

“... wahásìrötîmaHálâmiqqirBe°kä”(Exod 23:25) and John 15:7: A Contextual Analysis

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Abstract

Psychologists have proven the instinct of self-defense as the strongest instinct in the human person. This informs why the desire for good health is utmost in every person. Since sickness has remained a challenging experience in the life of the human person, recourse to the invisible and yet believably omnipotent being is the only option to actualize this desire especially in the face of the reality of ill health. The problem is that most often, the fulfilment appears to be in breach. In Exod 23:25, the promise is to remove sickness from our midst. John 15:7 teaches that if we abide in Him and His word abides in us, we shall receive whatever we ask. Interestingly, there is no exclusivity in what we may ask and assuredly receive. Experience has proven the opposite and, in some cases even after administering the sacrament of the sick. This paper concerns itself primarily with an exploration into the exegetical meaning of the texts. Attention is given to the stipulations in the texts as preconditions to fulfilment. A section is devoted to theological abstraction on the practicality of the texts in the present-day dispensation.

Keywords: sickness; word; abide; ask; analysis

Introduction

It is the firm belief of the Israelites that their origin is by Divine initiative and grace. They believe that they would not have been a people at all had God not acted on their behalf in the time of their oblivion and oppression. God heard, He saw and He rescued them. The first major theme of Exodus is, in fact, the miraculous deliverance of the descendants of Jacob from slavery in Egypt through the mediation of Moses (Exod 1:1-15:21). The second major theme is the Sinaitic Covenant (Exod 19:1-40:38) in which God made the Israelites His special people. The journey through the desert with its attendant problems runs in between these primary themes. Exodus is considered a very important book and so references to it spans through the OT and NT.² Because of

¹B.W. Anderson: Understanding: The Old Testament. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966, p. 43.

²References to Exodus are frequent in the book of Psalms in the form of supplication as in Psalm 77, and also in hymns of thanksgiving and praise for all the wonders of God: Pss 68, 99, 105, 114, 135, 136. The NT authors made proficient use of Exodus. Jesus is portrayed as the new Moses, who is to lead His new people out of the slavery of sin through the waters of Baptism. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is clearly portrayed as the new Moses, who gives a new and perfect law, which is the fulfilment of the Mosaic moral law. In the gospel of John, Jesus teaches about the imperishable food better than the imperishable manna God rained down from heaven for the Jews during the Exodus. Paul in 2Cor 3:1-18 compares the covenant of the OT with the new and perfect Covenant of the NT, the Covenant of Christ which gives freedom and life through the Spirit. Paul moral exhortations to Christians in Corinth (1Cor 10:1-11) with a warning that they ought not to follow the example of the people of the Old Covenant is all reference to Exodus (Daughters of St. Paul: Introductions to the Books of the Bible. Boston: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966, pp. 50-51).

their firm belief in God's intervention in their history, they see God as their father who is always there and ought to be there for them. This idea spans the OT constructions whether Yahwistic, Elohist, Priestly or Deuteronomistic. God is expected to bless them while they themselves ought to keep His commandments. Good health is believed to be part of this blessing since sickness and death remain an unwelcomed experience in human history. This desire explains the idea in Exod 23:25: wa`ábadtem `ëtyhwh(`ádönäy) `élöhêkemûbërak `e|t-lahmükäwü`et-même°käwahásirötímahálâmiqqirbe°kä. This underlying belief and conviction also influence the provisions of some NT passages like John 15:7: eanmeinëteenemoui kai ta hrëmata mou enhuminmeinë, eantheleiteaitësthe kai genësetaihumin. The big problem comes when one subjects some of these convincing biblical excerpts to criticisms based on human experiences. The fact remains that sickness has remained part of human problems. Several prayers have always been offered by believers in the face of this challenging problem and most often the fulfilment appear to be in breach. One wonders whether the problem is with God or with human beings understanding. Unfortunately, many religious leaders do not help the situation. Apparently, they appear so convinced when they cite some of these passages to push their adherents into believing their claims. Eventually many end up frustrated. Some have even abandoned the faith after years and years of presumed belief. The researcher takes time to give a background to the texts studied. He then proceeds with an interpretation of the texts. Effort is made to subject the texts to theological analysis. The finding reveals that God is ever faithful. The problem is with believers who either misconstrue the bible or do not fulfil the preconditions and yet expect the promised result.

Background of Studies

Christianity is gradually but regrettably becoming an endangered specie all over the world. The case in African setting is even more worrisome. She appears threatened and hemmed in from all sides. There is Islamic forceful influence on the oneside and a decadence necessitated by schismatic groups in the name of Pentecostalism; and worse is the external aggression coming from relapse into the so-called traditional religion. Quest for miracles could be said to be the general remote cause for this gradual demise. However, the researchers believes that while people can withstand the challenges of poverty and near success syndrome, the malaise of ill health and threats of death appear to be the more fundamental cause. Human beings can do anything to preserve life. Unfortunately, our sacred book, generally believed to be the Word of God seem to have also necessitated the problem because of misinterpretation. There are lots of promises in the passages of the bible. Naturally, people believe these literally. Most of the time, they get frustrated after several attempts to actualize these promises in their real life. Exod. 23:25 and John 15:7 are some of the passages in question.

Exod 23:25 is part of a larger pericope, Exod 23:20-33 detailing the relation of God to Israel. The declaration of the rights conferred by God upon His people is closed by promises, through which, on the one hand, God insured to the nation the gifts and benefits involved in their rights, and, on the other hand, sought to promote that willingness and love which were indispensable to the fulfilment of the duties incumbent upon every individual in consequence of the rights conferred upon them.³ These promises secured to the people not only the protection and help of God during their journey through the desert, and in the conquest of Canaan, but also preservation and prosperity when they had taken possession of the land. God promises to send them an angel who would go before them to

³C.F. Keil: Commentary on the Old Testament vol. 1. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2006, p.420.

guard them from injury and destruction, and bring them to the promised land. V. 21 indicates that God reveals Himself in this angel. His name is in this angel and so in Exod 33: 15-16 he is called the face of God because the essential nature of God is manifested in him. The angel is not a created spirit but a theophany; a manifestation of God who went before them in the pillar of cloud and fire, to guide and to defend them (Exod 13:21). It is God Himself leading His people through the instrumentality of the angel and He demanded unconditional obedience. If they provoked him by disobedience, He would not pardon their transgression; but if they followed him and hearkened to His voice, He would be an enemy to their enemies and an adversary to their adversaries (v.22). When they get into the promised land, the land of the Canaanites they must adhere to the strict obedience by not following the Canaanite gods. After the angel has exterminated the Canaanites, the Israelites must not serve the gods of the Canaanites. They must smite the pillars of their idolatrous worship and memorial stones (mašēbot). It is on this condition that He, God, would bless them in the land with bountiful provision, health, fruitfulness, and length of life (vv. 23-26Kî-y ē l ē k m a l ' ä k î l ü p ä n e k ä w e h é b î | ' á k ä ' e l - hä|'émörîwüha^ohittîwühappürizzîwüha|kküna`ánîhahîwwîwühayübûsîwühikhadtîw²⁴lô| - t i š t a h á w è l è ' l ö | h ê h e m w ü l ö ' t o | ` o b d è m w ü l ö ' ta`ásèKüma|`ásêhemKîhärëstühä^orsëmwüšabbërTüšabbërmaccëbötêhem²⁵wa`ábadtem ' è t y h w h (' ä d ö n ä y) ' é l ö h ê k e m û b ë r a k ' e | t - l a h m ü k ä w ü ' e t - m ê m e ^okäwahásîrötîmahálâmiqqirbe^okä²⁶lô' tihyëmüšakkëlâwa`áqârâBü'arce^okä 'et-misparyäme^okä 'ámallë'). The taking away of sickness (cf. 15:26) connotes the removal of everything that could endanger life.

A look at John 15:7 appear to enshrine similar nuance. It teaches that the Word of God must abide in one. The person must then also abide in Him. It is only in this condition that one can ask whatever he wills and God will do it (eanmeinēteenemoi kai ta hrēmata mou enhuminmeinē, o eantheleiteaitēsasthe kai genēsetaihumin).

The researcher has observed with concern the rate at which many Christian adherents anxiously jump from one church to another in search of the solution to their problems believing that God has promised them a life without sickness. Such passages as the two under investigations are cited by most so called 'men of God' as a backup for their promises of miracles on the sick and problem laden persons. Reference is scarcely made to the conditions given by God.

Statement of the Problem

The researcher observes with concern the apparent possibility of promises presumably made by God without fulfilment. Often, some believers get so frustrated after years of prayers and biblical citations; obvious demonstration of faith without expected result. Many have abandoned the faith because of this. Some continue with least assurance. Some have ended up as nominal followers. The big question is: Is God really the problem or the believers? Are the promises we believe God made truly what we take them to be? The researcher is convinced that a misinterpretation leads to misconstruction, misrepresentation and confusion. He believes that it is here that all the problem lies. Anderson is correct when he insists that every reader of the Bible has to make up his mind about the historical nucleus which lies at the heart of the tradition that has been elaborated and colored by Israel's faith over a period of generations. Some miracles are more central to the Exodus story, more native to the Mosaic period, than others. Some of the stories we read are an artistic and imaginative expression of the conviction that God was active in history, delivering them from servitude and calling them to serve His purpose.⁴ This explains why proper interpretation of every biblical text is of absolute necessity to separate the fact from later accretions.

B.W. Anderson: Understanding: The Old Testament. Eaglewood Cliffs.: Prentice Hall, 1966, p.49

Significance of the Study

The researcher believes that:

- i. this research will address the major problem accruing from misinterpretation of the bible.
- ii. It will aid those derailing in the faith to get back to their feet
- iii. It will help curb the frustration faced by many in the face of presumably unanswered prayer
- iv. It will help believers have proper discernment and be able to differentiate between the nut and the shell in the face of fundamentalism
- v. It will serve as a reference point for religious leaders to eschew desire for fame and fruits of the ministry and face squarely their God given duty of pastoring the people
- vi. It will serve as a tool for further researches in theology and biblical studies.

Exod 23:25 as a Parallel Text in the OT

Exod 23:25 could be described as a treasury of scriptural texts. It calls up many parallel texts in both OT and NT.

Deuteronomy 6:13 You shall fear the LORD your God, and serve him, and shall swear by his name.

Deuteronomy 10:12,20 And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but ...

Deuteronomy 11:13,14 And it shall come to pass, if you shall listen diligently to my commandments ...

Deuteronomy 13:4 You shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his ...

Deuteronomy 28:1-6 And it shall come to pass, if you shall listen diligently to the ...

Joshua 22:5 But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses ...

Joshua 24:14,15,21,24 Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth...

1 Samuel 7:3 And Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, If you do return ...

1 Samuel 12:20,24 And Samuel said to the people, Fear not: you have done all this wickedness: ...

Jeremiah 8:2 And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all ...

Matthew 4:10 Then said Jesus to him, Get you hence, Satan: for it is written, ...

he shall

Deuteronomy 7:13 And he will love you, and bless you, and multiply you: he will also ...

Deuteronomy 28:5-8 Blessed shall be your basket and your store...

Isaiah 33:16 He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions ...

Malachi 3:10 Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat ...

I will take

Exodus 15:26 And said, If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD ...

Deuteronomy 7:15 And the LORD will take away from you all sickness, and will put none ...

Psalms 103:3 Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases;

Isaiah 33:24 And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell ...

Exegesis of Exod 23:25

Syntax of Exod 23:25

wa`abadtemis a *waw* conjunctive plus *qal* perfect 2nd masculine plural from the verb *'abad*. It is rendered 'and you shall serve'. Its *qal* form depicts the sense of human being's free decision and active involvement in serving God. It is not a servitude or enslavement as opposed to its *hiphil* form (to be made to serve) or *hophal* (to cause to serve). It is God inviting them to serve Him and yet, the invitation is not an imposition. It is like a recommendation since serving Him will be for their good.⁵

⁵Deut 30:19 comes to mind here. God maintains that He has set before mankind, good and bad; life and death. He now recommends that we do the good in order that we may live.

'*ëtyhwh* is a direct object plus proper noun. The direct object indicates the definiteness and absoluteness of the person they are to serve. The use of the Hebrew Tetragrammaton *yhwh*, enforces the absoluteness and definiteness. The service is to God and God alone. It does not admit of any other.⁶ The idea is made clearer with the noun masculine plural construct with second person masculine plural suffix - '*élöhêkem*. The author dropped the Tetragrammaton to use a cognate word '*el* probably to show that just as other nations serve their gods, the Israelites ought to serve God but with unalloyed worship.

ûbërak is waw consecutive with piel perfect verb 3rd masculine singular. The use of the piel here is informative. The piel like the qal form means 'to bless'. The piel form however gives the word the sense of implied responsibility. It gives the idea of God's continued blessing on His people once they continue to serve Him alone. It is in His nature to bless and the blessing flows in as much as the condition is fulfilled. The blessing is to be on their bread ('*et-lamükä* a direct object marker with noun masculine singular construct with 2nd masculine singular suffix) and water (*wü'et-même⁰kä* a direct object marker with noun masculine singular construct with 2nd masculine singular suffix). Since their major means of sustenance, their food and water are blessed, sickness will have no place in their lives.

wahásirötîs is waw consecutive with first person hiphil common singular perfect. The hiphil form gives the sense of complete taking away of sickness. Unlike the qal form of the same verb often rendered 'turn aside', the hiphil denotes the idea of totality. It is taken away once and for all. It is like a promise. Once they remain steadfast in serving Him alone, He will take away every sickness (*mahálâ*, noun feminine singular) from their midst (*miqqirbe⁰kä*, preposition, noun masculine singular with 2nd person masculine singular suffix).

Semantic Analysis

Exod 23:25 is part of what Gray describes as hortatory epilogue covering Exod 23:20-33.⁷ In the exhortation stressing God's conditional grace, the law is related to the occupation of the promised land (Exod 20:5). The pericope appears to be a conclusion to the whole Sinai episode, introducing the departure for Canaan, which has been adapted as a conclusion to the Book of the Covenant.⁸ It is noteworthy that in this passage, there are no curses for disobedience as in the epilogues to the law in Lev 26:14-39.⁹ There are rather both admonitions and assurance (vv. 20-22) for the journey to Canaan and the settlement there (vv. 25-31). Exod 23:25-26 forms part of this admonition and assurance (*wa`ábadtem 'ëtyhwh('ädönäy) 'élöhêkemûbërak 'et-lahmükäwü'et-même⁰käwahásirötîmahálâmimiqqirbe⁰kä*).

The verse could be structured into two parts: the exhortation (*wa`ábadtem 'ëtyhwh('ädönäy) 'élöhêkem*) and the resultant effect (*ûbërak 'et-lahmükäwü'et-même⁰käwahásirötîmahálâmimiqqirbe⁰kä*). The people's responsibility is to serve God while God on His own part will bless their food and water; and then remove every sickness from them.

The root '*bd* is common in Semitism though with some measure of semantic diversity. The Ugaritic word '*bd*, and the Hebrew '*ábab* mean "serve", while the substantive '*ebeb*: Ugaritic '*bd*,

⁶The coinage connotes the absoluteness of the latria expected of the Israelites in Exod 20:3-5.

⁷J. Gray: "Exodus" The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible including all the Books of the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha, together with Forty-three General Articles, C.M. Laymon ed., London: William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd 1972, p. 58.

⁸J. Gray: "Exod", p. 58

⁹See also Deut 28:15-68.78

Phoenician *'bd*, Aramaic *'abdā* and Arabic *'abd* consistently mean “slave, servant”. The Ethiopic *'abalu* means “impose compulsory labour”. On the other hand, Aramaic, Syriac *'bab* and Phoenician *'bd* mean “do, make”. In Akkadic, it appears only as a loanword *abdu*.¹⁰ There are cognate words to the root *'bd* but in all the common denominator is that the root expresses a person who is subject to someone stronger. In the OT, *'ābab* occurs 271x in the qal, 4x in the niphāl, 2x in the pual, 8x in the hiphil and 4x in hophal. Without object, the verb usually means “to work”. In the expression *wa'abadtem 'ētyhwh*, *'ābab* has a personal and direct object, namely, YHWH. When the verb has a personal object, it means “serve” and expresses the relationship between an *'ēbēb* and his or her *'ābon* (lord, master). The relationship can take on various forms itself. It can be one of subjugation and dependence, of total claim on a person, or of loyalty.¹¹ Indeed, all these nuances resonate, with one or another feature being more or less emphasized in any given case. The dependence can be legal or social, as when a slave serves a master¹² or political as when a vassal serves a lord.¹³ Passages in which *'ābab* takes YHWH or other gods as its object, one observes particular theological interest. In the first instance, it implies cultic service as in Exod 3:12¹⁴. In the case of YHWH, it transcends just cultic interest. The correct postulation is to faithfully worship YHWH and Him exclusively. This explains why it is always circumscribed with the verbs *yārē'* and *šb'niphāl*.¹⁵ Other possible descriptive verbs include *hālak 'aḥrē*; *šāmarmibwbt* (Keep commandments); *šm' b'qbl* (heed the voice) etc. We can therefore say that the expression *wa'abadtem 'ētyhwh* in Exod 23:25 invokes total commitment on the part of the people. It could be said to be a religious and ethical disposition encompassing a person's entire life, one coming to expression especially in the obedient keeping of the commandments.¹⁶

The second part of the verse says: *ūbērak 'et-lahmükäwü'et-mēme'käwahäsirötîmahälâmiqqirbe'kä* (and he will bless your bread and your water and he will take away sickness from among you).

Häsirötîs is a hiphil perfect firstperson common singular from the deponent verb *šbr*. The verb is not widely distributed in the Semitic languages. It is found in the Akkadic *sāru* (to circle, to dance). In the Ugaritic it is *b'lsr*. In Phoenician and Punic, it appears as a verb taking an accusative object with the meaning “to remove”.¹⁷ The verb appears 158x as qal; 133x as hiphil; once as polel in Lam 3:11 and the hophal form is attested only in Lev 4:31.35, 1Sam 21:7, Isa 17:1 and in Dan 2:11. The hiphil form of the verb means “eliminate, remove” and it generally takes the preposition *min*.¹⁸ It is used in this sense in Exod 23:25. It is *mahälâ* that YHWH promises to eliminate here. However, the condition is that the Israelites must first serve the Lord. The context drives a sense of unalloyed submission. The challenges are made obvious in the force of 'serving the Lord'. In the midst of the temptations to follow others in worshipping other gods; in the face of unwholesome human problems and unwelcome situations, their part is to remain faithful and then God will eliminate sickness from their midst.

Exegesis of John 15:7

¹⁰H. Ringgren: “*'ābab*” TDOT vol. X, G.J. Botterweck et al. eds., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008, pp. 377-3

¹¹H. Ringgren: “*'ābab*” TDOT vol. X, G.J. Botterweck et al. eds., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008, p. 383.

¹²Exod 21:6

¹³2Kings 18:7

¹⁴This passage is recalled in subsequent events as in Exod 4:23; 7:16.26: 8:16; 9:1.13; 10:3.7.8.11.24.26; 12/31

¹⁵Deut 6:13 is a good example.

¹⁶This is the idea we also see in Exod 10:12f.

¹⁷A. Snijders: “*Sṣr*”, TDOT vol. X, G.J. Botterweck et al. eds., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008, p. 200

¹⁸Cf. 2Sam 7:15; Hos 2:19; Zech 9:7; it also includes elimination of foreign gods as in Gen 35:2 and Josh 24:14; foreign altars as in 2Chr 14:2; high places and images of the sun in 2Chr 14:4; abominations 2Chr 34:33; garments as in Deut 21:13 and Ezek 26:16; immaterial things such as reproach can also be eliminated 1Sam 17:26.

The text of John 15:7 reads: Ean meinēteenemoui kai ta hrēmata mou enhuminmeinē, ho eanthelēteaitēsasthe, kai genēsetai humin (If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you will, and it will be done for you).

Textual Problems

John 15:7 contains some salient textual issues. Some mss like Γ^{66} L 579 *pc* have *menei* as alternative reading to *meinē*. The text used by the researcher has *meinē*, an aorist subjunctive as against present indicative used by few manuscripts as alternative reading. The mss with the alternative reading are not just few in number, they are more recent. Even the papyrus that has the alternative reading is a corrected one. Ordinarily also, the verb ought to be in present indicative and not in the subjunctive because of the 'if' clause. The researcher believes that the text he uses is closer to the original because it is the *lectio difficilior* and also it is testified in more ancient mss. Further, Γ^{66} D* e omithumin. The researcher considers the text he uses as closer to the original based on the principle of *lectio difficilior* and the greater of mss that have similar reading with the text.

Syntactic Analysis

Ean (if) is used to introduce a subordinate clause in a conditional sentence. It is used instead of ei in cases of general suppositions, namely, when the apodosis expresses a customary or repeated action or general truth in the present or past time. It generally takes subjunctive mood in the protasis and present indicative in the apodosis.¹⁹

Meinēte is 2nd person plural aorist subjunctive active voice of *menō*. The verb is attested 118x in the NT. It is very common in John. In the NT it is generally used in reference to the immutability of God and the things of God.²⁰ As an intransitive verb, it is taken to mean “to remain, to stand firm, to continue”. As a transitive it means “to wait on, to expect”. In John 1,38 it also occurs with the derivative meaning “to dwell”; to remain alive (John 21:22f); to continue to live (1Cor 15:6); be permanent (John 3:14); remain in a situation (John 7:8.11.20.24.40).²¹

Ta hrēmata is a noun nominative neuter plural from hrēma (word). It is used in reference to a spoken word²² just as logos. The later, is much more attested in the NT with an occurrence of 330x while hrēma occurs only 68x. It appears more in Luke (33x) than others. It is used only 12x in John, 5x in Matthew, 2x in Mark, 4x in Romans and 2x in 2Corinthians.²³

Thelēteis present subjunctive active 2nd person plural. It has 209 occurrences in the NT. It mostly signifies willing whether in the sense of wish,²⁴ decision²⁵ and intention or command.²⁶

¹⁹D. Obielosi: Biblical Greek Grammar for Beginners, 2nd ed. Abuja: Perpetual Prints, 2014, p.120.

²⁰F. Hauck: “Menō” TDNT, vol. IV, G. Kittel ed., Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967, p.575.

²¹H. Hübner: “menō” EDNT vol. 2, H. Balz and G. Schneider eds., Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994, p. 407

²²M. Zerwick and M. Grosvenor: A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament, Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1996, p. 332.

²³W. Radl: “Hrēma” EDNT, vol. 3, H. Balz and G. Schneider eds., Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994, p. 210.

²⁴Matt 20:21; 1Cor 4:21; Gal 4:20.

²⁵Luke 13:31; John 6:67; Gal 1:7; 1Thes 2:18.

²⁶Matt 18:23; Luke 1:62; Rev 11:6

Aitēsasthe is 2nd person plural aorist imperative middle voice from aiteō. It is used frequently by the four evangelists and occurs about 70x in the NT and often in the middle voice.²⁷ The basic meaning is to ask for or to demand.²⁸ It can further mean to wish for,²⁹ solicit,³⁰ request,³¹ insist upon,³² call for,³³ beg,³⁴ petition,³⁵ desire,³⁶ seek, wish to see,³⁷ demand,³⁸ pray.³⁹

Genēsetai is a deponent verb future indicative middle voice 3rd person singular from gennaō. It is attested about 97x in the NT 40 of which are in Matthew, 18x in John and 10x in 1John. The rest occurrences are sparsely distributed in other parts of the NT. It simply means to beget, give birth or to bring forth.

Semantic Analysis

John 15:7 is part of a larger pericope (15:7-10) that draw out and illustrate the meaning of “remaining” in Jesus. The emphasis in vv. 1-6 is on faith that trusts in Christ, opens life to Christ and remains in union with Christ. V. 7 emphasizes remaining in the words of Christ, i.e. the revelation that he brought. Such a believer is assured that his prayers will be answered, for his prayers will be dominated by the desire for the service of the kingdom of God.⁴⁰

We can easily structure the verse into A and B.

A: Ean meinēteenemoui kai ta hrēmata mou enhuminmeinē,

B: ho eantheleiteaitēsasthe, kai genēsetaihumini

15:7a details a condition that must be fulfilled.

15:7b gives an assurance of the expected result if the given condition is fulfilled.

The key word in A is *meinēte*. The verb *meinein* is common in Johannine writings. Of the 112 occurrences in the NT, Johannine writings have it 66x. Hauck explains that along the lines of the common Greek expression, *meinein* in the NT often refers to the psychological abiding of the righteous in the things which belong to salvation.⁴¹ By the use of *meinein*, John seeks to express the immutability and inviolability of the relation of immanence. Thus, over and above the Hellenistic rapture and the prophecy of Israel, the Christian believer theologially

²⁷W. Radl: “aiteō” EDNT, vol 1, H. Balz and G. Schneider eds., Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994, p. 43.

²⁸Matt 7:7.8.9.10.11; Luke 12:20.48; Acts 25:15.

²⁹Mark 6:22.23.24.25; 10:35.

³⁰Mark 15:8.

³¹Mark 15:43; Acts 9:2.

³²Luke 23:23; Acts 13:28

³³Luke 1:63; Acts 16:29

³⁴Acts 3:2

³⁵Acts 12:20.

³⁶Acts 13:21

³⁷1Cor 1:22

³⁸1Pet 3:15

³⁹1John 5:16

⁴⁰R. Beasley-Murray: *John*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36, D.A. Hubbard et al. Waco: Word Books Publisher, 1987, p. 273.

⁴¹F. Hauck: “Menō” TDNT, vol. IV, G. Kittel ed., Grand Rapids: W.M. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967, p.576.

occupies a preeminent place in the sense that God abides in Christ (John 14:10) and believers abide in Christ (John 6:56; 15:4-7). Also, God abides in believers (1John 4:16) and believers abide in God (1John 2:24; 4:16). There is a type of reciprocal immanence.⁴² The expression gives a nuance of total surrender. A sublimation of the believer into the personhood of Christ such that in the words of St. Paul, it is no longer the believer living but Christ living in the believer (Gal 1:19-20). The believer is completely under the control of the Divine will. It is this union that gives impetus to the section of the passage *ho eantheleiteaitēsasthe*. Bernard explains that petitions prompted by the indwelling worlds of Jesus cannot fail to be in harmony with the Divine Will. A petitioner who abides in Christ asks habitually in His Name; i.e. he asks as Christ would ask, and so his satisfaction is sure. And so, *genēsetai hūmin* not as a boon granted arbitrarily, but as the inevitable sequence of the prayer.⁴³ It is no longer the prayer of the believer per se. It is Christ's as the mediatrix who now takes up the petition of the believer as his own and so it is actualized. Blank documents similar idea when he holds that "...Jesusnosmantiene enel y nos da el poder para guardar sus mandamientos y para amarnos los unos a los otros como el no amo. Por medio de la Palabra ... Jesus os capacita para llevar mucho fruto."⁴⁴

Ean meinēteenemōi is necessary but not sufficient. His word must also remain in one (ta hrēmata mou enhūmin meinē). John always uses *hrēma* in a collective sense of Jesus' words, including in the sense that he speaks God's words (3:34, 8:47) which he receives and passes on (17:8). Further, his words are also his works and so *hrēma* and *erga* alternate with one another (14:10, 17:4). One can therefore say that his word is identical with himself. It follows that when he says ta hrēmata mou enhūmin meinē he is simply saying that it is not enough for one to abide in him, He himself must also abide in the person and such is only possible if one loves him by keeping his commandments (John 14:21).

Exod 23:25 and John 15:7

A critical look at the two texts shows obvious theological rapport and interface. Exod 23:25 gives observance of God's commandment as a precondition for sickness to be removed from the people. John 15:7 gives a similar condition. For one to get whatever he/she asks, he/she must abide in Christ and the word of Christ must abide in him/her.

Theological Abstraction

It will be foolhardy to imagine a world without problems. Human beings without sickness and other challenges. Thus, a literal interpretation of the passages studied would be as misleading as a misnomer.

The story related in Exod 1-24 deals with two series of episodes. The first is the deliverance from Egypt and its sequel, the guidance through the wilderness, the second is God's revelation at Sinai, his giving of the Law, and the making of the covenant. The two are inseparably related. The first is the preparation for the second (Exod 3:12); and the second is based theologically on the first. In chp. 19 after their arrival at Sinai, we get the impression

⁴²H. Hübner: "menō" EDNT vol. 2, H. Balz and G. Schneider eds., Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994, p. 407

⁴³J.H. Bernard: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John, vol. 2, ICC, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1953, p.482.

⁴⁴R.H. Blank: El Evangelio Segun Juan. Comentario Concordia, H. Hope ed., St. Louis: Editorial Concordia, 1999, p.

that God had been carrying His people, just as an eagle lifts its young on its wing and on a purpose. His people were not intended to be a crowd but a community, bound to Him and to one another by a covenant bond:

ûmöšè `älâ `el-hä`élöhîmwayyiqrä` `äläwyhwh(`ädönäy) min-hähärlë`mörKò
tö`marlübêtya`âqöbwütaggêdlîbnêyiSrä`ël⁴`attemrü`îtem`âšer`âšî^otî 1
ümicrä^oyimwä`eSSä` `etkem `al-Kanpênüšârîmwä`âbî` `etkem `äläy^swü`attâ`im-
šämô^a` tišmü`ûBüqöliûšümartem `et-Bürîtiwihiyî^otemlîsügullâmikkol-
hä^o`ammîmkî-lîkol-hä`ä^orec⁶wü`attemtihyû-lîmamle^oketköhânîmwügôyqädôš
`ë^ollèhaddübârîm`âšertüdabbër`el-bünêyisrâ`ël (Thus you shall say to the house of
Jacob, and tel the people of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I
bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my
voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for a 1 1
the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words
which you shall speak to the children of Israel. Exod 19:3-6)

the passage above the represents a theological reflection on Israel's special calling grounded on the Exodus event. God's initiative evokes a response on the part of the people. He will be their God and they on their part will be His people. As His people, they must observe His commandments and serve Him alone. John 15:7 connotes similar sense. As Christians, we are God's people. We have special vocation. We are adopted sons and daughters of God (Gal 4:4-7). By baptism we have gotten configured into another Christ (Gal 3:26-27) and so we have become children of God (John 1:12). Just as the Jews must observe God's commandments and worship Him alone, so Christians must let the Word get incarnated into them through evident Christian life before the provisions of John 15:7 shall come to reality. It is in this understanding that L. Boadt, explains that because Israel had a strong sense of God's intervention into its history, it saw its duty both to remember the wonderful things God had done for it alone and to proclaim and affirm the truth about this God to the whole world.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, today as against the life of the Israel of old, most believers seek for the miracles of God without affinity to the God of miracles.

The bible is such a great book of revelation that it uses the structure of society to help a community function religiously, but at the same time moves beyond these structures. Thus, Israel could demand of its kings and indeed all Israelites a fidelity and obedience to God's law that no other ANE monarch had to face. Even in the face of adversities, they still saw God at work. Thus, when the Assyrians disparaged the Northern Israel, the rest moved on to a new understanding that God worked even when you did not have the promised land to live in. When the Babylonians destroyed the Temple, rather than giving in to frustration, doubt and unbelief, they moved on to perceive that these too could be dispensed with, and that God would now act in new ways. In the words of Boadt, "The Scriptures themselves are written so that Israel can be freed from any single human social structure or government or land and continue to meditate and proclaim the enduring covenant through time".⁴⁶ Christians must of necessity live above the limitations fundamentalism to see joys in the midst of suffering.

⁴⁵L. Boadt: Reading the Old Testament. An Introduction. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1984, p. 544.

⁴⁶L. Boadt: Reading the Old Testament, p. 548.

Again, God is a mystery and remains so. Whereas the Greeks developed philosophy and pondered on how gods can really communicate with man, the Israelites in Wisdom literature explored and explained God's transcendence and immanence in relation to human life. It is a case of total surrender to the will of the unseen God who does what He likes and the way He likes it without questioning.

The passages invite us to reflect on the reciprocal nature of our relationship with God. It's a reminder that in honoring God—through our actions, choices, and daily living—He, in turn, blesses us. This is not merely about physical blessings, but encompasses a holistic care that touches every aspect of our lives.

God's promise to bless our bread and water is symbolic of His provision for our basic needs. But it goes deeper, implying a commitment to our well-being and flourishing. In dedicating ourselves to God, we open our lives to His protective care and nurturing grace

Evaluation and Conclusion

Christians as the new people of God embracing people of every race can consider the book of Exodus as a very important and timely book, intensely human. In it we are touched especially by the fact that over and above the weakness and fickleness of people stands the infinite patience and mercy of God who hearkens to whoever turns to Him in repentance and trust. However, a reading and interpretation of the text must not fail to understanding the disparities, the contexts and influences of the sources of construction (J, E, P, D). Citing and applying a single passage without reference to the context will surely lead to deceit and fanatical belief. The result is usually frustration for lack of fulfilment. This is true for every part of the both the OT and NT. Contextual reading is not enough. Effort must be made to get the proper interpretation. This paper has demonstrated that Exod 23:25 and John 15:7 have good promises. However, a proper interpretation and contextual reading of the texts are of absolute necessity if the promises will be appropriated. Again, the preconditions must be fulfilled for its realization.

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