



Research article

INTERNALIZATION OF THE NEW COVENANT: AN ANTIDOTE TO RELIGIOUS VIGILANTISM IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The recent menace created by Vigilantism in India has become a threat to the Constitution as a whole. The paper addresses the aforementioned issue and proposes principles of internalization as an antidote to the problem of vigilantism in India. The paper is divided into three parts. First part deals with the definition of the words like 'covenant' and 'vigilantism'. Second part is application of the method to the chosen text Jeremiah 31:31-34 in order to draw principle of internalization of the covenant. The third part is an antidote to the problem of vigilantism in India.



I. Introduction

The preamble of Indian Constitution states that “We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic, Republic...”¹ This ideal is threatened by the recent menace created by Vigilantism in India. It has become a threat to the Constitution as a whole. So, how do we avoid vigilantism? Is it possible to eradicate it? What are the ways to eradicate or reduce acts of vigilantism? Do we need more laws or a law enforcing machinery to arrest vigilantism? Keeping these questions in mind, I have chosen Jeremiah 31:31-34 as key text in order to draw principles of internalization of the covenant to address the aforementioned issue. The paper is divided into three parts. First part deals with the definition of the words like ‘covenant’ and ‘vigilantism’. In addition to this, I will be using Traditio-historical method to find out different covenant traditions in the text. Second part is application of the method to the chosen text in order to draw principle of internalization of the covenant. In the third part, I will be proposing principles of internalization as an antidote to the problem of vigilantism in India.

A. Definition:

1. *bēryit* (covenant)

The word in Hebrew for “Covenant” is “*bēryit*.” It is used to describe the nature of relationship between two human parties. The nature of their relationship would be of a treaty, alliance or a league (Gen. 14:13; Ob

7; Gen. 21: 27 & 31).² Kutsch uses the word “obligation” to describe this relationship.³ The common technical phrase used “*kārat bēryit*” means “to make covenant or in literal sense to cut covenant.”⁴ The other familiar phrase is “*kārat bēryit lā*” which is translated as “covenant with/ for” indicates “covenant granted by a superior and received by an inferior.”⁵ In the paper, I will be using the above idea of covenant between a superior and inferior. In addition the idea of ‘covenant’ encompasses 1) identification of the deity who is giving the covenant, 2) historical prologue—past deeds of deity for the benefit of the vassal, 3) stipulation or laws, 4) deposit and public reading of the law, 5) witnesses, 6) blessing and curses, and 7) ratification of the covenant.⁶

2. Vigilantism

Vigilantism as a crime has to be understood in the light of Indian constitution. Indian constitution should not be understood as mere law. It should be understood in the light of the historical experience of our founding fathers that fought for an independent state. In fact it is in this context of liberation our Constitution was adopted, enacted, and enforced on 26th November 1949.⁷ Furthermore, the preamble of Indian constitution upholds justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. This is in turn reflected in the

² _____ “*בְּרִית*” *BDB*: 136.

³ E Kutsch, “*בְּרִית*,” *TLOT 1*: 256.

⁴ Kutsch, *TLOT 1*: 257.

⁵ Ernest W. Nicholson, *God and His People Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (NY: Claredon Press, 1988), 3.

⁶ George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, “Covenant,” *ABD 1*: 118-81.

⁷ _____, *The Constitution of India*, Commemorative ed. (Government of India Ministry of Law and Justice), 1.

¹ *The Constitution of India* (5d ed.; Delhi: Universal Law Publishing, 2002), 1.



fundamental rights—Right to equality, freedom, freedom of religion, property, and constitution remedies.⁸ Now, any action undertaken by an individual or a group whether sponsored by the state or any institution in order to thwart the fundamental rights of any individual or group can be treated as ‘vigilantism.’ To simply put, ‘vigilantism’ is breaching the Constitutional laws by taking the law into one’s own hands which is an open rebellion against its sovereignty.

B. Methodology: Traditio-historical Approach

The methodology that will be employed is an exegetical approach that progresses from the text to the context. Keeping this in mind, I will be using Traditio-historical method for the chosen text. Traditio-historical method is an “attempt to uncover the folk traditions that lie behind the passages in the Bible.”⁹ It was first, Hermann Gunkel¹⁰ who at the beginning of 20th century introduced Form-critical analysis of Old Testament literature which was further developed by Gerhard von Rad, Martin Noth, R. N. Whybray and others.¹¹ Von Rad building on Gunkel’s

work talked about development of Pentateuchal traditions by which Israel’s faith is expressed in creedal statements. These traditions were combined by the Yahwist¹²

The basic assumption of this method is that the text has oral history.¹³ The text which has an oral tradition may have been circulated in form of stories, folklores, legends, and sagas which were told and retold, preserved and remembered in different communities.¹⁴ Moreover, one must keep in mind that tradition history follows form criticism. Another assumption is that a

combined to form a foundations and a common tradition called *Grundlage (G)*, see, Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Tradition* (trans. Bernhard W. Anderson; Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972) 6; On the other hand, Whybray proposes an alternative approach where by Pentateuch was written by a single author from sixth B. C who is a historian similar to that of Greek historian Herodotus. Furthermore, he suggests that the author of Pentateuch may have intended Pentateuch to be like a prologue to Deuteronomistic history. This author following the rules of historiography of his times gathered all the material, re-worked on it radically by inserting additions with no intention of “smooth narrative free from inconsistencies, contradictions, and unevenness”, and thus forming a great literary masterpiece of all time, see, R. Norman Whybray, *Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995) 226, 242.

¹² von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 50–66.

¹³ There are methodological differences between Form criticism and Traditio-historical criticism. First, Form criticism is synchronic approach that focuses on form structural and literary genre of the literature. Its focus is on only the text. On the other hand, Traditio-historical approach is combination of Synchronic and diachronic text. Its focus is both on the text (form structural and literary genres), oral tradition behind the text, and history of transmission of the text from the oral stage to the writing and to the final form of the text, see, Garret, “Traditio-Historical Criticism,” 865.

¹⁴ Douglas A. Knight, “Tradition History,” *ABD VI*: 634.

⁸ *The Constitution of India*, 5-16.

⁹ D. A. Garret, “Traditio-Historical Criticism,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*: 864.

¹⁰ Gunkel attempted to find “preliterary” stages behind the text which is oral traditions and compared them with Ancient West Asian and other European folktales, see., Hermann Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis The Biblical Saga and History* (trans. W. H. Carruth; 3d ed.; NY: Schocken books, 1964).

¹¹ Gerhard von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken; English ed.; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965); Noth expanded on von Rad’s creedal statements. He suggested that the themes of von Rad’s creedal statements are originally separate traditions. According to him, when the tribes of Israel formed an ‘amphictyony’ in which these separate traditions were



text has different layers of tradition which calls for different layers of meaning.¹⁵ In other words, oral traditions were contemporized according to the context and re-interpreted in the light of new experiences. This was later on passed on to subsequent generations. In that we may have different traditions of a particular story with different meanings.

Having outlined the assumptions let me lay out the steps involved in applying this method. There are four steps in this method. The first step is delineating the oral texts (traditions) from the written text and classifying its genre. This step requires us to analyze the text in terms of the structure, vocabulary and grammatical issues which throw light on the oral dimension of the text. The second step is identifying *sitz-im-leben* of the text. In that the life situation of the text will be located. Third step involves identifying different covenant traditions and their influence on the interpretation of the chosen text. The final step involves finding out the purpose of the covenant traditions in the text.

The motif behind the selection of the above text is that the chosen text has lot of allusions to ancient covenant traditions. Keeping that in mind, the traditio-historical method helps us to understand the formal structure of the text and also its history of traditions behind its composition and its interpretation.

C. A Brief Methodological Critique

Tradition criticism, like any other historical critical method has ‘atomic’ view of the Bible. It is built on speculations of oral

traditions and based on which the method tries to reconstruct the history of the text. Furthermore, it based on that reconstructed text, the method proposes some theological insights. However, it does throw some light on the process of transmission of the text by looking at various traditions that are reflected in the text. This is the reason I have chosen Traditio-historical method to trace out the traditions that interplay in the chosen text to bring out a new understanding of the Covenant.

II. Traditio-historical analysis of Jeremiah 31:31-34

A. Delineating the text & Classification of the Genre

The chosen pericope is one of the salvation oracles that falls under the book of consolation (Jer 30-33:26).¹⁶ It is called book of consolation because the text contains expressions of hope and restoration.¹⁷ The other salvation oracles within this book of consolation are 31:23-26; 31:27-30; 31:35-

¹⁶ The book of Jeremiah is basically an anthology of anthologies that were collected and compiled into a single volume. It is therefore, difficult to decipher a coherent structure of the book. However, there are certain clues within the text to understand formal structure of the book. For example, 25:1-4 is narrative which may be a conclusion of the collection of oracles (chs. 1-24). Second, 30:1-2 may be an introduction to another collection called book of consolation (30-33). Thirdly, 46:1 may be another introductory marker to another anthology of oracles in relation to the foreign nation (46-51). Furthermore, different literary collections of the book were categorized into three types—A, B, and C. Type A consists of prophetic oracles in poetic form, type B consists of biographical prose narratives, and type C consists of discourses in prose, see, Peter C. Craige, Page H. Kelley, and Joel F. Drnkard, Jr., *Jeremiah 1-25* (WBC 26; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1991), xxi–xxxvii.

¹⁷ J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (NIOT 24; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 551.

¹⁵ Knight, *ABD* VI: 634.



37; and 31:38-40. The chosen text is third oracle of salvation at the center forming a chiasmic structure¹⁸ with other four salvation oracles with an emphasis on YHWH initiation of making a New covenant (lit. cutting). For example, the first oracle of salvation (31:23-26) begins with the messenger formula “thus says the LORD” (kōh āmar yēhwāh) is a proclamation of salvation to Judah . This is followed by the second oracle of salvation (vv. 27-30) with an eschatological formula “Behold! The days are coming” (hinēh yāmiym bā’iym) which is parallel to third oracle (vv. 31-34) and fourth oracle (vv. 38-40). Second oracle (vv. 27-30) talks about individual responsibility of one’s own sins. The third oracle (vv. 31-34) at the center talks about the New Covenant which starts with eschatological formula parallel to second oracle (vv.27-30). The fourth oracle of salvation (vv. 35-37) begins with the messenger formula parallel to the first one (vv. 23-26). This oracle describes YHWH perpetual and enduring commitment towards Israel. Finally the fifth oracle of salvation forms an *inclusio*¹⁹ as it begins with the messenger formula parallel to the first and re-emphasizes restoration of Jerusalem.²⁰

¹⁸ A *chiasmic* structure is a parallelism that has a verse pattern of (a, b, c) and its inversion (c, b, a) forming a single unit. See, Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry A Guide to Its Techniques* (JSOTSup 26; 2d ed.; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 201.

¹⁹ This is otherwise called as “envelop figure” which means that a phrase or a sentence is repeated at the beginning and the end thus demarcating the unit. In this case the phrase "nē’um yēhwāh" (declares the LORD) is repeated, see, Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry A Guide to Its Techniques*, 282.

²⁰ Gerald L. Keown, Pamela J. Scalise, and Thomas G. Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52* (WBC 27; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1995), 127.

The form of the chosen text is salvation-speech form. Claus Westermann provides a schema to identify salvation-speech form. The schema can be observed in most of the prophetic books. The schema is as follows:²¹ 1) judgment-speeches to one’s own nation; 2) judgment-speeches to foreign nations; and 3) salvation-speeches to one’s nation. In other words, judgment speech forms and salvation speech forms are alternatively arranged in a contrasting manner.²² For example, the chosen text as indicated earlier falls under book of consolation is preceded by judgment oracles against Israel and its institutions (chs. 20-29). The purpose of such an arrangement is to emphasis YHWH’s ḥ esed (faithfulness) towards His covenant though Israel has broken the covenant.

B. *Sitz-im-leben* of the Text or the Life Setting of the Text

The life situation of the text may be located just before the exile or after it in 587 B.C.²³ There is no consensus in the scholarship regarding the date of the chosen text. For example, R. E. Clements assumes Deuteronomistic edition of the text of Jeremiah’s *ipissima verba* (original words) which was directed to Judah in its acute crisis.²⁴ On the other hand, J. A. Thompson, while agreeing on some editorial work of this

²¹ Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech Form*, trans. Hugh Clayton White (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1991), 95.

²² Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech Form*, 96.

²³ R. K. Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 24; Downers Grove, IL: Inter- Varsity Press, 1973), 134.

²⁴ R. E. Clements, *Jeremiah*, Interpretation A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1988), 176.



collection, notes that it would have been “strange indeed if Jeremiah’s remarkable theological insight did not lead him through to this point...”²⁵ J. P Hyatt argues that chs. 30-33 were later additions of the post-Deuteronomistic edition.²⁶ It may have been the work of someone after Deutero-Isaiah and more probably Nehemiah.²⁷ This assumption is based on literary allusions to the Deutero-Isaiah and the growing anticipation of the return and rebuilding of the temple during Nehemiah’s time. So, a post-exilic date may also be possible.

However, the *sitz-im-leben* may be immediately after the exile (595-582 B. C).²⁸ The reasons are, first, the book of consolation starts with a messenger formula “the word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD” (*hadābār āšr l’irmērāhû*) Jer 30:1. Secondly, by Hebrew syntax this follows an *X-qatal* form i.e., a non-verbal element + verbal element.²⁹ Messenger formula basically consists of a report (perfect) and the commission (imperative).³⁰ Jer 30:1 is a prose introduction which is expressed in the past tense i.e., the phrase “the word which came.” It is followed by the imperative in v.2 “to write” (*kētāb lēkā*).³¹ This is a strong disjunctive that indicates a major break in the narrative. In addition to this the *X-qatal*

indicates beginning of a new episode . So, it is probable that the reference to “house of Judah” (*bêt yēhudā*) and “house of Israel” (*bêt yiśrā’ēl*) may refer to remnants of the nation which is immediately after the exile. In fact, Clements notes the reference to “house of Israel” in v. 33 may be a title in Diaspora.³² Therefore, by Hebrew syntax and the messenger formula of beginning of the book of consolation provides us a historical reference of a new episode which may be immediately after the exile.

C. Covenant traditions in the New Covenant

Having located the text in the historical context of exile, let us identify covenant traditions in the text. There are allusions to Abrahamic, Mosaic or Sinaitic, and Davidic covenant traditions in the Jeremiah’s New covenant.

Literary Allusions to the Covenant traditions in Jer 31:31-34³³

i. The ‘Newness’ of the New Covenant: Continuity or Discontinuity with Ancient Covenant Traditions

The phrase “*bēriyt ḥādā šāh*” appears only here in Jer 31:31. Covenant parties are identified—the LORD and the house of Israel and Judah. First, like Sinai and Davidic covenant, the covenant giver is identified here.³⁴ This also has affinity with

²⁵ Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 580.

²⁶ James Philip Hyatt, “Jeremiah,” (IB 5; Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1956), 790.

²⁷ Hyatt, “Jeremiah,” 790.

²⁸ For a detailed description of the end of Judah, see, John Bright, *A History of Israel* (3d ed.; London: SCM Press, 1981), 327–31.

²⁹ Lee Roy Martin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (rev.; Pune: Fountain Press, 2014), 79.

³⁰ Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech Form*, 106.

³¹ Here *ḥ*-preposition indicates benefactive dative. So the literal translation would be “write for yourself...”

³² Clements as cited by Keown, Scalise, and Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 132.

³³ This passage has syntactical connection with the introduction in Jer 30:3 along with the hope of restoration in 31:27-30 with repetition of the phrase *hnh ymym b’ym* (Behold! the days are coming), see, Mark Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile in Jeremiah 26-45* (NY: Cambridge Univ Pr, 2008), 55.

³⁴ Mendenhall and Herion, “Covenant,” 1160.



AWA Hittite suzerain treaties.³⁵ Secondly, the house of Israel and Judah is a *double entendre* which refers to the nation of Israel as whole. Walter C. Kaiser notes that in the New Covenant, the houses of Israel and Judah are analogous to Abrahamic and Davidic covenants.³⁶ In that there is some sort of continuity with the ancient covenant traditions of Israel. If this is so, then what is the nature of the ‘newness’ of this covenant? The term “*bēriyt ḥādāšāh*” (the New Covenant) is further explained in the following.

The ‘Newness’ according to Kaiser is a “ratification” of sure mercies of David.³⁷ In that he suggests the ‘newness’ in terms of time i.e., exile and renewal of nature of the covenant and hence it should be called as “Renewed Covenant.” Moreover he points to similar ideas in other biblical passages (Ezek 16:60; 37:26; Isa 24:5; 55:3; and 61:8).

However, in contrast to Kaiser, there is “newness” in content and function of the New covenant. There is discontinuity and continuity of ancient covenant traditions. The discontinuity is vociferously expressed in v. 32. For example, the phrase *lō’ kabriyt ṣār kāratiy ṭ’ bābōwtām* (Not like the covenant that I made with their fathers) indicates a strong discontinuity from Sinai and Davidic covenants.

Continuity is seen in terms of the usage of Sinai covenant as a historical framework (Exod 19:1-24:11). Sinai

covenant speaks of: 1) recognizing YHWH’s sovereignty and His kingship, 2) the given stipulations, 3) perpetuity of covenant based on loyalty to YHWH and 4) obedience to the covenant, and failure to covenant resulted in imposition of the curses. Clearly Israel and Judah failed persistently. New covenant became a necessary because the old one was broken.³⁸ In addition to this, though discontinuity is ‘accented’ in the New covenant, *Torah* remains as substance of the covenant and also obligation to comply with it still remains, though differently.³⁹ Bright rightly says that the Sinai tradition which has become a vantage point to reject Israel and Judah has become “foundation of hope.”⁴⁰

Furthermore, the verb “*bā’altiy*” (Lit. I married) in v. 32 is very significant in our understanding of this verse in relation to Sinai covenant. This is a verb used in marital context in which the rights and authority of the husband over his wife or concubine is mentioned in Deut 21:13; 22:22; and 24:1. In that faithlessness to the husband is often compared with religious infidelity. The covenantal breach and infidelity of Israel is often expressed in terms of wedlock as a prophetic symbolism.⁴¹ So a broken marriage and the promise of the New covenant expresses the acute need of YHWH’s grace to restore this broken relationship.

³⁵ "Hittite Treaties," translated by Albrecht Goetze (*ANET*, 201–3).

³⁶ Walter C Jr Kaiser, “The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34,” *J. Evang. Theol. Soc.* 15.1 (1972): 15.

³⁷ Kaiser, “The Old Promise and the New Covenant,” 16.

³⁸ Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 24:580.

³⁹ Jack R. Lundbom, “New Covenant,” *ABD* IV: 1089.

⁴⁰ Bright, *History of Israel*, 338.

⁴¹ Victor H. Matthews, *Social World of the Hebrew Prophets* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 76.



ii. Internalization of the Covenant: Inscription of the Law on the Hearts

The enforcement of the covenant is not through external means but through the internalization of the same. This is done by YHWH Himself. Firstly, the phrase “bēt yišrā’ēl” (house of Israel) in v. 33 may be understood as “bēny yišrā’ēl” as few Hebrew manuscripts read as such. In the light of the promise to bring together the house of Israel and Judah the variant reading of *BHS* can be accepted.

Secondly, the phrase “kiy zō’t habriyt” (But this covenant) in v. 33 expresses strong disjunctive once again with the older covenant traditions. Once again we see Sinai covenant is contrasted here. For example, in the Sinai covenant the *Torah* (Law)⁴² was written on the stone tablets by God (Exod 31:18) whereas in the New covenant it is written on the lēb (heart) that is in the “qrb” (inward) of individual. This expresses a surgical process by which YHWH would inscribe the Covenant in the inner most part of our being that is our heart and mind.

The metaphor of “writing on the heart” expresses, first, internal hindrances for the perfection of covenant relationship. Secondly, it indicates that the writing on the heart would avoid sin and inculcate in us the ability to obey (Ps. 49:9 [Eng 8]; cf. Deut 11:18). Thirdly, heart is the seat of our emotions which requires to be submitted to YHWH (Jer 3:10; 29:13). Fourthly, hardness of heart requires a strong tool (Jer 13:10; 23:17). Fifthly, only a “surgical” inscription

⁴² Here the words bēriyt and *Torah* are in parallel with each other which can be taken as synonyms.

by YHWH would overcome the hardness of the heart which fosters in us obedience to His Covenant.⁴³ Sixthly, the verb “nātatiy” can be taken as *Gnomic* or prophetic perfect that refers to the current situation in which the speaker has resolved to do something in future.⁴⁴ Moreover, this future action is a habitual action—a continuous action. In other words, the externality of Israelite cult enshrined in the Sinai and Davidic covenants will be transformed to foster the ability to obey *Torah* (law) continuously.⁴⁵ Seventhly, the writing on the heart also indicates a ‘Deuteronomic program’ of allegiance to YHWH in which *Torah* commands people to love YHWH (Deut 6:5).⁴⁶ However, in the New Covenant ‘love’ for God become an intrinsic element. In that *Torah* (law) and hb (love) were interwoven. Therefore, externality of the covenant is internalized continuously in the New Covenant in contrast to the older covenant traditions.

iii. Results of Internalization of the Covenant

There are two major results of internalizing the covenant in the hearts. They are knowledge of God and forgiveness of sins. First, “the writing of the Law” nullified the need for intermediaries like teachers, prophets, priests, and kings. Secondly, Sinai covenant’s need to “lmd” (teach) is abrogated (Jer 31:34 cf. Deut 6:7; Hos 4:4-6). Contrastingly, the community will be taught by God Himself and hence no human

⁴³ Keown, Scalise, and Smothers, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 134.

⁴⁴ Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 485.

⁴⁵ Bright, *History of Israel*, 338.

⁴⁶ Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile in Jeremiah* 26-45, 58.



agency is required (cf. Isa 54:13). Thirdly, the phrase “dē‘u’t yēhwāh” (Know the LORD) refers to the awareness of God’s character and the nature of His actions in the past (historical prologue), remembrance of the same (historical experience), and acceptance of God’s Law (obedience to God’s commands). Furthermore the word “yd” (to know) indicates “a personal knowledge which arises between two persons committed to one another.”⁴⁷ It also means that there is practical, religious, and ethical implication in such relationship.⁴⁸ Fourthly, in such relationship past sins are forgiven.⁴⁹ It is to such a community who were taught by YHWH and “knows” YHWH, the gift of forgiveness is offered. In that the people of Israel need not to bear the guilt of their ancestors as they can have a fresh start! Therefore, the gift of forgiveness here is due to God’s faithfulness but not through human efforts. Hence, in the New Covenant grace precedes Law and law is but a response to obey in gratitude.

D. The Purpose of the Covenant traditions in the Chosen Pericope

Jeremiah knew the traditions of the past and he contextualized them to express Israel’s failure to obey the older covenants and the need for the New covenant. This, he does by making use of ‘Deuteronomic rhetoric’ of YHWH’s grace and Israel’s response.⁵⁰ This is very evident in the way Jeremiah uses the

key terms listen (obey), not to obey, law, and commandments which expresses covenant thinking. As we have seen there are literary allusions to Abrahamic, Sinai (Jer 2:2-7; 7:21-22; 16:14-15; 23:7-8; 31:31-34) and Davidic covenant (Jer 23:5-6 cf. 22:30). With the emergence of monarchy, Davidic covenant is integrated into Sinai covenant. However, Jeremiah knew royal office was corrupted as it has breached Sinai covenant (Jer 21:11-23:8). Moreover Josianic reformation was the result of Sinai covenant tradition (Deut 12:13-14, 17-18; 18:6-8 cf. 2 Kgs 23:2-3). Jeremiah anchored himself in the covenant traditions of Israel to confront Israel’s failure to obey them. Moreover, he anticipated a New covenant which is radically different from the older covenants.⁵¹

So, one may observe scheme of thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis. For example, Abrahamic and Sinai covenant are *theocentric*—thesis. With the emergence of monarchy Davidic covenant has been integrated with ‘prophetic monitoring’—*anti-thesis*. With the failure of monarchy and the breach of covenant, messianic expectation emerged—*synthesis*.⁵² This is reconstituting and re-establishing God’s rule with Davidic ruler which is not by means of material means but by spiritual means (Isa 9:6b [Eng 7b], 11:25, Mic 5:3a [Eng 4a]; Jer 23:5-6). This messianic figure is identified

⁴⁷ Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 581.

⁴⁸ J. Bergman and G. J. Botterweck, “יָדָה” Yāda,” *TDOT* V: 469.

⁴⁹ Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 81.

⁵⁰ McConcile points out to that there is balance maintained between grace of God and Israel’s response in the book of Deuteronomy, see, J. G McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy* (JSOTSup 33; England: JSOT Press, 1984), 10–11.

⁵¹ Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 62.

⁵² In Duet 17:14-20 there is an ideal presentation of kingship that is integrated with Sinai covenant. However, the prophetic indictments show that there is stark difference between ideal presentation and the reality. Many syncretistic elements crept into royal religion. Hence, prophets spoke against royal institution, see, Whitelam and David Noel Freedman, “King and Kingship,” *ABD* IV: 46.



with God in Ezek 34:11-16 & 34:23.⁵³ This synthesis is completely realized in the New Covenant as it has not only integrated the older traditions but anticipated internalization of the covenant. In that law and love are brought together.⁵⁴

Based on the above discussion the following principles of internalization of the covenant are as follows. They are 1) internalization as recognizing the sovereignty of God, 2) internalization as remembering past acts of God's deliverance, 3) internalization as consciousness of the law, and 4) internalization as realization of the knowledge and forgiveness of God.

III. Internalization of the CONstitution as an antidote: Application

A. Problem of 'vigilantism' in India

Vigilantism as defined in the paper is breach of Constitution i.e., it is a criminal act. Vigilantism is multifaceted. However, a common streak found in the acts influenced by vigilantism is 'hate.' So, vigilantism as a hate crime is highly prejudiced.⁵⁵ Prejudices may be against individuals, groups, race, religion, region, and language. Hate crimes with these prejudices may be sponsored by a state or any other fundamentalist groups. Vahida Nainar explains how hate crimes turn into mass crimes which are "perpetuated by state and non-state individuals and entities,

⁵³ Mendenhall and Herion, "Covenant," 1192.

⁵⁴ In the book of Deuteronomy the word 'love' is widely used which is parallel to Suzerian treaties of AWA. In these treaties a Vassal is called to love the king, see, William L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background Of The Love OF God In Deuteronomy," *Cathol. Biblic. Q.* 25.1 (1963): 77–87.

⁵⁵ James B. Jacobs and Kimberly Potter, *Hate Crimes Criminal Law & Identity Politics* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 11–12.

targeting distinct and disparate groups of victims" which are prohibited by Indian Penal Code (IPC).⁵⁶ The author goes on to illustrate how the law of the land has completely broken down as in the case of Godhra incident in Gujarat in 2002. Mobs that were supposedly sponsored by the state officials attempted to eliminate Muslim population in Gujarat.⁵⁷ On the other hand, in the recent times, vigilantism is reality not only in *Kap panchayats* in villages but also in metro cities as well. Tabish Khair, journalist, points out that vigilantism created xenophobia that cuts across the whole region and takes the law into its own hands and administer the same brutally.⁵⁸ It is in such context, how the principle of internalization of the covenant that was envisioned by Jeremiah may be applied?

B. Internalization of the Constitution

In a postmodern world that we live in, principles are often considered as "naive" and relative. However, the stark reality is that we cannot live without them. We do find the "rhetoric of principles" in laws related to democracy, liberty, equality, and fraternity.⁵⁹ This means that we need some principle as

⁵⁶ Vahida Nainar, "Crimes Against Humanity in India Towards Legal Understanding," in *Pursuing Elusive Justice Mass Crimes in India and Relevance of International Standards*, ed. Vahida Nainar and Saumya Uma (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 392.

⁵⁷ Nainar, "Crimes Against Humanity in India Towards Legal Understanding," 397.

⁵⁸ "Violent Vigilante Mob Is the Biggest Disgrace to Mother India," n.d. [cited 1 Aug 2017]. Online: <http://www.dailyo.in/politics/tanzanian-woman-vigilante-unruly-mob-anti-nationalism-bangalore-lawlessness-xenophobia-khaps/story/1/9072.html>.

⁵⁹ Jakob De Roover, *Europe, India, and the Limits of Secularism, Religion and Democracy* (Delhi: Oxford university press, 2015), 133–34.



‘guiding force’ in order to address the issue of vigilantism. Furthermore, we also need to be aware of limitations of applying this principle of internalization. The reasons are first, the problem of vigilantism is a contemporary problem which is not present in the OT. Secondly, we cannot have an absolute correlation between the covenant concept in OT and modern concept of constitution. Thirdly, the principle of internalization provides us a moral and ethical framework to deliberate on the current issue. Fourthly, we cannot say that the principle of internalization is the only antidote to the problem of vigilantism. Since vigilantism exists in many forms, we also need to have multifaceted antidotes, of which the principle of internalization is one.⁶⁰ So, keeping these limitations in mind, now let us apply the principle of internalization of the covenant to the problem of vigilantism.

First, as an Indian citizen I should *recognize* the sovereignty of Indian constitution.⁶¹ One of the ways of recognizing the Sovereignty of Indian constitution is by recognizing the secular values of the Constitution—liberty, equality, and fraternity. However, merely recognizing secular values is not enough. Secular values are to be internalized. Keeping this in mind, unlike Western models of secularism that dichotomizes religion and state, in India religion as great role to help us internalize

secular values. M. M. Thomas assets this aspect more succinctly by saying, “if the religion is concerned with ultimate Truth or God, it cannot but have its implications for the whole of life, private, and public...”⁶² Arguing from Thomas’ standpoint, Jeremiah’s New Covenant is the only panacea for Israelites to internalize covenant. It would be to internalize the Covenant values of love for God and His covenant which would require love for the neighbor (other).

Secondly, internalization as *remembering* historical experience of freedom struggles of our forefathers will evoke patriotic sentiments among the citizenry. The reason is to inculcate the feeling of gratitude towards the efforts of our forefathers. This in turn will result in our desire to abide by the Constitution as law abiding citizens. This is very similar to the inclusion of historical prologue of God’s acts of deliverance in the covenant.

On the other hand, we should note that India has always been abode of many religions. The dichotomy that we see in the Western secularism between the sacred and secular, according to Vinoy Paikkattu is not a natural phenomenon but a human construct.⁶³ Similarly Cavanaugh notes that the distinction between the sacred and secular in Europe is an ‘invention.’⁶⁴ In that

⁶⁰ The multifaceted nature of the problem of vigilantism calls for multifaceted response from different fields. For example, it can be addressed from legal, psychological, social, anthropological, ethical, moral, and religious perspective.

⁶¹ The word “sovereign” refers to the power of the state to legislate on any subject in conformity with the constitutional limits, see, *The Constitution of India*, 4.

⁶² M. M. Thomas, *The Church’s Mission and Post-Modern Humanism A Collection of Essays and Talks 1992-1996* (Delhi: CSS/ISPCK, 1996), 23–24.

⁶³ Vinoy Paikkattu, “Dismantling the Dichotomy between the Secular and Sacred: A Wittgensteinian Way,” *J. Dharma* 40.3 (2015): 296.

⁶⁴ William T. Cavanaugh, “The Invention of the Religious-Secular Distinction,” in *At the Limits of the Secularism Reflections on Faith and Public Life*,



remembering how, since from the ancient times, India has been tolerant and respectful towards other religions may help us to internalize the secular humanistic values.

Thirdly, internalization as *consciousness* of the Constitution has two elements—love and law. *Consciousness* is intrinsically related to *remembrance*. Here the externality of law machinery can be internalized. For example, the Deuteronomic dynamism of love and law in the New Covenant obviated the need for external enforcement of the law. In other words, law is no more a consequence but consciousness.

Fourthly, internalization as *realization* of individual and corporate responsibility towards each other is practical application of the above factors. An individual or a group who truly identifies the sovereignty of our constitution, remembers the historical experience of freedom struggles, inculcates love and obedience in consciousness, will feel responsible towards fellow citizen. The obligation to serve others is very much intrinsic in the New covenant. The older covenants are broken because Israel failed to fulfill social responsibility required by the laws. Therefore, the “writing of the law” on the hearts in the New covenant has been internalized so as to evoke the feeling of responsibility for others. So, this realization is not done by external means but by internal outworking of the law.⁶⁵

Therefore, the above four principle would provide us a moral and ethical

framework by which we can reduce the acts and consequences of vigilantism in India. The principle of internalization of the New Covenant values should propel Christians in India to participate in nation building. For Thomas Christians contribution towards secularism especially in relation to nation building is in the realization of ‘*Koinonia* in Christ.’⁶⁶ In that he notes that ‘*Koinonia*’ is based on the gospel conviction that God became incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ to discard alienation between God and man.⁶⁷ Similarly, Stanislaus suggests that Christian should respond to religious fundamentalism that curbs secular values of the county. Christians also should involve in strengthening humanistic nationalism.⁶⁸ In that the Christian task must be to emancipate the weaker sections of the society.

Amit Bhaskar, in his discussion about human trafficking emphasizes on the aspect of *sensitization* of law enforcement agencies to eradicate human trafficking. Taking my cue from this aspect, I would suggest that the church in India should take part in this advocacy to sensitize not only the member of the church but also the law enforcing agencies. This means that church should work hand-in-hand in solidarity with the State and other NGO’s to sensitize and bring awareness in the community to curb the elements that instigate vigilantism.

⁶⁶ Thomas, *The Church’s Mission and Post-Modern Humanism A Collection of Essays and Talks 1992-1996*, 63.

⁶⁷ Thomas, *The Church’s Mission and Post-Modern Humanism*, 63.

⁶⁸ L. Stanislaus, “A Christian Response to Hindutva,” in *Nationalism and Hindutva A Christian Response Papers from the 10th CMS Consultation*, ed. Mark T. B. Laing (Delhi: CMS/UBS/ISPCK, 2005), 186.

ed. William A. Barbieri (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 105.

⁶⁵ Amit Bhaskar, “Human Trafficking Law in India: An Overview,” ed. A. Joseph Xavier, *Soc. Action Q. Rev. Soc. Trends* 63.4 (2013): 391.



IV. Conclusion

Jeremiah's New Covenant presented four principles of internalization of the covenant which is used to address the problem of vigilantism in India. The principles were drawn from the text by using Traditio-historical critical method. I have identified Abrahamic, Sinai, and Davidic covenant tradition in the chosen text by finding different literary allusions to these covenant traditions. There is a progression of thought from law to grace. The covenant traditions are used as a framework to confront Israel of their failure to obey the older covenants and anticipated the need for a new one. This progression is the result of "writing of the law" on the hearts by YHWH. This resulted in internalization of the covenant which is not done by external measures.⁶⁹ Keeping this in mind, I have applied the four principles of internalization as an ethical and moral framework to address the problem of vigilantism in India. Vigilantism can be reduced when one identifies the sovereignty of the constitution, remembers historical experience of freedom struggle, conscious of Constitutional stipulations, and social responsibility towards the others. In addition to this, the church has a role of advocacy in bringing awareness in the congregations and working in solidarity with the State and law enforcing agencies. Therefore, the need of the hour is not making new laws but internalizing them. Only then these principles envisioned can be actualized otherwise they remain naïve!

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⁶⁹ Mendenhall and Herion, "Covenant," 1192.



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