CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSION
Agriculture was the major economic activity in Israel during biblical times. Fishing and cattle rearing were also carried out. People lived close to nature and their lives were influenced by forces, conditions, and changes of nature. The labour participation rate was very high involving the whole family. Sustained agriculture was the aim of the Israelites and all their practices, traditions, and belief emphasise the need to have sustainable progress.

The system of agriculture represented a scientific pattern and irrigation system was well developed. Biodiversity was maintained and land was well protected. Periodically the land was left fallow in order to protect and safeguard its vitality. The prophets were visionaries who could accurately forecast famines, and surplus harvest. Agriculture planning was carried out on the basis of such forecast.

The diet of the people was balanced. Fruits, vegetables, fishes, mutton, dairy products and cooked food formed part of the diet. Israel did not depend on one cereal and cooked food as we do at present. Their food items were natural, healthy, and balanced. People seemed to have walked long distances and they used to assemble on hilltops and seashores. These places must have been kept clean and pollution free. Water resources were carefully maintained for irrigation and water available from most of the sources (except of course seawater) was used for drinking purposes. The use of salt was well known and people were familiar with the
fermentation process. Fruits and fruit juices, and wine were used extensively by the people. Domestication of food plants and animals was also a common practice. People must have worked hard as the land was not a stretch of plains. The hilly terrain should have demanded intelligent and hard work. People had learnt the art of storing the grains for long periods.

The religious practices were associated with every activity of the people. God’s presence was recognized in the mountains, fires, and many natural forces. Pilgrimages to the Jerusalem temple and celebration of major festivals seemed to have had great impact on the attitudes, belief, lifestyles and inter-personal relationships. Sacrifices to God were frequent. People had unshakable faith in Yahweh. Some of the members of the priestly class and some of the members of the middle class were not sincere in what they preached to others and their hypocrisy was exposed in many places in the Bible. There were money lenders who were exploiting the vulnerable sections of the population. In the name of God, prophets always condemned the money lenders. Israel was colonized several times by the imperialistic forces such as Babylonia. Slavery also prevailed in some form or other in some places.

The concern for poor was there during the biblical times. The prophets were always raising their voices against the exploitation by money lenders, landlords, the rich and the rulers. In the name of God, the economically poor and the socially oppressed were always defended. Even while prostitution was condemned, the prostitute
was saved. Demand for fair wages to the workers, not harvesting all the grains and leaving something for the poor, concern for orphans and widows, letting the slaves and the bonded labourers free during the Jubilee years were the instances which bring out the deep concern of the prophets for the poor and the marginalised.