

Migration, instrumental to accomplishing God's redemptive purpose to humankind: Perspectives from Ruth and Joshua



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This article identifies a lack of biblical theological foundation of migration driving the church to respond to migrants' challenges effectively. This is problematic because the rise in migration and migrants' challenges globally should challenge the church (as God's community responsible of caring for the vulnerable) to respond to migration situations in a meaningful way. In view of the aforesaid problem, this article is a quest for a biblical theological foundational status of migration theology that drives the churches' effective migrant ministries. To accomplish its objective, the article defines a *biblical redemptive historical approach* as a justified appropriate methodological approach in studying biblical migration, with specific focus on Joshua and Ruth. The article introduces the concepts of mission that emphasise God as the centre of the *centrifugal* and *centripetal* concepts of mission, using the books of Joshua and Ruth. The meaning of these concepts (in view of migration in redemptive history) in Joshua and Ruth configures the notion that God migrates both sinners and his chosen people to advance his kingdom. In this way, migration is not an accident in God's scheme. Next, the article concludes by challenging the church to develop effective migrant ministries for the physical and spiritual needs of migrants in both church and non-church spaces. God migrates people to fulfil his redemptive purposes and plans. However, in responding to the physical challenges of non-Christian migrants, the article challenges the church to also reach out to non-Christians with the gospel, in advancement of God's kingdom in *centripetal* and *centrifugal* ways through migration.

Keywords: Migration; migrant ministries; Ruth; Joshua; centripetal concept of mission; centrifugal concept of mission; redemptive historical approach.

Introduction and background

This article is premised on the firm conviction that the percentage of people that migrate from one country to another, or from one place to another within the same country, has rapidly increased in the last few years (International Organisation for Migration [IOM] 2015:1). For instance the IOM (2015:1) states, that due to political, economic, climate change, persecution, education and tourism factors, the number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow rapidly over the past 15 years, reaching 244 million in 2015 up from 222 million in 2010 and 173 million in 2000.

In the essay titled, *Global challenge of managing migration*, Martin (2013:2) concurs with the IOM (2015) and states that from 1980 to 2010, the number of international migrants increased by 117 million. This means that in 1980 the number of international migrants was 103 million and it increased to 220 million by 2010. Additionally, Martin (2013:2) reports that '... the number of international migrants increased from 220 million to 232 million by 2013'. Martin (2013) continues to estimate that the number of international migrants is most likely to reach 400 million by 2050. In both confirming and magnifying the extent and gravity of the issue of international migration, the IOM (2014:1) pointedly reports that '... approximately one in seven people are migrating every day'. Furthermore the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2015:2), provides a vivid picture of the global increase in the number of people who are forcibly displaced due to political instability, persecution, conflict, human rights violations and many other causes that are prevalent in their countries of origin. The UNHCR (2015) succinctly depicts the situation in the following words:

Global forced displacement has increased in 2015, with record-high numbers. By the end of the year, 65.3 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or human rights violations. This is 5.8 million more than the previous year (59.5 million). (p. 2)

In the UNHCR's (2015:2) view, the total of 65.3 million internally and internationally displaced migrants is so huge that if these refugees were a nation, they would make up the world's 21st largest nation in terms of population. However, it is important to note that when these migrants arrive in a foreign country, they face multiple and complex challenges that can be classified as physical, economic, spiritual, cultural, sociological, environmental, security, legal and emotional or psychological (Magezi 2018:329–231). In other words, when people leave their countries of origin for other countries because of the interaction between push and pull factors, they are subjected to a state of being in-between, a place of suspense (a suspended being) and a place of nowhere in which they face multiple and complex challenges.

The problem that has surfaced, is that the church of God, that should act as a mutually supportive community to vulnerable people such as migrants, is not responding to these challenges in an effective manner (Magezi 2018:305–321). Cruz (2010:121; cf. Longenecker 2010; Wright 2006)¹ regards the church as a mutually supportive community for vulnerable migrants and recommends that theology should dialogue with the current challenges that these migrants encounter. Reactive ministerial and ecclesiological models that respond to the challenges of migrants, should be developed. Hence in advancing a useful intercultural theology of migration, Cruz (2010:121; cf. Bosch 1991:4944) poignantly points out: 'Indeed, all theology participates in his (God's, *writer's emphasis*) story to address the issue of the day or the signs of the times'. Regrettably in an article titled, 'Migration crisis and the church: A response to lacunae and considerations for Christian ministry engagement', Magezi (2017a) states:

Theology has to dialogue with current forms of arising issues. An emerging problem indicates that while theology is expected to dialogue with migration, scholars observe that theology has been peripherally participating in shaping the discourse and responses to migration crises. (p. 7)

It can be posited that the church is at the periphery of the migration debate and discussion, because it possibly lacks biblical theological foundational statuses of migration theology, that should drive its response to migration challenges. Magezi (2018:305–321) indicates the need for a thoroughly worked out theology of migration to drive churches' migrant ministries. Magezi's (2018) qualitative research involved interviewing various church leaders in the Gauteng province. The study established, that the theological rationales that drive the structured and unstructured migrant ministries of South African churches, are limited in many and different ways. Firstly, some current South African church leaders have premised and justified theological rationales for their structured and unstructured migrant ministries on less

relevant biblical texts (Magezi 2018:314–316). Secondly, some current South African churches do not have structured migrant ministries due to their arguably skewed theological rationales (Magezi 2018:316–320). In light of the above-mentioned problem of the lack of a biblical foundation for a proper migration theology that drives the church to develop and design effective migrant ministries, this article aims at developing one of the theologies of migration theology that can possibly challenge the church to design comprehensive and effective migrant ministries.

In order to accomplish its objective, this article initially defines a biblical redemptive historical approach as a justified and appropriate methodological approach in studying migration in the Bible, with a particular focus on the books of Joshua and Ruth.² Thereafter the article will proceed to introduce the *centripetal* and *centrifugal* concepts of mission, that emphasise God as the centre of the centrefold and centripetal force of the mission, using the proposed books of Joshua and Ruth.³ That is, in affirming the importance of migration in redemptive history, utilising the books of Joshua and Ruth, the article advances the *centripetal* concept of mission and envisages a situation in which God migrates sinners to where his people are, for the former to know him (God). On the other hand, the *centrifugal* concept refers to instances when God migrates his people (Christians) to faraway places, where there are people who do not know him, for the purposes of advancing his kingdom (cf. Goheen 2011; Matacio 2008:31–42; Mitchell 2008). The *centripetal* and *centrifugal* ways are two traditional concepts, that have been used to understand the mission of the church in the Old and New Testaments (cf. Goheen 2011; Matacio 2008:31–42; Mitchell 2008; Tan 2007:1–3). In relation to what the Bible says about migration, the article argues that anyone who places migration within the broader plans of God, should understand both *centripetal* and *centrifugal* emphases as important. The aforesaid understanding is brought together to configure the notion that migration is not an accident in God's scheme.

Once this has been established, the article concludes by challenging the church to develop and design effective migrant ministries. These ministries should respond to the physical and spiritual needs of migrants, in both church and non-church spaces, because God migrates both sinners and his people to fulfil his redemptive purposes and plans.

1. In the book titled, *The mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's grand narrative* (2006), Christopher Wright affirms and addresses the challenges of vulnerable people as an integral part of the mission of God. That is, there is no proclamation of the gospel of Christ that does pay special attention to vulnerable people such as migrants. Likewise, in the book titled, *Remember the poor: Paul, poverty, and the Greco-Roman world*, Longenecker contends the unreasonableness of preaching the gospel that turns blind eyes to the challenges that people are experiencing. In contextualising the understanding of Wright and Longenecker to migration discussion, this article argues that the church of God, if it is going to be a true church of God, has a mandate to care for vulnerable migrants.

2. The writer is conscious of other biblical books that also speak of migration in redemptive history such as Exodus, the exile of Israel in the Prophets and historical books of the Bible, Matthew (i.e. Mt 28:19–20) and others. However, the article is limited to the Old Testament books of Joshua and Ruth, to thoroughly deal with migration in redemptive history, in order to see some nuances in and dimensions of migration in the redemptive history that emerge from the proposed texts. Although the particular focus of migration in redemptive history is on the books of Joshua and Ruth, the writer agrees with a considerable number of scholars (Campese 2012:22, 4–7; Groody 2009; 2013:35–38; Rivera-Pagán 2012:575–589) and the church councils (Catholic Church Conferencia Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil 1981:178; Lausanne Occasional Paper no. 55. 2004) that both the Old and New Testaments clearly assert migration as a biblical concept. In other words, these aforesaid scholars and church councils subscribe to a theological position, that states that all humanity is prone to migration, starting from Adam to the current generation (cf. Lausanne Occasional Paper no. 55. 2004).

3. The writer is aware that there are many cases in the Old and New Testaments in which God advances his kingdom in *centripetal* and *centrifugal* ways through migration. However, this article aims at establishing these aspects from the various migrations in the books of Joshua and Ruth.

However, in responding to the material and physical challenges of non-Christian migrants, the church should always aim to reach out to them with the gospel, as a way of aligning themselves with God's advancement of his kingdom in *centripetal* and *centrifugal* ways through migration.

Quest for a framework in migration theology: A biblical redemptive historical approach

A relevant and responsible approach to the understanding and developing of a migration theology, requires a constructive theological approach. Magezi and Magezi (2018:1) define a constructive theological approach as referring to 'functional theology that responds to the needs of people'. A constructive and sound theology refers to 'theology that is useful and able to address people's needs' (Magezi 2017:34). The constructive approach is not concerned with the issue of right or wrong, but about whether it is justifiable or not. It is about making an effort to determine whether a certain way of theological thinking is supported by the Bible. At stake in a constructive approach, is the question: Does the approach represent God as presented in the Bible? The notion of a constructive Bible framework is closely related to what Louw (2014:276) calls, speaking appropriately of God within different contexts (representative speaking). Selecting the constructive approach from multiple approaches, is like choosing food from a 'buffet table'. One selects that which meets one's intentions and goal. However, within an academic context, the selected approach should be rigorous.

However, the approach of speaking appropriately on God, as suggested by Louw (2014) is not the only one. Braaten (1987:2) identifies three different contexts that influence humanity's reference to God today, namely the ecclesial, the academic and the secular. Louw (2014) encapsulates Braaten's (1987) three modes of God's language as follows:

The first mode is that of the academic. Its concern and inquiry is to speak about the character and being of God; Braaten calls it a descriptive monological approach. The second refers to the dialogical mode of prophecy and proclamation, i.e. speaking for God, which is a prescriptive task. The third is the liturgical mode of speaking to God in prayer and praise that implies an ascriptive task. (p. 276)

However, the fourth approach, namely 'to speak appropriately on God within different contexts (representative speaking)', that Louw (2014:276) adds to Braaten's (1989) three modes of God's language, is critical in this study. This is because in theology (Louw 2014):

... whether we speak about, of, for, to or on God, our main task is hermeneutical, i.e. to determine the significance of God-talk with regard to the human quest for meaning. (p. 276)

Accordingly, linking with Louw's (2014) approach of appropriately speaking on God, this article contends and proposes a biblical redemptive historical approach in

developing a theology of migration that drives church migrant ministries. Its utility lies in providing a coherent, unifying approach, resulting in an appropriate and constructive understanding, as Louw (2014:276) rightly argues.

Nevertheless, the writer is conscious that a biblical redemptive-historical approach has been criticised by theologians such as Baker (2010), Kessler (2013) and many others. Baker (2010:277–228), in the book titled, *Two Testaments, one Bible*, presents the proposed approach as having a tendency of reducing the Old Testament to a secondary position in a manner that is not compatible with mainstream theological positions. In Baker's (2010) view, this is problematic because the authority of the Old Testament is not based on whether it is more, or less authoritative than that of the New Testament. Instead it is based on its function, that is similarly to that of the New Testament, because both testaments are the fundamental documents of Christian faith, through which God reveals himself and speaks to his people (Baker 2010). He adds that the main misunderstanding of the historical redemptive approach, is its claim that the Old Testament should be interpreted in the light of Jesus (Baker 2010). Likewise in the book titled, *Old Testament theology: Divine call and human response*, Kessler (2013) concurs with Baker (2010) for breaking away from the redemptive historical approach, and arguing for the New Testament resonances of Old Testament theology, as acceptable modes of dealing with the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Given the critique of the redemptive historical approach from Baker (2010) and Kessler (2013), it is possible that theologians that opt to use this approach in analysing migration in the Bible can be labelled as retaining a fundamentalist reading of Scripture (Pelikan 2003:4),⁴ or employing a pre-critical Bible usage, or reading, into the biblical text.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that theologians that subscribe to a redemptive historical approach in analysing the Bible, are overcritical of methodological frameworks of examining the Bible, such as the historical-critical approach that looks at the development of the biblical text (Pereira 2015:2). This is because such an approach is not capable of providing relevance and is inadequate for the theological task (Pereira 2015:2). In concurrence with Klingbeil (2003:403), Pereira (2015:2) underscores the reason why this critical approach lacks relevance to Christians. In their view, this is because the historical-critical approach tends to imprison the text in the past, therefore, failing to bridge the gap between the past and the present. At this juncture it can be argued, together with Pereira (2015:2), that this weakness in the

4. Pelikan (2003:4 ff.) explains fundamentalist reading of Scripture as referring to the view that perceives the 19th-century modernist theologians, to have misinterpreted or rejected certain key doctrines of Scripture, especially the doctrine inerrancy of Scripture. Many fundamentalist theologians and churches (sometimes called conservative evangelicals) have utilised a fighting style to the historical and theological methodologies, that have negative implications on their evangelical doctrinal positions (Pelikan 2003:4 ff.). Given this, Pelikan (2003:4) understands fundamentalism as a term that generally refers more to 'Protestant Christians opposed to the historical and theological implications of critical study of the Bible'.

historical-critical approach has resulted in Carson (2010) acknowledging Stephen Pattison avowing that:

... this minute, historical, critical and analytical perspective has yielded many benefits, but it has also had the effect of making it very difficult to integrate specific textual insights with broad theological concerns, or with Christian life in general. (p. 340)

Indeed, this serves to underscore that there is no approach that does not have its own weaknesses, as has been seen from the critiques of redemptive historical and historical-critical approaches.

However, at this point it is significant to state that the article does not follow the redemptive historical approach, simply to oppose the historical and theological implications of the critical study of the Bible or reducing the Old Testament to a secondary position. Instead the biblical redemptive historical approach is utilised as one of the theological lenses, that can be used to understand migration in the Bible, as well as developing a theology of migration that challenges the church to respond to migration challenges in an effective manner. Regardless of its weaknesses, as highlighted above, it is important to note that a biblical redemptive historical approach is also defined and supported by many scholars, as an appropriate way of reading the Bible, as the ensuing subsection will establish.

Defining a biblical redemptive historical approach as an important framework in analysing migration in the books of Joshua and Ruth

A biblical redemptive historical approach is a method of reading the Bible that pays special attention to the story line of the Bible, namely creation, fall, redemption and consummation. Vos (1980:7–13) who taught biblical theology at Princeton Seminary from 1893 to 1932 and Gaffin (2012) are two of the few leading proponents of the biblical redemptive historical approach. In building upon Vos's (1980) conception of redemptive historical approach, Gaffin (2012:92) endorses the redemptive historical approach as the best methodology for interpreting Scripture by articulating that 'history is revelation and develops six elements of the redemptive-historical approach', and strongly maintains that the 'outcome of these elements is that Jesus Christ is the culmination of the history of redemption'.

Gaffin's (2012:91–92) six elements are the following:

- The Bible should always be interpreted in view of God's self-revelation (in word and deed) in creation.
- God's redemption or revelation is historical.
- Jesus Christ in his person and work, centred in his death and resurrection (e.g. 1 Cor 15:3–4), is the culmination of the history of redemption (revelation).
- The subject matter of revelation is redemption, meaning that revelation – excluding prefall, pre-redemptive revelation in Eden – is the interpretation of redemption,

as revelation either attests or explains, describes or elaborates.

- Scripture is self-revelation, not somehow less revelation.
- Hermeneutically, revelation is the interpretation of redemption.

The significance of Gaffin's (2012:109) aforementioned six elements of the redemptive historical approach, lies in the fact that 'salvation resides ultimately, not in who God is or even in what He has said, but in what He has done in history, once and for all, in Christ'. Gaffin's (2012) redemptive historical approach can be summarised as advancing the study of any specific topic in the Bible, in view of the doctrines of creation, fall and redemption, with their culmination in Christ.

Torrance (2008:45) advances the redemptive historical approach as an appropriate method of studying the Bible and treats the Old and New Testaments as a single unit that finds its fulfilment in Jesus Christ's person and work. However, even when covenant theology is considered, the writer agrees with Horton (2011:45), Torrance (2008:44), Magezi and Magezi (2016:155–158) and Kruger (2007:2), that Christ is the one who fulfils the Old Testament covenant promises, that God designed to achieve through Abraham and his descendants (the Israelites) as his covenant people. Christ is the centre of the redemptive historical approach, because the Old Testament looks forward to the fulfilment of the redemptive promises *in* and *through* Christ, while the New Testament looks back to the promises of the redemptive history that culminates in Christ (Torrance 2008:45).⁵ However, there are many covenants and promises that God entered into with the human race, as a means of fulfilling his promises that are part of the first gospel promises in Genesis 3:15. The redemptive role of Israel is intrinsic in the centrality of the Abrahamic covenant (Gn 12:1–3, 15, 17), and its promises that have their fulfilment in the God-man, Jesus Christ, who inaugurated a new covenant (Lk 22:20b; Torrance 2008:48).

The Abrahamic covenant was specific and universal in nature (Torrance 2008:51). On the one hand, the particularity of the Abrahamic covenant refers to promises such as land and numerous descendants, which were promised to Abraham and his physical descendants. On the other hand, the universal aspect refers to God's designation of Abraham's covenant to embrace all nations (Torrance 2008:51). Wells & Zaspel (2002:276) concurs with this point, when he identifies a 'mathematical unity' and a 'teleological unity' regarding the Old Testament covenants. The former refers to the progressive nature of the covenants and the latter to the contribution of each covenant, to 'the fulfilment of redemptive history' (Wells 2002:276). However, even in that conception, Wells and Zaspel (2002) advances the Abrahamic covenant as

.....
5. Torrance (2008) argues that:

... the centre of gravity is in the incarnation itself, to which the Old Testament is stretched out in expectation, and the New Testament looks back in engulfment. This one movement throughout the Old Testament and New Testament is the movement of God's grace in which he renews the bond between himself and man in such a way as to assume human nature and existence into oneness with himself. (p. 45)

offering an overview of redemptive history in the following profound and penetrating way:

From the NT [*New Testament*], we can see that the Abrahamic Covenant spoke of two distinct peoples, Israel and the church, that would experience two kinds of redemptive histories with two covenants to guide them. They stand in typological relation to one another. One would experience a physical and national redemption, starting with deliverance from Egypt and guided by the Old or Mosaic Covenant. The other would experience a spiritual, transnational redemption, starting with deliverance from sin and guided by the New Covenant. (p. 277)

God renews the Abrahamic covenant with the descendants of Abraham. This covenant is reintroduced to Isaac (Gn 26:3–5) and Jacob (Gn 32:9–12; 35:12) and it is also cited in Exodus 2:24 and 6:4–5 as the basis for the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage by God. Also it is renewed with Israel, as a priestly nation of God that is unmeritoriously chosen (out of God's grace and love), to venture into a covenantal relationship with himself (God; Ex 19:1 ff. – the Sinai covenant), in which she (Israel) is to act as the mediator of God's salvation to all human race (Is 9:1–7; 49:6; Kruger 2007:2; Magezi & Magezi 2016:158; Torrance 2008:45, 58). However, given the doctrine of universal sin for all human race, Israel is part of the predicament of sin, that makes it impossible for her to operate as a light to the nations. Kruger (2007) understands this well in the affirmation that:

... the covenant between God and Israel is a personal relationship of the deepest, most intimate order, in which the Lord is doing the impossible – overcome the contradiction between fallen humanity and Himself and establishing real communion, union and oneness. (p. 2)

The role of Israel is ultimately fulfilled by the God-man, Jesus Christ, who is a sinless representative of humanity (Magezi & Magezi 2017:5 ff.). That is God's redemptive history, particularised in Israel (but designed to embrace all humankind), and fulfilled by the God-man, Jesus Christ. This biblical redemptive historical approach looks forward to the return of Christ in his second coming (*Parousia*), to consummate his salvation for humankind (cf. Bavinck 2006, as quoted by Bolt 1983:76). This implies that this proposed approach recognises Christians as living in the interim period, in which they are saved by Christ's redemptive work from sin and all its consequences, but still await the return of their saviour (Jesus Christ) to bring everything in its completion.

In view of the above-mentioned discussion, it can be argued that a biblical redemptive historical approach can be summarised as advancing the study of any specific topic in the Bible in view of the doctrines of creation, fall and redemption, with its culmination in Christ. Magezi (2018) specifically advances the biblical redemptive historical approach as an appropriate method of studying migration in the Bible by contending that:

... in studying migration, we prefer a historical redemptive approach because migration is widespread in the Bible and that what the Bible is saying on migration has unity. Thus, one needs

a redemptive historical approach to the matter because it helps to bring out the relationship of anything that the Bible touches on with its central message or the so-called bigger picture. In other words, the redemptive historical approach helps to mainstream anything that the Bible teaches on, whereas other approaches tend to allow for many of the things to be studied as if they are peripheral to the central message of the Bible. (p. 28)

Given this in developing a theology of migration from the books of Joshua and Ruth, a biblical redemptive historical approach, as established in this section, will be utilised.

Migrations of the Gibeonites and Israelites in God's redemption in the book of Joshua: Towards *centripetal* and *centrifugal* concept of mission

The complication of the Gibeonites and Israelites' narrative in Joshua 9 and its location in a biblical redemptive historical approach

In quest of the *centripetal* and *centrifugal* concepts, as the modes in which God advances his kingdom in the book of Joshua, the article will examine the narrative of the migration of the Gibeonites to where God's people (Israel) are, for their (the Gibeonites') salvation and God's migration of his people (the Israelites) to where sinners are, so that the sinners (Gibeonites) can know God. However, before tackling the story of the Gibeonites and the Israelites, the writer acknowledges that their narrative is too complicated to handle.⁶ This arises from the awareness that when God migrates the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, in order to possess the land of Canaan, He commands them to completely exterminate the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, including men, women and children (Dt 7:2; 20:17). This indicates that the battle God commands the Israelites to execute, is not simply a religious war. Instead it is a theocratic war.

In this article, the proposed complex narrative of the Gibeonites and the Israelites is going to be located within a biblical redemptive historical approach, established in the previous section. In view of the proposed approach, it can be affirmed that the Israelites are a people and nation ruled by God as his priestly nation, with a responsibility to advance redemption to all nations (Geisler 1977:99–100). Therefore, the command for the Israelites to exterminate the Canaanites comes directly from God (Geisler 1977:99–100).

6. The story of Rahab's conversion in the book of Joshua, that brings forth the centrifugal concept of mission, is also complicated to handle because it falls within the same framework with the Gibeonites' story. Rahab is a Canaanite. Canaanites are a gentile ethnic group. Rahab's story in Joshua 2:1–21 (cf. 6:17, 22, 23, 25) illustrates that in the redemption and migration of his people (the Israelites) from Egyptian bondage to the promised land of Canaan, God migrates them to accomplish his redemptive purposes and plans for his remnant people such as Rahab. That is, God migrates Israel to Canaan, so that there would be remnant people (i.e. Rahab) among the Gentile nations that God, in his providence, planned to graciously save, and over time, even incorporate into Israel. This picture is amplified, as perceived in Rahab's redemption and her inclusion in the Israelite family and community. Rahab's story reaches its climax, as later in the Scripture, she marries Salmon, and then gives birth to Boaz (Mt 1:5). Boaz marries a Moabite woman, Ruth, who gives birth to Obed, the father of Jesse, who sires David, from whom Jesus the Saviour of the world descends (Mt 1:1–16). The way in which Rahab comes to be in this lineage, in order to play such a crucial role together with many others, illustrates the value of migration in redemptive history. Hence God uses the migration of the Israelites to conquer Canaan and save some Gentiles, whom He uses in fulfilling his redemptive purposes and plans for humankind.

However, from a close glance of Deuteronomy 7 and 20, it seems the reason for the total extinction of the Canaanites was to prevent the Israelites from falling into idolatry. Hence from a redemptive historical approach, it could be argued that the Canaanites and other nations who had given up their foreign gods and acknowledged Israel's God as the only true God to be worshipped, were not supposed to be destroyed, since they were not a threat to the faith of the Israelites; that is, they could not corrupt the Israelites to worship their pagan gods, since they would now be part of the faith of Israel.

Furthermore, although God commanded the Israelites to exterminate the foreign nations in fulfilment of his covenant promises of ushering the land to Abraham and his descendants, it is apparent that a redemptive historical perspective sees God's grace, even in judgement, as people from gentile ethnic groups such as Rahab, and gentile nations such as the Gibeonites, were saved. This implies that from a redemptive historical perspective, the invasion of Canaan by the Israelites could be perceived by the Israelites as God's means of fulfilling one of the particular aspects of the Abrahamic promises, namely the promise of the land that was partially fulfilled at this point of the redemptive history (cf. Gn 12:3, 15:17:1–16; Butler 2015:1; Hess 1996:42–53; Miller & Tucker 1974:14–17; Nelson 1997:15–20).⁷ It could be advanced that the promise of the land had already been partially fulfilled. This argument can be supported by the fact that, prior to the exodus, Jacob's sons had managed to return to Canaan to bury their father in the promised land (Gn 49:29–33); and Joseph had indicated that they had a piece of land that already belonged to them in terms of what his father had said to him just before he had died. Joseph and his brothers thus buried Jacob in the land of Canaan, as had been instructed by him (Jacob) (Gn 50:1–21). This point serves to highlight that the promises were not yet fully realised, but God had already started to fulfil them. This is important, because even after the conquest of the land of Canaan, the book of Joshua gives evidence that not all the land was attained by the time Joshua bid Israel farewell (Jos 22; Clarke 2010:89–104). In fact, the whole Old Testament, even at the climax of David's reign, manifests a looking forward to a complete rest or fulfilment of the promises (Ps 22; 110). God had started but had not yet finished working towards the promises He had made to Abraham, which are included in the promise of Genesis 3:15.

It should also be understood that the conquest of Canaan was God's judgement of the foreign nations therein for their sins. The Canaanite nations did not acknowledge the God of Israel as the only true God, the Creator, who owns the whole land. Instead they were worshipping their pagan gods. Furthermore, their lifestyle did not conform to God's standard of living, hence the invasion was a form of God's judgement of pagan nations for their sins (wicked, unjust and detestable practices) by dispossessing them of their land (cf. Athas 2016:9; Japhet 2006:113). However, in all these interpretations

of God's command for the real extermination of the Canaanites from their land is perceived, yet it is not just a mere extinction of the pagan nations from their land because God was doing something in his larger redemptive purposes for humankind. This is the reason why Wade (n.d:1) advances that the Israelites' conquest of Canaan '... with the direct help of Yahweh, have a specific, God-designed purpose'. It is '... not a call to genocide against non-Christians' (Wade n.d:1).

Given this, in God's redemptive purposes and plans for the world, the Israelites both welcome and incorporate foreigners in their community, on condition that the latter give up their pagan gods and acknowledge the God of Israel as the only true God. This entails acknowledging the only true God of Israel as the sovereign God, who is giving the land of Canaan to the Israelites and who is the only God worth of worship and praise. The aforementioned view is substantiated by the forthcoming discussions of the Gibeonites' and Israelites' narrative, and the various migrations in the book of Ruth, that will be examined in this article from the standpoint of God's advancement of his kingdom in *centripetal* and *centrifugal* ways through migration (cf. Matacio 2008:31–42; Tan 2007:1–3).

The Gibeonites' and Israelites' migrations in redemption: Towards centripetal and centrifugal concept of mission

The story of the Gibeonites and the Israelites in Joshua 9 is rather too complicated to handle,⁸ however, it can be easily understood when one views it from the redemptive historical approach that was sketched in the section, *Defining a biblical redemptive historical approach as an important framework in analysing migration in the books of Joshua and Ruth*, above. The proposed narrative indicates that in Joshua 9, the Gibeonites (Hivites) use trickery to avoid being destroyed by the Israelites (Pink 1964:234–260). When the Gibeonites hear about the great destruction of the nations of Jericho and Ai, they become exceedingly scared of the Israelites (Jos 9:3) to the extent of sending messengers to trick Joshua to venture into a peace covenant with them (Auld 1984:64). The Gibeonite delegation lies to Joshua by claiming that they are from a distant country, so they plead to make a covenant with the Israelites (Jos 9:6–7; Pink 1964:242). The ambassadors of the Gibeonites tell Joshua that they want to become servants of the Israelites (Jos 9:11) because they had heard about what the God of Israel had done for them in Egypt. The Gibeonites had also heard accounts of what the God of Israel had done to the kings of the Amorites, to Sihon the king of Heshbon and to the king of Bashan who lived in Ashtaroth (Jos 9:9–10; Pink 1964:244–246). Even though the Israelites doubt that the men are from a distant place, Joshua makes a covenant with them, in which all the leaders of the

⁷All these commentators perceive land as one of the major themes in the book of Joshua. They are of the opinion that the conquest of Canaan was a means through which God partially gave the land to the Israelites as a fulfilment of his promises to Abraham and his descendants.

⁸The author of this article, is of the same opinion as Wilson (2013:310; cf. Baruch 1975:303; Leonard-Fleckman 2017:385–401) regarding the 'widespread disagreement over the date of composition, contents, purpose, and almost all other aspects of Deuteronomistic literature, and so a forthright and careful discussion of one's theoretical and methodological underpinnings is apposite'. This is correct but this article will not go into those disagreements and debates, but instead advises one to read Wilson's (2013) and Baruch's (1975) treatment of these debates and disagreements about Joshua.

Israelites swear before God to let the Gibeonites live (Jos 9:15). In this article, the writer agrees with Boer (1996:146) that the detailed content of the treaty is never disclosed, except for the crucial piece of information that it guaranteed the Gibeonites their lives (v. 15).

However, after three days, the Israelites hear that the Gibeonites are their neighbours, but they could not destroy them since their leaders had already sworn by the God of Israel to let the Gibeonites live (Jos 9:16–21; Boer 1996:145). Hence the Israelites let the Gibeonites live, but they make them their slaves – wood cutters and water carriers at the tabernacle (Jos 9:21; Auld 1984:66; Boer 1996:145). For this reason, Hess (1996), in a commentary on Joshua 9, notes:

The concern of chapter 9 to magnify Joshua's role as leader is evident. He appears at the beginning as the one in charge of negotiations. At the end of the account, he pronounces judgment on the Gibeonites, describing their servitude but thereby rescuing them from the wrath of Israel who wishes to put them to death. (p. 27)

In addition, the Gibeonites had abandoned their pagan gods. This shows how the Israelites later rescued the situation when they discovered that they had been cheated. From a redemptive historical approach, although the Gibeonites had deceived Joshua, it can be perceived that they had a strong city called Gibeon, that was described as possessing strong warriors (Jos 10:2). In this case, one could have expected the Gibeonites to wage war against the Israelites, yet they took an alternative approach, based on the news they had heard about the Israelites and their God. It is reasonable to argue that the Gibeonites, just like Rahab, believed that God had given the land of Canaan to the Israelites, thus they would not have won if they had waged war against them.

There is a point in the narrative of Joshua and the Gibeonites, when one needs to realise that the latter are spared because they did not resist the Israelites. Instead they agree to live under the Israelites and serve the only true God of Israel, rather than their pagan gods. This means that the episode of the Gibeonites deserves better treatment within the larger structure of Joshua's conquest. From a redemptive perspective, it can be argued that the Gibeonites were migrated by God to where the Israelites (God's people) were, so that they could get in touch with them and be saved (*centripetal* concept of mission). At this juncture, it did not matter that the Gibeonites had not migrated from a distant place to get to where the Israelites (God's people) are. This was because in both cases, the sending of the Gibeonite delegation suggested a form of their migration from a certain location to where the Israelites (God's people) were. Further it can be advanced, that the Israelites were migrated by God to Canaan so that there would be remnants of the Gentile nations (i.e. the Gibeonites) that God, in his providence, would graciously save in order to advance his redemption for all humankind, as promised in Genesis 3:15 (*centrifugal* concept of mission). In other words, God remained committed to accomplishing the redemptive purpose through Abraham and his descendants in the context of migration narratives.

God's redemption of the Gibeonites seems to become clearer in Joshua 9 and 10. Most importantly, in Joshua 10, God in his providence, used the Israelites to defend the Gibeonites from the five nations that ganged up against them (Jos 10:8, 42). God fought for Israel in her bid to protect the Gibeonites against the Canaanite nations that besiege the city of Gibeon. God did this because he honours the peace treaty that the Gibeonites had made with Joshua (Jos 10:8, 42). The argument that God protected the Gibeonites, was given credence when he, later in the Scripture, safeguarded them from King Saul who wanted to annihilate them. In the narrative of 2 Samuel 21, David, who became the king of Israel after Saul's death, was seen resolving matters with the Gibeonites (Baruch 1975:303). David found himself in that situation, because prior to his reign, King Saul had sought to annihilate the Gibeonites, but God had protected them from total annihilation by the hand of Saul. In other words, regardless of the peace treaty (not to destroy the Gibeonites) that the Israelites had sworn with the Gibeonites, Saul wanted to annihilate them (2 Sm 21:2), but God saved them. This indicates that in 2 Samuel 21, David's quest was to make matters right with the Gibeonites by giving them seven descendants of Saul so that they could hang them to death. This happened after Israel had encountered a 3-year long famine during the reign of David, who had enquired of the Lord why he had sent the famine on the Israel (2 Sm 21:1). God informed David that the famine was a result of Saul's sin of killing some of the Gibeonites. Therefore David had to put matters right with the survivors of the Gibeonites. God's protection of the Gibeonites from extermination by Saul, and the consequences that the Israelites later experienced (i.e. famine for three years and the punishment of Saul's descendants) were signs of divine judgement over any Israelite who thwarted the advancement of his redemptive purposes and plans.

However, in view of the doctrine of sin, the narrative of the Israelites and the Gibeonites indicates that both acted sinfully (Pink 1964:242–255). On the one hand, the Gibeonites acted sinfully by deceiving Joshua and the Israelites, whereas they could simply have gotten reprieve if they had given up their pagan gods and acknowledged the God of Israel as the only God, who was giving the land of Canaan to the Israelites (Pink 1964:242–255). On the other hand, Joshua and the Israelites acted sinfully, because they did not consult God about the decision to follow when they receive the Gibeonite delegation that was seeking peace with them (the Israelites) (Pink 1964:246–260). Nonetheless, in spite of the sinful actions of the Israelites and the Gibeonites that underscored that all people are sinners (saved Israel and the unsaved Gibeonites),⁹ the predominant argument is that God in his grace and sovereignty, migrates sinners (the Gibeonites) to where his people (the Israelites) are, so that the former can be saved by getting in touch with the latter. As well God migrates his

9. This also means that when it comes to sin, this story does not only show that the Gibeonites acted sinfully. Instead it points out that Joshua and the Israelites also acted sinfully. Hence in terms of migration issues, host nations may complain that foreign people complicate their lives because of their sins; but the Bible's view is that all are sinners (foreigners and host nations). Even those that have been saved, like the Israelites, were still sinners. This implies that in the context of the redemptive narratives interlinked with migration background, the real sinful nature of all humankind is being manifested.

people (the Israelites) to where sinners are, so that the sinners (the Gibeonites) can get in touch with his people and be saved.

The migration pattern in the book of Ruth and its linkage with God's redemption for mankind: Towards *centrifugal* and *centripetal* concept of mission

A considerable number of scholars (Bush 1996:55; Hubbard 1991:39; Linafelt 1999: xxiii; Ulrich 2007:xxi) suggest many themes for the book of Ruth. Hubbard (1991:39) argues, that although there are many themes in Ruth, the predominant one is God's gracious redemption of 'Elimelech's family from extinction by provision of an heir'. This implies that in line with covenant theology, the book of Ruth has a political purpose, namely '... to win popular acceptance of David's rule by appeal to the continuity of Yahweh's guidance in the lives of Israel's ancestors and David' (Hubbard 1991:42). Likewise Ulrich (2007:xxi) understands the book of Ruth, as contributing '... to the unfolding plan of God to redeem his fallen creation from sin and its delirious effect'. However, Linafelt (1999:xxiii) takes a different angle by advancing the book of Ruth as a linkage between the books of Judges and Samuel. This arises from the fact that the book of Ruth starts with the phrase 'in the days of judges', and concludes by mentioning the name of David, who is the son of Jesse. Bush (1996) differs from Hubbard (1991) and Linafelt (1999). Bush's (1996) theological comprehension of the book of Ruth, is that of affirming God to be usually effecting '... his purposes in the world through the ordinary motivations and events of his people – ordinary people like Ruth and Boaz ...'. Ulrich (2007:xxii) concurs with Bush (1996), since he also perceives the book of Ruth as a '... profound account of God's providence in the lives of the otherwise ordinary people who observed God's covenant in rather mundane circumstances'.

However, the disputes around the theme of the book of Ruth do not matter in this article. What matters is that the book of Ruth highlights migration patterns, that play a part towards the unfolding of the redemptive plan of God. This also happens through people, such as Boaz who implemented some of the laws in the five books that God had given Moses. This implies that the story of Ruth and Boaz shows the latter application of Deuteronomy 24:19–22 (Merrill 1994:324). In Deuteronomy 24:19–22, the landowners in Israel were commanded by God to leave some crops in the fields for the foreigners to glean. However, this practice will be viewed in light of the unfolding of God's redemptive purposes and plans for humankind. In establishing the preceding, it will be argued that the migrations that are perceived in the book of Ruth were crucial to the unfolding of God's redemptive purposes and plans for humankind. In the book of Ruth, God advanced his kingdom in *centripetal* and *centrifugal* ways through migration, as the approaching sections will establish.

Elimelech and his family's migration in God's redemption: Towards centrifugal concept of mission

The background of Ruth's narrative is that in the days of the judges' rule in Israel, famine breaks out in the land of Judah (Rt 1:1–2). Elimelech a man from Bethlehem in Judah, migrates to Moab with his wife Naomi and two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, and settles there (Rt 1:1–2). Then Elimelech dies, leaving Naomi with their two sons, who get married to Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth (v. 3–4). Naomi and her two sons live in Moab for 10 years after the death of Elimelech (v. 4b). However, the sons also later die (v. 5). After the death of her husband and sons, Naomi decides to leave Moab for Judah after hearing the good news that the covenant God of Israel has visited his people of Judah and has given them food (v. 6–7; Ulrich 2007:53). Given God's provision of food for the people of Judah, Naomi sets to return to Judah and advises her two daughters-in-law to return to their fathers' households and get remarried (v. 8–18). Orpah returns, but Ruth insists on going with Naomi. As a result of Ruth's insistence, Naomi finally migrates with her to Judah, at the beginning of the barley harvest (19–22).

Although the story of Boaz and Ruth is reminiscent of the practical pattern of how the Israelites positively deal with the migrants among them, as will be discussed later, there is a possibility that the migration of Elimelech and his family to Moab was in God's plan, since from a redemptive perspective, God in his grace and divine providence, migrated them to Moab to get in touch with people such as Ruth (from a Gentile ethnic group) so that they could be saved. When Naomi was about to return to Judah, after she had heard that God had visited her people of Judah by providing them with food, Ruth (Rt 1:16–18) confessed her faith in the God of Israel, thus confirming that she had already converted. It can be posited, therefore, that when Elimelech migrated to Moab, he and his family were certainly 'missionaries' by word and deeds to many Moabites. Ruth could have been converted when she married Elimelech's son. Naomi's words to her daughters-in-law suggested that they would be going back to their people and their gods when leaving her. This implies that when they were with her through marriage to her sons, they had declared some allegiance to Naomi's God. Thus when Ruth affirmed that the covenant people of God (the people of Naomi would be her people), and the covenant God (the God of Naomi) of Israel would be her God (Rt 1:16–18), it is apparent at this point, that Ruth had expressed her faith in the God of Israel, whom she had acknowledged and believed by virtue of her contact with Elimelech and his family.

The interconnection between the migration of Elimelech and his family, and Ruth's expression of her faith could be taken to imply that God uses migrants in fulfilling his redemptive purposes and plans for humankind. It also connotes the underlying truth, that the people or nations that God intends to reach through his children, individually and collectively, are evangelised and converted when God in his grace and sovereignty, migrates his people to the unreached, so that

they can get into contact with the people of God and be saved. In other words, the Israelites fulfilled their redemptive role by going, in obedience to the Lord, to where those that must be reached, were. At times God brings those he wants to save into the assembly of his chosen people. This article accordingly contends that the individual and corporate factors for migration should be understood from God's perspective, that is, as God's providence in migrating his people in order to work out his redemption plans for humankind.

Naomi and Ruth's migration to Judah in God's redemption: Towards the centripetal concept of mission

Ruth 1:19 confronts us with the migration of Naomi and Ruth to Judah at the end of the famine in Judah. This migration was crucial in two important ways. Firstly, it shows the application of Deuteronomy 24:19–22 in the lives of the Israelites. As stated earlier, one of the practices that the landowners in Israel were commanded by God, is to leave some crops in the field so that the foreigners can come and glean (Merrill 1994:324). Secondly, it also shows the marriage of Ruth and Boaz. It can be contended that God used this marriage to bring an heir to advance his redemptive plans and purposes for Adam and his descendants.

However, when Naomi and Ruth (a foreigner) returned to Judah, they find themselves in a complex situation since they had not cultivated any crops. Ruth 2:1–13 presents us with a sharp contrast between Boaz (the Israelite landowner) and Ruth¹⁰ (destitute foreigner; Luter & Davis 1995:46). Although Boaz is a relative of Elimelech and Naomi (Rt 4:1–22), the contrast was primarily between the vulnerable Ruth (the Moabite) in a foreign land of Judah and Boaz, an influential rich man of Judah (Luter & Davis 1995:46). Ruth, a foreign (Moabite) woman initiates the idea of going to glean in the field of a landowner, in whose sight she might find favour (Rt 2:2). The fact that Ruth mentioned gleaning from a field of one she might find favour in his sight (Rt 2:2), was an indication that not all the landowners in Israel during that time were keen on upholding the law in passages such as Deuteronomy 24:19–22, which concern the legal rights of the foreigners to glean after the harvesters in their fields (Luter & Davis 1995:47).

Ruth did not expect every landowner in Judah to allow her to glean after the harvesters, because there are some who most certainly do not obey their covenant responsibility of looking after the foreigners among them, as prescribed by God in Deuteronomy 24:19–22. Nonetheless, the proceeding verses (Rt 2:3–23) present Boaz as a complete opposite of other landowners in Israel, since he approved what his harvesters had done, that was to allow the foreign widow (Ruth) to glean after them. This is to say, although Ruth in the wider context of Ruth 2:3–23, was asking for permission of something she had already been allowed to do by Boaz's

foreman, it is important to acknowledge that when Boaz came, he approved of his foreman's decision. Boaz did not only approve of his foreman's decision, but he extended hospitality that Ruth had already been given by the foreman. Ruth 2:8 indicates that Boaz extended his hospitality to Ruth by authorising her to remain in his field to glean wherever she wanted and not to go into any other people's fields.

The extension of Boaz's hospitality to Ruth, can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, Boaz could be worried about the kind of treatment that Ruth could get from other landowners in Judah, since not all of them upheld the law of Deuteronomy 24:19–22. This interpretation of Boaz's extension of hospitality to Ruth corresponds with Ruth 2:2, which alludes to Ruth's expectation to be permitted to glean after the harvesters of the landowner in whose sight she might have found favour. Hubbard (1991:161) who interrogates the historical context of this situation, provides us with the second interpretation. Hubbard (1991) argues that it was an embarrassment during that time for a certain clan member of Israel to go and look for assistance from another clan member of Israel, since it would indicate that the clan had failed to look after their fellow clan member.

Although Ruth was a foreigner, Boaz knew that she was related to Naomi, so he would have been embarrassed if Ruth were to get assistance from a landowner of a different clan of Israel. In this way Hubbard (1991:161) concludes, that Boaz is '... prohibiting Ruth not to go in other people's fields as a means of saving his clan from embarrassment at not taking care of its own members'. However, regardless of different conceptions of Boaz's extension of hospitality to Ruth, the predominant interpretation is that Boaz '... tangibly demonstrated an internalized understanding of what the Lord their God had done for his people in the Exodus' by upholding the command of Deuteronomy 24:19–22 (Ulrich 2007:55, 80). This implies that Boaz, as one of the covenant people of God, understood that (Atkinson 1983):

Because God is God who rescues slaves and cares for the poor, helpless and needy, so the socio-economic laws of the land are to express this human concern also. For the land and the people belong to this covenant God, and their pattern of life is to reflect his nature. The belief is implicit that the land belongs ultimately to God, and that his concern for the poor and underprivileged is to find economic expression in these ways. (p. 60)

Boaz understood that he should use the land that God entrusted him with to bless the vulnerable and landless foreigners among Judah with its produce. However, this does not necessarily mean that God is not the one in charge of all the land in this cosmos, but this is in relation to the special covenant relationship that God entered into with Israel, as his priestly nation. In integrating Boaz's hospitality to Ruth with Israel's experience in Egyptian bondage, it was justified to assert that when the Israelites enter the promised land of Canaan, God considered the Israelite farmers as '... the means of provision, but the great, compassionate landlord was the actual generous benefactor of the poor', including foreigners (Hubbard 1991:136).

10. Ruth is named 'Ruth the Moabitess' five times in the book of Ruth, namely twice by Boaz (Rt 4:5, 10), three times by the author (Rt 1:14; 2:8, 22; 4:13; Hubbard 1991:137). This is important to emphasise, because the author wants the reader to know that Ruth was a foreigner among the Israelite society (Hubbard 1991:137).

Moreover, Boaz also extended his hospitality to Ruth in the following ways: firstly, he permitted her to go and draw water in the vessels when she was thirsty (v. 9); secondly, he invited her to have meals with him (Boaz) at lunch time (v. 14); thirdly, Boaz instructed her to stay close to his girls, as a means of safeguarding her from the dangers she could encounter as an foreigner (vv. 9, 15–16, 22; Hubbard 1991:156); and lastly, he went his young boys and ordered them not to lay hands on Ruth, the Moabite woman (v. 9b). This was warm hospitality and Ruth had not expected it. In gratitude she fall down on her face and bowed down on the ground, asking why she had found such favour in Boaz's sight. It is logical to conclude together with Hubbard (1991), that Ruth's action after the comprehensive hospitality she had received from Boaz, betrays:

Ruth's strong feeling of vulnerability as a non-Israelite. Her survival was totally dependent upon the goodwill of Israelite farmers. At the same time, it implied awareness of some sort of acceptance into Boaz's clan, perhaps even into his family. She was not family, but Boaz had treated her as if she were. Though such treatment came as quite a shock, it sounded the faint, opening strains of a new theme – the integration of Ruth into Israel. Boaz had unexpectedly welcomed this stranger to Israel through association with his workers. (p. 163)

However, from a redemptive historical approach, the application of the law in Deuteronomy regarding foreigners, was crucial because it presents Boaz as a faithful Israelite who lived according to God's standards as the true servant of God. In God's grace and divine providence, Boaz eventually marries Ruth (the Moabite woman), as her kinsman's redeemer (Rt 4). However, it can be advanced that the significance of the marriage of Boaz and Ruth is that God uses it to advance his redemptive purposes and plans for humankind. In addition, it can also be argued that the origin of the Moabites, is also an important story to keep in mind, since it advances God's unfolding of his redemptive plans in the context of migration narratives.

The origin of the Moabite nation happened in the context of migration, and God later used a Moabite woman (Ruth) to unfold his redemptive plans for humanity. In unfolding the origin of the Moabites, Genesis 19 ff. advances that God, being angry because of the sins of Sodom, determined to destroy it. However, even in the context of God's judgement for the sins of Sodom, he was still gracious and merciful to some, in order to advance his redemptive plans for the world (Gn 19:16 ff.). In his grace, God sent messengers to rescue Lot, his wife (although she is killed in their migration out of Sodom because she did not obey) and two daughters. The messengers advised Lot to escape the punishment of Sodom by migrating to the nearest city of Zoar. This means that Genesis 19 depicts God's grace in the judgement of sinful humanity. However, when Lot migrated to Zoar with his two daughters (Gn 19:30 ff.), they lived in the hills. Later, in order to preserve their father's offspring, Lot's daughters deceived him to lie with them, after which they each gave birth to a son (Gn 19:32). The first daughter named her son Moab, the father of the Moabites, while the second daughter named hers Ben-ammi, the father of the Ammonites (Gn 19:36–38).

This discussion compels one to contend, that in his grace God saved and migrated Lot and his daughters to Zoar, in order to start these two nations (Moabites and Ammonites). It is important to note that the Scripture does not openly condemn the act of Lot's daughters which resulted in the creation of the aforesaid nations. In this way, it can be advanced that God was involved in the migration of Lot and his daughters. One true descendant of these nations (Ruth, the Moabite woman) was later used by God in unleashing his redemptive purposes and plans for all humankind. When analysing the narrative of Ruth, one may conclude that it was she, a woman from the Moabite nation, who herself had origins in the migration narrative, whom God used to fulfil his redemptive purposes and plans for humankind. It was the marriage of Ruth to Boaz that God used, in advancing his redemptive purposes and plans for humankind, as specified in David's genealogy at the end of the closing chapter of Ruth (Rt 4:18–22). In this genealogy, it is apparent that it was Ruth (a converted vulnerable Moabite woman in the context of migration of his [God's] people to Moab because of famine in Judah), whom God used to accomplish his redemptive purposes for the world (Bush 1996:55; Ulrich 2007:xxii). In the context of the challenges that seem to jeopardise his greater purposes for humankind, which He sought to achieve through Israel, God migrated his people to the Gentile nations in order to save the remnant Gentiles.

It is in this migration of Ruth and Naomi to Judah in Ruth 1:19 ff., that God in his grace and divine providence, allowed Boaz to marry Ruth in order to fulfil his redemptive purposes and plans for humankind. Ruth conceived and gave birth to Obed, the father of Jesse, who sired David (Rt 4:17). David became the king of Israel and entered in an eternal covenant with God about his (David's) throne, which God declared would endure forever (2 Sm 7 ff.). The genealogy in Matthew 1 also amplifies David's genealogy in Ruth 4:18–22, by making a significant link between Jesus Christ (the saviour of all people) and David, as it denotes Jesus as the Davidic son (Mt 1:1–25). It is in Matthew's rendering that the inclusion of Ruth in Jesus' genealogy is perceived. In saying this, the article is moving towards the establishment that this gentile woman, Ruth (as well as Tamar and Rahab) came to be in Jesus' genealogy in order to play such a crucial role, together with many others, in a manner that illustrates the role and place of migration in God's redemptive plans.

Implication of God's advancement of his kingdom in *centripetal* and *centrifugal* ways through migration for church migrant ministries

The discussion from the books of Joshua and Ruth, establishes that God advances his kingdom in *centripetal* and *centrifugal* ways through migration. In view of migration in redemptive history, the *centripetal* concept in the books of Joshua and Ruth envisages a situation in which God migrates sinners to where his people (the Israelites) are, so that they could know

him. In other words, God migrates sinners so that they may receive salvation by virtue of being in contact with his chosen people. Regarding the *centrifugal* concept of the mission of the church from the books of Joshua and Ruth, it can be learnt that God migrates his people to faraway places to people who do not know him, for the purposes of advancing his kingdom. That is God migrates his people to where sinners are, so that they (God's people) may get into contact with the sinners and the latter could be saved. In this article, this understanding of migration from a redemptive perspective, is viewed as crucial in challenging churches to have *internal* and *external* migrant ministries. An internal migrant ministry refers to a church's arm that caters for its migrant members, while an external migrant ministry is designed to assist migrants in non-church spaces.

These ministries are needful because the eternally gracious, merciful and loving God migrates sinners and his people to advance his kingdom to all nations. Thus, when the church is designing its migrant ministries, it should be able to think of migrants in both church and non-church spaces because God has purposes to fulfil through the migrations of both Christians and non-Christians, so they should not be neglected. In other words, the conceptualisation of God, who migrates both sinners and his people in order to save his remnant people, should challenge the church not to limit its migrant ministries to migrants within their churches. Instead, they should set up ministries that address the challenges faced by migrants in and outside their churches. The church should, therefore, be fully conscious of the reality that God migrates both Christians and non-Christians as a means of advancing his redemptive purposes and plans to the ends of the earth. Although the church migrant ministries can offer physical and material help to the many vulnerable migrants in church and non-church spaces, it should always be kept in mind that God wants to achieve a redemptive purpose through these various migrations. That is, churches should always aim to reach out to non-Christian migrants with the gospel, as a way of aligning with God's advancement of his kingdom in *centripetal* and *centrifugal* ways through migration.

It is quite clear at this juncture that churches that develop internal and external migrant ministries with the view of bringing salvation to non-Christian migrants, are in line with Jesus' Great Commission for the church in Matthew 28:16–20, namely to advance the redemptive message of Jesus Christ to all people. One can thus be strongly persuaded that churches should be aware of the connection between the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16–20 and their migrant ministries, and properly explain the gospel that Jesus' followers are mandated to advance to all people. The gospel that Jesus commands his disciples to preach to all nations is pregnant with multidimensional results or changes to the lives of vulnerable people, such as migrants, if the teaching of Scripture itself is properly understood by the church. This can be done by adequately explaining the primary issue of sin and all its consequences, such as death and the corrupt

judicial, political, economic and social systems that the gospel addresses as it tackles the fundamental problem of sin. By implication, this means that when God, *in* and *through* Jesus Christ, commands the disciples to advance the gospel to all nations, He expects them to preach the redemptive acts of Christ that redeem people from sin and all its consequences. The church should follow the example of Christ, who inaugurated a new caring and loving community, with the primary focus of bringing salvation to the sinners that are in bondage of sin. In other words, the church as a community of God, is expected to follow the example of Christ, who during his earthly ministry, demonstrates and teaches (Mt 25:31:45) how his followers should relate to the vulnerable, including migrants.

In this way, the church should not forget God's use of migration in accomplishing his redemption for his remnant people, by proclaiming the good news. This understanding can then lead the churches to aim at bringing salvation to non-Christian migrants, as they (churches) look after their (migrants') physical and material needs. With the aforementioned understanding in mind, it is advisable for human beings to respond positively to migrants, because God brings them to their doorsteps for a purpose. This conception should also compel one to understand that migration is not an accident in God's scheme. That is, the individual and corporate factors for migration such as famine (the cause of Elimelech and his family's migration to Moab) and persecution may, in this case, also receive a more than human aspect in God's providential control of humanity, as he works out his plan to fulfil his promises.

At this point in the discussion, a qualification should be made that the author does not imply that one's conversion to the Christian faith is a condition for caring or welcoming migrants. This is because the good news of the gospel implies that being a neighbour is an 'act', not a status. The possible misconception for Christians in caring for those of the same faith, is dispelled in Luke 10:25–37 when Jesus defines a neighbour as every human being, regardless of his or her national, tribal and ethnic background. This arises from the fact that in Luke 10:25–37, Jesus stresses to the lawyer that everyone in need is his neighbour, despite the human categories that are put to segregate others in different nations, communities and societies. Luke 10:25–37 is quite related to the incident in Matthew 22:34–40, since the lawyer in this context asks a question that is also aimed at tricking Jesus (v. 25a). The question relates to what one can do to inherit eternal life (v. 25b; Ryken 2009:537). Jesus answers the lawyer with another question, so that the lawyer could respond to his own question as an expert of the law in Israel. Jesus asks the lawyer to stipulate what exactly is written in the law regarding that matter (v. 26). It can be argued that Jesus' response to the lawyer's question is appropriate since the latter is an expert in God's law, namely he is a Bible scholar and a theologian of the Old Testament Scripture, which he is expected to rightfully apply in his daily living (Hughes 1998:388; Ryken 2009:537). The fact that the lawyer is

an expert in the law is brought to the fore, when he sharply identifies that people have to love God with all their beings and love their neighbours as they love themselves, as prerequisites to inherit eternal life (v. 27). The correctness of the lawyer's response is affirmed by Jesus when He says that the lawyer has answered his own question correctly. Just like in Matthew 24:34–40, the former command in Luke 10:25–37 comes from Deuteronomy 6:7, while the latter comes from Leviticus 19:18 (Ryken 2009:538).

However, it is interesting to note that by inference, the lawyer assumes that he has been keeping the second commandment that demands him to love his neighbour, since he could possibly have been compassionate and loving to his fellow Israelites (v.29). Verse 29 clarifies this assumption, since it commences by underscoring the lawyer's attempt to justify himself as someone who has been keeping the second commandment, by posing a follow-up question that requires Jesus to clarify who his (lawyer's) neighbours are. However, in answering the lawyer's second question, Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan, which expands the general understanding of the term *neighbour* to include everyone who is in need (vv. 30–37). This means that although this author agrees with Manson (2012:161) that the primary message of Luke 10:25–37 is the impossibility of salvation by works, because people cannot keep the law, it is important to highlight that Jesus, in this Lukan passage, is possibly expanding the Israelites', and consequently, Christians' limited definition of neighbour as a fellow Israelite or fellow Christian, instead of referring to all people who are needy, regardless of their faith and status. At the end of the parable of the Good Samaritan, the lawyer perceives that to 'obey God's command of neighborly love meant caring for anyone he came across who was in need' (Manson 2012:161). Given this, it is prudent to concur with Ryken (2009; cf. Gooding 1987:203), who argues that this Lukan passage can be applied to contemporary contexts in the following way:

The attitude is equally common today. Sometimes we draw the boundary along ethnic lines, excluding people from a different background. Sometimes we draw it along religious lines. We do a decent job of caring for other Christians, but we have much less concern for people outside the church. Sometimes we draw the boundary along social lines, making a distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor. Sometimes we simply exclude people whose problem seems too large for us to handle. But wherever we draw the line, we find the lawyer's logic compelling. We have to make choices in life. Our love has to have no limits. (p. 541)

Conclusion

In conclusion, one can advance that in the Bible God advances his kingdom in *centripetal* and *centrifugal* ways through migration. From a redemptive perspective, it can be argued that the books of Joshua and Ruth portray a situation in which God migrated sinners to where his people were, so that sinners may get to know God (*centripetal* concept of mission). Further, these two books show God migrating his people (Christians) to faraway places to people who do not

know him, for the purposes of advancing his kingdom. This means that the eternally gracious, merciful and loving God migrates both sinners and his people to reach his remnant people. Hence when the church is designing its migrant ministries, it should think in response to the challenges of those migrants that are in both church and non-church spaces, because God has purposes to fulfil through these migrations. However, in responding to the material and physical challenges of non-Christian migrants, the church should always aim to reach non-Christian migrants with the gospel, as a way of aligning themselves with God's advancement of his kingdom, in *centripetal* and *centrifugal* ways through migration.

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