

The Toronto conference attracted many other scholarly papers from IAMS members and a selection of these will be published in forthcoming issues, beginning in the next issue with papers presented to the IAMS study group on Biblical Studies and Mission (BISAM) guest-edited by Dr John Prior, SVD.

Reference

Anderson, Gerald H. (2012). *Witness to World Christianity: The International Association for Mission Studies, 1972–2012*. New Haven, CT: OMSC Publications.



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Biblical Perspectives on Migration and Mission: Contributions from the Old Testament

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Abstract

The growing interest in diaspora mission requires consideration of the pertinent biblical material. This essay focuses on two parts of the Old Testament: the patriarchal narratives of Genesis and Israel's Law. The former introduces the reader to migrant experiences of the people of God and then connects these to their call to be a blessing to all the earth. The latter contends that Old Testament Law can serve as a paradigm for diaspora mission today in the form of tangible initiatives on behalf of diaspora peoples, both within the Christian community and beyond.

Keywords

Bible, diaspora, patriarchs, law, Old Testament

Introduction

The migration over the last two to three decades of many millions within and across national boundaries and the settlement of assorted diaspora populations in countries all around the globe are raising acute socioeconomic, political, security, legal, and cultural challenges – some new, others of scale – for communities of all sizes and for entire nation-states. Truly, this is an “age of

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migration” of unprecedented levels, complexity, and impact (Castles and Miller 2009; cf. Waters and Ueda 2007).

We live in a different day, and significant interdisciplinary work is needed to comprehend the life of these migrations and migrant communities (Brettell and Hollifield 2008). Studies abound, and research centers and journals are appearing to deal with these worldwide trends that will mark the course of the rest of this century. Sociology (Castles and Miller) and anthropology (Vertovec 2007; Horevitz 2009) are bringing their particular perspectives to bear on these multidimensional human realities. There are questions of basic definitions, such as, to what does (or should) the contested term “diaspora” refer (Baumann 2000; Dufoux 2008)? There are questions of scope: How do factors, such as ethnicity, perceptions of identity, and geographical displacement, figure in the research? Religion also is a major component of the life of many of these populations (for the United States, Portes and Rumbaut 2006: 299–342; Levitt 2007).

The human face of these demographic shifts and the issue of religion provide a segue to missiological concerns. The sheer size of the phenomena is leading some to call for a reorientation of mission thinking and praxis. Drawing from discussions in the social sciences but placing their reflections within a confessional framework, mission scholars talk of the ‘glocal’, mutuality and reciprocity, hybridity, deterritorialization and multidirectionality, liminality, transnationalism, and cultural identity as elements of a new, emerging interdisciplinary paradigm (Wan 2012: 95–156; Ybarrola 2012). There is concern not only to realize mission *to* diaspora groups, but also to encourage mission *through* these groups to reach their own people, and ultimately to mobilize them *beyond* their circle to join the broader Christian mission (Wan 2012: 5–6). Attention is being given to the missional initiatives of migrant communities from Africa, Asia, and Latin America in their new settings (Hanciles 2008; Kim and Ma 2011; Wan 2012: 157–311; cf. Jenkins 2011). International Protestant organizations have published biblical, theological, and pastoral declarations on migration, for instance, from the Lausanne Movement (LCWE 2004; 2010a, b [IIB.5]). There is also the Global Ecumenical Network on Migration of the World Council of Churches. On the Roman Catholic side, the Vatican provides direction through its Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (Catholic Truth Society 2004) and the work of its bishops (e.g. Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003).

The Bible: Preliminary Matters

There is much within the Bible that is pertinent to the topic of migration. Indeed, the directive at the very beginning of the biblical grand narrative presupposes movement. Humanity is to “fill the earth” (Gen 1:28; cf. 9:7) and, truly, migration has characterized the race and its history. In Genesis migration also springs from divine judgment: the first persons are sent out of the garden, east of Eden, for their rebellion (3:23–24); Cain must wander for murdering his brother Abel (4:12–16); and Yahweh scatters humanity at Babel for its misguided attempt at greatness (11:8–9).¹ From that tower, whose builders aspired to reach the heavens, the descendents of Noah’s sons spread out to their distant territories with their languages (10:5, 20, 31–32). To understand humanity is to appreciate its deeply rooted migratory heart.

This human reality takes on added theological importance, as migration is a key metaphor for understanding the Christian faith. All Christians are sojourners and strangers in the world, the New Testament says on various occasions (1 Pet 2:11; cf. Eph 2:12, 19; Heb 11:13; cf. Ps 39:12 [MT 39:13]; 1 Chr 29:15). This image of being outsiders and citizens of another kingdom suggests that awareness of migration and life in diaspora could yield a better comprehension of the Christian faith. In other words, the missional impulse to engage migration is, more importantly, a theological imperative and journey.

These two essential biblical observations, the migrant element within humanity and the centrality of the metaphor of migration for the faith, underscore the need to mine the Scriptures for the task at hand. Yet, we must inquire: What can the Bible provide for the link of mission with migration and diaspora? What is that we hope to find in its pages? Also, for whom are its words on migration, and might they function differently for different audiences? For example, the Bible contains accounts of lives of those outside their homeland. In fact, the amount of such material may surprise some. For migrants, this can suggest that the Bible is something akin to an identity document, an ethnographic mirror, as it were. They see their experiences confirmed in those of biblical characters and can be assured of God’s care and commitment. While the tales of migration might be novel to the native-born citizen and can generate helpful lessons for diaspora mission, they are a revelation of comfort to diaspora peoples. Not surprisingly, minority groups have begun

¹ Some argue for a more positive interpretation of the Babel incident. Note, e.g., José Míguez Bonino (1999).

to claim diaspora as the lens through which to do contextual theology (e.g. Campese 2012).²

There are several ways to study the Bible for issues related to diaspora mission. One is to investigate the vocabulary of dispersion in both Testaments and glean insights from that lexical variety (Santos 2011). Another is to survey diaspora experiences within the text to establish fundamental biblical foundations for this new perspective (Hanciles 2008: 139–56; Rubesh 2011; Ott 2011; Carroll R. 2012b). Several biblical scholars from diaspora groups are using their expertise to probe Scripture for the sake of their own communities and their life within the majority cultures in which they are embedded (e.g. Carroll R. 2008, 2012c; Groody and Campese 2008; Lee Cuellar 2008; Ruiz 2011; cf. Smith-Christopher 2002).

Clearly, several avenues are available for biblical research. This essay concentrates on two parts of the Old Testament.³ The first looks at experiences of Abram and Joseph in Genesis that are a window into the life of a people far from their place of origin. These vignettes then are placed within the mission responsibility of the people of God that is set out in 12:1–3. How do Abram and his descendents, as people on the move, fulfill their calling to be a vehicle of God's blessing to the world? The second major section of the biblical exposition turns to Old Testament legislation concerning outsiders. The Law has much to teach those in mission about engaging the stranger within our faith communities. It also can provide moral pointers on how to speak to society, that wider arena of transformative mission.

Diaspora and the *Missio Dei* in Genesis

The People of God as Outsiders

The reader is introduced to Abram in Genesis 11. The account of his life begins with the move from Ur in southern Mesopotamia to Harran, which today lies on the southeastern edge of Turkey on the border with Syria. From there he

² The sources cited in this essay are limited to the North American context, because this is the region within which I work.

³ This textual exposition of this essay is based on the final form, or canonical shape, of the Old Testament, which I believe is the most appropriate text for ethics and mission, especially when dealing with Christian communities (Carroll R. 2012a). The references to academic resources are kept to a minimum in this essay. Consult the cited works for additional bibliography and wider discussions. All biblical quotations are from the NRSV.

traveled with his extended family to the land of Canaan and journeyed south as far as the Negev (11:31–12:9). Their existence and that of the other patriarchs in Genesis was nomadic. Abram (later called Abraham, 17:5) never owned property, except that which he bought from Ephron the Hittite to bury his wife Sarah (ch. 23; cf. 49:29–33).

Not long after Abram's arrival in Canaan there is a famine, most likely due to lack of rain (12:10). This condition is not uncommon in that part of the world (cf. 26:1; 42:5; 47:4; Ruth 1:1; 2 Sam 21:1; 2 Kings 4:38). In contrast, the Nile offered Egypt a continuous water supply and usually guaranteed a consistent food supply. Egypt constantly had to deal with outsiders seeking food in times of scarcity. Archaeology has revealed that Egypt did absorb foreigners to a degree, but it also set up a series of forts along its eastern frontier to monitor the movement of those desiring entry. One such group was led by Abram (Carroll R. 2008: 72–77; Hoffmeier 2009: 35–46).

The patriarch supposes Pharaoh will want to take Sarai for himself and thus will dispose of him in due course. Abram instructs Sarai to say to that he is her brother, not her husband. It is later revealed that they are related (Gen 20:12; cf. 20:2), but this ruse requires fudging the truth and puts Sarai in great danger. Perhaps Abram hoped that the Egyptians would follow common custom and not take her without his, "her brother's", permission. This could buy time and allow them to survive. Theologically within the larger narrative, it is possible to view the fact that Abram is not killed as an example of Yahweh's sovereign protection of the seed promised in Genesis 12:1–3 (to which we return below). Nevertheless, the patriarch's action is deeply troubling. Feminist scholars criticize Abram for using Sarai for personal gain, but his actions raise ethical questions about his character for all commentators.

Sensitivity to the decisions of desperate migrants can offer another appreciation of the scene. There was hunger in the land of Canaan, and Abram had the responsibility to provide for those under his care and for their animals. They arrive in Egypt after a long journey through harsh terrain and heat. What was the alternative? To turn back and again cross that desolate wasteland to return to a land where there was no food? If lying to cross a border to feed his people and facing starvation are the only available options, what was Abram to do? To present his quandary in this light is not to exonerate the patriarch, but it might explain his tactics.

Today, there are many stories of similarly difficult decisions made by those who cross the deserts along the southern border of the United States seeking work and a new life for themselves and their families. Powerful testimonies, like Luis Alberto Urrea's *The Devil's Highway* and Sonia Nazario's award-winning

Enrique's Journey, describe the dangers that people are willing to endure to reach a land of plenty and how they conspire to bypass border authorities. Christian perspectives on the perilous treks of these migrants, which present their faith in God and call for a compassionate response from readers, include Miguel de la Torre's *Trails of Hope and Terror*, Ben Daniel's book *Neighbor*, and Amanda Rose's *Showdown in the Sonoran Desert*. Hunger and the need to provide for loved ones drive people to undertake such hazardous journeys.

Women often are those most at risk. Sometimes they come carrying children, and they can be prey for rape and physical abuse. Yet, they courageously participate in deception, if necessary, for the sake of their families' future (Ruiz 2011: 57–70). Was that wager at the Egyptian border a demonstration of the depth of Sarai's dedication to her family? Ruiz states:

The moral clarity of the regulations in the Hebrew Bible regarding the treatment of aliens becomes considerably muddled as these aliens themselves become implicated in the tension between disclosure and non-disclosure, between the truth and trickery that are essential to survival in the borderlands, the life-and-death tension at the barbed-wire boundary between truth and trickery where the collateral damage is considerable, and where the most vulnerable also become the most expendable. (Ruiz 2011: 69–70)

Most miss that Abraham, the father of the Christian faith (Rom 4; Gal 3), never settled down. He was a wandering pastoralist, and his walk with God was of one always on the move (Gen 23:4; Deut 26:5). His greatest trials arose from that rootless life among others.

A diaspora perspective also illuminates the exchanges between Joseph and his brothers in Genesis 42–45. At this juncture Joseph was governor of Egypt and in charge of the distribution of grain (42:6). He had become quite integrated into Egyptian culture. Joseph would have had to speak the Egyptian language well to carry out his duties. He was given the Egyptian name Zaphenath-Paneah, married an Egyptian (41:45), and had children by her (41:50). Later he would have his father Jacob embalmed and would be so himself upon his death (50:3, 26). In terms of dress and presentation, men of Joseph's status would have shaved their heads and painted their faces, so the inability of Joseph's brothers to recognize him is understandable. He stood before them as an Egyptian bureaucrat. By refusing to eat with them, Joseph reinforces this perception (43:31–32), and his actions towards them as that high ranking government official causes them great fear.

This assimilated foreigner, though, never forsook his cultural roots. Though married to an Egyptian, he gave his sons the Israelite names Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen 41:51–52). Neither did Joseph lose his mother tongue. At their

first meeting, he utilized an interpreter in the presence of his brothers to hide his identity, but he understood their conversation (42:23). Joseph also maintained his family loyalties, in spite of the troubled past, and secured a refuge for his brothers' families in Goshen, where he could have them close in order to personally provide for them (45:10–11; 46:31–47:12; cf. 45:16–26). He even presented his father to Pharaoh (46:7). This is quite remarkable, as Joseph, who held a most prestigious post in Egypt, brings his relatives to a land that detested the family's profession: shepherds (46:34; cf. 43:31–32). Affection overrode any social embarrassment.

These accounts, among several in Genesis and beyond, resonate with experiences of diaspora populations: desperation, vulnerability and powerlessness, connections back to their homeland, and deep allegiance to cultural markers. If read as a book about and (on occasion) by authors living as foreigners in Egypt and Babylon, Scripture becomes a resource that can raise awareness of migrant realities as well as speak to migrant existence. At the same time, the Bible locates the migration of God's people and others within a broader framework, the *Missio Dei*.

A Diaspora People in Mission

The book of Genesis begins with the wonderful disclosure that men and women are made in the image of God to serve as his vice-regents on earth (Wright 2006:421–28). Sadly, the human estrangement from God, themselves, and nature (3:14–19) follows the description of the first couple enjoying the divinely provided paradise (2:8–25). In Genesis 3 the serpent questions the Creator's motives and tempts the man and the woman with the possibility of being like God (3:1–5). God had told them that disobedience would bring immediate death (2:16), and their transgression brings them shame (3:7–8) and triggers a horrific descent into loss of life.

The first to die is an animal, whose skin covers Adam and Eve's nakedness (Gen 3:21). Their death, though, does not come quickly. The curses of Genesis 3:14–19 announce that they would return to the dust, but this intimation of physical death is not fulfilled at this point. Ironically, Adam names the woman "Eve," since she was to be "the mother of all living" (3:20). Chapter four actually begins with the birth of two sons, and the couple is grateful for God's help in procreation (4:1–2)! In a sense, there is spiritual death with the expulsion from Eden and their separation from the presence of God (3:23–24).

Physical death quickly comes in the narrative, though. Cain murders Abel (4:8) and then worries about being killed in his wandering (4:14–15). His descendant Lamech gloats of uncontrolled revenge (4:23–24). Chapter 5 repeats the

refrain “and he died” eight times, these passing maybe from old age and disease. In chapter 6 we read that the earth was “corrupt” and “filled with violence” (6:5, 11). Of course, most living creatures die in the deluge (7:11–24). Violence and death rule human existence.

Nevertheless, there are a few glimmers of hope that center on individuals who are in relationship with Yahweh. Seth is the first to call on the name of God (Gen 4:26), and Enoch walked with him and is taken away (5:24). Noah offers the greatest promise. His name is a play on the Hebrew verb ‘comfort’ (5:29) – surely he would end the harshness of human existence! – and he is commended for being upright (6:8). Noah does as he is commanded (6:22; 7:5, 9, 16) and begins the post-flood era well by building an altar and receiving God’s blessing and covenant promise (8:20–9:17). But, he ends poorly, drunk and unconscious in his tent, violated in some way by his son Ham (9:20–23). Human failure reaches its apex at the Tower of Babel (11:1–9). Like their primeval ancestors in Genesis 3, humanity gathers to “make a name for ourselves” by constructing a tower “with its top in heaven,” where God dwells. Hubris is coupled with defiance, as those gathered on the plain of Shinar reject the command to fill the earth. Their dispersion at Yahweh’s hand thwarts the immeasurable potential for evil of a united humanity fixed on replacing God (11:6).

It is from Babel that the families and nations of the earth come. The Table of Nations in Genesis 10 registers to where the descendents of the three sons of Noah spread. The phrase “with their own language” (10:5, 20, 31) connects this list to the judgment of 11:6–9, which chronologically must be prior to chapter 10. In the canon, the history of the nations begins at Babel and will also end there. John presages that they will gather at the close of the age as the final Babel/Babylon in arrogant rebellion against God (Rev 17–18).

This context of death, disobedience, and disappointed hope is the context in which the *Missio Dei* takes shape. Yahweh does not choose a nation; he cannot, as all were born at Babel and are tainted by its pride. Instead God selects a man, Abram, from whom he will create a people with a different purpose and ethos (Gen 12:1–3). The nation that will spring from the patriarch is expressly created for mission: this people are to be the divine means of blessing “all the families of the earth” (Carroll R. 2000; Wright 2006:191–221).⁴ The term “families” (*mishpōt*) connects the passage to the lists of chapter 10 (10:5, 20, 31). In other words, the “families” of the Table of Nations are the target of the mission of the people of God. The descendents of Abram, unlike the offspring of the Tower,

⁴ Other grammatical options include that peoples “will bless themselves” or “find blessing.”

will find a great name not in selfish ambition to replace God or stand as his equals, but rather as they fulfill that *Missio Dei* in service for him to humanity.

But it remains to explain what is the blessing that Yahweh commits to bringing to the world. Methodologically, it is best to allow Genesis itself to define the concept. In the book God’s blessing can be material and spiritual. It is so from the very beginning, where it is connected to fruitfulness and life (1:22, 28) and to the Sabbath day rest (2:3). Both aspects are evident in the patriarchal narratives. On the one hand, as in Genesis one, blessing is about having children (e.g. 13:5–6; 15:1–6; 16:11–16; 21:1–3; 35:11). It also means extending gracious hospitality (18:1–8; cf. ch. 24), finding water (ch. 26), multiplying flocks (chs. 29–30), and organizing food distribution as a government official to save a nation from famine (chs. 41, 47). On the other hand, being a blessing involves spiritual matters. The patriarchs build altars to Yahweh their God from which they call on his name (e.g. 12:7–8; 13:4, 18; 21:33; 26:25); they confess their faith before other individuals (e.g. 31:5–13, 42; 33:10–11; 41:16; 50:20), intercede for strangers (18:22–33; 20:7, 17), and give words of blessing (14:22; 47:10). Abraham even clarifies to Melchizedek that the “God Most High” by whom that priest blesses him (14:19–20) is none other than Yahweh (14:22). The impact of their mission calling is unmistakable. The hand of God is recognized by several who come into contact with them: Abimelech (21:22–24; 26:26–29), Laban (24:31, 50; 30:27; 31:29, 50, 53), and Pharaoh (41:39).

The blessing of God in Genesis involves relationship with him and enjoying the good gifts of creation. The patriarchs and their kin can take pleasure in the multidimensional blessings of Yahweh, but at the same time they are to be his channel of these blessings to “all the families of the earth.” This people of God were set apart for mission; it is the very reason for their existence. They were promised blessing in order to be a blessing (12:3).

Fulfillment of that call depended on their righteousness. At this point we return to the earlier discussion of Abram and his descendents as a migrant people. Within the biblical narrative they are indeed a migrant people, but a migrant people for mission. Their choices and actions determine whether they can be that people of blessing (Gen 18:17–19; 22:15–18). Unfortunately, in addition to their aforementioned positive interaction with others, there also are episodes of shame (12:17–20; 20:8–10; 26:6–11), deception (27:5–29; 37:12–36), vengeance (ch. 34), and lust (ch. 38). In other words, the life of this migrant people is a pilgrimage of faith and a journey of failures. The narrative describes multiple times if and how the patriarchs and their families trust God for sustenance, children, flocks, water, and peace with their neighbors. The high points of this journey in mission are Genesis 15:6, where Abram “believed the LORD;

and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness", and especially 22:15–18, where Yahweh commends the painful obedience of Abraham and his profound faith in the divine promise (cf. 26:3–5).

In sum, the Genesis narratives can orient diaspora mission in at least a couple of ways. First, they recount the lives of a migrant people. These narratives are instructive for those of us who are settled, as they offer us a glimpse of the particular challenges of the life of those who are strangers; but, the accounts are a helpful source, too, for the migrant, for they can find themselves in those stories and learn to see God in their midst. Second, these narratives place a migrant people who claim to follow the God of Abraham within the *Missio Dei*. They are to be a blessing among whom they live: in their confession of faith and worship, and in the daily exchanges of concrete human life. This call extends to the settled as well, for all Christians are sojourners and strangers and are to be a blessing to the world.

Immigrants in Old Testament Law and the *Missio Dei*

Nation states all legislate on migration. They control ports of entry, set parameters and criteria for access and length of stay, and establish guidelines for foreigners who decide to settle. These laws deal with issues of education, health care, labor, taxation, the judicial system, and security, among many other matters.

Legislation, of course, is one of a set of systems that organize how a society functions, determine the distribution of various forms of power, and define how life should be lived. The sociology of knowledge would call each law system part of that society's 'social construction of reality.' To those raised in these contexts these systems seem normal and normative. One of the challenges that an outsider faces is to learn to navigate the new social construction of reality – one that senses their presence to be an intrusion and disruption.

Importantly, legislation also is an expression of the fundamental values of a people. It reflects the significance given to individuals or groups and creates the tone and manner with which the majority culture interacts with minorities and newcomers. Particularly telling is how the social construction of reality perceives vulnerable groups and how it structures and sanctions their treatment. The vulnerable would include women in general, widows, orphans, the poor, the physically challenged or seriously ill, ethnic minorities, and the immigrant. Is the legislation characterized by exclusionary and punitive measures, or does it engender a sense of welcome and compassion?

The Purpose of Old Testament Law

Ancient Egypt was an imperial, hierarchical society, and its religious system sanctified its social construction of reality. The Israelites had long suffered as a foreign labor force, but the growth in their population set off a strong nativist fear of their presence (Exod 1:8–12). This sort of reaction against the Other has been repeated throughout human history among all people groups. The revulsion and panic usually are fleshed out in negative attitudes towards the alien, and these find structural expression in measures designed to keep the threatening group socially "in its place", control further population growth, and exploit this lower caste for the benefit of the ruling culture. These common responses appear in the Exodus narrative: the Egyptians are furious that the Israelites' leader (Moses) would confront Pharaoh – a Bedouin (even if he had been raised in the royal court) challenging a god! The death of male babies is decreed to stop the Israelites from multiplying (Exod 1:16), and the government demands that the Israelites keep working on its building projects. Yet, they do not provide them with straw to make bricks – an irrational and counterproductive economic measure driven by prejudice (Exod 5).

In the redemption wrought by Yahweh, Israel is led into a desert (Exod 14–18). There they receive a fundamental moral framework communicated through the two tablets, or Ten Commandments, and a set of laws that would shape a social construction of reality so very different than what they had experienced in Egypt (Exod 19:1–6). They are given the basis of an alternative society, where the vulnerable are cared for, life is valued, and the stranger is welcomed. This legislation covers every area of their personal, familial, and communal life, from guidelines for marriage and childrearing to diet, farming rules, provision for the needy, and rules for another kind of politics. These laws also point back to God's design in creation and the patriarchal narratives (Bruckner 2001) and, therefore, are a development of the missional thrust of Genesis. Undergirding this new society was the person of their god, Yahweh, whom they were to worship in a new sanctuary, a tabernacle in contradistinction to the imposing temples of Egypt – a mobile meeting place of the God of a migrating people.

This Law was in some measure an expression of the heart of God. Though legislation for an ancient theocracy, Deuteronomy 4:5–8 suggests that its wisdom was (and is) a testimony to Yahweh and its laws a paradigm for other contexts beyond that time and place. While to imitate those laws does not make sense in the twenty-first century, its moral principles continue to reverberate even now. The work of Christopher Wright is particularly informative. There is no need to reproduce his argument here, but his series of interlocking

triangles of what he labels the paradigmatic, the typological, and the eschatological interpretations of Old Testament Law demonstrates its abiding significance for the Christian church and ultimately for all human societies, both now and in the age to come (2004:182–211; cf. 2006:289–323). In his publications he uses the Jubilee laws of Leviticus 25 to illustrate his scheme. I would suggest that the Law's immigration legislation is another example of a missional paradigm for a redemptive community within the world.

Immigrants in Old Testament Law

In the ancient world there were no governmental safety nets or institutions, public or private, for the destitute like we have today. Help would have to come through extended family, although on occasion temples could extend a helping hand. Outsiders, of course, would lack this support system. There would be no kin to turn to in times of sickness, death, or physical need. A second problem that they would face in ancient Israel was the system of land tenure, a crucial matter in agrarian economies such as Israel, where most of the population lived as peasant farmers in rural villages. In the Law, land was to be passed down through the male heir. It would be difficult, then, for outsiders to own land. They would most likely be at the mercy of the Israelites for work, probably as day laborers. The sojourner (Hebrew *ger*) was at great disadvantage.

How did the Old Testament Law respond to these realities? If it was grounded in values reflecting the God of Israel, does one find specific legislation to aid this vulnerable group? In fact one does, and the extent of the care for the sojourner in Israel's Law is unique among all ancient law codes. Van Wijk-Bos claims that this concern for the stranger is central to the very ethos of the Torah (2005). It is telling that the command in Leviticus 19:18 to love the neighbor, which centuries later is cited by Jesus (Matt 19:16–19 and par.), is connected directly to the love of the sojourner in verse 34. In other words, the love of the immigrant, that neighbor from elsewhere who can be so different, is the best test of the willingness to love the neighbor.

The Law lists the sojourner with other at-risk groups: the poor, the widows, and the orphans. Widows and orphans would find it hard to survive in those farming communities, because the family would have lost the mature male needed to do the hard physical work of tilling the land. The poor and the sojourner did not have the necessary resources to provide for their families, and the sojourner had the additional obstacles cited above.

Accordingly, there were laws that provided several means to acquire food. They were to be allowed to harvest the edges of the fields (Lev 19:9–10;

Deut 24:19–22), and a special triennial tithe of produce was to be collected to provide them sustenance (Deut 14:28–29; 26:12–13). At the same time, there were laws directed specifically at those immigrants desiring to become part of Israelite society, however they may have arrived (Carroll R. 2008:91–112; forthcoming; Baker 2009:176–89).⁵ For example, to prevent prejudice in the judicial system the Law decreed that sojourners were to receive impartial treatment in legal proceedings (Deut 1:16–17; 24:17–18; 27:19). Their labor was not to be exploited, and they were to be paid a fair wage in a timely manner (Exod 23:12; Deut 24:14–15). They also were to be allowed to rest on the Sabbath (Exod 20:10; Deut 5:14).

In addition, such outsiders could participate in the religious festivals and rituals of Israel, which were the foundation of the nation's identity. Besides the Sabbath, sojourners could celebrate the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29), the Passover (Exod 12:45–49; Num 9:14), the Feast of Weeks (Deut 16:11), the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut 16:14), and Firstfruits (Deut 26:11). The prophet Isaiah adds that to fast for Yahweh and not help the sojourner (and other needy persons) is unacceptable (Isa 58:7).

Of course, there would have been expectations of sojourners as well in order to facilitate their integration into Israelite society. They surely would have had to learn the language to be able to work and to take part in its religious life. And, religious involvement assumes belief in the God of Israel and some level of cultural adaptation. Sojourners were also to attend the periodic public reading of the Law in order to learn the ways of Israel (Deut 31:8–13; cf. Neh 8). The engagement of the native-born and the outsider was to be reciprocal.

Why was Israel to be so gracious to the sojourner? The Law stipulates two primary motivations: first, historical memory. Israel must never forget the marginalization and injustice they had endured in Egypt. That social, racial, economic, and political memory was to be an incentive for them not to replicate the nativist attitudes and oppressive treatment of foreigners in their own land (Exod 22:21; 23:9; Lev 19:34; Deut 24:17–18). To forget would lead to their turning into the very kind of society (and people!) from whom they had been redeemed.

The second motivation is grounded in the person of Yahweh. Deuteronomy 10:12–22 declares that God loves Israel but that he loves sojourners, too. This love is tangible. The passage says that he provides them with food and clothing.

⁵ In contrast, Hoffmeier believes the legislation pertains to legal immigrants (Hoffmeier 2009: 71–96). There are some laws that are restrictive. Note, e.g., Deut 23:3–8 [MT 23:4–9] (see Carroll R. forthcoming).

These benefits, obviously, would have to come through the generosity of God's people, who also must love the stranger (vv. 14–19; cf. 24:14–15). Note that these lines also allude to the time in Egypt, thereby uniting both motivations.

Having the legislation in place, however, is no guarantee that the transition from outsider to accepted member of the host community would be easy. The narrative of Ruth is a case in point.⁶ On the one hand, as a sojourner (and widow) she qualifies to glean alongside Boaz's workers. The sustenance law is in operation. On the other hand, the book recounts the complicated process of her becoming part of the world of Bethlehem (Carroll 2012c:20–22).

She begins by pledging her unconditional loyalty to her mother-in-law. Naomi says not a word. No thanks, no commendation (Ruth 1:15–18). Is Naomi happy to have her along? Is she resentful of Moab, the place where her husband and sons died? We do not know. When the two women arrive at Bethlehem, Ruth is not introduced by Naomi or acknowledged by the women (1:19–22). Is she purposely ignored out of prejudice or simply not noticed? In chapter two Ruth goes to the fields to provide for herself and her mother-in-law. To the reapers, Ruth is just an anonymous hardworking foreigner related to Naomi (2:5–7). She does win Boaz, but, interestingly, he refers to her in public as "the Moabite" (4:5, 10). Ruth cannot shake off her ethnic label, even from her future husband; it is what defines her in this small town of Judah. By the end of the narrative, however, she gains the respect of the elders (4:11–12), and the praise of those women who at first had ignored her. Ruth, they tell Naomi, is worth more than seven sons. Once more, Naomi is silent, but she takes the child (4:14–16). At this moment, with this gesture, does she fully accept her foreign daughter-in-law? One thing is for sure, that little boy, Obed, never would have to endure the hardships that his mother Ruth had.

But, what a glorious close to the story (4:18–21). The genealogy informs the reader that from Obed would come King David. Who could have imagined that this hard-working immigrant would be the ancestress of Israel's greatest leader and of its Messiah! Life on the ground involved the uneasy dance between charitable law and otherness, not in abstract fashion but in the toil and sweat of a peasant woman.

⁶ Other narratives also reveal tensions between outsiders and Israel, such as the reaction to foreign wives in Ezra 9–10 and Nehemiah 13. These lie beyond the introductory goals of this essay, and, I would argue, do not negate the general positive tone toward the stranger in the Old Testament.

Implications of Old Testament Immigration Legislation

If Wright is correct – and I would argue strongly that he is – when he states that the Old Testament charitable laws serve as a paradigm for the Christian church at several levels, then there are lessons for mission to be learned from those statutes. To begin with, there are implications for its mission to and encounter with diaspora peoples. For instance, the church should extend hospitality to the strangers within their midst. The challenges of racial and ethnic engagement and integration go beyond the Old Testament; they run throughout the Gospels and the epistles of the New Testament. One of the hardest transitions of the early church was the change from being primarily a Jewish movement to one with Gentile prominence. Though Paul might declare that, "there is no longer Jew or Greek" in Christ (Gal 3:28), there was still the human need to get beyond ethnic tensions (note the case of the Hellenistic widows, Acts 6:1–7), to sort out the meaning of Gentile conversion at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), and repeatedly counter those trying to return assemblies to those Jewish roots. Paul publically had to denounce the apostle Peter of hypocrisy in Antioch (Gal 2:11–14).

Can the church be faithful to its mission if it does not reach out to diaspora peoples and bring them into Christian fellowship? Like ancient Israel it must put into place mechanisms and structures within its congregations and denominational organizations to make this theological, missional, and moral demand a reality. Human frailty that rears its head in discrimination and intolerance must be overcome by the twin motivations given in the Law: historical memory and the love of God. Do our native-born constituencies need to be reminded of their own histories of migration, the stories of hardship and rejection of their ancestors, those sad tales of poverty, labor exploitation, difficult language learning, and awkward cultural integration? Israel was never to forget what we often bury: the socio-economic hardship and the ethnic marginalization of long ago, which those who attend our churches no longer remember. Christians often mimic the critical voices of their countrymen and have lost sight of the fact that the clearest proof of the love of neighbor is love of the stranger. Said more bluntly: Can there be faithful mission without diaspora mission? Can Christians truly understand their identity as strangers and sojourners without diaspora mission?

There are implications at a broader level that deserve mention. Let me suggest at least one, and for this I return to Wright's triangular scheme. That the Law reflects the heart of God means that the core principles of that legislation should find expression in human society. It is appropriate, then, to ask if the

Christian church can avoid interest in and remain silent in those efforts that are trying to reform our countries' legislation toward diaspora peoples, if those laws are unjustly exclusionary or apathetic to the overwhelming human needs that drive massive migration today? Can discussion of diaspora mission be neatly separated from consideration of legislation for diaspora people? What should be the church's contribution to social transformation and its involvement in projects that serve the stranger and are led by of those beyond our communions? These are missional queries, not just socio-cultural and political observations. The Bible cannot provide the details of pragmatic legislation, but it can equip the church to serve as a moral compass, grounded in the Scripture, our own historical memory, and the person of God. We can call our societies to a more compassionate stance, even as the wider discussion moves into the multiple concrete fields with which they must deal to integrate the newly arrived strangers dwelling in their midst.

Conclusion

The growing interest and involvement in diaspora mission, I believe, require probing the immense amount of pertinent biblical material. This essay has tried to make a small contribution to such study by focusing on two parts of the Old Testament: the patriarchal narratives of Genesis and Israel's Law. The former introduces the reader to the migrant experiences of the people of God and then connects these to their call to be a blessing to all the earth. The latter contends that Old Testament Law can serve as a paradigm for diaspora mission today in the form of tangible initiatives on behalf of diaspora peoples, both within the Christian community and beyond. There is much more, of course, to consider within the Old Testament, and I have not even broached the New Testament! The biblical case for diaspora mission is overwhelming. May we heed its call.

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The Church on the Move: Mission in an Age of Migration

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Abstract

Migration is not only a contemporary challenge but something that humanity has undergone since earliest times. Interwoven into our genetic, biological, and spiritual DNA, it is fundamental to our identity as human beings, and it is also at the core of Christian mission. This article examines (1) the external journey of migrants, (2) the internal journey or spirituality of migrants, and (3) the human journey before God or a theology of migration. The author presents not only what the Church teaches about migration but also the underlying reasons why it does so. It looks at the contemporary challenges of global migration in light of God's migration to us in the incarnation and our return migration to God through discipleship, mission, and the journey to redemption. It argues that our fundamental identity rests in the end not on the creed of a nation but on who we are as a pilgrim people and our movement outward in mission to strangers in need.

Keywords

Migration, Mission, Refugees, Human Dignity, Catholic social teaching, Reconciliation, Justice, Incarnation

In recent times, the subject of migration has received considerable attention in virtually every part of the globe. Although people have been migrating since the dawn of human history, the current scope and magnitude of the issue are unprecedented. Today approximately 214 million people – or one out of every 33 people around the world – are living away from their homelands (IOM). Approximately 42 million are forcibly uprooted, including 16 million refugees and 26 million people who are internally displaced. The issue has become so

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