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Abstract- In recent times, some Christian faithful in nearly all Church traditions in Africa especially Nigeria have always close worship services or any Christian event in churches or homes with the recitation of Psalm 23: 6 as against the long standing tradition of closing these with Benediction or Grace. Attempt is made in this study to investigate the reasons for this change. In this Study, Psalm 23:6 is interpreted in the light of Security which is fundamental to the survival of the African people. The study adopted the African Biblical Hermeneutics which provides a useful lens to reread biblical text in African Context so that the Bible can be relevant in African situations and times. It was discovered that the book of Psalms was very popular and used by ancient Israel and by the early Christians. Portions of Psalms were written on parchment, clothes, houses, and any other things that are associated with them. They recited, sung and prayed from the Psalms. In the same way, some churches in Nigeria held that the contents of the Psalms are divinely potent and as such they recite, sing and pray from the Psalms especially in difficult times. Psalm 23: 6 can be used to invoke security and success on those who desire them in the same way as words of incantation *(ogede)* are used among the Yoruba ethnic group of Nigeria. It is the view of the African Christians that whenever, Psalm 23: 6 is recited by a Christian, instead of enemies *(ota)* following the individual, it is goodness and mercy shall follow the person all the days of his life. Since there are evils *(ibi)* accompany every day of the week this Psalm serves as immunity against all evils. The Christian is confident that his security is guaranteed and as such he is not afraid because God will watch over him at all times. Therefore, Biblical scholars and interpreters must ensure that the Bible and its contents are correctly contextualized to bring real-life interest that are of great concern to the Africans into the text for a better interpretation and understanding of the text under consideration.

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I. Introduction

The book of Psalms is widely read and cited among Christians in Africa especially in African Indigenous Churches in Nigeria. This is based on the view that the book is more potent than all other books of the Bible. Psalms are like the trends in modern speech act theory which maintains that words are potent and effective (Nasuti, 2001: 144). The book of Psalms is the best and most cited book in the Old Testament especially by the African Indigenous churches because of the believe that its contents are most potent and effective words in the Bible. Most times, the African Indigenous churches draw their prayer items, sermon topics and songs from the contents of the Psalter (Awojobi, 2021: 9).

Psalm 23 is one of the most familiar Psalms in the Bible (Crenshaw, 1993: 127-135). This Psalm the most loved book of the Psalms. Basically there are two ways of reading this Psalm: as a Shepherd to a Sheep and as God to a human. Africans would prefer that the Psalm be read as God to a human for the purposes of protection, provision, healing and success in all aspect of life which are the fundamental concerns of the African people (Adamo, 2018: 9). Psalm 23 is one of the classical Old Testament passages depicting Yahweh as Shepherd. The words and imagery of this Psalm will certainly accompany the faithful reader 'all the days of his life'. In this Psalm we encounter an individual who confesses trust in the good Shepherd who will provide in all circumstances. Psalm 23 stands out as the most familiar book in the Old Testament (Botha, 2015: 283-300; Kennedy, 1984: 14-21; Merrill, 1965: 354-360; Morgenstern, 1946: 13-24). Most Christians love Psalm 23 and as such it is referred to as 'American icon' (Holladay, 1993: 359) and 'nightingale of the Psalms' (Segal, 2013: 103) by some biblical scholars. This Psalm is believed to have filled the whole world with 'melodious joy' (Segal, 2013:103).

Western scholars in biblical studies have given different theme and titles to Psalm 23. As far as May is concerned the theme of this Psalm is 'the Lord Is My Shepherd' (1994:14). To Segal, it is 'With Me' (2013: 103), while Kraus sees it as 'Security in the Goodness and Mercy of Yahweh' (1988: 302-305). According to Schaefer (2001: 58), the theme that better describe the Psalm is 'You are with me'. Bullock sees it as 'The LORD Is My Shepherd I lack nothing' (2015: 166). Waltke and Houston calls it 'The Good shepherd' (2010:416) but to Watts it is 'Psalm of Trust, Thanksgiving and Praise' (1984395-406). To my mind all the above interpretations are good and appropriate as theme of Psalm 23 in the light of its contents and the context of the writer at the time of the composition of the Psalm. However, this study will focus on Kraus theme for Psalm 23 as 'Security in the Goodness and Mercy of Yahweh'. This agrees with Psalm 23: 6 in the African (Yoruba) context. African (Yoruba) approach to the interpretation of Psalm 23:6 as way of understanding the mind of some Yoruba Christians of Nigeria whenever they read or recite Psalm 23:6. They recite it every day before leaving their homes

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for work or business of the day for the purpose of protection, security, success, healing and provision. There are churches in Nigeria that will always close their worship services with the recitation of Psalm 23:6. This study seeks to investigate the reason for the recitation of Psalm 23: 6 in worship services after prayer and benediction or doxology in some churches and by some individual Christians in Nigeria. Psalm 23:6 is interpreted in the light of Security which is fundamental to the survival of the African (Yoruba) people. The study adopted the African Biblical Hermeneutics. The central focus of this method is to provide a useful lens to reread biblical text in African context. This is done to make the Bible relevant to the African situations and times. This actually distinguishes African Christianity from western Christianity. As far as the Africans are concerned, the western way of reading the Bible are too foreign to meet the urgent needs of Africans (Adamo, 2005: 39). This is not to jettison or abandon the western interpretation but to make an African contribution to the existing scholarship. To this end a review of the western interpretation of Psalm 23:6 will be done before we consider the African Yoruba approach to it.

II. The Text in Hebrew and English Language

[6] אַךְ טוֹב וָחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל־יְמֵי חַיָּי וְשַׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית־יְהוָה לְאֹרֶךְ יָמִים׃

[6] Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever (Psa 23:6 NIV)

a) *Psalm 23 in Western Biblical Scholarship*

This Psalm opens with a powerful metaphor: 'The Lord is my Shepherd' (Adamo, 2018: 7).Shepherd is a title that is synonymous with a King. This metaphor is used as a polemic argument that the vocation of a King is protection, guidance, care, and even substituting ones' life for the people (Botha, 2015: 283-300). A metaphor is when a word or a phrase is used to describe somebody or something else, in a way that is different from its normal use, in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the description more powerful (Hornby, 2015: 976). Metaphor does not describe by comparison but only identifies by equation (May, 1994:115-119). Many symbols are actually metaphors, because they are based on analogies within human experience. A symbol could be culture and history bound. That explains why the symbol of God as a Shepherd was so prominent in Israel's early history. In a society where the main means of subsistence was sheep-farming, a symbol such as that of the Shepherd could easily be associated with God (VanGemeren, 1997: 1225). As far as Foreman (2011) is concerned, Psalm 23 possess one of the powerful animal metaphor in biblical literature as he classified its imagery as mammal and pastoral. Yahweh being described as a Shepherd in this Psalm reflects the image of the God of Israel as seen in many Old Testament Scriptures (Exod. 15: 13, Psa. 77: 21; 78: 52-53) and prophetic oracles in exile and the return of God's people from exile to their home in Jerusalem. From the content of Psalm 23, it appears the author is very familiar with the history of the ancient Israel and when they went through (Botha, 2015: 283-300). The author made use of the life and experiences of the Israelites in the composition of the text under review (Bullock, 2015: 169). However, many scholars are of the view that Psalm 23 originated from late Babylonian exile and was recited in the post- exilic Israel (Adamo, 2018: 6).

It is clear from this Psalm that the Shepherd considered it his responsibility to provide for the Sheep. The Sheep is expected to be loyal, rely and depend absolutely on the Shepherd for provision, protection and guidance from time to time. According to Botha, Psalm 23 best describe the story of an individual in the journey of life (2015: 283-300). Goulder (2006: 463-473) opined that this Psalm may have been composed by a King in ancient Israel because it has national overtones and as such regarded it as a royal Psalm. Also, this Psalm fit into the royal Psalm in the light of Yahweh being referred to as King and Shepherd in ancient Israel, the Author thus becomes a vassal to the King (Merrill, 1965: 354-360; Tanner, 2004: 270-283).

b) *Literary Analysis of Psalm 23*

This Psalm is a Psalm of trust and confidence in Yahweh for his goodness in life and in the life to come. The Psalmist speaks of Yahweh in a personal way as his Shepherd and guidance. Psalm 23 can be divided into three parts and three basic images namely: Shepherds verses 1-2, the wanderer (verses 3-4) and the host, verses 5-6 (Weiser, 1998: 226-231; Clifford, 2002:130). Since God is the Shepherd all that is required from the Psalmist is to trust absolutely in Yahweh.

The first word of the Psalm, "The LORD", evokes the rich images of the provision and protection of God of covenant. The Psalmist maintains that the LORD is "my" Shepherd I shall not want. The common thing in ancient Israel was to address God as "our" Shepherd (Deut. 6: 4). This expression of the Psalmist is an indication that the God of Israel is also the God of individuals as well. The metaphor of the Shepherd point to the relationship between God and his Children (Baker & Kohlenberger III, 1994:823). A good Shepherd is primarily concerned about the welfare of the Sheep and as such provides all the necessities of life for the enjoyment of the Sheep. Due to the trust and confidence that the Psalmist has in the Shepherd he or she is not afraid of evil; 'because you are with me'. In verse 5, the Psalmist changed the image of God from being a Shepherd to a host in a banquet serving a meal in the presence of his enemies (Adamo, 2018:3). Verse 6 is the response of the Psalmist to the care of the shepherd

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or Yahweh. The Psalmist left the realm of imagery to return to the reality of the Temple, where he summarizes God's benevolent attributes that are eternal: 'goodness and love' (VanGemeren, 1997: 1105). As a result of what the Shepherd is doing to him 'surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever'.

It should be noted however that even though, Psalm 23 is a type of individual lament, it also has a communal dimension as it made allusion to exodus traditions with reference to the wilderness- 'even though I walk through the valley and the shadow of death' (Clifford, 2002: 130). In this Psalm, there is interplay of individual and communal elements where the idea of Yahweh is my Shepherd as well as a Shepherd of the people is written (Adamo, 2018: 3).

c) Hermeneutical Study of Psalm 23: 6.

This section is an attempt to critically consider Psalm 23:6 with the aim of understanding the original intention of the Psalmist. The verse started with the Hebrew word אַךְ surely meaning indeed, certainly, verily or truly. As mentioned earlier, verse is the response of the Psalmist to the care of the Shepherd or Yahweh on him. It is an expression of confidence and absolute trust in the ability of the Shepherd that he will care for him in every situation. The word surely occurs 150 times in biblical literature (Hollady, Lexicon). The word surely is a participle that primarily conveys the idea of emphasis and when translated, it is done in accordance with the context either an emphatic affirmative (Gen 26:9; Gen 29:14; Exo 31:13; Jer 16:19; Lam 2:16 etc.) or an emphatic restrictive (Gen 7:23; Gen 9:4; Gen 18:32; Exo 12:16; Lev 11:4; Num 22:20, Josh 22:19; 1Sam 8:9; etc.). In an emphatic affirmative manner it often introduce with emphasis the expression of a truth newly discovered or perceived, especially in colloquial language, For instance, *surely, no doubt*; (Gn 26:9) אַךְ אִשְׁתְּךָ הִוא *of a surety,* lo, she is thy wife! 29:14, 44:28, Ju 3:24, 20:39, 1 Sam. 16:6 *surely* the anointed of יי is before him! (25:21, Je 5:4, Psalm 58:12, 73:1, 73:13). Also, the most common use of "surely" is to translate a verb when emphasized by its own part, as "Thou shalt, surely die" (Gen 2:17) for "dying thou shalt die". In this sense "surely" is sometimes varied by "of a surety" (Gen 15:13, etc.) without the slightest difference in meaning. In the context of Psalm 23: 6, the Psalmist is confident that Yahweh is there for him at the time and as such his security is guaranteed.

Besides, the Hebrew word 'goodness' בּוֹט is a verb meaning good, beneficial, pleasant, favorable, beautiful, delightful, glad, joyful, precious, correct, and righteous, happy, and right. The Hiphil means to actively engage in good, "to do well," good things, or goodness. הַבָּוֹט good, welfare, in contrast to the stative meaning of the Qal. It can refer to doing practical good to someone else (Num 10:29, 32) or it can refer to doing the right thing. Both Jehu (2Kings 10:30) and David (1Kings 8:18) are thus praised. The verb frequently occurs with an impersonal subject, "It is good....".This idiom may describe a state of happiness or well-being as in describing the illusory well-being of the Hebrews in Egypt (Num 11:18), the well-being of a slave with a good master (Deut 15:16), and Saul's restful contentment resulting from David's music (1Sam 16:16).

Five general areas of meaning of good can be noted:

1) Practical, economic, or material good. This is a form of goodness that can be seen physically. It is tangible, visible, touchable and perceivable by humans. בּוֹט "Good" is well attested referring to practical or economic benefit. Good fruit (Gen 2:9) and the grain of Pharaoh's dream (Gen 41:5, 36) were good for eating. Other practical goods denoted by this term are: the promise of victory denied to Ahab (2Chr 18:7); hospitality and friendship (Gen 26:29); beneficial counsel (2Sam 17:7, 14); general economic prosperity (1Kings 10:7); agricultural prosperity (Hos 10:1, ASV); and God's intentions (Amos 9:4).
2) Abstract goodness such as desirability, pleasantness, and beauty. This is a situation of desire or `dreams being fulfilled. בּוֹט is used in respect to a wide variety of abstract perspectives. For instance, a good name is better than descendants in respect to fame and reputation (Isa 56:5). For abstract meanings, "goodness of heart" refers to joy (Deut 28:47; Isa 65:14). The "goodness" of God which can be appealed to for forgiveness (Psa 25:7) is something akin to kindness or graciousness. "Goodness" of taste and knowledge may refer to correctness (Psa 119:66).
3) Quality or expense: It connotes something that is standard and has value. בּוֹט may include ideas of superior quality or relative worth. As such it describes the "pure" gold of Havilah (Gen 2:12) and high quality perfumed oils (Song 1:3; RSV "anointing oils"). Quality craftsmanship is thus designated (Isa 41:7), as is quality or nobility in human character, as when Moses is described as "goodly" (i.e. "noble"; Exo 2:2).
4) Moral goodness: It denotes something that is ethically correct. An important usage of this term refers to moral goodness. The command, "Depart from evil and do good" (Psa 34:14) clearly contrasts "good" with moral evil. The "good way" which God will teach his reluctant people refers to moral life (1Kings 8:36). "Good" and "right", often occur as parallel terms for moral goodness (2Chr 14:1; 2Chr 31:20).
5) Technical philosophical good: This appeals to the minds and thought of the people. Ecclesiastes 2 tells the reader that there is no higher good than the

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life of hedonistic pleasure (v. 24) and, in the context, raises the question of what is the "Good" which man should seek (Eccl 3:2; Eccl 8:15).

Some usages blend two or more of the areas of meaning discussed above. The "good land" of the Old Covenant included practical, economic, and esthetic overtones (Deut 1:25; Josh 23:13). Likewise, the concept of God as "good" is rich with the overtones of all possible meanings of the term "good" (1Chr 16:34; Psa 145:9). In light of the above discussion, each individual usage must be clearly examined to see which of the above meanings are possible.

Furthermore, the Hebrew word חֶסֶד 'mercy' is translated kindness, loving kindness, mercy, love, bowels, and "to be inclined to," "to be gracious," "beneficence," "pity," and "compassion". in biblical literature. Mercy is the opposite of judgment. The Psalmist knowing his nature as human who is fallible knew that he needs the mercy of Yahweh in his life journey. The expression 'surely, goodness and mercy…' is an indication of assurance of Yahweh's continuous care and support for the Psalmist. Mercy is (a) an essential quality of God (Ex 34:6,7; Dt 4:31; Ps 62:12, etc.); it is His delight (Mic 7:18,20; Ps 52:8); He is "the Father of mercies" (2 Cor 1:3), "rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4), "full of pity, and merciful" (Jas 5:11); (b) it is associated with forgiveness (Ex 34:7; Nu 14:18; 1 Tim 1:13,16); (c) with His forbearance (Ps 145:8, "Yahweh is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great loving kindness"; compare Roman 2:4; 11:32); (d) with His covenant (1 Ki 8:23; Neh 1:5), with His justice (Ps 101:1), with His faithfulness (Ps 89:24), with His truth (Ps 108:4); mercy and truth are united in Prov 3:3; 14:22, etc. (in Ps 85:10 we have "Mercy and truth are met together"); (e) it goes forth to all, "Yahweh is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works" (Ps. 145:9). (f) it shows itself in pitying help (Ex 3:7; Ezr 9:9 f), supremely in Christ and His salvation (Lk 1:50, 54,58; Eph 2:4); (g) it is abundant, practically infinite (Ps 86:5,15; 119:64); (h) it is everlasting (1 Ch 16:34,41; Ezr 3:11; Ps 100:5; 136 repeatedly). "Mercy" חֶסֶד is a distinctive Bible word characterizing God as revealed to men. "Mercy" is used of man as well as of God, and is required on man's part toward man and beast (Dt 25:4; Ps 37:21; 109:16; Prov 12:10; Dan 4:27; Mic 6:8; Mt 5:7), "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy"; (25:31-46; Lk 6:36), "Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful"; (Lk 10:30ff; Lk 14:12-16; Jas 3:17). In the New Testament "mercy" is associated with "grace" in the apostolically greetings and elsewhere. From all the foregoing it will be seen that mercy in God is not merely His pardon of offenders, but His attitude to man, and to the world generally, from which His pardoning mercy proceeds.

d) Psalm 23: 6 in the Light of Insecurity in Nigeria Context

It is important to understand the African perspective of security and success before attempting to interpret the text. Africans are always faced with situations that are overwhelming to them. The level of poverty, insecurity and health issues are very high in Africa. All human efforts to bring solution to these issues have failed. This is the reason why an average African will always seek divine intervention on issues of concern. Before the advent of Christianity, African had their own ways of solving security challenges. However, when the White Missionaries came African were told to discard their how approach to issues of security, health, poverty and the likes without concrete alternatives (Adamo, 2005b: 31-52). In their search for solutions to these issues of concern, they discovered the book of Psalms which appeared to offer the desired solutions to their challenges. For instance, among the Yorubas of South Western Nigeria, the contents and the forms of Psalms are classified as *Ofo/OgedeDafidi,* David's incantations, etc. (Kalu, 2006: 140). The contents of the Psalms resemble the African traditional incantations (ogede). This made them to memorize some portions and apply them to their challenges.

Psalm 23 is classified as a Psalm of confidence and trust in Yahweh in the face of insecurity. The structure of Psalm 23 in the African context is classified according to African real life interest and what it can offer to the readers – protection, provision, healing and success (Adamo, 2018:8).This position agreed with the way the Psalms were used in ancient Israel with the verbs רמש[guard] and רצנ[protect] inscribed on them (Schmitz 2002:818–822; Smoak 2010:421–432, 2011:75–92). A good example is the existence of handful of Phoenician and Punic amulets from the first millennium with the same verb 'guard' and 'protect' inscribed on their surfaces (Schmitz, 2002: 818-822; 2010: 421-432; Smoak, 2011: 75-92). Some Jews in ancient Israel wrote the words of the scripture especially Psalms on their bodies, singing and chanting these words in their daily meditations and prayers to Yahweh (Awojobi, 2021:13).

In Nigeria, Psalm 23 is written on vehicles, parchments, doors, clothes and on the body as talisman, recited, chanted and sung with unwavering faith or trust in God (Adamo, 2005: 78b). Psalm 23: 6 is always recited immediately after the benediction in most Pentecostal and Evangelical churches in Nigeria. Reading, wearing and reciting of this portion of the Psalter is consider as prayer for divine intervention or miracle in the life of the person performing the activity as it happened to the Author. This is an indication of cultural and religious parallel between ancient Israel and the Africans. As far as Brown is concerned recitation, chanting of Psalms orally as divine prayers for guidance

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and casting out demons started during the third-century Christian era (2014).

According to Adamo, Psalm 23: 6 is a Psalm for success in all life endeavors. To an average African, success is having many wives and children, passing examination, making good profit in business, going on a journey and safe return, securing an employment, success in court cases and many other things (2005a: 90-95). To realize the above successes, many Africans go to any length. For instance, some of them go to traditional doctors for medicine or charms that will make them to succeed in any of the above endeavors. Africans inscribe the words of this Psalm on their clothes, paper, bill boards, vehicles, houses, and anything that is associated with them with the believe that the content of the Psalm will be a voice for them in the time of trouble.

As mentioned earlier, the study is premised on African biblical hermeneutics which attempted to bring real-life interest that are of great concern to the Africans into the text for a better interpretation and understanding of the text under consideration. Such life interest may be security, provision, and protection. The African biblical interpreter is not keenly interested in the historical, social and literary dimensions of the text but how the text can meet the daily challenges faced by the African people (Adamo 2015b: 31–52b). In other words, Africans are keenly interested in the solution a text can bring to an issue that is confronting them at the moment.

To facilitate understanding of the African concept of Psalm 23: 6, the interpretation shall be done under the following headings:

1. Surely

As mentioned earlier, the word 'surely' אַךְ means, certainly, truly, verily, and indeed. It is used in most case as a response to an action or a statement of fact. The Psalmist in Psalm 23: 6 declared: "surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me, all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever and ever". אַךְ טוֹב וָחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כֹּל יְמֵי חַיָּי וְשַׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית יְהוָה לְאֹרֶךְ יָמִים: This is a declaration of absolute trust and confidence in Yahweh for security, protection, healing, success, provisions and all that is needed in life. This suggests that the Psalmist is very certain of his security and success in Yahweh. This confidence and assurance is because of who Yahweh is and what he has done for the Psalmist (vss 1-5). In verse 5, the phrase: 'You prepared a table before me in the presence of my enemies' should be noted. The 'enemies are of great concern to the Africans. The Yoruba word for enemy is *ota*. Two types of enemies (ota) can be identified in Africa. They are: the world (aiye) and humans (eniyan). Some of the human enemies in Africa include: witches, wizards, sorcerers and the likes (Adamo, 2005b: 77). One of the main prayer of an average African is how to overcome 'enemies'. It is held among many Africans that every human has enemies. These (ota) 'enemies' are said to be responsible for evils in our society. There is a Church in Nigeria called Mountain of Fire and Miracles. The content of their prayers averagely is against (ota) enemies. They always pray that their enemies (ota) should die by fire. This is because of the view that no *ota* will wish anybody well. This group of Christians look for potent words from the Bible especially the book of Psalm in their prayer against the enemy, *ota*.

According to Dopamu, the adherents of African traditional religion use potent words called incantations *(ofo)* pronounced on charms *(epe)* on their enemies (ota) (1987: 58). The effects of this on the so called enemies may be abnormal behavior, death, loss of property, sickness, poverty, loss of job, ill luck, demotion and all sort of evil (1987). The 'enemies' will prevent a person from achieving divine purpose in life. *Ota* could be any person who does not wish another person well. David, the writer of most part of the Psalms had many *ota*. There were *ota* from within and without for David. If not for divine intervention David would not have been King in Israel (2 Sam. 1-6). There is parallel between David's experience and most Africans today.

It is held among the Africans that delay, sicknesses, poverty, insecurity, and any form of misfortune are the activities of *ota* (Awojobi, 2021: 7). The word 'surely' is interpreted *'nitoto'* in Yoruba language connote something that is true, certain, factual and cannot be reversed. The word *'nitoto'* instill confidence and trust in the speaker. It removes any iota of doubt or fear in the speaker. *Ota* could not stop Yahweh in carrying out his purpose for the Psalmist. Therefore, *'nitoto'* Yahweh will handle all *Ota*- 'enemies' of destiny. The Yoruba word *'nitoto'* (surely), expresses the absolute trust or confidence in the person being addressed. It is like drawing conclusion on a matter after a critical examination and being convinced beyond reasonable doubt. It is an affirmation of something that has been trusted and tested to be correct or true by all and sundry.

2. Goodness

The word 'goodness' means something that is good. The "goodness" טוֹב of God is demonstrated in his abundant care and promises (Baker & Kohlenberger III, 1994: 824). As far as the Psalmist is concerned, instead of enemies pursuing him, it is now 'goodness טוֹב and mercy' חֶסֶד of Yahweh pursuing him. In other words, the 'enemies' (*ota*) have been rendered powerless. The Psalmist is now being accompanied by goodness and mercy all the time. The Yoruba interpretation of goodness is *Ire*. *Ire* is the opposite of *ibi,* bad. It is held among the Yoruba that *Ire* is the absence of failure, evil, mishaps and anything that brings sadness to a person. The Yoruba believe that

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there are certain evils that do accompany each day. There is an adage in Yoruba that says: *ti ibi, ti ire la da le aiye*, meaning 'the world was created with good and evil'. In other words, evil and good are together. This is in accordance with the Bible verse that that says: 'redeeming the time for the days are evil' (Eph. 5: 16). *Ibi* always follow humans from time to time. The recitation of Psalm 23: 6 on a daily basis by an African Christian will prevent evils that are associated with a particular day from following him. Some Nigerians inscribe Psalm 23:6 on their clothes, vehicles, houses, and wrist bands that they wear from time to time. Others recite or read this Psalm into water and drink it or sprinkle it on the vehicle before they embark on a journey. In African Indigenous churches, Psalm 23 is considered a protective Psalm that can be chanted, written on parchment and worn on the waist, arm or neck, or hung on motor vehicles as a talisman and it represents the presence of God Almighty (Adamo, 2018: 8).

This is because no evil can stand in the face of good in the presence of God. The Yoruba believe that goodness is an indication of the presence of God around the Christian.

In Nigeria, some Prophets or Pastors in African Indigenous Churches have different types of programs that normally held early in the morning every day. They are usually prayer programs between 5- 6:30am every day. In this type of program, the sermon is short sermon but the prayer time is long. Most of the prayer point are drawn from the Psalter. The program is designed to attack all evils that may accompany the day and that is the reason why it is held in the early hour of the day. African Christian believe that after the prayer program, the day is already secure because the evils of the day as been render powerless. One of such prayer program is the one organized by Prophet Samuel Olukosi of the Christ Apostolic Church, Achievers District Church Council, Offa, Kwara State Nigeria. It is a Radio program tagged: "Goodness at Dawn" between 6- 6:20am on Mondays to Friday every week. Christians from all walks of life tune to this program to know what God has in stock for them for the day. In this program prayers are offered on the felt needs of participants. It is like early morning tonic or drug of prevention against evils that are likely to surface during the day. There are testimonies of answers to prayer by the participants (Olukosi, 2022). One of the main emphasis of this program is prevailing Prayer against enemies *ota* of all sorts that may prevent a person from realizing divine purpose daily. People with differs life threatening problems consult Prophets like Olukosi for special prayers and counselling on their issues of concern.

3. Mercy/Love דסֶחֶ

Mercy is an event or a situation to be grateful for, usually because it stops something unpleasant (Hornby, 2015: 973). The Hebrew word דסֶחֶ means 'mercy' (KJV), 'steadfast love' (NRSV), 'constancy love' (NEB), unfailing love' (NIV). This conventional term refers to unfailing help to the helpless (VanGemeren, 1997: 1107). Mercy is one of the attributes of God. It is held among the Yoruba in Nigeria that every human needs divine mercy to survive every day. The 'love' of God is conventional commitment to bless his people with his promises. Instead of being pursued by enemies who seek his destruction, God's love will follow the Psalmist. He does not need to be afraid, because God's loving care follows him throughout life (Baker & Kohlenberger III, 1994: 824). The love or mercy of God is very important to the Africans in view of the situation around. Africa especially Nigeria is going through tough times at the moment. Our roads are death traps and this make citizens to be afraid to travel in the day or night. Nigerian roads have claimed many lives. Kidnappers, bandits and Fulani herdsmen are having a field day in Nigeria. The kidnappers in Nigeria are so bold that they kidnap people in their homes, schools, churches, on the road and request for huge amount of money as ransom before their victims would be released (Awojobi, 2021:9). Sometimes after the payment of ransom the victims are killed. In most cases whenever beautiful girls or ladies are kidnapped they are married off by the kidnappers. Terrorist activities are on the increase. The Fulani herdsmen, Boko Haram and Bandits of all sorts have taken over our forests and roads. Nigerian always pray for journey mercies (*aanu irinajo*) before embarking on either long or short journeys. Kidnapping has become one of the most lucrative business in Nigeria today. Travelers on Nigerian road are in the attitude of praying before leaving their houses, praying when the vehicle is about to take off and praying when they arrive at their destinations. Today, travelling has become nightmares for some Nigerians. It is a situation where divine intervention is urgently needed. Surely, 'goodness and mercy' of God must be sought and obtained before embarking on a journey in Nigeria.

4. Dwelling in the house of the Lord forever

The Psalmist mentioned that he will dwell in the house of Yahweh forever. The Hebrew word מָלֹוע forever, everlasting, evermore, perpetual, old, ancient, world, always, eternity and so on is used more than three hundred times to indicate indefinite continuance into the very distant future, the meaning of the word is not confined to the future. There are at least twenty instances where it clearly refers to the past (Awojobi, 2021: 6). This implies that he has chosen Yahweh's residence as his place of continuous abode for security purposes. This is an indication that that sorrow and sighing will give way to joy, gladness and uninterrupted happiness for the Psalmist (Cf. Isa. 35: 10). This is a reminder of what happened in Mesopotamia, where the worshippers of the gods dedicated statues in the temple of their god to symbolize the individual continuous

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presence before their god that would guarantee divine safety, peace and goodness (Adamo, 2018: 8). This is in agreement with the theology of inviolability of Jerusalem in the time of Prophet Jeremiah when the Temple was considered as a symbol of safety for Israel. To this end, Israel believed that as long as the Temple remain in Jerusalem the city cannot be attacked and destroyed by enemies.

As far as the Nigerian Christians are concerned, the house of the Lord is a place of security. In African Indigenous Churches, whenever some people are going through challenges, they are asked by Church leader to come and spend sometimes in the Church to seek the face of God. This sometimes means that they will leave their homes to live in the Church for some days. Some Christians spend some days on the mountain to pray to God for solution to their problems. The African Indigenous Church leaders encourages their members to go to the mountains to prayer whenever they are going through divers' problems.

III. Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is clear that Psalms were very popular among the ancient Israel and the early Christians. They considered the words in the Psalms as potent and as such used them in their worship services for healing, success and security. Portions of Psalms were written on parchment, clothes, houses, and any other things that are associated with them. They recited, sung and prayed from the Psalms. This suggests that the words of the Psalter were memorized and recited in ancient Israel for security purposes. In the same fashion, the African Christians especially in Nigeria see the Psalter as divine, per formative and potent. The words of the Psalms can be used to achieve healing, success and security. Psalm 23: 6 is recited among some Christian faithful in Africa especially Nigeria for the purposes of security of lives and property. This is because of the high level of insecurity in the land. This Psalm serves as immunity for the Christians against evils that accompanies every day. The Christian is confident that his security is guaranteed and as such he is not afraid because God will watch over him at all times.

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