

**An Ideological Analysis of Genesis 18:1-15
and its
Implications for the Kiribati practice of *Kairuwa* (Hospitality)**

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ABSTRACT

This work stems from the problem which is evidently arriving in Kiribati – i.e. the dying out of *kairuwa* (practice of hospitality) especially amongst the local populations. This thesis studies Genesis 18:1-15 using ideological criticism. A specific interest is to explore meanings from Abraham's act of hospitality and to explore what implications this narrative may have on the practice of *kairuwa* in Kiribati. This thesis will attempt to uncover an elite ideology dictating the rhetoric of the text. In the end, this work hopes to offer plausible considerations to understand and recognize complications on the horizon of the practice of *kairuwa* in Kiribati. Furthermore, this work will also take into consideration theological suggestions of hospitality for the people in the islands.

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Dedication

Nakoia

Tetera, Sama, Tekimwau, Tionity

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Introduction

Thesis Problem

Kairuwa is the Kiribati word for the practice of hospitality. Like many societies in the modern world, hospitality plays an important role in the relations between the people of the islands of Kiribati, especially in everyday life. Probably the most important effect which has been evident over the years in the islands is how showing hospitality builds good relations with others around the community. In saying this, the modern age has seen great change in the practice of *kairuwa*. First, the treatment of foreigners as opposed to locals is clear, as *kairuwa* puts emphasis on the hospitable response towards those from outside of the communities – referred to as foreigners. The locals do not receive the same amount of hospitality. Although this maybe common in many communities, the problem in Kiribati is deteriorating to a state in which *kairuwa* towards locals has fallen to the stage of non-existent. It is a sad sight but relations between locals are not as good as it used to be.

Biblical Text and Thesis Statement

I have chosen to work with the story of Abraham's hospitality towards the three visitors in Genesis 18:1-15. In this analysis, I hope to explore the concept of hospitality in the world of the text but more importantly what the concept may have meant for the author in his/her world. In light of the Abraham story, this thesis attempts to show that this narrative functioned to promote an elite ideology of building of good relations through the promoting of receptive ideals.

Method and Methodology

The method I will use is Ideological criticism which will explore driving factors which call for the need and decline of showing hospitality in society. In line with the purpose of the study, these findings and conclusion will be discussed in light of the problem of *kairuwa*, what advice the biblical text may have for the society and practice of *kairuwa* in Kiribati.

The layout of this work is as follows; chapter one will present a review of the literature on the biblical text. This will provide an overview of the various arguments regarding the function and purpose of Abraham's act of hospitality; furthermore provide a platform for this work to build upon. The next section of this chapter will discuss the method of ideological criticism, definition, purpose and process of achieving the exegetical process. Chapter two will be dedicated to the first part of the exegetical process which is the extrinsic analysis. Chapter three will present the intrinsic analysis completing the process. The work ends with the conclusion and discussion of the implications for *kairuwa*.

Chapter 1

Literature Review and Method of Interpretation

1.1 Literature Review

This review explores the various views regarding the purpose or function of the story of Abraham's act of hospitality.

Although Gerhard von Rad sees Genesis 18 as part of a larger literary unit, he still comments on the individual significance of Abraham's act of hospitality. For von Rad – from a form critical perspective – the story functions to build good relationships between peoples. The main concern of the narrative was to encourage its readers to show hospitality as it was a necessity in the time of the author. Von Rad makes reference to Hebrews 13:2 which emphasize the generosity towards strangers who may possibly be angels amongst men.¹ So it is evident from Von Rad's point of view, this narrative encourages the building of alliances and good will as it can be rewarding.

Brueggemann also focuses on the issue and importance of servant-hood referring to the first section as the “atmosphere of hurry” which sees Abraham's hospitable to the strangers. Ideologically, the final section is focused on Sarah's laugh and her skeptical approach to the messages from the divine.² Ogletree emphasizes the moral implications of hospitality, “the moral life is exceedingly rich and complex. It eludes our attempts to grasps its essential meaning in a single conception”. In this work, he is not suggesting that morality can be perceived in terms of a single conception “as by an overarching metaphor: to be moral is to be hospitable to the stranger”. What this implies is that

¹ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library, Revised edition, (Eds.) Peter Ackroyd, James Barr (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), 204-206.

² Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982) 13.

hospitality provides a lens through which moral life is perceived, that is by considering the “otherness.”³

Like von Rad, Wenham views 18 as part of the larger literary unit (Gen. 18:1-19:38) where the destruction of Sodom lies at the centre. However, the story of Abraham’s hospitality is really seen as the announcement of the birth of Isaac. This acts as an introduction to the unit which emphasizes the Sodom destruction. The unit is then closed by the account of incest of Lot’s daughters.⁴ Thus, it may seem that Wenham perceives the entire unit from a theological mind-set.⁵ As the structure itself talks of the ushering in of a new hope with the arrival of Isaac and the destruction of those who sin.

Claus Westermann also emphasizes this theological focus on the importance strangers and their messages. Making reference to the warning in Heb. 13:2, hospitality is essential as one may never know whom one hosts. This carries the notion that Yahweh may be represented by visitors and thus to be receptive of these guests would be to receive the gift offered to the host as a reward.⁶ Bullard and Chrysostom emphasize the importance of servants and their openness to receive and serve.⁷

In summary, the chosen scholars represent two main arguments as to the function of the narrative of Abraham’s hospitality. First there is a theological understanding which emphasizes blessings and rewards as premeditated but dependent upon the response of the host to the visitors. Second line of thought perceives the function of the story to serve

³ Ogletree, TW. *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985). 1.

⁴ Gordon J Wenham, *Genesis 16-50, Vol.2*, World Biblical Commentary, (eds.) David A Hubbard, Glenn W Barker, John D Watts, Ralph P Martin (Texas: Word Book Publisher, 1994), 40-41

⁵ See also H Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spirit Life*. (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1975), 46.

⁶ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36; A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985), 277.

⁷ Jeremy Bullard, 2005, “*Genesis 18:1-15: Through the lens of the covenant meal type scene*” (Thesis Paper, Deerfield, Illinois, 2005), 65.

ideological purposes such as promoting servant-hood and hospitality which in turn should end in building of good relationships and alliances. While this work may lean slightly more towards the ideological function, the theological explanations should not also be forsaken because these concepts and phenomenon are interrelated. Religion in the eyes of Marxism is an ideology.⁸ Thus, this work may have slight contributions to both arguments.

1.2. Ideological Criticism

1.2.1. Definition and History

To date, no single suitable description for ideology has been suggested.⁹ This work does not offer to resolve this problem, but to point out one of the many connotations in order for the reader to grasp the essence of the argument. A brief description of the concept will be provided followed by a discussion of the functions of ideologies. Determining a selected nuance for this work shall conclude this discussion.

Ideology is a production of the Greek terms *idea* and *logos* to designate “knowledge of ideas.”¹⁰ The term arose during the 18th century French Revolution as ‘*ideologie*’ from French philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy to denote the “science of ideas.” Given an understanding of the origins of ideas, there would then be the basis for social and scientific advancement.¹¹ In other words, ideology can give a “measure of freedom”

⁸ Malcolm Hamilton. *The Sociology of Religion*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge Press, 2001), 91-97

⁹ Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction*, new and updated edition (London: Verso, 2007), 1.

¹⁰ William L. Reese, “Ideology,” in *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion: Eastern and Western Thought*, expanded edition, ed. William L. Reese (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 328.

¹¹ George Boas, “Ideology,” in *Standard Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Dagobert D. Runes (New York: Philosophy Library, 1983), 156. See also Alan F. Geyer, *Ideology in America: Challenges to Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 12. Jorge Larraín, *The Concept of Ideology* (London: Century Hutchinson Ltd, 1979), 17.

deeming it to be a redemptive phenomenon. According to Perkins, “the more we understand ideologies, the more we can control their inescapable effects on how we interpret social reality.”¹² The measure of freedom then, is not from ideologies themselves, but rather over the ideological decisions that are made.¹³ This in general can be seen as a positive or non-pejorative use of the term.

The pejorative or negative notion was later introduced when Napoleon Bonaparte in 1812 criticized the impact that Tracy and his followers—whom he referred to as ‘*ideologues*’¹⁴—had on the French military defeats.¹⁵ The self-crowned French Emperor continued to use the term as such to designate all his enemies, particularly those who upheld a republican ideology.¹⁶ This negative view was established further by the philosophers of the 19th century, most notably, Marx and Engels. Reacting against religion, they seemingly equated it with ideology, criticizing it as a source of a ‘false consciousness of reality’¹⁷ or rather an “inverted consciousness of the world.”¹⁸ For Marx, religion was “the opium of the people.”¹⁹ He perceived religion as the product of a class society which conveys a general theory of an abstract world and not historical reality. Religion provided only a temporary remedy and no real solution to problems, and in the

¹² Richard Perkins, *Looking Both Ways: Exploring the Interface between Christianity and Sociology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 101-102.

¹³ Perkins, *Looking Both Ways*, 103. Hans Barth also perceived this advantage of ideology as a means for societal developments. — Barth, *Truth and Ideology*, trans. F. Lilge (Berkeley: University of California, 1976), 3.

¹⁴ Ideologues refer to those who support a particular ideology, especially those who promote, express and represent the ideology or ideologies.

¹⁵ David Braybrooke, “Ideology,” in *EP*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York/London: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. & The Free Press/Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1972), 3 & 4: 124-127.

¹⁶ Boas, “Ideology,” 156. See also Reese, “Ideology,” 328.

¹⁷ Braybrooke, “Ideology,” 125. See also Geyer, *Ideology in America*, 13.

¹⁸ Jorge Larraín, *Ideology & Cultural Identity: Modernity and the Third World Presence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 12.

¹⁹ Karl Marx, “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” in *On Religion*, ed. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1964), 41-42.

process, further promotes the distorted view of the real world.²⁰ To further comprehend this distortion, Marx proposes the model of “*camera obscura*.”²¹ Dealing with the economic situation of his time, where the “alienation in class-divided societies”²² was of a major concern, Marx perceived religion to be serving the interest of a particular social class, presumably the elite. Despite only being a temporary remedy, religion presented spiritual answers to satisfy the so-called conscience of those who were experiencing suffering and oppression. Religion had distorted the view of the oppressed citizens of reality and their real social conditions. Ideology in this sense seemed to be a set of beliefs which express what people are led to think, in contrast to what is true.

. Terry Eagleton’s work testifies to the difficult task of trying to come up with a single adequate definition to the term ideology as he points out six of the most common understandings of the concept.²³ Before we point out the nuance this study assumes, let us briefly point out two main functions of ideologies.

²⁰ Marx, “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” 41-42.

²¹ ‘Camera Obscura’ is the model Marx uses to describe this distortion which would view men and their situations upside down. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology: Parts I & III*. Edited with an introduction by R. Pascal (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1938), cited in Afereti Uili, “The conflict of Biblical interpretations: towards a resolution in the light of the work of Paul Ricoeur,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Otago, Dunedin, 1998), 71.

—The camera obscura is a visual device. In a ‘dark room’ light from a scene would pass through a hole, hitting a surface where it is reproduced, in color, and upside-down. It was later developed with the addition of curved lens and mirrors to reflect images onto a viewing surface.

²² Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion*, 91.

²³ The most general of all meanings of ideology stresses the social determination of thought, thus providing a valuable antidote to idealism; but otherwise it would seem unworkably broad and suspiciously silent on the question of political conflict. 2. A second slightly less general meaning of ideology turns on ideas and beliefs (whether true or false) which symbolize the conditions and life-experiences of a specific, socially significant group or class. 3. ...a third definition of the term, which attends to the *promotion* and *legitimation* of the interests of such social groups in the face of opposing interests. 4. A fourth meaning of ideology would retain this emphasis on the promotion and legitimation of sectorial interests, but confine it to the activities of a dominant social power. 5. ...ideology signifies ideas and beliefs which help to legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class specifically by distortion and dissimulation. 6. There is, finally, the possibility of a sixth meaning of ideology, which retains an emphasis on false or deceptive beliefs but regards such beliefs as arising not from the interests of a dominant class but from the material structure of society as a whole. Eagleton, *Ideology*, 29-30.

1.2.2. Functions of Ideology

From the contradicting connotations discussed, the function of ideology would then depend on which side of the conflict one is situated. We can formulate two major functions of ideology. First, the pejorative notion of ideology—as seen in the understandings of Marx and Engels—functioned to *justify* and *preserve* the status quo.²⁴ Ideology was seen as a manipulative tool which presents a false consciousness of reality. Gale A. Yee’s definition of ideology also portrays this understanding,

As a complex system of values, ideas, pictures, images, and perceptions, ideology motivates men and women to “see” their particular place in the social order as natural, inevitable, and necessary.²⁵

In other words, this perception of ideology functions to legitimize what is; that is, current political, social, and economic conditions. To ensure that the elite maintain their status with all the prestige and power that comes with it, while the lower class citizens remain to be the lower class citizens. This understanding of ideology encourages these low class citizens to accept their low status as the way things should be. Such ideologies would normally stem from these upper class groups.

Second, the non-pejorative notion which falls in line with Mannheim’s concept of utopia²⁶ functions in opposition to ideology as discussed above. Utopias are ideologies which unmask existing dominant ideologies within a society. Politically, this non-pejorative ideology aims for transformation and change of current systems of a society. They function to *correct* oppressive political, social, and economic systems. In light of

²⁴ Marx, “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” 41-42. See also Ricoeur’s contribution on p.34 above.

²⁵ Gale A. Yee, “Ideological Criticism: Judges 17-21 and the Dismembered Body,” in *Judges & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 148.

²⁶ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Haecourt, Brace and Co.1936), 240.

Ricoeur's take on these opposing ideologies, the non-pejorative notion would normally be from "rising classes," or rather the "under-privilege."²⁷

In both functions we can see the influence and power that ideologies have within a society. It can motivate people to take a certain standpoint, and accordingly to move in a certain direction. To one extreme, it can motivate people to accept the status quo even though it contradicts their interests, to the other, it can also motivate people to make a stand against the so-called status quo. The argument of this work as proposed in the beginning suggests that while hospitality normally carries a positive nuance of generosity and genuine act of kindness, the function of the narrative of Abraham's act of hospitality from the author's perspective is more politically driven.

1.2.3. The Method: Ideological Criticism

According to Yee, the presupposition which guides the task of an ideological critic is two-fold. The "text (1) is a *production* of a specific, ideologically charged historical world that (2) *reproduces* a particular ideology with an internal logic of its own."²⁸ In other words, behind the text lies a world full of ideologies, and as a product of this ideological context, it encodes these competing ideologies.²⁹ W. Randolph Tate states that "Ideological criticism attempts to uncover the ideology of the text and the ideological influences during the history of its interpretation."³⁰ The primary goal of the ideological

²⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. & trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: University, 1981), 240.

²⁸ Yee, "Ideological Criticism: Judges 17-21 and the Dismembered Body," 149.

²⁹ Yee, "Ideological Criticism: Judges 17-21 and the Dismembered Body," 147. See also W. Randolph Tate who clearly points the influence social, political and economic issues have on how one writes.— Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, third edition (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2008), 325-326.

³⁰ Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, 325.

critic is to discover the dominant ideology or ideologies embedded in the text as well as ideologies of the unheard voices within the text.

The two fold task of ideological criticism sees a combination of literary critical methods and that of socio-historical analysis. On the one hand, “extrinsic analysis,” is the analysis of the social-historical context which produces the ideologies. On the other, “intrinsic analysis” employs literary critical methods to analyze the text in an attempt to unveil the ideologies inscribed within.³¹

(i) Extrinsic Analysis: Ideological Context of the Text

The ideological critic investigates the social and historical worlds which produced the text. Special focus of the extrinsic analysis is placed on the leading “mode of production” in the world that produces the text. Yee here is referring to the social, political, and economic activities and interaction within the society. Such interactions would prompt questions relating to the various structures and dominion within society. Furthermore, questions relating to group division such as class, race, gender, religion, etc. also play a vital role in determining the respective ideologies in a society, that is, different groups may have their own ideologies. Three major modes of production within the history of Israel are identified based on the distinctive political, economic, and social features; familial, tributary and slave mode.³²

This thesis situates the author(s) of the Abraham narrative in the David/Solomonic Era (1000-930 B.C.E.). This would fall under the ‘tributary’ mode of production.

³¹ Yee, “Ideological Criticism: Judges 17-21 and the Dismembered Body,” 147.

³² Yee, “Ideological Criticism: Judges 17-21 and the Dismembered Body,” 150-151.

(ii) Intrinsic Analysis: Ideological Content of the Text

The ideological critic adopts literary critical methods in an attempt to uncover how the text integrates the ideological context in its rhetoric, and reproduces these ideologies for readers.³³ In other words, the focus is on what is said in the text and how it is being said. Yee points out two distinctive approaches to achieving the intrinsic task, first, taking note of the “absences” within the text. These absences refer to things which the text deliberately leaves out because they contradict a ‘certain truth’ the author or authors are trying to present. This would present the reader with only half truths of the true reality. Thus, Yee believes that ideologies are most prominent within these so-called absences. The second approach is the examination of the text’s rhetoric, that is, the text’s capability to persuade readers to agree to and accept a certain point of view, that is, a particular ideology.³⁴

Chapter 2

Exegesis I – Extrinsic Analysis

This extrinsic analysis will not only attempt to define the ideological context but to relate possible significances of the concept of hospitality during this time.

2.1 The Yahwistic Source (J)

The J source which is short for Yahwist is one of the four main sources of the Pentateuch proposed by Julius Wellhausen. For Wellhausen, the Yahwist (henceforth J) is the earliest, around 950 BCE, in the time of Solomon when the monarchy peaked. From

³³ Yee, “Ideological Criticism: Judges 17-21 and the Dismembered Body,” 151.

³⁴ Yee, “Ideological Criticism: Judges 17-21 and the Dismembered Body,” 151-152.

Judah, J uses the divine name Yahweh, and has an anthropomorphic³⁵ view of God. The Elohist (E), dated around 800 BCE, is from Israel in the north. E arose from the need of the northern kingdom to record its own traditions. It uses the divine name Elohim, and has a less anthropomorphic view of God. The Deuteronomist (D) is the book of Deuteronomy, which dates around the 7th cent BCE. D consists of long speeches, and emphasises the covenant and land. The Priestly (P), dated around 500 BCE, uses the divine name Elohim, but it differs from E in style and content. P has an interest in genealogies, rituals, laws, and liturgy. It regards Israel as a cultic community organized around the tabernacle.³⁶ This work will focus specifically on J and the context.

The following texts in Genesis have been attributed to J – Genesis 2-16, 18-22, 24-34, 38, and 49. The historical context of the J source indicates an important aspect that is relative to the text. It is believed that J's account was written in the time of David and Solomon around 950 – 930 BCE and it is a source that is believed to have been written from the Southern Kingdom of Judah³⁷. Von Rad and Noth believe that J cannot be dated later than the David-Solomon reigns.³⁸ However, the composition of Genesis according to Louis, says that Genesis was formulated and structured into *toledot* (generation) formula that functioned in the text with different meaning and contexts³⁹ Nihan on the

³⁵ The J source is well-known for its highly “anthropomorphic God,” i.e. a God who has a close relationship with humans, as seen in Gen 2.4-3.24, which includes, for example, a description of God “walking in the garden” (3.8) and says that God “made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them” (3.21).

³⁶ Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, Reprint (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 6-9. Joseph Lam, "The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis," *JSTOR*, (2013), 30-32. See also Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction*, Second Edition (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 74-76.

³⁷ Greg A King, "The Documentary Hypothesis," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 12, no. 1 (2001): 24. Thomas L Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: The Quest for the Historical Abraham* (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 2002), 315-316.

³⁸ Martin Noth. *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, translated by Bernhard Anderson (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1981), 229-230.

³⁹ Jean Louis SKA. *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 22-23.

other hand suggests that the existence of priestly materials and works suggests a more complex nature of the texts composition.⁴⁰ Despite the argument for a later dating represented by these two scholars, this paper will follow the argument of Noth and Von Rad above.

With von Rad's brilliant staging of the "Solomonic enlightenment," his proposed date of around 930 BCE was no longer seriously questioned. Some even went so far as to suggest that the priest Abiathar, the companion of David exiled to Anathoth by Solomon (1 Kgs 2:26–27), might be the author of the J source. In fact, the basis for that early dating were fixed in the idea that Noth had established of premonarchic Israel.⁴¹ Noth insisted on the fact that all the constitutive "themes" of the Pentateuchal tradition, as well as their combination into a normative order, were marked by a "pan-Israelite" stance.⁴² The introduction of this pan-Israelite consciousness presupposed the formation of a tribal league in the mountains of Palestine. But that the Pentateuchal tradition belongs in its essence to the pre-Davidic period appears from the fact that the monarchic institution is remarkably absent and that the centre of gravity of Israel still seems to rest with the tribes of central Palestine (Joseph, Benjamin) – especially apparent in the Jacob and Joseph stories of Genesis and in the conquest narratives of Numbers – and not with Judah. The monarchy thus was the necessary situation for the writing down of the traditions. This falls in line with Noth's argument, "As far as I can see, there is nothing in the original material of the J narrative which would force one to place its composition later than the Davidic-Solomonic period"⁴³ For this 10th-century dating, the following additional

⁴⁰ Christophe Nihan, *Priestly Torah to Pentateuch* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 20.

⁴¹ Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 252-259.

⁴² Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 42-51.

⁴³ Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 230.

arguments were presented (1) the J material contains no references to the Aramean or Assyrian dangers which Israel encountered starting with the 9th century BCE (2) there is no suggestion of the separation between Israel and Judah; rather the tribes of the North South are considered a unity; and (3) the cursing of Canaan in Gen 9:26 (J) echoes the state of affairs of the Davidic and Solomonic empire, as do a number of further texts (e.g. Gen 15:18; 25:23; 27:37, 40a; Num 24:15–19).

In light of J's theology, the primeval history allows the cautious reader an insight into some of its author's profound mode of thinking. The major stories in that section (Gen 2:4b–3:24; 4:1–16; chaps. 6–8; 11:1–9) all concern human indiscretions. The consequences are used to illuminate the pain and frustration encountered in life (e.g., hostility between animals and humans, pain of childbirth, aridity of the soil, wearisome work, and animosity between brothers). Thus the frustrations of the human conditions are attributed not to Yahweh or unfriendly deities but to the imperfection of human beings. The endless human desire to disobey the borders established by Yahweh stimulates a response of the Creator. However, despite the weakness in humans, Yahweh continuously takes measures to save humanity from annihilation.⁴⁴

The theology of J is not that easy to determine due to arguments of earlier sources and traditions J may have used. Wolff however has proposed two main areas where the intentions of J may be recognized, (1) in the “programmatic” passages that are due to his own wording (such as Gen 8:21–22; 12:1–4a; 18:17–18, 22b–33; 32:10–13; 50:20, 24), and (2) in the juxtaposition or rearrangement of previously unconnected narrative units. Very typical of that second possibility might be the insertion of an episode demonstrating

⁴⁴ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985), 51–58.

Abraham's unfaithfulness in Gen 12:10–20 after the promise of the land in 12:7, or the placing of Gen 32:23–33 as Yahweh's answer to Jacob's prayer in 32:10–13.⁴⁵

For the interpretation of the Yahwist's theology, the key passage has always been Gen 12:1–3. Von Rad already gave these verses paramount significance,

In this interlinking of primeval history and history of salvation the Yahwist accounts for the intent and purpose of the salvatory relationship that Yahweh has granted Israel. It is the etiology of all etiologies of Israel.⁴⁶

The problem, though, is to know whether this relatively peaceful universalistic ending of extending the blessing of Abraham not only to his offspring but also to “all the clans of the earth,” may be translated into a “political” message and interpreted in terms of a Davidic “history of salvation.” For Von Rad, it was possible that J had in mind the legitimization of the Davidic monarchy as the fulfilment of Yahweh's plan.⁴⁷ Others perceived in J's message a more critical vein, his intent being not only to accept fully the Davidic turn in Israel's history, but also to expose the arrogance and haughtiness of the Solomonic court.⁴⁸ Furthermore, J appears to condemn the enslavement forced on “brother” nations like Edom (see Gen 27:40b) or Ammon.

Lawrence Boadt states that J did not only write down facts and legends but he was also an artist and a theologian using many literal devices to create his own style⁴⁹. One message which is quite clear, whatever good happens to the chosen of Yahweh is not due to their own virtue, but to the gracious and unseen tolerance of Yahweh.

⁴⁵ Hans Walter Wolff, “The Kerygma of the Yahwist” in *Interpretation: A Journal of the Bible and Theology*, translated by Wilbur A. Benware. Vol 20:2 (April 1966), 136-137.

⁴⁶ Gerhard Von Rad. “The Beginning of History Writing in Ancient Israel,” in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: SCM Press 1984), 65.

⁴⁷ Von Rad, 1961a: 75–8. See also Rost 1956: 5; Amsler 1969: 243–45

⁴⁸ Henry 1960: 15–20; Wolff 1966: 155.

⁴⁹ Lawrence Boadt, Richard J Clifford, and Daniel J Harrington, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 107-10. Von Rad, *Genesis*, 204-206.

2.1.1 The Historical Background – Solomonic Era

According to biblical tradition Solomon was the third and last king in the ancient United Kingdom of Israel. He was renowned for his wisdom, his prolific writings, and his building accomplishments. Born around 1010 BCE, Solomon was the tenth son of David. Like Saul and David, Solomon reigned for 40 years in one of the highest and most prosperous periods in Israel's history. The story of Solomon begins with his father, David, and his mother, Bathsheba. 1 Samuel 16 states that David was anointed by the prophet Samuel before Saul's demise to be his replacement and officially became king of Judah (1010 BCE). 2 Samuel 5 later states that all the elders of Israel approached him to be their ruler, and "The king made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel." David's reign lasted 40 years, and like King Saul, it started off better than it ended.

Despite being a man of warfare, David's initial eagerness for Yahweh and for ethical uprightness paved the way for his early prominence and prosperity. Yahweh decided that David was not fit to build Yahweh's Temple; that was eventually tasked to Solomon later on. David's reign continued to be plagued with troubles especially internal family issues. The killing of Uriah the Hittite and taking his wife for himself (2 Sam 11-12), the rape of his daughter Tamar and the death of his eldest son Ammon at the hands of half-brother Absalom (2 Sam 13). Later on David is faced with the Absalom coup causing him to flee Jerusalem (2 Sam 15:13ff).

By the end of David's life, it appeared that he had lost control of the political situations in Israel, thus resulting in the struggle for the throne. Eventually, Solomon

became king over Israel. Before David's death in 961 BCE, he issued a final charge to his son to always be obedient to the will of Yahweh (1 Kgs 2).⁵⁰

Now looking at the time period that the J source was written, we can see it was at the prime of the Davidic dynasty. It was a time of many rulers and many kings, and with leadership comes servant hood and hospitality. The stress in this time period was the importance of leadership in determining the fate of the Jewish people, so leadership was a major factor. Now it is believed that southern hospitality in the time of the Yahwist was enjoyable⁵¹. Perhaps the J source was indirectly influenced by the surrounding events at the time causing him to unconsciously write the Genesis account in Genesis 18:1-15. Thus, there could have been an influence of the surrounding world at the time with the authors hand and their literary materials, unknowingly putting material that accounted to the world at the time such as hospitality. Genesis 18:1-15 could have possibly been written from a hospitality perspective during the reign of David and the Kingdom dynasties at the time. Moreover, I would like to take Boadt's view on the theological implications that the Yahwistic source brings out especially in light of the chosen text. The Yahwist reviews the beginning and the creation of God, as the necessary origin of Gods true love or in this case, Gods true hospitality.

2.1.2. Political Conditions

Due to the fact that the empire David had built was full of great potential and a lot of the expansion of the territory had been done, some believe that Solomon's task may have been much easier. It has been concluded that his task was to maintain and sustain

⁵⁰ Mario Liverani. *Israel's History and the History of Israel*, translated by Chiara Peri and Philip R Davies (London: Equinox, 2003), 92-101.

⁵¹ Carol L Meyers, Michael O'Connor, and David Noel Freedman, "The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth. Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His 60. Birthday," *Special volume series* (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 246.

the empire that David had built. There was no need for him to follow the warrior like king that his father was as Israel had become a force to be reckoned with and in their own right had vassal states of their own.⁵² Despite the lack of need for war, military strategies and presence was as vital as ever as they were required for the protection of the kingdom. National defence was important and Solomon had implemented what Bright refers to as “*chain of cities*” which were fortified military bases (1 Kgs 9:15-19) located on the perimeters of Israel.⁵³ It is thus quite clear that although he was no warrior, Solomon certainly had military strategic mind-set which is also linked to his socio-economic ambitions. These cities house the armies which were not only concern with trouble from outside but also internal crisis. As part of this consolidating of power within the lands, it is evident that he utilizes elders and leaders from each of the twelve tribes to assist in the control of the united empire at the time (1 Kgs 4). Another addition by Solomon to his military is the use of chariots which were not popular during David’s reign. As we shall see below, this could be one influence of alliances with Egypt who are renowned for their chariots.

Probably the biggest political aspirations of the king is seen in his foreign policies and his intentions to create alliances. These alliances which was also a feature of David’s reign was upheld by Solomon. A lot of these alliances were attained through marriages to foreign noble women and proved beneficial for the king and Israel. Solomon’s marriage to the daughter of the Pharaoh resulted in the expansion of Solomon’s territory when Pharaoh destroyed Gezer and offered it to Solomon as his daughter’s dowry.⁵⁴ Whilst there were many more alliances, the alliance with Tyre (1 Kgs 5:1-12) as this opened up

⁵² John Bright. *A History of Israel*, Third Edition (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1980), 211.

⁵³ Bright. *A History of Israel*, 213.

⁵⁴ Bright. *A History of Israel*, 212.

economic benefits through trading. Israel were able to export their wheat and olive oil and in the process import hardwood from Lebanon which eventually proved useful for building of the temple.⁵⁵

2.1.3. Socio-Economic Conditions

For Marx, the economy is the base which all societies are built upon. Thus for this socio-economic discussion, this work will focus on the phenomenon of modes of productions which define the various economic systems and their relation to one another, but also the determining forces of society. Norman Gottwald differentiates three types of modes of production in ancient Israel, each having its own crucial period of ascendancy in Israel's history. First is the communitarian mode of production which was the preferred system in pre-monarchic Israel during the tribal era. Second, was the tributary mode of production which was dominant from the beginning of the monarchy to the Hellenistic era. Third was the slave mode of production which dominated from the Hellenistic to the Roman period.⁵⁶ This paper will discuss the first two and the contradictory relationship, especially in light of the early monarchic years of Israel, i.e. the transition from the tribal era to the monarchic.

(a) Communitarian Mode of production

Given the defining effect of the economy within society, we shall discuss the major characteristics of the system and the variety of impacts it had. The communitarian mode of production⁵⁷ is linked to the traces of familial and tribal manifestation within the text.

⁵⁵ Bright. *A History of Israel*, 212. Simon Devries, *Genesis*, Vol 2, Word Biblical Commentary (Texas: Word Book Publishers, 1985), xxiii. John M Walton, Victor H Matthews, Mark W Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 358-359.

⁵⁶ Norman K. Gottwald, "Sociology," in *ABD*, Ed. David N Freedman (New York / London / Toronto / Sydney / Auckland: Doubleday, 1992), 79-99.

⁵⁷ Gottwald also refers to this as the "Household mode of production" due to the household (usually the extended family) being the productive unit. – "Social Class as an Analytical and Hermeneutical

The agrarian⁵⁸ nature confirms the central significance of land and agriculture in the system. The people were mainly farmers and lived a subsistence approach, which may have been forced upon them. From a political perspective, the system is tribute-free as long as it is able to avoid domination by foreign states, or if it avoids from developing into a state itself. This the Israelites were able to achieve during the tribal era; i.e. before the implementation of the Israelite monarchy. Socially, at the core of the system is the strong base of family and village life, which is guided by customary laws upheld and administered by the village leaders. In Israel's case, these leaders came in the form of elders. Furthermore, the land was an inheritance and passed down from generation to generation. From a religious point of view, the absence of the institution of the monarchy meant that the cult and religion was the only form of centralizing guidance to a uniform culture and way of life.⁵⁹

Historically, Israel during the tribal years showed much of the features discussed above. However, a major function of the communitarian system was its resistance to elements of the tributary systems, which was very much the central element of monarchic institutions. The rise of the Philistines in the history of tribal Israel⁶⁰ can be seen as the main contributing factor to the gradual insertion of the native tributary economic system. While the people of Israel were able to live and survive all forms of challenges under the tribal and communitarian way of existence, the Philistine threat proved too much of a

category in Biblical Studies," in *JBL* 112/1 (1993), 7-8. See also Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E.* (New York: Orbis Books, 1979), 245-337.

⁵⁸ The agrarian describes a system of production which relates to the cultivation of lands.

⁵⁹ Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, 291-292. See also Gottwald, "Social Class as an Analytical and Hermeneutical category in Biblical Studies," 7-8. Gottwald, "Sociology," in *ABD*, Ed. David N Freedman (New York / London / Toronto / Sydney / Auckland: Doubleday, 1992), 79-99.

⁶⁰ Julius Wellhausen. *Sketch of the History of Israel and Judah*, Third Edition (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 39-56.

challenge and required a more centralized system to strengthen the unity of the Israelites.⁶¹ The people's request to Samuel for a king (1 Sam 8) not only signified a political and administrative change, but it also marked the ushering in of a new dominant economic system; i.e. the native tributary mode of production.

(b) Tributary Mode of production

The tributary mode of production presupposes the basis of production within villages where the majority of the farmers would work the lands by means of their own labor and that of their families. Under this system, the farmers practically labored for two reasons to feed the family and pay the required government taxes.⁶² The main discussion points that follow concerns labor, taxes and land tenure.

Labour is an important feature of the tributary mode of production. The labor was provided entirely by the farmer and his family. It is evident that a vital element to the labor force is the family unit or household.⁶³ A brief but important discussion of these households and their contributions to the economy will be beneficial to understanding the various challenges and struggles they face respectively. Faust discusses the two main households which are geographically determined, i.e. the urban and the rural households.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Stephen G. Dempster. *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, Editor D. A. Carson (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 137-138. Stuart Lasine, *Knowing Kings: Knowledge, Power and Narcissism in the Hebrew Bible*, SBL (Georgia: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 73-92.

⁶² Grabbe. *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 191. Jack Pastor, *Land and Economy in Ancient Palestine* (London/New York: Routledge, 1997), 1. Jairus Banaji, *Theory as History: Essays on Modes of Production and Exploitation*, Historical Materialism Book Series, Vol. 25, eds. Paul Blackledge, Sebastian Budgen (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010), 354-356.

⁶³ Gottwald. *The Tribes of Yahweh*, 291-292.

⁶⁴ Avraham Faust. "Household Economies in the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel" in Yasur-Landau, Assaf, Jennie R. Ebeling, and Laura B. Mazow, *Household Archaeology in Ancient Israel and Beyond* (Leiden: Brill. 2011) 257-273.

The urban household was made of mainly the nuclear family that normally dwelt in small structures and houses. Only a minority of the urban families appeared to have larger structures for living conditions.⁶⁵ These larger houses usually belonged to the wealthier families and these households tended to go beyond the nuclear and include the extended family members. Furthermore, archaeological studies claim that olive or wine pressing was the standard for work and usually found in larger urban households. In terms of labor, these wine or olive presses were operated by the families with the assistance of hired labor. Moreover, we see that these urban families – whether it be large or small – were not part of a larger economic group but were rather independent players in the face of the state economy.⁶⁶

The rural household, on the other hand, was made up primarily of the extended family. They lived in large houses that were subdivided to possibly house many nuclear families who would also make up the labor force. Unlike the urban setting, agricultural production is more concentrated in an industrial area where the production of olive oil and crops, and animal farming operated at a larger scale. For Faust, the rural households were operating under the traditional Israelite lineage economic system (*mispahah*).⁶⁷ The lineage was a larger organization body that worked in the area incorporating in it many families. Also evident in the rural system were storage facilities where excess for the family was stored in the individual houses while produce that belonged to the lineage – most probably intended to pay taxes – was placed in a communal storage place. Upon

⁶⁵ According to Faust, the larger household areas doubled the size of the small, i.e. 40-70 compared to 110-160 square metres.

⁶⁶ Faust, "Household Economies in the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel," 257-262.

⁶⁷ The term *mispahah/mishpahah* has been used synonymously with the term *shevet* to refer to tribes as a major entity in Israel. Gottwald discusses the biblical transformation of the tribe of Dan to make a certain distinction the terms. *Mispahah/miaspahah* is rather a small unit within the *shevet* but larger than a *bet av*. – Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, 245-270.

saying that, it appears that the individual families did not necessarily deal directly with the government or the state market as it would have been the responsibility of the lineage organization. In other words, the lineage functioned as a form of mediator between the family and state.⁶⁸

So far, we are able to distinguish three types of economic systems based on the household. The “private economy” would be the appropriate reference for the families – whether nuclear or extended – who functioned autonomously in the economy, most of which may be attributed to the urban households. On the other hand, the “lineage economy” referred to a larger association which integrated numerous extended families. It does emerge, however, that both urban and rural households were part of a larger economic system; i.e. “state economy” or “royal economy” – as it is headed by a monarch. Being operated by the state, this economic system focussed on four major areas, production, and collection of produce, storage, and trade.⁶⁹

A royal system for production is where large centres – expected to produce large quantities every season – were located in the peripheries of the urban areas.⁷⁰ Royal storage would be difficult to maintain in rural remote areas; furthermore, protection would have been needed from the rural farmers from which the product was taken from in the first place. Therefore, it is highly probable that none of these rural storages can be attributed to the state. Also evident was a series of buildings that surrounded these sites believed to have been either forts or estates. Regardless of their use, it is obvious that they functioned to serve royal purposes near production. The second focus is a royal system

⁶⁸ Faust, “Household Economies in the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel,” 262-266.

⁶⁹ Faust, “Household Economies in the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel,” 267-271.

⁷⁰ An example of this is a discovery of a royal centre south of Jerusalem which was estimated to have produced 150000 – 200000 liters of wine every season. Faust, “Household Economies in the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel,” 267.

of produce collection which is evident in epigraphic finds but also hinted through organized storage facilities. This leads to the third focus which is the royal system of storage. The final focus is the royal system of trade regulation.⁷¹

It is now easier to comprehend the impact each form of household had on the economy and vice versa, as well as – and more importantly – an insight to its operations in terms of the labour force. It is clear in our discussion that the main source of labour is family grounded, at least for the lineage system. While the same can be said about the urban households of the private economy, hired labour was also a common feature. The state economy, on the other hand, would be dependent on hired labour to operate the large state economic centres, especially in the four major areas noted above.⁷² In addition, the state would also benefit from the labours of the lineage and private economies, i.e. through taxation and corvee.⁷³

Taxes and tithes are a very central element of the tributary mode of production. As a working definition, we shall consider Elon's explanation of taxation;

...tax is a compulsory payment, in currency or in specie, exacted by public authority, for the purpose of satisfying the latter's own needs or those of the public, or part of the public⁷⁴

While this definition may be easy to understand, our focus at this point is on the various ways in which the tax is collected by the authorities. The first point regarding taxes in ancient Israel is the great difficulty in trying to distinguish between state and religious taxes.⁷⁵ The second point requiring our attention concerns the various forms of

⁷¹ Faust, "Household Economies in the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel," 267-271.

⁷² Roland Boer discusses this form of labor in detail under the term "estate labor." – *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel* (Louisville / Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 118-121.

⁷³ Faust, "Household Economies in the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel," 271-273.

⁷⁴ Menachem Elon, "Taxation," in Menachem Elon, ed., *The Principles of Jewish Law* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1975), 663.

⁷⁵ Robert A. Oden Jr, "Taxation in Biblical Israel" in *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Fall 1984), 164.

taxation. In Oden's discussion, almost any process that results with one gaining revenue at the expense of another is considered tax. Oden discusses various forms of offerings made to either the state or the temple, into which we shall not delve in any detail, with the exception of the following which has great bearing on our work; i.e. royal taxation, tithes, and forced labor.⁷⁶

While the existence of a royal taxation system is evident during the rule of David (1 Sam 30:20; 2 Sam 20:24), we do find within the Solomon narrative an official basis for the practice (1 Kgs 4:7-19). One major presupposition of this system is the understanding that kings were large landowners who increased their personal possessions during their reigns. As mentioned, under Solomon, the land was divided into twelve districts, each with royal officials to ensure that each district provided supplies for the king and his household for one month of the year. We must note here that such a system did have its flaws and the main debates concerned the fairness of the system towards each district, but also the question whether Judah may have been exempt from paying these taxes.

Another form of taxation is "forced labor," also known as "corvée labor" (*mas*).⁷⁷ Once again, while David may have employed forced labor (2 Sam 20:24) in his time, it is in the Solomon narrative that the adaptation of such methods appear to intensify. We note that Solomon imposes forced labor on the whole of Israel, demanding 30,000 men to work on the preparations for the building of the temple (1 Kgs 5:13-14). We find that

⁷⁶ Oden Jr, "Taxation in Biblical Israel" 165-171.

⁷⁷ It is noted that states in the Ancient Near East would impose corvée on the subjects in order to work on state projects. Walter J Houston, "Corvée in the Kingdom of Israel: Israelites, 'Canaanites', and Cultural Memory," in *JSOT*, Vol 43.1 (2018), 30. This is known as "the going" which is *ilku* in Akkadian and *unusshe* in Hurrian. Igor M. Diakonoff, "Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine in the Third and Second Millennia B.C." in Igor M. Diakonoff, *Early Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 297. In Hittite culture it is known as *luzzi*, - Grigorii G. Girogadze, "The Hittite Kingdom," in Igor M. Diakonoff, *Early Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 280.

there is a contrasting view regarding the imposing of such methods on the native people (1 Kgs 9:20-22). However, one argument is that this contradictory passage emerged with an apologetic purpose to pardon Solomon from his actions. Despite the debate, what is undeniable is the fact that forced labor may have been at the very centre of the revolt against Rehoboam (1 Kgs 12).⁷⁸ Already it is obvious that although the concept and practice of *corvée* may have been required, it definitely did not sit well with the people in general.

(c) Conflict between Communitarian and Tributary Modes of Production

This understanding of the native tributary system will assist in understanding the resistant nature of the communitarian. First, we may take note that even in tribal organization, other families tended to thrive more than others, thus showing signs of social class within the village settings. Some cases saw the peasant farmer resorting to debts in order to meet family needs. While the elite farmers may have been reluctant at first towards a tributary system, they eventually agreed as it also served their interests with the opening for the elite to tax their own people. David may have postponed the appropriation of the system in full and refrained from extracting tributes from his people, however, the system came to complete realization in the days of Solomon.⁷⁹

The Israelites were now operating under the very system they had worked hard to avoid for many years. Any surplus from the labours of the peasants was extracted by the elite in two ways: taxation and *corvée*, but also through debt. The peasants were exploited through unjust levels of taxation and labor. The unbearable burdens eventually led the people to fall into serious debt. As a result, many of the peasant class lost their lands as

⁷⁸ Oden Jr, "Taxation in Biblical Israel" 165-166.

⁷⁹ Gottwald, "Sociology," 79-99.

they were constantly subject to the obligations of a debtor system that seemed unalterable.⁸⁰

To sum up the impact of the tributary system on the tribal economy: first, the creditor's claim to the rights to another man's land. For Gottwald, this is a sign of the undermining of customary law – which protects the peasant landowner – through bribery in the courts. For Boer, customary law was part of the “constitutive resistance” which functioned to prevent exploitation of the peasant members.⁸¹ Second, struggling peasant farmers would definitely be vulnerable to exploitation by the creditor who appears to be a helping hand while actually looking after their own interests. Third, another impact of the tributary system is the concentration of the wealth in the hands of the community's elite. Fourth, from a theological perspective, ‘royal theology’ promotes justice and righteousness as the major focus of the reigns of kings. Ideologically, advocating the royal interests only legitimizes further the exploitation of the peasants.⁸²

There is no real difficulty in trying to comprehend why a general preference of the communitarian way of life continued to exist in the face of the dominant native tributary system. The persistent existence of a communitarian mode of production represents the utopian cry of the peasant farmers who are pressured to meet the state and government obligations which eventually lead to debt crisis and the loss of patriarchal land.

2.1.4. Religious Conditions

Maybe the biggest temptation the Israelites faced upon entering the lands of Canaan was accommodating the cultures and eventually the religious practices of the local people.

⁸⁰ Gottwald, “Social Class as an Analytical and Hermeneutical category in Biblical Studies,” 8.

⁸¹ Boer. *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel*, 102-103.

⁸² Gottwald, “Sociology,” 79-99.

It is no secret but the Canaanites worshiped multiple gods and deities and the Yahweh's people were being exposed to their religious practices such as cultic prostitution, child sacrifice and high places dedicated to patriarchal deities. David may have appeared to respond to this temptation in his time by building mutual bonds between the peoples.⁸³

Solomon's reign is known for the temple, despite it being a distinct place of worship and symbol of religious institution which set the Israelites apart from others,⁸⁴ Solomon's reign is marked with the co-existence of foreign deities.⁸⁵ Associated closely with his political and administrative policy of foreign alliances, the religious sphere of the kingdom was deeply affected. Yahweh being surrounded by the various deities of the lands and even the various shrines and high places had become for Solomon nothing more than a "national god."⁸⁶ In other words Yahweh had become the God of Israel whom was superior to other gods.

We may take note however that monarchic Israel may have just been continuing religious practices already common during the tribal era, i.e. the existence of multiple and major shrines for worship, e.g. Shechem, Bethel, Beer-sheba and Gilgal. We note that the prophet Samuel made regular rounds each year to offer sacrifices and to provide judgment on matters requiring his attention (1 Sam 7:15-17). So while the temple was a dream of David and built by Solomon as a great shrine, it existed amongst the shrines in the lands. It eventually became the centre of worship but the existence of other places of worship may have never left the minds of the people. Thus, the receptive attitude of Solomon not

⁸³ John H Walton. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (China: Zondervan, 1984), 10.

⁸⁴ Lawrence Boadt. *Reading the Old Testament*, Second Edition (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 204.

⁸⁵ Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, 9. Simon J Davies, *1 Kings*, Vol. 12, Word Biblical Commentary, eds. David Hubbard, Glenn Barker (Texas: WACO, 1985), xxvii.

⁸⁶ Davies, *1 Kings*, xxvii.

only of the other shrines to Yahweh, but also the foreign deities through his marriages and alliances.⁸⁷

2.2. Summary – Extrinsic

From a historical perspective it is evident that Solomon's task was to maintain and sustain the united kingdom handed to him by his father David. From this perspective, the unity of the tribes is of the utmost importance and thus the emphasis in the Abraham narrative and unit on the concept of hospitality and building good relations with others. Politically, Solomon's emphasis on political alliances with foreign nations is also important not only for the building up of wealth but also the expansion of the territory, although there was no real significant expansion during Solomon's time. However, as part of sustaining the kingdom, Solomon emphasized good relationships with foreigners. As this would be one major function of the Abrahamic narrative to promote and most probably legitimize good relations as not only was it beneficial between the local government and foreigners, we can also see the importance of good relations amongst the locals themselves. Solomon's administrative strategies and the delegation of authority to the leaders of the twelve tribes was also about controls and ensuring the smooth operations in the lands.

From a socio-economic standpoint, it is thus clear the interests of the state and government or rather monarchy are at the heart of these narratives. The promoting of good relations has economic advantages especially for the upper class citizens in the society. Within the tributary economic system, we see taxation, the issue of land ownership and labour at the centre. While the ushering in of the tributary arrived with the

⁸⁷ Boadt. *Reading the Old Testament*, 230-237. Walton, Matthews, Chavalas, *Old Testament* 359.

formation of the institution of the monarchy, traces of a communitarian economic system which was the main productive system during the tribal era continue to exist as opposition to the dominant royal system. It is clear that it would be in the best interests of the local farmers to uphold the communitarian system, however for some reason, a fair percentage of the middle and lower class citizens embrace this royal system against their best interests. One of the main ideological mechanisms I believe is the use of religion which Marxist scholars also tend to equate as ideology itself.

From a religious point of view, the story definitely portrays the reward that Yahweh bestowed upon Abraham and Sarah. In light of the context of J, this emphasis on Yahweh's blessing promotes loyalty and being receptive to others. This reward of loyalty to the cult falls in line with what the people have been taught most of their lives, to be obedient to Yahweh reaps rewards and prosperity, disobedience only results in suffering and punishment. Thus, although socio-economically, loyalty to the leaders who are seen as servants of Yahweh the ultimate King does not serve the interests of the lower class farmers, their religious beliefs ensures that they uphold the status quo. This falls well with those in the upper class of society. So not only does the concept of hospitality and being receptive, or rather building good relations serve the elite in the local sphere, but it also benefits them within the emphasis of foreign policies. In other words, Solomon's foreign policies would not have been favourably considered especially by the lower class citizens of society, as it only symbolized oppression and injustices. While others may have embraced these interests blindly, there were still those who opposed and resulted in a utopian cry for change in society.

Chapter 3

Exegesis II - Intrinsic Analysis

The intrinsic analysis will employ the following literary critical methods, a rhetorical-critical analysis of the form, structure and the language of the text.

3.1. The Text

¹ The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. ² He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. ³ He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵ Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves and after that you may pass on — since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." ⁶ And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." ⁷ Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. ⁸ Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

⁹ They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent." ¹⁰ Then one said, "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?" ¹³ The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' ¹⁴ Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son." ¹⁵ But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "Oh yes, you did laugh."⁸⁸

⁸⁸ *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*

3.2. Rhetorical Analysis

3.2.1. Structural Analysis

This section will explore rhetorical hints in which we may be able to identify traces of the theme of hospitality and receptiveness, furthermore, the contradicting modes of production which also relate to the ideals of the conflicting classes as discussed in the extrinsic analysis. From a structural point of view, we will first highlight the structure of an immediate literary unit in which the focal narrative is placed. Second, we shall then discuss a structural analysis of chapter 18 itself.

(a) Placement of Genesis 18:1-15 in the Genesis Narrative

Its Hebrew title is “in the beginning (בראשית),” and its LXX title, Genesis, means “source” or “origin.” Genesis is usually divided into two sections, i.e. Gen 1-11 which is referred to as the “primeval history” and Gen 12-50 referred to as the “patriarchal history.” The chosen text lies in the latter section which consists of legends about the patriarchs or forefathers of the people of Israel. As we are dealing specifically with the patriarch Abraham, the Abrahamic narrative is found in chapters 12-25.⁸⁹

For this work, I will focus on the chapters 18 and 19 which some agree makes up the immediate literary unit we can place the Abrahamic hospitality in.⁹⁰ For Wenham, the unit can be divided as follows;

18:1-15	Isaac’s birth announcement to Abraham and Sarah
18:16-33	Abraham pleads for Sodom
19:1-29	Lot and his family escape from Sodom

⁸⁹ Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction*, 111-112.

⁹⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 40-41. Von Rad, *Genesis*, 204.

19:30-38 Lot's daughters commit incest with their father⁹¹

For Wenham, the unity in these chapters are sown together by the appearance of the same actors throughout, i.e. the angels, Abraham, Lot. We may note that outside of this unit Abraham has shown the act of hospitality before when he encounters the priest/king Melchizedek (Gen. 17-20). Here, food is seen as playing a big role in being receptive of others. For our purposes I also wish to explore the theme of hospitality and being receptive which I see as a thread holding the unit together.

18:1-8 Abraham being receptive to the three visitors

18:9-15 Sarah not being too receptive of the birth announcement

18:16-33 Yahweh is seen being receptive to what Abraham has to say

19:1-4 Lot is now being receptive of the visitors

19:5-11 Men of Sodom not being receptive of the visitors

19:12-23 The visitors being receptive of Lot's plea

19:24-29 Lot's wife not being receptive of the visitor's instructions

19:30-38 Lot unconsciously being receptive to his daughter's shameful acts

From this particular layout, it is clear that a theme of hospitable and being receptive runs throughout the unit. Throughout it is evident that the various characters alternately show the act of being receptive or not in other cases. What must be noted here is that although the unit is dominated theme of hospitality and being receptive, there are also glimpse of the opposite and those who do not show receptiveness. In light of the extrinsic discussion the sense of contradicting ideals are clear. While there exists a dominant sense of receptiveness, there are also residue of unreceptiveness. As a rhetoric in the text this very well could be a glimpse of the many of lower class citizens who embrace of the

⁹¹ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 40.

foreign policies and building alliances of the state, while there still exists a small percentage who cry out for change and to be liberated.

The next point which is worth noting is the non-receptive attitude shown by Sarah and Lot's wife in particular, i.e. they are not as hospitable or receptive to the visitors "words." Here we see the importance of words which in the context of J, being hospitable also meant being receptive to the words and instructions from Yahweh. Thus if the leaders in society, king, elders and religious were representatives of the kingly rule of Yahweh, thus what they conveyed according to the story must be obeyed and received well.

(b) Chiasmus in Genesis 18

The simple structure of the chosen text is already mentioned above. However we will consider a chiasmic view of chapter 18 as shown below.

- A Abraham being receptive to the three visitors (18:1-8)
- X Sarah not being too receptive of the birth announcement (18:9-15)
- A' Yahweh is seen being receptive to what Abraham has to say (18:16-33)

The enclosed A, A' sees the encounters between Yahweh and Abraham where it is Abraham who is receptive at first and then it is Yahweh who reciprocates and accommodates Abraham's request at the end. The central point (X) however, is Sarah's skeptical nature towards the birth announcement or rather her unreceptiveness of the words spoken by the visitors. First as mentioned, while the society in Solomon's time may have been dominated by the receptive ideology and hospitality as shown by the enclosed points A, A', in the midst exists a contradicting voice which cries against the norm. Note that if we take into account the structure of vv.1-15 which is the focal text, a clear contradiction is seen in the responses of Abraham and Sarah. It is thus plausible that while Abraham represents the dominant ideal of the elite, Sarah's voice may represent the utopian cry for liberation.

3.2.2. Form Analysis of Genesis 18:1-15

Von Rad points out the connection of the Abrahamic hospitality with the Greek myth of the origins of Orion.⁹² Orion was the son of the sea god Poseidon while in other versions he is the grandson i.e. the son of king Hyrieus. The myth has it that Hyrieus was visited by the three Greek gods, Zeus, Poseidon and Hermes. Since he had received them hospitably, they promised him whatever he would ask for. He asked for children and the gods made a sacrifice and 9 months later Orion was born. Structure-wise, Westermann draws from parallel Syrian myths as follows; (a) childlessness as an affliction and announcement of child as salvation. (b) Is the visitation from the gods (messenger). In this structure, the promise of a child is the gift from the guest as reward for hospitality and good reception.⁹³

For Von Rad, such narratives were told as part of the patriarchal experience and would promote hospitality as a vital virtue.⁹⁴ While Von Rad speaks the importance of theophany – or the appearance of Yahweh⁹⁵ – in the narrative, Westermann finds this emphasis difficult to reconcile. For Westermann, the opening verse which suggest the theophany is redactional and the fact that the messengers take human form is a disguise which disqualifies the theophany argument. For Westermann while the life setting lies in the narratives regarding the patriarchal history, it is now combined with the emphasis of gifts from the guest or visitor. The emphasis and purpose for the combination is the promoting of the notion of “coming and visiting” as part of blessings.⁹⁶

⁹² Von Rad, *Genesis*, 205.

⁹³ Westermann, *Genesis*, 274.

⁹⁴ Von Rad, *Genesis*, 205.

⁹⁵ Von Rad, *Genesis*, 205. See also John Skinner. *Genesis, Vol 1, The International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1930), 298. Jack Lundbom, *Parataxis, Rhetorical Structure, and the Dialogue over Sodom in Genesis 18. The World of Genesis: Person, Place, Perspective*. Ed. Davies. (Journal, for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 257. 1998), 136.

⁹⁶ Westermann, *Genesis*, 275

If J was using these earlier forms for such purpose and arguments, then it is clear that the promotion of hospitality and being receptive to all peoples is important as one never knows when Yahweh may visit. Furthermore, blessings also appear premeditated and the coming and visiting part is deliberately part of bringing the blessing. However, there is an element of testing as gift is rewarded to those who are receptive and hospitable. Once again we encounter the dominant notion of being receptive as it will reward one with blessings. In the story, the blessing is from Yahweh and thus from a theological standpoint, this is what pushes people to be hospitable. On the other hand, an ideological effect sees this receptive nature also promoting being good citizens and building good relations which once again only falls to the advantage of the elite and those at the pinnacle of society.

3.2.3. Literary Analysis

This literary analysis will explore the rhetoric projected through the language, styles and traditions in the text. Not only will the work be attempting to identify the theme of hospitality and alliances, but also to identify the contradicting ideals, especially any residue of the utopian cries of the lower class.

(a) Abraham: A Model of Servant-hood

First we are told that Abraham is seated at the “entrance of the tent in the heat of the day” (Gen 18:1). For Fred Wight, this was intentional as Abraham was on the watch for strangers who would become potential guests.⁹⁷ Showing hospitality was believed to be a sacred duty for not only did the host believe visitors to be sent by Yahweh, they also saw enemies become potential friends through the sharing of a meal. We may also take

⁹⁷ Fred Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands* (Illinois: Moody Press, 1983).

note of where he hosts his guests. For Wight, usually the first section of the tent within the entrance is the regular guest apartment, which serves as dining room and sleeping quarters.⁹⁸ It was in this guest apartment of his tent, that Abraham entertained his angel guests, when Sarah in the adjacent woman's apartment, overheard what was said (Gen. 18:1-10). It is obvious that Abraham perceived his servant status important with regards to visitors.

Second, it is worth noting a certain progression of thought evident in the verbs used by the author to describe the progression of Abraham's actions.

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. (Gen 18:1-3)

I wish to note the highlight verbs. It says Abraham sat.... looked up Saw.... Ran.... Meet... bowed.... Said.... Clearly the acts can be traced and concluded to be that normally followed by one who serves. Blenkinsopp also speaks of this servant protocol and his explanation covers all of Abraham's actions in the story, i.e. seeing, running to meet, honoring, inviting, refreshing, preparing and serving.⁹⁹ This is the nature of Abraham's hospitality. Note that elsewhere in Genesis, people run to greet long lost relatives (Gen 29:13; 33:4), and they bow down to those of greater status, the high and mighty (Gen 23:12; 37:9; 42:6). Thus it is obvious that Abraham treats these strangers in the same manner which is a testament to his character and his humble opinion of himself as one who serves. Furthermore, Blenkinsopp speaks of Abraham's haste when the invitation is accepted. He prepares more than he offered and then serves

⁹⁸ Wight, *Manners and Customs*, 1983.

⁹⁹ Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Introduction to the Pentateuch" in *Genesis, Vol 1*, The NIB: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, eds. Leander E Keck, Thomas G Long (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 463. See also Westermann, *Genesis*, 277-278.

them. While they eat Abraham remains attentive and waits on them to further expound his servant status.

Furthermore his words of invitation are in jussive form. Although a jussive is a command it differs from an imperative due to the extent in which the speaker exerts his/her will. A direct command would be an imperative and has a stronger will behind it to be obeyed. The jussive – like a cohortative – is spoken in third person and although the speaker desires his will to be followed, the jussive is more of seeking permission¹⁰⁰ and the decision is really left with those whom the speaker speaks with. Given that the social status of the speaker determines which form of command is used, it is evident in Abraham's words that he is speaker to someone of higher rank which only confirms his perception of his servant-hood status. This is confirmed in his words "find favour in your eyes" (v.3; see also Gen 19:19; 32:5; 33:8-15) which gives the visitor higher status.

Washing guest's feet was a standard act in the practice of hospitality and as travelers wore either open leather sandals or leather closed boots, the dirt of the roads in their travels would always caver their feet.¹⁰¹ Thus the reason why amongst the first necessities of a traveler who stops to rest is a drink of water and washing of the feet. Abraham's offer is part of his hospitable nature and also status as a servant.

It is evident here that Abraham maybe seen as the epitome of servant-hood for any society. We see that his offer does not have any barriers and extends to anyone. This is evident in acts which are normally reserved for relatives only but here Abraham treats these strangers as such. It is also clear that Abraham's point of view of himself and his

¹⁰⁰ Arthur Walker-Jones, *Hebrew for Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Steven Mckenzie (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 152.

¹⁰¹ Walton, Matthews, Chavalas, *Old Testament*, 50.

purpose is to serve others, furthermore being haste in doing so. There may be many reasons why Abraham is so hospitable but as some have already pointed out, the form suggests that coming and visiting of strangers or rather gods in disguise is part of bringing blessings and thus is reliant on the host's response. Thus in simple terms, being receptive is promoted here with the idea that it will be rewarded by Yahweh with His blessings. From an ideological point of view this only promotes good citizenship and being receptive in society which in turn only goes towards serving the interests of the elite and state while the low class peasants continue to lose out.

(b) Abraham versus Sarah

Following with the previous discussion, Abraham is the embodiment of servant-hood and also projects what being receptive is at its best. We have also noted how this model of servant-hood would serve the interests of the elite in J's society. It is also natural that for any reader Abraham's act of hospitality here outshines Sarah's episode of scepticism and disbelief. That is a testament to the dominant nature of this receptive ideology in the context of J.

However if we were to focus a brief discussion on Sarah and what she may represent, we may find as mentioned before that Sarah's sceptical approach to the announcement can be evidence or residue to an economic system which has been overrun by a new way of doing things, i.e. they continue to exist as part of the utopian outcry and opposition to the dominant. We had touched on this in the extrinsic discussion as to how the lower class citizens tend to embrace ideals which contradict their own. In this story, because the theme of Abraham's model for hospitality is so dominant, people tend to see it as the role model and with the hope that Yahweh will bless them also in Yahweh's time. Sarah's reactions represent the voice struggling to be heard from below.

Another point worth noting which I believe exposes this contradiction is the fact that Abraham and Sarah's nomadic status is lost in the story which is dominated by Abraham's action. In terms of the modes of production discussed, it is clear that while the nomadic lifestyle emphasizes the familial and communitarian mode of production, it is dominated by the tributary in Abraham's portrait of his household. Furthermore, his response to the visitors, is promoted by the tributary mode of production and its needs,

(c) Blessing: Theology and Ideology

First we may point out the importance of the location in connection to Abraham's acts. The oaks of Mamre is also a place where Abraham had erected an altar of worship and sacrifice to Yahweh earlier (Gen 13:18). It says he offers the guests food and rest while he stands near them under the tree. From a theological observation, Abrahams's act of hospitality and offerings he makes towards the guest may also be seen as a sacrificial act. Thus hospitality also carrying the notion of sacrifice and offering as important elements. Not only is this act of sacrifice vital in the role of a servant but it is also important in the context of the correct relationship with Yahweh which will eventually result in blessings.

Second, the conflict between universality and particularity is seen in the text. Note an existence of the internal struggle with Abraham himself. He had just been circumcised which was a physical element of the covenant with Yahweh (Gen 17), this covenant also emphasizes the notion of the elected and particularity and here in the text Abraham is faced with a challenge. Does he maintain his particularity and disregard the strangers he sees or does he host them and show acceptance to the universality of humankind? It is obvious that Abraham does the latter and in the process provides the readers and audience with theological truths. Here we see Abraham put universality before particularity. Theologically or thematically it can be seen that the emphasis on the creation comes

before election.¹⁰² Furthermore, through this act, Abraham also shows how God's covenant is ultimately for the bringing of the blessings of righteousness and holiness to all humans. Ideologically this can support the notion already mentioned between the contradiction between the communitarian and tributary modes of production. This understanding of particularity and election for the benefit of the whole contradicts the tribal and familial modes which focus specifically on the family. Thus, while Abraham and Sarah are living a nomadic life his actions in the narrative support and promote the tributary system and its universal interests in the time of J.

A final theological point is the imagery presented here regarding strangers. They are presented as representatives of Yahweh, thus they also bring with them a foretaste of what lies ahead – which is evident in the birth announcement. In the text we see that Yahweh appears at the beginning. The word *raah* which is translated to see normally has Yahweh as the subject (Gen 1:4, 9, 10, 48:3). So it can be said that Yahweh's appearance here is premeditated as it is Yahweh who has come to deliberately see Abraham. This can be supported by the fact that they also accept the invitation without hesitation. Once again from an ideological perception, this promotes the universal approach of being receptive, thus, in support of the dominant tributary system.

Theologically, blessings as promoted in the Abraham narrative is for all humanity and creation. Partiality should not precede this universal purpose of Yahweh for mankind. Particularity is for a role basis only in light of the universal whole. Second, being receptive especially to strangers is to be a sacrificial act and must be emphasized as visitors – be it strangers or not – sometimes represent Yahweh and most probably have

¹⁰² Marianne Moyaert, "Biblical, Ethical and Hermeneutical Reflections on Narrative Hospitality," in *Hosting the Stranger*, ed. Richard Kearney and James Taylor (New York: Continuum Publishing Group, 2011), 99-100.

blessings in store for the host in the future. Thus blessings here can also be seen as a reward for being hospitable and receptive to others.¹⁰³

Ideologically, the particularity of the lower class citizens and what they do is promoted as being part of the bigger picture and it is their purpose and function in life. Receptiveness to strangers and others for that matter will bring blessings as these people could very well be representatives of God. Furthermore, due to the religious nature of the people, the rewards will be given to them in Yahweh's time and so they will persist with the receptive attitude and way of life, whilst awaiting eagerly Yahweh's rewards for them. Ideologically, the elite are already reaping the material rewards to the work of the peasants and lower class citizens.

3.3. Summary – Intrinsic

To summarize this section we can note a few things that were evident in the rhetoric of the text. First, it is obvious that the text promotes hospitality and the notion of being receptive. This element is clear in the nature of the main character, Abraham. It is the dominant nature of portraying Abraham as the idea role model for servant-hood that overshadows the less receptive Sarah in the second section of the text. Second, sacrifice is shown to be an important aspect of servant-hood and showing hospitality. Not only does the host sacrifice physically and materially to accommodate guests and visitors, but the act of offering service is a sacrifice in its own right. Third, We have also determined the dominant aspects of the tributary system or mode of production in the text. The fact that receptiveness and hospitality was promoted in J's context is obvious given the state's political emphasis on foreign alliances. This would benefit the elite in so many ways but

¹⁰³ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Ed. James Luther Mays. (Atlanta: John Knox Press. 1982), 158.

mostly on the financial side. Furthermore, such systems put strains on lower class citizens to meet the needs and requirements of the state, especially in the form of taxes and labor. The fourth point is the opposing mode of production which is also associated with the utopian cry of the lower class citizens. This is evident in the text in Sarah's skepticism and questioning of what is said by the visitors. Finally, the issue between universality and particularity is also evident. While the universality may serve the interests of the elite, particularity would be the cry of those from below. Furthermore, universality is seen to have priority over particularity, in other words, particularity serves the interest of the universal will of Yahweh.

Conclusion

To return to our statement in the beginning, the purpose was to expose the promotion of an elite ideology as the main function of the narrative. I believe that this has been achieved given the discussions above. From an extrinsic point of view it is evident that there is a clear conflict between the tributary and communitarian modes of production. This is to be expected because the monarchy and its tributary emphasis is quite new and the people who have been existing in tribes for a long time still relate to the communitarian way of life. While the tributary is now the dominant system during the time of J, it did not totally replace the communitarian which still existed sporadically amongst the lower class citizens. The promotion of hospitality and being receptive and good servants only goes towards the serving of the interest of the elite. For being good citizens of a theocratic kingdom means being good servants and Abraham who is the ultimate patriarch shows the true meaning of servant-hood through his actions. Furthermore, the rewards from Yahweh for being good hosts is clear in the narrative. Ideologically, this only serves the elite and their tributary system. For being good servants in the time of J was striving to pay taxes and offer labour for the benefit of the kingdom. It is universality before particularity. One must serve his/her purpose for the good of the all people.

Sarah's scepticism may represent residue or fragments of an older system which the lower class citizens were accustomed to, i.e. communitarian mode of production. So while the text and its rhetoric is dominated by this elite ideology, the existence of a more dominated opposition continues to exist.

From a theological perspective, hospitality is seen as a sacred act. It also carries the notion of sacrificial rights. Not only does the host sacrifice his time, energy, material wealth for the benefit of the guest or visitors, his entire act is a sacrifice in itself. In other

words, his hospitable acts is an offering to God through who the guests may represent. Furthermore, we all have a role in God's plan. Despite the different tasks and responsibilities which define our particularity from others, God's purpose for all is to serve for the benefit of all. Finally, God's blessings are for all who serve him without hesitation.

Implications for *Kairuwa*

First of all, we find ourselves in the same situation as J in terms of the conflicting ideals in the economic systems. The tributary emphasis of the government is most of the time in clash with the more simplistic agrarian or rather communitarian way of life for most people. From an ideological standpoint we can see that the emphasis on hospitality and being receptive will not always serve the best interests of the low class citizens. As this ideal promotes the importance of servant-hood, this is exactly the desires of any government, for their people to be good servants and respond favourably to their requests and words. As is in the context of J, the change is unescapable and the lower class always shoulders the bulk of the work for very little reward, which is in contradiction to the elite who do very little but control most of the socio-economic sphere. Why is it all of a sudden we tend to prioritize the foreigner over the locals as the practice of *kairuwa* towards the locals is almost non-existent? One in my opinion, has become clear from this socio-economic situation. The lower class citizens continue to struggle to meet the needs of the family and at the same time, the requirements of the government, thus, whatever surplus they may have – if any at all – would probably be put into good use to host others from outside than the locals whom we engage with every day. Hosting strangers as we have seen can create good relationships which has its benefits, such as transforming any potential enemies into friends. It may also benefit the host for the reciprocation of his/her hospitality may prove to be useful in the future.

Theologically, *kairuwa* should be treated as sacred, an offering and sacrifice to God. As Christians, this is one of the main teachings of Christ is the sacrificial act and offering of oneself for the benefit of others, we too must follow this example and showing kindness and being receptive towards others will be regarded by God in the future. Furthermore, the issue between the local and foreigner is also resolved in the Abraham narrative. Whilst we have our particularities, our particularities should not take priority over God's universal plan for humankind. Creation must always come before election. An inclusive view of God's plan will only create unity and rid this world of the differences because the focus is too much on our particularities. This however does not mean that we should disregard our local context.

This is probably the conflicting nature of the narrative, whilst it promotes building good relationships and being receptive to strangers and the universal plan, being receptive and unifying with those closest to us has been lost in the bigger picture. Sarah's overshadowed voice of reason – one might say – has been overlooked. It can be seen in fragments and sections but it remains unheard because it opposes the main stream ideal of society, or rather an elite ideology. For Kiribati, *kairuwa* should be refocus on our local neighbours whom have been neglected because we have become too obsessed with the stranger and their rewards for us.

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