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### Abstract

It was a strange experience to have a total lockdown in all parts of the World as COVID-19 ravaged in 2019, 2020 and part of 2021. It was an untold story to the current generation who experienced the same. There was real experience and fake or composed events to make money from the poor masses. Some medical practitioners paid with their lives in attempt to control the saga and some other set of people made money in cool term through the ugly scenario. Hence, the Reality and Mirage of Coronavirus, which will be viewed through African spectrum and Old Testament Precautions. The study adopted historic and participant observation methods to fulfil the intent of Africans and relayed the personal views of the individuals on Coronavirus, and what are the Old Testament precautions that were used to avert the scenario. The way out of Pandemic was examined in Torah and Historical part of the Old Testament Studies. The Holy Bible, Old Testament precisely and eyewitness report of the issues pertaining to COVID-19 and interviews conducted were the primary sources while the literatures, some reports in dailies and internet events on the pandemic were materials for the development of the events as secondary sources. It was realised that the outbreak of the pandemic is a reality. On the other side, it was a mirage as some people magnified the pandemic to enrich themselves in Nigeria. World Health Organization, W.H.O. involvement was not spared from some manipulations. The significant roles played by the President of Madagascar to present the reality behind the outbreak and other roles played by many others negatively are well narrated. The study also, suggested remedy used by few people, who worked for them without visiting hospital. The study concluded that the past COVID-19 was real and the other side of the coin is that, there were men manipulations and politicking in it.

**Keywords:** Reality, Mirage, Coronavirus, African perspectives, Old Testament, Precaution, W.H.O.

### Background

It was a strange thing for this generation to forcefully be lockdown at home during the outbreak of the Pandemic. Initially it seems incredible when the News presented the lockdown in the Western World and the same was enforced in Nigeria and all other African Countries. Some people did not believe it until it happened. Death of rich people rolled in thousands as money was unable to prevail over the termination of lives. The reality was on everybody that COVID19 may likely put end to the current World. Great Countries like Italy, America, Britain, Russia, France, etc lost their citizens to death on ground of the pandemic. Many countries have not recovered from the bitter experience.

The study used interchangeably Covid-19 and Coronavirus. COVID-19 is an acute respiratory illness in humans caused by Coronavirus. It was first discovered in China in December 2019, hence the '19 at the end of the name. The virus behind the illness is coronavirus, which is characterised by fever, coughing, sneezing and shortness of breath and it sometimes damages the major organs, heart and kidney.<sup>1</sup> It is highly infectious respiratory disease which occurs as a result of Coronavirus. The variants of COVID-19 are Covid-19, covid-19, COVID and covid. For over 50 years, the scientists are of the opinion of the existence of coronavirus. The virologists put to consideration in the characteristics of the virus and solar corona as coronaviruses cause severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARA) leading to death in most cases as majority of the victims were wealthy people.<sup>2</sup>

Some Africans never believed in the existence of the virus as other people whose beloved ones were victim of the virus, strongly believed in the efficacy and danger attached to the virus. Some other

Africans believed that the virus exist and the best medicine for it which could best be found in Africa. The Precautions so far used to suppress Coronavirus is from the Torah of the Old Testament. It was an ancient precaution, which was used in the wilderness experience of Israelites, and the same was their adopted precaution when they got to the promised land.

### **The Reality of Covid-19**

Covid-19 was first discovered in Wuhan of China. Geographically, it is a capital of Hubei province in China. Wuhan is at the junction of Han Shui and Chang Jiang. The discovery of Covid-19 was dated 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019. It was a great outbreak that affected all countries in the globe. Coronavirus is a compound of many viruses, which causes sicknesses in both human beings and animals. Coronavirus is of the family of Coronaviridae, which causes acute illness. This illness includes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and COVID-19 that was recently discovered. COVID is an acronym for Coronavirus, which is taking **Co**, **v** and **d** for the combination of a better pronouncement.

Geoffrey presents the defiant of Governments Worldwide to present defence ahead of time against the breakup of the pandemic, which was predicted in 2015,<sup>3</sup> Coronavirus is like a dream to some people, but it is a reality in all senses. At the early outbreak of the Virus, many disregarded the existence of the infection, as few others were optimistic about the quick conclusion of the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> As the rate of death increased in the World Power Countries, fear gripped the hearts of Africans. There was serious panicking and curiosity about how Africans would survive the hit of coronavirus if the technological World could fail. It was frightening to hear the stories of rich and wealthy people bowing to coronavirus. Dr. Chikwe Ihekweazu, the Director General of the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control, said we are still for more RNA (ribonucleic acid) extraction kits as we expand we expand COVID-19 testing Products.<sup>5</sup>

In December 2019,<sup>6</sup> the Chinese authority alerted the World Health Organization of the outbreak of a new pandemic called Coronavirus. According to Larisa, human respiratory disease has killed about 3 million people Worldwide.<sup>7</sup> At the compulsory closure of weddings, funerals, nightclubs, classes, church services, senate votes, mosques convergence, etc, as COVID-19 made everything go virtual.<sup>8</sup> A woman called Yekaterina Metaiskaya did online teaching. Students of Ajayi Crowther University Oyo, Oyo, State, Nigeria, went online lectures and did the CBT online examination after the instruction of the then Vice Chancellor, the Rt. Revd. Prof. Dapo Asaju.<sup>9</sup> There was the story of the closure of retrenchments in some private Universities. For instance, BOWEN laid off staff<sup>10</sup>, and some other Universities did as they could not cope with staff remuneration payments. The news heard about the virus made the potency of the virus evident, and the existence of the virus was real.

### **Similar Experience in 1918**

Covid-19 is a highly contagious virus with symptoms of sneezing and other similar malaria symptoms. Coronavirus emerged as the most catastrophic effect on the world's demographics, resulting in more than 6 million deaths worldwide as of March 2022, emerging as the most consequential global health crisis since the era of the influenza pandemic of 1918.<sup>11</sup> Initially, strange sickness was identified amidst 20 sumo wrestlers who travelled to Taiwan in April 1918,<sup>12</sup> which was traced to Japan as sumo flu. This was the hint of the Spanish Flu due to the censorship in Spain during the First World War.

After 18 months after the pandemic outbreak, 500 million people were affected, and about 50 million died due to the pandemic<sup>13</sup>, which made it deadlier than the First and Second World Wars. The Influenza Pandemic in Japan ravaged the World between February 1918 to April 1920. This means that the outbreak of Influenza clocked a century at the coronavirus outbreak. The pandemic, also known as the misnomer Spanish flu or the Great Influenza epidemic, is caused by the H1N1 influenza virus.<sup>14</sup> H1N1 virus with genes of avian origins could not be specified.<sup>15</sup> The spread of the Influenza Pandemic was swift and cut across the world.

The United States of America positively reacted with available resources to salvage the influenza pandemic 1918, unlike Europe, which had a weak response to the rescue mission.<sup>16</sup> Serious precautions were used to salvage the situation in 1918, which was repeated in 2019/2020 to reduce the mortality. Before the 1918 influenza pandemic, there was a record of similar influenza in 1510, believed to have emerged from Africa.

### **Response of United Nations to Coronavirus**

Immediately, the World Health Organisation, WHO, swung into action and contacted their 149 country offices to salvage the situation all over the World. Overseas countries took care of their citizens by giving portions of food allotted to a particular percentage of people who dwell in a house. Palliative was the answer as people received measures of foods that they could consume in Europe, the United Kingdom and America. Taylor's research revealed that coronavirus claimed over 1.6 million lives and sickened more than 76 million over the last year.<sup>17</sup> The complications and deaths did not deprive them of doing the right things. They had more challenges to curb the menace than raising money or interest.

John Houghton, a climate scientist and a senior member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), died of COVID-19 at age 85.<sup>18</sup> WHO says that Houghton does not know what COVID-19 entails, and the same was the source of his death. Actually, 85 years is a ripe age, as something else would have been linked with his death rather than Coronavirus.

### **Response of Africans**

Africans have mixed responses to the reality of Coronavirus. While some believed that it exists, others disbelieved its existence. The Cross Rivers State Governor, Prof. Ben Ayade, gave a different opinion to his counterpart on the battle against COVID-19. The governor's view is quite different. He was quoted as saying:

"I think Africans should come together to the realisation that it is not vaccines. It is healthy living. Give people jobs. Thabo Mbeki once told the world, 'Don't tell us about giving us the HIV drugs in South Africa. Give us Money get us improve our Agriculture. Let everybody have a job and is working and living healthy. HIV Virus will disappear. The same thing with coronavirus. It will sound very controversial but you should know that I am talking from sound intellectual and scientific background. The virus itself, the test method itself, the PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) test method is unreliable method and is never to be used for diagnostic purpose but genomic sequencing, for just research purpose".<sup>19</sup>

Till date, there are three major classes of beliefs about coronavirus in Africa. Some Africans believe that coronavirus is evident, some others rightly refuse to adhere with the existence of the virus, in our locality they say that there is no coronavirus anywhere, and the third group believe in the existence of coronavirus and strongly confirm that there are African remedies to the virus.

The researcher knows about two individuals who tested positive at the height of the virus and refused to go to the hospital for medication. In Oyo Town then, the local people believed that the medical practitioners detained some people at the hospital when the victims complained of symptoms related to coronavirus. These people went back to their different homes and made local treatment for themselves and are still alive till date. The suggested African medications will be touched soon through Madagascar. The local prevailing treatment made some Africans see the pandemic as something under control that should not have been magnified to such an extent.

Two of the staff where the researcher was serving during the outbreak of COVID-19 fell sick with the virus. Both of them refused to appear in any hospital. The researcher advised them both to appear in the hospital for treatment, but they resorted to home and African remedies. Eventually, both overcame

it, and they are still alive in the compilation of this work. Medical Doctors and Nurses demanded life insurance when the pandemic hit 318 casualties in Lagos.

In Nigeria (as of then), ...a doctor had died as a result of the disease, two doctors in Edo State had also tested positive for the virus, while about 25 doctors, comprising house officers, resident doctors and a consultant, had been in self-isolation after combating in contact with COVID-19 patients.<sup>20</sup> Yet the remunerations of majority of these medical personnel were not adequately cared for.

### **COVID-19: Source of Amassing Wealth in Nigeria: The Mirage**

Of a truth, COVID-19 created jobs for many jobless Nigerians as face masks, antivirus medications, etc, became a means of livelihood. Some local people saw a mirage on the sphere of the coronavirus outbreak. In an interview, some local people of Oyo Town felt that the fast spread of a pandemic involving malaria and cold symptoms surrounded by sneezing could not be as realistic as a real pandemic. A local man confessed that this was why the victims were not the local poor but the rich. COVID-19, to an extent, is a mirage, a seemingly unrealistic happening. It is a mirage today to the local people who use concoctions to treat their sicknesses as perceived symptoms of COVID-19 were not in exclusion. The farm, village and local people never see any reality in the announcements of the pandemic as they were not seriously affected. A village man near Oyo confessed that a relation who was sick during the pandemic outbreak visited a hospital for treatment and was hospitalised for coronavirus found his way out and was treated locally and is alive until the compilation of this research work. Possibly, the virus cannot stand what the village people exposed themselves to in this equatorial region.

Lockdown is a method that could best be used to curb the swift spread of coronavirus.<sup>21</sup> It is the method of keeping off from relationships with neighbours. There were several approaches adopted for the sowing of the facemask. Some wear pants, socks, and even *Ankara* clothes to make facemasks. *Ankara* facemasks cannot prevent COVID-19. The best approach is the lockdown and social distancing. The Palliatives provided to alleviate the poverty of the period were kept in agriculture stores. Part of the palliative got spoilt; others were reserved in 2020 as bribery materials for the 2023 elections.

Some Nigerians justified the looting of the warehouses where foodstuff and other materials for palliatives were kept. Mobs looted packages of rice, salt, sugar, and noodles.<sup>22</sup> The looting of the warehouse of palliatives was justified as the people who committed the offence said that the Government kept the palliatives against the Campaign of election of 2023. Military personnel were to arrest youths involved in looting the houses or warehouses. Indeed, some people could defend evil acts as people were dying of hunger, and the palliatives meant for them were proposed to be used as gifts to woo Nigerians against the election of 2023, which is unreasonable.

### **Salvaging the Situation**

The alert of the widespread mass killings of people in Europe, America, India and Australia was a huge blow that frightened the Nigerians. The question then was, will Africans be able to salvage this kind of pandemic? Undoubtedly, people were afraid of Nigeria at the news of the dreadful pandemic. Some things that frightened one were the closeness of Nigerians when travelling in vehicles, closeness at marketplaces, inability to listen to instructions, African attitudes in handling significant issues, weaknesses of selfishness and many others.

In Nigeria, attempts were made to rescue the situation ahead of time. Reservations were made for the quarantine of returnees from other parts of the world. As governments and individuals built new camps, donations flowed from patriot Nigerians. It was less of Governmental donations and more of individual donations from philanthropists. A good instance was Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, who donated his former residence as Isolation Centre.<sup>23</sup> The

isolation centre has 32 rooms. This is a good example to politicians who are rich with the message of helping victims of circumstances.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Geoffrey Onyeama, said at the briefing of the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 on Friday that finding hotels to quarantine the returnees has been a serious challenge because the hotels believed using their facilities to isolate the returnees could damage their brand.<sup>24</sup> Passionate governors in Nigeria were making private arrangements to salvage the expected attack. A good example was the attempt of President Muhammed Buhari on a particular Tuesday to send a team to Kano State as part of efforts to contain COVID-19 cases in the State.<sup>25</sup> Delegations were also sent to many other states. This is commendable to the government of Nigeria. The enforcement to stay indoors was strict by the government of Nigeria. Anybody caught was made to serve the punishment. Despite the lockdown, the Government could not handle the distribution of palliatives to the masses of Nigeria. Pastor Danjuma Ndakwasau of Rhema House of Prayer and Answer Ministry was arrested by the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Task Force for conducting a service on Sunday<sup>26</sup>. The worship places and any other gathering that involved mass collections of people were sanctioned.

As of the third week of the lockdown in Lagos and Ogun States, there were social restrictions and a reduction of financial income, contending with the rising insecurity from the armed robbers, who claim to be hunting for what to eat amid the lockdown.<sup>27</sup> The situation in Nigeria became eye-sore, and people were restless at home, hoping to go out at all costs. The moments that would have been used for resting from work became risks at home. There was agitation to go out at all costs.

Government officials and well-learned people fell victim to the virus, and some died. Notable amongst many was the death of Abba Kyari, who died and was buried during the hot experience of COVID-19. As the chief of staff to President Muhammadu Buhari, the Presidency directed that ministers and journalists who attended his burial service must stay away for some time from entering Aso Rock.<sup>28</sup> Lagos State Commissioner of Health, Professor Akin Abayomi confirmed that the former Governor of Oyo State, Senator Abiola Ajimobi, died of complications of COVID-19.<sup>29</sup> Money was available to be spent on these two leaders, but same money was a handicap to save their lives.

Alas, the reality of the pandemic was visible, and imitating the advanced countries, lockdown was the main solution. Nigerians thought it would be impossible to remain at home doing nothing. It became a reality as the lockdown was experienced by deviants who were arrested and punished. People felt restless at home and wished to go out to work to earn their living. It was a terrible experience. Street men went into robbery to find means of livelihood.

In salvaging the situation, some laws were enacted, powered by W.H.O.:

- i. using a nose mask
- ii. constant washing of hands with soap
- iii. keeping distance from one another
- iv. quarantine the victims who have been treated or who come from a distance place for two weeks (at least fourteen days)
- v. the use of the vaccine was another precaution which was done freely

The tension came down after the lockdown and the lockdown was lifted, and people resumed their work with jubilation. The study interviewed some medical practitioners in Offa Kwara State, Nigeria, who were part of the rescue mission. Nurse Olabisi said he risked his life to participate in treating the victims of COVID-19 with the promise of a huge amount of payment weekly from the federal government. Until the moment of compilation of this work, there was no payment. Amidst the medical practitioners who volunteered for the rescue mission, that volunteered and were not paid were Mrs. Olawale Mayowa, who too confessed that she was not paid. Mrs Bimbo Ogunjaiyeju also confessed her participation too without any reward. This nonchalant attitude of the government was not limited to



the Kwara State Government, as some other States in the Federation admitted the same thing. The Federal Government admitted to relief of financial aid to the States, but the state government denied receipt of any financial assistance from the government. The risk to the lives of some medical practitioners from some states of Nigeria was without compensation, now two years after the outbreak of COVID-19. 'The economic effect of COVID-19 is killing us more than the pandemic itself' was the collective cry of the small business owners.<sup>30</sup> Everywhere is quiet, and people who would have patronised their businesses were experiencing lockdown. No income, and the expense rises daily.

### **Madagascar's Position on COVID-19**

Madagascar is a country in Africa continent. It is an island on a geographical side of the continent. The popularity of Madagascar was revealed at the outbreak of the pandemic. Precisely, on April 3, 2020, the government of Madagascar, under strain from the COVID-19 pandemic, shut down their schools system for fear of the spread of the virus in the country.<sup>31</sup>

It is highly significant to mention Madagascar's position in the fight against COVID-19. No COVID-19 Vaccine nor other drugs were approved by the Government of Madagascar, except herbal drinks. W.H.O. warned against using any drug like Madagascar's concoction for patients suffering from COVID-19. President Andry Rajoelina slammed the World Health Organization for this and other political considerations, believing the W.H.O. shut its eyes against the herbal drug because a poor African country provided it.<sup>32</sup> The study felt that if the remedy had come from any rich countries, it would have been embraced, but being an African product, it was not approved.

The President of Madagascar, Andry Rajoelina, provided a cure of herb for COVID-19. The lockdown experience in Madagascar was just one month, unlike many other Countries that were home for over six months. After a month, Madagascar's high school was reopened, and a face mask and a small bottle of an herbal drink were given to the students to drink.<sup>33</sup>

Madagascar is a country where the herbal for coronavirus was 'made in Africa' pride.<sup>34</sup> Madagascar spread her herbal COVID-19 drinks to places like the Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, and Equatorial Guinea, among other countries, as many of these Countries testified to the herb's potency. This impressive development in Madagascar made the World Bank commit to strengthening Madagascar's Post-Cyclone recovery plan as the World Bank signed \$ 534,9 million.<sup>35</sup>

### **Coronavirus Precaution from the Old Testament Documentation**

About 3,500 years ago, the instruction of prevailing over Pandemic was given to the House of Israel. There is a need to itemise the precautions for COVID-19 from the Torah of the Old Testament. Without any doubt, the precautions that suppressed the almighty coronavirus were adopted from the Old Testament documentations. These are:

#### **i. Washing of Hands**

Washing hands is highly significant in suppressing the outbreak of the pandemic, as expressed in Leviticus 15: 11. Touching anyone who is unclean or exchanging pleasantries with anyone calls for rinsing or washing of hands. The call for constant washing of hands by W.H.O. was an existing cure from the Torah since antiquity. It was a command to the House of Israel to wash off their hands constantly. Health practitioners borrowed such ideas from the Torah of the Old Testament. Washing of hands is a strict Yahweh's instruction (Exodus 30: 18-21).

#### **ii. Use of Nose and/or Mouth Mask**

Leviticus 13: 4-5 and 46 instruct that if you have any symptoms, you must keep your distance to avoid affecting another person with the sickness. It further says that the mouth must be covered, meaning use a nose or mouth mask.<sup>36</sup> The nose or mouth mask is a new invention Israelites used it over 3,500

years ago in the Old Testament documentation. Currently, with the use of a nose or mouth mask, the advice on wearing the mask is to wash both hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitiser, which is usually alcohol-based.<sup>37</sup>

### **iii. Isolation or Quarantine**

Command the Children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper. Everyone who has an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead (Numbers 5:2). Leprosy was a contagious disease that the Israelites experienced in their wilderness days. Some other strange diseases they could not identify were not taken for granted as their victims were thrown out of the camp and habitation. Mariam experienced the same, as she was put out of the camp after Yahweh afflicted her with leprosy. 'So Mariam was shut of the camp seven days, and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again' (Number 12: 15). In the Old Testament context, the person shall remain unclean and is expected to live alone in isolation (Leviticus 13: 4, 5 and 46). This system is otherwise called quarantine. The Black Plague in Europe would have been reduced if Biblical Hygiene were observed.<sup>38</sup> It was the Jews who borrowed from Yahweh's instructions in the Bible as they were less affected by the plague due to the observation of Yahweh's injunctions such as hand washing, sanitation, separating the ill and rapid burial of the dead. Washing of hands reduces the mortality rate. Even after the close of the pandemic, hands should be constantly washed with soap. This is because the same hands that were used to handle dirty objects are the same ones that are being used for eating and drinking. Constant washing will reduce the consumption of dirt.

### **iv. The Use of Vaccines**

Vaccines are another precaution suggested by the World Health Organisation, which from Old Testament days were fruits and herbs. There is a problem in linking several therapies with coronavirus; hence, Asian countries, Israel inclusive, encourage the use of ancient herbs.<sup>39</sup> This is more natural and devoid of chemicals that may be injurious to man's health.

### **Toilet Hygiene**

Toilet Hygiene is another Old Testament practical way of cleanliness. Cleanliness is expedient so as to embrace godliness (Deuteronomy 23:14). There is assurance that diseases will be far from the Israelites if they observe all the Laws that were given to them for cleanliness (Exodus 15: 26). Yahweh was constantly visiting and must not meet them inside any unclean environment. It is on this condition that deceases of Egyptians will be far from them. The Bible still wants us to experience the etiquette that made the Israelites survive the pandemics of her days.<sup>40</sup> This will help this generation to prevail over any outbreak of diseases.

The first three aforementioned were the major strategies used to combat the Coronavirus Pandemic. As an Old Testament Scholar, it is to the utmost joy of this study to say that the inventor of the precautions for the Coronavirus Pandemic is Yahweh of Israel. Therefore, as ancient as the Old Testament documentation was, its potency is eternal. The more ancient, the more authentic the herbs are.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

COVID-19 is real, but the fabricated sicknesses which were not the virus is the mirage. The virus is real, and it is curable. The study suggested remedies used by a few people, which worked for them without visiting the hospital, should be adopted to tackle such menace wherever the symptoms are subsequently discovered. The study concluded that the past COVID-19 was real, and the other side of the coin is that there were men manipulations and politicking in it in magnifying it beyond proportion.

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