

International Journal of Arts and Humanities (IJAH)

Bahir Dar- Ethiopia

Vol. 3(4), S/No 12, September, 2014:80-95
ISSN: 2225-8590 (Print) ISSN 2227-5452 (Online)
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ijah.v3i4.7>

Prophet Ezekiel on Individual Responsibility: Implications for Nation Building in Nigeria

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Abstract

The idea of imposing blame on others for the problems of the present day Nigeria is a question of great concern as it was to prophet Ezekiel during the exile. A critical observation has shown that many people do not like to be associated with failures and blames. This retards the growth of a nation. Nation building consists in all activities which bring positive improvement in a society. Thus, individual responsibility is an indispensable part of the activities which bring development in a nation. The theme of 'individual responsibility' in Ezekiel is to be found in three passages of the book (Ezek. 14:12-23; 18:1-32 and 33:10-20). In Ezekiel's time, Israelites tried to shy away from their individual responsibility when things went wrong. They believed that it was primarily because of the sins of their ancestors that they were suffering in exile. Ezekiel advocated individual responsibility to avoid fatalism. This paper therefore studied the concept of individual responsibility in the book of Ezekiel and its implications for contemporary Nigerians who believe that Nigeria has been vandalized by the past generations especially the past political leaders. The paper concluded that if the concept of individual responsibility as preached by prophet Ezekiel is properly applied and internalized by contemporary Nigerians, there will be positive improvement in life and standard of the nation.

Introduction

A critical observation has shown that many people living in contemporary society do not like to be associated with failure and blames. It is also observed that some people like to blame other persons even their predecessors or ancestors when things go wrong. They also like to blame others for their current situation. Many people like to be praised and not to be blamed, to take the gains not the pains. People refuse to understand that in life there must be time for joy and happiness and time for sorrow and pain. So, it becomes a problem to the present researcher as it was in Ezekiel's time as why people try to shy away from accepting responsibility when things go the wrong way. An analysis of what is going on in the political and socio-economic aspects of the Nigerian society will notice a kind of ingrained attitudes that blame the people of the past for the current instability and disorder.

The concept of imposing blames on another person for the calamities of the present day Nigeria is a question of great concern as it was to Ezekiel during the exile. The same character portrayed by the Israelites during the time of Ezekiel which made the people to behave in a nonchalant attitude can also be found among many Nigerians today. A critical observation of what is happening in Nigeria reveals that this attitude on the part of some Nigerians has resulted in the damage of the love for the country and this has constituted a problem to the present researcher. The unpatriotic action of the Israelites when the Israelite nation was endangered because of their belief in inherited sin and punishment can also be found among many Nigerians who run away to seek refuge in different parts of the world as the best way to avoid the epileptic condition of Nigeria.

The primary objective of this research is to bring out the facts about individual responsibility as it was preached by Ezekiel and also apply it to present day Nigerian society in order to correct the idea held by many people that Nigerian nation has been vandalized by the past political administrators. The work also explores the implications of Ezekiel's message for nation building in contemporary Nigerian society.

Concept of Individual Responsibility

It is necessary to define the two words 'individual' and 'responsibility' for better understanding of the concept of individual responsibility. Individual means to be considered separately from a group. To be existing as one entity, or distinct being or object, single one; as an individual man, animal or city. In the words of La Farge (1992), an individual is a person or a specific object. Individuality is the state or quality of being an individual; a person separated from other persons, and possessing his or her own needs or goals. This means that the individual is person considered independent from any given or particular group. Russell (1994) regards every human

as an independent, sovereign entity who possesses an inalienable right to his or her own life, a right derived from his or her nature as a rational being.

Donagon (1979) sees responsibility as "being answerable for an act done, and to bear any consequences it has caused" (p. 43). This simply means the state of having a duty to deal with something. This constitutes the fact of being answerable, accountable or blamed for something done. It can also be seen as a duty or obligation to satisfactorily perform or complete a task (assigned by someone, or created by one's own promise or circumstances) that one must fulfil, and which has a consequent penalty for failure. Responsibility is the position of being responsible for an act which one portrayed, the ability or the authority to act or decide on one's own without supervision. It also means the obligation to carry forward an assigned task to a successful conclusion. Responsibility goes with authority to direct and take the necessary action to ensure success. Responsibility requires one to give account, as of one's actions or of the discharge of a duty or trust. It involves personal accountability.

Individual responsibility therefore means that everybody in the society has a role to play as individual person. Everybody is entrusted with some roles to play. This implies that each citizen of the state owes some obligation towards the maintenance and sustenance of the society. It is not ideal to rely on the government as a corporate body to provide all the need of the citizenry.

Concept of Nation Building

The concept of nation building has no single definition. From the theoretical viewpoint, it may be defined as a process of encouraging people with diverse beliefs, different socio-political opinions, varied cultural values and orientation values to agree to live together as member of one nation which is economically viable, politically stable and culturally homogenous. Ikemuelu (1993) describes nation building as a phenomenon which is interwoven with modernization. According to Spencer (1979), nation building involves changing the attitude of the citizens from traditionalism to nationalism, patriotism to modernity.

Ezeanya (1980) maintains that the building of a people that make up a nation precedes the building of the nation that contains the people. He means that nation building starts with the development of the people who compose the nation. The nation cannot exist if the individuals that form the nation are not first developed in their hearts, minds, and deeds. However, Ezegebe (1992) opines that nation building calls for orientation of the citizens to realize the need for honesty, hard work and co-operation. Value orientation trains people to be effective leaders and good followers. It helps people of a diverse nation to appreciate their differences and need to live together as one people.

Prophet Ezekiel and His Book

According to Smidt (2008), prophet Ezekiel was born into the family of Buzi and he was a priest. Ezekiel has no written records as the time and place of birth, all that one knows about him dates back to the time Nebuchadnezzar deported the Israelites to Babylon in 597 BC. Comay (1988) observes that Ezekiel ranked with Isaiah and Jeremiah as one of the three major figures among the classical prophetic movements. The call of prophecy came to him five years in the refuge community of Tel-Alib, on a large irrigation canal of Cheber north of Babylon.

In the words of Ugwueye and Okwueze (2002), "The traditions preserved in rabbinic circle has it that the book of Ezekiel and twelve other minor prophets were written by men of great synagogue, which meant that they were the composers of the book and thereby denying Ezekiel authorship of the book" (p. 6). The difficulties connected with the book are proverbial. The rabbis at the time of the closing of the canon found it difficult to reconcile its prescriptions with Torah, had it not been for Rabbi Haniniah Ben Hezekiah who closed himself in a room with food and three hundred jars of oil for light to explain all the discrepancies in the book.

Harrison (1993) maintains that the aforementioned traditional authorship did not however escape criticism of some biblical scholars who shared varied views as to the authenticity of the authorship of the book of Ezekiel. Others ascribe some parts of the book to Ezekiel of which out of 1, 273 verses of the prophecy, only 170 verses they accredited to Ezekiel on the premise that he was more of a poet. They assumed that the first sixteen chapters of the book are written by Ezekiel on the ground that they are poetic in nature. The remaining, they suppose to be the work of later levitical tendencies who functioned at a later date. The book of Ezekiel according to subtraction and persistent tradition is the product of the prophet whose name is attached to the book. They refused to accept the view that the book is a fiction written by an unknown author during the difficulty years of Israel.

Questioning the authorship of Ezekiel and his existence is ignoring his place in history. Ezekiel being the prophet of God, prophesied according to the inspiration of the spirit of God thereby spoke as he was led. It does not matter whether it is poetic or prose, eschatological or immediate what actually matters is communicating the message to the people. On this note, Ezekiel authored the whole book of the prophet Ezekiel.

Prophet Ezekiel and the Message of Individual Responsibility

The theme of 'individual responsibility' in Ezekiel is to be found in three passages of the book (Ezek. 14:12-23; 18:1-32 and 33:10-20). In Ezekiel's time, Israelites tried to shy away from their individual responsibility when things went wrong. The Israelites thought that it was because of the sins of their ancestors that they were suffering in

exile. According to McCain (1996), "individual responsibility is the prominent and significant feature of prophet Ezekiel's message." (p. 175). This is as opposed to the Israelite and Jewish idea of corporate punishment and responsibility of the covenant community which passed off punishment as being the result of the sins of their ancestors as seen in Ezekiel 18. The Jews believe on the proverb or saying that in effect presented God as being unjust in punishing their generation for the sins of the ancestors and by so doing could not realize their own mistakes. To encounter this idea, Ezekiel was of the view that no individual was being punished as a result of the sin committed by his forefathers rather each and every one of them was reaping the seed he or she sowed. Ezekiel was trying to see that they were guilty of what each of them as a person had done, which God would not allow them to continue with or go unpunished.

In the words of Carson (1994), "the relationship between God and his people is another good example of Ezekiel's message." (p. 717). On this note therefore, the afflictions of the people were not merely for punishment sake, rather it served as an avenue through which they would be brought to knowledge of God. It is meant to bring them closer to God in order to protect them, just as shepherd cares for his sheep. Knut (1967) observes that Ezekiel maintains that there will be no vicarious suffering of one generation for another's sin or condemnation of a presently good man for his wicked past, hence to repent is to live in God's grace (Ez. 18). The argument was provoked by the statement; Fathers have eaten unripe grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge, charging God with punishing the innocent descendants of wicked forefathers.

The message of Ezekiel is basically on bringing the ungodly Jews to repentance that they may avert further judgment of God, and encourage the godly to be steadfast and faithful in God. The prophet intended to use the concept of individual responsibility so as to break the shackle of individual sins which was so glaring at that time.

The Idea of Corporate Responsibility in Israel and Its Consequences

According to Gatsby (2003), the word Corporate has to do with "something that is shared in common or something that involves members of a group" (p. 304). From this definition, Corporate Responsibility has to do with shared responsibility, communal responsibility and collective responsibility. The Jews had the belief that they are not a community but one entity, which implies that they are one and united. In other words what effects one person among them affects the entire community. This is the reason why they believe that one man's sin can affect others around him even after his death.

Ugwueye (1995) sees collective responsibility as something that reigns in Israel in spite of the enhanced significance of the individual from the time of exile and continues into the New Testament in ways that are strange today. For instance, the baptism of a whole household as a result of the conversion of the head of the house (Act 1 1:14). Porter (1966) observes that "corporate responsibility means the treatment of the family, the clan or the nation as the unit in place of the individual" (p. 49). This interprets the reason why the community or group as a whole is deemed to be tainted by and answerable for the sins of any particular member. Such a possibility rests on the notion that the group whatever it is forms a physical whole.

However, Anderson (1952) stresses the question in differentiating between the role of individual personality and corporate personality in the Jewish community, but it remains clear that their respective roles are closely related that they cannot exist independently. This idea can be illustrated from the person of Abraham who is an individual but biographically represented the whole community of Israel.

Moreover, Anderson (1952) observes that a good example of corporate responsibility in Israel can also be seen from another side, the case of Gomer, prophet Hosea's wife, who abandoned her husband and resorted to prostitution and adultery and thus used to represent the whole community of Israel that abandoned their God and took to idolatry. According to Black (1986), the Israelites of Ezekiel's time believed that when a finger touches oil, it soils the whole hand. That is to say that a sin committed by an individual leads to the punishment of the whole community. Also, all the suffering and pains befalling man today are the consequences of the sin committed by Adam and Eve. This is the reason why they are familiar with the sayings of the proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge". This means that the children suffer the consequences of their fathers' sin, although the children were not the culprit of their suffering.

The Israelites' idea of corporate responsibility can also be traced from the ten commandments, as recorded in exodus 20:5-7, the Lord said, "Do not bow down to any idols on earth or beneath the water, because I am the Lord your God and I tolerate no rivals. I bring punishment on those who hate me and on their descendants down to the third and fourth generation". This injunction depicts the Israelites' idea of monotheism and that God reacts in jealousy against both idolatry and disobedience of any kind on the part of his people.

Hinson (1994) says that the punishment of the wicked and their children to many Old Testament writers is the direct opposite of the blessings of the righteous, which were thought to be long-life and many children. The people of the Old Testament had no clear idea of life after death and thereby believed that the wicked must be punished in his life, that is why they were of the view that the wicked and

their children should not be kept alive, but die with their evil acts so that their memory will perish and nobody will know their names.

Carson (1994) points out that in the New Testament (John 9:2), a disciple of Jesus asked Him a question which means they understand the nature of suffering. The disciple asked Jesus, "Teacher, whose sin caused this man to be blind? This shows that the disciples were assuming that the man or his parents must have sinned for him to have been born blind. This shows that even Christian Jews who have been following Christ have the belief in them that the consequence of a sin committed by a father could be transferred to his descendants.

It can be inferred from the above points that the Jews believe in corporate life and communal existence. This is the major reason why they insist that the sin committed by their ancestors can be transferred to their descendants. Moreover, the prophet Ezekiel served as an avenue through which the people of Israel should have a re-think about their belief in corporate punishment to know that God does not punish somebody for the sin and error committed by another person.

As a result of this idea, the Jews had a negative attitude towards life, without recognizing the individual sins against God, believing that whatever afflictions that befall them was as a result of the sins of their ancestors. So such fate had been predestined to befall them and that God's hand of judgment upon them was not due to their own sin, but as a result of the idolatry and polytheism of their fathers. This view had great impact on the life of the covenant community and resulted in a terrible consequence that was telling on them which was the exile. God complained to Jeremiah of the sins committed by the people of Israel, and urged them to repent but they refused. Probably, they had not seen themselves as sinners. Thus, in Ezekiel 7, God declared a day of judgment on the house of Judah as a result of their sins.

Hinson (1994) observed that "God used the Babylonians to punish Judah because of her waywardness and nonchalant attitude towards God. They did not honour God, but served false gods and acted without compassion on justice" (p. 152). God used the Babylonians to punish the Israelites due to their idolatry and sinful nature. The people of Israel never thought their ways are sinful enough to attract God's wrath on them. All the prophecies on the judgment of God against Judah were taken to be for the sins of their ancestors because of their belief in corporate punishment. God however, gave his people into captivity on three different occasions, to the Babylonians in 597 BC, 587BC and 582 BC respectively, so as to make them come back to him and serve him with full passion. In the light of this, it can be seen that the belief in corporate punishment also led to the decadence of attitudinal orientation and moral behaviour of the people, because they saw no need to be self

righteous, as the punishment of the sins of their unrighteous fathers will undoubtedly be visited on them.

The Idea of Corporate Responsibility among Nigerians

Although, there are some similarities in the concept of corporate responsibility among the Nigerians and the Israelites, there equally exist some differences. This similarity is due to the fact that the Israelites perceive their suffering as a cause of their fathers' sin and idolatry, with present economic exploitation by the Nigerian leaders and office holders who keep on blaming the past administration as the cause of all the problems. Moreover, there exist some differences. These differences arise because the Israelite are made up of group of people who share a single language, culture and tradition while the Nigerian society is made up of group of people with different ethnic groups, language, cultures and traditions. Therefore, in order to have a clear insight on the subject matter, it will be wise to study the concept of corporate responsibility with reference to Nigeria at large and Igbo society in particular.

In Nigerian society, there is a belief in togetherness of the people, this can be reflected from the belief of Igbo cosmology that a child belongs to the society and not only the parents. In the Nigerian society for the past years, we have witnessed series of cases where the whole county suffered for error committed by a particular person or group of people. Also the Israelites believe that they are not guilty of any sin rather it is because of the sins of their ancestors that they are suffering. Here, the word of the prophet is given room and freedom to break out of the collective guilt of the past generations to a new beginning which put him into a personal relationship of service and loyalty to the almighty God.

According to Nzomiwu (1999):

In the traditional Igbo society '*Ala*' (the mother earth) is the custodian of all moral laws and any default by any member of the society is seen as an offence against '*Ala*' and the punishment will be on the entire individuals. Heinous social offences are regarded as crimes against the land and new laws can be made in name (p.83).

In the traditional Igbo belief '*Ala*' is like a mother to all, therefore, they see one another as brothers and as a result of this, any sin committed by a brother might in one way or the other affect another person because they have a great sense of unity which is clearly brought out through a popular saying that 'I am because you are and you are because I am'.

This sense of brotherhood and unity can be seen from the meaning of names given to the Igbo children such as Igwebuiké (majority is strength). The Igbo believe

that no individual can independently survive on the surface of the earth. Among the Israelites of the exile, there are many who are not content with call for repentance and divine promise of new order instead of welcoming it with joy, they go on obstinately maintaining the sons' inheritance of parental guilt. Likewise, in the present Igbo society, everybody keeps on doing what he prefers without minding its consequences. The Christians still have slaves and maids in their various places without a great number of discrimination on them. There are still people regarded as "Osu" (outcast) in the present Igbo society who other citizens still discriminate on the issue of marriage, employment, association, education and socialization etc, for no fault of their own but rather the ancestral victimization placed by the society of the forebears. They have refused to welcome Ezekiel's message whether out of willingness to surrender a weapon to use again or whether because they are champions of traditional orthodoxy and feel that to repudiate the old dogma of retribution in so revolutionary a fashion which constitutes a dangerous assault upon foundation which ought to stand firm. In the face of this, the prophet is content simply to appeal to the sense of justice which recognizes the principle of retribution, the person who has sinned must die as a libration.

It is observed that the situations of the Israelites during the prophet Ezekiel's time and contemporary Nigeria are interrelated. The Israelites keep on blaming their ancestors and forebears for their suffering forgetting their idolatry, also in the Nigerian society today, we witness economic meltdown. The Nigerian leaders and many other people holding the public opinion still engage in bribery and other means of corruption for the good and well being of Nigerian society. What is needed is reorientation in one's character that will enhance a good relationship with God and our fellow men.

In the Nigerian society today, the economic condition is too poor that a common man can hardly afford three square meals per day. Our leaders today keep on talking about the past administration and leaders as being the mastermind of this poor economic situation. They lay the blames on Babangida and Obasanjo administrations as the brains behind all the corruption in Nigeria today. This allegation is false because after the administration of Babangida and Obasanjo Nigeria has witnessed different forms of corruption on the paths of our present day leaders. They siphon the money meant for public usages into their own personal accounts. Over the past recent years, some ex-governors have been accused by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) for allegedly diverting the government money into their own pockets. An average Nigerian especially those in political offices today is a potential criminal willing to do anything for an extra naira that make differences between death and survival. Our political leaders see their offices as the way to dupe the people without anybody questioning their authority.

In the words of Okwueze (1996):

The public servant and the traditional ruler diverts money meant for public uses for their own selfish interest, the business man sells water as injection, the pastors blindfold the worshipers in order to dupe them, the police man on the road collects bribe (p. 114).

This statement shows that there is corruption on the path of everybody from the public office holder to the average Nigerian. Nigerians both the leaders and the masses are thereby called to embrace the concept of individual responsibility as preached by the prophet Ezekiel.

For the Judeo-Christians, Carson (1994) is of the view that the idea of corporate responsibility can be traced from the events of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve sinned, by doing what God forbid them no to do. They ate the forbidden fruit and as a result, face the punishment of death (Gen 2:15-17). Tradition has it that immediately they ate the forbidden fruit, they became guilty and shame came upon them, there eyes opened and they noticed their naked bodies and attempted to hide each other from the presence of God.

The Christians believed that as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve, suffering and death came into the world and mankind in its totality inherited this sin. The entire womanhood also had to inherit the pains of child birth which is a constant reminder of the sin of Eve. On this note, marriage being a relationship of mutual care was often characterize by tension. As a result of this sin of disobedience, Adam was punished by expulsion from the garden and subjected to hard labour and sweat on his face before he can obtain his daily bread. So, because of the belief in corporate responsibility, the punishment of Adam's sin was not restricted to him alone but to the whole mankind, Douglas (1993), sees human suffering from the context of Adam's sin which was not subjected to Adam alone but to his descendants, the man has to labour for his daily breads and the women crying in pain for child birth. The Christians believed that all have sinned and fallen short of glory of God (Romans 3; 23). That is to so that man has elevated himself from what God intended him to be. They still hold the view that all have been forgiven, redeemed and made righteous and holy through Christ. The sacrifice which Christ paid on the cross of Calvary had made every Christian righteous before God. The New Testament theologically illustrates this in Rom 3:24-25, as follows:

They are justified by his grace as a gift of redemption which is in Christ whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. Christ did not commit error or sin, but he suffered the sins of the world, he died for sins of the world and therefore reconciled and canceled sentence of death for all those who believe in him.

The Christians hold the view that the sin of one man (Adam) put the whole mankind into the mystery of suffering and death, while the obedience and righteousness of one man (Christ) delivered the world from the bondage of death and brought everlasting life to all who believe in him. Through the baptism in Christ, the old nature is wiped out and a new life in Christ is cherished. All human being created are one in Christ because they belong to the one family called Church. Hence, the corporate responsibility can be known from the idea that all humanity inherited the sins of guilt through Adam and the sense of purity through Christ.

Israelites of Ezekiel's Time and the Nigerians of today

Ezekiel attacked and condemned the Israelites belief during his time. The people cowardly abandoned their duty to God and put all their blames for their suffering on their forebears. The prophet condemned this idea and upheld that "the soul that sins will die". This implies that a person that does not sin shall live. Although it may seem axiomatic to us that a son should not suffer for the sins of the father. The recipients of the act of grace were surprised because there is a break with tradition. The ancient destiny of guilt laid on them by their fathers who delivered them over to death had been annulled by Yahweh and replaced by a new offer of grace.

In our country Nigeria today, everybody is expected to give room and freedom to break out of the collective guilt of the past generations to a new beginning which puts him into a personal relationship of service and loyalty to the Lord almighty. The present generation of the Nigerian leaders excuse themselves from responsibilities of the situation of the present society by blame to the past while they continue to fail to make their own positive contribution.

Ugwueye (1995) says that the individual responsibility may seem frightening conclusions as it strips away the comforting concern of irresponsibility. So many Nigerians seem to enjoy as they recklessly blame the ills of the society on government, leaders, colonial masters or any other person which may suit the occasion. Of course, up to a point, the individual shortcoming and responsibility may credibly be blamed upon externalities. However, the line must be drawn and individual must be prepared to face the consequences of his or her action.

The Israelites of Ezekiel time blamed their forefathers for their suffering and afflictions forgetting their duty towards God. Ezekiel made it known that their total attitude, their ways and conduct is the reason why they are suffering and not because of their ancestors. Such situation also obtains in Nigeria. This is why Okwueze (1996) points out that:

Those who hold the public opinion, the public servant, the traditional rulers and the political leaders diverts the money meant for the public usages into

their own pocket, the business man sell fake drugs in place of good one, the church founders and leaders deceive the congregation in other to extort money from them, the police man is a toll cahier (p. 114).

This situation depicts immorality on the paths of everybody. In Nigeria today, every individual wants to make quick money ("or less work done and is willing to do anything possible to achieve success.

Prophet Ezekiel's exposition is to be read in the light of resent urgent pastoral situation in Nigeria. Those who make light of sin are to be warned of the stringency of divine justice. Those who are in distress because they see no hope are to be encouraged in the obedience which represents the right response to Yahweh's purpose. The righteous ones are well warned not to trust in themselves as an excuse for playing with evil. The saints need the watchman's warning as much as the sinner does. In each case persons are responsible for their own action; as Anderson (1957), said "they are not puppet of heredity environment or historical causation" (p. 412).

Implications of Ezekiel's Message of Individual Responsibility for Nation Building in Nigeria

The Book of Ezekiel embodies an act of grace. This act of grace is the general thought that forms the theme of Ezekiel 18: The soul that sins will die. This shows that nobody will suffer the wrong doing of another person. The present day Nigerians especially the leaders are therefore advised to put more effort in other to remedy this ugly situation of our country instead of blaming the past generation. People should be responsible for their actions instead of excusing ourselves from their responsibilities in this present hardship in the country and keep on blaming and making reference to the past generations or their contemporaries. Eichrodt (1970) observes that those Nigerians who claim to be children of God and born again still discriminate against the slaves and 'Osu' (outcast). They forget that those people committed no fault of their own but ancestral victimization placed on them by the forebears. They are therefore advised to surrender this weapon of victimization and follow the preaching of the prophet Ezekiel.

The offer of salvation in Ezekiel is also made available to every Nigerian who is ready to repent and accept his or her responsibility. It is the same will of God which is concerned to deliver the man who has been condemned to death. Today in Nigeria, the same holds true. In Ezekiel 18, the ancient destiny of sin or guilt laid on the Israelites by their fathers which delivered them over to death has been annulled by Yahweh and replaced by a new offer of grace. Every individual who believes the word of the prophet is given room and freedom to break out of the collective guilt of past generations to a new beginning which puts him into a personal relationship of service and loyalty to the Lord almighty and his country. The present generation of

Nigerians and Nigerian leaders excuse themselves from responsibility of the bad situation of the present Nigerian society by a repeated and boring reference to the past while they continue to fail to make their own positive contribution.

The Prophet Ezekiel thought on this message of individual responsibility is to restore the faith of broken community of Israel. It is not a mere restoration of the Hebrew institutions but an interior regeneration, a new heart, a new spirit within each individual. Nigerians are called upon to embrace the free gift of restoration and regeneration of the spirit of morality both as individuals as well as the unity. It is when Nigerians imbibe this message of individual responsibility that the country can achieve a sustainable development.

Anderson (1957) says that the Prophet Ezekiel's message is to be read in the light of present urgent pastoral situation in Nigeria, those who make light of sin are to be warned of the stringency of divine justice. Those who are in distress because they see no hope are to be encourage in the obedience which represent the right response to Yahweh's purpose. In each case, persons are responsible for their own destiny; they are not puppet of heredity environment or historical causation.

In Nigerian society today, it is a common belief that majority of those in public offices and political leaders are for their own personal interest and not for the masses who elected them into that various offices. They ate like the people of Israel of Ezekiel day who forgot their duty as individual persons and centered all the blames on their ancestors. In Nigeria, those in public leadership positions should imbibe and cultivate moral character, piety, human heartedness, self discipline, purpose, accomplishment indispensable for quality leadership with deep convictions, responsibility, knowledge, leadership with example which form the essence of leadership as portrayed by the prophet Ezekiel.

Invariably in Nigeria, where some corrupt leaders became the beloved they can be striped of their corrupt practices consequent upon testifying their names. Suffice it to say that all must join hands to build a nation of high moral standard in which hard work and sweat in the service of the nation will be commended and encouraged. Again, self-sacrifices should form primarily a duty which must be carried out in fear and trembling. Self sacrifice in the art of leadership is perhaps most powerful in attracting loyal followership. In Nigeria, those in public leadership positions should imbibe and cultivate moral character, piety, human heartedness, self discipline, purpose, accomplishment indispensable for quality leadership with deep convictions, responsibility, knowledge, leadership with example which form the essence of leadership as portrayed by the prophet Ezekiel.

The unequivocal bane of leadership in contemporary Nigeria has been re-emphasized. Be that as it may, all is not lost if some of the leaders and the lead can

develop a consciousness of adopting the individual responsibility as preached by the prophet Ezekiel and not referring the present bad situation of the country to the past generations and leaders. Our leaders should embrace the prophet Ezekiel's antidote to cure the leadership incubus in Nigeria. This approach has the knack of making struggle and lust for power foolish and ridiculous. The leadership problem in Nigeria is predicated by uncompromising lack of a philosophy of the orient. Understanding leadership is fundamental to understanding the world we live in, and how we fit into it. If we understand it, we can live beyond the ordinary and mundane in order to make a difference on this earth. Of course, the greatest challenge to some of the leaders in Nigeria and the led is to adopt the concept of individual responsibility. For Nigeria can be seen as another success story as the stitched the leadership seems as another with the adoption of prophet Ezekiel's virtue of the way of the leader.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Going through this work, one can understand what the Jews of Ezekiel time and the present day Nigerians think about sin and its punishment. The Jews of Ezekiel's time believed that whatever a man committed must be transferred to his children and their generation. They believed in heredity of sin as a result of communal life. Prophet Ezekiel shows that the prophet rebuked the orientational attitude of the Israelites about inherited sin. Ezekiel maintained that sin is committed individually as a result, the punishment must be individually. The responsibility of healing the brokenness of the Nigerian nation falls on everybody in the society. People should stop blaming another people for their own error. Many people keep on referring to the past while they still engage in the act of bribery and corruption in their different places of work.

In Nigerian society particularly the contemporary Igbo society, there is belief in the same view with the Jews of the Ezekiel time about corporate responsibility and inherited sin committed by their ancestors and forebears. The Israelites of Ezekiel's time put the blames on God, for punishing them for the wrong deeds of others. It is because of this proposition that the prophet Ezekiel had to rise and make the people to understand their responsibilities as their individual persons. Moreover, this works has shared light into the nature of the concept of individuality in tackling the miserable and deplorable situation facing the contemporary Nigerian society and Igbo in particular.

Finally, the work advises the Nigerians to accept the spirit of regeneration and imbibe with the spirits of patriotism and accountability as individuals in order to improve the poor economic situation of our country and society. Thus:

- i. There should be a commitment on the part of a person as an individual towards the growth of the Nigerian society. Everybody should be committed in his or her

place of work to serve others and not for others to serve him or her. We should therefore inculcate the spirit of obedience and loyalty in our various places of work. If this is done, it will improve the good relationship between every individual and other people that he or she comes in contact with.

- ii. The fight against corruption and embezzlement of the public fund should be done by every individual and the government. In present day Nigerian society, there is high level of corruption both in the public and the private sectors. It is the duty of the individuals to denounce corruption and report any body found in such an act to various agencies that should reprimand them. People give out bribes as individuals and people receive bribes as individuals. So it is when people change their characters and perceptions individually that the society can have necessary changes.
- iii. In contemporary Nigerian society today, one can easily observe that people do no longer imbibe the spirit of patriotism rather they their interest is only on what the government will offer to them. Everybody is therefore called individually to think of what to offer to the society and not what the society will offer him. If individual as a person look forward on what he or she will do to the good welfare of the state without making reference on how to fraud the government, the Nigerian society and economy must not be in this kind of situation which are facing us today. We should contribute immensely towards sustainable development of our country Nigeria through our effort as individual person. This will in turn create a better avenue for more success on the part of individual and the society.
- iv. Moreover, in the Nigerian society today, one can easily observed or notice that bribe are in most occasion given personally and accepted individually. So, if this is the case, it lies on the hand of individual to stop giving and accepting bribery and corruption. If we can be able to stop bribery and report any act of bribe within our offices, it will contribute to the building of our nation and our character as individual persons. In our higher institution of learning today some lectures demand for bribe from their student and the students will give the bribe as an individual without involving anybody. Here those lectures and students involving in this kind of acts should stop it. This is because it is in their hands as an individual to see and contribute to the good and quality education for sustainable development.
- v. Finally, it is the duty of everybody as individual in the contemporary Nigeria to contribute his or her own quota towards the growth of national consciousness. It is when we do so that we are improving our lives as individuals.

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