



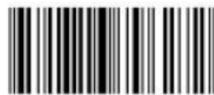
BOAZ ADHENGO

MAROR



BOAZ ADHENGU

MAROR



9781716796272

©2018 By Boaz Adhengo. All Rights Reserved

Published by Lulu Books
627 Davis Drive, Suite 300
27560 Morrisville, North Carolina.
United States

eBook ISBN: 978-1-71679-627-2

MAROR by Boaz Adhengo is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en_US.

Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at
<http://www.adhengoboaz.com/maror.info/reader>

Design and typography: Marlene Amondi Andiwo

G7891_x4

CC-AB-SA-4.0





www.adhengoboaz.com



@adhengobeuz

Table of Contents

	Introduction	1
I	What is in a Herb?	4
II	Towards the World	7
III	Blessed Maror	11
IV	Jesus and the Passover	13
V	Then and Now	17

MAROR / *mir:rah, mirror* /

Noun

- Dipping the bitter herb in sweet *charoset*
- It is obligatory Jewish tradition to eat *maror* or bitter herbs twice at each Seder. The bitter taste of *maror* symbolizes the bitterness and harshness of the slavery which the Jews endured in Egypt.
- A specific meditational plant grown in the highlands of Abyssinia, Meru and Embu.

Mark 2: 17

On hearing this, Jesus said to them, *“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are ill. I have not come to call the righteous, but the sinners”*.

Mathew 15:16 *“Jesus called the crowd to him and said ‘listen and understand, what goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth; that is what defiles them’.*

The celebrations of the Passover have often evoked mixed reactions; mostly emanating from the Jewish civilisation towards Judaism into an encultured practice of Christianity. Yet, other traditions still insist on the ethics of psychoactive herbal plants that have been in use even during the Greco-Roman era of civilisation. This context of bitter herbs has been controversial given the mosaic of different traditions all of which struggle to embrace Christianity in a non-discriminatory path; agreeing that as Christians, humanity is equal before God who is our Creator. Hence, restricting the definition of bitter herbs to be regional specific or to be plants found only within a uniquely identified area has prompted endless debates, most of which have resulted to Protestantism celebrations that are much different from the Jewish understanding of Passover; yet, the ultimate meaning of these celebrations unite to stand as a reminder of liberation, the eve of exodus; when Israelites finally broke lose from the grip of Pharaoh and were led by Moses in the journey of Exodus.

The use of psychoactive substances in religious and healing rituals, in semi-ritual practices which reinforce social and political bonds, and simply as recreational activity is a universal cultural practice. In indigenous societies the practice is often governed by an evolved

tradition and etiquette that place strictures on misuse. Outside the traditional environment, the substances enter a complex arena where the use of psychoactive plant substances or their derivatives leaves a trail of destruction in its wake, provoking collective responses, both official and private. This is what Jesus Christ referred to as “*what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them*” ..meaning what people chose to do outside the traditional practice of such event as the Passover.

You shall not eat anything leavened with it; for seven days thereafter you shall eat unleavened bread, the bread of distress - for you departed from the land of Egypt hurriedly - so that you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt as long as you live.
Deuteronomy 16:3.

The misconception of what bitter herbs really are to encultured African tribes who practice Christianity has resulted to many relations that attempt to bridge collaboration towards African traditions and the medicinal practices therein. Yet, the impact of Jewish culture to global Christian civilisation remains an endeavour to be revisited in seeking to understand the better norms towards taming emergent defilements resulting from over-indulgencies or untimely celebrations of certain events or even use of such herbs in unnecessary seasons.

From the beginning of time humanity has been confronted with fundamental health problems, and this has led to the

quest for solution to health problems. As a way to find cure for diseases, man discovered the medical values of some plants and herbs which have curative potencies. That was the evolution and development of traditional medicine. It is quite probable that man as soon as he has reached the stage of reasoning, found out through the process of trial and error; and that of revelation, that plants can be used as food, that some might be poisonous and may lead to death when eaten while some had medicinal value and power. Hitherto, traditional healing is the use of herbs and vegetable plants in the cure of illness and in the treatment of various kinds of ailments. Practitioners in this field have a wide knowledge of the properties of many roots, barks of trees, leaves and herbs. Traditional medicine is holistic in nature and involves both physical and spiritual dimensions of healing.

The role of traditional medicine in rendering cure and curbing disease in the society cannot be overemphasized. Diseases such as malaria, sexually transmitted diseases, infections and fracture, yellow fever, internal heat, diabetic, hypertension, typhoid, cough, snake bite, infertility as well as HIV/AIDS have been tackled using traditional medicine in Africa. It is not surprising that today; many other countries have come to realize the importance of traditional medicine and healing in health care delivery services.

Mathew 15: 17 *“do you see that whatever enters the mouth goes to the stomach and then out of the body? But*

the things that comes out of a persons mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts – murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.”

Religion is a meaningful relationship between the human entity and the Supreme Being which always dovetails into medicine, which is an art of restoring and preserving health. Prayer is a potent spiritual force in traditional treatment. The healer mentions God in all the stages of healing as is the custom seen amongst the *dholuo* speaking ethnics of Nyanza in Kenya; most of whom incline towards *Legio Maria* as an advance of encultured Catholicism.

What is in a Herb?

An herb is defined as a plant grown for culinary, medicinal, or in some cases spiritual value. In botanic terms, an herb is a plant not producing a woody stem. There are large number of known as well as some not yet identified plants and herbs with various psychoactive chemicals and other abusive substances. Abuse of certain plants can produce a wide range of clinical effects such as psychotic, stimulant, sedative, euphoric, and anticholinergic symptoms. The most affected are the adolescents and young adults. The lack of regulation of herbal products, many with psychotropic, stimulant, and euphoric effects, has resulted in people seeking an

alternative “*legal high*” to illicit drugs of abuse. Internet advertising and on-line sales have become profitable techniques for marketing and distribution of many herbal drugs of abuse. Despite the potential for abuse, addiction, and serious adverse effects, there may be a false perception that these products are all safe, legal, and organic; mostly owing to the theological justifications that are valid and true.

There is a misconception among peoples using herbal products, that herbal preparations being natural in origin are good for human’s health on safety point of view. There is little public awareness or appreciation of the fact that these “*all natural*” extracts are actually a combination of potentially biologically active compounds that exist in these marketed products in unknown quantities. The CYP enzymes involved in drug metabolism in humans are expressed predominantly in the liver. However, it is also present in intestines (*both large and small*), lungs and brain. They are insoluble proteins, bound to the endoplasmic reticulum with complex mechanistic and structural features.

Christians in the greater East Africa have resorted to popular plants that grow in the highlands of Kenya and Ethiopia; plants that many relate to as a theological herb which in Hebrew language has been understood as “*maror*”. Yet the local semantics have often translated the Hebrew dialect into Arabic nouns to be popular as “*mirrar*”.

Due to the natural origin of the product, its consumption has been linked to spiritual roles of meditation; hitherto, the former need of representing Passover has been multiplied into divergent uses; to which could be termed abuse. Thus, most who have objected towards the abuse of the role of *mirrar* in celebrating Passover have often advocated towards the use of alternative plants that are yet bitter but also as food. To this end, “*mirrar*” as a plant of “*maror*” had been equated to chewing of cud by ancient western missionaries who disapproved of its abuse; hence the name, “*Devils Cud*” which in Cushitic pronunciation has produced the name *Khut*. Most missionary activities in Kenya rotated around the “White Highlands” and in this region, mostly Cushitic and semi-bantu tribes were found to be of origin. Consuming the bitter herb at a time other than the Passover was seen as partaking the “*Devils Cud*” for the thoughts of many who used it were not moderated or rather inclined to the Biblical law; most people neglected the need to meditate on the *Word of God* and as such, profanely associated their memories to their worldly experiences, the devils intentions. In difficulty of pronouncing this “*cud*”, the Cushitic dialect has rested upon *Khut* and that is what is common understanding in Kenya and Ethiopia today; both countries have and had heavy missionary activities thereby being predominantly Christian.

Reports of *maror* use in the hinterlands of the Horn of Africa go back at least eight centuries. The leaves were chewed by the people in the medieval Islamic sultanates

of the southern region of today's Ethiopia as early as the fourteenth century. From there, the chew culture spread to the Plain and Horn region along the historic long-distance trading routes that connected trading states with each other and with the Indian Ocean world. By the mid-nineteenth century, the plant was used for a variety of purposes in the region that is now Kenya and Ethiopia. In the Kingdom of Shawa (*central Ethiopia*) and in Kaffa (*southwestern Ethiopia*) the plant was extensively cultivated and used. In the Tigray region in the north, *mirrar* was used for enhancing the flavour of a local drink made of honey; a tradition that was also dominant amongst the Meru speaking tribe of Kenya.

The fifteenth-century Egyptian historian and geographer, states that the people of Zeyla chewed “*the leaves of a plant which enhances intelligent performances, produces appreciable sense of hilarity while depressing appetites for food and sex and repelling sleep*”. Chemicals in *mirrah* accelerated the process of sperm maturation and prolonged the sperm's fertilizing state.

Towards the World

The use of psychoactive substances has been known since antiquity. The relationship between humans and substances was shaped by multiple factors including culture, society, religion, beliefs, individual psychology, neurobiology, cognition, and genetics. Historical evidence suggests *mirrar* use existed in the 13th century in

Abyssinia (Ethiopia); its cultivation and use in Ethiopia and the southwestern Arabian areas started earlier than that of coffee. Mirrar use varies: the fleshy and thickened parts of the plant can be chewed and then swallowed (*the most common form of use*), the leaves dried and powdered to make tea known as Abyssinian, African, or Arabian tea, or the powder can be eaten as a paste with honey. Mirrar is theologically and lawfully accepted as a custom in Arabia and Africa; its global distribution has increased dramatically in the past three decades, making *mirrar* available in the European and US markets.

Substances taken for nonmedical reasons, usually for their mind-altering effects, are called drugs of abuse. The use of psychoactive plants as drugs of abuse has had a long tradition. Most commonly abused herbal cultures extracted from or based on natural products are substances such as *mkovelo*, *kola-nut* and cannabis products but other herbal products used to produce a high are becoming increasingly popular drugs of abuse. Unfortunately, these “*new herbal drugs*” are falsely labelled as safe and legal. Health care professionals must be cognizant of this emerging problem as increased media coverage and marketing have made these products accessible and recognizable to many young adults and teenagers.

Hitherto, herbs have been administered for medical purposes and health for more than thousands of years. Herbal drugs are frequently used to offer first-line and basic healthiness proposes. Still in areas where modern

medication is accessible, the attention on plants medicines and their consumption have been increasing quickly in recent years. Plants products in traditional and modern medicine are usually perceived by the general population as well tolerated and free of major adverse effects. While, as all medicines, herbal drugs products are predictable to be of appropriate quality safe and effective.

Healing with herbal drugs is as old as mankind itself. The link between man and his search for drugs in nature has a long-lasting history. Alertness of medicinal plants administration is a result of the many years of efforts against diseases due to which man learned to follow drugs in fruit bodies, vegetables and seeds, or other parts of the herbs. In fact, herbal drugs have gained growing popularity in the recent years, and are currently administered in various populations; an herbal drug may be any form of a plant or plant product, consisting flowers, roots, leaves, stems and seeds.

It is clear that the misuse of licit and illicit substances has a profound effect in terms of harm across all areas of society. This includes high costs in terms of healthcare provision, social and economic costs as well as the effect on individuals and their families. Problem substance use is increasing in Kenya, with one fifth of all individuals treated from problem substance abuse being aged 18 or under.

Substance misuse can take the form of anti-social or harmful behaviour, and have harmful effects on the individual in terms of physical health (*overdose, hepatitis, HIV, respiratory problems*), mental health (*depression, anxiety disorders, suicide*), social problems and criminal and violence issues.

Substance misuse or abuse is frequently classified as experimental, recreational, or dependant that may result in adverse physical and/or psychological effects (*i.e. harmful use*). This represents a wide-ranging spectrum of the use of therapeutic drugs or substances with physiological and psycho-active effects on the body or mind which are out with legal or medical guidelines.

Dependence syndrome is a cluster of physiological, behavioural, and cognitive phenomena in which the use of a drug becomes a high priority for the user, overtaking other activities. A central descriptive characteristic of dependence syndrome is the desire (often strong, sometimes overpowering) to take psychoactive drugs (which may or may not have been medically prescribed). Experimentation and occasional use of drugs for recreational purposes is widespread and in most cases does not lead to misuse or dependence. Studies show that psychoactive drugs act on receptors in the brain to cause their biological or psychoactive effects. These effects then act as positive reinforcers for repeated drug use in some people. Long term use of drugs leads to adaptive changes in the receptors and in nerve terminals leading to

unpleasant symptoms on withdrawal of the drug. These unpleasant effects then act as a negative reinforcement and thereby perpetuate continued use of the drugs.

Many herb users remain employed and their herbal use is viewed as a harmless recreational activity by their peer group. Many people do not regard occasional use and experimentation with herbal drugs as abnormal. However, drug users in employment have a high absenteeism rate and a higher incidence of accidents and injuries. Though many who misuse drugs remain employed, the employment rates for drug dependent individuals are very low.

Blessed Maror

Letting go means just what it says. It's an invitation to cease clinging to anything: whether it be an idea, a thing, an event, a particular time, or view, or desire. It is a conscious decision to release with full acceptance into the stream of present moments as they are unfolding. To let go means to give up coercing, resisting or struggling, in exchange for something more powerful and wholesome which comes out of allowing things to be as they are without getting caught up in your attraction to or rejection of them, in the intrinsic stickiness of wanting, of liking and disliking. It's akin to letting your palm open to unhand something you have been holding on to.

Corinthians 3:23 - 24 *“Whatever you do work it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not your human masters. Since you know you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”*

Our story starts in ancient times, with Abraham, the first person to have the idea that maybe all those little statues his contemporaries worshiped as gods were just statues. The idea of one God, invisible and all-powerful, inspired him to leave his family and begin a new people in Canaan, the land that would one day bear his grandson Jacob’s adopted name, Israel. God had made a promise to Abraham that his family would become a great nation, but this promise came with a frightening vision of the troubles along the way: *“Your descendants will dwell for a time in a land that is not their own, and they will be enslaved and afflicted for four hundred years; however, I will punish the nation that enslaved them, and afterwards they shall leave with great wealth.”*

In the years our ancestors lived in Egypt, our numbers grew, and soon the family of Jacob became the People of Israel. Pharaoh and the leaders of Egypt grew alarmed by this great nation growing within their borders, so they enslaved us. We were forced to perform hard labour, perhaps even building pyramids. The Egyptians feared that even as slaves, the Israelites might grow strong and rebel. So, Pharaoh decreed that Israelite baby boys should

be drowned, to prevent the Israelites from overthrowing those who had enslaved them.

But God heard the cries of the Israelites. And God brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and outstretched arm, with great awe, miraculous signs and wonders. God brought us out not by angel or messenger, but through God's own intervention.

In creating a holiday about the joy of freedom, we turn the story of our bitter history into a sweet celebration. We recognize this by dipping our bitter herbs into the sweet honey. We don't totally eradicate the taste of the bitter with the taste of the sweet...but doesn't the sweet mean more when it's layered over the bitterness?

Jesus and the Passover

Festivals were part and parcel of Israel's life together as God's covenanted people. Jerusalem overflowed with pilgrims for three weeklong feasts every year: Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread commemorated the Exodus from slavery in Egypt; the Festival of Weeks (or, Pentecost) celebrated the harvest of wheat; and the Festival of Tabernacles remembered with penitence the people's wilderness suffering.

The Passover is the most significant festival in the Gospels. Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for Passover every year (*Luke 2:41*). Perhaps he attended in his early

adult years; from the three references to the festival in John 2:13, 6:4, and 11:55, the tradition grew that his public ministry lasted three years. Jesus' final trip to Jerusalem was near the time of Passover (*Luke 22:1; Mark 14:1; Matthew 26:2; John 11:55*).

The Gospel of John says Jesus was crucified on the day of Preparation, at the hour when Passover lambs were slain at the Temple (19:14-16). The Synoptic Gospels, however, report that Jesus' last meal with his disciples occurred at the time of the Passover feast (Mark 14:12, 16; Matthew 26:17-19; Luke 22:8, 15). They do not describe the usual Passover menu; instead, Jesus compared a shared loaf of bread with his body and a common cup of wine with his blood. These significant variations signal that the supper Jesus shared with his disciples on the night of his betrayal was different in kind from the Passover meals that were shared at other Jewish tables. The fact that this meal, which we call 'the Last Supper,' is the model for the Lord's Supper in the earliest churches suggests that Jesus' first followers considered his instructions to the twelve during their final meal to be especially valuable and readily applicable to all would-be disciples (note especially 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Several scripture passages go further and identify Jesus with the slaughtered paschal (Passover) lamb. Two of these draw out the implications for holy living.

“Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves” and “do not be conformed to the desires you formally had in ignorance,” the writer of 1 Peter urges, because *“you know that you were ransomed from the futile ways... with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.”* With our minds readied and desires disciplined, we’ll be prepared to show *“genuine mutual love, [and] love one another deeply from the heart”* (1:13-22).

Similarly, Paul warns the Corinthian congregation about its need for moral purity. Because *“our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed,”* they now should live *“unleavened [lives of] sincerity and truth.”* They must *“clean out the old yeast,”* which here serves as a metaphor for malice and evil (cf. Galatians 5:7-10), so that they may be the *“new batch”* that they have already become in Christ Jesus (*1 Corinthians 5:7-8*). In Paul’s wonderful metaphor, they are called to *“celebrate the festival”* as *“unleavened,”* morally righteous people.

We eat the unleavened bread to remind us of the fact that the Israelites did not have time to wait for yeast to rise because they had to be ready to move when God said. For us as Christians, it reminds us to live lightly, always ready to go when the call comes, for in the twinkling of an eye, like a thief in the night, Jesus is going to return and we will all go home.

We remember Jesus by whose stripes we are healed. Yeast leavens, or puffs up, as pride and sin inflates our hearts. Yeast reminds us of the words from 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 *“Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast – as you really are. For Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the festival, not with old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.”*

Why should we eat bitter herbs? For on that long ago night, that night of Passover for the children of Israel, God said that *‘bitter herbs they shall eat’* (Exodus 12:8) and so we do too. To remember the bitterness of the cruel slavery of the Israelites to Pharaoh, to recall the bitterness of our ugly bondage to sin. These herbs also serve as a reminder to us Christians of the many who have gone before us and have suffered even unto death that we may know the joy of the good news of Jesus.

Most importantly, we think on the suffering of Christ on the Cross for each of us, how Jesus, our Bread of Life, has paid the price and absorbed our bitter sins.

As the Jews needed the blood of a lamb on their doorpost for the angel of death to Passover them, so we need the blood of the lamb on our hearts for the angel of death to Passover our souls. And we have a lamb... as John the Baptist proclaimed, *“Look, the Lamb of God who takes*

away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). And He was a voluntary sacrificial lamb for Jesus said: *“No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord”* (John 10:17-18).

Then and Now

The Latin word for Passover is *pascha*, in Ancient Greek it is *paskha*, in Aramaic it is also *paskha* and in Hebrew it is *pesakh*... In many European languages, the words for "Easter" and "Passover" are etymologically related or homonyms. The term "*Pascha*" from the same root, is also used by some in English to refer to Easter.

The prototype of Pascha (that is Easter) is the Jewish Passover, the festival of Israel's deliverance from bondage. Like the Old Testament Passover, Pascha (that is Easter) is a festival of deliverance. But its nature is wholly other and unique, of which the Passover is only a prefigurement. Easter involves the ultimate redemption i.e., the deliverance and liberation of all humanity from the malignant power of Satan and death, through the death and resurrection of Christ. Easter is the feast of universal redemption. The feast, however, must have originated in the apostolic period. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to imagine otherwise. The first Christians were Jews and obviously conscious of the Jewish festal calendar. They scarcely could have forgotten that the remarkable and compelling events of Christ's death, burial and resurrection had occurred at a time in which the

annual Passover was being observed. These Christians could not have failed to project the events of the passion and the resurrection of Christ on the Jewish festal calendar, nor would they have failed to connect and impose their faith on the annual observance of the Jewish Passover.

Passover, like many of our holidays, combines the celebration of an event from our Jewish memory with recognition of the cycles of nature. As we remember the liberation from Egypt, we also recognize the stirrings of spring and rebirth happening in the world around us. The symbols of the foods on our Seder table bring together elements of both kinds of celebration. In earlier days, Passover combined the celebration of an annual harvest with a community festival as well as a personal family service at home; word of slavery of others around the world was often not known. But today the knowledge of what is going on around the world is unavoidable and so Christians must not fail to recognize the need to free others even from their own mental slavery. They must do this to preserve their freedom because we have learned that if others live in slavery, we too are not free.

Mr. Boaz Adhengo is President to Creative Arts Society of Kenya, a leadership coach, business for arts consultant and a cultural policy strategist. Having published twenty books, he manages the Adhengo Boaz & Associates consulting group and is co-founder of the Buruburu Basketball Ministry, Inc.

He has been recently ordained as a Life Coach Minister by the Christian Leaders Ministries, Michigan, U.S.A.

