**SPONSORED TERRORISM IN JUDGES 9: 1-6 AND THE CHALLENGES OF ARMED INSURGENCY IN THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY**

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**Abstract**

*Terrorism is a basic factor that benumbs and cripples the peace, development and progress of any state where it is carried out. It creates fear in the citizenry, paralyses the vision and goal of the government; it drains economy and makes a state desolate. Terroristic activities drive away local and foreign investors, making the society suffer a lot social ills, ranging from poverty, unemployment and mass suffering. This study, a text-linguistic approach, investigated the case of terrorism as narrated in the Bible book of Judges 9:1-6, in which Abimelech one of the sons of Gideon a judge in Israel massacred his half-brothers in order to achieve his political ambition in becoming the judge of Israel after the death of their father. The paper reveals that while the global community battles zealously against scourge and surge of terrorism in various corners, African continent and the Nigerian state have suffered a big deal of the adverse effect of terrorism menace. It therefore suggests that while measures geared towards engaging techniques to curtail terroristic activities, there should be religious and local social contents that should be in place to control and curb the escalation of terrorism through the efforts of all and sundry.*

**Keywords**: **Sponsored Terrorism, Challenges, Armed Insurgency, Contemporary Society, Judges 9:1-6.**

**Introduction**

Certain basic and fundamental attributes of terrorism are embedded in the fact that it is driven by motives or objectives, which in the long-run are political despite the fact that the perpetrators may be purportedly guided by religious beliefs (Okeke, 2005; Nacos (2006). Although there is a thin line between politics and religion, early stages of terrorism usually seems to be targeted largely on the non-combatants members of the society who are primarily civilians, members of certain religious or ethnic groups. On the other hand, terrorist actors are predominantly non-state actors, who could be sometimes supported by the state with the view of protecting certain interest through the use of violence such as shootings, suicide bombings, kidnappings and hostage taking in order to spread fear (Aderonke, 2015). Adeyemi (2010) observed that while global attention is focused on embassy bombing, aircraft hijacking and 9/11 terrorists attack kind of terrorism, equally devastating terrorist activities with equally devastating impacts are daily swept under the carpet in Africa. From history, terrorism has been linked to political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic and or religious interests. Aderonke (2015) argued that in recent years, terrorism has become one of the most dangerous threats to the global pursuance of world order. Terroristic activities as perpetrated in the contemporary society have become so pervasive that no country on earth can claim immunity from such violent acts, such as bombing, shooting, armed robbery, kidnapping, hostage-taking and bank-robbery. With the contemporary Nigerian society not being exception, but engulfed by terrible acts of terrorism (Aderonke, 2015).

**The Concepts of Terrorism, Armed Insurgence and Terrorism Sponsorship**

Conventional definition of the concept of terrorism as enshrined in dictionaries render it as “the unlawful use of violence or threats to intimidate or coerce a civilian population or government, with the goal of furthering political, social, or ideological objectives. The goal of terrorism is to instill the state of fear and submission in the society. However, scholars and experts in the study of security and politics such as Adeyemi (2010) and others perceive terrorism as ‘any harmful and armed group or individual activities meted against civilians or political opponents’, .hence, this paper aligns its thought with this definition as it stands operationally in the work.

**Armed Insurgence**

An insurgency is a violent, armed rebellion against authority being waged by small, lightly armed bands that practice guerrilla warfare from primarily rural base areas (Lewis, 2020).

**Terrorism Sponsorship**

Many version of the concepts of terrorism sponsorship abounds, however, Okochi (2023) argues that terrorism sponsorship is not only restricted to financial backing of funding of terror activities, but also includes, words, actions as well as moral supports that boost the courage of attackers to unleash terror on their targets or other victims.

**Brands, Dimensions and Synonyms of Terrorist Activities in Nigeria**

Past studies have identified three forms of terrorisms operational in Nigeria, such as revolutionary, sub-revolutionary, and establishment terrorism which epitomized by acts of violence meted out on unarmed citizens of the Nigeria (Adegboyega, 2022). Examples of terrorists groups and forms in Nigeria include Book Haram, which is broadly interpreted within the context of fighting “people who operate within Western-style frameworks and institutions” or simply put as “Westernized people” (Thurson, 2018), Bandits, Kidnappers, Fulani Herdsmen, and Unknown Gunmen Terrorism ‘’has been around’’ for a very long time, it has become a global phenomenon that needed the concerted effort of all states in the world to be tackled effectively. Terrorism has also been evident in the African continent and in Nigeria where the adverse effect of the menace has been massive loss of lives, displacement and endemic poverty. The deadly activities of the Islamic sect Boko Haram in Nigeria have raised immense havoc, especially in the Northeastern part of Nigeria where the killings and human displacement are at a high rate. Internally displacement monitoring center (IDMC, 2016) showed that the activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria have claimed the lives of 30,000 civilians and Military officers and, have caused many civilians to be internally displaced.

**The Book of Judges: The Book of Terror, Punishment and Repentance**

The book opens with the Israelites in the land that God has promised to them, but worshiping "foreign gods" instead the Almighty Yahweh, Elohim the God of Israel, and with the land of the Canaanites yet present everywhere. Judges 1:1–2:5 are thus a confession of failure, while chapters 2:6–3:6 are a major summary and reflection from the book of Deuteronomy. The opening pages and the prologues of the book set out the pattern which the stories in the main text later followed

**Genre of the Immediate Context (Judges 9:1-6)**

וַיֵּ֙לֶךְ אֲבִימֶ֤לֶךְ בֶּן־יְרֻבַּ֙עַל֙ שְׁכֶ֔מָה אֶל־אֲחֵ֖י אִמּ֑וֹ וַיְדַבֵּ֣ר אֲלֵיהֶ֔ם וְאֶל־כָּל־מִשְׁפַּ֛חַת בֵּית־אֲבִ֥י אִמּ֖וֹ לֵאמֹֽר׃ דַּבְּרוּ־נָ֞א בְּאָזְנֵ֙י כָל־בַּעֲלֵ֣ישְׁכֶם֘ מַה־טּ֣וֹב לָכֶם֒ הַמְשֹׁ֙ל בָּכֶ֜םשִׁבְעִ֣ים אִ֗ישׁ כֹּ֚ל בְּנֵ֣י יְרֻבַּ֔עַל אִם־מְשֹׁ֥לבָּכֶ֖ם אִ֣ישׁ אֶחָ֑ד וּזְכַרְתֶּ֕ם כִּֽי־עַצְמֵכֶ֥ם וּבְשַׂרְכֶ֖ם אָנִֽי׃וַיְדַבְּר֙וּ אֲחֵֽי־אִמּ֜וֹ עָלָ֗יו בְּאָזְנֵי֙ כָּל־בַּעֲלֵ֣י שְׁכֶ֔ם אֵ֥תכָּל־הַדְּבָרִ֖ים הָאֵ֑לֶּה וַיֵּ֤ט לִבָּם֙ אַחֲרֵ֣יאֲבִימֶ֔לֶךְ כִּ֥י אָמְר֖וּ אָחִ֥ינוּ הֽוּא׃וַיִּתְּנוּ־לוֹ֙ שִׁבְעִ֣ים כֶּ֔סֶף מִבֵּ֖ית בַּ֣עַל בְּרִ֑ית וַיִּשְׂכֹּ֙ר בָּהֶ֜ם אֲבִימֶ֗לֶךְ אֲנָשִׁ֤ים רֵיקִים֙ וּפֹ֣חֲזִ֔ים וַיֵּלְכ֖וּאַחֲרָֽיו׃וַיָּבֹ֤א בֵית־אָבִיו֙ עָפְרָ֔תָהוַֽיַּהֲרֹ֞ג אֶת־אֶחָ֧יו בְּנֵֽי־יְרֻבַּ֛עַל שִׁבְעִ֥ים אִ֖ישׁ עַל־אֶ֣בֶן אֶחָ֑ת וַיִּוָּתֵ֞ר יוֹתָ֧ם בֶּן־יְרֻבַּ֛עַל הַקָּטֹ֖ן כִּ֥י נֶחְבָּֽא׃ ס וַיֵּאָ֙סְפ֜וּ כָּל־בַּעֲלֵ֤י שְׁכֶם וְכָל־בֵּ֣ית מִלּ֔וֹא וַיֵּ֣לְכ֔וּ וַיַּמְלִ֥יכוּאֶת־אֲבִימֶ֖לֶךְ לְמֶ֑לֶךְ עִם־אֵל֥וֹן מֻצָּ֖באֲשֶׁ֥ר בִּשְׁכֶֽם׃

(Judges 9:1-6)

Now Abimelech son of Jerub-Baal went to Shechem to see his mother's relatives. He said to them and to his mother's entire extended family, Tell all the leaders of Shechem this: 'Why would you want to have seventy men, all Jerub-Baal's sons, ruling over you, when you can have just one ruler? Recall that I am your own flesh and blood.'" His mother's relatives spoke on his behalf to all the leaders of Shechem and reported his proposal. The leaders were drawn to Abimelech; they said, "He is our close relative." They paid him seventy silver shekels out of the temple of Baal-Berith. Abimelech then used the silver to hire some lawless, dangerous men as his followers. He went to his father's home in Ophrah and murdered his half-brothers, the seventy legitimate sons of Jerub-Baal, on one stone. Only Jotham, Jerub-Baal's youngest son, escaped, because he hid. All the leaders of Shechem and Beth Millo assembled and then went and made Abimelech king by the oak near the pillar in Shechem.

**Lexico- syntactic Analysis of the key words and phrases in the Immediate Context**

As a descriptive narrative, the passage contains certain words that explain the preparation for the terrorism perpetrated therein.

**וַיֵּ֙לֶך(Judges 9:1 ) *Va-llak* (Ha-lak)**

The Hebrew verb *ha-lak*which is translated as “went” captures the idea of walking to and fro. “And Abimelech was walking to and fro Shechem. Those conceive evil plan do not stay at a place, neither do they rest until they have perpetrated their ungodly enterprise. In the case of Abimelech, he saw his maternal how as the best place to go and share his deadly ideas, knowing very well that he would definitely get their support in carrying out the evil agenda. The Greek equivalent used in the LXX **is** ἐπορεύθη which is verb indicative aorist passive presents Abimelech in the persistent movement towards grabbing the throne.

**שְׁכֶם *Shekem* (Shechem): The Land of Shechem and the Evil of the Men of Shechem**

Etymologically, (shoulder, or upper part of the back just below the neck); explained as if the town were on the shoulder of the heights dividing the waters that flow toward the Mediterranean on the west and to the Jordan on the east; or on a shoulder or ridge connected with Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. Also called SICHEM, SYCHEM, and SYCHAR (John 4:5; Josh. 20:7; Judg. 9:9; 1 Kings 12:25). Mount Gerizim is close by (Judg. 9:7) on the southern side, Mount Ebal on the northern side (Holaday, 2000). These hills at the base are but 500 yards apart. Vespasian named it Neapolis; coins are extant with its name "Flavia Neapolis"; now Nablus by corruption. The situation is lovely; the valley runs West with a soil of rich, black, vegetable mold, watered by fountains, sending forth numerous streams flowing West; orchards of fruit, olive groves, gardens of vegetables, and verdure on all sides delight the eye. On the E. of Gerizim and Ebal the flue plain of Mukhna stretches from N. to S. Here first in Canaan God appeared to Abraham (Gen. 12:6 ), and here he pitched his tent and built an altar under the oak or terebinth (not "plain") of Moreh; here too Jacob re-entered the promised land (Gen. 33:18,19), and "bought a parcel of a field where he had spread his tent," from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, and bequeathed it subsequently to Joseph (Gen. 48:22; Josh. 24:32; John 4:5); a dwelling place, whereas Abraham's only purchase was a burial place. It lay in the rich plain of the Mukhna, and its value was increased by the well Jacob dug there. Joshua made "Shechem in Mount Ephraim" one of the six cities of refuge (Josh. 20:7). The suburbs in our Lord's days reached nearer the entrance of the valley between Gerizim and Ebal than now; for the narrative in John 4:30,35, implies that the people could be seen as they came from the town toward Jesus at the well, whereas Nablus now is more than a mile distant, and cannot be seen from that point. Josephus (B. J. 3:7, section 32) says that more than 10,000 of the inhabitants were once destroyed by the Romans, implying a much larger town and population than at present. Under Abraham's oak at Shechem Jacob buried the family idols and amulets (Gen. 35:1-4). Probably too "the strange gods" or "the gods of the stranger" were those carried away by Jacob's sons from Shechem among the spoils (Gen. 35:2; 34:26-29). The charge to "be clean and change garments" may have respect to the recent slaughter of the Shechemites, which polluted those who took part in it (Blunt, Undesigned Coincidences). Shechem was for a time Ephraim's civil capital as Shiloh was its religious capital (Judg. 9:2; 21:19; Josh. 24:1, 25, 26; 1 Kings 12:1).

At the same "memorial terebinth" at Shechem the Shechemites made Abimelech king (Judg. 9:6). Jotham's parable as to the trees, the vine, the fig, and the bramble, were most appropriate to the scenery; contrast the shadow of the bramble which would rather scratch than shelter, with Isa. 32:2. Abimelech destroyed Shechem and sowed it with salt (Judg. 9:45). From Gerizim the blessings, and from Ebal the curses, were read (Josh. 8:33-35). At Shechem Joshua gave his farewell charge (Josh. 24:1-25). Joseph was buried there (Josh. 24:32; Acts 7:16). At Shechem Rehoboam was made king by Israel (1 Kings 12:1); he desired to conciliate the haughty Ephraimites by being crowned there. Here, through his ill-advised obstinacy, the Israelites revolted to Jeroboam, who made Shechem his capital. Mediaeval writers (Palestine Exploration Quarterly Statement, Jan. 1878, p. 27, 28) placed the Dan and Bethel of Jeroboam's calves on Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. The following reasons favor this view. (1) The ruins below the western peak of Gerizim are still called Lozeh or Luz, the old name of Bethel; a western spur of Ebal has a site Amad ed Din, (possibly Joshua's altar on Ebal,) bearing traces of the name Dan, and the hill is called Ras el Kady (judgment answering to the meaning of Dan). (2) The Bethel of the calf was close to the palace of Jeroboam who lived in Shechem (Amos 7:13; 1 Kings 12:25). (3) The southern Bethel was in Benjamin (Josh. 18:22) and would hardly have been chosen as a religious center by Jeroboam who was anxious to draw away the people from Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:28). (4) The southern Bethel was taken from Jeroboam by Abijah king of Judah (2 Chr. 13:19), whereas the calf of Bethel was not destroyed but remained standing long after (2 Kings 10:29). (5) The Bethel of the calf is mentioned in connection with Samaria (1 Kings 13:32; 2 Kings 23:19; Amos 4:1-4; 5:6), and the old prophet at Bethel was of Samaria according to Josephus (2 Kings 23:18). (6) The southern Bethel was the seat of a school of prophets, which is hardly consistent with its being the seat of the calf worship (2 Kings 2:2, 3). The "men from Shechem" (Jer. 41:5) who had paganly "cut themselves," and were slain by Ishmael, were probably of the Babylonian colonists who combined Jehovah worship with their old idolatries. Shechem was the chief Samaritan city from the time of the setting up of the temple on Gerizim down to its destruction in 129 B.C., i.e. for about 200 years. In the New Testament time, the name Sycharin John 4 is probably a corruption of Shechem; others make it a Jewish alteration, for contempt, from *shecher* "a lie."

וַיְדַבֵּ֣ר אֲלֵיהֶ֔ם **וְאֶל־כָּל־מִשְׁפַּ֛חַת (Judges 9:1)*Dabar em kol mish-pa-chan***

“He spoke to all his mother’s relatives (the whole clan)”the word *dabar* when considered in the Hebrew verb hiphil could mean “to lead or chair a meeting”. This was typically a meeting to lobby them for support.

דַּבְּרוּ־נָ֞א בְּאָזְנֵ֙י כָל־בַּעֲלֵ֣י **(Judges 9:2) *Dabar azen kol bale***

Again, “speak to all the leaders” (of Shechem). The LXX phrasal equivalent is λαλήσατε δὴ ἐν ὠσὶν τῶν ἀνδρῶν “speak to the ears of all husbands, men or stakeholders” (of Shechem). The interrogative phrase “Why would you want to have seventy men, all Jerub-Baal's sons, ruling over you, when you can have just one ruler?” suggests that Abimelech was establishing a bloody political propaganda against the other sons of his father (his half-brothers). Before the meeting arose, there was a consensus as the leaders of Shechem were convinced by Abimelech’s persuasion, “I am your flesh”. Thus, they said, "he is our close relative" indicating that both political propaganda and unleashing of terror against those who are perceived as political enemies or opponents usually carry tribal, ethnic or socio-religious affinity.

In verse 4, the people of Shechem gave Abimelech seventy silver shekel from the house of Baal-berith with which hired ἄνδρας κενοὺς (Andros Kenois), the Hebrew words here are *req* and p*achaz*רֵיקִים֙ וּפֹ֣חֲזִ֔ים )worthless and reckless fellows, and they followed him. The terrorists massacred the seventy legitimate sons of Jerub-Baal, on one stone.

**Terrorism and Armed Insurgency in the Book of Judges 9:1-7 and in Nigeria**

Judges 9:1-7 contains clear portrayal of how terrorism could be conceived and initiated by an individual or group of people. The narrative better explains the steps in the advertisement of supporters in such plans. It denotes the rapid wave of the garnering of momentum through the support of the like minds thereafter, leading to terror sponsorship. Revealing the activities of terrorism in Nigeria, Afzal (2020) observed that In 2015, the year that could be marked as the height of its influence as well as control of territory, Boko Haram — which translates literally to “Western education is forbidden” — became ranked as one of the world’s deadliest terrorist groups by the Global Terrorism Index, ahead of the Islamic State group (ISIS).1 Since 2009, Boko Haram has killed tens of thousands of people in Nigeria, and has displaced more than two million others.

**Findings**

Terrorism in the book of Judges as carried out by Abimelech the son of Gideon had the involvement of his kinsmen who supported and sponsored him, is an indication that no form of terroristic attack on others could be successfully executed with the support of close allies. Such allies could be biological relatives, ethnic or religious. Again, terrorism has also been evident in the African continent and in Nigeria where the adverse effect of the menace has shown in massive loss of lives, displacement, mass unemployment and poverty.

**Conclusion**

While measures geared at engaging the terrorists in Nigeria must have local-contents thatreflect Nigeria’s national peculiarities, other nations with experiences and proven local bestpractices in this area should also share such practices with Nigeria.

**Recommendations**

The study therefore suggests that while measures are being taken towards finding solutions and engaging techniques to curtail terroristic activities, there should be religious and local social contents that should be in place to control and curb the escalation of terrorism through the efforts of all and sundry. Wholistic citizenship education which emphasizes on the promotion of ethnic and religious tolerance should take upper hand, since virtually every act of terrorism has political, ethnic or religious inclinations.

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