

Deuteronomy 8:7-9 In The Context Of African Dietary Regulations For Healing And Wellness In Contemporary Nigerian Experience

David O. Alabi Phd, Sunny M. Ekpaogba Phd, Olowokere, Adenike F.,
Olukunle, Olufemi J.

*Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji, Osun State Nigeria*

Abstract

Food has played dual roles in the life affairs of man from antiquity. It has been both a blessed and bitter gift for man. As a gift from God, it is biblically affirmed that “it was good”. Life has been saved and at the time lost due to eating of food in the history of man. The problem addressed in this study was the challenge of short life span and various sicknesses attributed to artificial, fast and junk foods, which have littered the supermarkets and successfully supplanted natural and organic food with natural flavours, nutrients and tastes. These artificial foods have constituted the bane of poor health and high mortality rate in the society. Therefore, this paper examined the selected passage, Deuteronomy 8:7-9 in milieu of biblical and African religious dietary ethics and regulations for healing and wellness of man in the contemporary Nigerian experience. The purpose of this study was to enlighten man through the biblical injunction and African socio-cultural food eating practices to return back to natural food. It would also join the vanguard for natural food crusade for the purpose of strengthening the immunity of the body system of man in the face of health challenges. Using the literary-historical approach, the paper examined the longevity of years of people in antiquity that ate natural food in the biblical era and in African traditional setting vis-à-vis the mortality rate in the contemporary Nigerian society. Findings revealed that natural foods have been scientifically proven; nutritionally established and traditionally experienced that mortality rate was low in the African societies of yesteryears due to what they ate. In conclusion, it recommended that man should be careful of what he eats and should not wait till he falls sick before he starts looking for natural food for his body through natural foodstuffs.

Keywords: *Deuteronomy, Dietary Food, Healing Regulations, Nigerian Experience*

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I. Introduction:

Food is an essential aspect of living for every man. The wellness of anyone depends on what he eats, when he eats it and how he eats it. Man makes choices on what to eat than any other decisions in his social life. Besides the fact that there are rooms for personal choice on what to eat at adult age, parental upbringing and cultural preferences influence the decision of any man on what to eat. These factors form the eating habit of everyone till adulthood when we can make our choice with adjustment from both the parental and cultural influences.

The growth of man, healing and wellness largely depend on food. From fetal stage to adulthood, that is, from conception to birth and growth thereafter till old age, man depends on what he eats and the nutrients he gets from it. The cells, tissues, muscles and other components of his body are inherently dependent on his foods and meals. The renewal, rebuilding and restoration of the body system and tissues are the functions of food that man eats and drinks. The divine mechanism of metabolism in man takes care of the digestion of the solid he takes to small components so that the body tissues can carry these through the blood to other parts of the body for proper utilization.

Therefore, this study took a look into the Deuteronomic regulations on diets for wellness in ancient Israel juxtaposing such regulations in the context of Nigerian dietary prescriptions for wellness. Taking the critical and historical approaches to the study, the paper looked into the problems created by the junk and fast foods to the wellness of people around in the contemporary Nigeria. The purpose of it was to examine the cultural practices of ancient Israel on foods and the stand of the Yoruba race when it comes to home grown foods vis-à-vis the health and wellness of the race. It also aimed at the incursion of civilization on food of the race and the health hazards attached to it. Available statistical data showed that once, people cherished junk

foods and considered them to be elements of civilization and westernized lifestyles but now it was viewed as dangerous to their health and wellness. The significance of this paper rests in the fact that secrets of long living and increase in life span and mortality rate depends on what people eat from the world of nature and not inorganic food stuffs. Natural feeding and eating increase the wellness of men and women and the body heals itself by feeding it with organic and natural foods. Vital organs in the body can be maintained and rejuvenated through the natural stem cells in the organic foods and not fertilized foods. These secrets have been revealed to the ancient Israelites through the Deuteronomic regulations.

Essential components of food are carbohydrates, fats, comprising of saturated and unsaturated better still polyunsaturated fats, minerals, proteins, vitamins and water. Each of these classes of food is essentially and everlastingly needed as long as man lives on earth. The quantity for daily requirements of these foods depends on the stage one is and the energy needed to dispense his daily duty. It has been suggested and nutritionally advised that each of these classes of food should be daily present in the food intakes of man. In the light of the above and other views, this paper examined the role of food in the healing and wellness of man in accordance with biblical and African religious dietary regulations for man and in the light of contemporary Nigerian experience.

Food For Men During the Creation

The Yahwist creation story¹ includes the provisions of vegetables, aquatic mammals and animal species that creep on the earth (cf. Gen. 1:11-12, 20, 25). These provisions were made by Yahweh before He created man and the purpose was to serve as food sources for man in order to maintain physical life of his body. Specifically, all vegetable bearing seeds and fruit bearing trees were expected to serve as food for man as Yahweh instructed man (Gen 1:29-30). It follows that the green stuffs were to serve as food for animals also. There was no discrimination or Levitical classifications of animals and fruits as either clean or unclean by the Yahwist account of this divine provision during and after the creation. Every creation be either heavenly bodies or world of nature creatures were considered to be “indeed, it was very good” and vegetables and fruits good for man to eat (Gen 1:31). The Elohist second creation story also made reference to food trees as food for man in Gen. 2:15-17.²

Undoubtedly, the food for man in the Garden of Eden would be vegetables and fruits as indicated in Genesis 2:16. Man was given ample privileges to eat from the trees in the Garden. This presupposes that God intended for man fresh foods and fruity diets that were capable of given him long life and healthy body without contamination. The commentary on the specifications of food and diets in the Garden of Eden according to the Elohist³ was:

And out of the ground the Lord made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food (Gen 2:9; 2:16).

At the inception of history, it was glaring that the diet of Adam was some ripe fruits around him in the garden as he gained the consciousness of his environment, the need for eating when he began to feel hungry. Food, especially trees and vegetable foods and water served as diets of man (Gen1:29-30) in antiquity. The secrets of “healthy” living for Adam would be the consumption of prescribed fruity foodstuffs in the Garden. After the fall, it seemed the same classes of fruity food and vegetables given to Adam were supposed to be the food of all men on earth. The first labour Noah engaged in was the planting of fruit and a vineyard as it is explicitly stated in Genesis 9:20.

Food Provisions and Wellness in Pre-Deluge and the Patriarchal Ages

The provision of food was part of the divine attention and care for the chosen race, the Israelites in the Old Testament. The patriarchal age witnessed some staple food, which the Old Testament attested to. It could be affirmed that during the period of Abraham, the semi-nomadic race fed on their animal-milk products, barley bread and cake from whatever was used to prepare them. A particular reference to the hospitality that Abraham showed to the angelic visitors in Genesis 18:5-8 points to this fact:

And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts....
Quickly make ready three measure of time meal; knead it and make cakes....

This indicates that bread and cakes form parts of the food eaten during the patriarchal era. Isaac planted fruits in Gerar and reaped hundredfold in Genesis 26:12-14. He became rich because of the planting of the orchards. After all, Jacob and his children went to Egypt because of food especially grains in order to escape starvation (Gen 42:1-47, 12). The fact that delicious food could make a weary man regain his strength was demonstrated in the Esau and Jacob saga in Genesis 25:29-30. A critical look at Number 11:5 recapitulates the fact that when Israel was in Egypt, they ate spices and food, which gave them strength. They remembered these spices and food with nostalgic feeling in their journey in the wilderness thus:

We remembered the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumber, the melons, the leeks, the onions and the garlic.

Fowler supports the view that “this list of foods has been found to correspond closely with ancient Egyptian foods especially in Goshen area in the 13th century B.C”.⁴ The region has wealth of foods: Onions, leeks, seven kinds of fish in its water and various fruits and vegetables. This shows that antiquity has a set of nature food and dietary that they ate for the sustenance of their healing and wellness. When the early generation lived on unprocessed food and fruits they became super beings with consistent health and wellness. They have the highest life expectancy and demonstrated equal energy during their lifetime. Among this generation was Methuselah, the oldest man on earth who lived for 969 years. The effects of the food by the first generation on earth were seen in their lifespan on earth, which can be stated as follows:

Adam, the man who lived for 930 years
Seth lived for 912 years;
Enosh lived for 905 years;
Cainan live for 910 years;
Jared lived for 962 years;
Lamech lived for 777 years;

Some have argued that these years could not be taken literally because of lack of concrete evidence of what constituted the days months and years during these periods. If these years were to be taken as literary years, one could deduce that the reason for such longevity could be dissociated from the food they ate. If these men were often sick and unhealthy, they would have not lived up to the number of years ascribed to them. They lived on nature foods and fruits as specified in Gen 1:29-30.

Noah and the Food Processing Industry: Effects on the Wellness of Man

The time of Noah definitely ushered in another era; it brought in the era of food alteration or food pollution due to destruction of all plants, vegetables, and trees after the flood. The narrator of the priestly document in Genesis 6-9 does not tell us whether Noah preserve seed of the herbs and plants as he was instructed to preserve the animals. But meat eating was permitted by God and reference to herbs was in passing according to Genesis 9:2-4:

And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every bird
of the air, on all that move on the earth and on all the fish of the sea.
They are given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you
shall not eat flesh with its life that is its blood.

Food processing and alteration started with Noah and his family after the Flood. Fermented food and drinks became order of the day during this time from Noah and his children. Intoxicating food and drinks began to take its effects on man from the Noahic period henceforth. This could be attributed to technological advancement and food process in the antiquity. Man began to face the aftermaths of food alteration and artificial processing. After the Deluge, biblical record reveals that man began to experience short life span; for instance Genesis 6:2 fixes the life span of man at one hundred and twenty. It follows that Genesis 11:10-32 gives us a radical change and reduction in the years after the Deluge. The record goes thus:

Shem lived for 500 years:
Arphaxad lived for 403 years;
Salah live for 403 years;
Eber live for 403 years;
Peleg live for 209 years;
Serug live for 200 years;
Nahor live for 119 years;
Haran died before his father (reason unknown)
and Terah lived for 205 years
Abraham live for 175 years
Sarah lived for 120 years
Isaac lived for 180 years
Jacob lived for 147 years
Joseph lived for 110 years.

Even none of the patriarchs under the covenant of God lived up to two hundred years coupled with other conditions.

It was glaring that after the deluge, man was permitted to eat meat, “all living things” but not their blood” (Gen 8:22, 9:4). Food pollution and short life span could be traced to this era. Blood was forbidden to be eaten and reason for this was theological in nature “for the life of a man is in his blood (Gen. 9:4-5, Lev. 17:22). The avoidance of blood was with the intention of giving respect to life that came from God and must be returned back to Him.

The Leviticus order on permitted foods and animals to be eaten and those forbidden to be eaten could not but have divine health arrangement and provision for mankind within the Israelite circle. By nature, everything God created “was indeed very good” and they were meant to be consumed by man as food (Gen. 1:31, 29). But the food pollution because of the fall of man and the great Deluge brought classifications of clean and unclean foods. This is not to overlook the religious cum cultural heritage of the people such as the Phoenicians, Canaanites, Egyptian, Assyrians, Babylonians and the Hittites and their influence on Jewish views on foods.⁵ Hoffmann, a Jewish exegete of Leviticus, quoted by Gipe is of the opinion that “other confessions which draw upon the Old Testament chiefly select Genesis as the subject of their study, while Jews pay special attention to Leviticus”.⁶ Orthodox Jews are tightly bound to the regulation they observe in the list of food given in the book of Leviticus.

Food and Human Health Challenges in the Contemporary Nigerian Society

The determinant factor of man’s health is his food. The healthy growth of any man is the product of what he eats. Ecclesiastes 5:17 says,

All his days he also eats in darkness
And he has much sorrow and sickness and anger (cf. Psa. 127:2).

“Eating in darkness” here have been variously interpreted but Fleming has rendered it to “be eating in bitterness and gloom”,⁷ which cannot promote sound health for man. A critical look at the passage connotes that eating has correlation with one’s health, sound body or sickness, psychological indisposition and sorrow. God wants man to use the gift of nature especially the fruity food for his healing and wellness. It is not always the amount of food that is consumed that causes trouble, sorrow and sickness for man but the nutritional contents of what he actually eats. Man should not be ignorant of the danger of what he consumes and it should be noted that not all food taken go down well with the physiology of man.

Synthetic foods, that is, foods that are highly processed, refined, polished and manufactured from factories are largely and habitually consumed nowadays. Some count it as a mark of luxuries while others consider it as a mark of civilization and westernization without taking into cognizance the bad nutritional effects it will have on their health and wellness. Junks are major foods in some people’s diet and these constitute health hazards to them. They do not boost any immunity in the body of a man. The issue is that all these foods would have lost all their nutritional benefits in them as given by God in the course of being processed. Preserved foods and drinks in cans, bottles, and paper boxes fill our market to the detriment of wellness of mankind. According to Fagbo, “the chemical used to preserve and extend the shelf life of these artificial foods and drinks are always toxic to the body and they can jeopardize good health”.⁸ He further submits that “not these alone, adulterated food that are laced and decorated with sweetened, flavouring colouring and other artificial chemicals to appeal to the sense and eliciting saliva are as well dangerous to human health”.⁹

All these foods are made in order to attract man for the sake of economic gains of the manufacturers without considering the health effects on man. The white flour products, canned food items, bottled beverages with chemical preservatives and colorings, condiments and seasonings hydrogenated fat foods such as margarine and butter and polished foods are dangerous health wise. According to Fagbo, all sweeteners consumed in the body, “they produce certain substance that is identical in composition to wood alcohol and formaldehyde, the embalming solution”.¹⁰ It is scientifically proven that the sugary foods are harmful to health and they lead to disease such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, high blood cholesterol, impotence in man and even premature aging, just as the consumption of sweeteners in high rate have some connection with cancer on the body.

Capturing this position, Wagman et.al. affirm “standard, commercially prepared foods,...lack the health benefits and better tastes of organic foods and may even be damaging to health.”¹¹

Deuteronomy 8:7-9 and Modern Biblical Scholarship: An Overview

The name Deuteronomy comes from Greek word, *deuteronomus*, meaning, second law due to its similarities to the Book of Exodus and other Pentateuchal literature and the LXX, the Septuagint version of the Hebrew Bible, compound words *dueteros* and *nomos*, which means “second law” or repetition of law”. Dillard and Longman III are of the views that it is an erroneous translation of a verse in the book. “Ironically it derives

from a misunderstanding in the Septuagint of a Hebrew phrase in Deuteronomy 17:18, where the king is instructed to make a “copy of this law”.¹² The Jewish title of the book “debarim” meaning, “words” is derived from the opening expression of the Book, “These are the words Moses spoke” (Deut 1:1). According to the line, Deuteronomy is the rest of “words” of suzerainty covenant made by the Lord of heaven through the mediation of Moses with the covenant people of Israel beyond the Jordan. Unlike the collection of laws in the Pentateuch, which are in form of an address of God to Moses, Deuteronomy is an address of Moses to the people. Schmidt corroborate this position when he submits that “Deuteronomy promises and ordinances are presented as the testament of a man who led Israel out of Egypt, through the wilderness and to the very borders of the Promised Land”¹³

Despite the fact that the book claims Mosaic authorship, Development hypothesis of source theory has expressed doubt on this claim. The theory claims that Deuteronomy is an independent entity and connected with the reform of the cult that had been regarded not as a discourse of Moses but reflects condition under the monarchy or even later during the reformation of King Josiah in 620 BC.¹⁴ This is predicated on the pillars that the book gives hints on having a king, (17:14 ff.); warns against false prophets (Deut 13:1ff: 18:9ff). The centralization of cult undertaken by Josiah (cf. 2 Kings 23:5ff and Duet 12). Pressing further, Gerhard von Rad, quoted by Schmidt “sees Deuteronomy as origination in (rural) Levitical circles in the Northern kingdom”¹⁵

Gleason L. Archer Jr. advances some arguments to show that internal evidence in the book point to Mosaic period. It is argued that “the legislation it contains could never have arisen under the condition which prevailed in the late seventh century”.¹⁶ More also, the social, economic, historical reflections and mostly religious “structure of the suzerainty treaties drawn up between vassal kings and their imperial overlord in the days of Hittite ascendancy in the latter half of a second millennium”¹⁷ compared with what we find in the book points to Mosaic authorship.

Deuteronomy 8:7-9 has been described as part of the treaty that the King, now Yahweh, made with the servant Israel. This time around it was the health provision through the abundance of nature food in the Promised Land. The LORD was bringing the people to “a good land” *tob aresh*. The Hebrew word *tob*, which means “pleasant, joyful or agreeable”, signifies primarily that which gratifies the sense and derivatively that which gives aesthetic or moral satisfaction. The LXX renders Hebrew *tob* by its Greek equivalent, *agathos*, the conventional Greek word for “good” as a physical or moral quality and sometimes by *kalos*, which literally means “beautiful”. The classical Greek renders the same word as “noble”, honourable, admirable or worthy”.¹⁸ This is to connote the worthiness of the land for a living or habitation. This shows that the Promised Land is beautifully and aesthetically habitable and agriculturally productive. The physical qualities of the land is satisfying enough to sustain the Israelites

Here we see the importance of one’s lives if it is not good enough, there cannot be sound health. Here God made provision for suitable condition and environment for the people He was bringing in. The environmental friendliness of the land was a concern to God hence; He was bringing them in to “a good land”. The theological imports of a “good land” extend to God as being a good God as the Psalmist proclaims (cf. Ps 100:5). The goodness of God is the basis of His praise in Old Testament (2 Chr. 30:18. Ps 86:5). This is also to affirm that the works and gifts of God are equally good. The creation story affirms that everything that God created was good (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 31). If the gifts of food are good, the possession of the Promised Land and dwelling there would not constitute health threats to the people.

The Provision of Water for Sound Health in the Land

Water is another essential provision that God has made for the people for a sound and healthy life. The Hebrew word *mayyim* meaning waters is always in the plural and it features significantly in the lives of the people of the Bible. We could say that nothing is more serious to them than the absence of water in the wilderness (cf. Ex 15:22-27; 17: 1-18; 1Kgs 17:1ff; 2 Kings 3:19, 25; 2:19- 22; Jer. 14:3; Joel 1:20; Hag 1:11). Rainfall is a sign of God’s favour and goodness in the land. The provision of “a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs that flow out of valleys and hills could not be less than provision of life and sound health for the people. They did not need to be afraid of what to drink or use domestically in the Land.

Theologically, water is symbol of God’s blessing and spiritual refreshment for His people. He himself is the “the foundation of living water” (Jer. 2:13, 17:13). The absence of which constitutes his divine wrath and punishment to His people. In the ancient world, water is life: he who gives water gives life. So when God promised them waters, it showed abundant life and living in the Promised Land. To the people in antiquity who lived in a dry climate, water, constitute a great importance as well as threat to them. In many ancient myths and mythology, water was regarded to be a living entity. Water was also treated as a primary building block of life and without water there is no life.

It follows that when God made abundant provision of waters for the people, He expected them to drink water abundantly for healing and sound health. Water pollutions as experienced in Egypt (cf. Ex 7:17ff), by the Israelite at Marah (cf. Ex 15:22-23) and the experienced of the people at Jericho (2 Kings 2:19-22) show that it

could at the same constitute health hazards. One of the safest and purest drinking waters comes from springs. So when God gives mankind springs and fountains, He is indirectly giving man sources of healing and sound health (cf. Psalm 104:6, 10-15). Synthetic drugs could be expensive and unaffordable to an average man, but water is common and affordable.

Right from creation, man has been at the mercy belt of water and nearly everything around him contains water. Man's survival depends on water even his food and edible fruits and vegetables. Referring to the importance of water, according to Anselm Adodo, "an apple is 80% water. Tomato is 95% water. Pawpaw is 90% water. Orange is 95% water. The human body is 70% water. 70% of the earth surface is water.... We are water people".¹⁹ For healing and sound health purposes, water plays very significant roles. From antiquity, water therapy or hydrotherapy has been involved in the use of concocted water for the management or treatment of human health problems and wellness. Without the aids of drugs just by drinking water for medicinal purposes, it could cure some ailments such as headaches, blood pressure, hypertension, general paralysis, cough, dysentery, hyper acidity, irregular menstruation, constipation, breast cancer. What needs to be done is to wake up early in the morning and take at least four to six cups of water or litres of water for a number of days, even before brushing one's teeth and eating. Adodo also supporting this view recommends that "when you wake up in the morning drink at least five cups of water. Cases of diabetes, cancer, hypertension, arthritis, stroke and other illness have been reversed through water therapy".²⁰

In the contemporary Nigeria, an average literate and common men and women are yet to be drinking water up to standard as required on daily basis. Hence, many are dehydrated and results are problems with metabolism, digestive system dysfunction, blood shortage because water increases blood quantity, dry and shrinking skins, ineffective heart, general headache problems, sight and many others. Many of the ailments people suffer today are attached lack of adequate water in the body systems. The brain can shrink due to lack of adequate fluid in the body system. Many students suffer from common headaches during their studies especially, examination periods due to lack of insufficient water intakes. The healing power of water is capable of fighting common ailments if the gift of God, water can be well utilized for ones' healing and wellness.

African Religious Dietary Regulations for Healing and Wellness in Contemporary Nigeria

Africans are essentially religious. Religion permeates almost the entire fabrics of life in Africa. In this regard, Mbiti writes that

because traditional religions permeate all the departments of life,
there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular,
between the religious and non-religious, between the spiritual
and the material areas of life in a traditional society.²¹

Because religion is the pivotal aspect of life to the Africans, many facets of life are linked with it. A good instance is the nexus of dietary regulations, healing and wellness. It is therefore a believable fact that religion, traditional-medical therapy, application of healing remedies and the process of preventing illness are interconnected in African traditional society.

In the study of African concept of man, it is a profound belief that man occupies a central stage in the ontological arrangement. Before man was created, the whole created order, including the world of nature, such as vegetation, animals, birds and more were in existence. These creatures are provided to ensure the satisfaction, succor and wellness of man. The spiritual aspects of life such as the divinities, ancestors, incorporeal forces and spirits were also to serve the purpose of man. It could be deduced from this that the wellness of man matters to God and to the entire world of nature. "It is therefore left for man to explore his environment of nature, to manipulate it and make it subservient to his advantage",²² healing and wellness.

When one falls sick in an African society, it is a general concern to the whole family and even the entire community. African sociological family set up is contrary to the nuclear arrangement in the Eurocentric society and other western world. The Africans operate the extended family structure; hence healing and wellness of every member of the extended family is the concern of all. In Africa, if a member of the family falls sick and he or she fails to respond to the initial care, therapy and medical remedy, the next step is to consult the *Ifa* priest. It is the duty of all members to contribute financially and through other means to the quick recovery of the fellow member of family. The *Ifa* priest would be consulted on the water concocted therapy, vegetables, herbs, foods and financial implications for the cure. When the family is able to meet the financial obligation the sick fellow will be conveyed to the *ifa* priest.

The *Ifa* priest will, in turn, consult the *Ifa* oracle to keep himself abreast of the necessary information on the situation on ground. The priest's interest at this point is to know the immediate and the remote causes of the illness. It will be of interest for him to know whether the illness is as a result of mere natural occurrence or spirit-related. The cause could also be as a result of carelessness on the part of the sufferer. The cause may be as a result of certain metaphysical entity in operation. It could be that his or her ancestors are angry with him. The

information at this level of investigation is very crucial for further investigation. A major breakthrough here would be that the *Ifa* priest is able to identify the source of the illness.

The next step is for the *Ifa* priest to seek for remedy. If it is discovered that the sufferer had offended someone, or a divinity, the next step is to investigate on the relevant items for sacrifice to the divinities. Our concern in this paper is the items of sacrifice that have to do with food. If the sufferer has offended an elderly person or a witch, the usual sacrifice is what is known as *èbè àwon àgbà*, meaning, sacrifice to appease the elders. The usual food items in this kind of sacrifice are *ògèdè òmìnì* (local banana), eggs, palm oil and more. This however depends on the specification of items demanded by the concerned elder. It is noteworthy to state here that the aggrieved person or divinity may not accept any placation. In that wise, it is either the sufferer suffers until death or that, if the *Ifa* priest is someone with super sensible power, he will fight the person or divinity that is responsible for the illness. In a situation like this it will be a survivor of the fittest.

The sufferer might be suffering as a result of infliction by his or her spiritual group. It is the belief in many parts of Africa that certain people belong to certain spiritual realms; though they are human beings, they still associate with spiritual groups. In this kind of situation, the sufferer may have broken a certain taboo of his spiritual group. He or she may have breached the agreement between them. It is the duty of the *Ifa* priest to find out the exact situation. In any case however, the solution will have to do with sacrifice, and mostly sacrifice that has to do with food items. It is the duty of the *Ifa* priest to investigate about the specification of such items of sacrifice. Items such as sugar cane, locally baked cake (*akara*), local banana, palm oil, and more would be part of the items of sacrifice.

In the case that the sufferer is suffering as a result of infliction by the ancestor, the *Ifa* priest knows exactly the necessary prescriptions. In this case, the *Ifa* priest could recommend that the sufferer should make sacrifice to his or her ancestor(s). In this kind of situation, libation of palm wine and local gin would be poured to the ancestor(s). This is apart from the use of fowl or goat for sacrifice. There are other items of sacrifice, depending on the *Ifa* prescriptions. Closely associated with this is the belief in sacrificing to one's inner head. The items of sacrifice are mostly cola-nuts and snails. This is done regularly, whether one is sick or not by many indigenous Yoruba. Many Yoruba do not eat cola nuts but they use it as items to sacrifice to their inner head (their spiritual being).

In an African healthcare procedure, there is what is referred to as "therapeutic prescriptions". The therapeutic prescriptions may have to depend on each particular ailment. Mostly used is cold or hot water therapy as the case may be. For swollen part of the body, hot water may be applied. For severe headache, cold water may be applied. In the case of blood clotting which result in swelling of a certain part of the body, combination of hot water and piercing of the particular spot could be applied. Piercing or incisions may be applied if hot water did not produce desired result.

In the case that the illness is as a result of carelessness on the part of the sufferer, further investigations would be made. If it is the case that illness is as a result of careless eating habit, the *Ifa* priest would need to prescribe the necessary food items which meet the physique of the particular person. Eating of a lot of fruits as food may be recommended for the person. He may be asked to always take much water. He may be advised against the drinking of alcohol and the use of cigarette. He or she may be advised not to eat after certain hours of the night. This kind of advice may be very relevant to the elderly persons. He may be told that his nature forbids certain kinds of food items.

The list of food items for herbal remedies by Lateju and Olagunju in Babalola and Lateju's Issues in African Traditional Religion²³ constitutes a far reaching complement on the list of food and herbal remedies in this study. In the study hereby referred to, the authors list water, honey edible herbs such as African cucumber, bitter leaves, quinine tree as part of the food and liquid items to effect healing. The authors reiterate further that healing through the use of food supplements such as onion, tomatoes, pawpaw, cashew, guava leaves, mango leaves and unripe plantain is a common phenomenon in Africa.

In African health care, Medicare, magic and spirituality are essentially interwoven. In this regard, Awolalu and Dopamu affirm that "magic and medicine are based on the belief that there are vital forces and supernatural powers in the universe that can be tapped and controlled by man".²⁴ The knowledge of the herbal use, the precise applications, and the linkage of illness with supernatural forces, divinities, ancestors and witches constitute a nexus of interconnectivity of Medicare and Spirituality. African healing process is somehow complex in the sense that many health cases are linked with spiritual remote causes. In such cases, there are procedures of appeasing the spiritual entities that are identified to be in connection to each case of illness.

Healing in Africa culture also involves water therapy. Health is a major concern to the Africans and they explore all means to procure this. Adamo is of the view that "these ways include the use of herbs, powerful, mysterious and potent words; animal parts... water, fasting, prayers..... Hydrotherapy involves the use of cold or hot water".²⁵ In our contemporary world, water therapy constitutes a vital force in many religious circles, the indigenous churches especially the *Aladura*, Christ Apostolic Church in particular is known for faith healing through water. Joseph Ayo Babalola claimed that God instructed him to use water for the healing of man during

his ministry. As a result, many streams, river and brook were consecrated and sanctified through prayers for healing purposes. In some *Aladura* churches, the use of water from the rock is very common for healing and sound health reasons with some biblical passages especially from the book of Psalm. This may be a mystery of some ancient practices of hydrotherapy. But the *Aladura* claim divine revelation as the origin of their practices. “Brooks of waters, of fountains and springs that flow out of valleys and hills” could be meant for drinking and hydrotherapy in ancient Israel as well. It could also form part of their health system.

The contemporary Nigeria is seriously combating COVID-19 pandemic as well as other parts of the world. It is the argument of both scientists and the traditional herbalists that this virus can be cured through the use of traditional herbs and vegetables in Nigeria. Beside, news reports on Ondo State Radiovision Corporation²⁶ claimed that the scientists are agitating that the Madagascar’s herb solution to COVID-19 could be better produced in Nigeria if the government can provide the enabling environments and finance. Emphasis has been on increase consumption of local herbs, vegetables, fruits and food in African land in order to boost the body immunity system. The natural fruits, vegetables and food given to the Africans remain ranking with others in the world. There is a clarion call to make use of these blessings and nature gifts in the face of the challenges in the contemporary Nigeria.

Deuteronomy 8:8 and Dietary Regulation for Healing and Wellness in the Contemporary Nigeria

God made provisions, commandments, regulations and laws concerning the diet of man for healing and sound health or wellness. When God’s people get to the Promised Land, they were expected to eat seven classes of food that were capable of enhancing the sound health. Commenting these foods, Fagbo opines that “they are bio-dynamic super food(s) which contain large amount of natural vitamins, essential amino acids and indispensable phyto-nutrients, all in their right proper proportion to keep you healthy, strong, young looking and add years of happiness top your life”.²⁷ The Deuteronomic regulation of food items are:

Wheat: The Hebrew word *dangan* is a cereal grass with an age long history in antiquity and of great significance as a food for mankind. Owing to its physical and chemical qualities, wheat makes more palatable and better bread than other makes. It was part of the diet of the Israelites (Jud. 6:11; 2 Sam 4:6). The calendar of ancient Israelites was often calculated with references to the harvest of wheat (Gen 30:14; 1 Sam 6:13; 12:7). Because of its importance as a food, it is a symbol of God’s goodness and provision (Ps 81:16; 147:14). Nutritionally, wheat has been regarded as the king of all grains and the “stuff of life”. Wheat is rich in natural vitamins, minerals, fibers and complex carbohydrates. Its nutritional value includes improvement in digestion; reduce the risk of heart diseases like heart attack indigestion, diabetics, rheumatism and the likes. It is unfortunate today that men suffer from these diseases due to wrong consumption of adulterated foods and runs after synthetic drugs for cure without knowing what God has made for his health and healing through this food item

Barley: Hebrew *sebra* and Greek *Krithe* is an edible grain which still grows wild in Palestine. That barley forms part of the staple food in Palestine is indicated in Ruth 2:17, Ezekiel 4:9 and John 6. It is very good for lowering excessive cholesterol and good for the diabetic patients. The percentage of the diabetes in our society is on higher rate and increasing daily. God’s recipe for healing of diabetes is found in the provision of barley grains for mankind and also for sound health.

Vine: Hebrew *gephen* usually the cultivated grape; *soreq*, meaning the dark types of grape are mentioned in the scripture and were important part of the diet of the Hebrews. Apart from their use in the form of wine, vine supplies important iron and other essential minerals to the body. It is a good source of energizing sugar according to 1 Samuel 30:12 and 1 Chronicles 12:40. It could be eaten as raisin cakes or consumed as fresh juice. It has been discovered that all the vine possess powerful healing potential for prevention of heart disease, intestinal, liver or kidney disorders, hemorrhoids, arthritis and cancerous processes when consumed consistently in large quality. So when God made regulation and proportion of vine for man’s diet, He wanted man to be free from the health crisis and remain healthy so, He gave them vine and raisins as foods.

Fig trees: Hebrew *te’ena* meaning fig or fig tree was a common fruit in Palestine. The fig tree is often planted with the vine (cf. Lk. 13:16) hence the expression “to sit down under one’s own vine and fig tree” is a symbol of long continued well bring and prosperity (1 Kings 4:25; Mic. 4:4; Zech 3:10). It was the first plant to be mentioned in the Bible (Gen 3:2). It is a good source of good food qualities in the Promised Land. Lumps and cakes of dried figs constitute an excellent food for the Hebrews as well as medicinal value in Palestine and God provided them. Thirds was seen in the mass of figs which was prescribes by Isaiah as a poultice for Hezekiah’s boil and its healing (2 Kings 20:7, Isa 38:21). This shows that the figs have medicinal powers that can enhance the immunity that we need in the contemporary Nigerian situations. No wonder god brought ancient Israel to a land where that would be able to eat such fruit and be healthy

According to Fagbo, “figs tree are very rich in potassium, vitamin e, B1, B2, B6 and trace element like Zinc, copper and manganese”.²⁸ As a result, their healthful nutritional power helps man to fight high blood pressure, cholesterol, infection as well as treating bronchial disorder and prevents colon cancer. Many men are

suffering from deficiencies of vitamin in the society. Only few men have met the daily required intake of vitamins. But divine regulation on consumption of these food items provides a good remedy.

Pomegranates: This edible fruit is always mentioned in conjunction with vine, figs and palm in Deuteronomy 8:8 and Numbers 20:5. Just as grain wheat, barley, vine and olive oil were staple food in Israel, pomegranates were eaten and their juice was drunk as evident in Songs of Solomon 8:2. There are two types of these fruits in Israel, the sweet and acidic types. A refreshing drink is made from its juice, a syrup from the blossom. An astringent medicine is made from the blossom type for the health reasons. Its medicinal value could help in the prevention of heart disease, hypertension and anemia.

Olive Oil: This was another major dietary provision that was made for the Israelites by God. It was expected to form part of the daily consumption in the Promised Land. Olive oil was widely employed in the preparation of food and cooking in Palestine besides its usefulness as an ointment for lamp light in the temple according to Exodus 25:6 and Leviticus 24:2. Harrison submits that:

As a medicine olive oil was used both internally and externally. Its soothing protective qualities made it a valuable remedy for gastric disorders, while its properties as a mild laxative were also recognized in antiquity. Externally, it formed a popular urgent application for bruises and wounds.²⁹

In actual fact, Fagbo also submits that “olive oil is the king of oils because of its superior medical nutritive benefits.... Olive oil protects the heart more than any other food because it is mainly composed of monounsaturated fatty acids”.³⁰ It should be noted that God intended for man the regular consumption of this oil in order to enjoy its maximum nutritional benefits. Many are suffering from heart diseases today in our society without appropriate diagnosis and cure. As part of the preventive and cure of heart diseases, the consumption of olive oil was provided by God besides its economic benefits (1 Kgs. 5:11; Eze. 27:17; Hos. 12:1). Certainly, many Nigerians suffer from heart diseases. To worsen the situation, COVID-19 is not friendly with people who are managing cardiovascular diseases. Olive oil needs to be consumed as part of one’s daily food and not when one is ill or suffering from heart disease in order to boost his health.

Honey: The Hebrew word *devash* meaning, honey has its variant words like *nopet* meaning, juice or dropping; *ya’ar* meaning comb or *ya’at had-debas* meaning, comb of honey; *sup debas* meaning, “a flowing of honey” and its Greek cognate *meli* meaning, honey. It was a favourite food in the biblical times and was used in cake making (Ex 16:31). It is regarded as God’s sweetener and it is naturally made. Honey has both plant and animal origins and it contains more than 700 bioactive substances. Its medicinal properties are attested to in the scripture in Proverbs 16:24. Honey has power over respiratory diseases when mixed with garlic and bitter kola. “It is capable of fighting the cases of asthma as well. Any liver malfunctioning could be resisted by the medicinal powers of honey”.³¹ Its power to improve good memory is attested to in the book of Proverbs and it is recommended as part of daily food for wisdom gaining in Proverbs 24:13.

Through all the food items listed in Deuteronomy 8:7-9, God has prepared His people before any sickness occurrence in the wilderness as well as in the land of Canaan. He conditioned them items that could boost the immunity of their bodies against any ailments. Even in the wilderness there was no endemic or pandemic outbreak in their camps because of the types of food they ate (cf. Deut. 8:4; 29:5; Ps. 105:24). It has been established that the types of food one consumes determine his wellness. Many Nigerians do not take a good care of themselves while they are still healthy but when they fall sick. The immunity might have been broken down to the point that there is little or no resistance to any sickness attack. COVID-19 has revealed that man needs to boost his immunity against any sickness attack. This can be done through foods: fruits, vegetables, grains, tuber and other types from nature and to artificial or junk foods.

Water is common and cheap in the society and it is an essential part of intakes that man should be taking daily. The food of man, tubers, fruits and vegetables should contain all types of foods in good proportions for the immunity to be boosted. The rate of mortality in the current Nigerian society can be reduced if we return back to foods from nature and run away from industrialized foods. Consumption of artificial and junk foods is not a mark of westernized life, a display of wealth, civilization and superiority to others. Rather, it is a symbol of living a proverbial life that the Yoruba call *Igun jeun s’orun de iku*, meaning, a vulture only swallows poison and waiting for sudden death soon. The best medicines for any ailment are foods from plant proteins, vitamins, mineral, zinc, manganese, phyto-chemical and carbohydrates derived from nature. Foods and vegetable from the world of nature have no negative sides as the artificial ones.

Conclusion: It is a firm conviction has findings have revealed that junk foods are dangerous to human health. Besides the commercial purpose for the benefits of the producers, these artificial foods are produced in order to destroy the local produce in Nigeria and ensure they go into extinction in the name of new and western product. As times go by, the local herbs, spices and food species which have been nourishing and take good care of the Nigerians will give way for the imported and foreign ones, which is a means of destruction to the

agricultural practices of the indigenous people of Nigeria. It is a way of blocking the exportation of the locally produced foodstuffs in the nation but giving ways for suppressing the exportation of the locally produced foods from the country and regarding them as inferior to others.

Without any iota of doubt, it is another form of modern slavery and colonization of the natives through the weapon of imported food product. Without considering the health implications of these inorganic foods for Nigerians, the people are also being colonized and make it a must for them to eat foreign foods. God gave Israelites their native foods for their sustenance in order to promote sound health, wellness and longevity. These and other food spices, fruits, tubers, grains and vegetables are notable and peculiar to the ancient Israel and till date.

Nigerians should endeavour to promote their local spices, herbs, vegetables, tubers, grains and fruits, which are organically produced. There are many ailments and sicknesses that can be reversed through the consumption of the locally produced. Vegetables such as *amunu-tutu*, spinach, *legede-pumpkin*, *ogolomasi* or *ibepe-pawpaw*, *feregede*, *kokondo*, *otili*, *agbeje-pumpkin*, *worowo*, *gbure*, *ewedu-jute*, *tete*, *ata-ile*, ginger, *ajo*, turmeric, *ewa-dudu*, balck beans, *agbalumo*, *esuru funfun*, *esuru pupa*, spices for *gbanu-nu*, stomach flourishing soup, *efo-ebolo*, *orogodo* and *papaala*- beans species peculiar to the Akoko, *pakala* of the Ekiti, *Igbimo* rice, a local very common to the Ekiti and Ijesa, grains common in the northern and eastern Nigeria.

It has been demonstrated in this paper that God has dietary regulation for the ancient Israelite as means of gaining sound healing and remaining healthy in the Promised Land. Many of the diseases that are killing modern men today without remedy have been provided for by God through dietary regulation. Nigerians should seriously seek to boost their immunity through consumption of natural for foods. African forefathers lived long to large extent because what they ate was from natural foods. Many aged parents who are alive still go to the farm, hale and hearty because of the types of food they eat. If man can follow this regulation, it is very likely that he would as well avoid the killing disease in the society. Not these alone, he would remain healthy, sound and live long on planet earth.

ENDNOTES

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