



Obedience as Biblical Efficacy for Healing Plagues in Ancient Egypt

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Abstract

All forms of pestilences and plagues are revealed in the biblical account to be the resultant effects and pictures of disobedience. As it was in biblical era so it is in contemporary times. Meanwhile, where obedience is highly placed, cherished, and championed, there seems to be sustainable, nurturing, and nourishing environment that could serve as efficacies for healing of all forms of pestilences and plagues in any locality. In this pattern, a critical study of plagues and their healing in ancient Egypt has revealed obedience as biblical efficacy for healing, health, and longevity. This paper adopts the socio-ethical principle of reading with the author and theological hermeneutical method to examine the biblical concept of healing, health, and longevity. Therefore, in order to have a sustainable, nurturing, and nourishing environment that promotes and supports healing, health, and longevity, total of obedience is required of all. The study argued that where dissidence is seen as norm in a society such a society is prone to causative factors of all forms of pestilences and plagues that are enemies of healing, health, and longevity.

Keywords: *Obedience, Disobedience, Efficacy, Healing, Ancient Egypt, Plagues*

INTRODUCTION

Prevalent arguments submit that God cannot be responsible for the evil of human actions. It could be established that God created human beings with freedom to choose good or evil. While obedience to the divine law will not go without being rewarded, disobedience to the divine order goes with evil and sufferings (Kizhakkeyil, 2009). In this wise, biblical account of Genesis 3 has revealed the consequential events of disobedience. These are evident in the hostility of nature that stands against man. As revealed in the biblical accounts, through man's act of disobedience God's glory that seemed to represent divine presence for provision and protection departed from mankind. Man lost the benefit of the divine presence and life has become hard for humanity. In this regard, this misstep has ushered in all forms of pestilences.

The evil results of disobedience are revealed in the biblical account of Genesis 3 to be warfare against human welfare, so seemed to be the experience of ancient Egyptians during their acts of disobedience. Hence, the evil effect of disobedience is argued to have brought anxiety and calamity of pestilence, plagues, and all forms of sufferings upon humanity. On the positive note, to Omotosho and Oyalabu, (2020), the world before human error was a place of an uninterrupted happiness and healthful living. Indeed, there was no room for any illness and sickness because every room was closed against them through total obedience on the part of Adam and Eve. The opinion here suggests that where there is disobedience such would be associated with various occurrences and experiences that war against healing, health, and longevity.

As it was in ancient Egypt then is in modern times. Meanwhile, the study engages in a critical study of the consequential events of obedience and how biblical obedience could serve as efficacies for healing, health, and longevity. This paper adopts the socio-ethical principle of reading with the author and theological hermeneutical method to examine the biblical concept of healing, health, and longevity. Therefore, in order to have a sustainable, nurturing, and nourishing environment that promotes and supports healing, health, and longevity, the study argues for total of obedience as required by all.

In this wise, living in a conducive and perfect atmosphere could suggest the end result of obedience. Where obedience reigns supreme, struggles and warfare of human life seem to be absent, and other consequential events of disobedience could be promptly prevented and deliberately guarded against. In reiteration, the adverse of effects of human error could be evident in human struggles and warfare against human welfare and perfection which have resulted in the different forms of tragedies such pestilences, plagues and others. It has now become indispensable not just knowing the evil effects of any act of disobedience of ancient Egypt and modern times; but it is seemed to be more important to critical study the biblical efficacies of obedience in relation to healing, health, and longevity.

GENESIS OF BIBLICAL HUMAN DISOBEDIENCE

The creation account in the book of Genesis projects the uniqueness of man to be a special creature. Distinctively setting apart from other creatures had created; man alone

bears the image of the Creator. This possibly informs why the Creator could designate man to subdue and rule the earth (Gen 1:26-31). However, the designation of man would by no means make him to be an unlimited and autonomous being. But he would still be guided and directed by the perfection of the divine law (Hamilton, 1982). Genesis as a book that reveals the happenings in the beginning clearly shows the way in which God initiated and made covenant with His chosen ones. God's love and faithfulness for His people are firmly established as demonstration of His exemplary live (McCain, 2002).

On the platform, man was placed in the Garden of Eden as an opportunity or avenue for him to truly demonstrate his love and loyalty to his Creator God. As part of the divine plans for man, he was obliged to carry out a dual responsibility. While man was to be responsible for the nourishment and preservation of the trees in the garden, he was to also abstain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:15-17) as a concept of love, loyalty, and obedience to his Creator God (Hamilton, 1982).

Although two trees are different from all other trees of the garden and are qualified with names, only the second one named the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is kept away from the reach of Adam and Eve. Everything in the garden is good and they can freely use them. There was no evil in the world that God had created. The only potential thing that might lead the first human beings to evil was the breaking the commandment of God not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They were given freedom to make choices. There was a test for them: Would they trust God? Would they believe and obey His words? God had not created them like robots or computers that would follow the commands fed into them. They had the freedom to choose good or evil. The tree of life was not put beyond their reach before their sin. Only the tree that might lead to evil was banned. The first human beings failed in their test with the consequence that the tree of life was put outside their reach denying their access to it, i.e., to life and immortality (Kizhakkeyil, 2009).

It has been revealed and observed from the creation account that in Eden man was accountable to the Creator. This suggests that man's freedom is not an open bracket nor to be abused; it must go with love, loyalty, and obedience to the divine law. Man indeed was created with both the ability and the opportunity of his choice of good or evil. Although man was created good (Fuller, 2008), but man would not stay within his limitation, overstepping divinely-imposed limits; he sinned against his Creator God. Here, this act of sin is argued to be conceptualised as hatred, disloyalty, and disobedience to the divine law (Hamilton, 1982). As man crossed his Rubicon and stood against the divine law through his act of sin, looking for a scapegoat, the consequential

events would be shame, guilt, and other forms of unpleasant experiences (Hamilton, 1982).

Admittedly, the account of sin and fall of man in Genesis 3 seems to attract more attentions especially in Christian circles. It could also account for the sin and evil, the nature of the human, and relationship between God and world (Bruce C. Birch and et el, (2005). It could be assumed that man was perfectly created. That is, mankind, Adam and Eve were perfect beings before they chose otherwise. While most likely they would not disobey without encouragement, so also Adam and Eve would possibly gain the spiritual strength follows through love, loyalty, and obedience to the divine law. Meanwhile, God could not allow tempter to come to mar them but using temptation to make them become stronger (Fuller, 2008). Notwithstanding the sufficient divine grace ever available for Adam and Eve, they succumbed the deception of the devil and chose the path of disobedience.

In this regard, Fuller (2008) asserts that the devil has been a liar, and shall be a lying being. As it is natural for the devil to tempt and deceive, he tempted and deceived Eve with his habitual lies, twisting the divine law in Genesis 2:17, devil deceptively told Eve that "you will not surely die". The deception of the devil to Eve in the biblical suggests that Adam and Eve could a way with sin. That is God is deceiver, and the same time withholds something good from the people. Similarly, inappropriately quoting from the divine law devil deceived Eve that God denying them of the knowledge of good and evil would hinder of becoming like. Meanwhile, devil would only project God to Eve as unloving and selfish God.

However, God knows good and evil by experiencing good and knowing about evil. Resisting temptation would have made them more like God. They were already like God in many ways. But after disobedience, they became like Satan who knows good and evil by experiencing evil and knowing about good. All of us may have an interest in becoming our own god, but if we try it, we only become Satan's slaves Fuller, (2008).

Therefore, what seems to be good may not really have any benefit to offer its observer. In this pattern, it would be wise to obey the divine law rather than to disobey and incurred shame, pain, and all forms of unpleasant experiences. From the above assertions it could be reiterated that obedience brings more of divine blessings to the doer, while disobedience remains a source of shame, pains, and all sorts of evil occurrences and experiences. Really, disobedience would pull losses to the doer and push away divine blessings from him or her.

EGYPTIAN ACTS OF DISOBEDIENCE

As earlier revealed and affirmed acts of disobedience have become human perpetual responses to the divine law. In a pattern, Egyptian acts of disobedience seemed to have built

on the Genesis of human disobedience in the maltreatment against Israelites while sojourning in Egypt. Relevantly, the scene behind Israelites as sojourners in the land of Egypt could be asserted to be inseparable from the famine that engulfed the land of Canaan where they were earlier inhabited (Okwueze, 2008). However, God seemed not to completely abandon them in their helpless conditions. He would definitely deliver them from the hands the Egyptians, the slave-masters (Ex 3). In the land of Egypt, the unwillingness of Pharaoh and his people, and their disobedience to the divine order to release Israelites from their bondage possibly account for the occurrences and experiences of various plagues in the land. Succinctly, Wolf describes the significance of the Egyptians plagues as follows:

When Abraham and Sarah travelled to Egypt to find relief from famine, Pharaoh unwittingly took Sarah into his harem only to be inflicted with “serious diseases” (Gen 12:17). The word for “disease” (*nega*) is also used in Exodus 11:1 to describe the plague on the firstborn. Whereas the episode over Sarah was unpleasant for the pharaoh and his household, it was nothing like the experience of the later Pharaoh, who had to deal with the ten plagues. Never before had a nation challenged the power of God only to be overwhelmed by incredible series catastrophes. Pharaoh thought he was dealing with the revolt of a helpless and enslaved people; instead he wound up in conflict with God Almighty and nearly brought about the destruction of his entire nation (Wolf, 1991).

Here God seems to vehemently demonstrate His stand against any sort of maltreatment. It is disobedience to the divine law and negation of divine plans for humanity. As part of human disobediences that seem to challenge the authority of God and His sovereignty, sins of maltreatment and exploitation could be considered to be more abominable to God. Meanwhile, God would only but to deal with defaulter or culprit appropriately. In the biblical era the infliction of disease (plague) seems to be a common phenomenon for God to vividly showcase His displeasure in any act of disobedience to His divine orders and laws. In Egypt, God used plagues against Pharaoh and his people as demonstrations of His displeasure in their acts of wickedness against the people of Israel (Ex 4-11).

God had heard the cry of the Israelites, ready and willing to rescue them from the land of perpetual slavery, He promptly sent His divine agents as rescuers. In this regard, at the command of Yahweh Moses and Aaron could but to go and meet Pharaoh and demand him to release the people of Israel so that they could be freed to go to the wilderness and hold a feast to God (Kizhakkeyil, 2009). Similarly, Wolf opines that that the defined goal of the presences of Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh would be to secure the freedom of the people of Israel from the land of Egypt (Wolf, 1991). It was based upon the miracles powers that God has endowed Moses and Aaron; they courageously confronted Pharaoh

with the divine demand to let the Israelites go and serve their God (McKenzie and Kaltner, 2007). But he would not listen to the divine order, challenging God’s authority and sovereignty. Although Moses and Aaron specifically informed Pharaoh that their demand was based on the divine directive, notwithstanding, he disregarded the demand of Moses and Aaron via an affirmative statement that he did not know their God (Kizhakkeyil, 2009).

Unfortunately, instead of the demand of Moses and Aaron from Pharaoh to lead to relief and freedom of the Israelites, it rather made their burden heavier. The consequential events of the heavier burden on the Israelites were evident in Pharaoh ordering the taskmasters and foremen to stop the supply of straw using for making bricks. Upon the instruction of Pharaoh the taskmasters and foremen also required the people of Israel to provide straw themselves and must still make the usual number of bricks daily. Regardless of the limited time available for the Israelites to make straw for themselves, they must not fail to complete the heavy task within the stipulated period because any act of failure attracted serious beating by the task masters (Kizhakkeyil, 2009).

This prompts the Lord to reaffirm His promises of deliverance in the most categoric terms. He is the Lord, whom the patriarchs knew was God Almighty. He will deliver them from slavery and bring them to the Promised Land. So Aaron and Moses return to Pharaoh and demonstrate their divine call by turning their staff into a serpent. But Pharaoh’s advisers do the same with their staffs, and although Aaron’s serpent eats up all the other serpents. Pharaoh refuses to give in and the exodus is no nearer to happening (Wenham, 2003).

According to Wolf, although as the time that God was ready and willing to deliver the Israelites from the land of Egypt, Egypt could be seen as one of the most powerful nations on earth, but no one could successfully battle with the Almighty God. As a result of the ten plagues that overwhelmed the land of Egypt, Pharaoh and his people would have learned their lesson in a hard way to understand that there is none the God of Israel who was not only supreme in heaven but also on earth. Profoundly, Exodus 9:16 and 18:11, plagues could be observed to be demonstrations of what described God’s authority and sovereignty over the whole world (Wolf, 1991).

Moses boldly warned the monarch that a plague of locusts would be sent, which would cover the face of the earth and eat up every green thing. Beholding the devastating effect the plague, Pharaoh again summoned Moses and Aaron, and he said to them, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. He said to them, go and serve the Lord your God: but who are they that shall go? They answered, we will go with our young and with our old with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds

will we go for we must hold a feast unto the Lord (White, 2010). The king said, pray to your God to take the plague away. Consenting, they did so, and a strong west wind arose, which carried away the locusts toward the Red Sea so that no one was left behind. But as soon as the plague was combated Pharaoh hardened his heart, and again refused to let Israel go and serve their God (White, 2010).

Consequently, then the Lord said to Moses, stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness which may even be felt (Ex 10:21), and the people of Egypt were in despair. Suddenly darkness settled over the land. Not only were people deprived of light, but the atmosphere was very oppressive so that breathing was difficult (White, 2010). At the end of the three days of darkness, Pharaoh made partial freedom. He sent for Moses and said, "Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds stay: let your little ones also go with you" (White, 2010).

But Moses leaving his presence he fearlessly declared the word of the Lord. Saying, about midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it anymore (White, 2010). But to the people of Israel this tenth and last plague was combated by God, through sprinkled blood on the two side posts and on the upper door post.

Succinctly, due the refusal of Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go and serve their God, his heart was hardened. Consequentially, Pharaoh and his people were heinously visited by the series of ten plagues. There were unusual occurrences and painful experiences: water turned to blood, frogs, gnats, flies, a pestilence on the livestock, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and the deaths of the firstborn. God rewarding the disobedience of Pharaoh and his people against the divine order, the plagues were calamitously evident in natural disasters, diseases, illnesses, and sicknesses (McKenzie and Kaltner, 2008).

However, although not so perpetual, there were instances of remorsefulness and repentance which seemed to show obedience to the divine order, every instance God was so kind and prompt to grant pardon to the unstable Pharaoh and his people through instant healing of the natural disasters, diseases, illnesses, and sicknesses (Ex 8: 8-14, 27-29; 9:19-20, 25-28). Thus, the Exodus of Israelites from Egypt seems to suggest the prominent event of redemption in the Old Testament. Delivering his people from slavery in Egypt, God made a covenant with them at Sinai to teach and lead as they journeyed to the land of promise (LaSort, Hubbard, Bush, 1996). In this wise, it would not be out of place to assert that the Egyptian land, people and nation played significant roles in the making of Israel as a people and nation and to showcase the healing, health, and longevity benefits of obedience.

EFFICACY OF OBEDIENCE FOR HEALING PLAGUES IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Obedience has been examined from the biblical perspective and found to be effective efficacy for healing, health, and longevity. This study has revealed that the root cause of natural disasters, diseases, illnesses, and sicknesses in the Bible to be disobedience against the divine law. In ancient Egypt, the devastating effects of disobedience ushered in ten plagues in the land. This possibly compelled Pharaoh to finally surrender and consent to let the Israelites go and serve their God. He begged, Moses and Aaron, the servants of God to entreat that the plagues might be removed but his inconsistent obedience brought series plagues to him and his entire nation.

Although it has established that total obedience is required for sustainable healing, however, Pharaoh's occasional remorsefulness could still make rooms for temporary healing of the plagues. Moses and Aaron prayed to God and the plagues combated at their prayer. Confessing and promising, the king said "I have sinned this time. The Lord is righteous, and my people and I are wicked" (Ex 9:27). Pharaoh now humbled himself and made a confession. He entreated the servants of God to intercede with him that the terrific thunder and lightning might cease (White, 2010). As earlier asserted, Pharaoh's confessions were made because terror and anguish compelled him. Moses promised to grant his request. Going out of the city he spread abroad his hands unto the Lord: and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth. But as soon as the awful exhibitions of divine power had passed, the heart of the king returned to its stubbornness and rebellion (White, 2010).

It has been established that human error ushered in different kinds of plagues in the ancient Egypt. Of course, the cause of ancient Egypt plagues could be argued from different perspectives, but the maltreatment that Pharaoh extended to the Israelites living in his land and his unwillingness to let them go and worship their God would be considered paramount. In the biblical accounts it could be opined that God, the Creator frowns at any kind of human error of social disorder and injustice against Him, and any fellow being (Ex 20:1-17). In effect, these errors committed by Pharaoh and his people brought in unwanted plagues upon the Egyptians. The consequential events remain ever green throughout the biblical era. In a similar pattern to the experience of ancient Egypt plagues, it is appropriate to argue that so often natural disasters, diseases, illnesses, and sicknesses come as result human error. That is, global pandemics are due to the disobedience of human inactions, actions and reactions.

The keen devastating condition that Israelites experienced under the dictatorship of Pharaoh in the land of Egypt informed the need for the rescue mission of Yahweh-God through human agent, Moses. Recognising their helplessness, the people of Israel called on their God, Yahweh to come and rescue them from the hands of Pharaoh, the slave master.

Promptly, He came to the aid of His people. The opinion here argues and affirms that the help that comes from God is adequate and total. As the people put their trust in Him, at the appointed time God did extend his impartial and total breakthrough to His people. In actual fact, it could be postulated here that the problems of evil are not standing or hiding anywhere. But rather they are caused or created by human inactions, actions and reactions of lifestyles. In this vein, God-Yahweh used plagues to deal with the enemies of Israelites because of the social injustice to their fellow human beings, and lack of remorsefulness to God's instructions, and refusal to grant Israelites total freedom.

In the ancient Egypt, via obedience there were opportunities to avert or amend human error through the adherence of obedience against natural disasters, diseases, illnesses, and sicknesses. There was a grace to prevent every inaction, action and reaction of human error, but the opportunities were taken for granted and the grace was abused. Presently, due to human error of inaction, action and reaction, the pictures of natural disasters, diseases, illnesses, and sicknesses are seen in the loss of resources, pain of hunger, and suffering. Similar to the ancient Egypt, as a bedrock of health and civil laws, total obedience to the divine order is required by all and sundry. That is, avoiding being deceptive in obedience and consistently doing what pleases divinity and that which blesses humanity.

Human limitation and helplessness were acknowledged in the biblical era. The Lord God was sought by the people of Israel during plagues pandemic. Responsively, God intervened and total freedom later was promptly granted. The retrogressive evidences of medical aid against diseases, illnesses and sicknesses in the multiple deaths in ancient Egypt, and other adverse effects have vividly given the pictures of human limitation, and proven helplessness of man. Since disobedience against the divine order vividly revealed via natural disasters, diseases, illnesses, and sicknesses in ancient Egypt, recognising human helplessness, and acknowledging God brought sustainable healing, health, and longevity.

As earlier affirmed and submitted, the human error of ancient Egypt through the maltreatment against ancient Israel, and the disobedience of God's instruction have been revealed to be the cause of ancient Egypt plagues. However, whenever ancient Egypt turned from their evil plans against ancient Israel, and remorsefully sought God, there would be healing, health, and longevity granted and recorded.

CONCLUSION

This study focuses on obedience as biblical efficacy for healing plagues in ancient Egypt. The cause, consequence and healing are considered to be appropriate to the causative agent, consequential events and efficacy of obedience to the present and global pandemics. In both the ancient Egyptian world and contemporary era that human error ushered in

problems of evil which are evident in natural disasters, diseases, illnesses, and sicknesses. It could be observed that ancient Egyptian world had adequate knowledge and understanding of God. They were not only well informed about God's personality, but also acknowledged the ability and responsibility of Yahweh, Lord God of Israel. Occasionally, ancient Egyptian era called on God because of who he was, and what he was always able to accomplish at healing plagues that engulfed their land.

In the ancient era, remorsefulness and repentance were among the measures against the plagues that were similar to the current global natural disasters, diseases, illnesses, and sicknesses. The most adequate efficacy against plagues in ancient Egypt was revealed to be total obedience to the divine order. An attainable freedom from the oppressors and slave masters was the acceptance and acknowledgement of God's power against every oppressor and slave masters. In the ancient biblical, there was no instant of failure on the part of God through His human agents. It was observed that He responsively answered the requests of the ancient people, and promptly dealt with the human error that was the possible causative agent of natural disasters, diseases, illnesses, and sicknesses.

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