

Rereading Texts of “Targeted Killings” in the Hebrew Bible: An Indigenous Knowledge Systems Perspective

Temba T. Rugwiji

University of Venda

rugwiji1964@gmail.com

Mogomme A. Masoga

University of Limpopo

alpheus.masoga@ul.ac.za

Pfalelo E. Matshidze

University of Venda

Pfarello.Matshidze@univen.ac.za

Abstract

The biblical text is replete with narratives of targeted killings (TKs), although it is not stated as such. For example, David is depicted as “a man after God’s own heart” (1 Sm 13:14). However, when David was on his deathbed, he summoned his son Solomon to kill his enemies, namely Joab son of Zeruah (1 Ki 2:5) and Shimei son of Gera (1 Ki 2:8). From an indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) perspective, this essay analyses David’s killings in view of TKs in the following eras: the apartheid era in South Africa; the post-apartheid period in South Africa; colonial Rhodesia; during the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe’s independence; and in the post-independence Zimbabwean era. It is explored that for the majority of African cultures, the spirit of a killed person will always return as *ngozi* (“avenging spirit”) to afflict the killer or a blood relative of the guilty person with various curses, illnesses or deaths.

Keywords: The Bible; religion; violence; targeted killings (TKs); Africa; pan-African; *ngozi*; South Africa; Zimbabwe; indigenous knowledge systems (IKS)

Introduction

The Bible offers many examples of murders undertaken to advance the political interests of the killer (David 2002, 2; Ford 1985, 7–24). King David is one striking example. In numerous cases, David’s actions contrast what the Bible portrays of him. David kills Uriah



Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae
<https://upjournals.co.za/index.php/SHE/index>
Volume 44 | Number 1 | 2018 | #3556 | 17 pages

<https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/3556>
ISSN 2412-4265 (Online)
© The Author(s)



Published by the Church History Society of Southern Africa and Unisa Press. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

and takes Bathsheba, Uriah's wife (2 Sm 11:2–5), yet the Bible depicts David as “a man after God's own heart” (1 Sm 13:14). In another incident, while on his deathbed, David summons his son Solomon to kill his enemies, namely Joab son of Zeruiah (1 Ki 2:5) and Shimei son of Gera (1 Ki 2:8). God affirms David's brutality when He refuses him to build the temple because David had “shed much blood on earth” in God's sight (1 Chr 22:8). This paper is a comparative study of characteristics of targeted killings¹ (TKs) in ancient Israel and in our modern post-biblical world with a particular focus on South African and Zimbabwean contexts. Most TKs in Africa emanate from political violence, either through instigation or negligence as the leadership focuses on empire-building (Gunda 2008, 299–318). In view of indigenous knowledge systems² (IKS), this essay condemns TKs in the strongest terms among African societies. For instance, among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, consequences for killing is *ngozi* (avenging spirit) which returns to afflict either the killer or a blood relative of the wrongdoer with various misfortunes, illnesses, or deaths (Mawere 2010, 218). The affliction of *ngozi* is settled by compensation which comprises payment of a herd of cattle, among other requirements.

Research Methodology

The research study upon which this article is based, utilises comparative study as a method. Comparative study focuses on contemporary phenomena within real life context/s (Yin 1989, 1). Comparative study employed in this study explores TKs in the biblical text in view of similar phenomena in our modern post-biblical world—with a particular focus on South African and Zimbabwean situations. In addition, existing literature on TKs already in circulation also comprises our data pool. These include secondary sources such as books, book chapters and journal articles on relatively appropriate themes consisting of TKs, IKS and gossip, among others. For Soanes, Waite and Hawker (2001, 552) “gossip is a casual conversation or unsubstantiated report about other people, whisper, hearsay, and informal chit-chat.” Invaluable contributions by anonymous individuals which assisted in developing the present argument have been accessed through gossip. Gossip, which derived from funeral gatherings, parties or other unsolicited platforms has been utilised to “sieve from the chunk” the authenticity of TKs and the functionality of IKS in South Africa and in Zimbabwe.

TKs in the Bible

The Bible presents God as the “God of light and life and the God of order” (Waltke 1974, 58). God created humanity in order to “rule over the fish of the seas and the birds of the air and over every other living creature that moves on the ground” (Gn 1:26–30). Humanity was also given “every seed-bearing plant on the face of the earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it.” In other words, Adam had a responsibility of managing the environment. In Genesis 4:2b, Cain is depicted as the first murderer. However, Cain is worried after killing

1 Steven David defines TKs as “the intentional slaying of a specific individual or group of individuals undertaken with explicit governmental approval” (David 2002, 2). See also Gross (2006, 324); Murphy and Radsan (2009, 405).

2 Ajibade (2003) defines IKS as “the knowledge systems developed by a community as opposed to the scientific knowledge that is generally referred to as modern knowledge.” See also Grenier (1998).

Abel and says: “Everyone who finds me shall slay me” (Gn 4:14). Since the first humans to be created were Adam and Eve (Gn 2:26–27), Cain was probably afraid of his own parents who would kill him because there were no other people elsewhere as yet. If the story or myth, as Hamilton (1990, 57) puts it, of other people living in the land of Nod is taken literally (Gn 4:16–17), then Adam and Eve were not the first people to be created. It is important at this point to note that modern Bible believing communities literally believe in the claims of the Bible, and the creation narrative itself. Both Jews and Christians believe that when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sinned, their punishments brought disruption to manhood and womanhood (Chase 2013, 16). However, educated Western Christians today probably do not grant much weight to this historical consensus (Collins 2010, 147).

The story of Noah and the flood is a striking example of the depiction that the Bible makes of God as a murderer. God caused mass murder of humans, animals, creeping creatures and birds, “all of that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died” (Gn 7:22). God “repented” that he would not do it again (Gn 8:21). Circumcision was also critical in the “eyes” of God that would cause death for ignoring it. God’s covenant with Israel demanded that: “Every male child among you shall be circumcised” (Gn 17:10). It is the presentation we get from the Bible in which those who are not circumcised (or those who did not circumcise those who are supposed to be circumcised) stay alienated from God, and may even face death. For example, God had sought to kill Moses but Zipporah, Moses’ wife, saved Moses by circumcising their son (Ex 4:24–26). It is presupposed that the story of Moses and circumcision shows the importance of penises to God and his hatred of foreskins; God can allow the killing in order to preserve the penis through removal of foreskin/s. In Genesis 22:1–12, Abraham had secretly planned to kill his son as a sacrifice, and God made Abraham a hero for attempted murder by showering him with promises of blessings (Gn 22:17–18). It appears that God did not remember his promise against previous mass murder because when he appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre (Gn 18:1), He could no longer hide his intent to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Gn 18:17), which he finally did (Gn 19:24–25). However, God’s character as being the architect of destruction is challenged in the book of Qoheleth, which is concerned more with metaphysics (Gordis 1981, 370). Qoheleth is obsessed with man’s inability to discover the ultimate truth about the universe, the purpose of creation, the goal of human existence, and the nature of death.

The book of Judges—one of the most violent books of the Hebrew Bible—contains many reports of people who were killed in different ways (Spronk 2004, 993). For example, in Judges 16:29, Samson—who is blind and facing death—requests God: “Give me strength just this once, O God, to take revenge of the Philistines, if only for one of my two eyes.” Samson’s request: “Let me die with the Philistines” (Judges 16:30) could be regarded as a suicide in the same way we regard targeted or suicide bombing in the modern understanding of the term (Shemesh 2009, 159). Of course, Samson’s goal was not intended to kill oneself, but to use one’s death to kill others (Shemesh 2009, 160). Suicide or attempts to commit suicide, in the authors’ view, can also be interpreted as internalisation of “targeted killing.” This could also be said about Saul. Saul had intended to kill David on several occasions (1 Sm 18:11; 19:1–2, 10–15). However, when Saul was injured during the war with the

Philistines (1 Sm 31:3) he decided to commit suicide by *falling* on his own sword (1 Sm 31:4). One would agree with Yael Shemesh's opinion that Saul's falling on his own sword should also be seen as an instance of the concept of reward and punishment and the principle of measure for measure (Shemesh 2009, 163). In the end Saul kills himself by falling on his sword in fulfilment of the principle that the weapon of an enemy or evil man is ultimately turned against himself (Shemesh 2003, 92). There are numerous other texts in which God is implicated as the architect of murder.

David

David's killing scheme is presented more clearly by his keeping of mercenary troops, without whom he would not have obtained his kingdom (Sheffler 2001, 79). David is portrayed as a targeted killer at a tender age when he perceived himself as capable of fighting the giant Goliath (1 Sm 17:33). Both David's brothers and King Saul had disapproved of David facing the Philistine giant (1 Sm 17:28–33). However, David insisted by arguing that God had delivered Goliath into his hands (1 Sm 17:46). David is reported as killing Goliath with a stone from a sling (1 Sm 17:49) (Smith 1933, 2). In another incident, David—who had matured both in killing and in stature—kills 200 Philistines and brings their foreskins to Saul as a pride price for his first wife, Michal, Saul's daughter (1 Sm 18:27). Initially, Saul had only asked for 100 foreskins for Michal (1 Sm 18:25). One wonders what Saul wanted to do with the foreskins of 200 dead Philistines. In our view, Saul's action might have been one of the reasons why God disapproved his kingship. Saul made numerous other mistakes before God, which include: offering sacrifices, which was the exclusive function of priests; ordering of the army to abstain from food; and his sentencing of Jonathan (Scheffler 2000, 78). For David and his men to get down to circumcising 200 dead bodies takes sheer bravery and blood-thirstiness. Such an exposure would obviously mould David into becoming a serial killer. We also read that Absalom is killed by the general of his father's (David's) army (Spronk 2004, 992).

Although it is believed that many portions of the Old Testament were written during the flowering of cultures which developed when Solomon was king over Israel (cf. Scheffler 2001, 87), it is also argued that the United Kingdom of David and Solomon did not last long (Soggin 1984, 189). Besides the murders of those perceived to be David's and Solomon's enemies, the state was in reality on the verge of collapse, with many sectors of the population oppressed and exploited (Rugwiji 2008, 41). The luxurious lifestyle of the court and extensive building programmes placed a heavy tax burden on the majority poor, and many were forced into labour gangs to carry out Solomon's projects (Birch et al. 1999, 256). It is not surprising that the division of the monarchy is attributed to Solomon's tenure of office (Soggin 1984, 41).

In another gruelling incident, while David was on his deathbed, he instructed his son Solomon to kill Joab and Shimei (2 Sm 16:5–7; 1 Ki 2:8). One would also want to compare the aspect of revenge with that of the story of Samson in the book of Judges discussed above. The story of Samson is perceived as the only one in the Bible in which the overt motive for

suicide is revenge (Shemesh 2009, 159). Even though committing of suicide is not explicit in the story of David on his deathbed, David's murder of Joab and Shimei shows he did not want these two to live after the end of his own life. In comparison, given that the motive for Samson's ultimate act of revenge is also personal rather than national where he says: "To take revenge of the Philistines, if only for one of my two eyes" (2 Sm 16:28) (Fishelov 2000, 6–63), one would see the murder of Joab and Shimei by David as personal because Shimei, for example, had previously cursed David (2 Sm 16:5–7; 1 Ki 2:8). In other words, at the time of his death, David is "teaching" his son that killing is the method to be sustained in order to revenge against those perceived as enemies. Ironically in the previous incident, David had instructed Joab to scheme the murder of Uriah (2 Sm 11:15), which Joab did. David's act demonstrates that when a superior instructs his junior to carry out TKs, it becomes an ideology which is perpetuated by those in the lower ranks in the line of command. Apparently, Joab had murdered Abner, the son of Ner (2 Sm 3:27). It appears Abner had previously killed Joab's brother Asahel (2 Sm 2:23), and this was out of personal revenge over the death of Asahel whom Abner had slain (2 Sm 2:12–23; 3:26–30; Wood 1970, 263). David, desiring to court favour with the northern tribes, now did all he could to dissociate himself from the deed, showing "some sorrow that it had happened" (2 Sm 3:28–39) (Wood 1970, 263).

Next, TKs are explored in the context of murders during the liberation struggle in South Africa.

TKs in South Africa

The killings and deaths during the apartheid era in South Africa still haunt both perpetrators and victims. In addition to incarceration and unjustified imprisonment, the uprising and the massacre of the Soweto children in June 1976 (Gallagher 2002), we have it on good record that the South African security police were notorious for torture (Venter 2014), TKs and other atrocities (Lalu 2004). Due to limitation of space, this study will not discuss biographies of all South African martyrs. However, Steve Biko has been chosen as a representative example.³ Biko was among the victims of the apartheid killings when he succumbed to death on 12 September 1977 after sustaining head injuries believed to have been inflicted by the apartheid security police (Lalu 2004, 107). Biko has been labelled as an advocate of African Socialism and he proposed a socialist solution—that is, an expression of black communalism. Lalu (2004, 111) explains that the political legacy of Biko, as one of the founders of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in South Africa, is often critiqued for its overt emphasis on subjectivation so that the struggle for the constitution of the self is seen as ultimately inadequate to the tasks of fighting apartheid. Biko's *I Write What I Like* (1986) registers the critical importance of the text as an incomplete history (Lalu 2004, 107). Appiah and Gates (1997, 77) chronicle that Biko was initially involved with the multiracial National Union of South African Students, but after he became convinced that black, Indian and

3 Nelson Mandela himself spent 27 years in prison. This study is not going to discuss this South African icon. Voluminous contributions have extensively dealt with the life of this South African statesman. For example, see Rugwiji (2014).

coloured students needed an organisation of their own, he helped found the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), whose agenda included political self-reliance and the unification of university students in a "black consciousness." Matshidze (2017) concurs that Biko was against any partnership with the apartheid government, whether in the form of Bantustan or coloured and Indian covenants with the regime.⁴ Matshidze (2017) contends that Biko believed that those fighting apartheid in South Africa should link with anti-colonial struggles elsewhere in the world and with activists in the global African diaspora who were combating racial prejudice and discrimination. Biko envisioned that a future socialist South Africa could become a completely non-racial society, with individuals of all ethnic backgrounds living peacefully together. Matshidze (2017) concludes that Biko did not support guarantees of minority rights, believing that doing so would continue to recognise divisions along racial lines. Biko is suspected to have died of torture, although apartheid authorities dismissed the claim arguing that Biko died of prolonged hunger strike (Appiah and Gates 1997, 76–77). Torture was the order of the day during the apartheid era. Robertson (2006, 265) admits that:

It took the death of Steve Biko under torture to provoke the [UN] General Assembly into drafting and accepting the 1984 *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, which requires state parties to take jurisdiction to punish torture committed within their territory either by or against their nationals.

Dowdall (1991, 51) concurs that over the past 25 years torture by state security forces has escalated in South Africa. Thanks to the advent of a democratic South Africa, the *UN Convention against Torture* (Muntingh 2008, 29) brought relief to almost every South African. Until recently, many Afrikaners would see nothing wrong with apartheid. As Gallagher (2002) remarks, the Afrikaners justified apartheid as God-ordained, and claimed that their churches found theological justification for apartheid because "Africans have been cursed since biblical times" (Farisani 2014, 212). As Farisani further observes (2014, 208), Scripture has also been used to justify slave trade with particular reference to African forced labour in sugar plantations in the USA.

TKs in Post-Apartheid South Africa

However, in practice the *UN Convention against Torture* did not guarantee that post-apartheid South Africa would not have its fair share of violence and TKs. Politically-induced killings in post-apartheid South Africa are increasingly becoming worrisome. The same view is echoed by Bruce (2013, 13) who remarks that the period since the transition to democracy has been associated with a major decline in the role played by violence in South African politics. Political commentators, such as David Bruce, have estimated that 14 000 deaths occurred as a result of political violence between 1990 and the elections in April 1994 (Bruce 2014, 2). Bruce further notes that:

For a killing to be "political" it must be motivated by or connected to contestation or rivalry, either regarding access to political power, or conflict over the way in which the individual

4 Matshidze, P. 2017. Conversation with author during a preliminary data gathering phase at the University of Venda on 3 April.

targeted (or a group aligned with that individual), is exercising his or her political power. (Bruce 2014, 2)

The massacre of congregants by terrorists at Saint James Anglican Church in Kenilworth, Cape Town, on 25 July 1993 remains one of the most indiscriminate attacks to be witnessed in South Africa. One of the survivors, Charl van Wyk, wrote a book (*Shooting Back: The Right and Duty of Self-Defense* [2007, 128]) in which he explained the TKs in detail. The attack occurred during the Sunday evening service. Eleven people were killed, while 53 others were severely wounded. The culprits, Sichumiso Nonxuba, Bassie Mkhumbuzi, Gcinikhaya Makoma and Tobela Mlambis were arrested 10 days later as people responsible for the attacks, who were subsequently charged in 1996. Van Wyk (2007) provides the names of the deceased as follows:

- Guy Cooper Javens.
- Richard Oliver O'Kill.
- Gerhard Dennis Harker.
- Wesley Alfonso Harker.
- Denise Gordon.
- Mirtle Joan Smith.
- Marita Ackermann.
- Andrey Katyl.
- Oleg Karamjin.
- Valentin Varaksa.
- Pavel Valuet.

Bruce (2013, 13) thinks that TKs have been exacerbated by the action of the police in response to protests, which in some cases have resulted in fatalities, such as the killing of Andries Tatane in April 2011 and that of 34 people during a strike by miners in Marikana in August 2012. The question which everyone is grappling with is: Why would the police, who are supposed to carry out a constitutional mandate of protecting citizens but are implicated in killing acts, be entrusted with responsibilities of keeping the law and order? The next question which follows the above is: Would security details execute their duties without command from superiors? The above two questions serve to elucidate that police chiefs are responsible for killings for some reasons yet to be known by society, which continues to demand some answers. Bruce (2013, 15) argues that most of the police killings in South Africa are politically-motivated, estimating a total of 107 deaths in the period from 2003 to 2013.

TKs by the Rhodesian Security Forces

Temba Rugwiji's book *Reading the Exodus Liberation Motif in the Post-Biblical World: The Zimbabwean Society and the Reality of Oppression* (Rugwiji 2012), deals with the colonial era in Rhodesia extensively. It is, therefore, critical to note that Rugwiji's ideas (among others) in this regard are helpful in reformulating this section of the study. Rugwiji (2012, 13)

explains that the country that is known as Zimbabwe was called Southern Rhodesia during the colonial era. Rugwiji argues that those who intend to subjugate targeted peoples, first of all describe the targeted lands as “good” and “spacious.” Dube (2000, 63) also explains that in Exodus the God-given land is characterised positively. It is described as “a good and spacious land” (Ex 3:8; 34:2). Rugwiji (2012, 18) sees the same trend of describing the sub-Saharan African country as “good” in order to justify colonising it, which after doing so, they named it Rhodesia, after Cecil John Rhodes. Other scholars have already affirmed that the colonisers likened Rhodesia with Canaan after the wilderness (e.g. Mlambo 1972, 13). However, the occupation of Rhodesia was not without bloodshed. Mlambo (1972, 1) explains that the constitutional and political development of Southern Rhodesia was reshaped by the revolt of the Ndebele and the Shona people in 1896–1897 against the rule of the British South Africa Company, which resulted in a bloody war. Rugwiji (2012, 96) says Cecil John Rhodes’s involvement in the colonisation of Southern Africa in general and Rhodesia in particular was very clear. Greg Mills and Grahame Wilson confirm that much has been written about the Rhodesian “bush war”—otherwise known as the Second *Chimurenga* (liberation struggle)—lasting from 1964 to 1979 (Mills and Wilson 2008, 22). There is no war without casualties. However, much of killings and bloodbath were unjustified as they targeted unarmed civilians and school children. Although ZANU-PF’s military wing, namely the Zimbabwe African Nation Liberation Army (ZANLA), caused serious casualties in the Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF), much of the damage was exerted on infrastructure (bridges, roads, church buildings, etc.), individual people such as missionary personnel—particularly in the remotest parts of the country—as well as rural communities who were suspected to be sell-outs. For example, the horrid killing of seven Catholic missionaries at Musami on 6 February 1977 (Nowell 1977, 31) was believed to have been carried out by ZANLA guerrillas. Ellim Mission also suffered serious casualties on missionaries (see Pera 1991, 29–31). As Mills and Wilson (2008, 23) admit, the Rhodesian bush war involved atrocities and dirty tricks on both sides. Mills and Wilson (2008, 23) explain the attack by the Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF) as follows:

In November 1977, around 200 Rhodesian troops crossed the border in the biggest “pre-emptive” cross-border raid yet. With air bombardment provided by the Rhodesian Air Force (RhAF), the Rhodesians attacked the 4,000-strong ZANLA base at Chimoio in Mozambique.

Hove (2012, 193) affirms that in a desperate attempt to curb the freedom fighter infiltration, the Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF) employed chemical and biological warfare which killed and maimed thousands of people and animals. When the Zimbabwean living nationalists define colonial Rhodesians as “barbaric” and “cruel,” reference is always made to the Chimoio and Nyadzonja attacks where thousands of civilians, including freedom fighters, perished. In addition to landmines and gunfire, which claimed many innocent lives, poisoning of water sources was also another strategy of mass killing either the freedom fighters or local village communities (Hove 2012, 199).

TKs during the Liberation Struggle

Although the Rhodesians employed various tactics to destabilise the liberation struggle, TKs among the freedom fighters themselves were also endemic. It is believed by some that the freedom fighters were discouraged from “spilling blood” (Lan 1985, 151–153). However, in contrast to this philosophy, revelations have emerged that the liberation struggle was characterised by beatings, killings and rape, among other methods of torture (Chikowero 2008, 146).

The Nyadzonia and Chimoio massacres came barely two years after the mysterious death of Herbert Chitepo in 1975 (White 2003) as a result of a bomb blast in a car in Zambia. Chitepo’s death was held by some as an inside job in which Josiah Tongogara was suspected of “complicity in the murder” (Chung 2006, 16). Tongogara himself also died in a car crash in Mozambique in December 1979, only four months before the achievement of independence by Zimbabwe (Chung 2006, 139). It is further stated that the Land Cruiser in which Tongogara was travelling overturned while trying to overtake a lorry that was towing a large trailer (Chung 2006, 139). Tongogara’s mysterious death is held by critics as emanating from leadership squabbles within ZANU, although no name is directly implicated in the allegations. However, some reading between the lines suggests that Tongogara’s death might have been orchestrated to eliminate him for the previous crimes he had allegedly committed. It is probable that there were individuals within the liberation struggle ranks who still held that the ZANU military commander had killed Chitepo in Zambia, although the Zambian court had acquitted and finally released Tongogara and the ZANU high command in September 1976 through the expertise of a lawyer named Platts Mills, after spending 18 months in a Zambian prison (Chung 2006, 139). However, the timing of Tongogara’s death was inconceivable. The popular view is that the Rhodesians who had thought that Tongogara would become leader of independent Zimbabwe, orchestrated the murder because they did not trust his policies. However, this assumption might be suspect because it is held that Ian Smith (former Prime Minister of colonial Rhodesia) was quoted saying Tongogara’s death was an “inside job” (Nyarota 2006, 111).

In Tanzania, the tragic massacre of some members of the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU)’s military wing, the Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) by ZANLA guerrillas at both Morogoro and Mgagao camps in August 1976 (Chung 2006, 147), was testimony of leadership and ethnic differences between ZAPU and ZANU, represented by Joshua Nkomo and Herbert Chitepo, respectively. The former was from the Ndebele ethnic tribe and the latter hailed from among the Shona people who constitutes about 90–95 per cent of Zimbabwe’s population. The *Gukurahundi* insurgence in post-independence Zimbabwe is believed by some to be the result of long-standing hostilities between the Mabelebes and MaShonas, which could be traced back to the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe’s independence. Alexander and McGregor (2004, 82) concur that at independence, ZIPRA guerrillas were also seen as a political danger, and they were targeted in a vicious war of repression in the 1980s.

Some reports say that the freedom fighters also exerted torture and TKs on ordinary members of communities. It is alleged that acts of terror were rampant in rural areas where the guerrillas coerced both material and moral support among peasants (Kriger 1992). *Pungwe* (overnight music celebrations) (Chikowero 2008, 146) characterised the liberation struggle at which guerrillas would continuously sensitise communities on the significance of the liberation struggle. Besides being an occasion for punishing offenders or perceived “sell-outs,” *pungwe* was a popular event in areas where guerrillas had declared total control. One ex-combatant recalled how villagers were assembled to sing *Chimurenga* songs by concluding that: *Vanamukoma vanouraya* (“Comrades, they kill”) (Schmidt 1997, 306). At *pungwe* people would start singing, while guerrillas were punishing targeted individuals suspected of having some connection with the Rhodesian government. Parents who were alleged to be having a son/daughter or brother/sister who was employed as a soldier or police in the Rhodesian government, were targeted for punishment which usually resulted in death. Besides its role in motivating determination among the freedom fighters, the overnight music gala would bring people together to inflict pain, injury and death. Unfortunately, TKs of the liberation struggle have continued to define this nation in post-independence Zimbabwe (Muwati, Gambahaya and Mangena 2006, 5).

TKs in Post-independence Zimbabwe

The violence and TKs of the liberation struggle in colonial Rhodesia have subsisted with the coming of Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980. Since the early years into democratic rule, post-independence Zimbabwe has been punctuated with politically-motivated TKs (Rugwiji 2013, 5). Between 1982 and 1987, the Zimbabwean government unleashed the military might of the Fifth Brigade against villagers in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces following incidents of dissident activities in these areas (Chung 2006, 10). The operations which were codenamed *Gukurahundi*—a Shona name which means the rain that washes away the chaff from the last harvest before the spring rains—were no less brutal than those of the Rhodesian forces in the 1970s (Chung 2006, 10). Over twenty thousand civilians were massacred in the *Gukurahundi* insurgency (Rugwiji 2012, 233). The above observations serve to affirm that the perpetuity of revolutionary ideologies within ZANU-PF in post-independence has a long history from the liberation struggle. When Muwati et al. (2006, 17) stated that “only violence perpetrated by the Rhodesian forces against civilians is officially remembered,” the implication is that TKs, such as that of the *Gukurahundi* insurgency, are usually swept under the carpet. Mugabe had always believed that only war would bring freedom to Zimbabwe (Meredith 2008, 2). For some critics it is, therefore, not surprising that the endemic nature of violence is continued in post-independence Zimbabwe. Hence, Mamdani’s (2001) assessment might be considered that most victims of torture become killers.

Towards the end of the 1990s, the introduction of the fast track land reform programme (Moyo 2011, 257), which peaked in the early 2000s, was also characterised by revolutionary ideologies and killings that targeted white-owned commercial farmers and their employees. However, it is not an overstatement to say that indigenous Zimbabweans are not opposed to the equitable redistribution of land. Of all the achievements (such as construction of roads,

hospitals and schools) that Mugabe's tenure of office has underscored in the history of Zimbabwe since independence in 1980, the land reform programme was a milestone. However, three key issues arising from the previous land allocation present themselves as problematic and impediments to the economy as a whole: 1) Only the elite in the ruling party were beneficiaries of fertile pieces of land which they are not sufficiently utilising, hence the whole programme was viewed as partisan (*Human Rights Watch* 2002, 3); 2) The government had not done some ground work from a well-informed position as preparatory measures towards resettlement in relation to empowering new farmers with resources prior to land acquisition; and 3) Land acquisition was marred by violence and TKs (*Human Rights Watch* 2002, 4), in the process attracting criticism that Zimbabwe's land reform was politicised and intended to subdue white commercial farmers.

Since the early 2000s the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) has emerged as the strongest contender to ZANU-PF since independence in 1980. The MDC was formed in September 1999, and Tsvangirai has been at the helm of the party since it was formed (Nduru 2006). In the elections of 2008, the MDC almost clinched victory. The escalation of violence and abductions, especially in the province of Mashonaland East and Harare in 2008 (*Human Rights Watch* 2008, 1), testifies to the intensity of TKs by the ruling elite. One senior ZANU-PF leader was quoted saying: "There is no way we are to lose the runoff. We are going to make sure of that. If we lose the runoff, then the army will take over. Never be fooled that Tsvangirai will rule this country" (Dixon 2008). The Human Rights NGO Forum reported that about 1 061 documented incidents of torture occurred in 2002, as well as 52 assaults, 29 disappearances, 58 murders and seven rapes (Davidson and Purohit 2014, 114). It is further reported that from 1 January to 31 July 2003, a further 390 incidents of torture were recorded by the Forum, along with 238 assaults, four disappearances, eight murders, and six rapes (Davidson and Purohit 2014). People were abducted from their homes at night, physically ill-treated in detention and threatened with further harm, should the victims report their attacks (Madoda 2015, 10). ZANU-PF is accused of "killing one in order to frighten a thousand" (Stiff 2000, 22); an implication that TKs are meant to serve two main purposes: 1) elimination; and 2) inflict shivers of fear, described elsewhere as "politics of fear" (Neocosmos 2008, 588–589). It is further stated that in Mashonaland West, soldiers reportedly handed out bullets to villagers and told them: "If you vote for MDC in the presidential run-off election, you have seen the bullets; we have enough for each one of you, so beware" ("Mugabe's Brutality to Force Election Victory Revealed." *The Independent*, 9 June 2008). The potential to kill for losing the elections was reported by a ZANU-PF candidate identified as Rugeje, who was reported warning villagers at a campaign rally in Masvingo that on his return after the elections "the helicopter will be full of bullets" ("Politicians Threaten to Wage Post-Election War," *The Financial Gazette*, 19 June 2008). Political protagonists in Zimbabwe (Biri, Chitando and Mashiri 2014, 173), who shared Mugabe's revolutionary ideologies, were also unshakable in terms of perceiving that nonconformity to the ruling party or antagonism was treacherous. However, among African cultures *ngozi* (avenging spirit) is a reality, and the spirit of a murdered person will always "come back" to revenge. It does so by afflicting members of the guilty family with endless curses, illnesses and deaths.

TKs and *Ngozi* from IKS Perspective

The Israelite culture takes a special place when it comes to the views concerning death and afterlife (Wächter 1967). Klaas Spronk affirms that, unlike the Hittites and the peoples of Mesopotamia, the Israelites did not seem to be familiar with a cult of the dead, in which the deceased ancestors are venerated and believed to have divine power to help or harm the living (Spronk 2004, 987). Although Israelite culture could have been influenced to some extent by other cultures of the ancient Near Eastern world, the Torah prohibited Israel from venerating the dead. In Leviticus 21 we read that a normal priest is not allowed to touch a dead person other than close relatives (Spronk 2004, 989). A high priest should not come close to any dead person because too much attention for death and the dead detracts from the correct veneration of the God of Israel (Spronk 2004, 989). In ancient Israel, an avenging spirit was non-existent. The ancient Israelites seem to react to death in a “modern” way, especially in their sober accepting of death as a reality (Spronk 2004, 995). Death was not viewed as the door to a life after death, but primarily as the conclusion of this life (Spronk 2004, 995).

IKS in Africa is complex, yet very advanced and practical. While Western cultures always regard it as scientific and legitimate when something is proven in a laboratory and is physical (e.g. a rifle and its firepower), Africans believe in the potency of curse, misfortune, bad omen or *ngozi* inflicted by either the spiritual world of dead ancestors or through witchcraft (*huroyi*) by either neighbours and traditional rituals by one’s relatives. Among African cultures (e.g. South African and Zimbabwean), the spirit of a person does not completely die. The Shona people of Zimbabwe, in particular, always perceive that *mushonga we ngozi kuiripa* (the only solution to appease the avenging spirit is reparations or restitution) (Muwati et al. 2006, 6). Technically, *ngozi* is the spirit of a person who has been murdered and then comes back to seek revenge in the family of the murderer by causing unfathomable sorrow through illnesses, misfortunes, or a series of deaths until the perpetrator pays reparations to the offended family (Mawere, 2005). *Ngozi* is an aggrieved spirit or the revenge inflicted by such a spirit (cf. Reynolds 1990, 1–38). Manyaradzi Mawere further opines that *ngozi* is premised on the idea of “tit for tat” (Mawere 2010, 218). Although targeted killers among Africans are familiar with this popular ancient adage, hunger for power convolutes them from reconsidering the consequences afflicted by *ngozi* for murder. For example, it is widely believed in Zimbabwe that the spirit of a person who was murdered or not adequately buried can afflict and even possess members of the lineage of the person responsible (Lan 1985, 35). Although Schmidt (1997, 302) has revealed that *ngozi* can be appeased through appropriate healing rituals, the disastrous consequences of *ngozi* would be unbearable such as deaths of members in the family or lineage of the culprit, or other regrettable misfortunes. In that sense, for a typical African, killing of any form is avoidable. It is believed that even if a person is sentenced to a jail term for murder, the avenging spirit of the dead person continues to torment the killer during and after serving the jail term until the avenging spirit is ritualised and the appropriate compensation made. The victim of the murder needs to be replaced by compensation in the form of a herd of cattle and a virgin girl, if the murdered person was a

man, and a herd of cattle and a small boy, if the murdered person was a woman (Mawere 2010, 218). In this case, one would talk of *ngozi* and compensation in view of the concept of restorative justice (Muwati et al. 2006, 5).

Conclusion

This paper has shown that the biblical text pictures God as commanding Israelite kings to kill Israel's enemies. For example, God killed all the people with the flood and saved Noah and his family (Gn 7:22); Sodom and Gomorrah was destroyed by fire when God sent angels to kill everyone in the city (Gn 18:17); Moses was saved by his wife, Zipporah, when God had pledged to kill Moses for failing to circumcise their son (Ex 4:24–26); in Egypt, God killed all the firstborn of both animals and humans in an attempt to set Israel free (Ex 12:29). David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sm 13:14), yet David killed Uriah for his wife Bathsheba (2 Sm 11:2–17). It was also explored that at his deathbed, David instructed his son Solomon to kill Joab and Shimei (1 Ki 2:5–8) for previous crimes they had committed. We have seen various examples in which David was implicated in brutality and shedding of blood. God himself admitted David's brutal acts when He refused David to build the temple for him because David had shed much blood on earth in the sight of God (1 Chr:22–8). The present discussion was an attempt to explore David's TKs when he had come of age and towards the end of his life.

It was shown that in both South Africa and Zimbabwe, TKs in pursuit of political mileage have continued to cause displacement, migration, economic meltdown, escalation of poverty and destabilisation of peace. For example, it was demonstrated that the current socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe is due to pursuance of revolutionary ideologies by the leadership. Biri, Chitando and Mashiri's (2014, 173) proposition may be helpful where they opine that: "There is an urgent need for Zimbabweans to engage in honest introspection in order to identify factors that contributed towards the crisis." This essay calls for a continuous need to engage each other in an honest dialogue as an attempt to avoid further killings. This should involve everybody, such as government authorities, community leaders, individuals, civic organisations, the church and the family—which is the nucleus of the nation (Muwati 2005, 84). Of interest to further inform the above consciousness is Baldwin's (1995) illuminative observation (quoted in Muwati et al. 2006, 17) that: "The past is all that makes the present coherent ... The past will remain horrible as long as we refuse to assess it honestly" (Baldwin 1995, 14).

References

- Appiah, P., and H. L. Gates. 1997. *The Dictionary of Global Culture*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 76–77.
- Ajibade, L. T. 2003. "A Methodology for the Collection and Evaluation of Farmers' Indigenous Environmental Knowledge in Developing Countries." *Indilinga: African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems* 2: 99–113.
- Alexander, J. and J. McGregor. 2004. "War Stories: Guerrilla Narratives of Zimbabwe's Liberation War." *History Workshop Journal* 57 (1): 80–100. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/57.1.79>.

- Baldwin, J. 1995. *Notes of a Native Son*. London: Penguin Books.
- Biko, S. 1986. *I Write What I Like*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Birch, B. C. et al. (eds.). 1999. *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Biri, K., E. Chitando and P. Mashiri. 2014. "Vanhu Vekwedu Vanotya Mwari [Our People are God-fearing]: The Valorisation of Zimbabwe in Fungisai Zvakavapano-Mashavave's Wenyasha nde Wenyasha." *The Journal of Pan-African Studies* 7 (3): 162–176.
- Bruce, D. 2013. "A Provincial Concern? Political Killings in South Africa." *South African Crime Quarterly* 45: 13–24.
- Bruce, D. 2014. "Political Killings in South Africa: The Ultimate Intimidation." Institute of Security Studies. Policy Brief 64: 1–5.
- Chase, M. 2013. "God's Judgment on His Blessing: How Genesis 1:28 Informs the Punishments on Adam and Eve." *JBMW* 16–21.
- Chikowero, M. 2008. "Our People Father, They Haven't Learned Yet: Music and Postcolonial Identities in Zimbabwe, 1980–2000." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34(1): 145–155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070701832932>.
- Chung, F. 2006. *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga: Memories from the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Weaver Press.
- Collins, J. C. 2010. "Adam and Eve as Historical People, and Why It Matters." *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 62 (3): 147–165.
- David, R. S. 2002. "Fatal Choices: Israel's Policy of TKs." *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 51: 1–26.
- Davidson, L., and R. Purohit. 2014. "The Zimbabwean Human Rights Crisis: A Collaborative Approach to International Advocacy." *Yale Human Rights and Development Journal* 7 (1): 114.
- Dowdall, T. L. 1991. "Repression, Health Care and Ethics under Apartheid." *Journal of Medical Ethics* 17: 51–54.
- Dixon, R. 2008. "Zimbabwe is on a Political Precipice." *The Los Angeles Times*, 24 May 2008, n.p.
- Dube, M. W. 2000. *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. St. Louis: Chalice Press.
- Farisani, E. B. 2014. "Interpreting the Bible in the Context of Apartheid and Beyond: An African Perspective." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 40 (2): 2007: 225.
- Fishelov, D. 2000. *Samson's Locks: The Transformations of Biblical Samson*. Tel Aviv: University of Haifa Press and Zmora-Bitan.
- Ford, L. F. 1985. *Political Murder: From Tyrannicide to Terrorism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Gallagher, M. 2002. The Birth and Death of Apartheid. BBC News World Edition, 17 June. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/575204.stm> (accessed 10 April 2017).
- Gordis, R. 1981. "Religion, Wisdom and History in the Book of Esther: A New Solution to an Ancient Crux." *JBL* 100 (3): 359–388. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3265960>.
- Grenier, L. 1998. *Working with Indigenous Knowledge: A Guide for Researchers*. Ottawa: IDRC.
- Gross, M. L. 2006. Assassination and TKs: Law Enforcement, Execution or Self-Defence? *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 23 (3): 323–335. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5930.2006.00347.x>.
- Gunda, R. M. 2008. "The Reign of Bishop Nolbert Kunonga: Nationalist Spirit or Empire Builder?" *Missionalia* 36 (2and3): 299–318.
- Hamilton V. P. 1990. *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Hove, M. 2012. "War Legacy: A Reflection on the Effects of the Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF) in South Eastern Zimbabwe during Zimbabwe's War of Liberation 1976–1980." *Journal of African Studies and Development* 4 (8): 193–206.
- Human Rights Watch* 2002. "Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe." *Human Rights Watch* 14 (1): 1–44.
- Human Rights Watch* 2008. "Bullets for Each of You: State-Sponsored Violence since Zimbabwe's March 29 Elections." *New York*, June, p.19.
- Kruger, N. J. 1992. *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lalu, P. 2004. "Incomplete Histories: Steve Biko, the Politics of Self-Writing and Apparatus of Reading." *Current Writing* 16 (1):107–126.
- Lan, D. 1985. *Guns and Rain: Guerrillas Mediums in Zimbabwe*. Harare.
- Madoda, V. 2015. "Margaret Dongo is a Spoilsport." *The Sunday Mail*, 9 August, p.10.
- Mamdani, M. 2001. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.
- Matshidze, P. 2017. Conversation with author during a preliminary data gathering phase at the University of Venda on 3 April.
- Mawere, M. 2005. "Life after Bodily Death: Myth or Reality?" *The Zambezia Journal of Humanities* 32(2): 26–46.
- Mawere, M. 2010. "Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKSs) for Establishing a Moral, Virtuous Society: Lessons from Selected IKSs in Zimbabwe and Mozambique." *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 12(7): 209–221.
- Meredith, M. 2008. *Mugabe: Power, Plunder in the Struggle for Zimbabwe*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball.
- Mills, G., and G. Wilson. 2008. "Who Dares Loses? Assessing Rhodesia's Counter-Insurgency Experience." *The Rusi Journal* 15 (6): 22–31.

- Mlambo, E. 1972. *Rhodesia: The Struggle for a Birthright*. London: Hurst and Company.
- Moyo, S. 2011. "Land Concentration and Accumulation after Redistributive Reform in Post-Settler Zimbabwe." *RAPE* 38 (128): 257. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2011.582763>.
- "Mugabe's Brutality to Force Election Victory Revealed." *The Independent* (UK), 9 June 2008, n.p.
- Muntingh, L. 2008. "The Betrayal of Steve Biko: South Africa's Initial Report to the UN Committee against Torture and Responses from Civil Society." *Law, Democracy and Development* 12 (1): 29–48.
- Murphy, R., and A. J. Radsan. 2009. "Due Process and TKs of Terrorists." *Cordozo Law Review* 31 (2): 405–450.
- Muwati, I. 2005. "Victimhood in Mungoshi's Shona Novels: A Critical Study." *Zambezia* 32(1): 78–94.
- Muwati, I., Z. Gambahaya and F. Mangena. 2006. "Echoing Silences as a Paradigm for Restorative Justice in Post-conflict Zimbabwe: A Philosophical Discourse." *Zambezia XXXIII (i/ii)*: 1–18.
- Nduru, M. 2006. "Politics–Zimbabwe: The Mediation that Never was." *Inter Press Service News Agency* (July). file://A:\news.asp.htm (accessed 23 August 2015).
- Neocosmos, M. 2008. "The Politics of Fear and Fear of Politics: Reflections on Xenophobic Violence in South Africa." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 43 (6): 588–589. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909608096655>.
- Nowell, R. 1977. "Who Really Killed the Rhodesian Missionaries?" *The Voice* xiii (50): 31–36.
- Nyarota, G. 2006. *Against the Grain: Memoirs of a Zimbabwean Newspaperman*. Cape Town: Zebra.
- Pera, S.A. 1991. "They Gave Their Lives: A Tribute to the Known and Unknown Nurse Martyrs." *Curationis* 14 (2): 29–31.
- "Politicians Threaten to Wage Post-Election War." *The Financial Gazette*, 19 June 2008, n.p.
- Reynolds, P. 1990. "Children of Tribulation: The Need to Heal and the Means to Heal War Trauma." *Africa* 60 (1): 1–38. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1160425>.
- Robertson, G. 2006. *Crimes against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice*. London: Penguin.
- Rugwiji, T. T. 2008. "Reading the Exodus from a Zimbabwean Perspective." MA dissertation. University of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Rugwiji, T. T. 2012. *Reading the Exodus Liberation Motif in the Modern Post-Biblical World: The Zimbabwean Society and the Reality of Oppression*. Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Rugwiji, T. T. 2013. "Appropriating Judean Postexilic Literature in a Postcolonial Discourse: A Case for Zimbabwe." Unpublished PhD thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria.

- Rugwiji, T. T. 2014. "Towards the Quest for Transforming Old Testament Scholarship: The Impact of Political and Socio-Economic Crises on Scholarship in Zimbabwe." *OTE* 27 (3): 1009–1034
- Scheffler, E. 2000. "The Literature of Israel's United Kingdom." In Boshoff, Scheffler and Spangenberg 2000, 78.
- Scheffler, E. 2001. *Politics in Ancient Israel*. Pretoria: Biblica.
- Shemesh, Y. 2003. "Measure for Measure in the David Stories." *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 17: 89–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09018320310000508>, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14697680208629736>.
- Shemesh, Y. 2009. "Suicide in the Bible." *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 37(3): 157–168.
- Schmidt, H. 1997. "Healing Wounds of War: Memories of Violence and the Making of History in Zimbabwe's Most Recent Past." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 23(2): 301–310. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057079708708538>.
- Smith, J. M. P. 1933. "The Character of David." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 52(1): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3259476>.
- Soanes, C., M. Waite and S. Hawker (eds.). 2001. *The Oxford Dictionary, Thesaurus, and Word Power Guide*. Oxford: University Press.
- Soggin, J. A. 1984. *A History of Ancient Israel: From the Beginning to Bar Kochba revolt AD 135*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- Spronk, K. 2004. "Good Death and Bad Death in Ancient Israel According to Biblical Lore." *Social Science and Medicine* 58: 987–995. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2003.10.035>.
- Stiff, P. 2000. *Cry Zimbabwe*. Alberton: Galago Publishing.
- Van Wyk, C. 2007. *Shooting Back: The Right and Duty of Self-Defense*. Cape Town: WND Books.
- Venter, Z. 2014. "Man tortured for days by cops gets R250 000." *Pretoria News*, 04 June. www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/man-tortured-for-days-by-cops-gets-r250-000-1.1698389 (accessed 27 February 2018).
- Wächter, L. 1967. *Der Tod Im Alten Testament*. Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag.
- Waltke, B. K. 1974. *Creation and Chaos*. Portland, OR: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary.
- White, L. 2003. *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Text and Politics in Zimbabwe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Wood, L. 1970. *A Survey of Israel's History*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Yin, R. K. 1989. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. London: SAGE Publications.