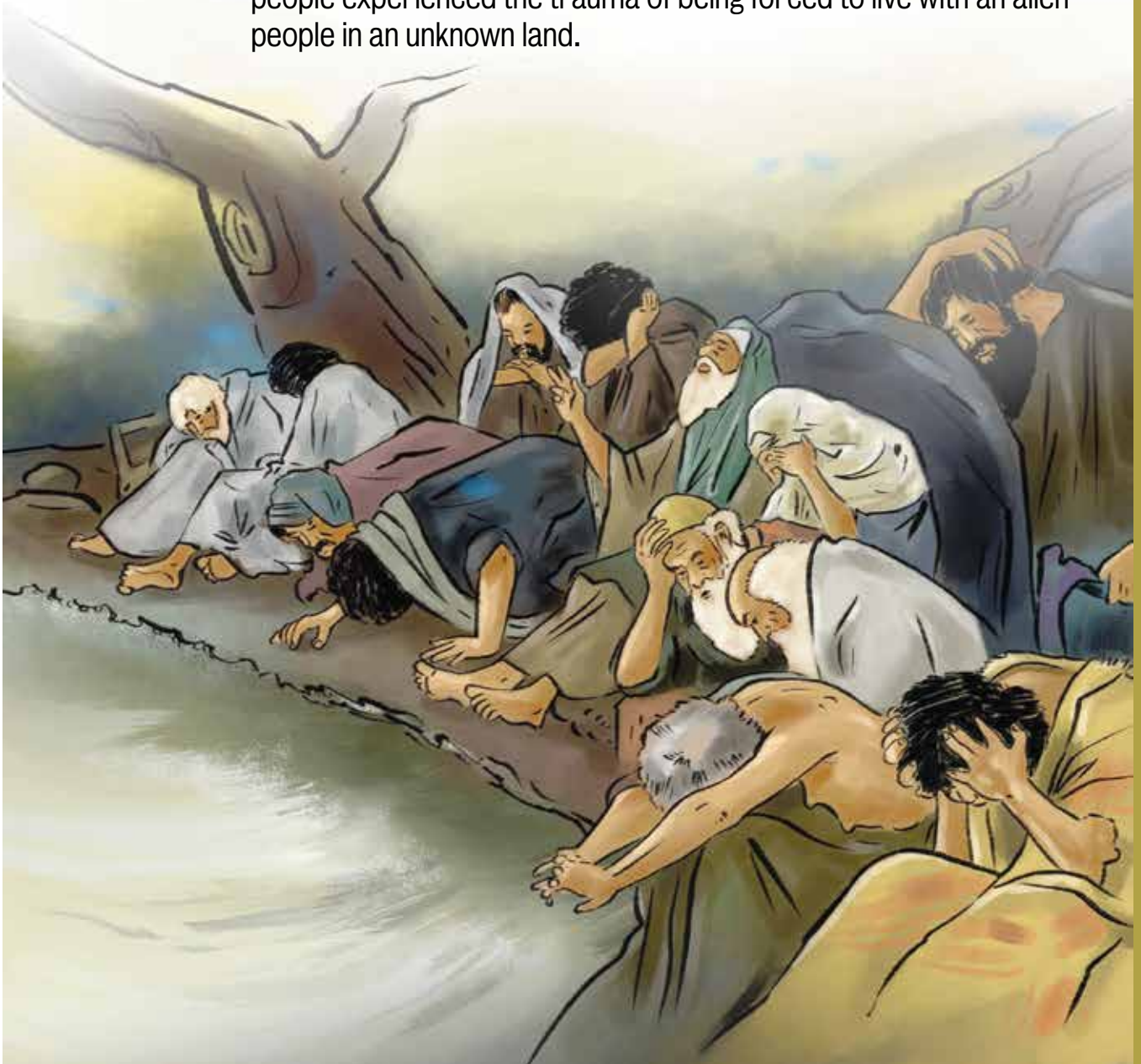




The Exile

As the prophets foretold, the people of Israel and Judah were driven out of their territories into Assyria and Babylonia respectively, causing them considerable trauma.

The Israelites who fought among themselves lost everything that God had bestowed upon them. With their Promised Land occupied by enemies, the Temple destroyed and a king no more in sight, the people experienced the trauma of being forced to live with an alien people in an unknown land.



The sorrow they felt is best captured in Psalm 137, which depicts the children of God seated on the banks of the Babylonian rivers, weeping over their status as exiles in a faraway land, where they would spend six decades in suffering.

But the miracle of Exile was that the Israelites began to recall Yahweh and his love and blessings. With the help of their prophets and priests they began to read about their traditions and tried to relive their faith in memory and mutual discourse.

A prophet like Ezekiel helped revive their faith without Temple pilgrimages or sacrifices. The Israelites met together on Sabbath to worship God and meditate on His word. The exiles relied on Yahweh as their sole king. Their relationship with God was purified and their faith focussed more on living out that relationship in their day to day lives.

Just like the Exodus so also the Exile marked an important milestone in the history of Israel. The suffering caused the people of God to reflect on the purpose of human life, the individual responsibility for good or bad deeds and the meaning of punishment and suffering.



Word of God

Lamentations 5: 1-9, 19-22

Remember, O Lord, what has happened to us. Look at us, and see our disgrace. Our property is in the hands of strangers; foreigners are living in our homes. Our fathers have been killed by the enemy, and now our mothers are widows. We must pay for the water we drink; we must buy the wood we need for fuel.

Driven hard like donkeys or camels, we are tired, but are allowed no rest. To get food enough to stay alive, we went begging to Egypt and Assyria. Our ancestors sinned, but now they are gone, and we are suffering for their sins. Our rulers are no better than slaves, and no one can save us from their power. Murderers roam through the countryside; we risk our lives when we look for food.

But you, O Lord, are king forever and will rule to the end of time. Why have you abandoned us so long? Will you ever remember us again? Bring us back to you, Lord! Bring us back! Restore our ancient glory. Or have you rejected us forever? Is there no limit to your anger?

Insight

St. John de Britto

St. John de Britto (1647- 1693) was a Jesuit missionary and a martyr. He was a native of Lisbon, Portugal. After becoming a Jesuit priest, he arrived in India and worked in Malabar and nearby regions. He adopted local customs, dressed as a Sanyasi and renamed himself Arul Anandar and became vegetarian. He was martyred, and declared a saint in 1947.



Notes



NOVEL:

Exodus is a historical novel by American novelist Leon Uris about the founding of the State of Israel. Published in 1958, it begins with a compressed retelling of the voyages of the 1947 immigration ship Exodus. The 626-page book has been widely praised as successful propaganda for Israel.

my TASK this week

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