

MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY



FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

HEALING IN ANCIENT ISRAELITE RELIGION AND SHONA TRADITIONAL RELIGION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

SUBMITTED BY

MLAMBO BLESSING

R137912P

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
Degree in Theology and Religious Studies at Midlands State University

SUPERVISOR DR. C. MWANDAYI

JUNE, 2016

ABSTRACT

Health was an important concern in Ancient Israelite Religion; it is also a major concern in Shona Traditional Religion. This is seen in how the Ancient Israelites preserved health by observing the Mosaic Law and the sanitary code. In Shona Traditional Religion, health is preserved from conception up to adulthood. These two religions share much in common on how they perceive the causes of ill health as a punishment from disobedience. In both religions, there are important religious practitioners who play a significant role in safeguarding the health of people. The study explores why some people undermine the traditional medicine. It argues that this attitude is mainly because of Christian missionaries who undermined the Shona health delivery system. The Shona people are encouraged by the researcher to use traditional medicine which is cheaper and affordable. The Shona people are also exhorted to appreciate traditional medicine because healing was there even before the colonialists came.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere and heartfelt gratitude first and foremost to my supervisor, Dr C. Mwandayi. His expertise and unwavering guidance and support throughout the compilation of this study is greatly appreciated. I thank my beloved husband Siphon and my children Adriel, Faith and Shammah for all the support throughout the research. I thank the Almighty God for keeping me healthy and alive during the course of undertaking the research and the compilation of this work. I also want to thank all those who inspired me.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

1.0 Background to the Study

This research aims to carry out a comparative analysis of healing in Ancient Israelite Religion and Shona Traditional Religion. This research lies in the field of Old Testament Studies. The research focuses much on how these two religions view the issues of health. There are many similarities than differences between these two religions.

This study discusses the Shona Traditional view regarding ill-health and sickness, causes of diseases and how diseases are diagnosed and treated in Zimbabwe and how it was done among the Ancient Israelites. The study will go on to describe the role of religious practitioners among these two religious groups. Ancient Israelite Religion and Shona Traditional Religion value health in people's lives and ill-health is believed to be caused by sin or evil spirits. These two religions have certain taboos which are meant to safeguard the health of people.

Healing plays an important role in the life of a Shona person therefore it needs to be preserved from any harm. Lack of good health has some destructive effects on life, meaning that where there is no healing there is no life. Among the Ancient Israelites health is essential and sickness is associated with curses from God after disobeying Him. In Shona Traditional Religion and Ancient Israelite Religion, diseases or sicknesses have always been a religious problem and religions continue to play a significant role in the health delivery system.

It has to be understood that because of the missionary teaching against the Shona way of healing, Africans themselves have been made to undermine their health delivery system. Gunda (2007) has it that Africans ended up having dual membership meaning to say that they had membership in church and in African Religion.

The research will focus on the Shona people living in Harare in Mbare\ Hatfield district. Chavhunduka (1997:1) has it that before the colonisation of Zimbabwe traditional healers enjoyed tremendous prestige in society but Christianity and western education made traditional healers to lose their prestige and status. Colonial governments and Christian missionaries attempted to suppress the traditional medical care system for a number of reasons. Firstly they did not know that traditional medicines were effective in curing many illnesses. Secondly they felt that traditional healers encouraged the belief in witchcraft which was regarded as one of the major stumbling blocks in the way of Christian missionary work.

Chavhunduka (1997) goes on to say that the terms used during the colonial era to describe traditional healers further undermined their position in the society. The most common terms used to describe a traditional healer were witchdoctor, herbalists, medicine men, sorcerer, diviner and magician. These terms are derogatory and pejorative, they are misleading terms which were used by missionaries and western scholars and they got domesticated to the extent that even the Africans use them comfortably. As a researcher I do not agree with the negative terms used to describe the traditional healers. What is interesting is that despite various attempts used by early missionaries and government officials to suppress the activities of traditional healers, many people have continued to use their services. This caused Zimbabweans to be traditionalists by night and Christians by day.

White (2012) has it that there are some diseases that western medicine cannot treat, which need spiritual attention. The Shona Traditional healing system recognises various ways to

deal with afflictions and has different religious experts whose task is to discover the reasons of disharmony in the universe. In support of the above, Buttrick (1991:546) says that Africans and Ancient Israelite Jews have laws and taboos which help people to safeguard their health. Health laws are given in the Old Testament. There are certain foods that should not be eaten and certain behaviours that are sinful in the sight of God. The Israelite laws protected them from bad diet, dangerous and communicable diseases. Israelite laws have dietary laws, child birth laws, circumcision and moral laws. We also find that in Shona Traditional Religion there are also similar laws. Old Testament healing share much in common with Shona Traditional Religious healing than with modern medicine

The question now is why Christian missionaries demonise African Traditional healing when it is apparent that these two religions share much in common with biblical healing. This has triggered me to research on healing between these two religions. Traditional healing encompasses treating illnesses with herbs to spiritual treatment. It is holistic in its approach and embodies the collective wisdom of indigenous knowledge handed down over many generations.

This research will also focus on the common diseases or ailments among Ancient Israelites and among the Africans. Among the Hebrew people the common diseases were leprosy, mental illness, sterility or barrenness, eye diseases, sexual diseases, haemorrhoids, dysentery, inflammation, itching and wounds. According to Brand (2004:429) Isaiah 38 relates the story of the very serious illness of King Hezekiah. The cause of illness was a boil. Mental illness was also common among the Hebrew people and the victims suffered greatly. Their sickness was usually associated with evil spirits. King Saul became mentally unstable (1 Samuel 16:23) and he gained some help from music. Eye diseases were also found among the Hebrews in Genesis 48:10 we read “Now the eyes of Israel were dim...” The dimness of

sight rather than blindness is indicative of a cataract. There is also evidence of dysentery where king Jehoram died of a painful intestinal disorder (2 Chronicles 21:18-20).

Gelfand and Mavi (1985) say that some of the common diseases in Zimbabwe are depressed fontanel (*nhova* or *chipande*), infertility, abdominal pains, painful uterus, madness, epilepsy and many others. Africans believe that there are many diseases known to a traditional healer (*n'anga*) and can only best be cured by them because the cause of the disease is so different from that of scientific medicine. Much of the disease is due to upset or anger of the spirit elders. Sickness may also be attributed to a failure to perform certain ritual practices and taboos.

Broida (2007), states that the Hebrew Bible usually presents sickness as God's punishment for straying from his commandments. The Bible demonstrates God punishing people or the whole nations by illness or calamities. God's forgiveness also brought healing. There are some cases like Job's when he suffered horrible sores and miseries when he was righteous. The Old Testament provides a hint of a world in which infirmities were treated at home by family members, prophets, or priests using prayers and other remedies. Diseases and injuries were treated by magic at times, for example bandaging injuries or applying ointment to wounds. The prophet Isaiah treated King Hezekiah's wounds by pressing figs on his sores (2Kings 20:11-17 and in Isaiah 38:1-2). Hezekiah got his recovery from this remedy because there is evidence from the Bible that God heard Hezekiah's prayers and that he was promised fifteen years more.

In the Old Testament, God was the cause and source of all that happened to humankind. This means that God was the source of health and illness. For instance, God is the one who gives life and kills at the same time (Deuteronomy 32:29). God punishes people if they are not obedient. For example, Gehazi was punished with leprosy because he disobeyed Elisha (2

Kings 5:20-27). The Old Testament laid much emphasis on the prevention of diseases rather than its cure. If a man pursued the life of spiritual fellowship with God he was entertaining the most valuable safeguard against sickness

1.2 Statement of the problem

A mere glance at the aspect of healing in the two religions reveals that there are striking similarities between them. It is assumed that the two religions originated and developed independently of each other. It is therefore a puzzle why their healing practices appear to be similar in one way or the other. For example both religions value health and regard it as essential. Because of that there are certain taboos that are given in a bid to safeguard the health of the community. Certain foods are prohibited as their consumption is seen as a threat to one's health.

The Hebrew people were subjected to a very strict diet. They were prohibited from eating pork and all other animals that do not chew the cud. Animals such as dogs and reptiles such as snakes are prohibited among the Hebrew people and among the Africans. The healing processes in both religions include the taking of medicine such as leaves and roots. It also includes exorcisms especially on those believed to be possessed by evil spirits. These similarities leave us with many questions like:

- Was the origin of these practices and beliefs spontaneous and independent?
- Why do we have striking similarities between the two religious traditions?
- Does the missionary advent in Africa precede these practices in Africa?

1.3 Aim of the research

The aim is to make comparative analysis of healing processes between Ancient Israelite Religion and Shona Traditional Religion.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 To describe the healing methods in Ancient Israel.

1.4.2 To describe healing methods in Shona Traditional Religion

1.4.3 To compare and contrast the healing process between the two religions.

1.5 Methodology

Given that the researcher deals with healing in Ancient Israelite religion source criticism and socio-scientific criticism will be used as a method of study.

1.5.1 Source criticism

Source criticism is a specialised field of biblical studies that seeks to determine the sources used to develop the final form of biblical text. According to Anderson (1959) source criticism is particularly concerned with the problem of whether there are written documents behind our present text. Initially the method was developed to address problems of repetition and inconsistencies in the Pentateuch. However, with passage of time it was no longer confined to

the Pentateuch, but got applied to the Bible in its entirety. In 1978 Julius Wellhausen came up with the documentary theory stating that there are four sources behind the text.

Alexander (1999) has it that source criticism is strong since it helps to identify the various sources behind our text repetitions and inconsistencies in the Bible can now be attributed to these sources. Apart from being strong, the method is weak in that it mainly concentrates on identifying early written sources over-looking earlier oral traditions.

1.5.2 Socio- scientific criticism

Socio- scientific criticism of the Bible is that phase of exegetical task which analyses the social and cultural dimensions of the text and its environmental context through the utilisation of the perspectives, theory models and research of social sciences. Elliot (1993) has it that socio –scientific criticism is a sub discipline of exegesis not a new or independent methodological paradigm. It complements the other sub-disciplines of the historical-critical method by bringing socio-scientific analysis to bear both on texts and on their geographical, historical, economic, social, political and cultural contexts. Socio- scientific method is a necessary and crucial operation of exegesis for several reasons. In general, every writer of the Biblical text describes events that are social in nature. Each biblical writing is not merely a literary composition but also a social and stylistic product with literary, theological or social aims. Each is intended to serve as a means of social communication interaction and to prompt social action on the part of its targeted audience

Hayes (1944) says that the method looks at the social context surrounding the text, the social dynamics of the early religious communities out of which these texts arose, and consequently fresh perspectives on the texts themselves. Though with its weaknesses, the method is useful

in as much as it essentially reads and uses biblical texts as sources for doing socio historical reconstruction or socio analysis

1.5.3 Phenomenological Approach

The Phenomenological method will be used because the research is dealing with lived realities of the Shona people. Cox (2010) defines phenomenology as a philosophical movement attributed to a German scholar Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), it provides a way of knowing reality or investigating the way we know reality. The approach guards against distortion and is suitable for this research. The researcher will employ main concepts which have been used by phenomenologists of religion. These concepts are epoche, empathy, and eidetic intuition and these are key elements used by the phenomenologists of religion, (Cox, 2010). The concepts are guided by the principle, 'the believer is always right.'

Cox (2006) has it that the concept entails a suspension of judgement. Epoche is a Greek term which means 'I hold back', so it refers to bracketing off preconceived biases when studying religions of others. Hence, it seeks to empower scholars to study other people's religions without prejudice and it serves to guard against making premature and unfounded truth claims. As such, the researcher will hold back preconceived judgement since she was brought up in a Christian family where she was taught that traditional healing is satanic. Epoche has a weakness of elevating the believer to a position of spokesperson of the deity.

Empathy according to Cox (2010) refers to a process of cultivating a feeling for the practices and beliefs of a religion other than one's own religion which does not originate in the scholar's own culture. Empathy is when the researchers get inside the phenomena, it should be understood from within, and hence it recommends, methodological conversion for the purpose of research. Empathy has its weakness for example it is difficult to view reality from

the point of view of believers if one for example does not believe in witchcraft. Eidetic intuition sees into the essence or meaning of religion. Despite the phenomenological approach's shortfalls the researcher uses the phenomenological approach because it guards against distortion.

1.5.4 Data collection

The researcher will utilise the following methods to collect data:

1.5.4.1 Interviews

This research would make use of interviews as data collection instruments. The types of interviews include personal and focus group. According to Creswell (2007) an interview provides access to what is inside a person's head, it makes it possible to measure what a person knows. Leary (2004) has it that interviews have an advantage in that they are flexible and can probe for more specific answers and can repeat a question when the response indicates that the respondent missed the question.

The interviewer can observe non-verbal behaviour and assess the validity of the respondent's answers. The researcher is aware of the disadvantages of interviews such as inconvenience and time consuming, furthermore it becomes difficult if the interviewee is not in a mood to talk. Above all interviews are very lengthy and require the interviewer to travel. Personal interviews are limited in that some people don't want to talk to the strangers especially in town they are suspicious of strangers.

1.5.4.2 Focus Group Interviews

The researcher is also going to use focus group interviews. Uwe (1999) says that focus group is a group of people picked out and assembled by the researchers to discuss and comment from personal experience on a subject topic. This shall be used because the research seeks to discuss and assess people's experiences on healing methods used in Shona Traditional Religion as the subject of study.

Focus group interviews enable the researcher to get right and correct information. The disadvantage of a focus group interview is that it can be intimidating to members who are not comfortable with strangers. It can be difficult to assemble a group; furthermore focus group interviews may discourage certain people from participating for example those with special needs and those not confident enough to participate in the presence of people.

1.6 Justification of the study

There has not been enough literature dealing with this subject. Previous researchers have tended to concentrate on the two religious traditions independently. This study seeks to go a mile further and make a comparative analysis of the healing processes between the two religious traditions. More so, the researcher intends to further the discussion in a more popular way using many of invaluable insights from this previous work.

This study will help the Shona people to appreciate the healing processes of both religions, since there are some similarities between them. The research also will equip future students with enough literature on the subject. Moreover the study serves as a foundation for this researcher's further studies.

1.8 Literature review

A lot of material on health issues has been published. My literature review will therefore not exhaust all the relevant texts on the subject matter under discussion. The researcher will look at some of the scholars individually then analyse their contributions and illustrate briefly on how I intend to relate this research to their views.

Chirongoma (2013) says that health is the major concern for the Shona people. This is evidenced by how the Shona people, put more emphasis in the preservation of life and health. For the Shona people life is sacred and there is need to preserve it. The Shona people reverse life and resist anything that is a threat to it. In my view Chirongoma's work will be of much help in my research since the Shona conception of health is communal. Again the Shona people preserve life from conception up to old age and this is true with the Shona people who take charms and amulets from conception till death.

Chavhunduka (1994) has it that before the colonisation of Zimbabwe, traditional healers enjoyed the incredible prestige in society. They were not regarded as the only medical specialists but they were also expected to deal with a wide range of social problems as well. Moreover, traditional healers were expected to have answers to all kinds of personal problems. The colonial government and missionaries despised the use of African traditional medicine because they believed that traditional healers encouraged the belief in witchcraft which was a major hindrance or stumbling block in the way of missionary work. Traditional healers are able to cure illnesses that could not be cured by modern medicine. Chavhunduka would be helpful to this research when examining how the colonial government undermined the traditional healing and how useful is the traditional medicine to the Shona people.

Gunda (2007) says that Christian missionaries tried to displace the traditional health delivery system in Zimbabwe and Africa as a whole but they failed. In Africa, Zimbabwe being not

the exception diseases or sickness remains a religious issue and this means those religions continue to play an important role in the health delivery system. Christianity in Zimbabwe sought to uproot indigenous religions and by trying to achieve that they attempted to undermine one of the cornerstones of traditional religions that is the health delivery system. They tried to set up mission hospitals throughout Zimbabwe but they did not succeed to do away with the traditional health delivery system. The Shona people understand sickness and diseases in two forms. Healing in Zimbabwe is understood in two forms the most important one being the spiritual one meaning to say some causes of illness are spiritual therefore need to be addressed by the traditional healers. This will help to establish why the Shona people will go to the traditional healers after coming from the hospital. This is because the scientific medicine deals with the physical side and not the spiritual one.

Thorpe (1996) has it that the Shona recognise that many illnesses have ordinary causes and they are treated by home medicines or traditional healers. Only prolonged illnesses which do not respond to ordinary measures are taken to a traditional healer (*n'anga*) for treatment. In healing the first step is to establish the cause, where after appropriate measures must be taken and proper remedies administered. Traditional healers use different methods of finding the cause of the problem but the most common are the throwing of dice and spirit possession. Many traditional healers specialise in either herbalism or divination but most of them perform both functions. Thorpe's view will be useful in this research when dealing with causes of illness and diseases among the Shona people. More so it will help in the methods of healing used by the Shona people as Africans.

Bourdillon (1982) says that the Shona people are terrified by serious illness and they believe that serious or abnormal illness like anything out of ordinary is caused by spirits, either angered spirits or by witchcraft or sorcery. Until the ultimate cause of the trouble is discovered and appeased or overcome there remains the frightening possibility of further

trouble and it is hopeless to expect complete relief from the present affliction. According to the Shona belief, modern medicine can only cure present illness but it remains useless against the original cause of an illness which can strike again. That is, even if the person is treated by modern medicine a Shona patient is likely to consult a traditional- diviner healer whose function is to communicate with the spirit world. A traditional healer can also provide medicine for success in various enterprises for example for good crops, for good relations with the employee, for love making and for many others. Therefore the Shona believe that their well-being depends on their relationships with ancestral spirits who control their lives. Bourdilon's contribution in this study will help to evaluate the work of traditional healers and their various roles.

Praglin (2015) has it that Ancient Israel's conventional relationship stated that God alone is the healer and the source of both health and illness. Sickness was viewed as a divinely ordained form of collective punishment. The Hebrew word for healing and healer was closely related both to spiritual and physical redemption and to wholeness. In Genesis, God heard the plea of Abraham and healed Abimelech who had been punished for taking Sarah the wife of Abraham. God also promised to keep Israel healthy if she kept the commandments. Deuteronomy 24:8-9 and numbers 12 recall Moses' prayer for Miriam's healing. The prophetic books describe God as caretaker of the sick, the weak and the lost. Elijah, Elisha and Isaiah invoked God's healing powers through signs, fasting, prayer, and various healing remedies. The practice of magic or faith healing was consistently denounced in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. In my view, Praglin's contribution will assist in this research so as to come up with how the Israelites view illness and diseases as having a spiritual cause.

Buttrick (1991:546) states that the Hebrew people thought that diseases were regarded as a divine visitation resulting upon disobedience or sin and this penal theory persisted in the

popular mind throughout the entire biblical period. Because of the consistent spiritualizing of pathological phenomena, the general biblical view of the incidence of disease related it more or less directly to God. Health itself could be maintained by thorough observance of the divine commands throughout life and if the discipline of the spirit was undertaken consistently the blessing of material prosperity would be added to physical and mental health. Buttrick's argument will help in this research in that for the Israelites, physical health was a blessing from God and sickness was caused by disobeying God. In my view, the Ancient Israelite people preserved life by observing certain laws.

Nyirongo (1997:170) says that there are different causes of diseases in Africa. Sickness can also be caused by disobeying the taboos and customs of the clan or tribe. In the Old Testament, sickness can be caused by poor hygiene and sanitation. To help the Israelites live a disease free life, God gave them a code of good sanitation and hygiene (Leviticus 15). Furthermore, sickness can be caused by a direct consequence of personal sin. Hebrew people suspected of suffering were carefully diagnosed and isolated from the community until they are healed (Leviticus 12:1-4).Nyirongo will be of much help when comparing healing in Ancient Israelite religion and in Shona traditional Religion.

CHAPTER TWO

HEALING METHODS IN ANCIENT ISRAELITE RELIGION

2.0 Introduction

Healing was an integral aspect of the religion of Ancient Israel. Religion being a human endeavour that seeks to provide spiritual and physical wellbeing to its adherents inevitably has healing as one of its salient features. The methods of healing in Ancient Israelite religion are as varied as the ailments themselves. Disease, death and any other forms of suffering were regarded as a violation of the nature of humanity hence they needed to be rectified. This chapter examines the methods of healing in Ancient Israelite religion by unpacking the concept of health, the causes of disease and delineating the methods employed in administering the healing process.

2.1 The view of Health in Ancient Israelite Religion

In Ancient Israelite religion, health is not something that humanity attains. According to Bromley (1988) it is rather the original state of a human being. This is seen in the creation story. When God created the world and everything in it he saw that it was good (Genesis 1:31). This goodness points to the absence of any form of evil, disease included. The goodness points to the fact that humanity was created healthy. God being the creator of life himself, he is the giver of health since it is health that sustains life. According to Praglin (2011), Ancient Israel's covenantal relationship affirmed God alone as healer, source of both

health and illness and restorer of body and spirit. Moreover, God's healing was linked to individual and communal forgiveness, restoration, renewal and deliverance from destruction. Healing in Hebrew was closely related both to physical and spiritual redemption and to wholeness.

According to Smundson (1982), God created the world without the intention to make it imperfect and infected with disease. So God's original plan was that of a world that promotes and sustains the well-being of humanity. This wellbeing does not refer to physical health only. Health in Ancient Israelite religion implies a wholesome well-being. This concurs with Hasel's opinion. According to Hasel (1983) health in the Old Testament embraces both the physical, mental and emotional qualities. The implication of Hasel's view is that being a healthy person requires that the body and the mind function harmoniously. This idea is further tackled by Prince (1999) who observed that Judaism has an implied vision of human health and well-being that is grounded in fierce engagement with life.

The general belief is that the mind, spirit and the body have been different parts of an integral whole. This idea of the interrelatedness of body, mind and spirit is derived from the Jewish concept of wholeness. Physical illness is understood to have psychological and spiritual effects. In the same vein, spiritual suffering or emotional disorder may manifest itself through physiological symptoms. It is probably due to this reason that Jews would wish a sick person a "complete healing" Hasel (1993).

In Ancient Israelite religion, health was believed to be evidenced through longevity. The long periods of life which the patriarchs lived should be understood within this framework. Jewish tradition has it that there was no disease from Adam until Jacob. The absence of disease propelled the Jewish fathers to live for years that were close to a millennium.

The view of healthy life in Ancient Israelite religion was therefore that of a body and mind that functions harmoniously. This harmonious function is necessitated by the absence of disease. The absence of disease which leads to a harmonious relationship between mind and body is then evidenced by longevity in one's life span. Broomiley (1988) states that in the Pentateuch, illness is sent by God to punish the transgressor or to make clear divine displeasure (Exodus 4:11 and 32:39). Diseases were thus regarded as conditional largely by moral and spiritual factors and major ailments of the Old Testament were accepted accordingly as punishment for personal iniquity or rebellion.

2.2 Perceived Causes of Diseases in Ancient Israelite Religion

As indicated earlier, Israelite tradition holds that there was no disease from Adam until Jacob. It is not immediately clear why this whole period was free from affliction, but however, Jews generally associated pain and disease with punishment from God. C.O Aluede and D.B Ekewenu (2009) have argued that pain and disease have been regarded as punitive measures from God for man's shortcomings. They do not happen naturally but they come as curses from God.

Disease then came later as a result of the first man's sin. Simudson (1982) shares the same view. He says that the Bible connects sickness to human sin. This implies that any disruption of health is a consequence for disobedience or wrong doing. Various ailments in the bible are associated with punishment from God. Examples of such include Miriam's leprosy (Numbers 12:9-16). The same applies to the predicament of David's child with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:14-23).

This same belief is shown when Job fell ill. His counsellors went on to suspect that he might have committed something wrong to deserve this predicament. This belief was also in

agreement with the teaching of the law. The Mosaic Law taught that sickness could be expected when God's law was disobeyed. The Deuteronomic law lists a number of curses that would befall people of Israel as consequences of sin (Deuteronomy 28:60-61).

However, the case of Job reflects a change in the basic conceptualization of illness. This primitive measure was then replaced with an understanding that suffering can be a natural consequence of living in this kind of world. The book of Job explicitly indicates that illness is not necessarily a punishment for sin. In fact, the book of Job shows that sickness may also be a result of Satan doing (Job 1:20).

Moreover, there are some diseases which were believed to come from the consumption of certain foods. Bromley (1988) asserts that the Israelite dietary regulations were meant to prevent certain diseases. Jews were given regulations which divided foodstuffs into readily recognisable categories of clean and unclean. Animals such as swine were prohibited on the basis that they were unclean. Most of these regulations are found in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Besides believing in the notion that sickness is a punishment from God, it can also be noted that sickness could emanate from our interaction with the environment as well.

Nyirongo (1997) reiterates that although sickness and diseases came to the world through sin as recorded in Genesis, God goes further to show that in daily life, poor hygiene and sanitation can cause diseases. To help the Israelites to live a disease free life, God gave them the code of good sanitation and hygiene. Thus the idea of bacterial and viral infections was not originated by scientists or hospitals but was originated by God. Nyirongo (1997) goes on to say that sickness can be a result of God's visitation either as judgement, chastisement or as a way of demonstrating His sovereign power. God promised to send diseases upon Israel if she departed from the covenant and good health if she obeyed God's commands. It doesn't

matter whether she had kept the whole hygiene and sanitary code but she would still suffer from diseases if she broke the commandments.

2.3 The Methods of Healing in Ancient Israelite Religion

In Ancient Israelite religion, healing is regarded as God's nature and intention, that is, by nature God is a healer. As stated earlier on, God created the world without intending it to be infected by disease. Hence, God's nature has the mechanism to counter disease when it emerges.

Healing is indeed God's nature because of the results that it seeks to achieve. According to G.F Hasel (1988), healing results in the functional repair and regeneration of a previously diseased or damaged part of the body or mind. Healing is therefore the restoration of the state of humanity. As has been already stated, health is the original state of humanity hence healing is in essence, the restoration to full personhood. In Ancient Israelite religion, there were as many healing methods as the ailments themselves.

2.3.1 Healing through forgiveness of sins

As earlier on indicated, the Israelites strongly believed in the connection between sin and sickness. According to D.J Simudson (1982) many biblical passages connect forgiveness of sins with healing. The forgiveness of sins is in fact, a necessary and sufficient condition for healing. This notion is captured in Psalm 103:3 which describes God as the one who forgives sins and heals disease. This is why it has been maintained that the concept of healing in Ancient Israelite religion has a broader meaning. It in fact, refers to reconciliation between God and humanity. Having been created sinless, man was without disease. The first man sinned and made the human species susceptible to disease. The removal of disease therefore

requires reconciliation between man and God hence healing can be achieved through the forgiveness of sin. However, the case of Job as discussed in the preceding issues throws the link between disease and punishment into question.

2.3.2 Healing through Prayer

Prayer was also a powerful tool to achieve healing. This method is closely linked to the above in that forgiveness normally comes through prayer and repentance. There are many examples of prayer to God for healing sickness. Moses prayed for the healing of the Israelites bitten by snakes (Numbers 21:7). Psalms 6 is also David's prayer in times of sickness. King Solomon encouraged the people to expect God to answer their prayer for healing sickness. (11 Chronicles 6:28-30).

Prayer was also common with Elijah and Elisha. When the son of the widow of Zarephath was stricken, Elijah cried out to God. Elisha also prayed for the Shunamite woman's son by laying hands on him repeatedly. Moreover, F.H Wight (1953) adds that King Hezekiah was healed in answer to prayer (11 Kings 20).

Healing through prayer can also be regarded as spiritual healing. The Old Testament has a record of incurable wounds which medicine cannot heal. Only spiritual healing can cure these types of wounds (Ezekiel 34:4).

2.3.3 Medicinal Healing

This can also be referred to as medical healing. There is ample evidence of this type of healing in Ancient Judaism. Medical healing can be achieved through the use of plants, herbs and some other substances. This is seen in 2 Chronicles 28:15 when wounds are anointed. Jeremiah talks of a balm and a physician (Jeremiah 8:22)

According to Simpson (1978) God created these plants and other natural necessities to develop medicines. Medical healing differs from spiritual healing in that it happens again and again in his one's lifetime. Divine or spiritual healing is a one-time event which will eradicate the disease forever.

Ancient Israelites viewed medical treatment positively. In fact, medical treatment was regarded as an obligation basing on Exodus 21:19. The positive portrayal of medical treatment and the physician is seen in Jeremiah 8:22. This passage shows that the presence of the physician among Israel was expected. Because of that, God expressed his surprise that there was no physician in Israel. The physician therefore had a place in the Israelite society. He probably used natural medicine such as the balm of Gilead. The use of the balm is also indicated in other passages in the book of Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 51:8, 46)

2.3.4 Natural healing

This type of healing is believed to have been in all plants and mammal life. It is the type of healing that takes place most often. Human beings were created with this feature being part of their genetic code. There is evidence of this feature in Ancient Israel. It appears as if even diseases such as leprosy could heal naturally as portrayed in Leviticus 13:37. Wounds from injuries and circumcision would also heal naturally as suggested in Joshua 5: 8.

In support of the above, Nyirongo says that in the Old Testament, help from medicine men was accepted but a Jew always had to remember that it was God who healed all diseases (Exodus 15:26). Moses's law gave specific instructions on what to do when one contracted certain diseases especially infectious diseases. One had to turn to a priest who would investigate the cause of the disease and then conduct both religious and medicinal

purification. From such guidelines, the Jew understood that sickness was just a result of natural or physical causes but also spiritual causes.

Some scholars like Praglin (1999) argue that the Hebrew Bible possessed a negative attitude toward physicians given their perceived link to sorcery and incantations. The practice of such magical healing was denounced in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Consulting exorcists in search for a cure was considered an abomination to the Lord. For example king Asa of Judah did not seek the Lord but sought help from physicians and as a punishment he soon died. Asa consulted the aid of the physicians rather than the aid of God (2 Chronicles 16:12-16).

2.4 Conclusion

There are varied methods of healing in Ancient Israelite religion. The methods are as varied as the ailments they seek to rectify. God was generally viewed as the healer and disease was associated with punitive measures from God. However, these conceptions were later questioned especially basing on Job's sickness. On the basis of the above evidence it becomes difficult to conclude whether medicinal treatment was disputed or accepted in Ancient Israelite religion. Of great importance is that God is the ultimate physician. The next chapter is going to deal with the methods of healing in Shona Traditional Religion.

CHAPTER THREE

Healing in Shona Traditional Religion

3.0 Introduction

Healing in the Shona understanding plays an important role in the life of a human being. Life in an African understanding needs to be preserved from any harm. Morekwa (2004) highlights that the lack of proper healing has negative effects on life; meaning to say that where there is no healing there is no life. The Shona healing system is concerned with the whole human being. For the Shona Traditional Religion, health is not just the proper functioning of the bodily organs, but it consists of mental, physical, spiritual and emotional stability of oneself, family members and the community. This integrated view of health is based on the Shona unitary views of reality. It is believed that when a person has a physical illness his or her religiosity will be affected too. This affects a person both economically and socially.

Good health is generally understood basing on the relationship with the ancestors. Health among the Shona people is not based just on how it affects the living because it is very important that the ancestors are pleased so that they can take care of the living, White (2015). In the Shona understanding, good health is believed to be the result of good behaviour that is, living in accordance with the values and norms of the traditions of the society. Healing among the Shona people goes together with faiths or beliefs of people

3.2 The view of Health in Shona Traditional Religion

The Shona people understand healing as part of their religion, culture and tradition. Morekwa (2004) says that it is very difficult for an African to live without healing. Healing is taken as a process along with the stages of life. The Healing ceremony begins from birth, continues through childhood, marriage and adulthood up to death. Among the Shona people, healing is a method of curing diseases. Healing diagnoses is done in various ways in order to deal with afflictions and has different religious experts whose task is to discover the reasons for dissonance in the universe.

Serious diseases and illnesses are viewed as having their root in personal loss. Thus the cause of illness is not limited to the environmental factors and other explanations expressed in other cultures. Shona traditionalists put emphasis on a liberative motif which is life giving and life enhancing. The Shona people accept the agency of health seekers who are actively involved in their welfare. Health and well-being is achieved on the basis of indigenous beliefs regarding health. Individuals and families invest a lot in refusing to accept ill health. Chirongoma (2013) articulates that the Shona concept of life is communal that is one belongs to a community. Everyone in the community is affected when one is sick. Therefore the sick person is surely not alone for he or she remains linked to those people because of the community's concern.

Nyirongo (1997:169) states that in the Shona community, sickness is a family affair. The disease itself is usually believed to be caused by one of the family members and during the treatment close relatives must be involved to give support and assurance. This is done because sickness is not just a clinical observation but a communal and spiritual encounter. Health among the Shona entails the lack of negative aspects that could hinder one from

enjoying life in the living world. In such cases, the diviners or healers could prescribe medical concoctions to catch thieves or witches.

Chavhunduka (1994) says that it is difficult to separate Shona traditional medicine from their religion because all traditional healers are also religious leaders. Traditional healers are successful in curing a large number of diseases. Many Shona people who are Christians find it difficult to abandon their religion and medicine. The Shona people believe that there are some diseases that cannot be treated by western medicine hence they need spiritual attention. It is also mostly agreed that it is impossible for anyone to be really healthy due to the presence of witches. Some families could actually protect themselves from the mechanisms of witches. The Shona people use charms for the protection of the household.

3.3 Perceived Causes of diseases in Shona Traditional religion

For the Shona people, maintaining health and well-being is the top priority therefore identifying the causes of ill-health and any forces that threaten life is of great importance. The Shona Traditional Religious system identifies numerous, various causes of diseases. Thorpe (1996) has it that the Shona people recognise that many illnesses have ordinary causes and these are treated by home medicines. Only prolonged illnesses which do not respond to ordinary measures are taken to traditional healers for treatment. Apart from physical complaints, misfortune or bad luck is viewed as an illness to be treated. Things that seem to have no human explanation are understood as having an undetectable cause. Traditional healers are regarded as the ideal people to deal with spiritual matters because their main function is to communicate with the spirit world.

The Shona people are not only interested in being healed but go further to seek the ultimate cause of illness and the cause has to do with spirits, leading to necessity for an explanation as to why the spirits have acted in such a way.

Nyirongo (1997) says that sickness can be caused by disobeying the taboos and customs of the clan or tribe. This behaviour angers the ancestors who are the custodians of such beliefs and therefore the sustainers of the tribe's well-being. When sickness affects the entire community, it is usually linked to a great-great ancestor.

In support of the above, Gelfand (1985) says that ancestral spirits normally protect all those in that family from harm but if one violates or omits a religious ritual, the spirit will become annoyed and punish the family by causing an illness or the death of one or more of its members. Ancestors are believed to be a major cause of illness as they seek attention. It is imperative that the curative measure takes cognisance of this fact. Thus, the affected parts are inextricably intertwined with action in the spiritual guidance is a prerequisite. Shoko (2011) has it that ill-health and other forces which deny scientific treatments are explained as spiritual forces directed by witches, wizards, evil spirits or angered spirits. The popular notion is that people do not just suffer illness by chance; serious illness is believed to have its origin in a primary supernatural cause. A good relationship with the ancestors should be maintained by offering sacrifices and offerings to those spirits.

Chirongoma (2013) states that the Shona people believe that the ancestral spirits may cause harm if they are not given proper reverence. There are different types of avenging spirits but the bottom line is that they are a spirit of someone who did not receive proper burial or who had suffered injustice. For example, if a child causes much grief to his parents or fails to take care of them and they die having holding a grudge, they might turn into avenging spirits, and

this can cause illnesses and diseases to the children even the grandchildren. Healing can only be achieved if the child performs a ritual, for example *kutanda botso*.

Illness can be caused by witchcraft. The Shona people perceive witchcraft as the source of all evil and anti-social behaviour. They readily suspect it to be able to work wherever something unpleasant or very much out of the ordinary occur such as illness and persistent ailments, misfortune or death. According to Morekwa (2004:3), witchcraft is a spiritual ability of a person to prey on the spirit of another person by means of a remote control. Witchcraft is meant to cause harm and sometimes even death to its victim. Sometimes witches use magical means to inflict harm. According to White (2015), the Shona traditionalists believe that certain illnesses which defy scientific treatment can be transmitted through witchcraft and unforeseen forces, these include barrenness, infertility, attacks by wild animals, persistent headaches and repeated miscarriages.

There are many diseases in the Shona Traditional Religion which affects different age groups and there are various methods of dealing with these diseases. There is this common disease which affects infants which is called depressed fontanel (*nhova* or *chipande*). The fontanel is regarded as the weakest part of the body which allows sickness or poison to enter it. The treatment of this sickness is by applying a black thick mixture which is applied over the fontanel. Infants can be protected from depressed fontanel (*nhova*) by using amulets. The amulet is worn or tied around the child's neck or waist.

Infertility is the complaint that is feared by the Shona people. This condition is usually attributed to the ancestors, alien spirits or witches. In an interview with Esther, interview, at Mbare Flats (15 /02/ 2016) she said that she was unable to bear a child because an alien spirit of a witch wanted to possess her. Failure to accept the offer of witchcraft can cause one to be barren. In another case a man was rendered sterile because he did not pay the cow which is

paid to the mother of the bride (*mombe yeumai*). In support of the above Chirongoma (2013) has it that if the mother dies without having received her cow from the groom, this may cause havoc on the daughter's family. Failure of the groom to pay some items which are required by the mother-in-law the mother might cause the avenging spirit to strike either her daughter by making her not to conceive. Barrenness also may be caused by witchcraft. Another woman became barren because she had been bewitched by the husband she had divorced. Rumbidzai Mushipe in an interview, at Mbare National, (16/02/16) said that the traditional healer told her that she was haunted by the spirit of her aunt who was a witch. That spirit was causing her to suffer from bad luck and she was having difficulty in bearing children. She said that the traditional healer told her that the spirit should be removed so that she would conceive.

The other common disease in Shona Traditional Religion is rheumatism (*chitsinga* or *chipotswa*). Gelfand, (1985:30) says that this physical disorder is characterised by pain, swelling or a foreign body which remains stationary. It is believed that a poison enters the body at a point and circulates to the other parts of the body causing severe pain. The witch plants poison on the victim's path so that when he steps on it, it enters the body. Shoko (2011) has it that the Shona people recommend herbs which are highly effective. Most of the preventive medicine is given in order to fight against evil forces, witchcraft and sorcery. The herbs make witches stupid or forget bewitching the person. Such herbs are a preventive medicine to protect one from witches. Different types of medicines are used for personal defence in order to maintain health and well-being of the individual.

Several diseases are caused by witchcraft, for example madness, paralysis, down syndrome small pox and epilepsy. According to Shoko (2007), mental illness is the serious disease which haunts the Shona people. On this illness, the factor of witchcraft becomes real. In terms of therapy for mental illness traditional healers prescribe herbs with the seeds of castor oil plant and other medicinal alternatives are effective.

3.4 Healing Methods in Shona Traditional Religion

The Shona Traditional healing is a method of healing and curing diseases and illnesses found in Zimbabwe. The Shona Traditional healing recognizes various ways to deal with afflictions and has different religious experts whose task is to discover the reasons for disharmony in the family and community. Morekwa (2004:6) asserts that traditional healers are expected to know and to prescribe the remedies and cures for those who have problems and to know the causes. Healing has been practiced in Africa for many years before the colonisation, and also that it is proving to be the best method among the Shona.

The role of the traditional healers is of much importance. Traditional healers are viewed as restorers of life and that they have knowledge to catch witches. They are also capable of exorcising evil spirits. The problem that made the Shona people to undermine traditional healing is because of the derogatory terms which were used by Christian missionaries like witch-doctor. Meaning that traditional healers had two roles of a witch and doctor, these two terms are contradictory. How can one be a witch and a doctor at the same time? Witches destroy life while the doctor protects and restores life. Machinga (2011) says that traditional healers have different methods they use like divination, cleansing rituals, protective amulets and herbs to cure and heal.

To add to the above Chavhunduka (1994:1) says that before the colonisation of Zimbabwe, traditional healers enjoyed remarkable prestige in society. They were not only regarded as medical specialists but they were also expected to deal with a wide range of social problems as well. Traditional healers were also expected to find answers to all kinds of personal problems. They were consulted about the future or if one wants to take a long journey, he

would ask a traditional healer whether he would reach his destination safely. Some traditional healers are able to inform their patients of the reasons for their visit and the social cause of their illness without having been told. The majority of such healers carry out the diagnosis by use of both possession and bones. Some less common methods are the use of calabash, a looking glass, a needle and dreaming.

Dahlin in Chirongoma (2013) says that at times people are uncertain about traditional healers because some of them engage in unscrupulous behaviour. Some traditional healers' primary goals are power and money but most of them are good people who use their skills to help others. Traditional healers have some potent magic which involve doing despicable things and how some traditional healers mislead people into committing incest, ritual murder or committing rape in search of cure of HIV/AIDS. Some people acquired goblins *zvkwambo* in search of treatment; therefore it impacts negatively on communal health and well-being.

Traditional healers use different methods of healing. In some instances, the traditional healer will merely treat the patient with herbs without divining. Gelfand (1985) has it that the decision whether to divine or not depends to some extent on whether the patient considers his complaint to be normal or abnormal. Before the traditional healer treats the patient, he may determine with his bones or by consulting his spirits whether his medicine will be of help. The diviner may then not even prescribe any medicine, but simply explain to the relatives that the illness is too far advanced for any treatment to avail. Among the Shona, there are three basic and important principles of treatment, which is prevention, finding the cause and curing the illness.

Exorcism is another healing method which is used in Shona Traditional Religion. Exorcism is a practise of expelling evil spirits from people or places that are possessed or are in danger of

possession by them. Exorcism is usually performed by a person with special religious authority such as traditional healers.

In an interview Mbuya Muhera, at Hatfield, (22/02/ 2016) who is a spirit medium and a traditional healer, she confirmed that they do sometimes interview their patients in order to find out the history behind sickness, where they have been for treatment and how long the person has been in that situation. She said that this approach informs them on how to handle the matter at hand. If the client is unable to speak, other family members speak on behalf of the sick person. Shona traditional healers' understanding is that their traditional healing process is holistic. Another traditional healer in an interview Sekuru Mubaira, interview, at Mbare National, (16/02/2016) confirmed that they interview their patients in order to know the source of illness but the problem is that at times they face challenges in when they lose some of their clients because they lose confidence in them since they expect the traditional healers to know everything pertaining to their visit to a *n'anga*.

The Maunganidze family was interviewed at Mbare National, (16/02/16) confirmed the above assertions. They had come to Sekuru Mushore with their father who had swollen legs and was unable to walk. The family said they had visited another traditional healer the previous week but they were unhappy because the traditional healer asked them their names and where they were coming from. They said that they were expecting the traditional healer to know their names instead of asking them because by asking it shows that he is a weak *n'anga*. They were impressed by the welcome they received at Sekuru because he told them everything before asking so they had confidence in him.

Midwives are the most important drivers of health delivery system in Shona traditional Religion. Gunda (2007:205) says that midwives play a major role of caring and offering of professional advice to pregnant women. They participate not only in pre-natal care but are

also responsible for assistance in labour and the delivery of children as well as the post-natal care of both mother and child. These women are also knowledgeable in herbs because they prescribe the necessary herbs before delivery. These herbs make delivery very easy for pregnant women. They also prescribe pre-emptive charms to protect the child from the effects of evil charms that are possessed by some members of the community that is a danger always present when the child is taken to the public places.

3.5 Conclusion

As has been noted above, healing is the most important aspect among the Shona People. In many circumstances the Shona people believe that illness and diseases have certain causes therefore they don't happen by accident. Those diseases are diagnosed and treated by traditional healers. Traditional healers are the most important providers of health among the Shona people because they offer an explanation of what caused the diseases or misfortune. This is the reason why people go further to them after being treated at the hospital. More so some Christians visit traditional healers privately this is because Christianity fails to answer some of their problems, it also proves that Christianity failed to destroy traditional healing, that is why most Africans by day traditionalists by night. The next chapter is going to compare and contrast healing between the Ancient Israelite Religion and Shona Traditional Religion.

CHAPTER FOUR

Comparing and contrasting healing between Ancient Israelite Religion and Shona Traditional Religion

4.0 Introduction

This chapter is going to deal with the similarities and differences between these two religions, how they view health and their healing methods. Health in the Old Testament embraces not only physical well-being but also the spiritual, mental and emotional qualities. Health in the biblical view is the wholeness and completeness of being in itself and in relation to God, fellow humans and to the world. In the Shona traditional Religion, health is not just the proper functioning of the body.

In support of the above Fredrick (1994) has it that illness presents itself in two dimensions on a physical level it is manifested through pain and suffering and on a spiritual level it is experienced by suffering. Jewish healing has to do with existential human quest for wholeness within oneself, one's community and ultimately one's God. While the brokenness of illness often brings all of these needs to consciousness, each creature yearns for this wholeness and integration every day. Ancient Israelite Religion is a covenantal relationship affirming God alone as healer, source of both health and illness and restorer of body and spirit. Sickness was viewed as a divinely ordained form of individual or mutual punishment. God's healing was linked to individual and communal, forgiveness, restoration, renewal, reward and deliverance from distraction. Healing in the Hebrew tradition was closely related both to spiritual and physical redemption and to wholeness.

The Shona people had in place mechanisms of dealing with forces threatening life like diseases, drought, barrenness, curses and witchcraft. These ailments do not occur by accident but are caused by certain forces and they require a religious approach in dealing with them. Therefore, healing in these two religions is holistic in its approach. These two religions have certain laws or taboos which are meant to protect people from diseases.

4.1 Similarities between ancient Israelite religion and Shona traditional religion's methods of healing

Healing in either of these religions is an intricate enterprise in which the practitioner does not seek only the person's physical well-being but also his spiritual and psychological fulfilment. Nyirongo (1997:173) says, sickness and healing are theological experiences, not merely clinical perceptions. To help the Israelites live a disease free life, God gave them a code of good sanitation and hygiene (Leviticus 15:1ff). Thus, the idea of dealing with the bacteria or viral infections was not originated by scientists or hospitals but it was originated by God. So to protect the nation, God gave them a health code. Nyirongo (1997) goes on to say that sickness in the Shona Traditional Religion can be caused by disobeying taboos and customs. This behaviour angers the ancestors who are the custodians of such beliefs and therefore the sustainers of the tribe's well-being.

In support of the above, Broida (2007) says that the Hebrew Bible usually presents sickness as God's punishment for straying from his commandments. Exodus 5:26 presents a common biblical view that if people listen to God, he will not bring diseases that were brought to the Egyptians. The Hebrew Bible also shows God punishing individuals and even entire nations by sending illness or the misfortunes. Nyirongo (1997) reiterates that God promised to send diseases upon Israel if she departed from the covenant and a good long life if she obeys

God's commands. This meant that she would suffer from diseases if she broke the commandments.

Diseases and sickness can also be caused by evil spirits in both religions, for example mental illness in the Shona Traditional view is caused by evil spirits. The possessed person is delivered from the power of that evil spirit by traditional healers. Hence they practice exorcism. Exorcism is a practice of expelling evil spirits from people or places that are possessed or are in danger of possession by them. Exorcism is usually performed by a person with religious authority. Mental illness among Ancient Israelites was also viewed as being caused by evil spirits. Bromley (1988) has it that King Saul represents one of the notable cases of mental illness. In Shona society, Chavhunduka (1994:80) says that a person is defined as being mad when he performs foolish acts without realising what he is doing. Many patients are looked after by their families, but it is not possible that they be kept at the healer's home clinic. Traditional healers know that there are many factors which may lead to mental illness. There are natural factors such as brain damage or incorrect use of medicine. There are also psychological factors such as worry, strain and tension. Related to the second group of factors are the various social agencies that cause illness such as ancestral spirits, alien spirits, angry spirits, witches and sorcerers. The diviner induces a trance in a patient and instructs him to fight and overcome the spirit that is causing the complaint. Herbal medicine is administered and many cases of mental illness and other illnesses as well are said to be caused by avenging spirits. The diviner may in some cases recommend that the spirit troubling the patient is transferred to another person or animal for example a chicken or a goat.

Carson (1994:140) says that in general, diseases along with other natural misfortunes could be part of the effects of God's judgement on the nation for covenant unfaithfulness and there were exceptional cases where physical illness was a sign of God's punishment of an

individual. In ancient Israelite religion the other common disease was skin disease which includes eczema, herpes scars, boils and leprosy. The priest had the duty of distinguishing serious skin disease from minor complaints. The patient would be isolated since the disease was contagious. The major purpose of isolation from the Levitical perspective was to remove the unclean from possible contact with the holy. Leprosy was seen as symbolic of sin and its consequences were socially and religiously disastrous. According to Williams (1989) the Israelites had a remarkable sanitary code in Moses' time without which they might not have survived their stay in the desert. The instructions dealt with water supply, sewage disposal inspection and selection of food and control of infectious disease. The burning of excrement (Exodus 29:14) and the prohibition on eating animals which had died naturally were important in preventing the spread of disease.

Healing in both religions is administered at home by family, prophets or healers using a combination of prayer and remedies. Olukune (2009) has it that when King Hezekiah became sick, the prophet Isaiah gave Hezekiah treatment for his sickness. Isaiah prescribed a common treatment for boils and ulcers to promote healing. Hezekiah's healing was a combination of prayer and medicine. However the Hebrew Bible presents the view that medical treatments were destruction of disease at best and that the healing power rested with God.

In both religions there are sexual laws. For the Shona people, sexual conduct is prohibited when a woman is menstruating. Breaking such a taboo endangers the health of both the man and the woman. These sexual laws are similar to the Ancient Israelite laws in Leviticus 15.

Furthermore, midwives were important religious practitioners in both religions. According to Williams (1989), midwives helped at child birth by receiving the new born child and cutting the umbilical cord and washing the baby in salted water. Midwives attended Rachel when she

was giving birth (Genesis 35:17), and Leah was also attended by midwives in Genesis 38:28. In Shona traditional religion, midwives attended to pregnant women between the fifth and the seventh month. At this stage the most important medicine required is one that will make the birthing process easier. The midwife also examines the condition of the woman; they are consulted at every stage of the child's growth.

In both religions, confession is one of the most crucial ways of healing. In Shona traditional religion when the child is sick, one of its parents who have been unfaithful has to confess for the child to be healed and in most cases as soon as the parent confesses the child gets healed. Hasel (1989) has it that in the Old Testament David is a vivid Biblical example of one who got relief from confession.

Both religions regard health to be a religious issue and have to be dealt with religiously. In Ancient Israelite religion, they were religious functionaries like priests, rabbis and the prophets who would deal with health issues. In Shona traditional religion there are traditional healers and diviners who also deal with health issues of the community and the individuals.

The diviners among the Shona people mediate between the living and the spirit world and they usually use divining techniques of casting lots. The diviners make sure that there is a good relationship between the living and the ancestral spirits who ensures the health of the community. In ancient Israelite religion, there was supposed to be a good relationship between God and his people for the nation to stay healthy.

4.3 Differences between healing in Ancient Israelite Religion and Shona traditional religion

Having found some similarities between these two religions they are also differences, especially on the healing methods they use. According to Praglin (2011) the Hebrew bible

largely possessed a negative attitude towards physicians given their perceived link to sorcery and incantations. Consulting exorcists in search for cure constituted ground for exile from the community or death for example King Asa of Judah did not seek the Lord but sought the help from of a physician and his punishment was that he soon died (2 Chronicles 16:12).

In Shona Traditional religion, magical healing is the most acceptable method of healing. As has been highlighted in the previous chapter, the Shona people preserve life from conception up to adulthood. Pregnant women take herbs which help to protect the child from any harm and when the child is born protective charms and armlets are tied around the waist or neck of the child. This medicine is both curative and preventive for the Shona people. Thus the use of medicine for treatment is highly recommended by the Shona people while it is disputed by the Ancient Israelites.

Furthermore, Shoko (2011) has it that the Shona people exorcize troublesome spirits and this is done by the diviners. The Shona people believe that when a spirit is diagnosed by a specialist as having invaded a person thereby causing serious ailments and disease, numerous exorcist measures are employed in an attempt to drive away or neutralise the intruder. Among the Shona people, there is a concept of spiritual cleansing where herbs are prepared for the person to bath with at specific times.

In Ancient Israelite Religion, priests as well as prophets promoted health but they were not so much healers but they supervised certain purification rituals to promote health. This aspect is different from Shona Traditional Religion where the traditional healer has power to heal the disease

The other difference between the two religions is that God was the healer in Ancient Israelite Religion while in Shona traditional religion the ancestral spirits are the ones who provide healing through the traditional healers. If the ancestors do not allow this healing to take place

the patient will suffer or die. Among the Shona people there are some rituals which are performed if the cause of the disease is spiritual.

More to the above, Ancient Israelites condemn the use of magical healing but for the Shona people, most of the healing uses medicines like roots leaves, barks and many others. In the Old Testament, faith is important in healing while in Shona traditional Religion the use of herbs is more important. The Shona traditionalists use medicine for protection while for the Ancient Israelites hygiene and sanitary laws were taken as preventive measures in disease.

4.4 Conclusion

The two religions have more similarities than differences which are inferred from how they view health. There are also varied methods of healing in both religions; the issue of health is religious. The ultimate cause of diseases is disobedience. In Shona traditional religion if people disobey the ancestors they allow diseases and misfortunes to haunt people. In Ancient Israelite religion, if people disobey God they are punished by diseases and misfortunes. There are also religious functionaries in both religions that are in charge of the health of the community. After healing, certain rituals are performed in both religions. Despite these similarities, the differences are there especially on the healing methods. The Ancient Israelites are condemned by God for using magical healing while in Shona traditional religion magical healing is most acceptable.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, recommendations and conclusion

5.0 Summary

Chapter one focused on the background of the study, statement of the problem, methodology, justification of the study and literature review.

In chapter two, the researcher dealt with how ancient Israelites view health and the causes of diseases and their methods of healing. In Ancient Israelite Religion, health is viewed as holistic in nature and that diseases are caused by disobeying Yahweh. There are also varied methods of healing in Ancient Israelite Religion and the methods are as varied as the ailments they seek to rectify. However, on the basis of the evidence in chapter two, it is difficult to conclude whether medicinal treatment was disputed or accepted.

In Chapter three, the researcher dealt with the healing methods in Shona Traditional Religion. The chapter explores the Shona understanding of health. The chapter looks at the causes of illness and the methods of treatment which were used to treat diseases. The chapter also looks at the importance of traditional functionaries. It also looks at how the Shona people perceive ill-health and how they deal with it.

In chapter four the researcher dealt with the similarities between Ancient Israelite Religion and Shona Traditional Religion. It also explores how these religions perceive the causes of diseases. The healing methods of these religions have been compared in this chapter. The chapter outlines the diseases which are common in both religions. It also deals with similarities and differences on how the use of medicine is viewed in these religions. It also deals with preventive measures used in these religions.

5.2 Recommendations

(1) After realising that the two religions share much in common in the area of healing, the researcher recommends that the healing approaches in the two religions should tolerate each other. This thesis will lead to a common understanding and coordinial cooperation between these religions. There is however a lot that has to be done to convince some Christians in Zimbabwe to accept the healing processes of both religions since they are similar. African theology should seriously engage in doing theology in the context of the Christian Shona people to accept the use of herbal treatment.

(2) I also recommend that the people in Zimbabwe should adhere to use the use of herbal treatment since we have realised that it is more effective than scientific medicine. Some people should appreciate the use of herbal medicine. The use of herbal medicine does not make someone a sinner because even in the Old Testament there is evidence of medicinal healing. Medical healing was achieved through the use of plants, herbs and other substances.

(3) The researcher also recommends that Christians today should remember that before imperialism people were healed through traditional medicine. Traditional healers enjoyed prestige in society before the colonisation of Zimbabwe. These traditional healers are of much importance just like priests and prophets of the Old Testament. Hence, if people are using both the Old and the New Testament, they should appreciate the use of traditional medicine.

(4) The Shona People are recommended not to throw away the traditional medicines. It has been discovered that traditional medicines have less side effects. However there is need for traditional practitioners to improve their healing skills in order to attract people. There are many things which need to be improved in traditional healing. For instance traditional healers use same razor blade when cutting incisions without sterilizing them. This is dangerous

especially in today's world where there are diseases like HIV/AIDS. Using the same razor blade on different people can contribute in the spread of diseases instead of curing them. Hence this makes people to shun traditional healing.

(5) In line with the above observation, the researcher recommends that the best measures should be taken to improve the conditions of traditional healers. Traditional healers should instruct patients to bring their own healing tools. Traditional healers need to be given first aid education so that they can combine it with their own healing methods. They should put their knowledge into written form so that it can be preserved. Most traditional healers do not disclose the mystery behind their healing powers and they die possessing those skills without passing them on. This is unlike the healing processes of Ancient Israelite Religion which are written down. The healing processes of both religions should benefit both parties that is Christians or non-Christians.

(6) Like many other medical systems the development of traditional medicine was meant to save and not to cause harm therefore it should be appreciated by people. Traditional healers are recommended to research on the measurements in order to attract modern day people. Traditional medicine plays a pivotal role in healing among the Shona people. The researcher recommends that Shona people should appreciate traditional healers because they are people who are concerned about their lives. My stand point is that the Shona people should use traditional healing without fear because it is not very different from Ancient Israelite Religious healing system. The only problem which made people to undermine traditional healing was colonialism which tried to get rid of this cornerstone of traditional healing.

In Shona Traditional healing there is nothing like shortage of medication, divination bones and healing water while the hospitals and clinics can run short of medicine. Traditional medicine is affordable for the vulnerable and the under-privileged. Some hospitals are very

far hence transportation is needed to reach health facilities but traditional healers live in the same community with the patients.

5.2 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to do a comparative analysis of healing between the Ancient Israelite Religion and Shona Traditional Religion. Having found some similarities in the Shona Traditional concept of health and causes of illness with that of the Old Testament, it is pertinent to find ways for people to appreciate healing processes in both religions. The Shona people had their ways of dealing with diseases which worked for them before the coming of Western medicine. Shona Traditional healers as well as priests and prophets of the Ancient Israelite Religion offered solutions to diseases whether spiritual or physical with little or no side effects. Traditional medicines are popular in Africa because they are available and cheap. So people should stop judging but should be ready to learn new things and make right choices.

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