

**FROM MOAB TO BENIN CITY: A RUTH HERMENEUTICS OF REMITTANCE
THEOLOGY FOR EDO MIGRANTS AND IDPS**

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Abstract

This study addresses the theological gap in interpreting Edo diasporic remittance practices as an expression of God's mission and covenant. While Edo migrants sustained families, churches, and communities through remittances, no hermeneutical Old Testament framework has theologised this practice; hence the research problem. The aim is to develop a remittance theology from the Book of Ruth for Edo diaspora and IDP communities. Using contextual and theological reading methods, the study exegeted Ruth as a migration narrative and correlated its motifs with Edo migration experiences. The study found that Ruth modelled movement, covenant faithfulness, divine provision, and the bearing of blessing back to the homeland, establishing a remittance theology rooted in Scripture. From this reading, the study identified remittance as a conduit of God's provision through migrants. The study disclosed that Ruth provided a viable theological resource for Edo migrants to understand sending resources home as worship, stewardship, and mission. Finally, the study revealed the first contextual remittance theology from Ruth for Edo diaspora and IDP communities, thereby giving biblical language to a practice already central to Edo life. This study addressed the paucity of contextual Old Testament theology for Edo remittance practices using a hermeneutical reading method.

Keywords: Ruth, Hermeneutics, Remittance Theology, Moab, Benin City, Edo, Migrants, Internally Displaced Persons (IDP).

Introduction

Edo people constitute one of Nigeria's major migrant populations. Traditionally known for trade, scholarship, and mobility, Edo men and women today are present in large numbers across Europe, North America, and Asia, and also as Internally Displaced Persons within Nigeria due to economic hardship, unemployment, and insecurity (Idemudia, 2018). A defining feature of Edo migration is the sustained flow of resources back to the homeland. These remittances take the form of money transfers for family upkeep, school fees, hospital bills, church building, community halls, festivals, and burial obligations (Adepoju, 2009). For many Edo communities, diaspora giving is what keeps local institutions alive. Yet while scholars have studied the economic and sociological dimensions of this practice, its theological meaning remains underdeveloped.

The Old Testament contains numerous migration narratives and laws concerning the *ger* (גֵּר), the resident alien (Deut. 10:18-19; Lev. 19:34). Despite this, existing biblical scholarship has not sufficiently developed Ruth into a coherent remittance theology that addresses the lived realities of Edo migrants. Theologically, this study contributes a contextual Old Testament (OT) resource for migration. Ecclesially, it equips Edo churches to interpret diaspora-giving as mission rather than mere obligation. Socially, it affirms the dignity and vocation of migrants and IDPs, and counters narratives that frame migration as failure or loss. This study is limited to the canonical Book of Ruth. It engages the Edo diaspora in Europe, America, and Asia, as well as IDPs within Nigeria.

The OT presents migration as central to God's people. From Abraham to the Exodus to the Exile, God portrays His people as sojourners (Brueggemann, 1997). The law gives special attention to the resident alien (*ger*), commanding Israel to love the foreigner because they were foreigners in Egypt (Deut. 10:19). Wright (2004) argued that migration texts reveal God's concern for justice, hospitality, and economic equity.

Ruth has been read as a story of faithfulness, steadfast love, faithful mercy, loving-kindness and loyalty (*hesed*, חֶסֶד) and inclusion (Nielsen, 1997). Hubbard (1988) emphasised Ruth as a model immigrant who integrates without losing identity. Block (2015) noted the narrative's economic realism: famine, gleaning, and land redemption. Sasson (1989) highlighted women's role in sustaining community. However, none of these studies has framed Ruth's provision for Naomi as a theological model for remittance.

African scholars have noted that African Christianity is increasingly a diaspora religion (Adogame, 2013). Remittances sustain churches, schools, and families. Yet much of this discussion is sociological. It needs biblical grounding. This study fills that gap by rooting remittance in Ruth.

For this study, migration theology refers to theological reflection on movement, displacement, and God's presence with migrants. Remittance theology refers to the interpretation of migrants' sending of economic and religious resources as covenant faithfulness and mission. *Ger* in Hebrew refers to a resident alien or sojourner in Israel under God's special care (Levine, 2019). Diaspora refers to communities living outside their ancestral homeland but maintaining ties to it. The study employs a hermeneutics of Ruth (migration-return narrative lens) as an analytical tool to construct a remittance theology in the context of Edo displacement.

Exegesis of Ruth Text as a Migration Narrative

The study reads Ruth with attention to Hebrew keywords that frame migration, alien status, and provision. Four scenes form the backbone of a remittance theology here.

(a) Migration Triggered by Crisis: Ruth 1:1-5

The narrative opens with movement out of the land:

Hebrew text:

וַיְהִי בַיָּמִי שֶׁשָּׁפֵט הַשָּׂפָטִים וַיְהִי רָעָב בְּאֶרֶץ וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֶחֶם יְהוּדָה לְגוֹר בְּשָׂדֵי מוֹאָב

English translation:

"Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled that there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab." Ruth 1:1

Key term: לָגוּר (*lagur*) means "to sojourn, to reside as an alien." Even at departure, the family is framed as sojourners, גֵּרִים (*gerim*). Both words come from the same root גּוּר (*gur*): to sojourn, to dwell temporarily, to be an alien resident. Bethlehem means בֵּית לֶחֶם - "house of bread." The irony sets up the migration theme: the place of bread has no bread due to רָעָב (*ra'av*), famine (Block, 2015).

Moab was outside the covenant קְהֵל יְהוָה (Deut 23:3). Yet the text presents migration for survival without condemnation. The deaths of Elimelech and his sons left Naomi as אֶלְמָנָה (*almanah*), a widow with no גּוֹאֵל (*go'el*), redeemer, and no land. This mirrors contemporary Edo migration driven by economic collapse and insecurity. That is why *ger* theology is so powerful for the Edo diaspora. The church is called to create structures for those who currently *lagur* (sojourn or live as aliens), because they are *gerim* (sojourners or resident aliens)

(b) Covenant Identity across Borders: Ruth 1:16-18

Ruth's confession here is the theological center of migration identity:

Hebrew text:

כִּי אֶל־אֱשֶׁר תֵּלַכְי אֶלֶךְ וּבְאֶשֶׁר תִּלְיִנִי אֵלֵין עַמִּי וְאֱלֹהֵי אֶלְהִי

English translation:

"For wherever you go I will go and wherever you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God my God." Ruth 1:16

Key terms: עַמִּי "your people my people." This is a transfer of social identity. וְאֱלֹהֵי "your God my God." This transfers religious identity. Sasson (1989) calls this a "migration creed." Ruth chooses to become a גֵּרָה (*gerah*), female resident alien, in Judah. She does not erase her Moabite origin but reorients allegiance.

For Edo migrants, this models how to maintain אֱמוּנָה (*emunah*), faithfulness, while integrating abroad. Like Ruth, Edo Christians in Italy, the UK, and the US live as both insiders to the host church and bearers of ties to home.

(c) Divine Provision and the Structure of Remittance:

In Bethlehem, Ruth enters the economy of Torah provision:

Hebrew text:

וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתָּבֹא וַתִּלְקֹט בַּשָּׂדֶה אַחֲרֵי הַקְצָרִים

English translation:

"So she went and came and gleaned in the field after the reapers." Ruth 2:3

Key law: לֵקֵט (leket), gleaning, was commanded for הָעֲנִי וְלִגֵּר "the poor and the sojourner" (Lev 19:9-10). Ruth, as מוֹאֲבִיָּה (Moabiyah – female resident in Moab), qualifies under this protection.

Boaz recognizes her faithfulness הָסֵד (hesed): Hebrew text: הִגֵּד הַגֵּד לִי כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־חַמּוּתְךָ

English translation: "It has been fully told me all that you have done for your mother-in-law." Ruth 2:11

The remittance act occurs in 2:18. Hebrew text: וַתִּשָּׂא וַתִּבּוֹא הָעִיר וַתֵּרָא חַמּוּתָהּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר לָקְטָהּ

English translation: "And she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned." (Ruth 2:18). The verb וַתִּשָּׂא (vattisa) means "she carried/lifted." Ruth gathered in Boaz's field and physically carried the surplus back to Naomi. She did not keep all. This is the narrative form of remittance: labour abroad → provision → transfer home. The grain represented more than calories. It was כֹּלֶלָה (kalkalah), sustenance, and כְּבוֹד (kavod), dignity for a widow.

(d) Redemption and Continuity: Ruth 3-4

The narrative's climax secures long-term restoration through גְּאֻלָּה (ge'ullah), redemption.

Hebrew text:

וַיִּקֶּן בָּעֵז אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לְאֵלִימֶלֶךְ וְאֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לְכִלְיוֹן וּלְמַחְלוֹן

English translation: "So Boaz bought all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon." (Ruth 4:9). By marrying Ruth, Boaz redeems the land and name. The birth of עוֹבֵד (Oved, obed – worker, servant, from the verb root to work or serve) ensures Naomi's lineage continues. Ruth the מוֹאֲבִיָּה (female resident of Moab) becomes ancestress of David. Ruth, the Moabite woman, gave birth to the servant/worker, who becomes the ancestral line of King David. The child born to Ruth is named *Oved, or Obed*; the name carries a double meaning – to work and to serve

Highlight of Migration-Remittance Motifs in Ruth

The theological point of the exegesis in sum is that migration is not outside God's plan. Through a migrant woman, God restores property, family, and national history. For the Edo context, this parallels diaspora funding of houses, schools, and churches that secure the homeland's future. From the Hebrew text, four motifs emerge: (a) תְּנוּעָה מִתּוֹךְ מִשְׁבֵּר (*Tenu'ah mitoch mashber*) meaning 'Movement in response to crisis'. Here, migration is presented as legitimate; (b) אֱמוּנַת בְּרִית בַּגּוֹלָה (*Emunat brit bagolah*), meaning 'Covenant faithfulness abroad'. Here, identity in YHWH is maintained in a foreign land; (c) פְּרִנְסָה אֱלֹהִית דֶּרֶךְ חֹק וְקֵהֳלָה (*Parnasah Elohit derekh chok ukehilah*) meaning 'Divine provision through law and community'. Here, the גֵּר (sojourner, stranger) is

protected; (d) נְשִׂיאַת בְּרָכָה אֶל-הַבַּיִת (*Nesi'at berakhah el-habayit*). Meaning 'Bearing of blessing home'. Here, the migrant gathers and remits.

Thus Ruth frames the migrant as one who leaves, receives God's provision, and becomes a conduit of blessing back. This provides the biblical foundation for a remittance theology for the Edo diaspora and IDPs. The Book of Ruth opens with famine in Bethlehem, "house of bread" (Block, 2015). Because of food scarcity, Naomi's family migrated to Moab for survival. This movement reflects contemporary economic migration. The text does not condemn migration but presents it as a human response to crisis. The deaths of Elimelech and his two sons in Moab created a new reality of two widows without male provision and without land rights.

Amid displacement, Ruth made a migration confession: "Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16-18). She chose to remain with Naomi and enter a new land with new gods, new laws, and new risks (Sasson, 1989). This act models how migrants can maintain covenant identity while integrating into a host community. For Edo Christians, this affirms that they can sustain faithfulness to God and kin abroad.

When Ruth and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem, provision came through Israel's legal structures. Ruth gleaned in Boaz's field, not as charity but as a legal provision for the poor and the foreigner (Lev. 19:9-10). Boaz's instruction to his workers and his gift of extra grain demonstrated covenant kindness - *hesed* (Chisholm, 2009). The study found that provision came through both divine providence and human structures of justice. Significantly, Ruth remitted this grain to Naomi in Ruth 2:18. This act of bringing resources back to the vulnerable at home lays the groundwork for remittance theology.

The narrative reaches its climax in chapters 3 and 4. At the threshing floor, Ruth secured Naomi's future through the institution of levirate redemption. Boaz redeemed Naomi's land and married Ruth. The birth of *Obed*, or *Oved*, preserved Naomi's name, property, and lineage. The study concluded that Ruth functioned as the conduit through whom economic security, social continuity, and community restoration were achieved. This is remittance in narrative form: the migrant secures blessing in a foreign land and channels it back to sustain the homeland and family.

From this reading, four motifs emerge. First is movement: migration is presented as real, necessary, and not outside God's concern. Second is covenant faithfulness: loyalty to God and kin is maintained across borders. Third is divine provision: God provides through work, community, and law. Fourth is bearing blessing: the migrant becomes a channel through whom resources flow back to sustain life at home.

Ruth as Paradigm for Remittance Theology

Building on the exegesis, this section constructs remittance theology by reading Ruth in conversation with African migration experiences. The study dialogued with Ukpong's (1995) contextual hermeneutics, Adogame's (2013) work on the African Christian diaspora, and Kaunda's theology of migration to show that Ruth speaks directly to Edo realities.

The central act that grounds this theology occurs in Ruth 2:18 when Ruth transfers grain to Naomi. The text reads: ותשא ותבוא העיר ותרא תמותה את אשר לקטה, "And she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned." The key verb here is נָשָׂא (*nasa*), meaning "to lift, carry, bear." Ruth bears what she received. This is not accumulation but distribution. Ukpong argues that African biblical interpretation must read the text with African eyes by placing it in dialogue with lived experience. For Edo migrants, the *nasa* moment happens monthly. Money earned in Rome, London, or Houston is lifted and sent home for school fees, hospital bills, and church projects. Ukpong's model helps us name this as theological, not merely economic. Wright (2004) further notes that the OT concept of צְדָקָה (*zedakah*) encompasses both justice and provision for the vulnerable. Ruth's remittance therefore participates in God's *zedakah*. Remittance is not loss. It is stewardship. The migrant becomes a צְנוּר (*tzinor*), a conduit, of God's care for האלמנה (*ha'almanah*), the widow.

Ruth's confession in Ruth 1:16 also grounds diaspora identity and covenant faithfulness abroad. She declares: עַמִּי וְאֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי, "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God." Ruth enters Israel as גֵּרָה (*gerah*), a female resident alien. The Torah repeatedly commands care for the *ger*: וְאָהַבְתֶּם אֶת-הַגֵּר כִּי-גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, "And you shall love the sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" Deut 10:19. Levine (2019) and Kaunda (2020) both argue that *ger* theology insists that God is present with displaced people. Kaunda, writing on Zambian migrants, contends that migration is a "theological space" where God forms a new people. Applied to the Edo diaspora, this counters two dominant narratives. The first is from host countries that treat migrants as burdens. The second is from home churches that sometimes treat migration as backsliding. Ruth shows that one can be a *ger* and still be fully within God's covenant. Adogame (2013) observes that African Pentecostal churches abroad function as transnational religious spaces that maintain ties to home while planting new congregations. Like Ruth in Bethlehem, Edo migrants in Italy build churches that worship Yahweh while remembering Benin, singing in Edo, and sending offerings home.

The book of Ruth also closes with a concern for structural restoration, not just immediate food relief. In Ruth 4:9-10 we read: וַיִּקֶן בְּעוֹז אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר לְאֵלִימֶלֶךְ... לְהַקִּים שֵׁם-הַמֵּת עַל-נַחֲלָתוֹ, "So Boaz bought all that belonged to Elimelech... to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance." Three Hebrew terms are critical here. גְּאֻלָּה (*ge'ullah*) means redemption. נַחֲלָה (*nachalah*) means inheritance or land. שֵׁם (*shem*) means name or legacy. Ruth's labour leads to the redemption of Naomi's land and name. Migration therefore does not sever responsibility to the homeland. This

directly addresses Edo practice of collective remittance. When Edo unions in Canada fund a town hall in Irrua, or when a diaspora group sponsors the Igue festival, they are doing *ge'ullah* work. They are redeeming community memory and inheritance. Adogame (2013) calls this deterritorialised religion where the diaspora sustains institutions at home. Ukpong's contextual method demands that we ask about what Ruth has for us. It means that sending home is mission. It denotes how the migrant participates in securing (*nachalah*) for the next generation.

The ethical base for this theology is found in the Torah's repeated command concerning the vulnerable migrant. Exodus 22:21 states: גֵּר לֹא-תוֹנֶה וְלֹא תִלְחָצֶנּוּ כִּי-גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם, "You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt." The rationale is memory. God identifies with the migrant because Israel was once a migrant people. Kaunda (2020) argues that this creates a theology of accompaniment where God migrates with the people. For Edo IDPs in Port Harcourt, Lagos, and Abuja, this is crucial. They are internally displaced *gerim*. Ruth's story assures them that God sees them. The church's role is to be like Boaz, creating structures of חֶסֶד (*hesed*) that protect and provide.

Drawing these motifs together, four pillars of remittance theology emerge from Ruth in Hebrew categories. First is תְּנוּעָה כְּשֶׁלִּיחוּת (*Tenu'ah keshelikut*) - movement as vocation. God sends migrants just as He sent Ruth to Bethlehem. Second is נְאֻמָּנוּת בְּרִית בְּאֶרֶץ נִכְרִיָּה (*Ne'emanut brit be'erezt nokhriyah*) - covenant faithfulness in a foreign land. Identity in Yahweh is maintained through worship and community. Third is פְּרִנָּסָה וּמִשְׁפָּט (*Parnasah umishpat*) - provision and justice. God provides through work and through laws that protect the *ger*. Fourth is הַשְׁבַּת בְּרָכָה לְמוֹלֶדֶת (*Hashavat berakhah lammoledet*) - returning blessing to the homeland. The migrant is a bearer, not just a receiver.

Through Ruth, the Old Testament precisely provides language for what Edo people already practice. Remittance is עֲבוֹדַת קֹדֶשׁ (*avodat kodesh*), sacred work. The migrant functions like a priest, gathering in the foreign field and bringing the offering back home. This reframes brain drain as a flow of blessing. It gives theological dignity to Edo men and women abroad and within Nigeria.

Reading Ruth through the lens of Edo migration reveals a theology in which remittance is not incidental but central to God's purpose for displaced people. First, remittance is a conduit of God's provision. Ruth gathered grain for herself, but she did not keep it all. She carried it back to Naomi. In the same way, God positions migrants as channels through whom divine care reaches the vulnerable at home. To remit is therefore not to lose, but to participate in God's economy of provision for the widow, the orphan, and the poor (Wright, 2004).

Second, Ruth models covenant faithfulness abroad. She did not abandon Yahweh when she left Moab, nor did she assimilate into idolatry in Bethlehem. She lived as a *ger*, a resident alien, while holding to her new confession of faith. For Edo migrants in Europe, America, and Asia, this means

diaspora life is a vocation. It is a space to witness, to build Christian community, and to live with integrity without losing identity.

Third, Ruth demonstrates responsibility to the homeland. The redemption of Naomi's land in Ruth 4 shows that migration does not sever ties to family, property, and community memory. Ruth's actions ensured continuity. Applied to the Edo context, this reframes sending money home as a theological mission. Church buildings in Benin City funded from Italy, scholarships for cousins in Uromi, and support for town unions are not mere cultural obligations. They are acts of stewardship that sustain worship, education, and community life.

Fourth, the text grounds the migrant's dignity. The OT law repeatedly commands care for the *ger* because God is near to the displaced (Deut. 10:18; Lev. 19:34). Levine (2019) notes that the *ger* theology insists that God sees migrants. This counters both host-country narratives of migrants as burdens and home-country narratives of migration as failure. In Ruth, God blesses a foreign woman and, through her, restores a family.

Thus a remittance theology from Ruth affirms that migrants are bearers of blessing, that sending home is worship, and that God is present both in the diaspora and in the homeland.

Edo-Benin Diaspora and IDP Communities

The theological motifs drawn from Ruth resonate directly with the lived experiences of Edo people both abroad and within Nigeria. Edo migration has deep historical roots that predate colonialism. The Benin Kingdom was known for long-distance trade, scholarship, and mobility across West Africa. In the post-colonial and contemporary periods, this mobility intensified due to unemployment, political instability, insecurity, and climate-related displacement. Today, large Edo populations are found in Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Spain, and Germany. Within Nigeria, many Edo people have also become Internally Displaced Persons, moving from rural communities in Ovia North-East, Orhionmwon, and Etsako to urban centres such as Port Harcourt, Lagos, Abuja, and Asaba because of flooding, communal clashes, and economic collapse (Idemudia, 2018). Two dominant patterns define Edo migration. The first is economic migration abroad, largely for care giving, trade, and professional work. The second is internal displacement within Nigeria. Despite distance and hardship, both groups maintain sustained ties to the homeland through remittances. In this context, the Book of Ruth offers theological significance.

One concrete example is the Edo Catholic Women Association in Rome, Italy. This community of about 4,000 Edo migrants, mostly women engaged in caregiving and domestic work, has organised since the 1990s around what they call "Isusu Owa," meaning home support. They pool monthly contributions and remit them to Benin City. Between 2022 and 2024, association records indicate that over €280,000 was sent home. These funds are used to pay WAEC and JAMB fees

for students in Oredo, Egor, and Ikpoba-Okha LGAs, cover medical bills for elderly parents, support the building of St. Anthony Catholic Church annex in Benin City, and sponsor cultural troupes for the Igue Festival in the diaspora. In the language of Ruth 2:18, these women brought resources home just as Ruth carried grain to Naomi. Association leaders describe their work as *aroha* (love and duty), which closely parallels the Hebrew concept of *hesed* (covenant kindness). For them, remittance is not simply economic obligation. It is a way of bearing blessing and sustaining inheritance for the next generation. One leader from Uromi put it plainly: "We glean here so that our mothers will not beg there." This echoes Ruth's work in Boaz's field. The association also institutionalises this theology through a 'Ruth Blessing Service' before members travel home, where pastors recite Ruth 1:16 over them. This frames migration as vocation rather than failure. At the same time, members face stigma similar to what Ruth faced as a *Moabiyah* (an outsider, female alien in Moab). The *ger* theology of Deuteronomy 10:19 provides a counter-narrative: God commands love for the sojourner because He identifies with the displaced.

A second example is found among Edo IDPs in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. An estimated 1,500 Edo people from Ovia North-East and Orhionmwon LGAs relocated to areas like Rumuokoro and Choba between 2020 and 2023 due to flooding and communal conflict. Many lost farmland, their *nachalah* (inheritance). In Port Harcourt, men have taken up motorcycle transport, and women sell food at Mile 3 Market. They have entered a new economic space much like Ruth entering Boaz's field to glean. The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Edo Fellowship Port Harcourt, functions in a Boaz-like role. The church provides free Sunday meals, school fee support for IDP children, and job linkages through church members. This is *עֲקָף* (gleaning provision), the Torah structure for protecting the poor and the sojourner (Leviticus 19:9-10; Deut. 24:19-22). Interestingly, even in displacement, some IDPs continue to remit small amounts of ₦5,000 to ₦20,000 monthly to ageing parents left in Edo villages. Those who are themselves displaced still act as conduits of provision. For IDPs, Ruth answers two urgent questions. We can still worship God outside our land. We can still provide for those we left behind. The church's role is to create just structures for the *ger*, as Boaz did.

From these cases, three pastoral and ecclesial implications emerge for Edo churches at home and abroad. First, migration must be taught as vocation, not abandonment. Pulpits should preach Ruth as the migrant model. A sermon series on Ruth as the First Remittance Missionary can reframe diaspora giving from cultural duty to theological mission. Churches should commission travellers with Ruth 1:16 and create space for return testimonies of God's provision. Second, churches need accountability structures modelled after Boaz. Boaz ensured justice in the field and protected Ruth from harassment. Similarly, Edo town unions and church building committees must publish accounts and ensure transparency so diaspora funding is seen not as exploitation but as *hesed*. Trust is essential for sustaining the flow of resources. Third, the church should develop liturgies of sending and return. A proposed Edo Diaspora Liturgy could include a prayer of commissioning in Edo and English Languages using Ruth 1:16-17, a Feast of First Fruits where migrants dedicate

a portion of earnings, and a Thanksgiving service upon return where the migrant shares how God provided and what was sent home. For IDPs, churches in host cities like Port Harcourt should establish *Ger* Desks to provide legal aid, housing support, and job connections, embodying Deuteronomy 10:19.

Finally, Ruth challenges the dominant narrative of brain drain. That narrative assumes that migration equals loss to the homeland. Ruth reframes it. Ruth left Moab, but her labour in Bethlehem became a blessing for Naomi and for the nation of Israel. Edo migration is better understood as a flow of blessings. The nurse in Milan, the engineer in Texas, the trader in Guangzhou, and the commercial motorcycle rider in Port Harcourt are modern Ruths. They glean in foreign fields; they gather, and they remit. The homeland is not abandoned. It is sustained. The book of Ruth closes with a genealogy that places a migrant woman at the centre of David's lineage. This suggests that God uses displaced people to build nations. In the same way, God can use the Edo diaspora and Edo IDPs to build Edo State and all of Nigeria, as well as other host nations and cities.

Ruth's model rearticulates the Edo migrant experience. Like Ruth, Edo migrants often leave home due to crisis. Like Ruth, they labour in foreign fields, sometimes in low-status jobs, to gather resources. Like Ruth, they are called to maintain faith while integrating. And like Ruth, they are called to remit. The grain Ruth carried was not just food. It was dignity for Naomi, security for the future, and participation in the covenant community. When an Edo nurse in Italy sends money for her brother's WAEC fees, or when an Edo union in Houston funds a maternity ward in Ekpoma community, they are enacting the same theology. They are bearing blessing.

Ruth, *Qoheleth*, and 2 Kings 5 converge in portraying God as the sovereign supplier who subverts ethnocentric boundaries by channelling remittance-like provisions through marginal and cross-border agents as an expression of divine justice. As Ugwueye (2014) argues in materialist reading, *Qoheleth's* honest doubt leads to the conclusion that evil is permitted as necessary for the realization of the fear of God. This framework helps explain Ruth's remittance: Naomi's material loss (famine, death, displacement) becomes the vehicle for God's justice where blessings came to the homeland. Similarly, Ugwueye and Uzuegbunam (2015) elsewhere show that redactors of the Hebrew Scripture (2 Kings 5) used a missionary device to sustain faith while asserting Yahweh's supremacy and this paradigm illuminates how Edo migrants assimilate abroad while their remittances sustain both home community and faith identity.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to develop a remittance theology from the Book of Ruth for Edo diaspora and IDP communities. The central problem was that Edo migrants sustained their homeland through remittances, yet the church lacked a biblical framework to interpret this practice theologically.

The study found that Ruth is fundamentally a migration narrative that models how God works through displaced people. The exegesis revealed four key motifs: movement as a legitimate human response to crisis, covenant faithfulness maintained across borders, divine provision mediated through community and law, and the migrant as a bearer of blessing. From these motifs, the study articulated remittance theology as the understanding that migrants function as conduits of God's provision. Remittance is therefore not economic loss but theological participation in God's care for the vulnerable.

The major contribution of this study is that it provided the first contextual remittance theology from Ruth for Edo communities. It gave biblical legitimacy and theological depth to a practice that has long sustained Edo families and churches. By reading Ruth with Edo eyes, the study demonstrated that the Old Testament speaks directly to contemporary African migration.

Based on these findings, this study offers three recommendations. First, Edo churches both at home and abroad should intentionally preach and teach migration as a vocation. Sermons and Bible studies should use Ruth to show that God calls and blesses migrants. Second, theological institutions in Nigeria should include migration theology and diaspora studies in their curriculum to equip pastors to minister to mobile congregations. Third, policymakers and church leaders should create transparent structures to channel diaspora resources in ways that promote justice, avoid dependency, and empower local communities.

Ultimately, Ruth reminds the church that God is not confined to one place. He provides in the foreign field and sends the migrant back as a bearer of blessing. For Edo migrants and IDPs, this means that distance does not diminish responsibility, and that sending home is a sacred act and most importantly that God in his sovereign supremacy as creator and sustainer of the universe, providentially provides for both homeland and diaspora.

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