



An investigation into the concept of “The Council of Yahweh” in the Old Testament and its functional relationship to traditional and political leaders

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Abstract

A Divine Council could pose puzzling question in the mind of a layman with the understanding that humans are the best understood to practice assemblies or gatherings to make decisions. But an understanding of the council of Yahweh in the Old Testament, though not clearly written verbatim which such inscription, come to play and is discovered across the Old Testament in which vital decisions are being made for or against an individual and for the larger populace of humanity. As such an examination of the concept of “council of Yahweh” is the focus of this piece in practically deducing from the operations of the Divine Council as a paradigm for traditional and political rulers in executing their various responsibilities for the betterment of humanity.

Keywords: Leadership, Council of Yahweh, Political leaders, Traditional leaders.

Introduction

The term Divine Council is a alternative word for God’s heavenly host comprising of the spirit beings loyal to God which dwell in the spiritual world. It is the entire assembly of heavenly beings who were fashioned to serve God in a spiritual kingdom. They order the universe in God’s way. The expression “Divine Council” comes principally from Psalm 82:1 (“God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment”; ESV). The gods (*elohim*) of Psa 82:1 are called “gods” and “sons of the Most High” (the God of Israel) later in verse 6 of the same psalm. These “sons of God” are labelled as being in God’s council or assembly which resides in a spiritual realm of divine beings (Heiser, 2015; 2008; 2007). Most scholars (Smith, 2009; Heiser, 2008; Freedman, 1997) begin the study about the Divine Council with the texts found at Ugarit or Mesopotamia, outline a structure based on those religious traditions, and then explore the material in the Hebrew Bible in order to determine how it fits with the other religions.

Plato, the Athenian philosopher of the Classical period in Ancient Greece stated that “As things are done on earth, so it is in heaven” (Meno, 1961; Barrow, 2007) this is a rationale stated in discussion about the reality about the presence of the council of Yahweh in which it connotes that an establishment of what is done here on earth can be seen in heaven as well. Some examples can be drawn out from the scriptural passages according to his proposition which includes Genesis 1:26; 11:6-7. The ideology of a council which is greater than a human one has being discovered to be dated to a very long time back in the ancient world. The concept of a divine assembly (or council) is attested to in the many jurisdictions and among many people, and this can be traceable to the understanding that in the ancient world, there are many gods that people believe in and worship at that time just as it is in the modern world today. Thus religions which range from people of various countries/sections have a belief in a divine gathering and this resulted in various names being offered for the “Chairman” or “Head” of the gathering as the religion might suggest.



The divine council in the Hebrew Bible is a symbolic ruling body consisting of God as the supreme monarch and various supernatural attendants. According to Patrick Miller, the divine council is one of the central cosmological symbols in the Hebrew Bible. That is, it is one of the Bible's ways of describing how God maintains order in the Creation. Working through innumerable hosts of angelic servants, God creates and rules the physical universe, as well as the world of men. In his position as head of the council, God holds three primary offices: King, Judge, and Warrior. He is absolute ruler over all. He makes judicial decisions about the activities of its occupants. And he initiates punitive actions against those forces (divine or human) which cause chaos and disorder (i.e. sin), in order to restore *tsedaqah* (righteousness) and *shalom* (wholeness, peace). His obedient angels serve him in each of his corresponding offices. In his royal throne-room, they praise their King and act as his official counsellors, courtiers, and messengers. As members of the court, they act as witnesses, investigating detectives, bailiffs, and perhaps fellow judges. As members of the Warrior's vast army, they wage war on evil beings. (Summer, 1991)

The people (*goyim*) that have the concept of a Divine Council includes the archaic Sumerian, Akkadian, Old Babylonian, Ancient Egyptian, Babylonian, Canaanite, and also the Israelite, Celtic, Ancient Greek and Ancient Roman and Nordic pantheons (Freedman, 1997). Ancient Egyptian literature reveals the existence of a "synod of the gods". Some of the most complete descriptions of the activities of the divine assembly are found in the literature from Mesopotamia. Their assembly of the gods, headed by the high god Anu, would meet to address various concerns. The term used in Sumerian to describe this concept was *Ukkin*, and in later Akkadian and Aramaic was *Puhru*. (Freedman, 1997). It is therefore important at this point to clarify that, this paper is not talking about the ancient reference to the divine assembly as it is being stated in the above paragraph but rather, the focus of the paper is to venture into the council of Yahweh which is headed by God (Yahweh). Therefore, the reference to a Divine Council is not to be generalised as it is being used for other gathering of gods in another religious sense, but rather to relate to the supreme God.

The Divine Assembly from Ancient Perspective/Cultures

In ancient times various names referred to the divine assembly and this is thanks to their various cultures but with the belief that there is a particular council bearing a 'Divine assembly' and the names and the chief god heading the council are vividly listed according to Wikipedia;¹

Archaic Sumerian: one of the first records of a divine council appears in the Lament for Ur, where the Pantheon of Annunaki is directed by An with Ninhursang and Enlil also appearing as prominent members.

Akkadian: The Divine Council is led by Anu, Ninlil and Enlil

Old Babylonian: In the Old Babylonian pantheon, Samas (Shamash) and Adad presiding over the meetings of the Divine Council

Ancient Egypt: The leader of the Ancient Egyptian pantheon is well thought-out to be either Thoth or Ra, who were known to conduct meetings at Heliopolis(On).

Babylonian: Marduk appears in the Babylonian *Enûma Eliš* as ruling over a Divine Council, determining fates and administering divine justice.

Canaanite: Texts from Ugarit give a comprehensive account of the Divine Council's structure of which El and Ba'al are presiding gods.

Hebrew: in the Hebrew Bible, there are multiple accounts of Yahweh presiding over a great assembly of Heavenly Hosts. Some understand these assemblies to be examples of Divine Councils.

¹ www.Wikipedia.com/divine/council/ (Accessed on September 14, 2017).



Ancient Roman: Jupiter Presides over the Roman pantheon who proposes castigation on Lycaon in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as well as punishing Argos and Thebes in Thebaid by Statius.

The list goes on and on. But a particular thing that is very cogent to the study in this paper is that all the names listed above present that there is definitely a chief god presiding over the council/gathering. Although, not Yahweh in these cases, it helps to have a glimpse of how the real council of Yahweh looked considering the Old Testament passages and texts depicting a scene of the council of Yahweh and which this paper deals with in subsequent sections..

Definition of Divine Council

The Divine Council will be viewed as the 'heavenly government', which most likely resembled the earthly royal court, since this would be the council that is most familiar to the authors of the texts. Divine Council text is a scene in which the fate of the world or an individual is being debated and/or decided, which often involves courtroom imagery or uses of conciliatory language.² This narrow definition obviously means that there are numerous scenes involving divine beings that are excluded from the Divine Council tradition while they may indeed have some council connection.

Furthermore, another theological figure in the person of Fisher also did well in his capacity to define the Divine Council by stating that the Divine Council is the Jewish theological idea that Yahweh holds court in heaven and consults other divine beings (best understood as spirits and angels).³ The scope of approach given to the subject matter by Fisher is creditable except for the fact that he never made mention of the fact that the Divine Council is not only a Jewish idea as it had been portrayed in the above section where other nations also have the concept of a council of the divine being (Heiser, n.d.). But despite his limitation to make note to the other idea of a Divine Council, it can be discovered from his write-up that he wrote extensively on the issue of a Divine Council making reference to the Bible. He said that in several Biblical descriptions there is the setting of a royal court. God has a throne room and His subjects approach Him. Sometimes these divine beings report their activities to God, sometimes God consults these beings, and sometimes God reprimands these beings. From this setting God rules the heavens and the Earth.⁴

All Divine Councils are not headed by Yahweh, but for the sake of this paper and with the limitation to the Biblical view of the subject matter, a concise definition that the researcher of this paper would go with after consulting various definitions by various scholars is that, the Divine Council is the gathering that is quite different from other religious concepts of a gathering of various gods, where God (YAHWEH) is the head and He presides over the affairs of the gathering where some issues are being concluded. The final say thus inevitably lies with the pronouncements of Yahweh.

Structure of the Council

Definitional logic suggests that the Divine Council consists of gods, and humans, by nature, cannot be members of the council. However, Jer. 23:16-22 challenges this assumption.

² Marylyn Ellen White, *The Council of Yahweh: Its Structure and Membership* (A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Theology of the University of St. Michael's College in Partial Fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology, 2012), 15.

³ Christopher Fisher, *The Divine Council* (www.councilofyahweh.realityisnotoptional.com Accessed on September 20, 2017).

⁴Ibid



In this passage, the term $\tau\omicron$ appears twice in reference to the Council of Yahweh. On behalf of the Lord of Hosts, the prophet is speaking against “pseudo-prophets”, in this case those who are speaking of peace. In verse 18 he says to the people that the prophets have not stood in the council of Yahweh and therefore, have not heard his words. Then in verse 22, the text says that if they had been in God’s council, they would have been proclaiming His words. This juxtaposition between false and true prophecy revolves around the Council of Yahweh. It is explicit that true prophets must have access to the Council of Yahweh in order to convey the words of the Lord (Jeremiah 28:20; 15:19). Fretheim says:

The council demonstrates that God is not in heaven alone, but that a complex sociality is basic to the divine life. In other words, relationship is integral to the identity of God, independent of God’s relationship to the world. In some sense the prophet was invited to participate in this relationship. The boundary between human and divine communities is not seen to be fixed or impenetrable. The human is caught up into the divine life and together they become involved in the becoming of the world. In so doing the prophet retains his individuality, and his humanness is not compromised. Yet, the prophet, in leaving the council table with a word to speak, becomes the embodiment of the word of God in the world. The prophet is the vehicle for divine immanence.⁵

Thus, the divine tiers or hierarchy goes in the way that:

1. The first tier belongs to the chief god, but since this paper is referring to the supreme God, Yahweh is the “presiding officer” in the council.
2. The second tier is called the Councillors and the two divisions are the Advisors and the Officers. Satan, angels/messengers etc
3. The third tier is the Agents and the two divisions on this tier are the Commissioned and the Officials. Isaiah, Joshua.

Elements of the Council of Yahweh

For a council to be understood or accepted as the council of Yahweh, there are some characteristic traits which define the attainment of the designation of such nomenclature and these are simply presented in this section to drive home the understanding of the council known as the council of Yahweh.

The first characteristic is that it must take place in Heaven. This criterion reflects the otherworldliness of the “divine” within the definition and title. It provides clarity of context for the narrative. The second is that it must contain multiple divine beings. This criterion develops from the definition in that it recognizes that in order for it to be a “divine” council there must be deities present to engage in the council’s activities.

Third, it must contain some form of dialogue among the members. Stemming from the previous criterion, this criterion takes the “council” part of the title and definition seriously. In order to be a council proper, the members must engage in some type of discussion, otherwise they would merely be a royal entourage. Fourth, it must contain some form of judgment on an individual or group. This criterion flows naturally from the rest. If the purpose of a council is to govern, then it must make resolutions that are obligatory on its constituents. This criterion gives focus and meaning to the criterion of discussion. In fact, the two are so closely tied to each other there are times when they may be interlaced into the same narrative elements.

⁵ Terence E Fretheim, *Jeremiah*. Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary 15. Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2002), 237.



Finally, Yahweh must be in charge of the council. This final criterion is specific to the Hebrew Bible and the current study. Since the objective of this study is to gain insight into Yahweh's council, and not just Divine Councils in general, this is a necessary criterion for the present work.

Membership in the Council

A "member" is defined as a being who is present and performs a role essential to the actual function of the council meeting itself (e.g., engages in discussion, provides advice, etc.). Presence alone is not enough to constitute membership, since a defendant could be present within the council in order to be judged, but would not be a member. When the discussion is being stated following the addition of the name of the subject matter "Council of Yahweh" or "Divine Council", one would think that members that would be involved there would purely be mortal beings. But contrary to that idea, Mullen (1980) has properly mentioned, there are reasons to understand the prophets as members within the council.⁶ This view of Mullen which is strongly supported by this paper holds the position that the council does not only comprise of divine beings alone but rather, there is a place for human part within the council. There are very important things to know more about the membership of the Divine Council and that is the three criterion for membership in the Divine Council, Ellen White (2012) has compiled a list of the criteria which is stated below.⁷

Firstly, the character is named (not necessarily by personal name, but at least by title). This suggests that there is no compulsion for the name to be mentioned as the title is the most important to note. For example, there are some unnamed council members who appear in 1 Kings 22, e.g., the reader is told "one said one thing, and another said another" (1 Kings 22:20b), but at no point does the reader learn the identity of the characters.

The second criterion is that the character is a witness. This criterion seems obvious, but it is also challenging. One can certainly assume that if a being is a member of the council that being needs to be present for some council meetings. However, the being does not need to be physically present, but he or she must be able to witness the council through a vision or dream sequence. There are some inconclusive deliberations on this criterion as some hold that they are not aware of their act for the council as members of the council, while others hold that these people (e.g. prophets in 1 Kings 22) are not members of the council at all. But as far as this paper is concerned, and to take a position, the latter would be supported in which case even a prophet should be aware that he or she is running a message for the council as in the case of Isaiah, who was fully aware of his mission from the council.

The third and the last is that the character is involved in the council's purpose. A member must have a particular role or purpose to play in a council gathering either little or much. At this juncture, the members of the Divine Council would be considered quickly.

Yahweh (יהוה), the God that the Israelites knew from the ancient times is the one in reference to here. He is the Head of the council with no one being able to dethrone Him. He chairs the council and He has the final say in the council. There is no case where another representative makes a decision on His behalf and whatever verdict He passes in a given situation is the final verdict.

⁶ Theodore E. Mullen, *The Assembly of the Gods: The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature*. (Chico: Scholars Press, 1980.), 24.

⁷Marylyn Ellen White, 72-74



Angels (המלאך), are also part of the members of the council, only that the number of angels that are members have not been emphatically stated in any of the texts portraying the council of Yahweh. The fact is that it only states that angels are also members of this council as they appear in all the texts.

The Satan (השטן), is also seen as a member. Fisher (2017) explained in assertion of this that, an angel labelled “A Satan” (probably not to be misunderstood as the traditional character of Satan) explains to God where and what he was doing.⁸ Making it clear that Satan could be a particular designation or office in the Divine Council this could also be traced to the use of the article “the” placed before Satan, and the fact is that an individual has to occupy that spot. Thus, it should be noted that Satan is more man’s adversary than God’s. There are six characteristics which are significant about this member of the council (Kingsbury, 1964) as follows:⁹

1. He appears within the Council
2. The narrative has a governmental/legal context
3. He makes an accusation based on justice
4. He is under God’s authority
5. He is not independent
6. He is ultimately demonstrated to be incorrect

The Prophets (אִיבְנֵי) are mostly the human representatives in the council. They are there to carry out the verdict of the council and more or less act like the “Publicity Secretary” or “P.R.O” of the council to human beings. They are the medium of relating the decision of the council to whosoever it might concern specifically as the case might be. There are different prophets that represented humans at different text of the council of Yahweh like Isaiah son of Amos, Micah son of Imla, Daniel, etc.

Council of Yahweh Texts

Five criteria could be considered before determining a Council of Yahweh text. This criteria are stated below:

- 1) Multiple gods are present (in this case we can refer to them as the trinity)
- 2) The setting is Heaven
- 3) There is judgment (a verdict is being made)
- 4) There is some form of discussion (an interactive session) and
- 5) Yahweh is the leader of the council

After considering the five criteria for the selection of a Council of Yahweh text, the following text will be discussed as it meets each criterion listed above.

1 Kings 22: is a council of Yahweh text after considering that it contains all the criterion for discovering a text about the council. As a matter of fact, Barker and Kohlenberger (1994) in support of the passage as a Divine Council scene commented that, ... Micah described a heavenly scene in which the Lord and his hosts discussed the best way to get Ahab to Ramoth

⁸Christopher Fisher, *The Divine Council* (www.councilofyahweh.realityisnotoptional.com Accessed on September 20, 2017).

⁹E. C. Kingsbury, "The Prophets and the Council of Yahweh," *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1964), 284-285.



Gilead.¹⁰ This presents that there was a “plot” and a topic of discussion which eventually led to the final conclusion of the council. Walsh (1996) offered an opinion with regards to this text in clarifying the statements of the 400 prophets involved in this passage and their role in the delivery of the council’s verdict, he stated that:

First, the prophets do not name the “lord” who will deliver the victory. Second, there is no direct object for the verb “deliver.” English requires a direct object here, and the NRSV’s “it” clearly points to Ramoth-Gilead. The Hebrew, however, does not specify what will be delivered. Third, the prophets do not identify “the king” who will gain the victory either. Ahab certainly understands it to be himself, but the prophets do not in fact say so.¹¹

He (Walsh) was only trying to justify the acts of the prophets but though he might be correct which this paper is not fully in support of, the truth remains that the council decided to use those prophets because they possibly had been involved in lying to the king before that particular day which made the prophet Micah distinguished. Thus, the passage is seen as portraying a council scene.

Job 1 and 2: the African Bible commentary is largely in support of the fact that this passage is a council of Yahweh scene and this is obvious when it states that, The Idea of God sitting on His throne with the angels presenting themselves before Him is not unique to the book of Job¹². After stating this reference was made to some other passages which happens to be among the passages that would be considered in this book as the council of Yahweh texts. The focus here is on the section where Satan is seen accusing the devil but in this scene other members of the council were not seen to have contributed, but the statement that “The sons of God came to present themselves before God” shows that other members of the council were also present in the scene and the discussion transpired as a topic of discussion in the council at that exact scene.

Barker and Kohlenberger (1994) further added in talking about the Divine Council, they said that, there are two scenes in heaven, each depicting the Divine Council. Each is followed by series of events that results from the encounter between God and Satan.¹³ Thus, at this juncture the researcher would like to infer as it had been said earlier to the point that “Satan” Could be a designation or office and this could be possibly seen in his accusation of Job before God. Besides an important point to note from the passage is that God was the started the discussion with Satan and not Satan raising the discussion.

Isaiah 6: In this passage of the Scripture, the angels are referred to as “Seraph(im)” which means the burning ones. Thus, they are to serve in the presence of Yahweh. The book “Old Testament Survey” presented in regards to this chapter of Isaiah stated that, before that event, Isaiah saw only the glories and splendour of the royal court (Lasor, 1982) but when Uzziah died, God was able to break through Isaiah with a vision of the heavenly court¹⁴. This suggests that there is a court in Heaven and that was the scene when Isaiah was legally and officially inaugurated as a member of the council.

¹⁰Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger (eds.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: The Zondervan, 1994), 535.

¹¹J.T Walsh, *1 Kings* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 345.

¹²Tokunbo Adeyemo (ed.), *African Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), 572.

¹³Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger (eds.), 746.

¹⁴William S. Lasor, *et al*, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 379.



Daniel 7: This passage tends to be different from the other passages in identifying a council of Yahweh text but it is evidently seen that it is one of the texts about the council of Yahweh. Only that the passage can be seen to be a completion of what is said in chapter two and to be a complement or link for the halves of the book of Daniel in support of this point, Redditt and Collins (1984) claim that Daniel 2-7 is a chiasm and that the purpose of chapter 7 is to balance out chapter 2.¹⁵ Thus, the major emphasis that depicts the council of Yahweh scene is the section that talks about the Son of Man appearing before the throne of God in chapter 13-14.

Zechariah 3: Zechariah 3 is clearly a Council of Yahweh passage as it contains all the criteria required to be included in the council corpus. It contains multiple deities; Yahweh is named and in charge; an exchange among the characters takes place; and judgment is placed on Joshua (or perhaps all of Israel).

White (2012) puts it that, Yahweh plays the role of judge, השטן the role of prosecutor, מלאך יהוה the role of defence attorney, and Joshua is the defendant.¹⁶

Traditional and Political Leadership in Africa

Cole (1987) tried to define leadership and stated that leadership is often described as a dynamic process in a group whereby one individual influences others to contribute voluntarily to the achievement of a group task in a given situation,¹⁷ thus, holding that, leadership encompass the ability to influence the attitude of others. A popular saying goes thus, “If you think that you are leading, and no one is following, you are only taking a walk”. Therefore, leadership deals with leadership and followership. In defining leadership, it has been discovered that, there is no strict or universal definition for leadership as various individuals have their definitions for leadership. The Websters dictionary defines leadership as the ability to lead, to show the way, conduct, guide and direct the course of others by going before or along with them.¹⁸ Leadership can also be seen to motivate and provoke people to rationalise things for achievements of a common goal which the organization has set down.

A very common key point to note in the various definitions from different authors about leadership is that they fail to include in the definition of leadership, the ingredient of a leader taking care of the social relationship of the followers. This is stated because directly or indirectly, there would be dispute among followers and it is right and expected of the leader to interfere into the cause of the dispute. This is noted as this paper is centred on passing justice and ensuring proper leadership.

Thus, this paper has discovered this fault in the leadership style of the African leaders in which self-centeredness has made them neglect the responsibility they are to shoulder as leaders of the people. Perhaps, some are only partially doing what is expected of them while others are totally out of line and devoid of a moral compass in carrying out their proper ethical

¹⁵John J. Collins, *Daniel, with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature: The Forms of the Old Testament Literature XX* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 30.

¹⁶Marylen Ellen White, 63.

¹⁷G.A Cole, *Management: Theory and Practice 2nd Edition* (Eastleigh, Hants: D.P Publication, 1987), 14

¹⁸.P.R Gove, (ed.), *Webster's third New International Dictionary of the English Language* (Springfield: G and C Merriam , 1976), 11.



responsibility due to self-serving narcissism and ego-centric behaviour (Nicolaidis & Duho, 2019).

Process/Means to Leadership Positions in Africa

In Africa especially in the modern world, leaders are either appointed or elected in which the former goes with the traditional leaders in most cases while the latter is a trait in political leadership since most African nations practice democracy as a way of government (democratic rule).

Iwuchukwu (2009) in her write up on Nigerian leaders remarked that, the process of getting into these positions are disheartening and calls for a review.¹⁹ Thereby expressing that many people in their quest to become leaders in the nation would 'soil' their hands with corrupt acts just to get the benefits that are evident from holding a leadership position. A position that ought to be a place of service to humanity has now been converted to a place of lordship over the people they ought to serve and the 'me, myself and I', rules supreme in their actions (Nicolaidis & Duho, 2019).

The modes of leadership in many African nations are very disheartening and they are nothing to 'write home about'. Iwuchukwu (2009) in line with this, presented that: Successive governments hardly feel the people's pulse through their bureaucratic and dictatorial policies²⁰ but instead they only deal with their immediate surrounding and their own self- satisfaction and they mostly turn out to be like ethical egoist rather than being a utilitarian.

Rightful Traits in Leadership

This sub-section would point to things that are to be expected in leadership but which are lagging in the African political and traditional leadership style. In leadership, the following things are traits or characteristic/ingredients that should be found but are often absent:

Firstly, leadership should have empathy, since this is putting oneself in the place of another individual and to sense what the other person is feeling in a particular situation. A fellow that is empathetic enough would rarely do his fellow brother or sister any harm as he would have considered how the fellow would feel after causing the act. He would rather go through suffering for his people to enjoy than having pleasure at the expense of his followers' happiness. This traits is not something that is common in African leadership both at the traditional level and even in political circle.

Furthermore, leadership should be seen as a responsible role. Responsible in the sense that, like a parent would take responsibility for his wards, leaders should be ready to satisfy and take responsibility for their followers. They should ensure that they get the very best of life that is achievable for their followers. The Biblical Hero, Moses is a very typical example of this in which he was always ready to take responsibility for his followers' goodness. He was ready to go any length to convince God in not losing hope in the Israelites. Rather than African leaders having these, they rather seek for the goodness of only their own biological children and leave other people's children to suffer on their own without a sense of responsibility or any reasonable attitude to alleviate the sorrow of the poor masses (Nicolaidis, 2014).

¹⁹Rebecca C. Iwuchukwu, "A Comparative Analysis of Gideon's Leadership and Contemporary Nigerian Leaders in National Development" in S. O Abogunrin *et al* (eds.), *Biblical Studies and Leadership in Africa* (2009), 83.

²⁰Ibid, 83.



Also, leadership should be representative of the populace, in either case of the appointed (traditional) leaders or the elected (political) leaders, they are to stand and speak on behalf of the people they are representing since they are to be the voice of the people. Just like the case of a lawyer who is a defence in the court of law who will always stand for the accused in order to defend him either he is to win or to lose the case. But instead of the African leaders being the mouthpiece of the people in promoting justice, they themselves are for the most part, the culprits responsible for the suffering of their followers, rather than standing in for their people, they are the ones castigating and speaking against their own.

In addition, leadership should carry every citizen along in policies it would come up with, and Dokubo (n.d.) reacted to this by stating that, the economic policies of this government are not for the poor people.²¹ Instead, the rich and the wealthy are always considered to be worthy of high esteem and viewed as being 'over the poor' and to many leaders who claim to consider the poor in their budgets and policies, it is not always followed as stated, but in most cases, funds and other resources are used for personal gains and profits rather than for the needy masses.

The list of things expected in proper leadership which are not found or limited in the African political/traditional leadership style are endless.

Inferences From the “Council of Yahweh” as a Guide for African Leadership

This section of the paper is set to meet the need for applying some practices in the political and traditional leadership style in Africa. With proper use of this, it is expedient to note that for a proper and effective use of the said styles, the leadership of the African societies should try as much as possible to apply this to their role and way of life and relationship with other people.

Co-Reasoning: This process is seen in the passages talking about the Council of Yahweh, where God is seen not to be making an immediate conclusion to the case that is being dealt with in each scene but rather, there is room for other members of the council to contribute their own quota to the development of a particular case and this would then lead to the final decision of the head of the council, in person of Yahweh. If traditional and political leaders could recognise this fact and deal with issues appropriately without jumping to a biased conclusion on any particular issue, then there would be a proper ethical flow of leadership activities in society. People would be glad to bring their reports and misunderstanding to the leaders since they can then rest assured that they would be glad at the end outcome.

Justice: this is a very cogent characteristic of the Council, in which they would not declare the righteous guilty or the guilty righteous, but rather they would make sure that all goes well with any classification the prosecution falls on. The leaders and rulers in the traditional settings and even in the political world should try as much as possible to make the right judgement in their diverse dealings. Especially the traditional leaders, who people see as their judges, play a crucial role, but in most cases they would judge a case for their own personal and selfish gain and interest and this is not always good as the people would not always trust the judgement of their leaders in such eventualities.

Purity of Heart: this could be seen in the Isaiah chapter 6 scene where Isaiah was purified in order to be among the council. This suggests that every member of the council are pure persons, and that is why, for Isaiah to be a member like the others, he has to go through a process of cleansing or catharsis. Thus, for leaders in politics and in the local traditional setting, one has to be a person of clean heart if he/she is at all able to lead well. When the heart is pure, there will be no bias in making judgements for people as there is no proverbial skeleton inside the cupboard so to speak..

²¹M. Dokubo, *Weekly Spectator* (April 29, 2007), 33.



Condemnation: a very significant trait in the council is that they do not just condemn, as they always have hope in humanity. They do not see man as being despicable and gullible so that he cannot again be useful because of a particular shortcoming, but rather they give second chances to people to prove and to certify the trust that God has in them e.g. Isaiah, Zechariah, Amos, Obadiah etc. As a matter of fact, one of the works/responsibilities of the members of the council is to plead for mercy.²² This is presenting a message to the traditional and political leaders that they are not just to think that nothing good can come out of a person that probably committed a mistake in doing a particular act that goes against the societal norms, but instead, a second chance should be given for individuals to prove the doubt about them, either good or bad.

Conclusion

The Divine Council is very well attested to in Jewish theology. God established a court in heaven. In this court, God entertained angels, passed judgment, issued decrees, and engaged in all types of Kingly functions. God is shown with absolute power and omnipotence, but often entertains the ideas of His subjects. Subjects are allowed, at times, to have frank conversations with God. God hears them out and answers them. In all of this, God is portrayed as obliging yet sovereign.²³ The council characterised an important and “realistic” component in Israel’s theological worldview (Summer, 1991) that African and other leaders would do well to emulate. Therefore, as a rule for leadership and ruler-ship in the traditional and political context, especially here in Africa, leaders should take a glimpse at the mode of the operation in the council of leadership especially when it comes to making judgements and they should deduce a proper attitude from the exercise as it had been revealed in various biblical passages that had been considered in this paper. By observing this and doing away with ego and the self-centredness leadership that is rampant in the society today, society and the world at large would be a better social-religious place for people to live in, as there would be respect towards all with no segregation at all and the world would be a place where love reigns.

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²²K.P. Kareem, *Course Note on Old Testament Theology* (2015), 21.

²³Christopher Fisher, *The Divine Council* www.councilofyahweh.realityisnotoptional.com



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