

Editorial

HULISANI RAMANTSWANA (UNISA)

This issue comes out when our world is embroiled in turmoil with wars ravaging the planet. The Russia-Ukraine war has been ongoing for over a year, the civil war in Sudan is in its sixth month and, more recently, the Israeli-Palestine war has flared up again. While the current war between Israel and Palestine was instigated by Hamas' violent and inhumane killing of 1400 people in Israel and the kidnapping of over 200 people, in just three weeks, Israel's aggressive and vicious response has resulted in the loss of over 8000 Palestinians and the massive destruction of infrastructure through its military bombardments and ground operations in Gaza. The people living in Gaza are marked for death; they have nowhere to run as the borders are closed, and they daily have to look death in the eye in the face of Israeli military aggression. What the Palestinian people in Gaza require is a ceasefire, an end to the war, the right to live and not simply humanitarian aid without a ceasefire. In this war, the biopolitics at play is evident in the failure of some of the Euro-Western countries to call for a ceasefire and their 'licence' to the Israeli state to kill under the banner of "Israel has the right to defend itself", which, in effect implies that in their horizon Israeli's bodies are more important than Palestinian bodies and furthermore, only Israel has a right to inflict collective punishment on Palestinians and not the other way round.

The first article in this issue is by Wilfred Warning, who passed away after submitting the article for review. We are grateful to Dr Warning's family for allowing us to continue with the publication of his work. In the article, Warning pays attention to the literary devices in the Pentateuch, which points to canonical intentional resumptive repetitions in the text in its final form. Following a canonical approach, Warning argues that repetitions in the Pentateuch in its final form should be viewed as "*bewußt synthetische Darstellung*" (conscious synthetic representation), which points to theologically oriented texts.

For their part, Doerpinghaus and Wüncch analyse the social structure in the Jacob story using Social Network Analysis (SNA). The authors argue that, while SNA has the potential to illuminate the text in new and exciting ways, it requires preliminary exegetical work and tends to be an extension of narrative analysis. In a similar vein, Stone's article engages in a social scientific analysis

* To cite: Hulisani Ramantswana, "Editorial," *Old Testament Essays* 36 no. 2 (2023): 323–324. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2022/v36n2a2>.

Prof Hulisani Ramantswana is the General Editor of *OTE*. He is a professor of Old Testament in the Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies, University of South Africa. Email: ramanh@unisa.ac.za; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6629-9194>.

of the Jethro character in the Hebrew Bible using concepts from group processes in social psychology. For Stone, the Jethro character is complex as it embodies an identity both of an insider and an outsider to the Israelite group. Stone also highlights the reception of the Jethro character in Origen’s Christian interpretation and the Rabbinic interpretation in *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael*. Mtshiselwa on the other hand considers the intertextual relationship between Lev 25:2–7 and other biblical texts on the Sabbath tradition (Exod 23:10–11; Deut 11:8–17; 15:7–18; Neh 5; 9:32–37; 13). Mtshiselwa argues that Lev 25:2–7 does not serve to legitimise the Sabbath tradition during the Persian period based on the earlier Pentateuchal sources and that the Lev 25:2–7 text was creatively used by the author of Nehemiah to address the socio-economic challenges of the period.

In her article, Maleke Kondemo engages in a gender-sensitive reading of the book of Ruth, considering the plight of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo who must put their bodies at risk to provide for their families. In Kondemo’s view, in as much as the book of Ruth is steeped in patriarchal norms, Ruth’s story presents an emancipatory potential for women to overcome their challenges without necessarily operating within the web of male power. In their article, Damian Odo et al. engage in a contextual reading of Job 9:1–24 by paying attention to the issue of retributive justice. The authors draw a parallel between the plight of Job and the suffering of some of the people of Enugu State in Nigeria.

Dunham’s article addresses the issue of possible redaction of the Psalter in its final form. Dunham supports the idea of wisdom redaction of Psalter by pointing to the introductory Pss 1 and 2 and several other literary features that point to the Psalter’s intertextual link with the book of Proverbs, David’s wisdom, the presence of sages and the wisdom framing of the book. In his analysis of the presentation of Hezekiah in Isa 1–39, Giffone argues that in as much as Hezekiah figure is presented positively, this figure is eschatologised—the deliverance during the time of Hezekiah becomes a shadow of a glorious salvation in the future. Ahiamadu’s reading of Jeremiah (30:7) draws on Hegelian dialectics and socio-rhetorical analysis in the context of the socio-political ills in Nigeria. For Ahiamadu, just as the prophet had an apocalyptic vision of a better future for Judah and Jerusalem, so too, in the Nigeria context, a socio-political change for the better may emerge in the dialectic process.

In his article, Poniatowski explores various scenarios to highlight what the locust and army represent in Joel 1 and 2. He argues that the ambiguity in the text allows for multiple, varying and even contradictory interpretations. The final article is by Jančovič and it examines the terms used for epidemics in the Hebrew Bible namely *deber*, *qeteb* and *rešep*, considering also the contexts in which they appear and their function.

Enjoy reading the current issue.