

MOUNTAIN AND HILL IN PSALM 121: 1-2 AND YORUBA RELIGIOUS THOUGHT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

Mountains and Hills are found in biblical literature and many important events are associated with them. The purpose of this study is to examine the concept of Mountains and Hills in Psalm 121:1-2 with a view to establishing their importance in ancient Israel and African Yoruba Context. Historical and African Biblical Hermeneutics methods were used for the study. It was discovered that Mountains and Hills occupied a unique place in ancient Israel and Africa. Mountains and Hills were very important in the religious, social and economic lives of ancient Israel and African Yoruba. Mountains were places of refuge during intertribal wars, places of prayer and meditation in both contexts. Some of the early European and American missionaries to Africa had their residences on mountains and hills. Mountains were perceived as the abode of Yahweh, gods, spirit and divinities and these were venerated and worshipped on the Mountains. Some Christians and the adherents of African Traditional Religion used Mountains and Hills to advance their religions. Some church buildings belonging to African Indigenous churches are located on mountain top. The study concluded that Mountains and Hills are considered as sacred phenomena in both contexts. Africans are enjoined to properly maintain the hills and mountains in their communities, so that divine endowment in them can be sustained.

Keywords: Mountains, Hills, Hermeneutics, Sacred place, African

Introduction

The book of Psalm is widely read by Christians and Non-Christians all over the world. Psalm 121 has been read over and over again by different interpreters, theologians and Christians especially in Africa. This Psalm is considered as one of the most popular, loved and most read book of the Psalm (Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014: 525; Weiser 1998: 45). Most scholars opined that this is one of the Psalms where the author expressed strong assurance, confidence and trust in Yahweh to deliver and save especially in the time of trouble (Segal 2013: 592; Weiser 1998: 745).

It should be noted, however, that despite the popularity of this Psalm, scholars are divided into camps on its origin and unity of the contents. Also, scholars opined that this Psalm was sung or composed by travellers or pilgrims: when commencing their pilgrimage in Jerusalem; a dialogue on arrival; internal dialogue of an individual; dialogue from liturgical farewell; prayer of the congregation; or a form of the ancient

apostrophe (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011: 316-320).

This study therefore examined the concept of Mountains and Hills in Psalm 121:1-2 with a view to establishing their importance in ancient Israel and African Yoruba Context. This is because scholars have given different meanings to the imagery of mountains and hills. This study surveyed the various usages and meaning of mountains and hills in the Old Testament and in the African Indigenous (Yoruba) Churches in Nigeria. Also, this study aimed to encourage readers of this Psalm in Africa especially, Nigeria to trust and hope in Yahweh in this time when travellers, Kings, Pastors, Church Members and the likes are being robbed, kidnapped in broad day light, and killed even when ransomed have been paid.

The study used Historical and African Biblical Hermeneutics. The use of the historical-critical approach involved a study of Psalm 121:1-2 in relation to the historical Israelite setting. This involved an examination of the literary and linguistic aspects of the text along with the theological concerns of the text. Emphasis was placed upon Hebrew terms such as נָשָׂא (to lift), עֵין (eye), and עֲזָרָה (help).

African Biblical Hermeneutics involves interpretation of the biblical text in African context. This was done to make biblical literature relevant in any Culture, tradition and generation. African will always appreciate biblical hermeneutics that address their felt needs. In other words, biblical interpretation must be relevant to the cultural situation of the community that received it (Ukpong, 2000). As far as the Africans are concerned, biblical interpretation is relevant only if it addresses the concerns of the Africans. In other words, biblical studies must be relevant to the cultural and religious situation of the community where it is found. This is because the meaning given to a story, oral or written, when it was handed down from one generation to another is subject to review, modification or changes (Wyatt, 1986: 361-364). So, ancient texts need to be read anew (Adamo, 2017: 1).

The comparative analysis technique was used in this study in order to compare and contrast Israelite and African Yoruba understandings of the mountain/hill. Primary data sources include biblical texts while secondary data sources are studies related to Old Testament scholarship and African Traditional Religion.

Analysis of Psalm 121

The book of Psalms has attracted more attention from Christians than other Old Testament book. In the New Testament, there are quotations and allusions to the Psalms. Some Christians today consider the Psalms as the heart of the Old Testament (Dillard & Longman III, 1995: 211). Many scholars opined that Psalm 121 is an expression of trust, confidence and assurance in Yahweh who is faithful to his words (Segal, 2013: 592; Weiser, 1998: 745). Also, this Psalm is mostly read and applied by Christians when faced with dangers (Brueggemann & Bellinger, 2014: 525; Weiser, 1998: 45). Besides, some scholars maintained that Psalm 121 was sung by pilgrims to Jerusalem (Payne, 1987: 835; Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011: 317-320).

In verse 1, the author said: "I will lift up my eyes to the hill..." This statement suggests that the speaker is faced with a particular challenge and needed help. The question is: why was the speaker looking up to the mountain for help? To the ancient Israel, Yahweh dwells in mountains. Mountains are places of refuge (Psa. 11: 1; Ezek. 7: 16; Hos. 10: 8; Psa. 30: 7-8). Also, Yahweh will defeat and reign over all his enemies on mount Zion (Zech. 8: 3; Isa. 24: 23; Ezek. 38-39; Zech. 14: 3-4; Isa. 25: 6-7). In other words, the faith of the speaker is not on the mountain but on Yahweh who dwells in the mountain.

In verse 2, the author declared: 'my help comes from the Lord...' This is an indication that Yahweh is the

ultimate helper of humans. The speaker also claimed that Yahweh is the 'creator of heaven and earth' This suggests that everything in heaven and on earth are under his control (Baker & Kohlenberger, 1994: 920). Verses 3-6 is a testament of Yahweh's protection and guardian over humans. The statement "he will not suffer your feet to be moved" affirms the speaker's total confidence and trust in Yahweh for salvation at all times. This is why some scholars refer to this Psalm as the psalm of absolute trust in Yahweh because of his past deeds (Goldingay 2006: 334-355; Brueggemann, 1984: 154). To this end, Kraus (1988:305), categorised this Psalm is among prayer songs which Gunkel considers as songs of trust. The expression "never sleeps nor slumbers" is an indication that Yahweh as the ultimate guardian of humans is committed to his work all the time. Therefore, Yahweh's love, care and concern for humanity will not allow him to sleep or slumber (Clifford 2002: 130-133).

Yahweh's protection is clearly seen in Verses 7-8. The speaker's declaration that "the Lord shall preserve you from all evil" suggests complete protection for all evils. This shows that the security of the speaker is not negotiable, it is sure.

Mountains in Psalm 121 and Ancient Israel

From the opening statement, 'I will lift up my eyes to the hill' it appears that the psalmist is going through a difficult situation and needed divine intervention and as such resolved to look to 'the hills or mountains'. In ancient Israel, mountains and hills were used as places of refuge (Psa. 11:1; Ezek. 7: 16; Hos 10:8). Physically, mountains represent obstacles, barriers, boundaries between nations of the world (Isa 40:4; 49: 11; cf. Zech 4:7). Spiritually, connotes a symbol of inner strength and security (Psa 30:7, 8). The Hebrew word הַר is used sixty-one times for hill, and 486 times for mountain (TWOT 517a; ISBE 4336).

Mountains/Hills in ancient times, are usually associated with the gods because of its majesty, power and height. By reason of the believe that Mountains are sacred and dwell place of Yahweh they were venerated. Scholars opined that Mount Sinai or Horeb played a crucial role in the history of ancient Israel's liturgy. It was on Mount Sinai that Moses received the Torah from the God of the fathers of Israel (Exod. 20: 2-17). Gileaning from biblical literature, mountains were places where ancient Israel and their leaders met Yahweh. The Israelites were expected to purify themselves, washed their clothes and maintain cultic distance from the mountain whenever there was the need or call to meet Yahweh on a particular mountain.

Scholars like Albright (72-124), Marvin (61-72) and Douglas Van Buren (124-125) maintained that El's Mountain was aqueous mountain and that the water of El's rivers is life giving water. In Canaanite religion, El lived on sacred mountain which has been associated with life-giving water. When Israelite cried for water, Yahweh led Moses to the rock (mountain) to provide water for His people (Exod. 17: 1-6). In Numbers 20: 1-13, Yahweh provided water from the Mountain.

Furthermore, in ancient Israel, mountains are like the battle ground of conflicting natural forces. For instance, in the war between Israel and the Amalekites, Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the mountain instead of the battle front. This is an indication that the power that control human affairs reside on the mountain. In fact, Moses going to the mountain top with rod in his hand suggests that he wanted to be closer to Yahweh to invoke His power from the mountain. It is believed that some mountains possess magical power to ensure victory. To invoke the power of victory residing on these mountains, some symbolic actions must be taken. For instance, Moses lifted up his hands with the rod lifted, pointing to heavens and to Yahweh and brought victory to Israel.

This victory against the Amalekites, that came as a result of the action of Moses and his team on the mountain is an indication that some mountains in ancient Israel were conceived to be a place of battle, victory and magical potencies

Besides, ancient Israel believed that blessings in all its ramifications come from the mountains and hills. Some mountains were venerated for the blessings that come from them. Moses enjoyed Israel to put blessing inscription on mount Gerizim (Deut. 11: 29). It appears that the power to bless the people reside in Mount Gerizim as such blessing were to be pronounced from this mountain. There, to the Israelite, Mount Gerizim was a mountain of blessing or a symbol of blessing and later became the site where the Samaritans built their temple. Mountain could be described as a unique symbol of inner strength and security.

Theologically, mountains are viewed at least in four ways. Firstly, the Lord is greater than the mountains: he establishes them (Psa 65:6; Psa 90:2), weighs them (Isa 40:12), breaks them in pieces (1Kings 19:11; Hab 3:6), grinds and threshes them in pieces (Isa 41:15), sets them on fire (Deut 32:22; Psa 83:14; Psa 104:32), melts them (Mic 1:4; Isa 63:19), and removes them (Job 9:5). Secondly, the mountains are a symbol of power: Babylon is called a destroying mountain (Jer 51:25); the opposition to Zerubbabel is likened to a mountain that will become a plain (Zech 4:7), and the kingdom that will endure for all eternity is symbolically portrayed as a mountain that fills the earth (Dan 2:44). Thirdly, the Lord gives his people a sense of his nearness by choosing mountains for his worship and revelation. Fourthly, employing the imagery of its neighbors, the Old Testament denotes the divine abode by reference to the mountain in the extreme north (Psa 48:2). In Isa 14:12ff. and Ezek 28:11-19 the pagan kings of Babylon and Tyre respectively are described as seeking to become gods by ascending the mythological divine mountain (TWOT).

Interpretation of Psalm 121: 1-2

The Text in English and Hebrew Language

Psalm 121:1 A Song of Ascents. I lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come?

² My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. (NIV)

שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלֹת אֲשָׁא עֵינַי אֶל־הַהָרִים מֵאֵין יְבֹא עֲזָרִי:^{WTT}
עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:²

Attempt is made in this section of the study to interpret Psalm 121: 1-2 with the view of discovering what the text meant in ancient Israel.

The reading of Psalm 121: 1-2 can be associated with a concrete topography, or a metaphorical statement (Allen 1983: 151). In verse 1, the psalmist declares “I will lift up my eyes to the hill” אֲשָׁא עֵינַי אֶל־הַהָרִים. The verb "to lift up" אֲשָׁא is Qal imperfect first-person common singular. Also, it was used 655 times in the Old Testament (TWOT 1421; BDB 6337, p.669; Strong 4984, 5375, 5379). It is used six hundred times with three separate meanings: "to lift up"; "to bear, carry, support"; and "to take, take away." (2Sam 2:22). This verb is used both literally and figuratively. Example of literal use is: to promote or honour a person (Gen. 40: 13,20) while figurative use raising the gate of a city (Psa 24:7, 9) (Awojobi, 2021:10).

It should be noted that the Hebrew word עֵין means “eye” or “source” (TWOT, 1612; ISBE Dictionary 3302). It may represent the whole process of seeing (Jer 5:21) or to express knowledge, view, perception and response. In this context the speaker is looking up to God for help in his hour of need. (TWOT, 1612; ISBE Dictionary

3302). It appears that the speaker is facing danger and suddenly recalled that 'his true salvation is not to be seen' (Segal, 2013: 592). The Psalmist looked at the mountain and wonder whether the God that is dwelling there will truly save at this time of danger (Adamo & Olusegun 2022: 2).

The speaker may had tried other means of assistance and now resolved to the option of looking up “to the hill” אֶל־הַהָרִים. The hill or mountain could refer to Mount Zion (Adamo & Olusegun 2022: 2). His resolve to contact the hill for help was because of the speaker's understanding of the hills and its habitant. Ancient Israelites believed that Yahweh to reside on the mountains and this is the reason why some worship places were located on hills or mountains. For instance, Yahweh manifested himself on Mount Sinai to Israel (Exod. 3: 105, 19: 10-22).

Furthermore, Mountain has been interpreted as referring to Yahweh (Dt. 32: 15; Ps. 18: 3, 32, 47; 92: 16; 94: 22; 95: 1). For some interpreters, 'mountains are symbol of power of Yahweh himself (Clifford 2003: 221-222). However, it has been suggested that the mountain that the psalmist is referring to here is an expression of longing from a distance (exile) for the 'homeland' (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011: 322). Mountains or hills were places where Yahweh manifested his glory. Israel regarded mountains to be places of meeting with Yahweh and where they received instructions from him. Mountain was also a place of prayer. Moses prayed on Mount Sinai while Elijah prayed on Mount Carmel and Elijah prayed (Exo 17:9; 1Kings 18:42). Worship is offered on various mountains (cf. Gen 22:2; Josh 5:3; 1Sam 9:12ff; 1Kings 3:4). Another important issue attached to mountain was the issue of covenant. Mountains served as places of covenant-cutting with Yahweh (Exod. 24). It is held that blessings like rain, water, fertility and in all its ramifications come from the mountains and the hill (Deut. 11: 29; 33: 15; Deut 11:29; Deut 27:12ff; Josh 8:33).

In Verse 2, **the phrase** אֶזְרִי מֵעַם יְהוָה לֵשָׁה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ my help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth is worthy of note. This is considered as a confession of trust resting on the protection of Yahweh (Adamo, & Olusegun, 2022: 2). The psalmist acknowledged that Yahweh is the only person that can provide adequate help (TWOT 1598b, BDB 6971, Strong 5826). This is because heaven and earth belongs to him (Clifford 2003: 222). The Hebrew word for help is אֶזְרִי. It connotes assistance or support especially in the context of difficulty (Gen. 1:1; Ps 115: 15; Prov. 3: 19-20). Yahweh is perceived as the only personality that is capable of providing true and lasting help, support or assistance to those who put their confidence in him (Psa 20:2; 33:20; 42:5; 46:1; 115:9,10,11; 121:2; Isa 41:10,13,14, etc.) (Holladay 6205, ISBE 4243). Help could be material, spiritual, financial and any form of assistance that could bring succour to an individual or nation (VanGemeren, 1997: 378). The psalmist is confident in that his help will come from Yahweh, the “maker of heaven and earth” לֵשָׁה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ or the creator of the universe. This is an indication that genuine help, protection, blessing, and security are gift from Yahweh the creator of the universe (Baker & Kohlenberger, 1994: 920).

The phrase: “my help comes from the Lord” is a confession of absolute trust in the ability of Yahweh to protect. Yahweh has both the willingness and the power to help. Scholars also see the mountain as Yahweh and rejection of other gods by the speaker. Thus, Yahweh is the single and necessary source of help and protection. Yahweh alone has the ultimate power to protect and create (Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014: 526). As the maker of heaven and earth, Yahweh is sovereign over 'hill or mountain'. As a helper, Yahweh exercises his beneficent power from Zion, 'May the Lord bless you from Zion' (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011: 322).

The Importance of Mountains in Psalm 121:1-2 in African Yoruba Context

Our task in this section of the study is to examine the importance of mountains and hills in ancient Israel and African Yoruba Context. The Yoruba people are mainly found in the southwestern part of Nigeria and states like Kwara and Kogi of Nigeria. Yorubas are also in Benin Republic and Sierra Leone. The Yorubas are believed to be the largest ethnic group in sub-Saharan Africa (Bascon, 1969: 1). The Yorubas are the most important group in West Africa in terms of significance and influence (Booth, 1977: 179; Ilegu, 2000: 105-138; Olubunmi, 2011: 4-6). It should be noted that there are more people committed to the Yoruba religion outside Africa than in Nigeria. The Yorubas are called *Nago* in Brazil, *Aku* in Sierra Leone and *Lucumi* in Cuba (Kilson & Rotberg, 1976). The Yorubas practice African Traditional Religion. African traditional religion is the indigenous religion of the people of Africa (Awolalu & Dopamu, 1979: 26). This form of religion has been handed down from generation to generation by the Africans forefathers. Mbiti observed that African cosmological view is a religious world and “man lives in a religious universe (1982: 48). In other words, the world in its entirety is a religion and humans are expected to conduct their affairs in a manner that conforms to acceptable norms.

As mentioned earlier, the phrase: 'I will lift up my eyes to the mountain from where?' (*Emi o gbe oju mi si ori oke wonni, nibo ni iranlowo mi yio ti nwa*) indicated that the speaker was in a particular place and confronted with a situation that is beyond human control and needed help. Like in ancient Israel, mountains and hills occupied important place in religion, social and economic lives of the people of Africa. A careful study of the African history and practices revealed that some communities in Africa are associated with some natural formations, such as hill, mountains, rivers and lakes (Oyewole, 371). These formations are considered sacred and, in some cases, deified and venerated, worshipped and even celebrated annually as a mark of respect and honour for them. Examples are the *Oke-Ibadan*, *Orosun (Oke Idanre)*, in *Ondo State*, and *Osun (Osogbo)* festivals (Oyewole, 371). Because the mountains do not die or sick, the Yoruba read strength, sound health, longevity and durability to the mountains and believe that if they are served and worshipped these blessings would be transferred to the worshippers. This made Mbiti to assert that the stability of the mountains makes the souls, or spirit inhabiting them permanent and those who worship them would be permanent as well (1969: 48).

Like in ancient Israel, Africans see mountains and hills as the abode of the gods, spirits and divinities. Some mountains and hills in Africa are dedicated to the worship of some gods. It is common to see Africans on the mountains or hills offering sacrifices to the gods they believe live in or on the mountains (Awojobi, 2021:13). The Yorubas are very religious people. Before the advent of white missionaries to Nigeria, the Yoruba people had their own religion and way of doing things. There are sacred places where worship is being conducted in Africa and among the Yorubas (Awolalu, 1979: 114). These are places where humans encounter the Divine. The name given to this place in Yoruba land is: *Ojubo* (the place of worship or shrine). It is traditionally held among the Yoruba people of Nigeria, that there are spiritual blessings when prayers are made on some mountains. Women that suffer from infertility received answers to their prayers on the mountains. The children received are named after mountains, examples are: Okeseyi, Okedele, okekede, *Okedoyin*, *Okedayo* and so on (Ayodele, 133).

During the time of civil and religious wars in Africa, mountains served as places of refuge from the attack of more powerful groups. People migrated from valleys to the mountains for security reasons during wars in

Africa. In fact, some cities in Africa are located on mountain tops today (Awojobi, 2021:13). Mountains like Idanre, *Ikare*, *Ado-Awaye*, *Igbeti* and *Igbajo* were places where people settle during wars (Ekanade & Aloba, 1998: 24). Ibadan hill also served as a place of refuge for people during the war and later became military base in the nineteenth century (Ekanade & Aloba, 1998: 27). Mountains were good sources of water. Good examples of these are the water falls resort centre at *Erin-Ijesa* that supplies water to the town and its environments and the *Oyo Alaafin* water works reservoir which is situated on *Soro Hills* (Ojebode, 134).

It is pertinent to note at this juncture that when the early Europeans and American Missionaries came to Yoruba land in the 19th century, most of them settled on the mountains and hills. Their residences were sometimes far away from the town and their converts. Examples are: David Hinder and Anna his wife lived at *Oke* (Mount) *Kudeti* in Ibadan (Kalu, 1978: 269), some missionaries lived at *Oke-Ogunpa* and *Oke-Aremo* in 1857 (Kalu, 1978: 272). The Catholic missionaries resided at *Oke-parde*, *Oke-Ofa*, *Oke-Ado* and *Oke Are* (O'Neill, 1981: 7-28). In Jebba and Share in Kwara State, Nigeria, the United Missionary Society missionaries from Canada and America established their first mission station on the mountains.

Among the African Indigenous churches in Nigeria, some mountain and hills are sacred and are considered to be the abode of God. Mountains are places where prayers can be answered fast. There are church leaders who spend days or even months on the mountain to seek the face of God in prayer and fasting (Adamo & Olusegun 2022: 4). In fact, some of their churches are located on hills and mountains. An example of this group of churches is the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), where nearly every branch of the church has *Oke* (mountain) attached to the name whether the church building is located on the mountain or valley. This shows that mountain occupied a unique place in worship among the African Indigenous churches. They have names like CAC *Oke Alaafia* (mountain of Peace), *Oke Aanu* (mountain of Mercy), *Oke Igbala* (mountain of Salvation), *Oke Ibukun* (mountain of blessing), *Oke Iyin* (mountain of praise), *Oke Isegun* (mountain of Victory), and so on. To the Cherubim and Seraphim church, the mountains are sacred places. They are places where imperishable life force has been available (Omoyajowo, 1982: 160). Orimolade, the founder of Cherubim and Seraphim established the practice of praying on the mountains in the Church. Faithful leave their house to pray in solitary places to avoid distractions in prayer. (Idowu, 2009: 221). People with problems of all sorts are found on the mountains seeking the face of God and finding solutions to their problems. Some denominations in Nigeria have camps on the mountains. These camps are used for retreats, conferences, seminars, workshops, night vigils and the likes. In Nigeria, some church buildings are located on the mountains.

Leaders of the Indigenous churches encourage their members to go to the hills and mountains to pray because they are places where God can be contacted. In Yorubaland some of the sacred mountains where people pray or seek the face of God are: *Olorunkole Hill*, *Oke Erinmo Hill*, *Oke Igbala* (mountain of Salvation) at Ondo, *Oke Calvary*, *Ikare*, and *Okejigbo*, Abeokuta (Omoyajowo, 1982: 161). Other include: *Oke taborah*, Ilorin, *Ori-Oke Ikoyi*, *Ori-Oke Akinkemi*, *Okesasa*, *Oke Aanu*, *Oke Irapada Oluwa*, *Ori Oke Abiye*, *Ede*, *Oke Babalola*, *Odo Owa*, and so on. Many prayer mountains were established by leaders of *Aladura* churches in Nigeria for people to contact God. For instance, Babalola and his team of prophets established many mountains during his evangelistic enterprise and Christians and non-Christian are seen patronizing the prophets on these mountains for solutions to their problems. Some Christian faithful spend hours, days or weeks in prayers on mountains to seek the face of God on issues of concern. Some prayer mountains are named after their founders. For instance, *Ori Oke Babalola* (Mountain of Babalola) at Odo-owa, Kwara State, Nigeria was named after its founder

Prophet Ayodele Babalola of Christ Apostolic Church. People from all walks of life with different needs do go to this mountain to call the God of Ayodele Babalola to come and help them (Awojobi, 2021:14).

The phrase “*nibo ni iranlowo mi yio ti nwa?*” (From whence does my help come?) is very important. The psalmist is in need of help which he believes can only come from the hill or mountain. In other words, the help that is needed by the psalmist can only come from the one that resides in the mountain. This is so because of the belief that a supreme being lives in the mountain and specialises in rendering help to those who asked him (Baba 2020: 67).

It should be noted that, Africans are always searching for assistance or help by reason of the issues that have bedevilled her. Africans seek help from the gods on the mountains on challenges such as sicknesses, famine, poverty, death, infertility, and any form of misfortune. In African context, help is very crucial to life. It is held in some quarters that God will not come down whenever prayers are offered to him but he will send humans to meet the needs. The communal lifestyle of Africans suggests that no man is an island on his own and as such help is expected from one another. This is why Africans live together in immediate family, extended family, clans, ethnic groups, and so on. They share their success, failures, challenges and pains together (Awojobi, 2021:14).

In Verse 2, the psalmist declares “*iranlowo mi yio to owo Oluwa wa, ti o da orun on aiye*” (My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth). The psalmist acknowledged God as his sure helper because he is the maker of heaven and the earth. The psalmist is confident that God will surely help him in the time of trouble since God is the creator of heaven and earth. A careful consideration of the socio-political situation of Nigeria reveals that the nation is faced with characteristic problems of injustice, corruption, inequality and other such like oppressive and exploitative vices. The word “*iranlowo mi yio to wo Oluwa wa*” (my help comes from the LORD) makes a lot of sense to an average poor, and marginalized African Yoruba person who is constantly under the attack or victimization from the rich or rulers. The assurance is that “*iranlowo*”, (help) is guaranteed in God “*ti o da orun on aiye*”, (who made heaven and earth). With this statement, a Yoruba man believes that God is in control of heaven and earth. The power and influence of God is not limited and as such the needed help will surely come from God. In most cases, Africans are always in need of help such as protection, guidance, provision and blessing. This is an indication that God watches over his people at all times and in all places (Adeyemo, 2006: 747).

Some members of the Indigenous Churches in Nigeria are in the habit of inscribing Psalm 121 on their clothes, doorposts, vehicles and houses. Some read a portion of this Psalm in bathing or drinking water before use. This is done for protection from evils, witches, wizards, and any form of misfortune (Adamo 2017: 45-46). This Psalm is recited by Christians and non-Christians for protection, healing and success in any human endeavour. It is the belief of some African Christians that the recitation of this Psalm is the affirmation of the African faith in Yahweh as the ancient Israel did as they journeyed to the promised land from Egypt. Therefore, recitation of this Psalm will bring success, healing, protection and provision as they were in the time of Israel (Adamo 2017:45-46; Olusegun 2021: 150).

Conclusion

The concern expressed in this Psalm is crucial especially with travellers in ancient Israel and in Africa today. This is because all our travelling outlets such as the road, the sea and the air are not safe. In Africa, the activities

of terrorists, bandits, and kidnappers have to turn our roads to nightmare. It is becoming increasingly difficult for African to travel in the day or night for the fear of being kidnapped or killed even when ransom has been paid. God's protection, guidance and intervention is required to navigate these terrains in the journey of life. This Psalm is about absolute trust in God for protection in life journeys. It assures pilgrims of protection and guidance of God.

Also, it is clear from this Psalm that the author had absolute trust in God for protection in his time of trial. The lifting up of his eyes to the mountain was to the God who live on the mountain for assistance or help in his time of need. This is because of the believe that mountains and hills are the abode of gods or God. Some places of worship in ancient Israel and Africa are built on mountains. Early missionaries in Africa had their residences on mountains. Humans, consider mountains as sacred phenomena in ancient Israel, Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The church, her members and adherents of African traditional religion in Yoruba land use mountains and hills to achieve their religious satisfaction, political and socio-economic well-being. The African Indigenous Churches have adopted mountains as places of worship and prayer. Mountains and hills serve as places of refuge in the time of wars in ancient Israel and in Africa Yoruba Contexts. Mountains and hills are sources of water supply for people in ancient Israel and contemporary African Yoruba society. Mountains and Hills were created for the use of human by God. The Christians and the adherents of African Traditional Religion are making adequate use of Mountains and Hill to advance their religions. Humans are enjoined to maintain mountains and hills properly and adequately in order to continue to enjoy the blessings embedded in them.

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