

The Relevance of the Life of Samson in the Book of Judges for Leadership in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This research is significant because it has to do with one of the resurging issues in the African socio-political context and Nigeria in particular. The issue discussed here though with a biblical framework is not limited to the Christian leadership sphere. Often times, the leadership in the African sphere have been spotted as the main problem of Africa. The study employs a descriptive methodology. Therefore, this research draws relevance and inference from the life and leadership of Samson, one of the judges in Israel analyzing its applicability to Nigerian leadership context. The study observes that the people of Israel are somewhat analogous to Nigerians in the sense that the call to serve is a serious issue, among leaders and followers alike. Several flair of moral decadence in Nigerian society is in line with the spotted anarchical nature of Israel before Samson came to limelight. Leadership should be centered on the wellbeing of the people; a leader should be conscious of the effects of his decisions and actions; thus, leadership should be exemplary, respectful and humble.

Keywords: *Judges, Leader, Leadership, Nigeria, Samson.*

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a serious issue in Nigerian context. [1] Leadership is described severally as a lively process such that people influence each other to contributing to the achievement of a particular group or set of people in a particular state of affairs. [2] In core African setting, leadership mode for people is via appointment, while 'election' is a trait in political leadership since most African nations practice democracy as a system of government. [3] The exploration of Samson's leadership as a framework on which inferences is drawn stems from the fact that the leadership history of Israel though in theocracy-like form exclusively involves the affairs of men just like Nigeria; believing in men in leadership capacities to liberate the people and empower the society. The thrust of this study has to do with the action and reaction of leaders to situations which in turn affect the growth and development of the community as a whole. On this note, the study explores what leadership entails, and then explicitly discusses the leadership track of Samson and its relevance for leadership in Nigeria.

THE IDEA OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a general and popular phenomenon the human society cannot do

without. According to Abiola, leadership is cardinal to the growth and development of any organization whether it is secular or religious (spiritual). [4] In other words, leadership plays a pivotal role in any organized human society. The society of many often tend towards being organized; therefore, the pattern and structure put in place for proper govern turns out as leadership. It is carried out in order to govern the affairs of mankind across the world. [5]

The flow of leadership has been a serious issue over the years; some people take advantage of others, this sometimes brings commotion, chaos or uproar; this includes the Christian community. [6] Leadership is cardinal to the development and sustenance of human society. Many spheres of human world have failed due to inadequate leadership. [7] Of a truth, Africa and Asia countries are suffering from the issue of bad and corrupt leadership; this is because reasonable percentage of development rests in the bosom of leaders; they are in control of everything that belongs to everyone. [8]

A good leadership is often characterized with honesty and sincerity. [9] This perspective is in line with Awojobi's opinion; he further added that leadership is the readiness to serve and not to be served. [10] Here, Awojobi emphasize the place of the society or community with which

the leader serves. Clearly seen, Awojobi is with from an African undertone, emphasizing the fact that the people who serve as 'followers' are the ones who bestow leaders with the privilege to serve. Therefore, it is logical for leadership to be seen as a platform simply to serve the community where with he belongs and is chosen.

Leadership is cardinal because it is the system that entrenches, coordinates and mobilizes all sector of a nation (political, religion, social, economic, among others). [11] This understanding is congruent with Jeremiye's opinion when he explained that:

Leadership is the art of managing the nature of man; be it physical, religious or other natures. Leadership is the power to direct, motivate and inspire others. It is the art of molding, correcting, influencing or guiding human behavior towards desired or designed goals and ends. Leadership therefore calls for obedience from the followers, while earns the people's confidence, respect and submission. [12]

The above quotation reveals that a leader exists because he/she has certain group of people following and listening to his/her guiding activity. There is a cordial and intimate relationship between the person leading (leader) and the ones being lead (followers); only through this rapport can a great society be birth.

Leadership is known in Nigeria nation as a 'dirty game'. The obvious leadership style is Nigeria deals with lording everything over the masses (followers). Many religious people often want to abstain from it because of the concurrent happenings as a result of seeming struggles and tussles for power and authority. Kareem further argued that leaders in Nigeria do not care (non-challant attitude), rather they break laws, abuse powers and use their exalted positions as means to oppress, marginalize and lord it over some people. [13] Various misnomers that happen as a result of people's quest for power in Nigeria does not deny the place of leadership and the need for it in the society.

THE LEADERSHIP TRACK OF SAMSON

Judges has a clear over all formation which can be divided in two parts; chapter 1-16 and 17-21. The preceding story of the Israelites before the Judges has to do with the conquest of Canaan under Joshua which is some what incomplete; however, the story line gives the new development about the people who do not serve

Yahweh. The recurring pattern of the book of Judges goes thus; Israelites goes astray (sin and follow other gods), [14] Yahweh gives them for oppression; the people cry out to Him, then He raise-up a judge to deliver them. Contrary to what is commonly known about the Judges, Samson did not lead to battle, the men from Judah that he had an opportunity to lead (15:11-13) did not follow him, and instead they handed him over to the Philistines. [15] Samson is described as judging twice Israel for twenty years; he is always all by himself even in Philistine-dominated territory (16:23-31).

The focus of Samson's leadership track as explicated in this study is focused on the reason for Samson's leadership and how he ended his leadership. Samson's narrative is recorded in Judges 13-17. Samson's role began with the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines (13:5). "And again the sons of Israel did evil in the eyes of YHWH and YHWH gave them into the hand of the Philistines (for) forty years" (13:1) informs the reader of the purpose of Samson as a Judge.[16] This is common in the book of Judges (3:7, 12, 4:1, 6:1; 10:6); indicating the purpose for which the Jude's leadership platform is set forth.

The story of Samson in the first verse of Judges 13 is opened with the connotation of "evil". Often times, the Israel perpetuated in the sight of the Lord is often emphasized. Meanwhile, anytime the children of Israel perpetuate this kind of evil, Yahweh gave them up to the enemies, in order for them to be dealt with so that they can learn lesson. [17] The evil of the Israelites justifies Yahweh's giving of Israel to the Philistines. Therefore, it is not that Yahweh is a wicked God, but that Israelites are sinners and unfaithful in their dealings with Yahweh. The trend of the evil as explicated in the first verse of Judges Chapter 13 is somewhat reflected in Samson's discussion with his father in request for marriage arrangements (14:3). In that scene, Manoah (Samson's father) rebuked Samson and described Timnah as one of the uncircumcised Philistines. It is important to note that this title is derogatory and commonly used against the enemies of Yahweh in the Old Testament. This stance brings statements of David while fighting against Goliath to mind; "...you, this uncircumcised Philistine". Here, Goliath and his people are charged with contempt; so also is Manoah in his discourse with Samson. In this wise, it is logical to say that Manoah's objection concerning Samson's demand is a strong indicator of Samson's

purpose and ministry; he is a leader who should liberate the people from the bondage of the Philistines; Samson was meant to be a judge and deliverer, bringing judgment to God's people.

Furthermore, Judges 14 unveils several series of unfriendly encounters that took place between Samson and the Philistines. Prominent part of which was Samson's interaction with the countrymen (vs 7-14), seeking answers to the riddles he gave them. Judges 14-15 gives details of Samson's marriage and how he neglected the advice of his parents. In Judges 15, Samson is discovered to have gotten the consequences of his hardened decision. A clear look at the Samson's leadership track reveals him as a Charismatic Leader; he presented a great leadership strategy, he was dynamic and extraordinary in his presentations and reactions; he declares his innocence while announcing his plans for retaliation, using the word 'blameless' in Judges 15:3. [18]The idea 'blameless' can also be understood by the usage of the biblical term 'righteousness' [19]. This is because the two words give emphasis in same direction. To the Philistines, Samson pronouncement of himself as being innocent is standing; simply because he has not in any way wronged them, mean while to Yahweh his excuse and explanation of innocence might not be genuine because he is aware of the existing and standing order in Israel's marriage terms and conditions as given by Yahweh. Here, Samson was trying to shift the blame. He was trying to wash himself clean of his predicament; meanwhile, his got what he wanted.

More so, Samson's leadership valor is revealed in his sole announcement of war against the philistines, with the emphasis that he would not be held accountable for any damages. Although Samson's act at the latter end seems redeeming than his activities at the beginning; the fact remains that his craggy eccentricity earned him great respect among the people as well as among the file of the heroes.

Leaders being human aren't immune from downfalls; however, the painful part of Samson's leadership track is the means through which his downfall creeps. Samson's downfall came through a woman Delilah. This woman worked all the ways and means through which the leader Samson was effectively captured (Judges 16:3-30). She did not rest until Samson was eventually apprehended. [21] The argument which ensued in the beginning of Samson's leadership story was what eventually paves way

for Samson's downfall. Samson while dying was ridiculed by being made to entertain the uncircumcised Philistines (Judg 16:25). The Israelites enemy rejoiced upon the capture of Samson because they simply regarded Samson as a 'national enemy'; therefore, it was a national victory for the Philistines.

In addition, Samson experienced serious torture at the hands of the Philistines before he finally died. The Philistine made Samson suffers to the length that 'they gouge out his eyes'. Many scholars are of the opinion that this exact action of the Philistines towards Samson was what cushioned Samson's appeal for divine vengeance. [22] Even though all these were consequences of Samson's decision and actions which he was warned against but didn't listen; he still want justice to prevail even at his point of death.[23] After the prayer of vengeance, the text made it clear that Samson's hair had begun to grow again (16:22), but it is still a scholarly and theological debate if the hair which grew back reinstated his consecration to Yahweh whose covenant he previously turned away.[26]. However, Samson as a leadership committed several blunders in the process of discharging the mandate given to his by Yahweh in Israel and he paid dearly with his precious life.The study posits that Samson's leadership track as recorded in the explicated biblical text is an actual historical fact which transpire in the pre-monarch Israel.[25]

RELEVANCE OF SAMSON'S LIFE FOR NIGERIAN LEADERSHIP

After a clear overview of the life of Samson, this study explores the significance of Samson's life as a leader in Israel. The relevance of the life of Samson in this sphere stems from the fact that Samson serves as Judge in Israel; during this period, the Judge also serve in the capacity of a king, ruling, leading the people off to war and judging the people. This is obtainable in the Nigerian context; in the sense that Nigeria is a nation with several leaders, secular and religious. This implies that there are several leadership positions of which people of the society are engaged in, being ruled and judged by the privileged people in power. Having observed the leadership life of Samson, the research posits that it contains relevant scenery upon which Leadership in Nigeria can be addressed. In view of this, the life of Samson and the lessons drawn from his leadership history is used as a thermostat for leadership in Nigeria.

Attentiveness to Priority: Just as Samson neglected several of his duties to focus what is not needed. So as leadership in Nigeria today is geared towards frivolities; in the sense those priorities (things that matter to the people and the welfare of the nation as a whole) have been absolutely neglected. Obviously, Samson does not care that much about the welfare of the people; no wonder he lust after a woman who was the source of His downfall. Even Christian leadership in Nigeria is guilty of this; in the sense that the word of God has been purely converted and stylishly blends to the gospel of money; such that materialism has been a serious tussle among Church leaders in the contemporary time.[27]

The fact that when leaders pursue after the wrong things, the people will suffer cannot be denied; however, the downfall of such leaders is not far at hand at all. Priority is very essential in every scale of preference; or better put, a good scale of preference give a good identification and aligning of priority. In view of this, for Nigeria leaders to be attentive to priority it is imperative for them to have and prepare a good scale of preference. Many leaders in Nigeria do not know what priority is simply because their scale of preference is utterly wrong.

Vision: it is a thing for a leader to have vision; it is another thing entirely for the leader to stay on the course. In other words, a leader must be visionary; this helps the focus of the leadership administration. This keeps the leader in check. There is need for leader to build community of likeminded people; for a leader, working in isolation is extremely dangerous. This vision gives the leader a kind of known pattern to thread upon. This is what people will know the leader for, in fact, it becomes the identity of the leadership in question.

It is worthy of note that many biblical scholars argue that Samson is the most suitable forerunner to David (2nd Sam 5). [28] Although the leadership history of Samson is far-fetched from that of David; it is clear that Samson's leadership prepared the ground for the ministry of David. A successful leadership have posterity at heart; this makes the works of the heroes past significant. Foresight is important in the cause of decision making; this means that future generations will benefit directly or indirectly from the works of the frontier-fathers. Therefore, it is important for leaders in Nigeria to be conscious of the aftermath of their actions

not only towards the immediate recipients and environment, but also towards posterity.

Lack of Respect for Law and Constituted Authority: Inattentiveness to things that matter makes Nigeria leaders to disrespect law and constituted authority. In the case of Samson, it is clear that "theocracy" was the system of government in operation; therefore, God is the "Law" and the "sole authority" in charge of the nation Israel. Samson is conversant with the law and guiding principles of the nation; and as a leader, he guides and leads the people in that regard; yet, he seek for activities outside the coverage of the law. In other words, Samson disrespected and disregarded the constituted authority. It is important for leaders in Nigeria to be conscious of the fact that no matter the level of leadership and authority being bestowed, they are still meant to respect, regard and obey the law. It is often said that "no man is above the law".

It is logical to say that the government model operational in the then Israel (theocracy) during the time of Samson is different from the nation Nigeria (democracy) in this time which this article is relevant; the fact remains that there is a connective tissue, which is the existence of law and order. Lack of people in government is the misplacement of God in the daily activities and even in making by-laws. Adelodun and Kolawole who gave another perspective about the Nigerian government explained that although Nigeria is a nation known for her fervency in religious attachments and involvements throughout Africa and even the world, the leadership still does not see any importance to include godly activities in the budget, meaning that they have side lined God in the leadership of the citizens.[1] Even in the so called 'laws' legislated by Nigerian leadership, the same leadership create loop holes in order to perpetuate wrong deeds. They do not abolish the good laws already established by heroes in past times, rather do they shy away from creating new good laws; what they simply do is to bend to laws and find exemptions for themselves amidst the stated laws. In other words, equality and equity is not obtainable.

Pride: Samson sees his power and authority, with the grace God bestowed upon him he feels and thinks he can do everything anyhow anywhere anytime without anyone checking or judging his activities (Judg 15:16). The sense of his humility came back when his downfall

beckon on him; Samson then remembered how to reference the Lord, using YHWH, *Adonai* and *Elohim*. The reality of these reverences for God isn't explicit in the character track of Samson as a leader; the names are significant in the sense that they guide the behavior of Israelites, coupled with the fact that Samson was a Nazarene, much is expected from him. But the power would not let Samson be. Meanwhile, pride goes before destruction. The obvious signal having to do with the endpoint of Samson wasn't clear enough to him, rather he was blotted by the fleshly desires of his heart

Downfall of Samson: the leader of Israel from the part of Judges we study indicated Samson as a great Judge, filled with the power and strength of God. To whom much is given, much is required. In jury to one, is injury to all they say. The study opine that other than the parents who gave little caution when Samson was going astray in the area of marriage; the people of the society didn't take much action concerning it. It is logical to say that even the parents didn't stand their opposing ground against Samson's decision due to the fact that his decision is absolutely contrary to Yahweh's instructions. [1]Therefore, there is a need to identify the role of parents and society in the process of leadership. Truth be told, family members have direct or indirect influence on the leader, likewise the society who are part of the ruling council and followers. Obviously, the act of "it doesn't concern me has become the order of the day today"; many people see leaders doing wrong things, it is either they say it doesn't concern them and mind their business, or even take part in the wrong thing being perpetuated by the leadership in order to get money and then say "since it's the leadership, there won't be problem". Leaders or followers, the law or rules and regulations guiding a particular society is the rule, it doesn't change at all. Therefore, there is a serious need for members of the society to be at watch, not that alone; they must also take necessary appropriate steps to cease every form of the leadership shifting away from attaining the real goals and objectives of the society.

At the end of Samson's destruction, it is not only his name and that of his family that was dragged in the mud, but the entire society he represents. This is why the family of leaders in Nigeria, both religious and secular must be on watch as it concerns the activities of their family members who are privilege to be in power. They should not be afraid to call them to order, when erring. The place of family and community

elders in Africa is significant; thus, if the immediate members of the leader's family couldn't curb the leader in the obvious act of defiance, then, they can beckon on the elders of the community with which the leader identifies with for help in this regard. Unfortunately today, the eldership of African society has been fallen in her standard in the sense that they often become 'god-fathers' who order leaders who emerge in wrong doings. [29] If this is the case, then the immediate family becomes incapacitated and follow the trend of "if you can't beat them, then join them". This trend is what is killing several countries in African continent, Nigeria inclusive.

No matter the tribe from which leaders are being selected in Nigeria; it must be noted that there is just one nationale "Nigerian", as such; they no matter of where they go represent Nigerians. The relevance depicted here is of great concern to the nation Nigeria, because at the end of the day, it is not leaders that will bear the consequences alone, even the poor masses who didn't buy anything will eventually have to pay part in what has been damaged.

CONCLUSION

The life of Samson clearly shows how the mighty are fallen. The fact that Israel lost a great leader is not an understatement. The life and management tracks of Samson contain great memories in the leadership history of the Israelite. When a society possesses good leader, then the people enjoys. Samson opened the door for his downfall and his leadership prowess and endowment capsized. As a leader, all eyes were on him, the expectations were very high; and as such those looking earnest and waiting for his downfall weren't far away at all. The account of Samson's leadership is a great warning and of great relevant to all leadership sphere in Nigeria. The relevance speaks to the religious and socio-political issues in the contemporary time. To whom much is given, much is required; leadership without argument remains a great task which need a dedicated and committed heart for success to be achieved. Truth be told, human are difficult to lead; however, the reflection of a true leader is in his ability to manage and guide his followers. Samson knowing that a Nazarene should not get a strange woman as a wife ignored the law. A good leader whose aim is to build the society he lead should not attempt to breach laws; not to talk of making laws that encourages perversion and all sorts.

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- Adelodun and Kolawole, “The Error of Belshazzar in the Book of Daniel: a Warning to Nigerian Political Leadership”.It is important to note that family is an important part of man’s social life; it influence man’s decisions and often forms man’s worldview. Kolawole concluded that societal problems, including problems of leadership are coming out of people who do not get proper teaching at their home. Kolawole O.P. (2019), “A Critical Examination of

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