


# Leviticus 19:33–34: A biblical response to the xenophobic behaviour in South Africa

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**Dates:**

Received: 22 Nov. 2024

Accepted: 20 June 2025

Published: 12 Aug. 2025

**How to cite this article:**

Mulaudzi, N., 2025, 'Leviticus 19:33–34: A biblical response to the xenophobic behaviour in South Africa', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 81(1), a10401. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v81i1.10401>

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This article addresses the persistent issue of xenophobic attacks against foreign nationals in South Africa. It offers a biblical framework for understanding and responding to such violence and explores practical solutions to this deeply troubling social phenomenon. Xenophobia remains a pressing public concern in South Africa, frequently reflected in newspapers, broadcast media and social media platforms, suggesting a troubling normalisation of anti-foreigner sentiment. The hostile attitudes and actions displayed by some South Africans towards their fellow Africans demand urgent and sustained intervention. As a theological and ethical point of departure, this article draws on *Leviticus 19:33–34*, which commands just and compassionate treatment of foreigners. This scriptural principle serves as a foundation for envisioning a more inclusive and humane society. The biblical imperative to 'love your neighbour as yourself' is also applied, aligning closely with the African philosophy of Ubuntu, which emphasises shared humanity, mutual respect and communal harmony. By integrating these moral and cultural principles, the article advocates for the cultivation of a non-xenophobic community in South Africa, across the African continent and globally.

**Contribution:** This study will begin by examining the historical relationship between the Israelites and surrounding nations, as depicted in the biblical narrative. It will then shift focus to contemporary xenophobic behaviour in South Africa, highlighting its social and ethical implications. Finally, the study will explore the application of the biblical 'law of love' and consider the role of the faith community in addressing and combating xenophobia, both within South Africa and globally.

**Keywords:** South Africa; xenophobia; Africa; love; Ubuntu; *Vhuthu*.

## Introduction

In both May 2008 and more recently in March 2019, South Africa drew national and international attention because of violent xenophobic attacks targeting African nationals who were not of South African origin. These incidents resulted in the deaths of numerous individuals and the destruction of property, including the burning of informal dwellings, which left many displaced – particularly in and around major South African townships (cf. Steinberg 2008:1–2; Landau 2010:213–214). These acts of violence, perpetrated by South Africans against fellow Africans, have widely been identified as xenophobic attacks in both academic and human rights discourses (Human Rights Watch 2020; Matsinhe 2011; Mosselson 2010; Nell 2009).

This kind of behaviour transpired again in 2015, leaving many African men and women burnt alive and killed by South Africans (News24 2015; South African History Online n.d.). This unethical and brutal action by South Africans reflected a loss of Ubuntu among them. Once it became clear that South Africans were on a mission to attack foreign nationals, some countries, such as Malawi and Zimbabwe, evacuated their citizens from South Africa (BBC 15 April 2015). President Jacob Zuma, the then president of South Africa, apologised to the Mozambique government during his state visit to Mozambique after three Mozambicans were killed during the attacks. In his apology, he referred to the behaviour as atrocious acts by a small minority of South Africans (Fauvet 2015; Whittles 2015).

The question arises, 'What happened to Ubuntu in our country?' Given the Christian majority in South Africa, biblical and theological reflections may also lead one to ask, 'What does the Bible say about the situation in South Africa? Why does it seem like South Africans have turned their backs on their fellow Africans?' Malchow (1984:300) argues that 'social justice is a topic of great concern in the church today'. One is quick to conclude that the serious question of xenophobic attacks requires serious attention, where guidance from a biblical perspective can be offered.

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The church and theologians should not keep quiet while the country is in turmoil. While there might be social, political or economic solutions to the challenges of xenophobia or xenophobic attacks, there is a greater need to provide biblical guidance.

The article unearths the biblical truth regarding the treatment of foreigners in a foreign land. It further aims to offer ways in which African people and the people of the world can treat each other, primarily foreigners who reside among them. While factors such as race, language and citizenship are important in shaping identity, they should never undermine the fundamental ethical imperative to treat others with dignity and compassion. The long-standing humanitarian principle, 'Love others as you love yourself', provides a moral foundation for this approach. In this context, Leviticus 19:33–34 will be read in dialogue with the African values of Ubuntu (or *vhuthu*) to explore sustainable responses to xenophobia – an attitude and behaviour that can be regarded as fundamentally un-African. This characterisation is justified by the fact that traditional African worldviews are deeply rooted in principles of shared humanity, mutual respect and communal care. The Vhavenda people have a saying: *Muthu ndi muthu nga vhanwe vhatu*, meaning 'A person is a person because of other people, or I am because we are'. The Vhavenda saying helps us to understand that a person is not an island. There is much to learn about life's values through relationships and interactions with others from different languages, races, cultures, among others. This proverb is applied to find a long-lasting solution to some of the problems identified among Africans.

## Leviticus 19:33–34 in the book of Leviticus

The book of Leviticus includes the notion of holiness as its basic building block, accepted as the prime motivation of the Israelite nation. The book could be divided into the following themes: chapters 1–7 are the religious responsibilities, chapters 8–18 are the ethical or purity themes and chapters 19–26 are the Holiness Code. Chapter 27 was regarded as the appendix of the whole book of Leviticus (cf. Smith 1996:26). The suggestion that chapters 19–26 address the holiness of the nation does not necessarily imply that we cannot have holiness traces in other chapters of the book. When one reads 7:1, 11:44–45 and 27:14, one does find the Holiness Code appearing. Milgrom (1996:67) believes the Holiness Code introduces radical changes in the priestly notion of holiness. Firstly, the trace of these radical changes is breaking down the barriers that separate the priesthood from the laity; consequently, attributes of holiness will be accessible to all Israelites. Secondly, holiness is not just a matter of adherence to the regime-prohibitive commandments and taboos. It embraces positive and performative commandments that are ethical. Thirdly, the whole of Israel, including priests, enhances or diminishes its holiness in proportion to its observance of all God's commandments.

Reading the book of Leviticus, although it was addressed to the Israelites in Sinai, it is not limited to the people of Israel

but finds relevance in today's world, considering the different geographical and political settings that are far apart. Reading Leviticus 17–26, one finds that it also addresses the aliens in the land of Israel. Kaminsky (2008:124) suggests that the aliens are included among the people of Yahweh in these chapters. The inclusion of the aliens among the people of Yahweh is addressed in Leviticus 17:15, where the alien and the citizen are discussed in the same Holiness Code. It is further made clear in 17:16 that when aliens and the Israelites fail to purify themselves, they sin.

In Leviticus 19, Yahweh calls the people of Israel into holiness. The chapter begins by saying, '...Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy' Leviticus 19:2 (NIV). Yahweh calls his people to practise holiness, which, as we will see later, includes the commandment of love. Boone (2010:65) suggests that Leviticus 19 emphasises the quality that belongs to God: holiness. Boone (2010:196) further argues that Leviticus 19 gives 'a theology of transformation that would, in theory, abolish all barriers that could divide society - racial, religious, cultural and social'. Leviticus 19:18, 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself', calls for society to eliminate the egocentric attitude, which must first be abolished before the transformation into holiness can be realised (Boone 2010:73–74). In 19:33–34, Yahweh calls the Israelites to love the aliens who are in their land. The love they must show the aliens should be demonstrated through attitude and action. Balentine (2002:165) suggests that this love should be able to translate into a concrete act, as Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31 indicate, 'So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you ...'

## The use of גֵּר in Leviticus 19:33–34

The Hebrew word for foreigner used in this text is גֵּר. The *gēr* can be translated as foreigner, alien and stranger (Gribble 1975:126–127), to mention a few. In line with the translation of the Hebrew, גֵּר one can argue that the word *gēr* was used to refer to someone who was living in a country or a city where they had no citizenship. Matlock and Arnold (2009:384; cf. Rendtorff 1996) describe *gēr* as:

[A] person of a different geographical or cultural group that the dominant cultural group and whose right to the land and property, marriage, and participation in jurisdiction, cult, and war has been restricted ... (pp. 78–79)

This also confirms Wuench's (2014:1143) argument that the word *gēr* refers to a person (or a group of people) who leaves their home, primarily for political or economic reasons, to live in a foreign country or area where they do not belong. The person or group of people referred to as *gēr* have no full citizenship status in that country or city; however, they enjoy limited political and religious rights. Leach (2010) also confirmed this, arguing that an alien is a person of a different geographical or cultural group with limited rights compared to the native.

The word *gēr*, has been used similarly to other Hebrew terms with almost the same meaning, such as *nokri* (Dt 14:21; Job

19:15) and *tôšāb* (Lv 25:35; 1 Chr 29:15). *Gēr* in the Hebrew Bible was also used referring to Abram in the foreign land (Gn 15:13), Jacob (Gn 28:4), Isaac (Gn 35:27; 37:1) and the Israelites in Egypt (Ex 22:21; 23:9). Moses also lived in Midian as a stranger (גֵר) and he called his son *Gershon* (Ex 2:22; 18:3) referring to himself as a stranger in the foreign land. The name *Gershon* is the combination of two Hebrew words, 'Ger' and 'Shom', meaning 'Stranger there'. Moses referred to life in Egypt because the statement is past tense. Tuchman and Rapport (2008:111) supported this, arguing that 'by naming his son "Gershon", Moses is expressing gratitude to God for delivering him to safety from the hands of his Egyptian pursuers'.

## Treatment of the foreigner by the Israelites

The Israelites understood the meaning of being a stranger in a foreign land and were expected to treat foreigners with love and as natives. This is what God said to the Israelites, referring to the foreigners before they entered the promised land: '... do not mistreat them. ... must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt' (Lv 19:33–34 NIV).

Strangers in the land of Israel are given equal status to that of Israelite orphans and widows because they are mentioned together in many instances (see Dt 10:18; 14:29; 16:11; Jr 7:6; 22:3; Ezk 22:7; Zch 7:10; Ml 3:5; Ps 94:6; 146:9). To be given this status was a symbol of the lowness of the foreigners, widows and orphans in the land of Israel. The same treatment was given to the foreigners in the land.

### An intertextual analysis of 'Do not mistreat them...'

Although the foreigners in the land of Israel were given a status equal to that of Israelite widows and orphans, they were to be treated with dignity and respect. This command prohibits any Israelite from oppressing or mistreating any stranger within the borders of Israel. Yahweh is calling for positive behaviour and treatment towards strangers. Exodus 22:21 and 23:9 emphasise that Yahweh is entirely against the oppression of foreign nationals.

The Israelites were called not to mistreat the foreign nationals but to regard them as natives. The call to treat foreigners as 'native-born' also changes or gives a new perspective on and towards foreign nationals. In Numbers 15:14, Yahweh allowed strangers to present burnt sacrifices with the Israelites. For the foreign nationals to be given a chance to show their burnt sacrifices to Yahweh, they were also subjected to the Torah as the Israelites do (Ex 12:49; Lv 18:26; 24:22; Nm 15:15–16). This order prohibiting the mistreatment of foreign nationals in Leviticus 19:33–34 was emphasised by God's words and tone when God said, 'I am the Lord, your God'. This indicates that God sympathises with the foreigner or is protecting the foreign nationals from the Israelites, as maintained by Wuench (2014:1147; cf. Malchow

1984:303), who argues that this was a 'special protection by Yahweh himself' over the foreign nationals. Psalm 146:9 confirms that Yahweh watches over foreign nationals. In Malachi 3:5, Yahweh categorises those who mistreat foreign nationals in the same category as sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, those who defraud labourers of their wages, and those who oppress the widows and the fatherless. Mistreating foreign nationals was an offence not only to the foreign nationals but also to Yahweh because he is the one who watches over them.

### The implication of loving foreigners as you love yourselves

The Israelites were not only ordered not to mistreat foreign nationals, but they had to love them in practical ways as they loved themselves. Leviticus 19:34 gives a good foundation for the unconditional law of love, which will not be based on one's skin colour, nationality or other basis. Wellhausen in Milgrom (2004:244) argues that 'the command is practical, not platonic, hence emphasising the importance of love and working with foreigners'. The practicality of the command also extends to business ethics in verses 35–36. Verses 35–36 command how they should ethically conduct themselves towards foreigners. Those two verses have a practical element of 'love' because they express one's behaviour towards the foreigner. Swartz in Milgrom (2004:1706) shows the reciprocal relations between the alien and the Israelite: it is incumbent on the Israelite to love them (Dt 10:19), not to oppress them (Ex 22:20; 23:9), support them (Lv 19:10), include them in festival celebrations (Dt 16:11; 26:11), allow them to rest on the Sabbath (Ex 20:10; 23:12) and provide them with safety (Nm 35:15). Also, Kaminsky (2008:125) is of the view that 'loving one's neighbour was not simple (and perhaps not even primarily) an affective state, but rather an obligation to act properly towards such an individual'. This means that the concept of loving one's neighbour goes beyond merely having warm feelings or affection towards them. Instead, it emphasises that love for one's neighbour involves an active commitment and obligation to treat them properly and respectfully. It is not just about how one feels but, more importantly, how one behaves and interacts with others.

### The reason why the Israelites should treat foreigners as natives

#### The Israelites understood the experience of being strangers

Yahweh reminds the Israelites of their experience as foreigners in Egypt. This is the basis for the Israelites' refusal to mistreat foreigners in their land because they knew and experienced being a *gēr* in Egypt (Dt 23:8; 26:5; Is 52:4; Ps 105:23) (cf. Kellermann 1975:449; Wuench 2014:1147–1148). In Leviticus 34, they are also asked to extend their loving hand to the foreigner. The Israelites are commanded to show compassion to the deprived because they were once aliens in Egypt and know what it is like to be aliens (Ex 23:9; Lv 19:34) and enslaved people (Dt 16:12; 24:22). This is supposed to serve as a motivation that

reminds the Israelites of the pain they endured as foreigners in Egypt. Harrison (1980:120) argues that the 'Israelites should remember the oppression and seek to overcome it in their relationship'. The Israelites are God's people, and God expects them to do justice and be ethical in their conduct, not only to their fellow Israelites but also to the aliens who live among them (cf. Milgrom 2000:1706). As God commands, the Israelites should treat aliens with respect and dignity. The significance of the message lies in the fact that the Israelites should not allow foreigners who live among them to experience what they experienced in Egypt.

### It was a divine command and obligation

The motivation to love strangers who reside among the Israelites is God, and he is justifying this commandment as it requires transcendence beyond the essence of being, categorisation and violence. The command and obligation to love foreigners comes at a cost to oneself as it comes with the responsibility to love as if 'the demands of the other matter to me as if they are concerns of mine' (Kim 2024:41). The command is not optional as it says, 'you shall ...' and it represents God's love and holiness when God said 'I am the Lord your God' emphasising that it is God not human legislations.

## Transiting from Leviticus to the South African context

The treatment of others, particularly foreigners in Leviticus 19:33–34, is not just a social call but a divine obligation rooted in God's call of holiness and justice. The Israelites were reminded of their lived experience of alienation and deliverance and were commanded to love foreigners in their land (cf. Wright 2018: n.p.). South Africans shared a similar experience of alienation during the Apartheid era when many were living in exile, housed by many African countries. This divine call is relevant in the South African context today when the country is confronted by the attacks of foreign nationals living in South Africa. 'Foreigners in South Africa' explores the living experiences of foreigners in South Africa, and how far contemporary attitudes and practices have drifted from this biblical principle and the African value of *vhuthu*, and in the process, lost our humanity. Mahatma Gandhi reminds us that our humanity is measured by how we treat the most vulnerable.

## Foreigners in South Africa

According to Statistics South Africa 2013 and Documented immigrants in South Africa 2012, many foreign nationals have come to find refuge, seek employment and search for better living conditions. The socio-economic challenges in many African countries seem to be the major driving factor that leads foreigners to find South Africa as one of their final destinations. Most people travel long distances, crossing borders legally or illegally, crossing dangerous rivers and wilderness to find greener pastures in South Africa. Matsinhe (2001:296) indicates that foreign job seekers come to South

Africa to work in thriving industries, such as mining, when he argues that '...its [South Africa] mining industry has for ages attracted large numbers of migrant workers from neighbouring countries, particularly Mozambique, Malawi, and Lesotho'. This makes South Africa a rescue centre for many African people disadvantaged by their countries' socio-economic and political status. Many African people flock to South Africa, and the onus remains with South Africans on how they receive their fellow African brothers and sisters in their land and share whatever God has blessed them with. One should not forget that not long ago, South Africa was in the same predicament, and the neighbouring countries were the recipients of the South Africans during the Apartheid era.

## Xenophobic attacks in South Africa

Many African people are living in the cities, towns, townships and villages of South Africa. McConnell (2009) argues that 'South Africa is considered a major migrant-receiving country in the region, hosting over five million "visitors" per year'. Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe are among the leading countries of origin for both documented and undocumented immigrants residing in South Africa. In particular, Zimbabwe has experienced significant political and economic instability over the past two decades, prompting millions of its citizens to seek refuge in South Africa, often through irregular migration channels. This complex migration pattern has contributed to a growing population of undocumented immigrants, with Zimbabweans comprising a substantial portion because of the severity and duration of their country's crises. Because of the political and economic turmoil, these African brothers and sisters remain incredibly vulnerable even in South Africa because they have entered the country illegally (McDonald et al. 2008:817). According to Neocosmos (2008:588), 'African migrants are fair game for those with power (police, state bureaucrats, employees at Lindela [Repatriation Centre]) to use in making a fast buck'. The foreign nationals sometimes attempt all means, including bribes, to find themselves in South Africa, hoping for political and economic stability and security. The stability they were hoping for has turned out to be instability because of the fear South Africans have of these immigrants. South Africans feel threatened by many African brothers and sisters coming in numbers to South Africa, as indicated in Neocosmos (2008):

Government departments, parliamentarians, the police...have all been reinforcing a one-way message since the 1990s: we are invaded by illegal immigrants who are a threat to national stability, the RDP, development, our social services, and the very fabric of our society. (p. 588)

The arrival of foreign nationals shocked ordinary citizens, and the government and law enforcement were also shocked and threatened by this. The instabilities and hopeless situations in their respective countries led them to flee to South Africa, hoping for better hospitality and a great welcome embraced through the spirit of Ubuntu.



Mangosuthu Buthelezi was quoted as saying:

If we as South Africans are going to compete for scarce resources with millions of aliens who are pouring into South Africa, then we can bid goodbye to our Reconstruction and Development Programme. (Neocosmos 2008:588)

Many South Africans share these views since democracy. Some believe that the coming of foreign nationals to South Africa is to deprive this country of its wealth. Steinberg supported this view by saying, 'The entire country is leaking into the pockets of Mozambicans...they have flooded this country like water, but they are leaving our land dry' (Steinberg 2008:8). Palmary (2002:2) also argues in the same line when he wrote, 'fear of, and hostility towards, foreigners are related to the widespread perception within South Africa that there are "floods" of illegal immigrants coming to South Africa'. I am firmly convinced that such words are selfish and lead to many problems, especially for leaders. These utterances led people to fight against those they believed had invaded their space and taken their jobs. Some of the irresponsible words by South African leaders have led to violence in protests against foreign nationals. The 2015 xenophobic attacks are attributed to the late Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini, who was quoted as saying, 'Immigrants should pack their bags and leave'. These words instigated violence and a sense of rebellion among South African citizens, leading to violence and fighting throughout the country as people wanted to make sure that the foreign citizens had packed their bags and left the country. It is important to note that this hatred is directed at nationals from other African countries, while those who are coming from different continents are seen as having good reasons to visit South Africa. They are seen as investors and tourists who are here to help our country, while those who are Africans are here to drain the wealth of the country. This is a stereotype that leads South Africans to fight against their fellow Africans.

## The concept of 'vhuthu'

*Vhuthu* is a Tshivenda word from the noun *muthu*, meaning 'a person'. *Vhuthu* is a way of treating other people or one's relationships with others. This translates into the idea that one cannot do without others, as Vhavenda people say, 'muthu ndi muthu nga vhathu' [a person is a person because of other people]. The Vhavenda people, like other Africans, believe that it is more than 'I' that matters but 'We'. According to Mzamo and Damane (2001:25), 'the statement conveys that a person becomes a person only through his or her relationship with and recognition by others'. This philosophy does not only exist among the Vhavenda people but is a general African philosophical notion. In almost all Bantu languages, the concept of *vhuthu* exists. In Zulu, the phrase is expressed as *Ubuntu*; in Sesotho, as *Botho*; in Setswana, as *Botho*; in Tsonga, as *Vunhu*; in Shona, as *Munhu*; in Swahili (Kenya), as *Utu* and in Uganda, as *Abantu*. According to Mohutsiwa (2015), *Botho* or *Ubuntu*, often referred to as African socialism or by other fashionable names, has always been a cornerstone of African, specifically Bantu, societies.

However, it appears that *Botho* is now in decline. African worldview has traditionally emphasized communality and interdependence, yet contemporary societies are increasingly influenced by individualistic ways of living.

Biko (2004:46) argues that 'we regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap but as a deliberate act of God to make us a community of brothers and sisters...'. This is the community that shares pains and joys. The 'we' in the African concept of *vhuthu* extends to social, political, economic and other spheres of life. The 'we' is not limited by the political boundaries created by the colonisers but goes beyond that. Mbiti (1990) argues that 'I am because we are and because we are, therefore, I am'. This contrasts with René Descartes's philosophy of 'I think, therefore I am'. This philosophy reflects individualism, while in Africa, we cherish and embrace Ubuntu and togetherness. Kunda (2009:112) believes that the 'we' transcends national boundaries of imperialism to enforce the otherness of Ubuntu.

This philosophy symbolises the interconnectedness of African people because we share the same values. According to Mulaudzi (2014:97), 'this philosophy of life is indicated by the concept, "both/Ubuntu/vhuthu," which translates as a sense of community and mutual aid'. *Vhuthu* is an ancient philosophy that has driven African people for centuries. Broodryk (2002) argues:

Ubuntu is an ancient African worldview based on the primary values of intense humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion and associated values, ensuring a happy and qualitative human community life in the spirit of family. (p. 56)

According to Mulaudzi (2014:97), *vhuthu* or Ubuntu grooms people to tolerate, be patient and be kind to others. If one can display this type of commitment, then this can be regarded as an unselfish commitment to the needs and wants of intense caring. At some point, as Mohutsiwa (2015) argues, we must choose between fulfilling the destiny Steve Biko believed was Africa's responsibility (to bring a human race to civilisation) and following the rest of the world in letting capitalist aspirations shape our societies if the recent bouts of xenophobic attacks in South Africa are any indication, we, as African people, have chosen greed over *vhuthu*.

## South Africans being called to show 'vhuthu' towards fellow Africans

Mokgoro (1997:3) believes that 'the meaning of the concept, however, becomes much clearer when its social value is highlighted'. Mokgoro (1997:3) further argues that 'Group solidarity, conformity, compassion, respect, human dignity, humanistic orientation, and collective unity have, among others, been defined as key social values of Ubuntu'. Mzamo and Damane (2001:24) also support this, arguing that 'Ubuntu is the foundation for the basic values that manifest themselves in the ways African people think and behave towards each other and everyone else they encounter'.

This is the call to South Africans to start practising the concept of *vhuthu*, *botho*, Ubuntu, or *bunhu* in all South African languages and cultures. South Africans did not go through the liberation struggles to alienate others from South Africa. How about when we were facing the Apartheid regime? Could it not be that God is reminding us, like the Israelites? We have to ask ourselves these types of questions every day if we are to arrive at the correct conclusion: Africa has to fight xenophobia harder than we have ever fought anything else. We have to fight it like we fought cruel colonialists, we have to fight it like we fought for freedom and we have to fight it harder than we have ever fought anything because xenophobia is Africa's most significant problem. This call suggests that South Africans are to identify themselves with the other African brothers and sisters, as Mulaudzi (2014:97) argues that from an Ubuntu point of view, what is more critical is sensitivity and sympathy towards the needs and wants of others.

## Vhuthu is a decolonial tool for embracing fellow Africans

Because the concept of *vhuthu* is found in most African languages and cultures, it symbolises unity based on our values as Africans. Looking at Africa from this concept should automatically liberate Africans from the colonial borders that led us to call those who do not belong within our own borders 'makwerekwere'. In South Africa, those who are not from within the boundaries of South Africa and specifically from other African countries are mocked as *makwerekwere* (Nyamnjoh 2010:66), and some of them are associated with crime, drugs and human trafficking (Neocosmos 2008: 588; cf. Mhiripiri 2010:288–289). The connotation attached to foreign nationals has its roots in South Africa's colonial history because the colonisers' cultural impact has eroded the 'us' of Ubuntu. Matsinhe (2011:299) argues that for one to rightfully place the behaviour of South Africans towards other African brothers and sisters, it has the imprints of colonial impact. The colonial history has left South Africans with Afrophobia and a colonial social unconsciousness. The use of Ubuntu can liberate South Africans and Africa at large. The proper application of Ubuntu, which is social, political and economic, can liberate South Africans from the colonial imprints that continue to haunt them. The liberation through Ubuntu will continue to manifest in all African people and cultures. South Africans can liberate themselves by viewing themselves through the eyes of Ubuntu, which, according to Tambulasi and Kayuni (2005:148), is the underlying foundation of African communities' culture.

## Conclusion

Leviticus 19:33–34 and the African philosophy of *vhuthu* or Ubuntu give one answers to so many questions that one might have concerning the question of being an alien in the African context. The two complement each other because they teach that a person should be treated with respect and dignity. People in the Old Testament were moving from their different countries for political, social, and economic reasons, and they resided among the Israelites. The Israelites were to

treat them with love, respect and dignity. This is the same situation with South Africa, where people from different African countries are in South Africa for various reasons that led them to flee to South Africa. The challenges faced by many African countries are political, social and economic. South Africans who understand Ubuntu must treat their fellow Africans with love, respect and dignity. A proper understanding of *vhuthu* or Ubuntu will help South Africans not mock foreign nationals by calling them *makwerekwere* because it takes away an individual's humanity.

## Acknowledgements

### Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

### Author's contribution

N.M. is the sole author of this research article.

### Ethical considerations

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

### Funding information

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

### Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article, as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

### Disclaimer

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