

Judaism and Migration

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ABSTRACT: Migration in history has generated ethnical and religious synthesis, demographical, cultural, economical, social and political changes. Today, the migration phenomenon has taken amplitude in the context of two unrolling processes with a visible potential for changing the contemporaneous world: the extension of the European Union and the democratization in the Arabic world. Is there any connection between the development of the Judaism and the actual migration phenomenon? The study limits itself at analyzing the migration's origins in the context of the creation of the Jewish people and of the impact of the Judaism upon the world. The conclusion emphasizes the fact that setting the migration concept in relation with the development of the Judaism, has an empirical and a theological support, which reveals the result of a dynamic juxtaposition, as a product of the divine providence. **KEY WORDS:** migration, stranger, Judaism, change, development, providence.

Introduction

Throughout time, migration has had as an effect ethnical, religious and economic changes, followed by the resettlement of political reports on regional level, and presently on a worldwide level, causing crises and changes of values. During this period, in contrast to other ages, besides the constant results of the migration phenomenon,

we notice a new “product”: the globalization of the occidental democratic paradigm.

Beside the important demographic, sociologic, economic changes, determined by the present population’s movements from different territories, there is a change that attains the cultural depths of the societies. The change in question refers to the birth and the consolidation of a way of living based on the aspiration to prosperity, individual freedom and democracy, surpassing the ethnical, religious and other differences.

The contemporary societies attach certain contradictory and variable significances to migration, depending on the evolution of the economic and cultural indicators, and of the collective security and international juridical settlement indicators.

Thus, the migration may end up being seen, in a certain context, as an “invasion” of the poor in a developed society, where they search for economic prosperity. In another context, migration is perceived as a process in which the rich win, attracting the intellectuals of the poor societies, taking advantage of their highly qualified work capacity, without investing in their professional development.

In the biblical history, we discover a process of another type of migration, initiated by the divinity with a certain motivation and purpose. After the definition of the terms, this will be the start of research, followed by the analysis of the beginning, and the development of Judaism. Eventually, we will analyse the impact of Judaism on the Occidental society, which has become “the pattern” desired at a worldwide level, and thus, “the target” of the contemporary migration waves.

Defining the Terms

Migration, migrations f.: voluntary movement of some individuals, or populations from a territory to another, determined by economic, social, political, cultural, natural and other factors.¹

Migrations are a phenomenon of universal proliferation, which has favoured the development of humanity from the genesis to these days. The massive movements of the migrating populations, which

began a long time ago, had deep influences on the existential human fields, from the damaged geographical environment, materialized by the disturbances in the ethno—demographic field, in the economic evolution, the dynamics in the socio-political structures, in the cultural field, confessional relations etc.

The large diversity and complexity of the big migrations impose an epistemological approach of global dimensions, asserting a vast expansion of the horizon. The impact of the big migrations on the development of humanity determines their irradiation and elucidation, needs infusions of new revealing data, and a shaded corroboration of the narrative, linguistic, archeological information, the interdisciplinary types of research being the only effective ones.

Judaism is defined as the religion of the Jews, based on the Bible (OT.) and the Talmud; mozaism.² The word “Judaism”, based on how Emmanuel Levinas describes it in the *Dificila Libertate* (Difficult Freedom), represents a religion, a system of beliefs, rites and moral prescriptions, built on the Bible, the Talmud, Rabbinic Literature, mixed with the mystique and the theosophy of the Kabbalah.

“Judaism” refers to a culture—result or foundation of the religion, but having its own becoming; the source of the big monotheist religions, to which the modern world owes as much as it does to Greece and Rome.”³

Judaism is a revealed religion, which is the basis of Christianity; it is built on the revelation of the Old Testament, and has the role to prepare the world for the return of God’s Son. Judaism is the first religion based on the belief in a unique God—monotheist. Judaism, according to the description of the venerable theologian Hans Kung, is “a fatidic mysterious community”, of everyone who descended from Jacob named Israel, and those converted to Judaism. They are a community based on the experience with the unseen, untouchable, unknown God, “in the light or shadow of whom stood Israel, beginning with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”⁴ Jacob Neusner stated that “Israel” has always meant “the sacred people, the chosen one,” to whom God has gifted Torah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”⁵

Beginnings

To determine the period in which the Jewish man became part of history, it is necessary for us to go back to his origins. Andre Neher captures this moment: "The Jew was born in the same time with Adam, the first man, who had already deposited the germs, simultaneously with the ones of the entire mankind." He states further on that the Jew bears within himself the recollection of some events throughout history, which he reactivates during each Shabbat "The Memorable Day of the beginning".⁶

The whole Creation belongs to God. All people belong to God. Why has God chosen His own people? Why has He chosen Israel?

In the beginning there were the direct ancestors of Abel and Seth, Adam's sons, Noah and Shem being the parents of all the Semites and the Patriarch of Israel, along with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The biblical report describes the succession of generations, inserting some information bound to certain deeds, events and occurrences.

At the beginning, the Genesis relates the role and the purpose of man on Earth, uttered by the Creator, using words that have become verbs: "Be fertile and reproduce yourselves, and fill your land, subdue it and possess it over the fish of seas, over the birds of the sky and over each living thing that moves on Earth".⁷

In an embryonic condition, this message contains the germs of migration. After falling into sin, God decides the banishment of Man from Eden: "Thus, He banished Adam from Eden; and in the East of the Garden of Eden he put some cherubim to twist the flared sword, so that they can guard the path to the tree of life."⁸

This new situation places man in a new posture: if he was "the master" before, having the role of a "governor" or "administrator", he then, is outside of Eden in his new posture, owning the premise of a "traveler".

Shortly after this event, the first descendants of Man appear, Cain and Abel, and the first attempt ended with the first crime in history, at the end of which, Abel, loyal to the Creator, had been killed. After this tragedy, a new determination of man appears, as

a consequence of Cain's deed: "You are damnable now, banished from this field, which has opened its mouth to get the blood of your brother from your hand!

"When you will work the land, may not give you its wealth anymore. Solitary and fugitive you shall be on Earth."⁹ Under these new circumstances, man becomes a "traveler", looking for a more favorable place for living.

During the same period, Adam's son was born, whom he named Seth, the child considered to be a substitute of Abel. Seth also had a son, called Enos, "that was the time people started calling the Name of the Lord".¹⁰

After the flood, Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth got out of the boat, "and by them was the whole Earth covered."¹¹

The event concerning the building of the tower of Babel, created, after the flood, the premises of the peoples' migration.¹² The biblical text relates that, "the entire Earth had a single language and a single way of speech. And it happened, as they had gone East, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they lived there."

People have begun building a fortress with a tower, having as purpose to "let us make a name, not to be spread on the whole surface of Earth." This decision emphasizes the opposing spirit in front of the Creator, in view of the fact that man had been destined to grow, inhabit and administer the land.

The migration was temporary means, necessary in reaching this purpose. For the accomplishment of the divine plan in collaboration with mankind, a new supernatural intervention was necessary, thus "the Lord baffled their language and, from that place, He spread them on the whole surface of the Earth, so they stopped building the fortress."¹³ The tower had been called "Babel" (confusion) the place where the Lord baffled the language of the whole world.

This was the crucial moment when the peoples' migration, which "is spreading all over the Earth", was getting a global dimension.

Throughout the course of history, when some peoples in their development were reaching a certain potential, their edenic instinct to grow and to possess the perverted field, was determining them to expansion movements and new territorial conquests.

Thus, enormous masses of people invaded various territories from time to time, frequently driving chain reactions across wide areas. Ethnic groups had been seriously endangered, and sometimes, they had disappeared, being removed or assimilated by their oppressors.

Peoples' migration, described in the *Illustrated World Great History*, includes the movement of the Semite and Indo-European tribes from the Near East, which was crystallized in the third millennium B.C., with their ascertainment from Mesopotamia to Egypt.

Around 2400 B.C., the Semite Acadians conquered the Sumerian city-states and they formed an empire. The Canaan people settled in Palestine and they established city-states, the same way as the Amorites, natives of Syria, did. The Amorites established the first dynasty of Babylon and they reigned over the old Babylonian Empire.

In the 13th century B.C., the Arameans, Semite ancestors of Jews, made their appearance. They defeated the Assyrians in Syria and Palestine (under the reign of David and Solomon, for instance) and thus, they increased their influence in Mesopotamia after 1100 B.C. The Aramaic Chaldeans finally defeated the Assyrians and they formed the Neo-Babylonian Empire (625–539 BC).¹⁴

From Creation to Migration to History

The Jews¹⁵ were a small group of tribes descendant from the big family of the Semitic peoples. The first Jews weren't "nomads", but farmers and shepherds. They initially settle down in Mesopotamia, but the political and socio-economic pressures determine them to migrate to the Euphrates' and Nile's Valley, "having the Canaan land as their centre of gravity, where different tribes aim to settle down", according to the description of the distinguished Josy Eisenberg.¹⁶

"History begins at Sumer"; but an explanation is necessary: whose history and with whom? In a magisterial manner, Andre Neher replies "The history begins at Sumer-Shinar, via Abraham's gesture, objecting against the Tower of Babel, and launching man's challenge against it."¹⁷

The native ancestry, beginning with Adam, Abel and Seth, of the Semite Acadians, leads us to Abraham. Eber and Peleg are the ancestors of Abraham.¹⁸

Abraham, the patriarch and the ancestor of the Jewish people, opens *the first period of the history of Judaism*, which extends from Abraham to Moses (aprox. 1900–1400 BC), age that includes: the settlement of Abraham and his family in Canaan; the migration to Egypt in the time of Jacob, the patriarch; the egress from Egypt under the leading of Moses; the reception of the Law on Mount Sinai; the re-conquering of Canaan and the foundation of the institution of Judges, the first of them being Samuel.

A remarkable deed during this age, noticed by rabbi dr. Jacob Iḥtac Niemirower is that, “even in the first period of time, the ability to say ‘no’ reveals itself in the Jews. What the patriarch thought about God in a positive manner, science cannot establish exactly.”

However, what is certain is that, Abraham denied his father’s polytheism, opposing to the paganism of his time.¹⁹ Due to this act, the human race exists freely, and God has allowed their existence even today.

The second period is the Kingdom, beginning with Saul, the first king, followed by David, the most important king of Israel, and then Solomon, who completed the construction of the Temple of Jerusalem.

The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires will conquer Israel, they will destroy the Temple of Jerusalem, and the majority of the Jews will be taken as slaves to Mesopotamia, and then to Babylon.

The third period is the rabbinic one, which includes the history from the banishment to the destruction of Jerusalem. After the repatriation of the Jews, the walls of Jerusalem, including the Temple were remade, and the central cult is reestablished.

Thenceforth the year 63 B.C., the Roman domination begins, which culminates with the war of the years 66–70 BC, when the Judeans are defeated definitively.

This moment marks the history of Judaism. The Judaic religion takes a new shape. Without the Temple and the Aaronic priesthood, losing their genealogy, their membership is no longer known. The Jews pray in synagogues, and the sacrifices stop. Their faith is

founded on the Holy Scriptures revealed by God and written down, first by Moses, and then, by other authors.

The essential book of Judaism is represented by the Old Testament, also called the Judaic Bible. Another essential book for Judaism is represented by the Talmud or the “Oral Law”, a collection of theological, historical, and juridical works that complete and explain the Bible. The authors of these works are the rabbis of the 5th century B.C.

Abram or Abraham (abt. 2150–2000 BC) is the first among the three biblical patriarchs, worshipped by the three most important monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The Genesis tells us that God charged Abraham to become the father of a new nation in Canaan.

According to the Bible, Abram (“Father [God] is glorious”), whose name becomes Abraham (“The father of many peoples”), born in Ur (Mesopotamia), is commanded by God (Yahve) to leave his home town and the people he was part of, to travel to a land, where he becomes the father of a big nation. Abraham obeys and, at the age of 75, he heads off toward Canaan (the territory situated between Syria and Egypt), accompanied by: Sarai, his wife, whose name becomes Sarra (“Princess”), Lot, his nephew, and other consorts. Once he reached there, God vows that his “seed” will dominate that realm and will become a great nation.

Abraham will be blessed with two sons: Ismael, born by Hagar, Sarra’s handmaid, and Isaac, to whom Sarra gave birth herself. Isaac will become the heir of the promise made by God. Although Isaac is his only inheritor, Abraham does not hesitate when God, trying to challenge his loyalty, asks him to sacrifice his son. Certain of Abraham’s unshaken faith, God accepts the sacrifice of a ram in the place of Isaac.

As location, Abraham’s experience begins in “Ur Kasdim”, the motherland of the Terah family (clan), and ends at Macpela Cave. Most researchers argue that Ur Caşdim is the old Sumerian city Ur, today Tell al-Muqayyar today (or Mughair), about 350 km from Baghdad.

Genesis 23:19–20 recounts that when Sarah died at Hebron, Abraham bought the cave from Machpelah, near Hebron, together

with the surrounding lands, as burial place for his family. It is the first ownership clue of a part from the Promised Land of Abraham and his descendants.

According to Genesis 23:7 Abraham died at the age of 175 years and was buried near Sarah in the cave of Machpelah. Judaism considers Abraham a model of virtue, because he respected all the commandments of Lord, although they had not yet been revealed by God.

Abraham was the first who knew the Unique God; Genes 12:1 wrote: "The Lord said to Abram: „ Leave your country, your relatives and your father's house and come ahead to the land that I will show you."

This imperative constitutes the base of an atypical migration process, which moves not only Abraham and his family, but through the intersection with other nations and peoples, new events, experiences, new precepts are born, laws, that gradually write a history.

A reliable source, *The Universal Britannica Encyclopedia* tells us about Abraham that he laid the foundation of the morning prayer (daily ministry, involving recitation of Shema and of the eighteen blessings). Abraham also established the Jews circumcision ritual—"the entry into the covenant of our father Abraham" refers to circumcision.

The source also recalls the position of Christians, who have always considered him the father of all believers²⁰. His Fidelity, the desire to believe in God were the model of all the saints from the ages that followed²¹ and "it was imputed unto him for righteousness"²² as the basis of his justification before God, either by faith without actions²³, either by faith and actions.²⁴

The obedience that he showed by not hesitated to sacrifice Isaac made Abraham, in terms of Soren Kierkegaard, "the Knight of the endless resignations" and was interpreted as the typological prophecy of Him "He, Who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him to death, for all of us."²⁵

In Islam, the Qur'an portrays him as as a prototype prophet—close to God, who endured the opposition of his own people, when he wanted to spread the true religion.²⁶ The Islamic hagiographies

include Abraham in the genealogy of Mohammed and of other important prophets.²⁷

We can see how the history of Abraham, plaited with prehistory, in fact with the history of mankind from the Creation to the building of the Tower of Babel, leads us to the history of Israel, as a part of the universal history. In the last verse of Genesis 22:16–18 God promised: “And in thy seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

Troubled mankind discovers, as Alexandru Şafran stated, an amazing phenomenon that arouses amazement, even anger—the presence of a people which with all the endured miseries from the nations, has not lost its identity and strength to resist.²⁸

For centuries, Jews have preferred a secluded existence towards the surrounding populations. In the modern era, many of them were involved in the politics and culture of the nations among whom they lived, retaining their own identity and beliefs.

I. Epstein says that according to the tradition of the Bible, the Hebrew people had accepted the task of forming a universal Kingdom of God, realizing the fairness and justice on his entire nation.

The faith in this mission gives meaning both to individual and social life, creating “a new type of Hebrew personality by endorsing a double ideal, of his nation and of humanity.” The motivation of Hebrew nationalism is “the socio-religious idea which involves the cooperation of all people and nations on the basis of equality and fraternity.”²⁹

One of the most knowledgeable Hebrew scientists from the Bible, David S. Luzzatto, highlighting the superiority of religion towards philosophy, in a presentation of his thesis says: “The world civilization is the product of two particular elements: Atticism and Judaism. To Athens we owe philosophy, arts, sciences, development of intelligence, of order, of love for beauty and greatness, for intellectual and learned moral. To Judaism we owe religion, morality that comes from the heart and from self abandon, from the love for Good.” His statement ends with the conclusion that emerges from the reality that society needs emotion, that can not be offered by Atticism, and human nature will always react “in favor of the heart, of Good and Judaism.”³⁰

From History to Actuality

It is necessary and important the distinction between Judaism as a faith and Hebrews as a people. They have had an impact on the development of capitalism but in different ways.

Judaism had an impact by focusing on work as a virtue and considered private property as a precondition for the individual freedom. Both rising from the the Biblical record.

Judaism saw prosperity as a sign of God's blessing, and work as a privilege for man to be in "partnership with God in the work of creation."

The Jews, throughout time, have often lived in difficult conditions; for example in the Middle Ages they had the prohibition to own properties and to practice more basic professions. So they were forced to engage themselves in trade and finance. The result was that they became specialists in banking—financial and international trade.

Judaism as a religious vision promotes values such as integrity, freedom and independence of the individual and its responsibilities towards society.

The prophet Micah dreamed of a day when "every man shall sit under his vineyard and under his fig tree, and no one will make them be afraid."³¹ A world of limited government and of respect for private property, in which individuals are sustainable through their own work, it is a world of human dignity and freedom.

The Jewish provisions for "tzedakah" (charity and rightness) are not conceived just to attenuate poverty, but first and foremost to reestablish the independence and autonomy of the individual. In the Jewish law, the highest form of charity is to find a job for someone, so that he or she, not to depend on charity.

This gives to the individual the human dignity and freedom. These are an example from the way of thinking and from ethical and theological claims of Judaism in the free market economy field.

Among the most important ways, in which the rabbinic thinking has contributed to the moral reflection on ethics in business, is

described in the Hebrew literature as a subject of reflection for more than three thousand years.

It begins in the biblical books with provisions, such as fair and decent treatment of employees, honest tasks and measures, and also periodic remission of debts, in order to avoid creating an underclass.

These principles were developed in the rabbinic literature, which sets out detailed principles of fair trading, workers' rights, unfair competition, and so on. It continues through the prophetic literature with the message of prophets Isaiah and Amos.

The historical evolution of the last two millennia has contributed, as Andre Neher stated to the maintaining of Judaism on the path of prophecy, through those spontaneous internal forces that formed the "prophetic" continuity of the Hebrew people. How could this stage had been reached ? The conclusion of Andre Neher may be an answer: "Thanks to the democratic and laic view that pharisaic imposed to the Synagogue, suppressing any institutional or hereditary clergy, assigning the roles of spiritual orientation and vigilance to the Masters of Law, to all laic rabbis."³²

This conception has been agreed in various circles of thinkers, taken and initiated in the West, then being adapted to the history of that time. With time it became an autonomous concept, which once put in practice led to the development of nowadays Western society, point of attraction for immigrants.

Preliminary Considerations Regarding Migration

Migration can be considered an accurate indicator of the social body health and the result of some cumulated phenomena, of which the most important is the continued impoverishment of the population.

The person that is heading to a new country in search of better opportunities in terms of economic benefits, finding a superior professional environment or wider the pathways to family, culture or religion, is supposedly engaged in a process of migration (emigration from the country of origin and immigration in destination country). In the opinion of specialists, such a migration is regarded as voluntary.

Throughout the history international migration, it was, it is and will be a reality. Every year, millions of people leave their homes and cross the national borders in search of better living standards, security for themselves and their families, in search of jobs, from handicraft to high-tech activities.

In the 21st century international migration is one of the key factors that shapes the world we live in; it plays a central role in the global processes of social, economical and political changes.

In this context, migrants continue to be considered by the majority of the populations from the destination countries, as intruders aggravating the crisis on the labor market, with a great contribution to the growing criminality or to the social welfare budget supplement.

Another important aspect is the demographic aspect. Developed areas are rarified areas from a demographic point of view and these areas will attract people from other areas, with the power of a physical law.

Mankind can not live a long time torn by this demographic imbalance, that will generate balancing social movements and processes. From the perspective of demographic imbalance, migration is the only solution.

Conclusions

Objectively and subjectively speaking, the Western episteme has the chance to reorganize the European world migration due to real and virtual migration that in two decades has made us reach an axiological consensus almost unexpectedly; a democratic consensus which means freedom and prosperity.

Many of the European continent states have acquired a multiethnic character, including important communities of non-European immigrants and, especially, inassimilable immigrants. Under the impact of migration the autonomy of nation-states was redefined, focusing on multiculturalism.

Contrary to the predictions of analysts, the nation-states from Europe haven't vanished, still remaining the main political entities

that have the ability to determine or change, through their foreign policy, the evolution of the international relations.

From the perspective of benefits, migration contributes directly to reducing poverty, unemployment, adjusts the imbalances from the labor market and stimulates the growth of investments in human resources.

The surplus of the labor force determines the increase of consumption, resulting in GDP growth, leading to living standards rising, contributing to the improvement of the living standards of the families left behind.

All of these aspects related to migration, largely have their origin in the Bible principles, assimilated, applied and promoted throughout the history of Judaism as basic principles of a free and democratic society.

NOTES

¹ Ioan Oprea, et al. *Noul dicționar Universal al limbii române*. (București: Editura Litera Internațional, 2009), 915.

² Ibid., 713.

³ Emmanuel Levinas. *Dificila Libertate*. (București: Editura Hasefer, 1999), 43.

⁴ Hans Küng. *Iudaismul*. (București: Editura Hasefer, 2005), 41–42.

⁵ Jacob Neusner. *Iudaismul În Timpurile Moderne*. (București: Editura Hasefer, 2001), 29.

⁶ Andre Neher. *Cheile Identității Iudaice*. (București: Editura Hasefer, 2001), 46.

⁷ Gn 1:28; cf. *Biblia Fidela*. Cluj–Napoca, 2010. All the biblical texts used in this article have this source.

⁸ Gn 3:24.

⁹ Gn 4:11–12.

¹⁰ Gn 4:25–26.

¹¹ Gn 9:18–19.

¹² Gn 11:1–32.

¹³ Gn 11:7–8.

¹⁴ Klaus Berndt, et al. *Marea istorie ilustrată a lumii. vol.1* (București: Editura Litera Internațional, 2008), 32–33.

¹⁵ The etymology of the word is uncertain. It may have as a root the name 'Eber', one of Abraham's ancestors, or it may have its origin in the preposition 'beyond', the Jews coming from beyond Euphrates.

¹⁶ Josy Eisenberg. *O istorie a evreilor*. (București: Editura Humanitas, 1993), 12.

¹⁷ Ande Neher. *Exilul Cuvântului* (București: Editura Hasefer, 2002), 173.

¹⁸ Gn 10:25.

¹⁹ Ițhac Iacob Niemirower. *Iudaismul* (București: Editura Hasefer, 2005), 128.

²⁰ Rom 4:11.

²¹ Heb 11.

²² Rom 4:3.

²³ Rom 3.

²⁴ Jas 2.

²⁵ Rom 8:32.

²⁶ Koran 3:65–68, 4:125, 6:74–83.

²⁷ *Enciclopedia Universală Britanica*, vol.2, A–B. (București: Editura Litera, 2010), 36–37.

²⁸ Alexandru Șafran. *Etica Evreiască Și Modernitatea* (București: Editura Hasefer, 2005), 91.

²⁹ Isidor Epstein. *Iudaismul*. (București: Editura Hasefer, 2003), 409.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 392.

³¹ Mi 4:4.

³² Neher, 2001, 161.