

## **BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEM OF HOMELESSNESS AND MIGRATION, A CASE STUDY IN KENYA**

**Margaret Aringo, PhD**

Tangaza University College

Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

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### **Abstract**

*Using Kenya as a case study, this article investigates how the Bible addresses migration and homelessness. The following questions guided the research: how Kenya relates to the commandment in Leviticus 19:33-34 to "love aliens as yourself," how homelessness and migration are related to Biblical migration, and how homelessness and migration are discussed as critical contemporary issues in Kenya. The methodology this study uses is the desktop study through the reader response, socio-historical criticism, and literary criticism. The study reveals that globalization has become a significant factor in human migration due to its ease of communication and travel. Wars such as the Russian-Ukrainian War, insecurity, pandemics, conflicts, xenophobic attacks in countries are some of the causes of migration that result to homelessness. The study cited a number of local proverbs and tales that demonstrate locals' love for migrants and asylum seekers. Communities such as the Luo and Kikuyu were mentioned. The main passage from the Bible that served as the study's primary source was Leviticus 19:33-34. The study recommends that the churches, NGOs, FBOs and the Kenya government should work collaboratively to integrate Migrants and the Homeless into the society.*

**Keywords:** Migration and homelessness, Leviticus 19:33-34, hospitality, Kenya, trafficking

### **Introduction**

Homelessness and migration are a reality and a topical issue today. They existed in the human history, among the Jews and in our contemporary world. According to Speak (2019), in the developing world, there is a continuum of homelessness, first, roughly ranging from "rough sleeping" which refers to night time sleeping in a public place, such as on the ground or under a bridge, that is transitory, seasonal, short-term, or long-term. Second, pavement habitation, in which a standard "pitch" is used over time and some extremely rudimentary, short-to medium-term shelter is created out of card, fabric, or plastic. Third is a

repeated short-to medium-term squatting in the same abandoned building. Fourth is long-term or permanent residence on a woefully insufficient, frequently hazardous, unprotected, unserved, or floating platform that fails all sufficiency requirements and finally, residing in refugee camps with few hopes of relief or permanent return home.

Homelessness and migration can be temporary and cyclical for instance, in Alto Plano, Bolivia, rural populations go to cities before going back to their rural homes, they spend the summer trading and residing on the streets as affirmed by Speak (2019) on research about homelessness in the developing countries. Furthermore, she revealed that homelessness can also be a longer-lasting, even permanent, condition, like in Indian towns where families raise their children while living on the streets.

From Matamanda (2020), Homelessness in the form of woefully insufficient, frequently unofficial housing, also known as "slums," is typically considerably more permanent. Kenyans are compelled to live in slums due to a severe land shortage and escalating land costs. Certain parties may resort to violence in order to grab further land. According to accounts, Tharaka herders, who frequently struggle for land, have been observed in certain towns. These herders assaulted the rural town of River Naka in Tharaka Nithi central Kenya, displacing hundreds of farmers, (Parr, 2014).

Following the existence of COVID-19, more than 7,000 people were recently forced out of their homes and onto the streets of Nairobi's slums. Assuming that these individuals were residing on "public land," the authorities responded appropriately. <https://borgenproject.org/homelessness-in-kenya/>

This study examines a Biblical response to the problem of Homelessness and Migration in Kenya. It discusses the question of Homelessness and migration as a critical issue. The central question this study investigates, first, what is the link between contemporary homelessness and migration and the Biblical migration. Second, how does Kenyan respond to the commandment "love aliens as yourself" in Leviticus 19:34b? It proceeds to assess issues of aliens in Leviticus 19:33-34 and the related texts using literary criticism, socio-historical criticism and reader- response. Kenyan case is used to inform the study as a context so as to understand the phenomena of homelessness and migration at the depth, its implication, how homelessness affects the life of the community and Kenya's response.

## **Homelessness and Migration as a Critical Contemporary Issue**

The dynamic nature of the human persons urges the people who live uncomfortable inhuman situations to move out of their native lands for survival and improve their lives. Migration is a human reality and it is as old as human kind. Tataru, (2019) defines migration on her research work as a phenomenon of great complexity, in that there are many different and evolving factors that influence migration. Furthermore, it is difficult to categorize migrants because they arrive under a variety of conditions, from a variety of surroundings, and with a variety of personal traits. It follows that addressing the issues that arise and creating sensible policies to protect migrants require an awareness of the causes and effects of migration as well as theoretical and practical abilities.

Besides, migration is a historical element known down the history. In historical records many people migrate from place to place, (Onaiyekan, 2019). Human beings constantly move from place to place in search of settlement away from home land.

In the recent time globalization has made migration fast and easier, as illustrated by Czaika, et al. (2014), advances in transportation and communication technologies are frequently associated with increases in the volume, diversity, geographic breadth, and overall complexity of international migration, as well as, more broadly, globalization processes. The statement "widening, deepening, and speeding up of global connectivity in all sectors of contemporary social life", (De Hass, 2014, p. 48) may best represent globalization thus in terms of both technological and political dimensions, globalization technology advancements have dramatically cheaper (air) travel and communication over ever-greater distances, thereby strengthening migrant networks and transitional ties by making it easier to communicate with family and friends, send money, and travel between countries of origin and destination, (Czaika, et al., 2014, p. 48)

Furthermore, Javakhishvili, (2019) on his paper about globalization and migration process; he indicated the migration patterns and the globalization of the economy which is illustrated by the emergence of a fundamentally novel migration situation worldwide. It is described by the following characteristics: extraordinary growth in the scales of global migration, qualitative shifts in migration patterns, feminization of labor migration, rise in illegal migration, and transformation of migration into a transnationally organized business, including criminal activity. Supported by data from United Nation where, at the turn of the century, more than 220 million people lived in countries other than their

countries of birth and citizenship. Hence people quickly move across borders by air, rail, road, and sea.

On the report released by world immigration, United Nation Migration, its indicated that the world had an International Migrants of 281 million up from 272 million in 2019 with whom 135 International Migrant are female and 146 million male International Migrants. This clearly show an increase in migration, as reported by McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, (2022).

On illustration by (Nwachukwu, 2019) many factors have contributed to migration of people which include but not limited to social, economic and political instability. Other factors include violence and war-torn environment which compels people to move from hostility to find security and safety. The last decade witnessed large number of peoples' movement from conflict, violent and war torn countries like Syria, the Republic of South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia, the Central Republic of Central Africa, and Nigeria are among the countries involved. Currently, many people are moving from Ukraine to seek refuge in Poland and other NATO countries because of the Russian-Ukraine war where Russian aggression invading Ukraine marks the beginning of severe displacement crisis on February 24th, 2022. The High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, highlighted in a statement on February 24, 2022 that "The humanitarian implications for civilian populations will be severe." Juric, (2022).

In a conflict, no one wins, but countless lives are shattered. People have already started to leave their homes in search of protection and there have even been reports of casualties. According to UN officials, if the situation worsens, up to 4 million people could leave Ukraine. 1.2 million people had left Ukraine for neighboring nations in the region as of March 4, 2022.

According to Guenette, Kenworthy, and Wheeler, (2022), a serious refugee issue has resulted from the Russian-Ukraine war. Over 7 million people have been forced to leave Ukraine, and as of the 15th of April, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that 4.7 million people have fled to neighboring countries (IOM 2022; United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Data Portal 2022). Women and children make up a sizeable portion of refugees. Of the estimated 7.5 million children in Ukraine, 4.3 million (or 57% of the total) have been compelled to flee their homes; of these, 1.8 million (or 24% of the total) are believed to have traveled as refugees to nearby nations, and the

remaining 2.5 million (or 33% of the total) are believed to be internally displaced (IOM 2022; UNHRC 2022) requesting asylum.

Obinwa, (2019), towards the same indicate that religious terrorists like ISIS, Alcaida, Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen attacks people and force them to move away from their home lands and the oppressive conditions. LeVan, (2019) proposed that Xenophobic attacks cause people to migrate for safer zones as refugees. Ethnic cleansing where one ethnic group forces non-ethnic members to leave and return to their homeland for example the case of Nigeria.

Homelessness and immigration have been linked to pandemics such as COVID-19 as illustrated by Duclos and Palmer (2020) on their case study on “The Impact of COVID-19 on Forced Displacement: addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities of a crisis” he explained that the Americas, the US government is one of 57 countries to close its borders with no exceptions for asylum seekers in an attempt to slow down the spread of COVID-19. Under the new border regulations implemented by the US government on March 21<sup>st</sup> 2022, a total of 7,000 people were deported to Mexico, 377 of whom were minors. This resulted in individuals getting removed without going through regular immigration procedures. According to Hesson and Rosenberg, (2020) 120 of the minors who arrived without a parent or legal guardian at the US-Mexico border were sent to Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Other migration is due to fascination of modernity distilled by media filling the immigration of the poor villagers on inhabitant of a less affluent countries to move and find green pasture to improve their life style. Such migrants have no legal documents to enter host countries or to work in the formal and informal sectors of the host countries. These migrants end up often in the slums, homeless or in the streets, (Adangba, 2019, p. 23).

There are those migrants who go abroad because of their high education, qualifications, specializations and skills to offer to the host countries. They move to improve their life status and future. Some of these skilled migrants send money back home for development. Whether people migrate from their homelands for green pastures, or due to social, religious, political and economic reasons the whole process causes migrants to experience some form of homelessness either for a short term or long period of time, therefore migration is structural risk factor for homelessness.

### **Homelessness and Migration Globally, Regionally and Locally**

Homelessness is placed in diverse forms and manners throughout the globe. Homelessness was defined as a condition where a person or household lacks a habitation with security of tenure, right and ability to enjoy social relations, including safety, by the United Nations Expert Group Meeting. Homelessness is a sign of severe poverty and a violation of many human rights, (Obiorah, 2019, pp. 22-24). This definition highlights the failure of human rights in establishing housing and security and lack of housing that has resulted to millions of people living in slums and urban areas.

According to Quinn, (2020) UNANIMA; Homeless families are defined as those who live episodically, temporarily, or chronologically in temporary housing, including shelters and locations not intended for human habitat or settlement, due to a lack of continuity or the support required to maintain their own residency. Slum dwellers were included in UNANIMA's definition of homelessness.

Homelessness is driven by personal and family circumstances, urbanization and finlandization of housing, natural disaster like floods, earthquakes, landslides, domestic violence against women, addictions, conflicts and trauma. For Speak (2019), Homelessness includes those who sleep on the streets or under bridges, those who squat, those who live in abject poverty and fail all adequacy tests, and those who are displaced and have no realistic chance of returning home, (Speak, 2019).

The Mass Media are full of picture and stories about drama and tragedy of thousands of people, especially the youth from Africa and Asia going into Europe and dying in the desert or drowning in the Mediterranean Sea, (Onaiyekan, 2019, p. 43). The control of borders across Europe with the external border military reinforcement and the European Union Policy on migration has made it difficult for migrants to enter European countries. (Enrico, et al, 2022, p. 1-21).

Giansanti, Lindberg and Joormann, (2022) suggested that migration is still evident in European Union states from poor states. Homelessness covers diverse areas including those on the streets, in temporary shelters, living with friends and those that the governments give housing for three years are counted homeless when the three-year period set for settlements by the government are due, (Hermans, et al., 2020, p.20).

On indication by Gilleland, et al. (2016) North America is known to be a land of migrants for over the past 400 years, Migrants came from their home countries in Europe to escape from hunger, war, political persecution to find freedom and to practice their religion. Others came to own land and to escape from poverty. In the recent past migrant continue to flow to America. There are four or more groups of migrants to America. These are migrants within American cities, those who seek asylum and there are the ones that have entered America illegally, and those with legal documents (Lanchica, 2013). Asylum seekers or migrants without documents in America are vulnerable. They are kept out of employment; economic and social stability and they cannot raise money to pay for their housing. Some live in crowded shared houses. They are ignorant of migrant policy and fear to be deported.

Hermant (2021) reports that 15% of homeless people in Australia are migrants who arrived in Australia since 2017. Homelessness is a critical issue in Australia where migrants sleep in park benches and local Lion Clubs among other places while waiting for housing.

Cross-border migration in Africa is on the increase. Thousands of people leave their countries in African for abroad with documents for paying jobs or without documents due to religious, socio-political-cultural and economic conditions. For example, people from the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eretria have left their countries and crossed borders because of wars, conflict, violence and poverty. Thousands of Nigerians migrate to African cities as well as abroad every year due to socio- economic situation, seeking employment to improve their life status, (Obiorah, 2019).

Other Nigerians are pushed out of Nigeria because of Boko Haram, armed robbery and Fulani Herdsmen attack, (Nwachukwu, 2019, p. 55-68). Many migrants from Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Nigeria stream to South Africa to make a better living condition. Several Xenophobia attacks have taken place in South Africa where the citizens demanded that the migrants leave their country. The citizens accuse the foreigners for stealing their jobs and bringing moral decay like sex workers as expressed by Mashau, (2019). The cross-border migrants in South Africa are exposed to many challenges including poor housing and sanitation, and homelessness as represented on book titled as "Migration in the Bible" by Adekambi, (2019).

Kenya is suggested by IOM 2015 pg. 15 as main distribution and transit country for many people in Eastern region of Africa including migrants, refugees, and

human trafficking. The migrants who move to South Africa, West Africa, Central Africa and North Africa, Europe, America, Canada, Middle East and Gulf countries pass through Kenya, (Adekambi, 2019. Pg.16) Kenya as a country originates migrants who are professional, skilled workers and educated migrants to Uganda, Tanzanian, Lesotho, South Africa, Namibia, Rwanda, Europe, Asia, America and Canada. These Kenyans leave the country through legal and regular means. The less skilled migrants move to Europe, Middle- East and the Gulf countries, FMPT, 2017).

In fact, Kenya hosts refugees and asylum seekers in two of the country's oldest refugee camps, Daadab and Kakuma refugee camps, which house thousands of people fleeing the Republic of South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia, as well as some refugees from the Republic of Congo. Although there is currently little information on human trafficking in the nation, two major trafficking routes have been identified: the north-eastern route while passing through Garissa on the Kenya-Somalia border and the western route between Kenya and Uganda at the Busia-Malaba crossing point. The Middle East is the location of the other trafficking, where victims run the risk of being exploited for forced labor, domestic servitude, or both. (IOM, 2015, p. 15-16).

Due to a lack of opportunities in rural areas, Kenya has a high rate of internal migration between rural and urban areas. Due to the lack of opportunities in rural areas, many young people who have completed their primary or secondary education move to urban areas to look for jobs. The rural-urban migrants form unemployment sector. They either live with relatives or friends, but the majority find their residence in the slums, although they live in slum houses, technically they are considered as homeless because they are away from their homes and the slum houses lack basic requirements for housing. Other migrants that pose problem for Kenya are the street dwellers which consist of street children, street boys and girls, and street families. Street people come from different parts of Kenya and form distinct communities in the streets. Some live in abandoned building.

### **African hospitality**

African hospitality can be described in terms of kindness that is freely given and without any strings attached. Gatogo, (2006) justification was consistent with Echema's claim that "it is an absolute willingness to share" (give and take). The willingness to give, help, assist, love, and bear one another's burden without regard for gain or reward is thus the driving force.



From the research work on 'some expressions of Africa hospitality today' Gathogo (2008, p. 39) revealed that the concept that no one is an island unto themselves and that everyone is an important part of the community is at the heart of African hospitality. Songs and stories, conventions, and people's institutions were the earliest forms of this aspect of culture, which was initially pre-literate, pre-scientific, and pre-industrial. In this sense, African hospitality epitomizes the African spirit of community which is, "I believe, therefore I am," (Mbiti, 1969).

Moila, (2002) reinforced that in basic sense, African cultural and moral values are a way of life, not an ideal. This highlights how, like African religion, the concept of hospitality pervades every facet of African civilization. Besides Moila, (2002) affirmed that African hospitality can also be defined as brotherhood or sisterhood between members of the same family group and clan. Everyone in the same family group owes it to the other members of that group to provide for their needs. However, stranger hospitality is also a tradition in Africa. Africans regard and practice hospitality as the most natural, instinctive, and generous conduct in the world.

### **The Relevance of Hospitality to African**

The African Hospitality showed up in three circumstances namely, religious life, social life and economic life.

*Religious life* is where this calls for having positive relationships with one's forefathers on a religious level. When drinking the local beer, it was customary in ancient Africa to pour the last few sips into a calabash for the ancestors. Similar to this, it was believed that when a pot of beer cracked, the ancestors should devour it.

*Social life* African hospitality can be evident in the social life, which is heavily religious. As a result, it adds to the overall well-being of a community. Activities such as singing and dancing are consequently regarded as welcoming activities since they bring people together. Africans dance to honor every feeling imaginable, including joy, grief, love, and hatred, as well as to bring wealth and avert tragedy. Africans can also ease tensions in their tiny communities through song and humorous talk, (Gathogo, 2007).

*Economic life* which was indicated through working together on chores such as farming, home construction and maintenance, land clearing and cultivation,

hunting, and fishing, among others, has been a practice among Africans from the beginning of time. Kenyatta discusses the Kikuyu people of Kenya and how thoroughness is an important component of African hospitality, (Obengo, 1997).

Many African proverbs reflect this communalistic way of life. To cite a Kikuyu (African) saying, "*Mugogo umwe nduaraga iriuko*" means "One log does not create a bridge." It suggests that an individual cannot accomplish much on their own. Above all, one requires the assistance of others for direction, instruction, chastisement, correction, and training (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16). Bridges make it possible for people to cross rivers and engage in activities like trading and social interaction, so without cooperation from other members of the community, one log, that is, one person cannot guarantee the survival of the community. If one is totally reliant on himself, they risk starving or isolation owing to a lack of a sufficient bridge to cross and engage with one another. Because no one can see behind them, they cannot counsel, punish, or instruct themselves. Logs must be joined together to make a solid bridge in order for us to safely traverse through the valleys of life together.

### **How Africans Shows Hospitality to Aliens, Refugees and Asylum-Seekers**

It's incredible how friendly Africa has been to refugees. African countries have open doors and borders to refugees. Even before the UNHCR and the rest of the world can assist, host communities are accepting refugees.

According to Momodu (2019), as thousands of desperate men, women, and children flee conflicts and natural disasters in search of safety, some countries are debating whether to accept or reject asylum seekers. On the other hand, Uganda has taken in record a number of refugees. Despite its poverty, Uganda hosts over a million refugees, with South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, and Somalia accounting for the majority of them. Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are some of the countries on the continent that host the most refugees.

Luo community in Kenya is built upon the idea of sharing with others, the asylum-seeker were referred to as *jodak*, Hebinck and Mango (2008), illustrated that a *jadak* is someone who goes to another clan's territory and requests land. According to Luo tradition, it is difficult to deny a foreigner the land they seek to support their subsistence. Because of this tradition, people can coexist with tribes or clans that are not their own. If they are friends, mothers, or have other affinal

connections, they are eligible to request usufruct land. In any case, such a transaction requires the elder council's approval.

The Luo encouraged the *jodak* to settle among them, and until recently, a *jodak* was rarely forced to leave the land that had been "given" to him, except in extreme cases. According to some sources, the Luo concept of *jadak* is closely related to the expression *chiem gi wadu* ("eat what you have with your neighbor"). In contrast, if a *jadak's* clan was at war with another clan and he demonstrated bravery during the conflict, that clan would elevate him to the rank of landowner.

Through *sigendini* (folklore) like the one of Limbi Nyaima, the Luo children are taught the importance of sharing with others so that when they are adults, they will embrace the extended family system's ideology, which is a component of social responsibility. The Simbi villagers and their elder are drowned in water for ignoring or shrugging off their social obligations when they felt too happy to welcome Anyango, as stated by Odaga, (1980). African hospitality towards migrants is similar to the way aliens are treated in the Bible.

### **Migration and Homelessness in The Bible**

The underlying environment of African hospitality promotes interdependence. It agrees with Pauline theology that acknowledging the abilities and talents of others is vital for the edification of the church and society at large (Ephesians 4:10-12, 1 Corinthian 12).

Bible narratives provide stories of migration and homelessness. It has evidence of persons who migrated from one place to another. For example, Abraham moved from Negeb to Egypt when famine was severe in the land (Gen 12: 10) and at Hebron where he bought a land for burial (Gen 23: 4). Isaac went to Abimelech King of Philistines in *Gerar* at a time of famine (Gen 26:1). Judah parted from his brothers and settled near Adillamite named Hirah (Gen 38:1). Jacob and his sons moved to Egypt and settled at Goshen (Gen 46:1-34). During a severe famine in the land of Judah, Abimelech, his wife and children left Bethlehem and settled in Moab (Ruth 1:1). When Moses knew that he was in danger after killing the Egyptian, he flew to Midian (Ex 2:15). Elijah stayed as a migrant with a widow of Zeraphat (1 King 17:20) and Elisha sent the woman of Shenem to fertile coastal area due to the immanent famine. Joseph migrated with Jesus and Mary his mother to Egypt to protect Jesus from the wrath of Herod. They stayed in Egypt until his death (Mt. 2:13-23). There are texts that refer to *ger/gerim* (Ex 22: 20; 23:9;

Deut 10: 19; 23:8; Lev 19: 34). The same word appears in prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. These are only a few examples of migration in the Bible. The Scriptures recognize the plight of migrants and homelessness is implied (Deut 16:14), (Obiorah, 2019, p. 127). The word alien (*ger/gerim*) appear many times in the book of Leviticus.

### **Literary Reading of Leviticus 19:33-34**

Leviticus 19:33-34 provides a commandment of how to deal with aliens and the reasons why they should be treated justly. The periscope is set between two commandments: the first set of commandments is Leviticus 19:1-18 and the second set of commandments are Leviticus 19:19-37. The first set of the commandments observes God's statutes while the second commandments (Lev 19:19-37) consist of 21 (3 times 7) laws which are segmented by a sevenfold repetition of the phrase, "I am the Lord (your) God" (cf. Lev. 19:25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, and 37), (Obiora 2019, p. 131).

### **Reading the Text: Leviticus 19: 33-34**

V33 You should not oppress an alien who lives on your property.

V34 Because you were an outsider in Egypt, you must treat the alien as you would a citizen among you. I am your God, and you must treat the alien as such.

### **Literary Analysis of Leviticus 19:33-34**

Obiorah observes that Leviticus 19: 33-34 has a rhetorical construction of A, B, C, D, E, F,

- A- when an alien resides with in your land (v33a) serves as an introduction with *gwr/* alien as a key word. *Gwr* appears five times including the pronominal suffixes.
- B- You shall not oppress the aliens
- C- The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you
- D- You shall love the alien as yourself. Line D gives instruction that the alien should be treated with love
- E- Gives the reason for the command "for you were aliens in the land of Egypt"

F- Provide a divine seal to this command, “am the lord your God

Obiorah posits that *hb* (to love) has a preposition *l<sub>e</sub>* and not *e t* for determinate object and with a pronominal suffix which is also found in Leviticus 19:18. Love summarizes the injunction in lines B and C. Line E offers reasons for the command and line F gives a divine seal of the law.

Kellermann, (1979) suggest that the root word for alien (*ger/gerim*) is *gwr* which means to tarry as a sojourner. *Ger* is a sojourner away from his home in another homeland or group. *Gwr* is a frequently word used in Leviticus 19:33-34. *Gwr* appear five times in a periscope of twenty-six words, twice it appears a verb: a finite construction in v33 and a particle in v34. The other three times, *gwr* express the theme of Leviticus 19:33-34, and its structure, (Obiorah, 2019, p.131).

The root *gwr* in Leviticus 19:33-34 is the basis of *gerim* that link Leviticus 19:33-34 with the entire Leviticus 19. Leviticus 19:33 “when an alien resides with you in the land “introduce the law on how to treat aliens. Leviticus 19:33-34 alternates singular and plural pronominal suffixes and makes the reading of this text difficult. Is it addressing individual or community? The plural elements mingled with singular explains that the text was secondary modification to take care of the aliens living in the midst of people of Israel. Leviticus 19:33b prohibits the oppression of aliens. “You shall not oppress him (the alien)” – *io, tonu oto oto*. The verb *ynh* in the text is in *hiphil*. The same verb is found in the Exodus 22:20 (21) in the context of covenant code. The covenant code is the oldest legislation in the Old Testament. Leviticus 19:33-34 could have been written in reference to Exodus 22:20 (21) where Leviticus 19:33 prohibits the oppression of aliens. Obiorah (2019) suggests that if Leviticus 19:33-34 was written in reference to Exodus 22:20(21), then more information was added to Leviticus 19: 30-33 to include the inclusion of aliens in the community worship.

### **Close Reading of Leviticus 19:33-34**

Leviticus 19:34a “The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you”. The citizens are called to treat the aliens as native citizens (*ezrah*). They shall have rights like any citizen (*ezrah*) and accorded citizenships.

Leviticus 19:34b “You shall love the alien as yourself” calls the citizens to treat the aliens living among them with love. This text implies that the aliens living among the Jews underwent oppression which took different forms. They lack protection, therefore, the commandment orders that the aliens should be loved

unconditionally and inclusively (cf. Leviticus 19:18). The aliens are human beings and so they should be treated accordingly. The pronominal suffix *kamoka* “who is like you” or “who is your equal” remind the citizens that God created all human beings as equal that is the reason for Israel to treat all aliens equal.

Leviticus 19:34b “For you were aliens in the land of Egypt”. The verse gives the reason to why the Jews must treat the aliens well and care for them because they knew the plight of aliens. The Jews were subjected to slavery and hard labour in Egypt. By being in their own land, they should stand for the aliens.

### **Socio-Historical Reading of Leviticus 19:33-34**

The close reading of Leviticus 19:33-34 elicits some embedded socio-historical realities at the background of the text which reveals that there were aliens (*gerim*) living among the Jews recognized their status in Israel.

In Israel there were different categories of aliens. There were aliens who migrated on their own accord or personal compulsion. Others moved compelled by famine, and war (2 Sam 4:3; Isaiah 16:4). Some migrated to preserve their nomadic deal (Jer 35:9). Still others migrated for religious reasons like the Leviticus (Deut 16:11,14; Judges 17: 7-9; 19:1, 16). The resident alien observed in Israel’ religious practices, festivals and feasts, Sabbath (Ex 20: 10; Deut 5:14) and the day of atonement (Leviticus 16:29) and the law of cleanliness (Leviticus 17:8-13,18:26; Num 19:10). Aliens circumcised could celebrate the Passover with Israelites (Ex 12: 48-49, Num 9:14). There were laws that protected the aliens and they enjoyed the protection. God provided them with food and clothing like the orphans and widows, (Erhard, p. 283).

Some proceeds of the farms were left for them in the land to collect (Deut 24:19-21). They were free to pick any fruits, any olive left on the tree belonged to them, the remnant grapes (Leviticus 19:10) and they were allowed to glean after harvest (Leviticus 23:22). They received sustenance from the regular tithe (Deut 14:29) and stipulations of the sabbath year (Leviticus 25:6).

There was another group of strangers known as *nokri*. The law did not protect the *Nokri* and they remained strangers among the Jews. They came among the Jews by accident. They were hostile or neutral to the Jewish way of life and they could not be neutralized. There were still other groups of foreigners like merchants, labourers, craftsmen and slaves. Some of these foreigners were not

professional and had no national connections in the land. They depended on the hospitality of the people, (Oropo, 2016, p. 328).

Aliens in Israel, whether with document or no documents were exposed of hardships, discrimination and depended on the citizens for survival. At times, there was hostility towards them and that explains the reason for commandment in Leviticus 19:33-34. The commandment was set to protect the aliens. The experience of the homeless and the migrant society today is not different from that of aliens who lived among the Jews. In our Society, migrants without documents among citizens of the host countries are exposed to severe treatment, imprisonment and some are even killed and die. Kenya continues to be the hub for irregular and regular migration.

### **Leviticus 19: 33-34 and Homelessness and Migration in Kenya**

Homelessness, migration, migrants, and human trafficking are all major issues in Kenya. Although there is little information on the number of Kenyans living in the country illegally, it is estimated that at least 300,000 Kenyans live in the United States. While professionals and skilled Kenyans migrate abroad, they deprive Kenya their skills and expertise. There is a steady brain drain that deprive Kenya development and delays its growth to the middle class and development of sustainable development.

As of the end of January 2021, Nairobi was home to approximately 81,023 urban refugees and asylum seekers. Many people in Kenya particularly the youth school leavers in search of employment have moved from rural to the urban settings, and the majority find themselves resides in the slums. Kenya has the large slums and has high records of homelessness, street-dwellers, and internally displaced people (IDPs)

For those who have moved away from their homeland, homes property become homeless even if it means temporarily. So, what is the biblical response to homelessness and migration in Kenya?

### **Biblical Response to Homelessness and Migration in Kenya**

The Bible has stipulated Covenant Code and Commandments to make citizens and aliens live in harmony. For example, Leviticus 19:33-34 address aliens' situation and how the citizens should treat them, while in Kenya there are challenges because of the increasing number of homeliness and the prevailing migration. The homeless and migrants lack acceptance and integration in their

places of prevailing “refugee”. In most cases, the homeless are evicted without home while the street dwellers work and or loiter along the street experiencing harsh way of living. The professional migrants Kenya fails to get the required jobs as such they resort to menial and sometimes dehumanizing works or they stay in the refugee camps with little hopes of getting asylum. Leviticus 19:33-34 states that “when an alien resides with you in your land, you should not oppress the aliens”. In reference to this command, there is the need to recognize the sacredness of all human being and as such human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. They are sacred and should be respected. According to the World Council of Churches (WCC), migrants in Kenya must be treated with respect. As per this viewpoint, Respect for the human dignity and the worth of every person, regardless of age, abilities, ethnicity, or our faith Our faith obligates us to uphold human life, physical safety, and individual safety in laws and institutions. ( Magezi, 2015).

Kenya being a Christian country, the Bible stipulates that Christians should respect human rights of migration and to pray for the struggling migrants particularly refugees in transit seeking asylum in Europe and America to succeed and eventually settle into what they will home.

Leviticus 19:33-34 commanded the citizens to care for the aliens; “The alien who reside with you shall be to you as yourself” which implies that the lives of the homeless and migrants are at risk as they are at the victim of violence and insecurity. On migration Pope John XXIII *Pacem in Terris* states that it is an “inherent right of human person” to move freely and to fix for valid reasons, to a better place, there is amoral obligation to protect the life of people from their homeland to the host countries.

*Pacem in Terris* calls for moral and ethical obligations and responsibilities before the common good of humanity which is life of every human being, (Adangba, 2019, p. 25). The homeless and migrants are fully human beings that deserves to have a full human protection. By showing hospitality, they will welcome and receive migrants without discrimination and to enable them participate in a more just and humane development.

Leviticus 19:34b, “You shall love the aliens as yourself”. Jesus summed up the to fold -commandment of love: to love God above all else and to love neighbor as self. “You shall love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest commandment. The second is like it: you shall love your neighbor as self” (Mt. 22:37-39, cf. Mk.12:28-31, Lk 10:25-28), for Jesus



to love God means to share in his plan for people, to become God's instrument of love. When Leviticus 19:34b commands the people of Israel to love aliens as themselves refers to biblical values of love, justice and peace. These values compel Christians to renew themselves refer to biblical values, justice and peace. These values compel Christian's to renew their response to the migrants.

The Bible talks about unconditional love. It is a call for Kenyan to work towards a just and a unified world to love migrants unconditionally. Practically, to solve the problem of homelessness and migration in regard to love them selflessly will compel the Kenyans to struggle for justice and peace for all, to work for the world where economics, political and social institutions serve people unconditionally. Like Leviticus 19:34b called the Jews to love aliens as themselves, Kenyans too are being called to build an inclusive community with the homelessness and migrants; to embrace the uprooted in service and witness which means that Kenyans are called to be with the migrants and the homeless who are struggling to change their status of life.

The Kenyans are challenged by Leviticus 19:34b to intensify the ministry of accompaniment and advocacy with migrants and homeless. Kenyan churches are called to uphold the prophetic witness by speaking for the migrants and the homeless. Since the command of love comes from the Bible (Leviticus 19:34b), Kenyans ought to uphold the dignity of all people because they all bear the imprint of the all-loving God. Therefore, Kenyans are reminded to love their neighbor as themselves, which calls for including the homeless and migrants by welcoming them and guarding them against any form of injustices while in Kenya.

Leviticus 19:34c "For you were aliens in the land of Egypt" Leviticus orders the Jews to welcome strangers because they were migrants in Egypt and they know the plight of being strangers. The call for solidarity with the homeless and migrants and how to treat them fairly and justly when they reside with the citizens. As a hub for migrants in the region, it is important that Kenya has clear migration policy that will protect them while they are in transition.

### **Recommendations**

This study recommends that the churches, communities and both Faith Based and the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) should work together with the homeless and migrants. As a group, they would be able to work with the

migrants and the homeless and integrate them in the native churches. The study makes the following recommendations.

- To provide homeless people and migrant workers with material assistance.
- To advocate for the human rights of immigrants, the homeless, and those living on the streets.
- There is the need to address the root causes of migration and homelessness by different groups coming together.
- There is need to provide accommodation and push the government to see the need of having affordable housing for the homeless and the migrants and work with those that are evicted because of financial challenges.
- The bodies and organizations dealing with migration, the homeless and street-people to conscientize the societies and government about the plight of migration.
- The faith communities to follow the call in the commandment and call of Jesus of love of God and neighbors towards a justice and peace and community service.

## **Conclusion**

Migration is part and parcel of human life. People migrate for different reasons globally, regionally and locally as indicated in various part of African countries that include the Democratic Republic of Congo. The major reasons that have led to migration and homelessness according to this study were war as currently revealed in RUSSIAN and UKRAINE war, conflicts and pandemic such COVID-19; for whatever reasons that make the people to move out of their homes, lands and countries; whether for a change of life status or security, it never works out a hundred percent as many migrants get exposed to different forms of challenges. The Bible reveals that although people migrate and find themselves as foreigners, the bottom line is that they are human beings and need to be treated with integrity and dignity. Love is a Biblical value that Christ Jesus advocates and so Kenya can model the call to love aliens in their midst and work towards a just society. Africa has exposed many of its people to be migrants and as such homeless. The types of homelessness whether in America, Australia, Europe, Asia and Africa, it takes away the integrity and dignity of the persons from them. It is for this reason that Leviticus 19:33-34 reminds the readers and humanity to

treat migrants justly and fairly. They deserve to have a home therefore churches, organizations and governments need to work together towards affordable accommodation for them. Kenyan society face a challenge on how to treat migrants since it serves as a hub for migrants who transit to different parts of Africa, Europe, Asia and America.

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