

**ANALYZING THE REPRESENTATION OF NON-ISRAELITE CHARACTERS IN THE
OLD TESTAMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONSHIP IN
NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This paper critically analyzes and explores the representation of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament, examining their portrayal and cultural implications. The Old Testament includes various characters from different nations, tribes, and ethnicities, and their representation has significant cultural implications. The study highlights that the representation of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament is often stereotypical and simplified, emphasizing their otherness and inferiority to the Israelites. This portrayal has implications for the cultural attitudes and biases of the readers towards non-Israelite cultures and can contribute to reinforcing negative stereotypes and prejudices. The analysis concludes by discussing the cultural implications of the portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament which can be analyzed through various lenses, including historical, anthropological, and sociological. The paper concluded by noting that contemporary Nigerian literature and media have the potential to influence and shape popular perceptions of other cultures and traditions. They can be used to challenge negative stereotypes and promote cross-cultural understanding and dialogue

Keywords: Non-Israelite characters, Old Testament, stereotypes, Ruth, Rahab, Nigeria

Introduction

The Old Testament (OT) is a significant religious text that has shaped the beliefs and practices of Jews and Christians for centuries. It contains a diverse range of characters, including non-Israelites who interacted with the Israelites. The representation of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament has been a subject of scholarly interest, as it sheds light on the cultural and social context of the text. This article aimed to critically analyze the portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament and examine its cultural implications.

The Old Testament contains numerous examples of non-Israelite characters, including Ruth, Rahab, and Naaman, among others. These characters play significant roles in the narratives of the Old Testament and offer insights into the relationships between Israelites and non-Israelites during the ancient times. However, the portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament has been a subject of controversy and debate among scholars.

Some scholars such as Bird (1971), Clifford (1972), Gottwald (1979) and Collins (2004) are of the opinion that non-Israelite characters are portrayed negatively in the Old Testament; while others contend that their portrayal is more nuanced. For instance, Kaiser (2008) argues that the portrayal

of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament is not uniformly negative, but rather reflects a complex relationship between Israelites and non-Israelites. He suggests that the portrayal of non-Israelite characters can be understood in the context of the cultural and historical background of the Old Testament.

This paper critically analyzed the portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament and examined the cultural implications. Specifically, it examined the portrayal of non-Israelite characters in relation to Israelite characters and discuss the cultural and social context of the representation of non-Israelite characters. The study will draw from a range of scholarly sources to provide a comprehensive analysis of the representation of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament. The representation of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament is a crucial topic that offers insights into the cultural and social context of the texts. This article aimed at contributing to the scholarly debate on the portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament and provide a critical analysis of its cultural implications.

Overview of Non-Israelite Characters in the Old Testament

Non-Israelite characters play a significant role in the Old Testament. Some examples of non-Israelite characters include:

Abimelech (various): There are multiple individuals with this name in the Old Testament, but one notable Abimelech is the king of Gerar mentioned in Genesis 20 and 26. He encountered both Abraham and Isaac.

Hagar - Egyptian maidservant of Sarah and mother of Ishmael (Genesis 16).

Ishmael - Son of Abraham and Hagar, progenitor of the Ishmaelites (Genesis 16). Though a son of Abraham, his actions and conflicts with Isaac are depicted negatively (Genesis 21).

Laban - Father of Rachel and Leah, accused of deceitful practices (Genesis 29-31).

Hamor - Hivite, father of Shechem (Genesis 34).

Tamar (daughter-in-law of Judah) - Canaanite woman mentioned in Genesis 38.

Pharaoh of Egypt: Several pharaohs are mentioned in the Old Testament, including the pharaoh during the time of Joseph, who had dreams about seven fat and seven lean cows (Genesis 41), and the pharaoh during the time of Moses, who opposed the release of the Israelites from slavery.

Zipporah - Midianite wife of Moses (Exodus 2).

Balaam: Though not an Israelite, Balaam is a non-Israelite prophet mentioned in Numbers 22-24. He is known for his talking donkey and his attempts to curse the Israelites, which are ultimately thwarted by divine intervention.

Rahab: She is a Canaanite prostitute mentioned in Joshua 2. Rahab is known for helping the Israelite spies and is later spared when the city of Jericho is conquered.

Jabin - King of Hazor who oppressed the Israelites (Judges 4).

Sisera - Canaanite military commander defeated by Deborah and Barak (Judges 4).

Ruth: Ruth is a Moabite woman whose story is told in the Book of Ruth. She becomes the great-grandmother of King David and is considered an ancestor of Jesus in the New Testament.

Nahash the Ammonite - Threatened to gouge out the eyes of the people in Jabesh-gilead (1 Samuel 11).

Agag - Amalekite king spared by Saul against God's command (1 Samuel 15).

Nabal – Depicted as a foolish and inhospitable man (1 Samuel 25).

Uriah the Hittite - Hittite warrior, husband of Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11).

Jezebel - Phoenician princess, wife of King Ahab (1 Kings 16).

Naaman - Naaman is a Syrian general who is healed of leprosy by the prophet Elisha in the book of Kings.

Nebuchadnezzar: The king of Babylon who plays a significant role in the books of Daniel and Jeremiah. Nebuchadnezzar is known for his dreams and experiences, including the famous incident of being driven into madness until he acknowledges the God of Israel (Daniel 4).

Belshazzar - Babylonian king who saw the writing on the wall (Daniel 5).

The above characters, among others, contribute to the diverse narratives and interactions found in the Old Testament. They come from various periods and regions, adding depth and diversity to the Old Testament narratives. These characters and others like them provide insight into the relationships between the Israelites and their neighboring peoples, as well as the religious and cultural practices of those peoples.

How ancient Israelites conceived themselves

The ancient Israelites, as depicted in the Old Testament, had a distinct conception of themselves in comparison to non-Israelites. This differentiation was not merely based on geographical or

ethnic distinctions, but was deeply rooted in their religious beliefs, cultural practices, and historical experiences.

One of the key ways in which the Israelites distinguished themselves from non-Israelites was through their monotheistic belief in Yahweh, the God of Israel. Unlike the polytheistic beliefs of many surrounding nations, the Israelites worshipped only one God, whom they believed had chosen them as his special people. This belief is evident in Deuteronomy 7:6, where it is stated that the Israelites were “a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.” This passage underscores the Israelites’ understanding of themselves as a chosen people, set apart from the rest of the world by their unique relationship with Yahweh.

The Israelites thus believed that they were chosen by God to be his people and that they were superior to other nations. This belief also extended to their religious practices. The Israelites believed that their religion was the only true religion and that all other religions were false. Deuteronomy 12:2-3 records, “You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, upon the high mountains and upon the hills and under every green tree; you shall tear down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and burn their Asherim with fire, and hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy their name out of that place” (RSV). These beliefs played a significant role in their cultural identity and continue to influence religious and cultural practices today.

Furthermore, the Israelites’ conception of themselves as distinct from non-Israelites was reinforced by their adherence to a set of laws and commandments that governed every aspect of their lives. The Torah, or the Laws of Moses, provided a framework for ethical behavior, social relationships, and religious observance that set the Israelites apart from the surrounding nations. In Leviticus 20:26, God instructed the Israelites: “be holy to me, because I, the Lord, am holy and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.” This passage emphasizes the Israelites’ commitment to living according to the laws of Yahweh, which distinguished them from the practices of non-Israelites.

In addition to their religious beliefs and practices, the Israelites also viewed themselves as a chosen people with a unique historical identity. The stories of the patriarchs, the exodus from Egypt, and the conquest of the Promised Land were central to their understanding of themselves as a people with a special relationship to Yahweh. Joshua recounts the history of the Israelites from their ancestors in Mesopotamia to their conquest of Canaan, emphasizing Yahweh's role in guiding and protecting them throughout their journey (Josh. 24:2-13). These historical narratives served to reinforce the Israelites' sense of themselves as a people with a divine destiny, distinct from the nations around them.

The Portrayal of Non-Israelite Characters in the Old Testament

As already noted, non-Israelite characters play an important role in the Old Testament, and many scholars have analyzed the way in which they are portrayed. According to Niehaus (1995), "non-Israelite characters are often depicted negatively in the Old Testament." They are frequently used as foils to the Israelites (p. 23). For instance, in the story of David and Goliath, Goliath is portrayed as a giant and a pagan, while David is a young and faithful Israelite. This contrast emphasizes David's superiority over Goliath, and reinforces the idea that the Israelites are God's chosen people.

Similarly, Nihan (1991) argues that non-Israelite characters are often portrayed as immoral or foolish in the Old Testament, and are used to highlight the virtues of the Israelites. For example, in the story of Samson and Delilah, Delilah is depicted as a treacherous and deceitful woman, while Samson is a faithful and heroic Israelite. Hamor and his son Shechem are portrayed as foolish in Genesis 34. Shechem's rash and inappropriate actions towards Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, lead to a disastrous outcome for them and their people (Gen 34:1-31). Nabal is a wealthy man mentioned in 1 Samuel 25. He is depicted as foolish for refusing to show kindness to David and his men, despite their previous protection of his shepherds. Nabal's actions lead to negative consequences for him (cf. 1 Sam 25:2-42). Belshazzar is also depicted as foolish in the Book of Daniel. In Daniel 5, he organizes a feast and uses the holy vessels from the temple in Jerusalem for his own pleasure. This act leads to the famous "writing on the wall" and the downfall of his kingdom (Dan 5:1-30).

The Pharaoh of Egypt, Sennacherib, King of Assyria, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, are often depicted as arrogant in the Old Testament. Their arrogance leads to their downfall, and they are humbled by the God of Israel (Exod 5-14; 2 Kgs 18-19; Isa 36-37; Dan 4:28-37). Another important example of a non-Israelite character depicted as arrogant in the Old Testament is Naaman, a Syrian military commander who suffered from leprosy. 2 Kings 5:11 records that he initially refuses to follow the prophet Elisha's instructions for healing his leprosy, saying, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy." Naaman's arrogance and expectation of a grand display of power from Elisha causes him to initially reject the simple instructions that would ultimately heal him.

Abimelech is depicted as a power-hungry and rash leader in Judges 9. His unwise actions, including the murder of his seventy brothers, lead to his downfall, and he is eventually killed by a woman who drops a millstone on his head (Judg 9:1-57). Again, Goliath, a Philistine champion, though often portrayed as physically strong but his defeat by the young shepherd David subtly highlights his vulnerability and lack of foresight.

Balaam, a non-Israelite prophet, is portrayed as having a character flaw of greed. He is hired by the king of Moab to curse the Israelites, but God prevents him from doing so. Balaam's love for wealth leads him to compromise his principles (Num 22-24). Also, Haman, an antagonist in the Book of Esther, is depicted as having the character flaws of pride and hatred. His desire for power and his hatred toward Mordecai led him to plot the destruction of the Jewish people. Haman's eventual downfall highlights the consequences of these character flaws (Esth 3-7).

There are several non-Israelite figures depicted in a positive light in the Old Testament. One of them is Melchizedek, the King of Salem, who is mentioned in Genesis 14:18-20. He is portrayed as a priest of God and blessed Abraham, which is interpreted as a sign of his superiority over Abraham (Ps 110:4). Another example is Job, who is depicted as a righteous man in the Book of Job. He is described as blameless, upright, and God-fearing (Job 1:1). Despite facing great adversity, he never curses God and maintains his faith throughout his trials. The Queen of Sheba

is another non-Israelite figure who is portrayed positively in the Old Testament. She visits King Solomon to test his wisdom, and is impressed by his knowledge and wealth (1 Kgs 10:1-13).

Furthermore, Cyrus, the Persian king, is praised in the Book of Isaiah for being an instrument of God in allowing the Israelites to return to their land and rebuild the temple (Isa 44:28; 45:1-7; Ezra 1:1-4). The people of Nineveh, though initially depicted negatively, respond to Jonah's warning by repenting and turning to God. Their repentance leads to God sparing the city (Jonah 3:1-10). While initially depicted with pride, Naaman, the commander of the army of the king of Aram, humbles himself and follows the instructions of the prophet Elisha to be healed of leprosy. His eventual humility is portrayed positively. These positive depictions of non-Israelite figures highlight the inclusive nature of God's plan and the recognition of righteousness beyond ethnic boundaries.

While Biddle (1987) notes that the portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament reflects the social and political context of the time, and is often influenced by the Israelites' interactions with neighboring peoples (p. 112), Weinfeld (1991) contends that the negative portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament is part of a broader concern with social justice, as the Israelites sought to define themselves in contrast to the practices of their neighbors (p. 45).

Comparison of the Portrayal of Non-Israelite Characters to Israelite Characters

The Old Testament, as the study shows, presents a complex narrative that includes both positive and negative depictions of non-Israelite individuals. Some are depicted favorably, showing positive qualities and interactions with Israelites, while others are presented as adversaries or involved in negative actions. Moreover, one observable fact is that in the Old Testament, there is a clear distinction between how non-Israelite characters are portrayed compared to Israelite characters. To a great extent, non-Israelite characters are often depicted as barbaric and godless, while Israelite characters are portrayed as righteous and chosen by God. This comparison can be seen in various stories throughout the Old Testament. For example, in the story of Samson and Delilah mentioned above, Delilah is depicted as a deceitful and treacherous woman who betrays

Samson for her own gain (Judg 16:4-22). In contrast, Samson is portrayed as a hero chosen by God to deliver the Israelites from the Philistines (Judg 13:1-25).

Another example can be seen in the story of Ruth and Naomi also mentioned above. Ruth is a Moabite woman who is initially portrayed as an outsider and an enemy of Israel (Ruth 1:4). However, as the story unfolds, Ruth converts to Judaism and becomes a loyal and faithful companion to Naomi (Ruth 1:16-17). In contrast, Naomi, an Israelite, is portrayed as a righteous and virtuous woman who is blessed by God despite her hardships (Ruth 1:6-7).

The above examples demonstrate the stark contrast between the portrayal of non-Israelite characters and Israelite characters in the Old Testament. Non-Israelite characters are often depicted as inferior and ungodly, while Israelite characters are portrayed as superior and chosen by God.

Analysis of the Portrayal of non-Israelite Characters in the Old Testament

As earlier stated, the portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament is complex and varied. In some cases, non-Israelite characters are portrayed positively because of their friendly relationship with the Israelites. For example, Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, is portrayed as a wise counselor who advises Moses on how to govern the people (Exod 18). Similarly, Ruth, a Moabite woman, is portrayed as a loyal and virtuous follower of the God of Israel (Ruth 1-4). Conversely, non-Israelite characters are often portrayed negatively when they are seen as a threat to the Israelites' welfare or religious beliefs. For example, Pharaoh is portrayed as a tyrant who enslaves the Israelites and refuses to let them go (Exod 7-12). Similarly, the Canaanite tribes are portrayed as immoral and idolatrous, deserving of God's wrath (Deut 7).

From all indications, it is obvious that the portrayal of non-Israelite characters is often influenced by their relationship with the Israelites, as well as their perceived moral character. Moreover, it is important to note that the portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament is influenced by the historical context in which the texts were written. These texts were written during a time when there was conflict between Israel and surrounding nations, and the portrayal of non-Israelite characters reflects this tension. This tension is reflected in the portrayal of non-Israelite characters. Non-Israelite characters are thus often depicted as a threat to the Israelites' welfare or religious

beliefs. Understanding the historical and cultural context is crucial for interpreting the portrayal of non-Israelite characters.

Evaluating Representation Patterns

Again, it is important to note that the representation patterns of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament are complex and multifaceted. As stated above, non-Israelite characters are often portrayed in a way that reflects the Israelites' relationship with them, as well as their perceived moral character. The representation patterns of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament can be analyzed through various lenses, including cultural, theological, and historical.

One representation pattern of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament is that they are often depicted as "the other," that is, as distinct from the Israelites in terms of culture, religion, and identity (Brenner, 2009, p. 177). According to Brenner (2009), this otherness is often emphasized through language, such as the use of the word "foreigner" to describe non-Israelite characters (p. 176). This representation pattern can be seen, for example, in the portrayal of the Canaanite tribes as immoral and idolatrous, deserving of God's wrath (Deut 7).

Another representation pattern of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament, as also stated already, is that they are often portrayed as either positive or negative, depending on their relationship with the Israelites. Melchizedek, for example, is portrayed positively because he blesses Abraham and is described as a priest of God Most High (Gen 14:18-20). By contrast, Pharaoh is portrayed negatively because he enslaves the Israelites and refuses to let them go (Exod 7-12). This representation pattern can be seen throughout the Old Testament, as non-Israelite characters are often judged based on their relationship with the Israelites.

Cultural Implications of the Portrayal of Non-Israelite Characters

The portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament has significant cultural implications, both in terms of how the Israelites viewed themselves and how they viewed other cultures. The cultural implications of the portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament can be analyzed through various lenses, including historical, anthropological, and sociological.

Cultural Boundaries and Inclusivity: The Old Testament reflects the cultural boundaries of ancient Israel, highlighting the distinctions between the Israelites and neighboring non-Israelite nations. References such as Exodus 23:32-33 emphasize the cautionary approach toward coexistence with non-Israelites: “Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. Do not let them live in your land or they will cause you to sin against me.”

One cultural implication of the portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament is that it reinforces the idea of Israelite exceptionalism. Non-Israelite characters are often depicted as morally inferior or less intelligent than the Israelites, which reinforces the idea that the Israelites are God’s chosen people and superior to other cultures (Brenner, 2009, p. 178). This portrayal of non-Israelite characters serves to reinforce the Israelites’ cultural identity and reinforce their sense of superiority.

Another cultural implication of the portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament is that it perpetuates negative stereotypes of other cultures. Non-Israelite characters are often depicted as practicing immoral or idolatrous acts, reinforcing negative stereotypes of other cultures as morally inferior or corrupt (Davies, 2015, p. 31). This portrayal of non-Israelite characters serves to reinforce negative cultural biases and stereotypes, which can have real-world implications for how cultures interact with one another.

Cultural Exchange and Interaction: Despite these boundaries, the Old Testament also portrays instances of cultural exchange and interaction. The stories of Ruth and Rahab, for example, challenge ethnic boundaries and showcase positive relationships between Israelites and non-Israelites (Ruth 1:16-17; Josh 2).

Conflict and Identity: The Old Testament's portrayal of conflicts between Israelites and non-Israelites contributes to discussions about identity and the preservation of cultural distinctiveness. The narratives often emphasize the importance of loyalty to Yahweh and the covenant, which sometimes results in conflicts with neighboring nations. The portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament has cultural implications for how cultures are perceived and understood. As already noted, the Old Testament was written during a time of conflict between Israel and

surrounding nations, and this tension is reflected in the portrayal of non-Israelite characters. This portrayal can shape how cultures are perceived and understood, reinforcing negative stereotypes and biases that can have real-world implications for how cultures interact with one another.

Implication of the Study

Having carried out this study, the question is: Are there certain stereotypes or biases influenced by ethnicity and religion in the contemporary Nigerian society? Over the years, how has these prejudices impacted interactions between different ethnic groups or religions in the country? How can contemporary Nigerian literature or media influence or shape popular perceptions of other cultures and traditions?

Nigeria is a diverse country with over 250 ethnic groups and the three popular religions practiced in the country include Christianity, Islam and traditional religion. Over the years in the history of Nigeria, experience has shown that ethnicity and religion have significantly influenced the society. Religious and ethnic prejudice has had a significant impact on Nigerian society, leading to conflicts, violence, and discrimination. According to Adebayo and Adebayo (2017), religious and ethnic prejudices have fueled violent conflicts in Nigeria, resulting in loss of lives and property the same way they did in ancient Israel. These prejudices have led to a lack of trust and cooperation among different ethnic and religious groups, hindering the country's development.

It is common to see an Igbo calling an Hausa/Fulani person, "Aboki". Though "Aboki" simply means "my friend" but for the Igbo, it has the nuance of an "uncivilized" person. Also, for the Hausa/Fulani, an Igbo person is referred as "Nyamiri" (from Nyem miri: give me water). The Yoruba calls an Igbo "Omo Ibo" (Igbo child) and the Igbo calls them, "Ndi ofe mmanu" (people of palm oil or people that love palm oil). All the above name-calling are influenced by ethnic and religious prejudice and over the years, they have continued to impact on Nigeria's unity and inclusivity.

Furthermore, religious and ethnic prejudices have also affected social and economic relations in Nigeria. In their study, Adetunji and Adesina (2019) found that ethnic and religious prejudices have led to discrimination in the workplace, education, and housing. They argue that this

discrimination has resulted in social and economic inequalities, further exacerbating the problem of poverty and underdevelopment in the country.

Additionally, religious and ethnic prejudices have also affected political relations in Nigeria. According to Ogunbodede and Ojo (2016), religious and ethnic prejudices have influenced political decisions and power-sharing arrangements in the country. They argue that these prejudices have led to a lack of inclusivity in the political system, hindering democracy and good governance. Based on the above facts, it is essential for the Nigerian government and society to address these prejudices and promote unity, inclusivity, and cooperation among different ethnic and religious groups to achieve a peaceful and prosperous society.

Contemporary Nigerian literature and media have the potential to shape popular perceptions of other cultures and traditions. According to Okonkwo and Nwagbara (2019), Nigerian literature and media have played a significant role in projecting the country's cultural and traditional values to the world. They argue that Nigerian literature and media have helped to promote a positive image of the country, highlighting its rich cultural heritage and diversity.

Furthermore, Nigerian literature and media have also been used to challenge negative stereotypes and perceptions of other cultures. In his article, Akinwumi (2019) notes that contemporary Nigerian literature has been used to challenge Western-centric views of Africa and promote a more nuanced understanding of the continent's cultures and traditions. He argues that Nigerian literature has helped to showcase the diversity and complexity of African cultures, challenging monolithic and homogenous views of the continent. Similarly, Nigerian media has also been used to promote cross-cultural understanding and dialogue. According to Ogunyemi (2018), Nigerian media has played a crucial role in promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding among different cultures. He notes that Nigerian movies and music have been popular across Africa and beyond, providing a platform for cultural exchange and understanding.

Conclusion

This paper set out to critically analyze the portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament and to examine its cultural implications. The study has so far demonstrated that

stereotypes and biases against non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament are evident in the portrayal of these characters in the text. These biases are often a result of the Israelites' own cultural and religious biases, as well as their historical context.

According to the study, one stereotype against non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament is that they are often depicted as morally inferior to the Israelites. This stereotype can be seen in the portrayal of the Canaanite tribes as immoral and idolatrous, deserving of God's wrath (Deut 7). Similarly, non-Israelite characters are often depicted as practicing immoral acts, such as prostitution, as in the case of Rahab, a prostitute from Jericho who initially helps the Israelite spies (Joshua 2). Another bias against non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament is that they are often depicted as being less intelligent or wise than the Israelites. This bias can be seen in the portrayal of the Pharaoh of Egypt, who is depicted as being stubborn and foolish for refusing to let the Israelites go (Exodus 7-12). Similarly, the non-Israelite prophet Balaam is depicted as being easily swayed by the Israelites' God and ultimately blessing the Israelites despite being hired to curse them (Numbers 22-24).

Based on the findings of this study, it is understandable that these stereotypes and biases against non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament reflect the Israelites' own cultural and religious biases, as well as their historical context. During the time in which the Old Testament was written, there was conflict between Israel and surrounding nations, and this tension is reflected in the portrayal of non-Israelite characters. In conclusion, the study has shown that the portrayal of non-Israelite characters in the Old Testament has significant cultural implications, reinforcing the idea of Israelite exceptionalism, perpetuating negative stereotypes of other cultures, and shaping how cultures are perceived and understood.

Applying the study to the Nigeria social milieu shows that Nigerian literature and media, have a crucial role to play in promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding among different cultures. Though Nigerian media and the entertainment industry have been popular across Africa and beyond, in providing a platform for cultural exchange and understanding, more needs to be done for there to be love, harmony and unity in the country. Contemporary Nigerian literature and media have the potential to influence and shape popular perceptions of other cultures and traditions. They

can be used to challenge negative stereotypes and promote cross-cultural understanding and dialogue.

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