

# **Kingship and Integrity in Psalm 72:1-7 and Its Relevance for National Stability in Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

While leadership integrity has been variously described as invaluable for good governance in the field of scholarship, yet, Africa and Nigeria, in particular, are continuously plagued with crisis and instability emanating from lack of leadership integrity. This paper is an attempt to survey kingship integrity from the biblical perspective as expressed in Psalm 72:1-7. Examine the key terms “justice and righteousness” used to convey the idea of integrity and evaluate their impact on ancient Israelite’s kingship and its relevance for national stability in Nigeria. Form-critical method of exegesis which pays close attention to the genre/classification of the text; it's setting in Israel's life and makes a comparison with the ancient Near Eastern background has been adopted. The study reveals that justice and righteousness are the key elements of leadership integrity in ancient Israel, the impact of which is quietness, stability and security in the land. These elements are divinely banqueted by God the just and righteous one. It also reveals that leadership integrity is achievable through the conscious effort of both the leaders and the led. Moreover, peace and stability can be true of any nation if the culture of justice and righteousness are imbibed by the people. Thus, the study emphasizes the need to inculcate the virtue of integrity in the young ones who are believed to be the leaders of tomorrow.

## **Introduction**

One of the effects of the leadership deficit is the state of insecurity in which Nigeria is currently stricken. One goes to the social media to be burdened with one breaking bad news to the other ranging from silent

wars of ethnic cleansing to violent/non-violent agitations on grounds of marginalization, negligence and unfairness. To say that this is in no way impacting negatively on the nation's economic stability is misleading. There is a natural tendency for people to move away from an unsafe place to safe places. When this happens, it affects governance (as some political leaders now lead in the proxy), agriculture, and economic, religious and social wellbeing of the nation. Asaju, Arome and Mukaila situate Nigeria's problems in the woeful shortfall of moral values which culminated into a state with a deficit of value-based leadership. They argue that corruption thrives where moral values are eroded by greed, sharp practices and unbridle crave for luxuries and grandeur<sup>1</sup>. Agomuo views Nigerian problem as having to do with corruption. He opines that most public office holders are people who are not capable of running their own homes but have manipulated their ways into high leadership positions through the already corrupt electoral process<sup>2</sup>. Many Nigerians believe that all of Nigeria's problems can be summarized as 'leadership failure. Thus, everybody tends to be pointing at political leadership, specifically the president/presidency as the sole cause of all Nigeria's crises and instability. Mohammed acknowledges the fact that the major problem with Nigeria is squarely a failure of leadership and the unwillingness and inability of the leadership to rise to responsibility, coupled with the challenge of personal exemplary leadership style, which are the hallmarks of true leadership<sup>3</sup>. Fundamental to these arguments is the need for leadership integrity in the governance of the nation.

Polanski and Yammarinofound argue that there is no single unified, universally accepted definition of integrity, concluding that the "study of integrity suffers from three significant problems: too many definitions; too little theory and too few rigorous empirical studies."<sup>4</sup> However, the term integrity is used to represent a range of ideas and constructs and often overlaps with terms such as morality, ethics, conscientiousness,

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honesty and trustworthiness. It is argued that people with high indices in integrity make excellent candidates for leadership positions, because they will not divert organisational resources, treat others unfairly or deceive themselves or others<sup>5</sup>. This is consistent with Badaracco and Ellsworth's notion that value-driven leaders make decisions in line with the purported values of the organisation<sup>6</sup>, and with Srivastva's emphasis on congruence, consistency, morality, universality and concern for others.<sup>7</sup> It is also easier for leaders with integrity to convince others that they are worth following, which in turn can lead to more innovation. Hence, it can be stated that leaders with integrity can influence others positively to facilitate desired change. Murphy argues that the five core virtues of integrity, fairness, trust, respect and empathy are especially relevant for the multicultural and multinational marketing context.<sup>8</sup>

Becker draws attention to the fact that the concept of integrity is generally treated as synonymous with honesty.<sup>9</sup> Viewed from the context of leadership, integrity is a concept commonly used within formal and informal discussions of leadership and organisational theory, but it is not clearly defined and understood. For example, words such as integrity, honesty and conscientiousness are often not differentiated and tend to be used as interchangeable terms. Nevertheless, integrity is a pervasive ideal in leadership: citizens clamour for it from politicians, employees desire it from their managers, religious faithful expect it from the clergy, and stakeholders demand it from corporations.

Scholarly interest in integrity is on the rise, however, research in this area has thus far been limited by three primary problems, firstly, there is little agreement about the meaning of integrity; secondly, despite the popularity of the concept as a normative descriptor, there is little theory

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in existence about integrity in the management literature; and thirdly, there are relatively few empirical studies concerning integrity. The aim of the study, therefore, is to examine the concept of leadership in ancient Israel and the essential qualities necessary for effective leadership enshrined in Psalm 72:1-7. Form criticism which identifies the category/genre of the text situates its setting (*sitz-im-leben*) in Israel's life and makes a comparison with ancient Near Eastern background has been adopted for the study.

### **Historical Background to Psalm 72:1-7.**

The Psalms are frequently referred to as song, poetry and undoubtedly, the prayers of ancient Israel. Longman III has observed that while Psalms are not the only prayers that Israel ever uttered, its uniqueness is rooted in being the official collection of Israel's corporate prayers<sup>10</sup>. Mowinckel aptly refers to the Psalms as "the hymnbook of the temple."<sup>11</sup> Thus, the book of Psalms can be rightly described as the prayer book of Israel. Prayer is communication with one's deity. Israel thought of their God in a personal way and so engaged Him in conversation. Praying to a deity is not uniquely Israelite but integral to all major ancient Near Eastern religions. Miller has observed rightly that "when Israel began to pray to the Lord, it did so among peoples whose arms had long been raised and whose heads had been bowed to the gods that directed their lives and delivered them from disaster."<sup>12</sup> Longman III draws pieces of literature of Ancient Near Eastern prayer genres of Egypt, Summer, Babylon, Assyria, Canaan among others as ample evidence to authenticate the prominence of prayers in ancient Near Eastern religious life.<sup>13</sup> Apart from the prayer rituals, one other

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idea in ancient Israel philosophy is the fact that stability and wellbeing of the land are not separated from leadership. Hence the saying, “When the righteous are on the throne, the people rejoice.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Exegetical Analysis of PSALM 72:1-7**

1 Of Solomon

Endow the king with your justice, O God,  
the royal son with your righteousness.

2He will judge  
your people in righteousness,  
your afflicted ones with justice.

3The mountains will bring prosperity to the people,  
the hills the fruit of righteousness.

4He will defend the afflicted among the people  
and save the children of the needy;  
he will crush the oppressor.

5He will endure as  
long as the sun,  
as long as the moon, through all generations.

6He will be like rain falling on a mown field,  
like showers watering the earth.

7In his days the righteous will flourish;  
prosperity will abound till the moon is no more (NIV)

Psalm 72:1 - The first word in the Hebrew text “*Lishlomo*” literally translated as “to Solomon/of Solomon” or “belonging to Solomon/concerning Solomon,” makes the authorship controversial. While some argue for Solomon, others argue for David. An internal evidence Davidic authorship is the postscript (Ps. 72:20), saying that this ends the prayer of David. 72:1b“Give your justice to the king, O God, and righteousness to the king's son” follows immediately after the title - a prayer for the king to be endowed with the justice and righteousness of God. The king’s function as the agent of Yahweh (Psa. 10:1-2) is evident in the emphasis of verse 2 on his extending justice and righteousness to God’s people especially the poor. Justice here

connotes the acts and principles of a right government, while righteousness is the qualifications for conducting such a government. The point of the Psalmist prayer is that these attributes are divinely oriented and are given by the prerogative of God. Verses 2-4 spell out the duties of the king to which “judge your people in righteousness; And your afflicted ones with justice” (72:2) are fundamental. Verse 3 is an expression of the abundance of blessings and prosperity. Observe, “The mountains will bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness”(Verse 3). As mountains and hills are not usually productive, they are here selected to show the abundance of peace, being represented as bringing—or, literally, “bearing” it as produce. Verse 4 “children of the needy” are those who are naturally poor. Those who are born to poverty are more or less regarded, by an unrighteous government, as having no rights. A righteous king will “... defend the afflicted” by not only being a Savior to the marginalized but he will also punish their oppressors. Here, peace is illustrated in the security provided for the helpless and needy, and the punishment inflicted on oppressors, whose power to injure or mar the peace of others will be destroyed (compare Isa 65:25; Zec 9:10).

In verse 5, the Psalmist embarks on a hyperbolic celebration of the glory of the ruler. His reign is said to stand “...as long as the sun, as long as the moon....” Sun and moon as symbols of day and night, were viewed as objects that would last forever (Jer. 33:20). Hence, the reign of the king will be very long.

Verse 6-7 drops of rain and showers are beautiful symbols expressing the grateful nature of the king’s influence; the results are described in an abundant production. Godly leaders are like the refreshing rain that makes the land fruitful and beautiful so that even the newly mown fields will produce a second crop. They are also like lamps that light the way (2 Sam. 21:17), shields that protect (Psa.84:9; 89:16), and the very breath of life that sustains us (Lam. 4:20).

### **Kingship and Integrity in Psalm 72:1-7**

Psalm 72 is universally considered to be a royal (kingship) psalm. Hermann Gunkel, who pioneered form criticism in the Psalms, discerned five basic types among them (others are Hymns, communal

laments, Individual lament and individual Praise), aptly identifies ten Psalms as royal (including Ps. 72)<sup>15</sup>. The royal psalms bear no specific stylistic characteristics, some are hymns of praise, and some are laments, but all deal with the person or the office of the king, since Israel saw her kings as standing in the relationship of special endowment by and responsibility to God, her worship included concerns about them. Others have expanded the royal classification to cover more psalms, but 72 continues to be included among them. More specifically 72 may have formed part of the coronation ceremony as well as less spectacular occasions when praying for the king's welfare is required. The Psalm focuses not on the relationship between the king and God, such as is found in Psalm 2 but on the relationship between the king and the people with glimpses of the response of the nation and of the land itself to the reign of this royal son. Moreover, the passage specifically mentions two qualities (which are synonymous with integrity) the palmist considers very important for the office of the king – justice and righteousness. The questions are: What are these qualities? How would these qualities in the leader possibly bring about peace and stability?

### **Justice, Righteousness and Peace**

The word "justice" does not occur in the New Testament and in most cases where "just" is found in the King James Version it is changed to "righteous" in the American Standard Revised Version. As a result, McClintock opines that the ideas of justice or righteousness are essentially the same<sup>16</sup>. It has also been stated that when *mishpat* and *sadaqa* appear as a word pair, they pertain significantly to the right ordering of society within God's covenant community.<sup>17</sup> While righteousness refers to an internal trait of character; justice relates to everything that is implicit on governance and shalom is born when the justice and righteousness meet. These virtues, therefore, are

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indispensable for any ruler whose aim is to achieve peace in the society wherein he/she rules. Gibbs has observed that from the Yahwist (early 10th cent. B.C.) comes a persistent norm for kings and, implicitly, others in authority stressing that the way of the Lord can be kept, and His promises received, only by doing "righteousness and justice" (Gen. 18:19).<sup>18</sup> God made Solomon king "that you may execute justice and righteousness" (1 Kings 10:9). Only "with justice and with righteousness" will the Davidic kingdom be upheld, according to Isaiah's ideal (Isa. 9:7). The Text under consideration refers to the same model: "Give the king thy justice, O God, and thy righteousness to the royal son" (Ps. 72:1).

It is by this norm that a king's misconduct was measured. According to Jeremiah, what makes a king is not a successful competition with other rulers for more luxury (a reference to Jehoiakin's use of slave labour to build a new palace), but only doing "justice and righteousness" (22:15; 23:5). Micah puts to "the heads of Jacob" and "rulers of the house of Israel" the rhetorical question: "Is it not for you to know justice?" Judged by that standard they have, on the contrary, cannibalized their subjects (Mic. 3:1-3).

Philosophers like Plato and Aristotle regard justice as a supreme virtue, the source of all others and encompasses within itself the whole of morality<sup>19</sup>. For Rawls, justice is a very important aspect of human existence, the first virtue of society. He explains justice as fairness.<sup>20</sup> This implies fair opportunities for all citizens, dismantling structures that encourage injustice to benefit the less privileged. The origin of justice, therefore, is traced to man's consciousness of injustice in society and consequently to his urge for change in the situation towards a better and desirable one. In other words, man's craving for what is good and

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what ought to be is the perennial experience that gives rise to the concern for justice.<sup>21</sup> The philosophical concept of justice is very relevant to this study since it is believed that justice harmonizes the conflicting interests and tends to bring out a balance in terms of peace and stability.

### **The relevance of Kingship and Integrity in Psalm 72:1-7 for National Stability in Nigeria**

The Nigerian nation is a heterogeneous society properly known as a federation. A federation according to Obidimma and Obidimma, "... is born by the coming together of otherwise independent states to form a central government to whom certain powers are given, while the states retain most of their powers."<sup>22</sup> Prominent in Obidimma and Obidimma's definition of a federation is the idea that "independent states" come together to form a central government. There is a diversity of peoples and cultures that must be merged to achieve oneness. It should be observed that no individual state would consciously join an entity where it would be treated as second-class; hence, such treatment as a second class would amount to threat to the unity in the federating entity once it is established. In the view of Adedeji and Ifeoma, the primary aim of federalism is to accommodate diversity in a single entity.<sup>23</sup> Thus, what should be occupying the policies and governance of the Nigerian state should be the uniting of the different ethnic groups in Nigeria. This can be achieved through a government of integrity that gives sincere responses to the yearnings of the people. On the contrary, the quest for peace and stability in Nigeria has a long and painful history. Even before gaining independence in 1960, a host of conflicts, civil wars, and secessionist movements have weakened national peace and security.

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From the discussion so far, Psalm 72 offers a glimpse of the ideal relationship among a ruler, God and people. The people pray for the empowerment of the king, who uses the gifts God gives, not for his benefit or even for the benefit of the powerful, but for the least of all among the people. The prayer for justice and righteousness implies that these attributes are divine and are obtained by the prerogative of God's mercy as the people fear and trust in him. The constant prayers of the people enable him to continue in his kingly function with a sense of integrity. The people have a responsibility in this relationship as well. They need to respond to the king. They are to invoke God's blessing on him all his days. The prayer for justice and righteousness on behalf of the leader was borne out of the sensitivity of the heterogeneous nature of the ancient Israelite nation. If the king/leader exhibits any favouritism or partiality towards some tribes or a particular tribe, that will be the bane of his administration. Adeyemo has observed that such rulers are rare in Africa. He states that many in Africa view their time in power as an opportunity to get rich. Thus they overlook the needs of those they rule and ignore or even overturn righteousness and justice.<sup>24</sup> It is worthy of note that the first prayer is for the king to bring justice and deliverance to the poor. Following the plea for justice is the plea that the king may live and give life to the land, and lastly, the hope that his power may go to the ends of the earth. Observed closely, these are not three separate goals but one. The familiar ancient belief in the king as the giver of fertile life is here echoed and amplified; establishing justice is also a life-giving activity, and for the psalmist a much more important one. When the king gives the life of God's justices to the people, then the blessings of fertile land and far-reaching power follow. By the ideas of Justice and righteousness, integrity is implied. These themes add up to the biblical concept of *shalom* ("peace" "completeness" "wellbeing"). *Shalom* brings together into wholeness the political, economic, social and spiritual dimensions of life. Of course, the blessing of *shalom*, in which there are life and harmony for every creation, is a biblical concept<sup>25</sup>.

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Furthermore, the blessings of a leader with integrity go beyond the well-being of the people; it is equally about the king himself. He serves at the pleasure of the people. Power and authority go with a kind of fame and influence that many in Africa who emerge as leaders whether in the church or society do not want to step aside for another. Tenure extension can happen naturally without any push from the leader apart from the virtue of justice. Verse 5, for instance, states "He will endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations." Solomon who is believed to be the object of the prayer in this text continues to be venerated in Israel due to his wisdom in the discharge of justice during his reign especially the case of the two women with one live and dead babies. Solomon's works live even when he is far gone. Moreover, Psalms belong to the Wisdom/Poetic books which aim at "attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair"<sup>26</sup>. Although in the context of Psalm 72 it appears that these prayers come only as a result of his work for the people, the probability that this is a coronation psalm indicates that the people begin to pray for the king even before he takes on his tasks so that he might be empowered by God to fulfil them. Hence, the emerging king whose goal is to succeed knows that integrity is expected of him and must have trained/disciplined himself to take up such a responsibility.

## **Conclusion**

Thus far, it has been argued in this paper that sound leadership based on integrity is the pre-requisite for stability in the nation. That Nigeria is a heterogeneous nation is not an excuse for the prevalent marginalization and ethnic/tribal agitations that are ravaging the country. That ancient kingdom of Israel composed of twelve tribes is relevant to the Nigerian situation as a federation. Israel's leaders who succeeded were able to deliver governance of integrity.<sup>27</sup> It is obvious from the discussion so far that peace and security do not happen like magic- they are a product of integrity in governance. Integrity is the supreme virtue of

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leadership/governance. It is the antidote to the state of insecurity/instability in the society because it dismantles the structure of injustice and all the ills that accompany it. The peace and security that Nigerians yearn and clamour for can hardly come without a governmental structure that promotes integrity. Hence, every Nigerian should genuinely pray for leadership that is integrity oriented and equally encourage political parties/individuals that view justice as indispensable for national stability, peace and unity.

### **Recommendations**

1. Since it takes fear and trust in God to pray for leadership integrity; and having seen that leadership integrity is a prerequisite for good governance which promotes stability, it beholds on Christian leaders to teach and also exemplify fear and trust in God.
2. The leader is not expected to come to governance to learn integrity; it is a virtue that must have been in him through training and discipline. Thus, institutions whose duties it is to give guidance to the young ones should labour hard to inculcate the virtue of integrity into the young ones; this will go a long way to remedy the future.

### **RESULT:**

Thus far, the study surveys the concept of integrity in governance from the biblical perspective, the following are the discoveries made:

1. Justice and righteousness – the key ingredients of integrity are divine attributes; hence ancient Israel prayed that God may bequeath the king with these virtues. It takes a nation that fear and trust in God to pray.
2. Integrity in governance is the antidote to the state of insecurity/instability in the society because it dismantles the structure of injustice and all the ills that accompany it.
3. Peace and security do not happen like magic- they are a product of integrity in governance. Hence, the human mind should be trained to imbibe the virtue of integrity.

4. There is a level of collaboration between the divine and human in Psalm 72 to achieve leadership integrity in ancient Israel; the same cannot be overlooked in any nation that seeks to achieve stability.

## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> K. Asaju, S. Arome, & I. Mukaila, "Leadership Crisis in Nigeria: The Urgent Need for Moral Education and Value Re-Orientaion" *Public Administration Research*. Canadian Center of Science and Education 3. (2014): 120.
- <sup>2</sup> Z. Agomuo, *The Nigerian Leadership Question* (2013): 34.  
<http://www.businessdaynigeria.com/doi/nigeria-leadership-question/html> (accessed October 11, 2019).
- <sup>3</sup> I. Muhammed, "Leadership, the Bane of Nigerian Civil Service" *Ankpa Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* (AJASS), 2 (2004): 51.
- <sup>4</sup> M. E. Palanski, & F. J. Yammarino, "Integrity and Leadership: Clearing the Conceptual Confusion." *European Management Journal*, 25 (2007): 171- 184.
- <sup>5</sup> T. E. Becker, "Integrity in Organizations: Beyond honesty and conscientiousness." *Academy of Management Review*, 23 (1998): 154- 161.
- <sup>6</sup> J. K. Badaracco, & R. R. Ellsworth, "Leadership integrity and conflict." *Management Decision*, 30 (1992):29- 34.
- <sup>7</sup> S. Srivastva, et al, "Executive integrity: The search for human values in organizational life."(San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass:1989), 89.
- <sup>8</sup> P. E. Murphy, "Character and virtue ethics in international marketing: an agenda for managers, researchers and educators." *Journal of Business Ethics*, 18 (1999): 107- 124.
- <sup>9</sup> T. E. Becker, "Integrity in Organizations: Beyond honesty and conscientiousness." *Academy of Management Review*, 23 (1998): 154- 161.
- <sup>10</sup> T. Longman III, "Psalms 2: Ancient Near Eastern Background in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*

edited by Tremple Longman III & Peter Enns. (Downers Grove Inter-Varsity.2008), 598.

- <sup>11</sup> S. Mowinckle, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 32.
- <sup>12</sup> P. D. Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis: Fortress,1994), 5.
- <sup>13</sup> T. Longman III, "The Psalms and Ancient Near Eastern Prayer Genres" in *Interpreting the Psalms*, edited by P. Johnston and D. Firth. (Leicester: Inter-Varsity,2005), 56.
- <sup>14</sup> Pro. 29:2
- <sup>15</sup> Klaus Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), 112, citing Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen*, p. 224.
- <sup>16</sup> McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia "Justice" *PC Study Bible @ biblesoft*, 2005.
- <sup>17</sup> M. Weinfeld. "Justice and Righteousness – *Mishpat & Sedaqa*- The Expression and Its Meaning," in *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and Their Influence*, edited by H. G. Reventlow and Y. Hoffman. (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 228.
- <sup>18</sup> J. G. Gibbs, "Justice" International Standard Bible Encyclopedia in *PC Study Bible @ biblesoft*, 2005.
- <sup>19</sup> See Hope, R. (Trans.), *Aristotle's Metaphysics*. (Michigan: University of Michigan, 1966), 654 and Jowett, B. (Trans.), *The Dialogues of Plato*. (New York: Random House, 1937), 298.
- <sup>20</sup> J. Rawls, *A theory of justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 16.
- <sup>21</sup> C. Perelman, *The Idea of Justice and the Problem of Argument* Translated by John Petrie. (London: The Humanities Press, 1963), 67.
- <sup>22</sup> A. E. Obidimma and E. O. C. Obidimma. Restructuring the Nigerian Federation for Proper Functioning of the Nigerian Federalism. (2015):2, <http://www.iiste.org>. (Accessed November 5, 2019).
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- <sup>24</sup> T. Adeyemo, T. (Ed) *Africa Bible Commentary*. (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), 692.

- <sup>25</sup> G. L. Carr. “*Shalom*” in *Theological Words of the Old Testament* edited by R. Laird Harris and others. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 931.
- <sup>26</sup> Prov. 1:2-3

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