


Interplay of fear of God's judgement and responsibility compulsion as nexus for encouraging responsible migration response

**Author:**Christopher Magezi¹ **Affiliation:**¹Faculty of Theology, North-West University, Vanderbijlpark, South Africa**Corresponding author:**Christopher Magezi, magezichristopher@gmail.com**Dates:**

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This article argues for the interplay of fear of God's judgement and responsibility compulsion as a nexus for encouraging responsible migration response. This arises from the need of theology of migration that challenges the church to respond to migration challenges in a comprehensive manner. Given this, the aim of this article is to contribute migration theology that respond to the aforementioned proposed need. It utilises the available literature to establish the role of Israel in God's redemptive history that includes her positive treatment of people from other nations, thereby also reminding the nations of what God expects of all people. In bringing the issue of the interplay of fear of God's judgement and responsibility compulsion as a nexus for encouraging responsible migration response, it advances that God promises to judge and punish his people when they oppose his care and love for the vulnerable people such as aliens, widows and orphans (Ex 22:21–27). However, in remaining faithful to his aforementioned promises to the Israelites, God confronts them (the Israelites) in anger, judgement and punishment when they disobey him in the way they manage their relationship with people of other nations (Jr 7:1–15, 52; 2 Ki 24:10–20). With this in mind, it concludes by advancing the interplay of fear of God's judgement and responsibility compulsion as nexus for encouraging responsible migration response within contemporary churches in South Africa and beyond.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: This article outlines the issue of fear of judgement and responsibility compulsion as a nexus for responsible migration response. It underscores the aforementioned by delving into a thorough exegesis of the relevant Old Testament passages and looking at Israel's role in redemptive history as God's people. It then presents the role of Israel as accomplished by the God-man, Jesus Christ, who established the church as a new covenant community of God. As such, it is a theological interdisciplinary article integrating exegesis, biblical theology, systematic theology and practical theology.

Keywords: Israel; responsibility compulsion; God's anger; God's judgement; God's punishment; Christians; church; migration response.

Introduction, background and premise of the study

The issue of punishment and rewards is part of the Bible's central teaching (Saleam & Moustafa 2016). In Scripture, God pronounces curses and rewards regarding the way his people have lived lives that correspond to their sanctified status as God's people (cf. Dt 29–30 and Mt 25:31ff). It is important to note the fact that God's people, who have been called from darkness to light, should reflect God's loving and compassionate character to those that are marginalised or vulnerable in their societies (Kaiser 2012; Martin-Achard & Smith 2011). That is, whilst the church is mandated by God to extend his (God's) redemptive work to all nations (Mt 28:16–20), there is a responsibility for it to practically love and care for those who are marginalised and vulnerable in church communities and beyond (Mt 25:31ff) (Mitch & Sri 2010:326). The obligation for God's people to love and care for the vulnerable is a pervasive teaching in the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament context, we are referring to God's obligation for the Israelites as his priestly nation to practically love and care for the vulnerable people who are among them (Ex 22:21–27, 23:9; Lv 19:33–37; Dt 24:14–22, 10:12–22).¹ Likewise, in the

1. However, we are aware of the following arising question: How can God's concern that Israel be hospitable to the immigrants be reconciled with his seemingly exclusivist commands that Israel should not intermarry with the foreigners and the sending away of foreign wives in the Ezra-Nehemiah's accounts? In responding to the aforementioned question, we argue that in utilising the biblical redemptive-historical approach (which will be explained in the forthcoming section of the article) to understand Ezra-Nehemiah's command for the Israelites (returnees) to divorce foreign wives, the Israelites are not supposed to marry unconverted foreign women because of the danger they could bring to the Israelites' faith to their covenantal God, that is, foreign women could cause the Israelites to abandon their covenant obligations, that is, to follow God and serve him wholeheartedly (Dt 7:4). The Ezra-Nehemiah narratives motivate the Israelite men to divorce foreign wives by employing the case of King Solomon's marriage to unconverted foreign women

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New Testament context, we are referring to Jesus' challenge for Christians to treat the lowly among them well (Mt 25:31ff).

However, both the Old and New Testament texts express the intervention of God in judgement of his people when they mistreat the lowly among them (Ex 22:23–24 and Mt 25:31ff). For example, in examining Matthew 25:31ff, a considerable number of scholars such as Stuart (2006:517), Morris (1992:639), Mitch and Sri (2010:326) and Nolland (2005:1031–1032) argue that the proposed passage indicates an eschatological divine punishment for Christians regarding their mistreatment of aliens among them. In view of the current situation, in which international migration is rapidly increasing and the church is not adequately addressing migrants' challenges (Louw 2016; Magezi 2017), one can perhaps bring the interplay of fear of God's judgement and responsibility compulsion as a nexus for encouraging responsible migration response within churches. Before we proceed, it is important for us to grasp what we mean by the following terms: *fear of God's of judgement* and *responsibility compulsion*. The fear of God's judgement refers to Christians' unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of God's judgement for violating their God ordained obligation to look after the aliens among them. Judgement simply refers to a calamity, viewed as a divine punishment, which falls upon Christians. However, we are conscious that in the New Testament, judgement is a positive thing for Christians. It portrays the notion of Jesus' second coming in which he will consummate his salvation for humanity and the world (Rm 8:18–30). In Romans 8:18–30, Paul underscores the second coming of Jesus Christ to judge the world as a positive thing for believers because it is a time in which chaos will be put to order, evil will be completely eradicated and light will completely displace darkness. Further, in 1 Thessalonians 2:19–20 (cf. Rv 22:12), Paul supports the notion of judgement for believers as a positive thing when he indicates that judgement for Christians and non-Christians will be based on different criteria, that is, the works of Christians will determine their rewards because they attain eternal life (with God) by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. *Responsibility compulsion* refers to the obligation of the Israelites, and consequently, Christians to look after vulnerable migrants because it is the former's responsibility, which is a direct command from God.

Having established the aforementioned, it is important to note that the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (2015) presents a penetrating picture of the extent of international migration as a serious contemporary issue which the international community cannot afford to ignore. IOM (2015) states that:

(footnote 1 continues ...)

(cf. 1 Ki 11:1–11) and its consequences as an example of the consequences laid down in Deuteronomy 7:4 as a result of marrying unconverted foreign wives. In examining Ezra and Nehemiah's utilisation of the aforementioned conception, anchored in a biblical redemptive-historical approach, we contend that the issue in Ezra and Nehemiah is not about the exclusion of foreigners. Instead, it is about accepting and marrying unconverted people who are not committed to the faith and life of obedience to God. This is further substantiated by the fact that we have seen the marriage of women of Gentile ethnic groups such as Ruth and Rahab to Israelite men. Later on, these women play a significant role, together with many others, in advancing Jesus' genealogy.

... the number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow rapidly over the past fifteen years reaching 244 million in 2015 up from 222 million in 2010 and 173 million in 2000. (p. 1)

Likewise, in 'The global challenge of managing migration', Martin (2013:2) states that from 1980 to 2010, the number of international migrants has increased by 117 million. In 1980, the number of international migrants was 103 million and it increased to 220 million by 2010. Furthermore, Martin (2013:2) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2013) report that '... the number of international migrants increased from 220 million to 232 million by 2013'. Martin (2013:2) 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'.

Given the above-mentioned background, this article presents the interplay of fear of God's judgement and responsibility compulsion as a nexus for encouraging responsible migration response within South African churches and beyond. However, although God's judgement of his people regarding their mistreatment of strangers or aliens is a pervasive teaching in the Old and New Testaments, this article will establish the interplay of fear of judgement and responsibility compulsion as a nexus for encouraging responsible migration response by using relevant Old Testament passages. To accomplish its objective, the first section of the article will discuss the Israelites as God's people within redemptive history with specific roles that include reflecting God's character in the way they treat migrants, thereby also reminding the nations of what God expects of all people. Using Exodus 22:21–27, the second section will establish God's promise to punish the Israelites once they mistreat people from other nations. The third section will present God's confrontation of the Israelites in anger and judgement, when they disobey him in the way they manage their relationship with people of other nations. This section utilises Jeremiah 7:1–15 as the key Old Testament text. Relevant New Testament passages will be mentioned or referred to in passing as a means of establishing the linkage between the Old and New Testaments regarding the proposed subject that we are bringing to bear in inducing responsible migration response with South African churches and beyond. Once this is accomplished, the final section will advance the interplay of fear of God's judgement and responsibility compulsion as a nexus for encouraging responsible migration response within South African churches and beyond.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Towards defining a redemptive-historical approach and locating the role of Israel in redemptive history that includes imaging God in their treatment of aliens

A redemptive-historical approach pays special attention to the storyline of the Bible, namely creation, fall, redemption and consummation. Geerhardus Vos (1980:7–13), who taught biblical theology at Princeton Seminary from 1893 to 1932, and Gaffin (2012) are some of the few leading proponents of the 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 of interpreting scripture and articulates 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 2012:92). Gaffin's (2012) six elements are as follows:

- 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's person and work are centred on his death and resurrection (e.g. 1 Cor 15:3–4), which are 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. (pp. 91–92)

The significance of Gaffin's (2012:109) aforementioned six elements of the redemptive-historical approach lie 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 particular 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, we agree with Horton (2007:19–107), 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, whilst the New Testament looks back to the promises of the redemptive history that culminates in Christ (Torrance 2008:45). 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 particular and universal in nature (Torrance 2008:51). On the one hand, the particularity of the Abrahamic covenant refers to the promises such as land and numerous descendants, which are because of 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 (2002:276) concurs with the aforementioned point when he identifies a 'mathematical unity' and a 'teleological unity' with regard to 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 (2002) advances the Abrahamic covenant as 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. Israel is 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 19:1ff – the Sinai covenant), in which she (Israel) is to act as the mediator of God's salvation to the 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 the 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 2017:5ff). Regardless of the fact that God's redemptive history particularised in Israel (but designed to embrace all humankind) is fulfilled by the God-man, Jesus Christ; it is apparent that God, in history, has attempted to use Israel as his instrument of salvation to all nations. One of the manners in which Israel is supposed to accomplish her role is through reflecting God's character in the way she treats migrants, thereby also reminding the nations of what God expects of all people. The biblical-theological foundational status of the preceding God-ordained role of the Israelites and his (God's) promise to punish them (Israelites) for violating their obligation is established in the ensuing sub-section.

Exodus 22:21–27: God's promise of punishment for Israel regarding her mistreatment of aliens

In Exodus 22:21–27, the motivation for the Israelites to care for migrants among them is based on two important things. Firstly, Israel's former experience as aliens in the land of Egypt (Ex 22:21; Stuart 2006:515). Secondly, God's character as a compassionate God who is the primary defender of the cause of the vulnerable, namely migrants, orphans and widows (Ex 22:23–24). Firstly, by appealing to the former experience of the Israelites as aliens in Egypt (v. 21), it seems that God has migrated the Israelites into Egyptian bondage to have an excruciating experience of being aliens so that he (God) can use it to teach them (the Israelites to live as an ideal nation or people of God that bring about God's redemption to all the nations) how they were supposed to treat aliens among them. It is unfortunate that commentators do not view the migration of the Israelites in Egyptian bondage from this perspective, perhaps because they are not viewing migration from a redemptive-historical approach.

From a redemptive-historical approach, God's call for the Israelites to remember their excruciating experience in a foreign land serves to illustrate that the migration of the Israelites into Egyptian bondage was not outside of God's control because God uses that former experience to teach the Israelites to understand the kind of mercy, love and justice they have to exhibit to aliens among them. It is in Egyptian bondage where the Israelites were severely mistreated, so they should not let the aliens among them face the same experiences (Stuart 2006:515). Unlike the Egyptians, the Israelites should treat aliens among them in the way they would have loved to be treated by the Egyptians. The Israelites' just treatment of the aliens among them shows them as a distinct nation of God that has to reflect God's holy and righteous character to other nations so that they can perceive God's ideal way of treating aliens and change from their evil ways of treating aliens among them. In doing this, Israel can fulfil its redemptive role of being a light to the nations (Is 49:6).

The above-mentioned conception means that by bringing to memory the former experience of the Israelites in Egypt, God wanted the Israelites to know that God is primarily a compassionate God who stands with the vulnerable. In the midst of the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt, the Israelites had to remember that the God whom they had entered into a covenantal relationship with is the God who cares for the vulnerable (the Israelites as foreigners in Egypt). So, as God cared for the Israelites during their time as migrants in Egypt by redeeming them, God also cares for the vulnerable among the Israelites. By caring for the aliens among them, the Israelites cannot be considered as repaying their Egyptian redemption debt in which God had compassion and redeemed them. Instead, the Israelites are demonstrating the mercy and love that arise from their experience as former slaves in Egypt, as well as adopting God's compassion for the aliens as he demonstrated to them (Israelites) when they were in Egyptian bondage. This implies that the memory of Egyptian bondage and their knowledge of a compassionate God who upholds justice for the aliens should be the basis for the Israelites to exhibit just treatment of aliens among them. In adopting God's compassion character for the aliens, the Israelites became distinct from other nations and they reflect God's character so that other nations could perceive the Israelites' just treatment of aliens and be able to change their evil ways. As the Israelites live according to God's laws and standards in the proposed respect, they can partake and fulfil their role in the unfolding of God's redemptive purposes and plans for the human race.

The importance of treating the vulnerable justly is expressed in two ways in verses 23–24, namely: (1) the compassionate God of Israel who hears the cry of the foreigners, widows and orphans when the Israelites oppress them; (2) the consequences that Israelites incur as a result of acting unjustly to the foreigners, orphans and widows among them. These two ways indicate that the need for the Israelites to treat aliens among them well was of serious concern for God. In concurrence with the preceding analysis, Stuart (2006:517) advances that God in Exodus 22:23–24 is warning the Israelites that:

... Social injustice could result in the unleashing of the covenant curses (the full listings of which are still to come in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28–23) with the effect of a general rejection of Israel and its consignment to destruction as a political entity.

At this juncture, one should agree with Stuart (2006:517) that the seriousness of the punishment that would be incurred by the Israelites when they oppress these three categories of people (foreigners, widows and orphans) among them indicates the obligation of 'social justice if the people are to remain Yahweh's people and not be disseminated and discarded by him' (Stuart 2006:517). In Stuart's view, the wording can be equally translated as saying 'I simply will not tolerate any exploitation of anyone, I will ruin you in response' (Stuart 2006:517). The inferred threat by God to use a sword² to destroy the Israelites that will oppress the

²The phrase 'I will kill you with a sword' is of a type well attested in the Pentateuch, for example 'I will bring the sword upon you' (Lv 26:25) or 'I will make my arrows drunk with blood, while my sword devours flesh' (Dt 32:42) (Stuart 2006:517).

vulnerable (foreigners, orphans and widows) among them conveys that 'God would not allow Israel's enemies to attack and exterminate them if they uphold social justice' (Stuart 2006:517). Mackay (2001:393) agrees with Stuart when he underscores that the predominant message being communicated in Exodus 22:23–24 is that the communities that lack social justice will fall under God's judgement. This indicates that a compassionate God who defends the defenceless '... will directly intervene in righteous indignation at such offenses and impose a penalty that matches the nature of what has been done' (Mackay 2001:393). This can be taken to imply that when the Israelites contradict the confessions about God and of his gracious promises, he (God) is ready to execute judgement. At this point, the Israelites could have failed their God-ordained obligation in bringing about God's redemptive promises and plans to the fulfilment, the promises he (God) initially promised in Genesis 3:15, and then proceeded to commit himself to accomplish through Abraham and his descendants. Likewise, Ryken (2005) in book entitled *Exodus: Saved for God's glory* concludes that:

If we claim to follow God, then we must show his compassion by caring for the strangers, widows, and orphans. The Scripture reports that God defends the cause of fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. (Dt 10:18) (p. 739)

Given this, God promised to punish his people, the Israelites, when they mistreat the vulnerable among them such as aliens and he is faithful to his word, as the ensuing section will present God's confrontation of the Israelites in anger and judgement when they disobeyed him in the manner they managed their relationship with people of other nations.

God's confrontation of the Israelites in anger and judgement when they disobeyed him in their relationship with people of other nations

Jeremiah 7:1–15: God's anger against Judah's mistreatment of aliens: Towards the indivisibility of worship and ethics

Carroll (1986:207) argues that in Jeremiah 7:1–15, the prophet Jeremiah is preaching the law in the temple. From a redemptive-historical perspective, we note that the predominant problem in this proposed passage of Jeremiah is twofold, namely (1) the Israelites' faithlessness in God and (2) their contradiction of the role God has called them to fulfil which includes doing so by acts of righteousness that he both calls and enables them to do when they are in fellowship with him. Ezekiel 16 uses powerful metaphors of death to indicate that the unfaithfulness that was manifest was the result of such death. However, before we delve into

(footnote 2 continues ...)

The expression 'the sword' is often used in the Old Testament and New Testament as a metonymy for warfare (cf. Ex 17:13; Lv 26:6; Dt 32:24; 2 Sm 1:12, 2:26) (Stuart 2006:517).

Jeremiah 7:1–15, it is important to sketch a historical context of this passage.

The prophet Jeremiah was active in the period when Babylon emerged as a super power in the ancient near East world, following the downfall of the Assyrian state (Carroll 1986:33). Jeremiah reveals the collapse of both Judah and the city of Jerusalem in the 6th century BCE, because the nation of Judah was wicked (Carroll 1986:33). So, Jeremiah sees the inescapable judgement of God coming upon Judah if she did not repent and turn to God (Jr 1–6; Huey 1993:31; Stulman 2005:89). However, Jeremiah's message of the collapse of Judah and the city of Jerusalem creates a political and theological tension between Jeremiah and the people of Judah (Huey 1993:31). In view of the political tension, the people of Judah perceive Jeremiah as a traitor who supports the nation of Babylon (Jr 37:11–16); yet Jeremiah sees Babylon as 'God's instrument of judgment on his people and warns that Judah would be destroyed' (Jr 1:11–19, 4:5–31, 25:1–4; Huey 1993:31). The theological tension arises when Jeremiah's opponents contradict his message (Jr 6:14, 28:10–11) by preaching peace when Jeremiah is proclaiming judgement (Huey 1993:32). Jeremiah's opponents preach that Babylon's power or yoke is going to be broken whilst Jeremiah insists that its power is still going to be a reality for many years and that the Babylonians will take Judah to exile after destroying the city of Jerusalem and its temple (Huey 1993:32). This means that the demolition of Judah does not fit well within the theological perspective of some people of Judah (Jr 26:1–24; Huey 1993:32). Nevertheless, in the context of the pending punishment of God for Judah, which eventually takes place, Jeremiah 52 reports the siege of Jerusalem by king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Huey (1993) argues that:

God's grace is demonstrated by his patient dealings with Judah in spite of its stubborn rebellion. He repeatedly appealed, 'return, faithless people' (Jr 3:4). Jeremiah did not minimize the seriousness of sin or hesitate to condemn it. He also knew that sin must be punished by a just God. He understood that it is deep seated, a part of human nature (Jr 13:23), engraved on the perverse of human heart (Jr 17:1, 5) but that God and God alone can conquer it (Jr 31:33). The remedy of sin was not to take sacrifices to the temple or to observe its rituals. The only remedy for sin was repentance and the obedience to faith. (p. 35)

In bringing the message of Jeremiah 7:1–15 to bear in the construction of migration theology, Jeremiah advises the Israelites to amend their lives if they were to survive the approaching judgement of God, as announced in Jeremiah 1–6 (Stulman 2005:89; cf. Nicholson 1970:71). Jeremiah warns the Israelites not build false security by going to the temple and affirming to the name of the Lord in vain, for God wants true worshippers who live according to his covenant obligations. Jeremiah 7:1–15 targets those who worship God at the temple (Jr 7:1–2). Craigie, Kelly and Drinkard (1991:120) agree with the foregoing understanding and indicate that this temple sermon is 'a direct proclamation from God to Judah delivered by and through the prophet Jeremiah' in the temple for temple worshippers to listen to and amend their ethical lives.

The focus of Jeremiah 7:1–15 lies on the threat for the Israelites to make observations on issues related to temple worship (Carroll 1986:207) and the erroneous behaviours of the worshippers of Judah (Huey 1993:105). This threat suggests that the Israelites had departed from their covenant responsibility in the related matters mentioned by Jeremiah in this passage. There are four elements in this temple sermon of Jeremiah 7:1–15, namely:

- first admonition (vv. 2–4)
- second admonition (vv. 5–7)
- invective (vv. 9–11)
- threat (vv. 12–14) (Carroll 1986:207–208).

The first admonition in Jeremiah 7:2–4 calls the people of Judah to amend their ethical lives in order to remain in the land that God gave them as their treasured possession. Instead of building false security on their superficial form of religious faith that does not correspond to God's expectation for their ethical lives, the people of Judah have to reform their moral lives in order to remain in the land (Craigie et al. 1991:120). The false security for the people of Judah is their misconception that the presence of the temple in the city of Jerusalem assures them security and continuity in the land (Craigie et al. 1991:120; Ryken 2001:121). Given this, the prophet Jeremiah sharply rebukes the Israelites by affirming that God will not remain with them in the temple nor allow them to live in the land (or city) if they continue with their false ideology of worship. Here, Jeremiah is warning the people of Judah not to trust in the lie contained in the chant of 'the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh' (listed three times in verse 4³) (Carroll 1986:208). This invocation of the temple is false because (Carroll 1986):

... the people's security is not to be found in the possession of a divine house. Everything in which the nation puts its trust may become the source of false consciousness if it is divorced from life: temple, city, cultic officials, king, religion, history. Such is the essential critique of ideology in the book of Jeremiah. The fall of Jerusalem exposed the falseness of all such beliefs, and not even possession of Yahweh's temple could protect an evil people. (p. 208)

Huey (1993:106) argues that Jeremiah made it clear that God's promise for the Israelites to remain in the land was conditional. The prolonged history of the people of Judah of not listening to the Word of God invites the destruction of both the temple and the city, as shown in Jeremiah 7:7 and 14–15. If the people of Judah will not respond positively to God's word, then all the divine commitments are cancelled (cf. Jr 18:7–9; Is 50:2, 65:12, 66:4; Carroll 1986:2011). Here, the divine commitments are cancelled because God will cast out Judah from the land the same way God cast out Ephraim, Judah's brother. However, Huey's aforementioned conception has to be challenged, because to say that all the divine commitments are cancelled might be a misunderstanding of the whole book of Jeremiah and the preceding narrative of Israel. It is

3. The deceptive lies of verses 4 and 10 that the people of Judah believe is also implied in verse 8. This is correlated to verses 4 and 10, because the prophet does not specify the worthless words that the people of Judah are trusting in.

better to say that the divine commitments require that God acts against Judah. Firstly, the threat Jeremiah is sent to proclaim or announce is in accordance with what God had said in passages like Deuteronomy 27; 28:45–52, 64–68 and 30:1–10. Secondly, the whole book of Jeremiah shows a great commitment of the Lord to his people even when he had to exile Judah. In fact, that exact act of exile was a demonstration of the Lord's amazing commitment which, in this case, is evident even when he had to discipline Judah. Despite the preceding disagreement with Huey, we argue that the conclusion in v. 15 makes the destruction of Shiloh⁴ equivalent to the casting out of Ephraim⁵ (Carroll 1986:2011; Huey 1993:107). Here, the message to be taken is that when worshippers 'desecrate sacred shrines with idolatry and justice, when communities of faith become recalcitrant and inhuman, there is no place to hide' (Jr 7:14; Stulman 2005:91).

Jeremiah 7:5–7 brings the second admonition that stipulates the exact things the people of Judah have to do if they were to remain in the land that God swore to their forefathers to give them (cf. Gn 12:1–3, 17:1–16, 15). The areas of life the people of Judah are to amend are the following:

- they have to deal justly with each other (Jr 7:5b; cf. Dt 16:20)
- they should cease to oppress the aliens, fatherless and widows among them⁶ (Jr 7:6a, cf. Ex 22:21–22; Dt 24:17, 22:27)
- they should not shed innocent blood (Jr 7:9–12)
- they should not worship any other god besides their only God of Israel (Jr 7:6c; Ex 20:3–4).

The aforementioned sins of Judah compel Stulman (2005:92) to conclude that 'fundamental arrangements of society rest on the preservation of social justice and the practice of neighbourly love, not upon the Jerusalem temple'. This arises from the fact that Jeremiah 7:1–15 indicate that 'disobedience to the central principles of the Decalogue lies at the heart of the community's ills' (Stulman 2005:90). With this background in mind, we argue that the people of Judah were wrong because they wanted 'covenant blessings without obedience' (Ryken 2001:122). The implication is that the Israelites want the blessings outside faith and grace in God. It is as if the rituals alone will save them and ensure them of blessings; yet, God wants the rituals to help preserve faith and hope in the promises and encourage them to love out of gratitude. They are expected to exhibit a love

4. Bright (1981:186) argues whether Jeremiah here was referring to the destruction at Shiloh in 1050. Likewise, Stulman (2005:91; cf. Craigie et al. 1991:122) affirms that to emphasise his point, the prophet reminds his audience 'of the shrine at Shiloh which the Philistines, we presume, had destroyed in the days of Samuel' (Jr 7:12–15; 1 Sm 4–6).

5. Huey (1993:107) argues that Ephraim, as a leader among the 10 northern tribes, is often used synonymously with Israel (cf. Is 7:2).

6. It is important to note that there are many passages in which the prophets confront the pre-exilic Israelites about their faithless to God that manifest in the way they mistreat the vulnerable among them such as aliens, widows and orphans. For instance, Jeremiah 22:1–9 depicts God's confrontation of the Davidic king and his followers in anger because they have perverted justice due to the aliens. Ezekiel 22:1–16, with special focus on v. 7, also depicts God's confrontation of the Israelites in anger for their mistreatment of aliens.

that is anchored in obedience, which even involves serving others, including the vulnerable such as aliens, widows and orphans.

The admonitions in Jeremiah 7:9–12 accuse the community of Judah of stealing, murdering, committing adultery, false swearing, serving Baal and other gods (cf. 2 Chr 29–36). The worship of Baal gods was a pervasive act of worship during the time of the kings, as it is clear in the wider context of 2 Chronicles 29–36 (i.e. during reign of Ahaz, Manasseh, and so on). After performing such evil acts, the people of Judah go back into the temple of God to praise him, in a bid to hide from their detestable deeds (Carroll 1986:208). As a cycle, the people of Judah would go back to commit the same evil acts, after which they would again seek refuge in the temple of the Lord. Carroll (1986) captures the message of Jeremiah 7:9–12 in the following way:

However rhetorical the picture may be, it is a striking illustration of mindless worship. This type of behaviour turns the temple, Yahweh's house into a robbers' cave. ... Taken together these polemical pieces constitute a thorough going critique of Jerusalem's cultic ideology and identify the destruction of the city with false cultic practices accompanied by false ethical attitudes. (pp. 208–209)

We can affirm that Jeremiah 7:1–15 bring forth the close association between worship and ethics (Carroll 1986:209). Here, the temple of the Lord acquires its status from the quality of worshippers who meet and worship there (v. 11; Carroll 1986:209). As noted by Stulman (2005:91), 'liturgy and ethics are inseparable. And spirituality divorced from right conduct is a dangerous distortion of the practice of faith'. In view of pursuing justice for the aliens, widows and orphans, Stulman (2005:91) underscores that 'worship without compassion represents an obscene caricature of true Yahwism'. In commenting on Jeremiah 7:1–15, Ryken (2001:125) concurs with Stulman and Carroll by stating that the content of the temple sermon can be summarised as 'religious observance without moral obedience cannot save'. God can only dwell with the worshippers in the temple if they amend their ways and their doings or when they believe and repent (Jr 7:3; Stulman 2005:91).⁷ Given this, we argue that one of the reasons for God's confrontation of the Israelites in anger in Jeremiah 1:1–15 is the oppression of aliens by the Israelites. As promised in the Torah, God is hurt when the vulnerable (such as aliens, widows and orphans) among the Israelites are oppressed.

However, God did not only warn Judah for her faithlessness towards God, including the manner she managed her relationship with people from other nations. Instead, God eventually punishes Judah for her faithlessness. This emanates from passages such as Jeremiah 52 that reports the

7. Now, Stulman (2005:92) poses an interesting question to pursue with regard to Jeremiah 7:1–15. Even though that question is not part of this research, it is important to admit that we are also conscious of it. The question is whether the presence of God in the temple of Judah depends on the loyalty of the Israelites to their covenant responsibility. To put it differently, is it that God can depart the temple in Jerusalem if the Israelites fail to live according to the requirements of Torah? Nicholson (1970:71) is not clear in answering this question since he simply affirms that the Israelite's loyalty to their covenant responsibility assures them of Yahweh's blessings.

siege of Jerusalem by king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. In this way, exile (as promised in Ex 22:23–24) was used by God as a form of punishing or judging Israel for her sins, which include her unjust treatment of aliens among her.

Interplay of fear of judgement and responsibility compulsion as a nexus for encouraging responsible migration response for the church

From a redemptive-historical approach, the above-mentioned exegetical consideration of Exodus 22:21–27 is essentially about seeing God's great love for the Israelites in perceiving his grace in their migrations and how they respond to him and his love in grateful service when they see and understand his great love. The response of the Israelites to God and his love in grateful service includes how they treat other people, who include migrants, even those from nations that may have hurt them in the past. As God's people, the Israelites are to understand that God is actively involved in every phase of their history (Wright 2006:253), including their migration in exile, in God's grace and love, so that they (Israelites) can be saved from whatever stands in their way of unleashing God's redemptive purposes and plans for the human race.

Nonetheless, in the wider context of the Old Testament, the ethical concept of justice for aliens is one of the predominant ways in which the Israelites are to respond to God's grace and love, which he executes for them in migration contexts such as Egyptian bondage and the Babylonian captivity (Boloje & Groenewald 2014:1–9). Exodus 22:21–27 challenge the Israelites to treat aliens in a manner that corresponds to 'Yahweh's redeeming intentions', namely: the Israelites are obliged to create a just society as a response to God's redemption of them in their migration (Boloje & Groenewald 2014:7). In amplifying the aforementioned point, we argue that, based on their experience in Egyptian bondage, the Israelites should be cognisant of the fact that the aliens (as well as widows and orphans) among them are disadvantaged in many and different ways, so they should look after them. Work (2009:220) supports this point by advancing that God calls on the Israelites to protect the foreigners among them '... by making Israel's story of Egyptian servitude a point of commonality with all of Israel's powerless'. In the midst of the powerlessness of the Israelites as aliens in Egyptian bondage, God demonstrates his compassion, love and mercy to them by redeeming them. The compassion, love and mercy that God demonstrates to the Israelites during their bondage in Egypt are not confined to the Israelites alone; instead, they are for all the vulnerable. Given this, the Israelites have to extend that same compassion, love and mercy to the vulnerable among them, namely widows, orphans and aliens. Merrill (1994) encapsulates the foregoing argument thus:

... the mercy to be extended to the widows, aliens and orphans was a reflex of the mercy of God, who in a mighty act of redemptive and protective grace brought helpless Israel out from Egyptian bondage (v. 18, cf. 5:15, 6:12, 21; 8:14, 10:19, 15:15).

... memory of the Lord's goodness to them [the Israelites] should have evoked corresponding blessings from them to the weakest members of the community. (p. 323)

It is important to note that Exodus 22:21–27 also bring to the fore the fact that God promises to punish his people (the Israelites) when they mistreat the vulnerable among them such as aliens, widows and orphans. In light of the universal implication of the Israelites' role, this means that God's judgement for Israel also applies to the current church as a new covenant community of God (Lk 22:20b; Torrance 2008:48) that is responsible for extending God's compassion, love and mercy to the vulnerable such as aliens (Mt 25:31ff). In view of the migration issue, the Abrahamic covenant was universal in nature in the sense of casting light on the obligation of all nations and individuals to care for their fellow human beings, regardless of their tribal, ethnic, religious, national and language backgrounds. Martin-Achard and Smith (2011), in a monograph entitled *Israel's mission to the world*, and Kaiser's (2012) profound and penetrating book called *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a light to the nations*, advance the aforesaid point well in their conception of Israel as a nation that is given special responsibility by God to act as the mediator of spreading the gospel to all nations. However, the mission of the Israelites is not to evangelise the Gentiles by merely preaching the word. Instead, the ethical lives of the Israelites, as a chosen people of God, are to show that they are priestly people of God who are set apart to draw the Gentiles to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In an article entitled 'Israel's mission to the nations in Isaiah 40–55', Grisanti (1998) understands the universal role of Israel and argues that in God's renewal of the Abrahamic covenant with the nation of Israel in Exodus 19:4–6, God:

... presents Israel with a unique and sobering challenge (before revealing to them the Law, i.e., the Mosaic Covenant). Doubtless, their conformity to the Law would have caused them to be a distinct nation among the pagan nations of the world. However, that distinctiveness was not an end in itself. From the very outset, this divinely-intended distinctiveness carried with it worldwide implications. By conducting their lives in conformity with the demands of the Law, the nation of Israel would have been able to function as God's servant nation, representing God and His character before the surrounding nations of the world. (p. 40)

Now the church, as a new covenant community of God that was inaugurated by the incarnational mystery of Christ, has to carry Israel's responsibility as a light to the world (Mt 5:14–16). Torrance (2008:48) brings the linkage between Israel and the church as a new community of God that is grounded in Jesus Christ and introduces us to the covenant sign of circumcision, which is established between God and Abraham (in which the covenant is to be cut into the flesh of Abraham and all his descendants as their symbol covenant with God) as an anticipation of the incarnational event, in which the Word of God would enter into actual human existence for the sake of our redemption. Here, the mystery of incarnation stands as the definitive fulfilment of the anticipation of the Abrahamic covenant, the anticipation

in which the Word of God is to be 'enacted so deeply into the existence of Israel' (Torrance 2008:48). The incarnation of Christ does not only fulfil the anticipation of the Abrahamic covenant (hence, Israel), but also inaugurates the new covenant between God and humanity, in which a 'new and living way is opened up in the humanity of the Son of God' (Torrance 2008:48). Thus, Christians, as the new community of God that has access to him by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph 2:8, 1:7), embody the role of Israel, which includes looking after the aliens among them. Having established the linkage between Israel and the current church, it follows that God, in anger, judges the church (and consequently Christians) when it neglects care and love for universal humanity that is fashioned in his image (Gn 1:27). In amplifying the aforementioned point, we argue that God does not only promise to punish his people when they mistreat aliens among them. Instead, he acts upon his promises in the history of Israel through exiling them to foreign nations (2 Ki 24:10–20; Jr 52) as a form of judgement and punishment for their sins, which include demonstrating faithlessness in God by turning to pagan gods, as well as separating their worship from their ethical lives, which culminates in the unjust treatment of aliens, widows and orphans (Jr 7:1–15).

In view of the exile of Judah as God's punishment for their sins, we perceive that, several times, God uses prophets such as Jeremiah to confront Judah, in anger, when she disobeys God in the way she manages her relationship with people of other nations (Jr 7:1–15). Consequently, God punishes Judah. Jeremiah 52 reports the siege of Jerusalem by king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon as one form of such punishment. Judah is exiled because she oppresses the vulnerable aliens that were among her, which is reported by McConville (2002:362) as '... the parade example in the OT of social sin, the antithesis of the spirit of the covenant'. At this point, Christians should perceive that God is faithful to his promises in Scripture. He promises to punish the Israelites by sending them into exile if they mistreated the aliens among them and, later on, when the Israelites violate their God-ordained obligation, God acts according to his promise. Indeed, if God (in the Old Testament) promises to punish his people (the Israelites) regarding their mistreatment of vulnerable aliens among them, and he acts upon his promises, it follows that Christians, as new covenant people of God, should fear God's punishment regarding their failure to fight for the just treatment of the vulnerable aliens among them.

In interlinking the Old and New Testaments regarding the proposed issue, we argue that in the eschatological judgement of Matthew 25:31ff, the God-man, Jesus Christ, challenges Christians to practise just treatment of the lowly among them by addressing their physical needs (Mitch & Sri 2010:326ff; Morris 1992:639ff; Nolland 2005:1031–1032; Stuart 2006:517ff). For example, in focussing on the desperate situation of a stranger in Matthew 25:43, Morris (1992:637) argues that the stranger is '... always in a somewhat difficult position, and in first century Palestine'. The situation of strangers in

first-century Palestine is complex because there are not many facilities that they can use as lodgings. Morris (1992:638) develops the aforementioned points and presents that the underlying question in first-century Palestine was about places where a stranger, being in an unfamiliar place, could lodge because there were no such modern facilities such as the hotels that we use today. However, even if we have many such facilities today, they often are beyond the reach of the needy and vulnerable who, on their own, are not able to afford such accommodation. Morris (1992:638) further highlights that the word 'stranger' also means foreigner in a foreign land, who does not have rights and protection in that foreign nation. By equating the word 'stranger' with 'alien', Morris (1992) is right because the Greek word ξένος (transliterated as *xenos*), used in Matthew 25:35, can also be translated to mean 'alien or foreigner' in English (Mounce n.d:1). Thus, aliens in a foreign land are the obvious candidates for the kind of help that Jesus Christ wants people from all nations to look after. At this point in our discussion, we are not going to discuss in detail the aspect of God's judgement from a New Testament perspective because our final judgement regarding the New Testament is provided in the introduction.

On the basis of the foregoing, we are conscious that in focusing on the final judgement as the predominant theme of Matthew 25:31–46, Newman and Snit (1988:784) and Mitch and Sri (2010:326) explain that these verses speak about the final judgement as based on the good things the righteous have done to the needy in their earthly life (Matt 25:35–40), as well as the bad things the unrighteous have done to the needy during their time on earth (Matt 25:41–46). This denotes that at the final judgement, Jesus Christ will judge both the righteous and unrighteous people based on their loving and compassionate deeds for those people in desperate situations in their communities and societies (Newman & Snit 1988:784). Nevertheless, Newman and Snit and Mitch and Sri's (2010:326) understanding of the works of the righteous as the basis of their salvation is controversial, especially when considering the wider scope of Scripture. Their understanding invokes the issue of salvation by works, yet the pervasive teaching of the New Testament underscores salvation as the gracious act of God (Eph 2:8) through faith in the saving work of Christ (Eph 1:7, Rm 3:21ff). Christian salvation is entirely the work of God, but this salvation results in the manifestation of good works that correspond with Christians' new sanctified status in Christ (Eph 2:10, Rm 3). This denotes that in the order of salvation, genuine Christian salvation should lead to a good life, that is, we maintain the New Testament perspective about judgement. We established in the introduction that judgement for believers is a positive thing because it envisions a situation when chaos will be brought to order at the second return of Christ to judge both Christians and non-Christians. However, the works of believers do not entail the aspect of attaining eternal life by their good works because they attain eternal life (with God) by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Given the above discussion, we argue that embedded in Matthew 25:31ff is the challenge for humanity to exhibit just treatment of the vulnerable such as the strangers among them in anticipation of blessings (rewards), or adversely, curses that will befall all people (i.e. Christians and non-Christians). However, for Christians, the judgement entails receiving rewards that are commensurate with their works. In this case, the reward is according to the manner they have treated the lowly among them, including vulnerable strangers (ibid). This means that no Christian will be cursed for eternity (Rv 22:12; 1 Th 2:19–20). At this juncture, it is imperative to state that the aforementioned judgement threat and responsibility compulsion for Christians (to treat vulnerable strangers well) are reminiscent of both the Old and New Testament and this realisation should compel the church (as a corporate body of believers) and individual Christians to exhibit positive responses to migrants' challenges. This implies affirming that the interplay of fear of judgement and responsibility compulsion should challenge the church to be versatile and innovative in addressing migrants' challenges that are within its jurisdiction and capacity, as well as those beyond its jurisdiction and capacity. For instance, because of fear of God's judgement threat, the church should operate as a voice of the voiceless and advocate for the vulnerable aliens (in the migrants' host nations) against the political, social and economic injustices that they encounter (cf. Is 1:17; Zch 7:9–10; Pr 39:8–9; Jr 22:3; Ps 32:3 and Mt 7:12) at the hands of various nations' service providers, institutions, labour and migration laws.

Nevertheless, we are aware that in the wider context of Scripture, the judgement of non-Christians will be based on different criteria, that is, the works of Christians will determine their rewards because they attain eternal life (with God) by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Rv 22:12; 1 Th 2:19–20).⁸ But in 1 Thessalonians, the apostle Paul draws courage and motivation in his Christian life from the knowledge that he was going to receive the rewards he would have earned at the second coming, when Christ will consummate his redemption as both saviour and judge. Hence, although we view Christians' compassion works, such as migrant ministries, as their appropriate response to their gracious redemption in Jesus Christ, we argue that the fear of God's judgement threat that emanates from the Old Testament (and is echoed in the New Testament) should induce responsible migration response. That is, the fear of God's judgement threat and responsibility compulsion to care for the needy, such as aliens, are important before God as all people are his image bearers. Thus, these compulsions should be the nexus for encouraging responsible migration responses by churches in South Africa and beyond.

⁸We are aware that there is a current debate regarding the role of works at the final judgement, but we cannot delve into it here because of space constraints. To see that discussion, see the book by Stanley and Wilkin (2013) in which four scholars with different views on the proposed issue use biblical texts to present their perspectives on the role of works at the final judgement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article reveals that God, in anger, both judges and punishes those who oppose his care and love for universal humanity. It arises from the fact that from a redemptive-historical approach, God sanctions the Israelites (as his graciously chosen people) not to emulate the nations, but rather to strive to reflect him in the way they treat migrants, thereby also reminding the nations of what he expects of all people. God's command for Israel is relevant to Christians (and consequently the church) as his people in the New Testament. Christians are sanctioned by the timeless truth of the Old Testament that challenges them to exhibit just treatment of the vulnerable aliens or strangers and act as a light to the world, that is, treating migrants in a manner that God desires them to be treated. Just like Israel, if Christians fail to act according to the proposed Old Testament's ethical injunction on responsible response to migrants (which is also echoed in the New Testament), they incur God's judgement and punishment upon them. Although we view the Christians' works of compassion, such as migrant ministries, as their appropriate response to their gracious redemption in Jesus Christ, we argue that the fear and threat of God's judgement that emanates from the Old Testament should induce responsible migration response, that is, the fear of judgement and responsibility compulsion to care for the needy, such as aliens, who are important before God as his image bearers, should be a nexus for encouraging responsible migration response. Intrinsic to the aforementioned is the notion that God is faithful to his promises as he acts in anger, judgement and punishment for Israel's mistreatment of the aliens among her.

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