these categories will demonstrate how the text of the Deuteronomistic History supports the ruling classes and undermines the struggles of the ruled classes. The analysis also demonstrates that the text of the Deuteronomistic History cannot be appropriated uncritically by the contemporary oppressed to their situation.

An example of the crisis between a foreign king and the king and kingdom of Israel in the North, in this case, is II Kings 6:8-23. In this text the prophet Elisha arbitrates on behalf of the king and kingdom of Israel against the threats of the king of Syria. This text has been used by W. Brueggemann to

demonstrate the tension in the book of Kings between foreign royal threats against the kingdom of Israel and her miraculous divine protection. He appropriates the military weakness of the king of Israel in the North and relate it to the weakness of the contemporary oppressed when he asserts:

We misunderstand the way of knowing given in the story if we miss the social reference of the narrative. The action in this narrative is a model "from below". The marginal ones are the ones authorized by the narrative to perceive the world differently and to act on that difference. The others, the ones who already have power when the story begins, are, by the end of the narrative, delegitimated and reduced. (1987:12)

W. Brueggemann rightly observes the tension of external royal threats and the miraculous divine protection in the books of Kings. However, his social reference of this tension and the interests it serves for the contemporary oppressed is questionable. His observation of the tension applies to the other books of the Deuteronomistic History in the presentation of the conflict between a foreign king and either a king of Israel in the Northern Kingdom or a king of Judah in the Southern Kingdom. In order for us to appreciate the social reference and the interests served by the resolution of this tension we need to understand the text in the context of the Deuteronomistic History. The struggle of the ruling classes of the kingdom of Israel against the ruling classes of Syria is literarily emphasized in the text while the struggle of the ruling classes of Israel against the ruled classes of Israel are underplayed. This literary tendency in the Deuteronomistic History finds expression in the option it presents when reading the text, namely, to

choose between the ruling classes of Syria or the ruling classes of Israel. The contemporary oppressed and their spokesperson have traditionally chosen the ruling classes of the kingdom of Israel in their appropriation of this text to their situation. By so doing they mistake the military powerlessness of the ruling classes of the kingdom of Israel against foreign threats for their contemporary political powerlessness.

The tension between external threats and existing social orders in the Deuteronomistic History manifests itself at another level, namely, the conflict of social tendencies within a social systems of both the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel. An example of this conflict in the kingdom of Israel in the North is the Elijah-cycle which culminates in the Naboth Episode (IKings 21:1-19). In this text also the prophet is the main actor and presented as the representative of the view of the oppressed. W. Brueggemann notes that with the imposition of the Davidic-Solomonic social order on the sociopolitical egalitarianism of early Israel, there arose two dominant perceptions of landed property. He writes:

Elijah stands in the old tradition of "inheritance" (nahalah) whereas the royal figures are committed to the right of royal confiscation which overrides older inheritance rights (yaras). (1979:172)

It is these two perception of landed property which the Deuteronomistic historian employs in order to explain the conflict between the prophet and the king of Israel in the Elijah-cycle as it culminates in the Naboth Episode (IKings

21). The historian uses these traditions about land tenure in Israel in order to explain the disobedience of the kings to the law of Yahweh which governs their covenant relationship. The historian uses the traditions of the gift of the land in order to legitimize the monarchical policy of centralization of worship and the state at Jerusalem under the Davidic dynasty. The tradition of land as a gift from Yahweh to the families is employed by the historian in order to explain the division and the subsequent destruction of the monarchy, first the Northern Kingdom of Israel under the Assyrians and later the Southern Kingdom of Judah under the Babylonians.

A REDACTIONAL EXEGESIS OF THE ELIJAH-CYCLE (IKINGS 17-21)

The Naboth Episode as presented in IKings 21 is the focus of the Elijah-Elisha cycle in the Deuteronomistic History. This is borne by the fact that after the Naboth incident, Elijah who is the central figure against Jezebel in the cycle, is removed from the scene by the historian. The other important consideration in taking the incident as the focus of the Elijah-Elisha narratives is the drought which Elijah predicts in IKings 17. S.B. Frost (1964:507) points out that the vineyard's capacity to hold water during the time of drought was the basis of Ahab's offer to buy or barter the vineyard and Naboth's reluctance to sell or barter the vineyard. It is for this reason why we suggest that an analysis of the Naboth Episode must be undertaken within the context of the Elijah-Elisha cycle in the Deuteronomistic History. It is to this cycle to which we turn.

The redaction of the Naboth Episode in the Deuteronomistic History is about king Ahab's desire to buy or barter Naboth's vineyard (IKings 21:2). According to IKings 21 Naboth refuses both offers. The text implies that Naboth invokes the Lord and His/Her law governing family property (IKings 21:3) (F.I. Andersen 1966:49). Naboth's response upsets the king who goes into his house (IKings 21:4). It is not clear whether Ahab is upset because of Naboth's refusal to sell or barter the vineyard on the one hand or by being reminded of the law governing family property (S.B. Frost 1964:508).

Whereas the prophets of the northern kingdom were apparently inclined to omit the names of the kings who were only secondary characters in the Elisha legends and in their adaptations of the battle accounts, it is well known that an opposite tendency can operate in connection with transmission of traditional material - the tendency to ascribe anonymous works and deeds to well-known personalities of the past (1966:447).

In the process it will become clear how the condemnation of Ahab and his house in the Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History culminates in the announcement of the Assyrian exile. The tradition of the apostate kings of Israel whose practices result in the exile of the nation is used in the Deuteronomistic History and reaches its climax in the condemnation of the institution of kingship in the Exile redaction of the Deuteronomistic History. It is in this sense that the redaction of the Elijah-cycle in the Josianic edition of the Deuteronomistic History fits with the ideology of the Babylonian exiles in the Exile redaction of the Deuteronomistic History in particular, and the Old Testament in general.

The Deuteronomistic History use the tradition of Yahweh as the sovereign and leader of the social order of the tribal confederacy of Israel in the conflicts between Elijah and Ahab. Elijah, and the social class he represents, and whose interests he secures, is presented as standing in the Yahwist tradition from which Ahab has departed. This is how the reign of Ahab is summarized in the Deuteronomistic History:

30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all that were before him. 31 And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jerobo'am the son of Nebat, he took for wife Jez'ebel the daughter of Ethba'al king of the Sido'nians, and went and served Ba'al, and worshipped him. 32 He erected an altar for Ba'al, in the house of Ba'al which he built in Samar'ia. 33 And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. (RSV IKings 16:30-33)

The Deuteronomistic History presents Elijah, and presumably his social class of which Naboth was a member, as standing in the tradition of the tribal confederacy of Israel where the attribution of deity in worship and cult was reserved to Yahweh. The departure of Ahab from this tradition is presented as having aroused the wrath of Yahweh against all the people (R.E. Friedman 1981:32) of Israel:

17 When Ahab saw Eli'jah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" 18 And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel; but you have, and your father's house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed the Ba'als. (RSV IKings 18:17-18)

The confrontation between Elijah and Ahab in the Deuteronomistic History is not confined to the religious realm, but is also undertaken at the level of social relations within the Israelite society and externally at the level of social systems against which Israel's social ordering was struggling. In his analysis of the interdependence between religion and society in the tribal confederacy of Israel, N.K. Gottwald makes a similar point when he concludes:

Yahweh's symbolic roles and the cultic and sociopolitical instructions developed as divine law refer precisely to the pivotal structural features of the community and serve to strengthen those axial features against system-disrupting counter-tendencies. (1979:615)

The Deuteronomistic Historian uses the tradition of Yahweh in

the conflict between social tendencies within the monarchical social system in Israel in the Deuteronomistic History during the reign of Ahab. The conflict of social tendencies reaches its climax in the confrontation between Naboth and Ahab. The conflict of social class interests between Naboth and Ahab are presented as a reflection of the general struggles between social systems at the time. It is important to note here that we are concerned with how the traditions are used in the Elijah-cycle in the Deuteronomistic History. At this point we need, however, to ask the question: What social class is represented and what interests are secured by Elijah's insistence on the Torah of Yahweh in his confrontation with Ahab in the Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History? A critical analysis of the conflict between Elijah and Ahab in the Deuteronomistic History reveals that they may belong to two different groups who represent the same social class and secure the same social class interests.

An analysis of the social class of which Elijah was a member gives us a clue as to the class interests secured by the Deuteronomistic History. Naboth, as he is portrayed in IKings 21, is undoubtedly a member of the same social class as Elijah, and like the other members, he owned landed property (IKings 21:1). The social class represented and the interests secured by the adherents of Yahweh, of which Elijah and Naboth were members, in the Deuteronomistic History, were not only landed property holders during the reign of Ahab,

but were also actively involved in the day-to-day administration of civil affairs (IKings 18:3-4). The adherents of Yahweh in the Deuteronomistic History are indispensable for the maintenance of Israelite society. Their influence is presented in the Deuteronomistic History as beneficial to Israel both for her internal ordering of society and against threats of external social pressure (N.K. Gottwald 1985:352). In its identification of Ahab as the king of Israel who fought against the king of Syria (IKings 20), the Deuteronomistic History presents the advice of the adherents of Yahweh as sound policy against that of the king:

7 Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, "Mark, now, and see how this man (Ben-ha'dad, the Syrian king) is seeking trouble; for he sent to me for my wives and my children, and for my silver and my gold, and I did not refuse him." 8 And all the elders and all the people said to him, "Do not heed or consent." (RSV IKings 20:7-8)

Despite their good advice to the king and the people, the adherents of Yahweh are presented as being constantly flogged and killed. In addition to going underground (IKings 18:3-4) their response to royal threats against their members and the existence of their class included recruitment of new members and leadership training within their ranks:

So he (Elijah) departed from there, and found Eli'sha the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing, with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Eli'jah passed by him and cast his mantle upon him. (RSV IKings 19:19)

C.F. Keil asserts that the significance of the twelfth yoke being with Elisha shows that he was a wealthy man (1980:260). This signifies that the issue was more than religious differences. The royal threats against the members of this class were not only directed to the life and limb of the adherents of Yahweh. This is clearly demonstrated by the

conflict about landed property between Ahab and Naboth as the representative of this class. The responses of the adherents of Yahweh in the Deuteronomistic History are primarily about the protection of their property against which the royal threats were directed. The Deuteronomistic Historian uses the tradition of land ownership in his presentation of the conflict within the dominant social classes of the monarchical social order. The dominant social classes in this case are the landed adherents of Yahweh, of which Naboth was a member, and the royal house of Ahab. The land which these two social classes own in the Deuteronomistic History originally did not belong to them, and the struggles of these two groups against one another were not only about religion but also concerned the ownership and protection of property. A. Edersheim corroborates this contention when he asserts:

These fields, far as the eye could reach, were the possession of one Shaphat, and he was of those seven thousand who had not bent to Baal, as we infer even from the name which he had given to his son: Elisha, "the God of salvation." or better, "my God salvation." [sic] And now twelve yoke of oxen were ploughing up the land - eleven guided by the hands of servants, the twelfth, in good old Hebrew simple fashion, by the son of the owner of those lands.
(NO DATE:31)

The reference to property ownership and the allusion to Elisha, who succeeded Elijah as the leader of the adherents of Yahweh, is a clue to the use of land acquisition in the Deuteronomistic History. The tradition regarding Ahab's land acquisition is used to condemn monarchical social tendencies against the adherents of Yahweh within the Israelite society, and monarchical policies towards threats posed by external

social systems. The Naboth Episode in the Deuteronomistic History is an example of the use of a tradition about devious land acquisition for the interests of the adherents of Yahweh within the Israelite society (F.I.Andersen 1966:48). The tradition of illicit land acquisition is used in the Naboth Episode to demonstrate the threat posed by the neighbouring societies against the landed property of the adherents of Yahweh. Ahab is presented as first tolerant of his enemies (IKings 20) and later as adopting their policies of land acquisition (IKings 21). In his analysis of the motive behind the Syrian wars against the Omride dynasty, A. Edersheim succinctly makes this point when he writes:

Apparently the land was parcelled out among "princes of the shires," either hereditary chieftains of districts, or governors appointed by the king: an arrangement which throws light on Ben-hadad's previously expressed purpose permanently to break the power of these leaders of Israel. These "princes of the shires" seem to have been each surrounded by a small armed retinue: "the youngmen" (comp. (Sam. xviii.15). (NO DATE:38)

The reference to the threat posed by the external social system of the Syrian King to the Israelite social system in the Deuteronomistic History sheds light on how the adherents of Yahweh acquired land during the monarchy. The tradition of land as a gift from Yahweh is used in the Deuteronomistic History to protect the acquired land against foreign invasion. According to this tradition the land is the property of Yahweh who donates it to His covenant people. This tradition is used against internal expropriation by the king in the Naboth Episode. Naboth of IKings 21 asserts that Yahweh is the proprietor of the vineyard and has donated it to his family and that Yahweh protects the right of the

family to their vineyard, which they must retain in sacred trust. The reference to the adherents of Yahweh, the ownership of property and the threats posed by the external social system against the Israelite social system in the broader context of IKings into which the Naboth Episode fits, lead us to the conclusion that Naboth in the Deuteronomistic History represents the adherents of Yahweh within the ruling social classes, and therefore the tradition was intended to secure their interests against the monarchy. The group of Yahweh's adherents which Naboth represents in the Deuteronomistic History might be different from the one which identified with the king, but it belongs to the same social class and secures the same interests against the interests of the masses of Israelite society about whom we hear nothing during the monarchy. In his analysis of the dominant social classes of the Israelite monarchical society, N.K. Gottwald succinctly makes this point when he writes:

The class fraction that lived off the tax rent was made up of state functionaries and the class fraction that lived off the debt payments was made up of latifundaries, who probably for the most part had a base in state administration which gave them command of resources enabling them to extend credit to peasants.
(1985:20)

We noted that the adherents of Yahweh in the Deuteronomistic History were involved in the administration of civil affairs (IKings 18:3-4), they owned big fields (IKings 19:19), which they refused to sell or barter (IKings 21:3). It is on the basis of these considerations that we conclude that the adherents of Yahweh during the monarchy were latifundaries whose exploitation of the masses of Israelite society was not

economically different from the state functionaries. This is probably the reason why the historians of the Josianic and the exilic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History preserved the incident in order to legitimate their condemnation of the kings and kingdom of Israel.

The tradition of land as a gift from Yahweh who donates it to His covenant adherents and protects their rights to their property is employed in the Deuteronomistic History to enhance the struggles of the adherents of Yahweh against the king. The tradition of illicit land acquisition is used by the historian of the Josianic redaction to condemn the evils of kingship in the Northern Kingdom. He presents it as the antecedent cause of the Assyrian exile, while at the same time he employs it to condone the kingship of Judah in that the monarchy in Judah did not abuse its power in this way (J.M. Miller 1966:447). The condemnation of Ahab is announced first by an unknown prophet (IKings 20) and later by Elijah (IKings 21). They are both members of the class of the latifundaries who are presented as the adherents of Yahweh in Israel. But the Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History is a product of Judah (M. Cogan 1978:44). J.M. Miller notes the use of the traditions of the prophets of Israel by Judah after the Assyrian exile. He observes that the account of the war between Ahab and Ben-ha'dad (IKings 20) is an anachronism. He asserts that the event could not have taken place during the reign of Ahab because Israel was an ally of Syria at the time. Secondly, that there was no need for the war because the whole territory was under the

control of Israel during the reign of Ahab (IIKings 10:32-33). Thirdly that the fate which overcame the king of Israel in IKings 22:38 did not befall Ahab (compare IKings 21:27-29). He supports the contention that the historical event is used in the intra-group affairs within the same social class, when he concludes:

In fact, the king's name has been replaced in these accounts with the phrase *סמך שם*, the same phrase which is consistently used in the Elisha cycle. It would seem reasonable to argue, then, that, regardless of their origin, the accounts of Jehoahaz's three victories were taken over and were passed on by a circle of northern prophets who looked to Elisha as their ideal. These accounts were revised by them to enhance the prophetic role in Israel's military successes and were transmitted thereafter in association with the Elisha cycle. (1966:446)

The account of the battle between Ahab and Ben-ha'dad in IKings 20, not only replace the name of the king, but has ascribed the works and deeds of that king of Israel to Ahab. The prophet is also not named but from the above evidence about the social class and interests secured by such prophecies, it is reasonable to assume that it is one of the adherents of Yahweh from the perspective of the editor. Ahab is condemned for not having executed the ban of the Lord against the foreign kings who pose a threat to the rights of the adherents of Yahweh to their acquired land. The condemnation is not confined to Ahab and his house, but presumably extends to all the people excluding the latifundaries who are presented as the adherents of Yahweh:

And he said to him, "Thus says the Lord, 'Because you have let go out of your hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.'" (IKings 20:42)

The historian of the Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History uses the term "people" to differentiate between on the one hand, the house of Ahab and the masses of Israelite society, and on the other hand, the adherents of Yahweh, who are referred as those who have not bent to Ba'al (IKings 19:18). It is in this sense that the social class and interests represented by Elijah and Naboth in the Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History relate to the ideological outlook of the ruling classes in Judah who were taken to the Babylonian exile. The ideological outlook of the Babylonian exiles is expressed in the condemnation of the institution of kingship by the ruling classes of Judah in the exilic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History (G.V. Pixley 1981:57). For the purpose of demonstrating how the ideological outlook of the latifundaries relate to that of the Babylonian exiles we will adopt the four categories which R.E. Friedman (1981:30) has identified as the main concerns of the Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History: (i) the Torah as standard for the nation, (ii) the centralization of worship, (iii) the prohibition of foreign worship, and (iv) chastisement.

(i) The Torah as standard for the nation

The tradition of the Torah of Yahweh as the standard for the nation is used in the Deuteronomistic History to condemn the religious policies and the social tendencies of Ahab while at the same time the historian employs it to condone the religious policies and the social tendencies of the

latifundaries, of which Elijah and Naboth were members. The tradition of the Torah as the standard for the nation is used to maintain the system of latifundialization (M.L. Chaney:1985) within Israelite society against external social pressures. The use of the Torah as standard for the nation in the Deuteronomistic History centres around the covenant traditions of the relationship between Yahweh and his covenant people. These include the attribution of sovereignty and leadership exclusively to Yahweh, the land as a gift from Yahweh. The traditions of the Torah as the standard for the nation are used in the confrontation between Elijah and Ahab. Elijah and Naboth are presented as the faithful adherents of Yahweh, while Ahab and his house, and presumably the masses of the Israelite society, are presented as having forsaken Yahweh. In the Deuteronomistic History the adherents of Yahweh in Israel, of which Elijah and Naboth were members, are presented as standing in the tradition of the adherents of Yahweh in Jerusalem (R.E. Friedman 1981:28). This association of the adherents of Yahweh in Israel and Judah further establishes the link between the Elijah-cycle in the Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History and the ideological outlook of the Babylonian exiles. The adherents of Yahweh in Israel, as presented in the confrontations with Ahab, were representing the interests of the larger group which had as its head quarters Jerusalem. The centrality of Jerusalem in the Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History explains better the use of the tradition of the Torah as the standard for the nation, in the confrontation between the house of Ahab and Elijah, to which we now turn.

The first such confrontation takes place at Mount Carmel

(IKings 18). The tradition of the covenant relationship of Yahweh over His people is adapted and used here to assert the sovereignty and rulership of Yahweh over a place and not in a social order, IKings 18:36-37 (N.K. Gottwald 1979:615). Ahab and his house and the people, except the adherents of Yahweh, are presented as having symbolically attributed sovereignty and leadership role to the Ba'als. By turning away from worshipping Yahweh and clinging to the Ba'al, Ahab and his house and the people are presented in the Deuteronomistic History as identifying Yahweh with one of the Ba'als. They have made Yahweh one of the deities of the high places. The attribution of sovereignty and leadership to the deities of Ba'al and their worship at 'high places' is presented in the Deuteronomistic History as not only associating Yahweh with one of those deities, but also misleading the non-Israelites:

23 And the servants of the king of Syria said to him, "Their gods are gods of the hills, and so they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. (RSV IKings 20:23)

The miracle performed by Elijah is presumably meant to reverse this situation by proving the sovereignty of Yahweh over the Ba'als. The conceptual significance of the miracle performed by Elijah at Mount Carmel against the Ba'als, also has institutional implications. It is possible that it was meant to pronounce doom against the monarchy of Israel under the reign of Ahab, whose household worshipped the Ba'als. Ahab and his house are presented as a threat to the life of the adherents of Yahweh after the miracle at Mount Carmel:

Ahab told Jez'bel all that Eli'jah had done, and how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.
2 Then Jez'bel sent a messenger to Eli'jah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do

not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." (RSV IKings 19:1-2)

The conceptual battle between Ba'al and Yahweh cannot be divorced from its institutional implications. We have established that the adherents of Yahweh in the Deuteronomistic History belonged to the same social class as the royal house. It is this fact which reveals the use of the tradition of the covenant people of Yahweh in the Deuteronomistic History, to refer to the adherents of Yahweh in their confrontations with the house of Ahab. Elijah and Naboth, and the other members of the adherents of Yahweh, are presented as having limited political power (N.K. Gottwald 1979:625) - if not being politically powerless - against the queen, Jezebel, who abuses royal power against them. The miracle performed at Mount Carmel is presented by the historian as reviving Elijah and the latifundaries. This manifests itself through the call of Elisha (IKings 19:19). The conceptual and institutional battle between the adherents of Yahweh and the agents of Ba'al reaches its climax in the Naboth Episode.

According to IKings 21:3, Naboth as a latifundary appeals to the tradition of the land as gift to his family from Yahweh. He asserts his right to the basic means of production. His claim is based on the acquisition of land through the establishment of patrimony. This tradition is used in the Deuteronomistic History to highlight the evil practices of the kings of Israel, who followed the Ba'als, against the adherents of Yahweh. The tradition of land as a gift from

Yahweh is used in the Deuteronomistic History to explain the differences between the latifundaries and the state functionaries within the ruling class circles. F.I. Andersen succinctly makes this point when he observes:

In the absence of a king, it was Yahweh who supervised the ownership of the land. Political differences between urbanized Canaanites and Israelites were grounded in totally different views of God in his dealings with men. The incident of Naboth's vineyard has been well chosen by the historian to epitomize this clash. (1966:48)

The historian employs the tradition of the Canaanite tendencies about land to highlight the differences between the latifundaries and the state functionaries. He presents Ahab as practicing the Canaanite illicit means of acquiring land. The historian presents Ahab as having usurped the prerogative reserved for Yahweh and having abused his authority as the king of Israel (H.W. Wolff 1973:264) against the latifundaries. The historian blames the Canaanite practices which Ahab has adopted on his transgression of the law of Yahweh which prohibits foreign marriages (IKings 16:31; 21:25-26). The tradition of the law of Yahweh against foreign marriage is used to explain the differences between the adherents of Yahweh and the house of Ahab in the Elijah-cycle. The tradition of the law of Yahweh against foreign marriage is used by the historian to explain the intra-group differences between the state functionaries and the latifundaries. The presence of the foreign princess Jezebel, wife of Ahab, is presented as the cause of these differences. It is as though the adherents of Yahweh in the Deuteronomistic History are saying to Ahab: we do not need the sanction of a foreign deity in order to legitimate our

position of social privilege against the masses of the Israelite society. F.I. Andersen writes:

The biblical record makes it clear that Jezebel was the real villain, although allowance should be made for the fact that the historian focuses all his hostility to Canaanite ways upon her. By contrast, Ahab's sulkiness was not just due to pique; this is out of character compared with his strongmindedness on other occasions. Ahab realized that Naboth's position was unassailable. This Jezebel could not understand. (1966:47)

The tradition of the land as the gift to the liberated slaves of the tribal confederacy of Israel is used in the Deuteronomistic History to explain the tensions between the adherents of Yahweh against the threats of the followers of Ba'al during the monarchy. If there appears to have been such tensions about the basic means of production between the groups in the ruling social classes, we can only speculate about the lot of the ruled classes about whom we hear nothing. The tensions among the social classes of the Northern Kingdom during the monarchy is transformed in the Exilic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History into a justification for the conflict between the ruling classes of Judah who were taken to the Babylonian exile and the ruled classes who either remained in the land or sought refuge elsewhere (II Kings 25:26). The ruling classes of Judah who were taken to exile in Babylon, like the adherents of Yahweh during the monarchy, used the tradition of the law of Yahweh and the gift of land to the liberated slaves of the tribal confederacy by appropriating it for themselves. R.E. Friedman corroborates this contention when he observe:

Not to disregard the obvious, Exile is the primary concern of Dtr2 [Exilic redaction of the

Deuteronomistic History]. The re-editing of the work was above all designed to explain the circumstances in which the Jews found themselves, and to begin to develop some notion of the course to take in future. (1981:34)

The ruling classes who were taken to exile not only condemned the practices of the kings, but also condemned the institution of the monarchy. The tradition of the attribution of sovereignty and leadership to Yahweh is used in the Exilic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History and the Priestly code (M. Cevenot 1985:35-41) to condemn the monarchy as the institution responsible for the exile itself. The tradition of the acquisition of land through patrimony is appropriated exclusively to the exiles. The protection of such acquired land through the institution of the Jubilee (G.V. Pixley 1981:57) is used in the Exilic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History to refer to their anticipated restoration to the Promised land and their rights to regain their own patrimonies.

(ii) centralization of worship

The service of Yahweh through the priests is important to the understanding of the use of the tradition of centralization of worship in the conflict between the house of Ahab and the latifundaries in Israel in the Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History. The tradition of the centralization of worship is used by the Deuteronomistic Historian to assert that Jerusalem should be the central and only place where Yahweh can be worshipped. It is also used to assert that the temple in Jerusalem is the central place where the legitimate

priests of Yahweh are to be found. The tradition of the centralization of worship is used in the Deuteronomistic History to explain the fate of Israel (II Kings 17:21-23). In his analysis of the contradiction in the use of the prophetic narratives in the Deuteronomistic History, J.M. Miller makes this point when he observes:

In addition to these examples it is important to mention that the Elijah legends challenge the very basis of the deuteronomist's contention that God destroyed the northern kingdom because her kings maintained shrines away from Jerusalem. These legends know of no restrictions concerning the place where Yahweh is to be worshipped, and in fact imply that his abode is Horeb rather than Jerusalem. (1966:450)

It is important to point out here again that the concern is not with what actually happened historically but how the tradition of the centralization of the place of worship has been used in the Deuteronomistic History. We have pointed out that Elijah and the other adherents of Yahweh in Israel secured the same social class interests as the adherents of Yahweh in Jerusalem concerning the monarchy of Israel. It is possible that it is for this reason that the ruling classes of Judah have appropriated the legends. Z. Zevit has pointed out that the concern of the Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History was not with the social class and the interests secured by the kings, but their royal policies towards the temple. J. Barr has observed that the traditions of the prophetic movement are used in the Deuteronomistic History without their social implications. This observation corroborates our contention that the adherents of Yahweh, of which Elijah and Naboth were members, form a group in the ruling social classes and secures their interests. R.E.

Friedman notes that the tradition of the centralization of worship is used in the Deuteronomistic History to assert the centre of worship as the place where the ark was situated. He further justifies our contention that Elijah in the Deuteronomistic History represented the interests of the adherents of Yahweh, when he writes:

As for Elijah's sacrifice on Carmel, the prophet was dealing with the kingdom of Israel, but the ark was in Judah. Where else could he go? Further, a story of miraculous fire falling from heaven is hardly a customary sort of sacrifice, and need be consistent with no statutes. (1981:28)

The traditions of the place where the ark is located and the miracle is used by the adherents of Yahweh in the Deuteronomistic History to explain their differences with the followers of Ba'al. In addition to the use of these traditions in the Deuteronomistic History to associate Elijah and his group with the adherents of Yahweh in Judah, there are other factors. In his analysis of the miracle performed by Elijah at Mount Carmel, A. Edersheim observes that Elijah stands in the tradition of the priests of Jerusalem. He sees the performance of the miracle as a restoration of the covenant with Yahweh which Israel broke. He writes:

The sun had long passed its meridian, and the time of the regular evening-sacrifice in the Temple of Jehova at Jerusalem had come. From the accounts of Temple-times left us we know that the evening sacrifice was offered "between the evenings," as it was termed - that is, between the downgoing of the sun and the evening. In point of fact the service commenced between two and three p.m. It must have been about the same when Elijah began the simple yet solemn preparations for his sacrifice. (NO DATE:18)

At Mount Carmel Elijah is presented in the Deuteronomistic History as the adherent of Yahweh and Ahab is presented as the follower of Ba'al. It is in the use of traditions of the place where the ark is located and the miracle performed by Elijah to which the traditions of Elisha as the successor of Elijah (IKings 19:19) are directed. These tradition are presumably meant to declare the Ba'als' impotence conceptually and institutionally. The traditions are used to demonstrate that at least conceptually they might have succeeded to condemn the house of Ahab and vindicate the adherents of Yahweh (IKings 20). They are used to demonstrate that on the institutional level the house of Ahab was beyond repentance as it is presented in the Naboth Episode. Ahab is condemned in the Deuteronomistic History not only for having worshipped the Ba'als and establishing rival centres of worship for them, but also for having allowed himself to be advised by a follower of the Ba'als (IKings 21:25-26). The tolerance of the followers of Ba'al and the establishment of rival centres of worship for which the historian condemns Ahab relate to the ideological outlook of the ruling classes of Judah. The historian uses the tradition of the centralization of worship in order to condemn the existence of the monarchy of Israel. The existence of the monarchy of Israel meant that the state was no longer centred in Jerusalem anymore than worship was. G.V. Pixley makes a similar point:

Persian policy was to impose upon the village productive base of Judah a priestly class that would serve as a buffer between the producers and the final oppressor (the imperial authorities). From the point of view of Judah's internal life it meant taking up again Josiah's

project of centering the national life on the temple. This time, however, the temple was backed by the political power, not of a Judean monarchy, but of the Persian crown. The historical fact was that the Persian Empire supported the exile community in putting into practice the project they have worked out in Babylon. (1981:59)

The tradition of centralization of worship is used in the Deuteronomistic History to assert the exclusive worship of Yahweh, to which we now turn.

(iii) Prohibition of foreign worship

The prohibition of foreign worship in the Deuteronomistic History concerns the historian's attitude towards the foreign people (non-Israelites). The historian's view of the result of Israel's association with these people betrays his negative attitude towards them. The hostile attitude which the historian displays towards the non-Israelites is extended to Israel in the Northern Kingdom. Israel is associated with the foreign people because according to the historian she is serving the foreign deities. The historian links foreign worship with foreign marriage. Ahab, like his predecessors, is presented as having transgressed the law which prohibits the worship of foreign deities by marrying Jezebel, the daughter of Ethba'al, the Sido'nian king (IKings 16:29-34). The intermarriage between Israel and the foreign people is condemned in the same way as the that between Israel and Judah. After the internecine wars between Israel and Judah, Ahab makes peace with Jehoshaphat (IKings 22:41-45). The peace treaty between the kingdom of Israel and Judah is

condemned (IIChronicles 19:1-3). The treaty which was presumably sealed by the marriage between Ahab's daughter and Jehoshaphat's son is also condemned:

And he (Jeho'ram) walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife. And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. (IIKings 8:18)

The historian is negative towards the people and not the result of the tolerant attitude towards them. R.E. Friedman makes this point when he writes:

The injunction in Deuteronomy is one of the few Biblical laws which include a statement of the reason for the demand. Intermarriage is forbidden because the foreign partner will turn the Israelite to apostasy (Deut.7:4). This is precisely the perspective of IKings 11:1-4. Deut.7:4 warns that this will enrage YHWH; 1 Kings 11:9 reports that "YHWH was angered at Solomon." The two passages are utterly consistent. (1981:28)

It is important to note here that the historian is consistent in his negative attitude towards the foreign people, including Israel, while at the same time he is inconsistent towards the intermarriages themselves. The historian's view was negative towards intermarriage for the internal ordering of the Israelite monarchical society. To this must be added that the historian views such intermarriages beneficial to the Israelite monarchy when threatened by external social pressures. The Deuteronomistic Historian condemns the internal social and religious tendencies which result of the intermarriages while at the same time condones its protective measures against external social pressures. A. Edersheim observes that the intermarriage between Israel and Judah were not condemned for the introduction of apostasy, but were also celebrated as important political and military alliances. He

applies the same principle to the historian's view about intermarriages with foreigners when he observes:

To this cause for uneasiness to Syria must be added the close alliance between Israel and Tyre, indicated, if not brought about, by the marriage of Ahab with Jezebel. Thus the kingdom of Israel was secure both on its southern and western boundaries, and only threatened on that towards Syria.
(NO DATE:34)

The marriage between Ahab and Jezebel is condemned within the Israelite social system while at the same time the editor condones it against the external social pressures. The Deuteronomistic Historian uses the tradition concerning the prohibition of foreign worship to condemn Jezebel while at the same time he employs it to condone intermarriage for sociopolitical and military alliances. The historian blames Jezebel for the introduction of foreign worship in Israelite society. According to the Elijah-cycle in the Deuteronomistic History, she is not repentent of the drought caused by the worship of foreign deities. Instead, she is seeking vengeance against the prophet of Yahweh (IKings 19:2) for slaying the prophets of Ba'al (IKings 18:40). A. Edersheim observes that the duel between Yahweh and Ba'al, symbolically represented by Elijah and the prophets of Ba'al, was not about foreign deities competing against Mono-Yahwism only but concerned also the imposition of the monarchical social order upon sociopolitical egalitarianism of the liberated slaves from Egypt. He writes:

If all the representatives of Yahweh were exterminated, His power could no longer be exercised in the land, and she would at the same time crush resistance to her imperious will, and finally uproot that hated religion which was alike the charter of Israel's spiritual allegiance and

of civil liberty. Yet neither Ahab
nor Jezebel succeeded. (NO DATE :10)

Jezebel is, therefore, blamed for the social tendencies that came through the monarchy. The historian's portrayal of Jezebel explains better his presentation of other non-Israelites who participated in the history of the Israel. According to Joshua 2, the motive of Rahab, the harlot for harbouring the spies was simply to save her own life and the lives of her immediate family. The Deuteronomistic historian presents her as a member of the lower classes who have contributed to the downfall of her own people. Unlike Jezebel she is commended for the role she played in the life of Israel (Hebrews 11:31). The other non-Israelite who participated in the history of Israel is Delilah (Judges 16). She is condemned by the historian for her contribution in the victory of her people against their enemies. S.B. Frost's observation about the historian's use of the material concerning Jezebel applies equally to Rahab and Delilah. He writes:

We may note therefore that there is in the Bible no attempt to deal with Jezebel for her own sake, and that she is only brought in to act as a foil to the heroes of the prophetic tradition, Elijah, Elisha, and Jehu; we may also conclude that some rearrangement of the material may be necessary to secure a more coherent chronology. (1964:506)

Unlike Delilah, Jezebel is directly blamed for the introduction of foreign worship in Israel. She is condemned for the establishment of rival cults and worship at high places. S.B. Frost notes that the kings of Israel married foreign women as part of their policy to depart from the sociopolitical egalitarianism of the tribal confederacy of Israel. These women did not introduce rival cults but that

their marriages were a good excuse for the introduction of foreign worship. He concludes:

That Jezebel initiated this policy is unlikely and one gains the impression that she was a result of it rather than a cause - that is, Ahab married Jezebel as part of his policy of what we might call the Canaanitization of Israel. In any event, she espoused not only the king but also his Canaanitizing policy and indeed became identified in the eyes of the prophetic movement as its chief architect and protagonist. (1964:506)

Jezebel is in the Elijah-cycle not blamed for the monarchical policy of the Northern Kingdom of departing from Mono-Yahwism but also for the destruction of the monarchy itself.

(iv) Chastisement

According to the Deuteronomistic History, the house of Ahab continued in the sins of Jeroboam (IKings 16:31). This is the basis of the condemnation of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. As in the case of Jeroboam, the judgment was not executed during the reign of Ahab, but was partially implemented. According to IKings 17:2, Elijah announces that Yahweh will withdraw land from the land. With the relief that follow after the miracle at Mount Carmel, Elijah himself and the people execute the judgment of Yahweh against the prophets of Ba'al (IKings 18:42). This is followed by the commandment to Elijah by Yahweh that he must anoint Jehu to be king of Israel and Elisha as his successor in order to execute the judgment of Yahweh against the adherents of Ba'al (IKings 19:15-18). Judgment is pronounced against Ahab by an

unknown prophet for sparing the life of Ben-hadad who was under the ban of the Lord (IKings 20:42). The house of Ahab is also condemned for the murder of Naboth (IKings 21:19). In his presentation of the sins of Ahab, the Deuteronomistic historian points out that he was instigated by his foreign wife, and that they were unparalleled in the remainder of the history of Israel (IKings 21:25). He is also presented as having surpassed his predecessors who were before him (IKings 16:30-33). The historian compares him with the foreign people "whom the Lord had driven out from before the Israelites" (IKings 21:26). The historian compares the sins of Ahab with the foreign nations in order to justify the destruction of the Northern Kingdom and to warn the Southern Kingdom about a similar fate. E.T. Mullen Jr. makes the same point when he writes:

As the Dtr H [Deuteronomistic History] presents it, whatever good may have resulted from the righteous acts of these two rulers [Hezekiah and Josiah] was completely negated by the evil of the deeds of Manasseh, a king who, in practical terms, did very little that had not already been done by his predecessors to the Judean throne. Hence, the "sins of Jeroboam" function as a theological device, a judgment placed upon the Israelite monarchy at the beginning of the story of its history, to serve as a warning to Judah and an explanation of the evil that befell both nations. (1997:231).

This is the reality which the contemporary oppressed have to live with in order to appropriate the biblical exiles properly to their situation and experience of exile.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The Naboth Episode as presented in IKings 21 in the Deuteronomistic History cannot be understood apart from the context of the Elijah-Elisha cycle, of which it is part. It is the climax of the confrontation between Elijah and the house of Ahab. The conflict includes: Elijah's prediction of drought (IKings 17); the termination of the drought (IKings 18); the prosperity of the land (IKings 19); the royal policy towards the enemies of Israel (IKings 20); the royal policy towards the inhabitants of the Israelite society (IKings 21).

The historian of the Deuteronomistic History presents the conflict about land between the latifundiary class and the king in the Naboth Episode of IKings 21 in such a way that the reader takes sides with the latifundiary class. The contemporary readers, especially the oppressed, have not looked beyond the options presented by the text and have traditionally identified with and taken sides with the latifundiary class in the text. They have assumed that the latifundiary class represents their struggles against extraction of land in contemporary societies. This is unfortunate because Naboth as a latifundiary in the text is no more interested in the course of the peasants of his day than the royal house, both of whom secured the same social class interests by extracting land from the ruled classes. In this thesis an attempt has been made to demonstrate that the confrontation between Ahab and Naboth must be understood

as an intra-group conflict within the ruling classes and contradictory to and overdetermined by the conflict for land between the ruling classes and ruled classes. In order to correct this situation we suggested that we must address the social context and the ideological interests which the Naboth Episode (IKings 21) secures in the Deuteronomistic History as W. Benjamin put it:

Before I ask: how does a literary work stand in relation to the relationships of production of a period, I would like to ask: how does it stand in them? This question aims directly at the function that the work has within the literary relationships of production of a period. In other words, it aims directly at a work's literary technique. (1970:85)

The approach which the contemporary oppressed have traditionally adopted in their interpretation of the Bible is well illustrated by their approach to the Naboth episode which has proved important because of the issue of land tenure. They ask how the Naboth Episode stand in relation to the social relationship of production during the monarchy of Israel. They have not, however, asked how it stood in the social relationship of production of its redactors. They have therefore not asked what function the Naboth Episode had within the literary relationship of production during the period of the editors of the Deuteronomistic History.

In this thesis an attempt has been made to demonstrate that a search for an answer to this question gives us access to the social class of the historians through a literary oriented

materialist analysis of the Naboth Episode. It also helped us to overcome the traditional egg-or-chicken question in interpretation between the literary form or the content. For the sake of emphasis we want to recall T. Eagleton who admirably make the egg-and-chicken both indispensable when he writes:

A scientific criticism would seek to explain the literary work in terms of the ideological structure of which it is part, yet which it transforms in its art: it would search out the principle which both ties the work to ideology and distance it from it. (1976:19)

We have demonstrated in the course of this thesis that the glue which held the literary forms and the content of the editors was the temple ideology. The literary forms themselves, originating as they did in the Northern Kingdom, exhibit a tendency to renounce the ideological constraints of the Jerusalem temple ideology. This was demonstrated by the miracle performed by the prophet Elijah at Mount Carmel (IKings 18). We have pointed out that the temple ideology on the other hand was not significant for the religious centralization only but was also concerned with the centralization of the state in Jerusalem in the Josianic reedction of the material. It is in this sense that the literary forms were part of the ideological structure while at the same time transforming the structure itself. At the end of the day the collectors made their impression against the kingdom of Israel through the Naboth Episode. How they managed it we suggest is a lesson to be learnt by the contemporary oppressed in their insistence that they have a mandate from Yahweh to seize the "gospel" from the hands of the powerful of this world. What they are not aware of is

that the "gospel", at least the Old Testament, is in the hands of the powerful of the Biblical world. W. Benjamin's observation about the intellectuals of his day is applicable to the editors of the Naboth Episode as we now have it:

In point of fact we are faced with a situation - for which the last decade in Germany furnishes complete proof - in which the bourgeois apparatus of production and publication can assimilate an astonishing number of revolutionary themes, and can even propagate them without seriously placing its own existence or the existence of the class that possess them into question. (1970:90)

The themes employed by the editors of the Deuteronomistic History are (i) the land (ii) the exile and (iii) woman as the revolutionary agent.

(i) the land

The duel between Yahweh and Ba'al which is symbolically represented by Elijah and Ahab respectively at Mount Carmel (IKings 18) is related to the crisis involved in the use of the theme of the land in the Deuteronomistic History. The worship of the Ba'als has aroused the wrath of Yahweh who has withheld rain from the land. After the defeat of the Ba'als the people returned to Yahweh who subsequently acknowledges their repentance by sending rain. The land starts to prosper and the people were able to plough it again (IKings 19:19). The prosperous land is envied by the foreign people (IKings 20:5-6). Throughout the Deuteronomistic History where land is employed as the literary theme, the role of the king is either diminished or his opinion rejected with contempt, while credit is given to the prophet (IKings 20:35-

43). The theme of the land and the confrontation between the prophet and the king reaches its climax in the Naboth Episode (IKings 21). The historian presents the tension between the king and the prophet in such a way that the readers must identify the prophet in the text. In the case of the drought at Mount Carmel, the nation chose the side of Yahweh, who gave rain against the Ba'als. The reader was bound to believe that those who worshipped Yahweh would prosper (IKings 19:19-21). In the case of a direct confrontation between the king and the latifundiary, the reader is expected to condemn the activities of the royal house while at the same time sympathising with the land owner. This is how the text stands in connection with the relationships of production for the redactors. In order to appreciate how the text stands in the relationships of production themselves, we look at how the historian employ land as a literary theme.

The land as the basic means of production is central to the struggle between Ahab and Naboth. We note with regret here that the struggles of the proleteriat against the ruling classes during the monarchy were appropriated by the collectors of the material for their own class interests. The claim of the oppressed to the right to protect their land is turned into an intra-group affair within the members of the ruling in Israelite society. We have attempted to demonstrate that the law which prohibits the acquisition of land through devious means is employed by the historian to condemn the house of Ahab and the kingdom of Israel in order

to legitimate the Assyrian exile. The historian presents the Assyrian exile as Yahweh's rejection of Israel. The centrality of the land to the promise of Yahweh is expressed by the ruling classes of Judah who were taken to the Babylonian exile. In exile they anticipated a return to the land which they once extracted by the same devious means they accused Ahab in the Naboth Episode. This developments about the use of the theme of the land have striking parallels with our contemporary situation in South Africa where extraction of land from the Black people is justified in the same manner as the redactors present the motive behind Ahab's desire to buy or exchange the vineyard for a better one: a subject's property bordering the royal estate or a black spot in a white area. However, that is as far as the parallels go. We do not know for certain about the historical circumstances of the Naboth Episode; what we do know is the way in which the incident was redacted. We also know that the redaction comes from the pen of the ruling classes and the interests secured by the text are those of the surviving ruling class. It is in the light of these considerations that we suggested that we must differentiate between three intentions of the text as we have it: the etiological, the historical and the hermeneutical. Since the contemporary oppressed are operating on the hermeneutical level, we suggests that the text must be critiqued in the light of their contemporary situation. This will be the case if the contemporary oppressed want to solve their problems rather than go to the etiological context of the events in the text. The historical intention as represented by the text as we have it now is foreign to the ideology of the contemporary oppressed. In order to appreciate how the Naboth Episode stand in the

relationships of production, we must look at another theme which the editors of the Deuteronomistic History employed in their presentation of the tensions in the Naboth Episode.

exile

The question of how the Naboth episode stand in the relationships of production of the editors of the Deuteronomistic History, is concerned with the social class analysis of the redactors themselves. Their social class and the interests they secured are betrayed by their theological position revealed in the themes; their theological position on the question of estrangement of the ruled classes from the land by the ruling classes during the monarchy. The theme of estrangement from the land reaches its climax in the exile of the Israelite ruling classes to Babylon in 586 B.C. The theme of the land and the estrangement from it by either the indigenous or the foreign ruling classes looms large in the Naboth Episode.

The Naboth Episode as presented in IKings 21 forms the focus of the Elijah-Elisha cycle's explanation why the people of Israel were taken to the Assyrian exile in 722 B.C. The historian uses the exile as the theme around which to explain how the the royal practices in Israel led to their exile. In the Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History, the historians espouses a positive attitude towards the institution of kingship. They only condemn the evil

practices of the kings and not the institution of kingship. The reason is because the kingdom of Israel was no more but the kingdom of Judah was still surviving. This fact also explains the standard which was employed in the condemnation of the kings of Israel: it was the kingship of Judah. The condemnation of the individual kings of Judah and all the kings of Israel reaches its climax in the condemnation of the institution of kingship by the editors of the Deuteronomistic History who were taken to the Babylonian exile. It is important to note here how the historian employs the theme of exile in the Deuteronomistic History. In the Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History the theme of exile is employed to explain why Israel was deported by the Assyrians. In this case the historian uses the theme of exile in order to highlight the evil practices of the kings and confirm his assumption of its illegitimate establishment in the first place. In the exilic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History the historian employs the theme of exile in order to explain the result of the establishment of the institution of kingship among the people of Yahweh. He sought to explain why the ruling classes were deported from the promised land and found themselves in exile. F.E. Deist and I. Du Plessis observe this concern of the Deuteronomistic History when they write:

The Deuteronomist far rather wished to urge the people to become converted and repent, and encourage them not to place their faith in kings but in God who can and wants to save the oppressed. (1982:74-75).

In this case the historian is only concerned with the oppression of the ruling classes in exile (R.E. Friedman 1981:34). He does not say anything about the remnants in the

land who were now oppressed by the foreign ruling classes (G.V. Pixley (1981:56). The contemporary oppressed have in their appropriation of the exile redaction mistaken the struggles of the oppressors in the same way as they have in the Naboth Episode. They have identified the deportation and exile of Judean ruling classes in Babylon with their own banishments, forced removals and exile in contemporary societies. This is unfortunate because by so doing the contemporary oppressed appropriate the struggles of the once oppressors who are now exiled as their own. It is characteristic of this tendency displayed by the contemporary oppressed to forget that the struggles of the exiles in the Deuteronomistic History contradict and are overdetermined by the struggles between the ruling classes who were taken to exile and the ruled classes who were left to remain in the land. This situation can be corrected only when the contemporary readers of the Deuteronomistic History ask the question: how does the exile redaction of the Deuteronomistic History stand in the relationships of production during the period of the exiled historian in a foreign land. With this question we come to the last theme employed by the editors of the Deuteronomistic History.

(iii) Woman as the revolutionary agent

The theme of woman as the revolutionary agent is central to the Elijah-Elisha cycle which forms the context of the Naboth Episode as presented in 1 Kings 21. The woman as the agent of revolution is central to the issue of land tenure about which

the cycle is particularly concerned. In the case of the Naboth Episode the woman under the spotlight is Jezebel (Ahab's wife), the daughter of Ethba'al the Sidonian king. It is important to note here that her foreignness, royal background and her sex plays a decisive role in the historian's presentation of her contribution in the murder of Naboth. It is these same factors which the contemporary oppressed take into consideration when they choose a side between Ahab and Naboth as presented in IKings 21. The historian presents her foreign origin as the cause of the establishment of rival shrines and the worship of foreign deities in Israel. Her royal background and understanding of kingship is blamed by the historian for the murder of Naboth. The historian's presentation of Jezebel reveals an inconsistent attitude towards the participation of non-Israelites in the affairs of Israel (Judges 5:24; 16:4; IIKings 9:24). In their identification with Naboth as presented in IKings 21:3, the contemporary oppressed have colluded with the racism, the sectarian ruling class interests and the sexism of the historian. In this thesis an attempt was made to demonstrate that the royal practices of the non-Israelite kings were not worse than the royal practices of the Israelite kings during the monarchy: they both extracted land from the ruled classes. If we condemn the foreign ruling classes by taking side with Naboth as presented by the historian, we tacitly accept the indigenous ruling classes who secure the same class interests against the masses of the Israelite society. In order to avoid this situation the contemporary oppressed need to critique the Deuteronomistic History on the basis of their situation and

experience of banishments, forced removals and exiles in order to understand why:

It appears that seduction, treason, and murder are virtuous and praiseworthy when done to Israel's advantage, but are deserving of the utmost censure when used by Israel's enemies. There is in the Bible, it would seem, a double standard of judgment, and the view is tacitly inculcated that when actions benefit Israel they are right, but when they militate against her they are wrong. (S.B. Frost 1964:505)

From the above it becomes clear that in our reading of the Deuteronomistic History, we must distinguish between three levels: the etiological; the historical and the hermeneutical context. It is these levels which the oppressed must take into account in their attempt to appropriate the historian's use of the theme of land, exile and woman as the revolutionary agent; in their contemporary situation and experience of banishments and forced removals from their land. It is only when the contemporary oppressed critique the text of the Deuteronomistic History in the light of the estrangement from their land in contemporary societies, that they will realize that the Naboth Episode of IKings 21 is the creation of the ruling classes in order to secure their interests.

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