

**Herbal Healing in Ezekiel 47:12 and Second Baptist Church, Yekemi, Ile-Ife, Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

*Healing in both the Old and New Testaments regard God as the healer while human beings are the agents of God for healing. Healing in the genre of the book of Ezekiel was set in the context of the Jewish community living under Babylonian captivity. Attention was focused on suffering posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). So, healing in the book of Ezekiel considered existing authoritative texts of the time like past priestly outlook, partisan prophetic inspiration, rhetoric of opinionated Torah, and subjective accounts of the past. However, considering herbal healing in the final form of Ezekiel 47:12 and contextualizing it in Second Baptist Church Yekemi had not been given critical biblical exegesis. So, the study engaged a historical and literary exploration of healing in Ezekiel 47:12. Participant observation and interview of leaders of Second Baptist Church Yekemi were made. It finds a rhetoric of land allotment plan for Levites and priests in the ritual of Jerusalem cult with a life-giving river under temple measurements and law. It locates the use of leaves for healing (we 'alehu litrupah) as the basis for contextualizing anti-inflammatory and antioxidant ingredients in Orogbo (Bitter kola), Aayu (Garlic), Ata-ire (Alligator pepper), and Ata-ile funfun (Ginger) in Yekemi.*

**Keywords:** Baptist Church, Ezekiel 47:12, Herbal healing, and Land allotment.

**Introduction**

Every human community has a need for healing as a reinstatement and reinstallation of wholeness, completeness and fullness from illnesses and infections in its cultural rhetoric. Illnesses are products of developments of diseases by mutations from bacterial, cancerous and viral infections. An outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic in Nigeria in March 2020 manifested symptoms like coughing, sneezing, improper breathing, shivering, and respiratory tract infections. The above contagions required immunity boosting ingredients would avert and destroy their metamorphoses. Inaccessibility of both Federal and State Government hospitals in Yekemi, Ile-Ife complicated the suffering of the dwellers. Members of Second Baptist Church, Yekemi resorted to the use of herbs for healing and maintenance of peace in the town.

Consequently, this paper examines the relationship between herbal healing and maintenance of peace in Ezekiel 47:12 and Second Baptist Church, Yekemi. It

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makes an exegetical study of the use of leaves for healing in Ezekiel 47:12. It interrogates the covenant of peace in the exilic culture and spirituality of the Israelites in Ezekiel 34:4&25. It analyses the use of herbal healing in Second Baptist Church, Yekemi. It surveys the application of the covenant of peace in Israelite spirituality as exorcism in Second Baptist Church, Yekemi. The study engages a historical and literary exploration of healing in Ezekiel 47:12. Participant observation of prayer of exorcism and interview of seven leaders of Second Baptist Church, Yekemi who have knowledge of the use of herbs (Mr. Aaro Bunmi Olaode; Mr. Joseph Ibitoye; Mr. Olode Adeyemi Adewale; Pa. Phillip Adejumo; Mr. Isaac Folorunso; Mr. Ebenezer Owaniyi; and Chief S. O. Kehinde) are conducted in this study. People/Community Based Approach in African Biblical Hermeneutics is the interpretive method for the study. The contextualization of anti-inflammatory and antioxidant ingredients in *Orogbo* (Bitter kola), *Aayu* (Garlic), *Ata-ire* (Alligator pepper), and *Ata-ile funfun* (Ginger) as herbal healing with prayer of exorcism in Yekemi is the existing gap that this study fills.

Healing is severally defined as binding of wounds, repairing of hurts, being made wholesome, "treat (medically)", stitching of cracks, mending of distresses or restoring of the broken.<sup>2</sup> God is acknowledged as the healer of life using humans as his agents of restoration.<sup>3</sup> Some people who are God's agents of healing include medicine men and physicians. Others are spiritualists who are so enabled to do through spirit possession and supernatural revelation and communication. Christian missions are of the view that reinstatement to wholeness is important for humankind.

Objectives of Christian missionary activities in Nigeria include evangelism, education and healing of the people.<sup>4</sup> Their activities turned many ancient forests of taboos (*Igbo-Eewo*) into churches, educational institutions and medical health centres had a chapel in its compound for religious activities. Africans also served along with these American and European missionaries in social transformation of Yoruba lands into economically and politically viable cities. The use of plants, roots, vegetations, and leaves for healing is established in texts of rhetoric of Israelite territories and sanctuary of healing in Ezekiel 40-48 especially in 47:12 alluded to in Revelation 22:2.<sup>5</sup> Several African scholars have

<sup>2</sup> Alan Kam-Yau Chan, Thomas B. Song, and Michael L. Brown, *rp'* in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis, Volume 3*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, (Michigan: Zondervan, 1997), 1162.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, "Biblical Healing in African Context" in *Biblical Healing in African Context, Biblical Studies Series No. 3*, ed. S. O. Abogunrin, J. O. Akao, D. O. Akintunde, G. N. Toryough, and P. A. Oguntoye, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 2004), 2-3, 11-15. See also David T. Adamo, "Healing in the Old Testament and in African Context" in *Biblical Healing in African Context, Biblical Studies Series No. 3*, ed. S. O. Abogunrin, J. O. Akao, D. O. Akintunde, G. N. Toryough, and P. A. Oguntoye, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 2004), 32-36, 37-47.

<sup>4</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention, *Book of Reports of 107<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention-in-Session*, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Baptist Press, 2020), 25-38, 114-116, 214-242, 244-246, 250-253. Compare S. Ademola Ajayi, *Baptists of Nigeria: Their Genesis, Identity, Doctrinal Beliefs and Practices*, (Ibadan, Nigeria: BookWight, 2009), 13-41.

<sup>5</sup> Ezekiel 47 contains an account of the past reemphasizing boundaries of Israelite lands that were promised to Abraham and his descendants with a detailed description of the

researched the potency of African herbs and produced effective medicines in treating common sicknesses in Africa.<sup>6</sup> Samuel Abogunrin avows Prof. Adeoye Lambo researched into traditional herbs inherited from African forefathers and produced drugs used in treating the mentally-ill people. He later established Aro Specialist Hospital for treating the mentally-ill at Abeokuta, Nigeria. Samuel Abogunrin avers that “many African Universities and research centres are engaged in the manufacture of alternative medicine and some of them are in use outside Africa, in Asia and in the West.”<sup>7</sup> Scholarly works on this abound in “*Biblical Healing in African Context*.”<sup>8</sup> Yet, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration Control (NAFDAC) in Nigeria approved on December 16, 2021 an herbal healing potion submitted by Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD), for human consumption. It is called ABUAD Herbal Virucidine Liquid for immune boosting, as an anti-inflammatory agent and an antioxidant against corona virus and other viral infections.<sup>9</sup>

### Healing in the Old Testament

The Old Testament (OT) contains various health laws in Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy on ritual washing, food or dietary laws and priestly examination of contagious diseases. The dietary laws promote public health.<sup>10</sup> According to D. T. Adamo, “the Hebrew text shows that many words have been translated to

life-giving river as a transitional unit in the hope for the future (Gen. 15:18; Exo. 23:31; Deut. 1:7&8; 11:24; Josh. 1:4; 1 Kgs. 4:21; Isa. 27:12; Mic. 7:12). The book of Ezekiel is a record from a polymath combining a priestly outlook with prophetic inspiration, law with rhetoric of influence, and mystical visions commingled with strident morality including the scribal/ sapiential perspective from which the deeper questions of meaning are addressed in the Hebrew Bible. See Daniel M. O'Hare, *Have You Seen, Son of Man? A Study in the Translation and Vorlage of LXX Ezekiel 40–48*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 1-3, 126-127, 138 & 192. The vision in Ezekiel 40-48 is a territorial rhetoric. See also Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of The Book of Ezekiel*, (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), 121-130. See Risa Levitt Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile and the Torah*, (London: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 2002), 13 & 112.

<sup>6</sup> David T. Adamo, “Healing in the Old Testament and in African Context” in *Biblical Healing in African Context, Biblical Studies Series No. 3*, ed. S. O. Abogunrin, J. O. Akao, D. O. Akintunde, G. N. Toryough, and P. A. Oguntoye, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 2004), 35-36, 40-43. Samuel O. Abogunrin, “Biblical Healing in African Context” in *Biblical Healing in African Context, Biblical Studies Series No. 3*, ed. S. O. Abogunrin, J. O. Akao, D. O. Akintunde, G. N. Toryough, and P. A. Oguntoye, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 2004), 8-11.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, “Biblical Healing in African Context” in *Biblical Healing in African Context, Biblical Studies Series No. 3*, ed. S. O. Abogunrin, J. O. Akao, D. O. Akintunde, G. N. Toryough, and P. A. Oguntoye, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 2004), 15.

<sup>8</sup> S. O. Abogunrin, J. O. Akao, D. O. Akintunde, G. N. Toryough, and P. A. Oguntoye, *Biblical Healing in African Context, Biblical Studies Series No. 3*, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Ayodele Afolabi, “NAFDAC Licenses ABUAD to Produce Covid-19 Herbal Drug”, *The Guardian Newspaper*, accessed on 20 December, 2021, <https://guardian.ng/news/nafdac-licenses-abuad-to-produce-covid-19-herbal-drug/>.

<sup>10</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, “Biblical Healing in African Context” in *Biblical Healing in African Context, Biblical Studies Series No. 3*, ed. S. O. Abogunrin, J. O. Akao, D. O. Akintunde, G. N. Toryough, and P. A. Oguntoye, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 2004), 14.

healing. These words are *shalom*, *repha*, *arad*, *habash*.<sup>11</sup> The Hebrew term *rapha'* is "heal" or "restore".<sup>12</sup> In the words of Chan, Song and Brown *rapha'* is "heal; restore; mend...be cured/remitted...be repaired, fixed...be made wholesome..." (Exodus 15:26; Hosea 6:1) and it appears 67 times as a verb in the OT.<sup>13</sup> The Hebrew term *shalom* is to "be at peace", "make peace with", "cause to be at peace", or "live in peace with". It is also to "complete", "finish", "make safe", "make whole or good", "restore thing lost", "pay a debt", "make compensation for injury", as well as "requite, recompense, reward".<sup>14</sup> So, Philip Nel regards *shalom* as "peace, friendship, happiness, well-being, prosperity, health, luck, kindness, salvation" towards making something complete or fulfilled in order to "make peace or live in peace with", compensating a hurt, making treaty, having satisfaction, or repaying, rewarding and fulfilling a vow (Exodus 21:33-22:14; Deuteronomy 20:12; Joshua 10:1&4; 1 Kings 9:25; Job 22:21; Isaiah 27:5; 44:26&28).<sup>15</sup> Brown, Driver and Briggs read *'arukah* to mean "healing of a wound", "restoration" or having "new flesh that grows at the wounded spot" (Jeremiah 8:22).<sup>16</sup> The Hebrew term *habash* is translated "binding up a wound", "comforting the distressed" figuratively, "restrain" or "control" in "equipping a beast for riding" also "of repairing fortunes of people".<sup>17</sup> So, Desmond Alexander avers *habash* to mean "binding of things together", "bandaging of wounds", "the bond (relationship) between people and people, and even with God" in order to "reveal the compassionate nature of God as the one who heals the afflicted." So, it is to "tie up", "the binding of fractures or wounds", "band", "design", "saddle" or "imprison" (Job 5:18; Isaiah 1:6; 30:26; Hosea 6:1).<sup>18</sup> So, a good physical health is connected to experiencing a complete peace (*Shalom/Shalem*) and its various aspects of prosperity and safety in the OT (Psalm 73:3-5).<sup>19</sup>

The terms *rapha'* and *shalom* are complementary in the OT. *Shalom* signifies "welfare of every kind: security, contentment, sound health, prosperity, friendship, peace of mind and heart, as opposed to the dissatisfaction and

<sup>11</sup> David T. Adamo, "Healing in the Old Testament and in African Context" in *Biblical Healing in African Context, Biblical Studies Series No. 3*, ed. S. O. Abogunrin, J. O. Akao, D. O. Akintunde, G. N. Toryough, and P. A. Oguntoye, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 2004), 32-50.

<sup>12</sup> Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, & Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 950.

<sup>13</sup> Alan Kam-Yau Chan, Thomas B. Song, and Michael L. Brown, *rp'* in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis, Volume 3*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, (Michigan: Zondervan, 1997), 1162-1163.

<sup>14</sup> Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, & Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 1022-1023.

<sup>15</sup> Philip J. Nel, *slm* in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis, Volume 4*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, (Michigan: Zondervan, 1997), 130-131.

<sup>16</sup> Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, & Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 74.

<sup>17</sup> Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, & Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 289.

<sup>18</sup> T Desmond Alexander, *hbs* in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis, Volume 2*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, (Michigan: Zondervan, 1997), 18-19.

<sup>19</sup> David T. Adamo, *Explorations in African Biblical Studies*, (Benin City, Nigeria: Justice Jeco, 2005), 123-131.

unrest caused by evil".<sup>20</sup> *Rapha'* in proximity to *shalom* is captured in Ezekiel chapters 40-48. Thomas Renz avers Ezekiel chapters "40-48 deal with the land as an inheritance given to Israel. A stream flowing from the sanctuary will bring healing and fertility to the barren land (47:1-12), even bringing the Dead Sea to life again." Thus, "the area of the land to be inherited is outlined through boundaries in 47:13-21. The area is approximately the same as that outlined in Numbers 34:2-12 as the land that shall fall to you for an inheritance, the land of Canaan defined by its boundaries."<sup>21</sup> In addition, D. T. Adamo "if any continent needs *shalom* in the context of healing it is Africa. The spiritual dimension of *shalom* in African continent involves the healing of Africa" since "healing in African tradition is *shalom* as it is in the Old Testament."<sup>22</sup> Consequently, Thomas Renz avers that rhetoric of Ezekiel chapter 40-48 vision "elaborates on the last gift of Yahweh in 37:24-28". The chapters reveal "the sanctuary set in their midst" as the Israelites occupied certain territories distributed to them with boundaries that were to be respected in ensuring "the idea of an eternal covenant of peace that brings blessings to the land."<sup>23</sup>

The harmony between healing and whole peace is also expressed in Leviticus 26:4-6. It describes peace as having "every creature in community with every other, living in harmony and security toward the joy and wellbeing of every other creature." The Leviticus text (26:4-6) asserts among other things that having rains in their season, land yielding its produce in increasing measures, and trees bearing fruits in order for the threshing sessions to last to the time of another sowing, availability of bread to the full, and dwelling in the lands securely are characteristic of life of peace. So, the safety which goes with peace in the discourse includes settling down without being terrified by agents of evil that are removed or exorcised from the land in order to prevent sword from going through the land. In this light, "shalom is the essence of this one community embracing all creation."<sup>24</sup>

According to Chan, Song and Brown, healing (*rapha'*) in propinquity, contiguity and correspondence with complete peace (as *shalom*) is restoring, mending, putting back together, curing, remitting and repairing shattered expectation or broken-down object. It is to be made wholesome; to recover; to heal up; to get remedy and to make fresh. This view is in keeping with the covenantal understanding that equates health and fertility with divine blessing in Exodus 5:26; 23:25-26; Deuteronomy 7:12-15 cp. 2 Kings 2:21-22; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Ezekiel 47:8-9, &12). Consequently, "to be (come) healthy" or strong "is sometimes found in proximity to or parallel with *shalom*" in Isaiah 57:18-19; Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11; 14:19; 33:6. In this light, there is a wide range of conditions

<sup>20</sup> P. Bernbaum, *A Book of Jewish Concepts*, (Hebrew Publishing Co., 1975), 601.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of The Book of Ezekiel*, (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), 126.

<sup>22</sup> David T. Adamo, "Healing in the Old Testament and in African Context" in *Biblical Healing in African Context, Biblical Studies Series No. 3*, ed. S. O. Abogunrin, J. O. Akao, D. O. Akintunde, G. N. Toryough, and P. A. Oguntoye, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 2004), 35 & 40.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of The Book of Ezekiel*, (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), 121.

<sup>24</sup> Clifford W. Yank, "Peace: Shalom and Ho-Ping" in *International Journal on World Peace*, Vol. 4, No. 4, (1987), 81-83.

that are candidates for healing from figurative healing to spiritual healing in the OT. There is healing of sin and apostasy in Jeremiah 3:22 and Hosea 14:3. So, “to the biblical mind, the restoration of an individual’s health would be seen as literal while the restoration of a nation’s health would be understood to be figurative.” In other words, “healing of physical diseases was certainly not excluded from the wider metaphor of national healing and restoration” as Isaiah 53:4-5 presents “healing in a total sense: the healing of the person, restoring fullness and completeness, a mark of the Messianic day.” Psalms also have instances of “reference to literal, physical healing” as shown in Psalm 6:3; 30:3; 41:1-4; 103:3; 107:20. But Proverbs 3:7-8 and 4:20-22 show “the healing promised as a result of godly living is bodily” since Proverbs in Wisdom Literature “sees godliness as the very real path to life and well-being”. Thus the force of the above verses of Proverbs reflects “godly living is a key to healing and health.” However, among the Israelites “the priests functioned only as observers and hygienists” unlike Egyptian and Mesopotamian physicians and magical healers. Surprisingly, *rapha’* for healing “never occurs in the Old Testament with both a human subject...the Lord is virtually always the subject” of *rapha’* for the people of Israel. So, “there was to be one main source for healing, deliverance, and salvation, viz., the Lord.” In conclusion, Ezekiel 47:12 connotes “the doctor is god’s agent for healing, using the (herbal) medicines that the Lord has put in the earth.” In other words, herbal cure in Ezekiel 47:12 is “found in proximity to or parallel with shalom” in the experience of a priest turned prophet and pharmacist by life challenges.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the Hebrew term *šālôm*, written as *shalom*, generally connotes enjoying comfort, wellbeing, total reconciliation, harmony and whole peace. Lexicon of Hebrew language in BibleWorks presents *šālôm* in diverse usages and several meanings as wholeness, completeness, soundness, safety, prosperity, welfare, wellbeing, health, peace, quietness, tranquility, contentment or friendship.<sup>26</sup>

### Healing in Ezekiel

The book of Ezekiel belongs to the corpus known as the Latter **Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel)**. It is set in the context of the Jewish community living in Babylon during the sixth century BC. Prophet Ezekiel is described as a man of priestly descent in the OT. Ezekiel was among the first group of deportees to be taken to Babylon from Judah in 593 BC (Ezekiel 1:1-3). The language of the book of Ezekiel has also been considered by scholars as fitting chronologically the sixth century BC. The book of Ezekiel describes people involved in the context of Ezekiel as those who can easily be identified as suffering posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of experiencing the violence of the Neo-Babylonian attacks on Jerusalem and the deprivation and humiliation of such a deportation or displacement of people. Despite its exilic setting, the book of Ezekiel shows that the Jews living in “Babylon were

<sup>25</sup> Alan Kam-Yau Chan, Thomas B. Song, and Michael L. Brown, *rp’* in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis, Volume 3*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, (Michigan: Zondervan, 1997), 1162-1171.

<sup>26</sup> M. S. Bushell, and M.D. Tan, “Shalom” in *BibleWorks Version 7.0 of BibleWorks*, contracted with HERMENEUTIKA™ Bible Research Software, and Whittaker’s Revised BDB Lexicon entry 2003, 1022.

relatively well integrated into society, although it is unlikely that they were assimilated into the population around them.”<sup>27</sup>

According to Tiemeyer, the theology of Ezekiel includes “the proclamation of God’s holiness, glory and power.” The utterly holy, glorious and powerful God of Israel is presented as the Deity who cannot tolerate sin. He demands the sole devotion of the Israelites, his people. When the Israelites failed to live up to his demands, God punished them by allowing the Neo-Babylonian armies to conquer their land and to destroy their capital city Jerusalem in 587/586 BC. In this sense, the book of Ezekiel paints a theodicy: seeking to justify God’s behaviour by declaring that God’s acts of punishment toward the Israelites is the direct consequences of their sins (thus, a retribution of sin). The theology of God, as the supreme ruler of the world is affirmed in the use of his power over not only on Judah (its sin, repentance and punishment) but also on the Neo-Babylonian Empire, over which he rules and uses as a tool for punishing Judah (Ezekiel 4—24).<sup>28</sup>

Relevance of the book of Ezekiel to healing of the weak, sick, distressed and displaced can be deduced from its use of existing authoritative texts of the time. According to O’ Hare, Ezekiel Though with major textual differences in extant witnesses, it employs past priestly outlook, prophetic inspiration, *Torah*, rhetoric and “tendentious accounts of the past with no less clearly delineated hopes for the future” in commingling mystical visions with strident moralism. Thus, Ezekiel 40-48 emphasizes boundaries of the land and city with a life-giving river under the temple measurements and law in its rhetoric.<sup>29</sup> Kohn avers that the land allotment plan of Ezekiel 40-48 with respect for tribal territory for Levites and priests uses rhetoric of differentiations that does not promote the tabernacle, the Ark, the *Cherubim*, the *Seraphim* or Sinai event of the *Torah*. So, in the history of Israelite worship, it is assumed that the earliest Israel recorded its laws, customs, and conduct of worship as a written *Torah* around the exilic age with Ezekiel 40-48 codifying previous practices of the Israelite past into a system as the ritual of Jerusalem cult.<sup>30</sup> Tiemeyer adds that the Pentateuchal Priestly Source, the texts of the Holiness School in Leviticus 17—26 and the book of Deuteronomy are alluded to in addressing certain issues in Ezekiel 3:17-21; 14:1-12; 18:1-20; 22:1-16 since Prophet Ezekiel was a priest, as indicated in Ezekiel 1:3.<sup>31</sup> Ezekiel is a prophetic interpretation of the *Torah* or Law for the Israelites (who were in exile).

On “...leaves for healing (*we ‘alehu litrupah*)” in having wholeness as peace in Ezekiel, two biblical passages in the book of Ezekiel show the connection between healing and peace: Ezekiel 34:4, 25-29 and 47:12. Ezekiel identifies the

<sup>27</sup> L. S. Tiemeyer, “The Book of Ezekiel” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*, eds., Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville, (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 214-215.

<sup>28</sup> L. S. Tiemeyer, “The Book of Ezekiel” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*, eds., Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville, (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 220-221.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel M. O’Hare, *Have You Seen, Son of Man? A Study in the Translation and Vorlage of LXX Ezekiel 40–48*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 1-3.

<sup>30</sup> Risa Levitt Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile and the Torah*, (London: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 2002), 13 & 112.

<sup>31</sup> L. S. Tiemeyer, “The Book of Ezekiel” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*, eds., Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville, (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 216.

sick or weak (*ha holah*) that are not healed (*lo' rippe'tem*). But, Ezekiel 34:25 promises a covenant of complete peace with them (34:4) "and (*we*) I will cut (*karatti*) with them (*lahem*) a covenant (*berit*) of complete peace (*shalom*) while Ezekiel establishes the importance of healing them in the covenant of complete peace through leaves or herbs in 47:12. The text mentions the use of leaves (*'alehu*) which would be grown on both banks of the temple-river for healing (*litrupah*). Thus, in the covenant of complete peace in Ezekiel is a provision of leaves like Western medicine for healing the people (*we 'alehu litrupah*). The above mentioned texts employ the concepts of healing for *shalom* (complete peace) through herbs as dominant discourses in the exilic culture and spirituality of the Israelites.<sup>32</sup>

### Healing in Africa

Good health and calmness of mind are connected to prosperity and complete peace in African thought. The Yoruba concept of health is wealth (*Ilera ni oro*) describes the state of experiencing the whole peace (*Alafia*) with the cliché peace is good health as good health is peace.<sup>33</sup> Systems of health care delivery in Africa prior to the advent of Christianity involved the use of herbs, sacrifice, ritual baths and incantation. The healing of the sick among the Yoruba requires the use of plant roots, bark of trees, fruits and herbs, with or without reciting incantation. Consultation with the spirit-world through divination is also made. Some sicknesses demand the mixture of concoctions from body-wastes and animal parts to cure them. Burning of incense and anointing with oil are also applied in different contexts. Also, transference of evil (illness) from humans to animals which are then slaughtered and offered as a whole sacrifice at crossroads or road junctions is another common healing practice. Healing powers and methods are known to be both hereditary and learnable.<sup>34</sup>

### Herbal Health at Second Baptist Church Yekemi

Baptist missionary activities in Nigeria started under Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention with Revd. Thomas Jefferson Bowen on August 5, 1850.<sup>35</sup> Ijaye town, a Yoruba settlement in Oyo State became the host of First Baptist Mission work under Revd. T. J. Bowen in Nigeria in February 1852. Revd. Bowen and his wife retired from Baptist work in Nigeria in 1856. The Baptist Mission work in Nigeria as Yoruba Baptist Association became Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) after the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates of the British Colony called Nigeria. The NBC grew to firmly hold the belief that any teaching or church doctrine that could not be directly linked

<sup>32</sup> M. S. Bushell, and M.D. Tan, in *BibleWorks Version 7.0 of BibleWorks*, contracted with HERMENEUTIKA™ Bible Research Software, and Whittaker's Revised BDB Lexicon entry 2003, 930.

<sup>33</sup> David T. Adamo, *Explorations in African Biblical Studies*, (Benin City, Nigeria: Justice Jeco, 2005), 132-140.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, "Biblical Healing in African Context" in *Biblical Healing in African Context, Biblical Studies Series No. 3*, ed. S. O. Abogunrin, J. O. Akao, D. O. Akintunde, G. N. Toryough, and P. A. Oguntoye, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 2004), 1-31.

<sup>35</sup> Travis Collins, *The Baptist Mission of Nigeria: 1850-1993*, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Baptist Bookstores, 1993), 3-8.



to a scriptural reference should be regarded as a human tradition and not be respected as God's directive. Consequently, the NBC is fondly tagged "People of the Bible" because it upholds the Bible as the inspired word of God and the sole norm of faith and practice. It also affirms autonomy of every local congregation to administer its internal management independently of any other Baptist church.<sup>36</sup>

The NBC focuses on evangelism through preaching in churches, teaching in schools and healing in medical health centres of its local Baptist organizations. The Book of Reports, an annual catalogue of assessment and evaluation of various outlets of Christian services from the NBC in Nigeria lists out Baptist beliefs as demonstrated in Baptist medical institutions (Gorah Health Plan for Bowen University Teaching Hospital Ogbomoso; Baptist Dental Centre Enugu; Baptist Medical Centres: Lagos, Saki, Okeho; Baptist Hospitals: Ejigbo, Oyo, Okehi-Etche), Baptist educational institutions (Bowen University Iwo. Baptist High Schools: Jos, Benin, Masaka, Agbor, Orerokpe, Makurdi, Port Harcourt; Olivet Baptist Academy Oyo, Baptist Academy Lagos, Reagan Memorial Baptist Girls Secondary School Lagos, Baptist Model High School Jos, Baptist Girls High School Agbor, Baptist Girls Academy Lagos, Baptist Girls' College Abeokuta, Baptist Boys' High School Abeokuta, "BMSS Obinze") and Baptist theological institutions (Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomoso, Baptist Theological Seminary Kaduna, Baptist Theological Seminary Eku, Baptist College of Theology Igede-Ekiti, Baptist College of Theology Lagos, Baptist College of Theology Obinze, Baptist College of Theology Oyo, Baptist College of Theology Benin City, Baptist College of Theology Jos, & Baptist Pastors' School Gombi).<sup>37</sup> The growth of Baptist faith in Nigeria later extended to Yekemi, Ile-Ife with the establishment of First Baptist Church, Yekemi in 1953. Second Baptist Church, Yekemi, Ile-Ife seceded from First Baptist Church, Yekemi to locally manage its administration on May 11, 1963. It continued to serve as a radical faith movement with an average of 45 members in Yekemi, Ile-Ife.<sup>38</sup>

The Federal Government of Nigeria declared a total lockdown on movement of people from any location within Nigeria to another due to an outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic in the country in March 2020 with symptoms like coughing, sneezing, improper breathing, shivering, and respiratory tract infections. Many people in the country showed symptoms of the infection and the above described contagions. People living in remote villages and small towns were at disadvantage of accessing Government hospitals that were located in cities. Private health facilities that would have been accessible to poor masses were also banned from treating any ailments that had descriptions like the above. The people of the Second Baptist Church, Yekemi invited Rev. Dr. A. A. Olaniyi (who had on several occasions visited them in company of medical practitioners from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife Health Centre, financially supported their pastor's remuneration and preached on the relevance of African culture to

<sup>36</sup> S. Ademola Ajayi, *Baptists of Nigeria: Their Genesis, Identity, Doctrinal Beliefs and Practices*, (Ibadan, Nigeria: BookWight, 2009), 13-41.

<sup>37</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention, *Book of Reports of 107<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention-in-Session*, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Baptist Press, 2020), 25-38, 114-116, 214-242, 244-246, 250-253.

<sup>38</sup> The Historical Committee Osun Baptist Conference, *History of Churches in Osun Baptist Conference*, (Osogbo, Nigeria: Osun Baptist Conference of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, 2018), 70-71.

evangelism) between March and July 2020 to provide spiritual and medical counsels in the town where farming was the people's primary occupation. Crops like cocoa, yam, kola nut, bitter kola, alligator pepper, garlic, ginger, turmeric, and onions were commonly grown in farm lands of every household in the town. A series of health seminars on vegetable plants that could be used as preventive and therapeutic medicines was held in the church. Prayers to cast out demonic forces behind the pandemic were also held in view of the aforementioned ailments. The herbal health counsels included the use of:

1. *Orogbo* (Bitter kola) has anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial and antioxidant ingredients that boost immunity to prevent and overpower cough, phlegm, and catarrh.
2. Vegetables, fruits, and nuts like *Timati* (Tomatoes), *Soya* (Soybeans), *Alubosa* (Onions), *Osan* (Oranges/Grapes), *Ogede* (Bananas), *Orombo wewe* (Limes/Lemons), *Awusa/Asala* (Walnuts), *Agbalumo* (African Star Apple or African Cherry), Cocoa, Almonds, Cashews, Peanuts have flavonoids containing anti-inflammatory and antioxidant ingredients that fight the development of diseases by hindering mutations from bacterial, cancerous and viral infections.<sup>39</sup>
3. *Aayu* (Garlic) has anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial ingredients against corona virus and other viral infections.
4. *Ata-ile pupa* (Turmeric) anti-inflammatory ingredients against corona virus and other viral infections.
5. *Ata-ile funfun* (Ginger) has anti-inflammatory ingredients against corona virus and other viral infections.
6. *Ata-ire* (Alligator pepper) has anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial ingredients against corona virus and other viral infections.<sup>40</sup>

From the foregoing, the relationship between the use of leaves for healing (*we 'alehu litrupah*) in Ezekiel 47:12 and the use of herbs and roots for healing in Second Baptist Church, Yekemi employed People/Community Based Approach in African Biblical Hermeneutics. The contextualization of Ezekiel 47:12 in maintaining peace in Second Baptist Church, Yekemi interpreted the water of life flowing from the temple to mean that God arranged the solution to the pandemic to have spiritual and priestly influences. Prayers of exorcism were then made against imagined and encountered spiritual forces that were encountered in dreams as spirits of death causing fear and psychological passivity in people in the town. A gradual development of immunity boosting mechanism in people who consumed the roots and leaves for healing was compared with how fresh growth was recorded among the exilic Israelites as the depth of the river water increased in Ezekiel 47. Consequently, leaves for healing in Ezekiel 47:12 under the covenant of peace for Israelite spirituality in the exilic culture (arrival of fresh plants on both sides of the river with growth of fresh fish and animals in the river flowing with water of life) represented the

<sup>39</sup> Corroborations on herbal health from Mr. Aaro Bunmi Olaode; Mr. Joseph Ibitoye; Mr. Olode Adeyemi Adewale; Pa. Phillip Adejumo; Mr. Isaac Folorunso; Mr. Ebenezer Owaniyi; and Chief S. O. Kehinde during Covid-19 Lockdown at Ile-Ife between March and June 2020 to excerpts from herbal health counsels of Late Emmanuel Victor Adewale, Adaraloje Compound, Asawo Road, Ede Town, Osun State.

<sup>40</sup> Prof. Ebenezer Olatunde Farombi, Department of Biochemistry, University of Ibadan, Fresh 105.9 FM Radio audio accessed on 16/07/2020.

awakening of a peaceful and healthy sense of relationship in Yekemi after the pandemic. The trees on both sides of the river that was flowing from the temple and produced fruits for food also symbolized the revitalization of socioeconomic relations in Yekemi after the pandemic had died down (Ezekiel 34:4&25). The contextualization of anti-inflammatory and antioxidant ingredients found in *Orogbo* (Bitter kola), *Aayu* (Garlic), *Ata-ire* (Alligator pepper), and *Ata-ile funfun* (Ginger) as herbal healing with prayer of exorcism in Yekemi achieved the filling of the existing gap that this study initially identified.

### Conclusion

In all, healing in ancient Israel and among the Yoruba is connected to experiencing complete peace. Exercise of power relations by exorcism is a method of reinstatement or restoration of the afflicted and distressed to previous settings of wholeness. Thus, allusions to Ezekiel 47:12 were made during the seminars and prayer meetings at Yekemi. Members of Second Baptist Church, Yekemi were saddled with Christian missionary counseling of other members of the town on the potency and relevance of herbal healing as divine provisions to humanity for such a time. Those who manifested the symptoms of COVID 19 were attended to and counseled to chew and eat either two seeds of any combination of the above listed herbs or not more than three seeds of the herbs daily, throughout the lockdown. There was no record of death in the town throughout the lockdown.

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