

Old Testament Perspective on Migration and Its Implications for Africans in Diaspora

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ABSTRACT: *This paper explores the Old Testament perspective on migration and its implications for Africans in the diaspora. Migration has been a significant aspect of human history, shaping societies and cultures across the globe. Africans in the diaspora have a unique experience of migration, often driven by historical factors such as the transatlantic slave trade. By examining Old Testament narratives, this paper aims to shed light on the theological and ethical dimensions of migration and provide insights into the experiences of Africans in the diaspora. The paper emphasizes themes of displacement, liberation, justice, and cultural preservation within the context of migration while acknowledging the complexity and diversity of the African diaspora experience.*

KEY WORDS: Africans, diaspora, justice, hospitality, migration

INTRODUCTION

Migration is a perennial issue, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where people are always on the move because of wars, famine, insecurity, and socio-economic and political instability. To this end, M. Daniel Carroll R. avers that acute socio-economic, political, security, legal, and cultural difficulties are being raised by the migration of many millions of people within and beyond national boundaries over the past two to three decades, as well as by the establishment of diverse diaspora populations in nations all over the world.¹ Similarly, Rupen Das asserts that Diaspora communities, migration, and displacement are not recent phenomena; they have existed since the beginning of time. The sheer number of refugees and migrants in the destination countries has

¹ M. Daniel Carroll R., "Biblical Perspectives on Migration and Mission: Contribution from the Old Testament," *Mission Studies* 30 (2013), 9. Also see Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C. "Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees," in *Theological Studies* 70(2009):638.

caused them to grapple with existential questions about integration and identity, and they are unsure of how these relate to their long-held values of religious freedom, cultural diversity, individual rights, and the idea of citizenship and belonging. This is in addition to the fact that migration originates in contexts of poverty, hardship, and chaos, often rooted in conflict.² Although Das and Carroll contend that a variety of hardships might cause migration and displacement, it is evident that these phenomena were widespread during the times of the Patriarchs and the Hebrew people. Christopher J.H Wright and Marcel V. Macelaru assert that since Abraham, migration has been a tenet of our theology and history (Gen. 23:4; Ex. 2:22; Lev. 25:23; Deut. 23:7; 26:5; Ruth 1:1–5; Amos 9:7-9).³ As a result, the discussion of migration and displacement has its roots in biblical doctrine. This complex argument implies that the biblical story is permeated by the displacement and migration that gave rise to diaspora populations. Additionally, according to Zorodzai Dube, the ancient world was immune to the difficulties associated with migration, just as it is with Africa's contemporary situation.⁴ In the framework of the Old Testament and among Africans, migration and displacement continue to be existential realities. In this paper, the descriptive method is employed.

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND MIGRATION

This section focuses on two parts of the Old Testament. The first section is focused on the migration in Old Testament narratives, while the second centres on liberation and justice: Exodus and the quest for freedom. These two concerns are placed within the narratives of the Old Testament. Over the years, God has used several persons in the Old Testament like Adam, Cain, Noah, and the Patriarchs, to introduce and sustain the concept of migration. From observation, one cannot deny that the issue of migration is a recurrent concern in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament narrative.

Migration in Old Testament Narratives

The discourse on migration in the Old Testament is a crucial concern. Carroll observes that migration in the Old Testament narrative begins with the call for humanity to “fill the earth” (Gen.1:28; cf. 9:7), and this is followed by a divine judgment whereby the first persons are sent out the Eden (Gen. 3:23-24). After that, Cain became a wanderer because he murdered his brother (Gen. 4:12-16), and at the tower of Babel, God scattered the proper for their misguided attempt at

² Rupen Das, “From Displacement to Diaspora: Finding a Place for the Outsider Within the Mission of God,” *From the Margins to the Centre: The Diaspora Effect. A Collection of Essays to Celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Tyndale Intercultural Ministry Centre*, edited by Michael Krause; with Narry Santos and Robert Cousins (Toronto: Tyndale Academic Press, 2018), 200-201.

³ Christopher J.H. Wright, and Marcel V. Macelaru, “The Refugee Crisis-A Shared Human Condition: An Old Testament Perspective,” *Transformation* Vol. 35, no. 2 (April 2018): 92; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/102307/90025310> accessed July 20, 2023.

⁴ Zorodzai Dube, “Abraham and Jesus as Ancient Migrants: An African Migration Perspective,” in *De Grutyer Open* Vol. 14 Issue 1 (2016):66, Doi:101515/perc-2016-0004 accessed July 20, 2023.

greatness (Gen. 11:8-9).⁵ This narration suggests that the displacement of both human and economic resources began during the pre-Abrahamic era. The life of Abram in Genesis 12:1-2 introduced with the movement from Ur in southern Mesopotamia to Harran and later to the Land of Canaan as far as the Negev climate the concept of migration (Gen.11:31-12:9). The lifestyle of the Patriarchs suggests that they were nomads.⁶

Abram moved from the Land of Canaan to Egypt because of famine (Gen.12:10), like the case of Elimelek and his family in Ruth 1:1. The prevailing famine happened to be one of the factors that led to the migration of people in the ancient Near East. Carroll notes that archaeology has revealed that Egypt was opened to receive foreigners, maybe because of the river Nile that eased irrigation and plenty of food in the land.⁷ The situations of people who cross the border or the deserts in search of a new life for themselves and their families are increasing and, to a large extent, similar to the discourse on migration during the patriarchal era.

Christoph Stenschke submits that the Bible describes numerous instances of forced or voluntary refugee relocation and briefly highlights the material effects of such upheavals. Its significant characters include some immigrants and refugees. Only a few cases will do. Abraham travelled to Canaan after being summoned by God (Gen. 11:31–12:6). After that, a famine drove him to Egypt. Before going back to Egypt, Moses spent many years living as a refugee in the Midiani region. He led migrants for the remainder of his life.⁸ The Israelites fled Egypt after centuries of servitude and travelled through the desert for forty years before returning to the land promised to their forefathers. Migration brought on by dispersion and deportation is depicted as a divine judgment in the Old Testament narrative and prophetic tradition. These migrations frequently resulted in poverty, loss of rank, and other drawbacks for some or all. Still, on occasion, they also brought wealth and exciting professions, as in the cases of Daniel or Nehemiah in Babylon or Persia.⁹ The migration of Abraham from Ur to Canaan was perhaps ignited by the famine and a search for a better pasture for his cattle. Thus, liberation and justice during the Exodus were necessary.

Liberation and Justice: Exodus and the Quest for Freedom

The liberation and justice in the book of Exodus is unquestionably a standard for many in search of freedom today. Karen Jordan suggests that freedom is the hallmark of modern and postmodern thought. Freedom has been the goal across all fields, including politics, sociology, science, and technology. The modern era's political objectives have been to remove repressive governing

⁵ Carroll R., 11.

⁶ Carroll R., 13.

⁷ Carroll R., 13.

⁸ Christoph Stenschke, "Migration and Mission," in *Missionalia* 44:2 (129-130); www.missionalia.journals.ac.za/http://dx.doi.org/10.7832/44-2-99, accessed July 20, 2023.

⁹ Christoph Stenschke, "Migration and Mission," in *Missionalia* 44:2 (129-130); www.missionalia.journals.ac.za/http://dx.doi.org/10.7832/44-2-99, accessed 20, 2023.

regimes, injustice, and unfair discrimination based on distinctions in race, class, and other categorizations. In contrast, science and technology's goals have been to master nature. Without a doubt, these objectives have had numerous positive effects. But generally speaking, the contemporary liberation movements have been ineffective.¹⁰ The quest for freedom is inevitable in every culture and generation, where subjugation and oppression prevail daily. In line with Jordan thought's, Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan opines that Exodus is a statement of faith, not a first-person account of God's self-disclosure and deliverance of Israel in 1250 BCE.¹¹ According to Kirk-Duggan, The Exodus sage (Exod.1:1-15:21) commemorates Israel's historical deliverance and celebration of its freedom and salvation. In the book of Exodus, God is depicted as a being who desires to free the Hebrews and make the Egyptians aware of Himself. In Exodus, freedom refers to liberation from oppression and freedom to occupy the Land God promised them. Confrontations between a self-assured, theatrical Moses and a steadfast, unyielding Pharaoh are part of the journey toward liberation.¹² It is observed that oppression and liberation are common themes in the Exodus.

Further, Masiwa Ragies Gunda notes that the departure's historicity gave it power. This was a replay of past events. The Exodus involved the displacement of the native inhabitants of the "Promised Land" because they were residing on territory that had been promised to the invaders. It was physical because it involved migrating from one physical space to another. Therefore, no tyranny or injustice was done to the native people because God had already decided what would happen to them. The invasion's intruders were fleeing oppression.¹³ The Exodus was more a displacement of indigenous people because of bad leadership. No doubt that Ephraim Tshuma asserts that Genesis and Exodus' narratives reveal that the Jewish people were forced out of Egypt due to oppression. This occurred because a Pharaoh who was unaware of Joseph rose to power. The Hebrew people's desire for freedom is reasonable if it is proven that they were mistreated. That's why the Exodus became unavoidable. Assaulters emerged among the Egyptian hosts. The experience of slavery and harsher labour raises questions regarding labour regulations and working conditions in Egypt. The tale also raises concerns about how foreigners and enslaved people were treated in the Ancient Near East.¹⁴ The Exodus narrative greatly equates poverty and deprivation in the developing world. Most people in Africa, Asia, and Central America experience poverty necessitated by several causes ranging from totalitarian leadership, civil wars, global economic

¹⁰ Karen Jordan, "A Christian Vision of Freedom and Democracy: Neutrality as an Obstacle to Freedom," in *Tennessee Journal of Law and Policy* Vol. 9, Issue 4 (Spring 2014):3.

¹¹ Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, "How Liberating is the Exodus and for whom? Deconstructing Exodus Motifs in Scripture, Literature, and life, n.p, 7.

¹² Kirk-Duggan, 7.

¹³ Masiwa Ragies Gunda, "Understanding the Role of the Exodus in the Institutionalization and Dismantling of Apartheid: Considering the Paradox of Justice and Injustice in the Exodus," in *Religions* 12 (2021): 4; <https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions> accessed July 20, 2023.

¹⁴ Ephraim Tshuma, "Liberation as a Paradigm for Full Humanity in Africa," *De Gruyter Open* Vol. 14 Issue 1(2016): 5.

challenges, government economic policies, diseases and droughts.¹⁵ Suppose polity and policy are not well managed. In that case, the tendency is that the socio-economic sector of society will experience a setback that may provoke many to seek means to relocate. Hence, displacement and the African diaspora have become a reality.

DISPLACEMENT AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

This section focuses on the historical context of African migration, displacement and loss of Cultural identity, resilience and cultural preservation, and social justice and advocacy for migrants.

Historical Context of African Migration

The historical context of African migration is an age-old issue. Veronika Bilger and Albert Kraler opine that migration, or spatial movement in its broadest sense, can be seen as a characteristic of the human condition. Like other social processes, the political, economic, cultural, ecological, and social context in which migration takes place significantly impacts the types, scales, and directions of movement.¹⁶ One may be tempted to observe that Africa is probably a ‘mobile continent’ from its inception. Bruno Schoumaker et al. submit that media and policy frequently focus on migration from Africa to Europe. The impression that waves of desperate migrants are overrunning the European continent was fueled by the frequent media coverage of refugees arriving by sea on the shores of Italy and Spain.¹⁷ This may also mean that while migrants from more developed countries tend to go to Europe, those from less developed nations move to other African countries. This movement of persons and goods will last a long time since governance in some continents like Africa is willing to improve people’s well-being.

Further, Alain Antil et al. suggest that Africa was not heavily populated for a very long period. It has seen large-scale human movements and mobilities throughout history, from the Bantu expansion to contemporary labour migrations that are a part of continental and global circulations, not to mention the evictions brought on by war, enslavement, and forced labour.¹⁸ Equally, Nora McKeon observes that mobility has always been a fundamental aspect of existence in West Africa. Before the advent of colonialism, population movements were mainly related to inter-group conflict, natural disasters, the hunt for arable land, and colonization.¹⁹ Also, Antil et al. observe that “There were several effects of colonization on human movement. Human settlements were

¹⁵ Ephraim Tshuma, “Liberation as a Paradigm for Full Humanity in Africa,” *De Gruyter Open* Vol. 14 Issue 1(2016): 5.

¹⁶ Veronika Bilger and Albert Kraler, “Introduction: African Migrations. Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Dynamics,” in *Stichproben.Wiener Zeitschrift für Kritische Afrikastudien* Nr. 8, (2005):5; also see Gunvor Jonsson, “African Perspectives on Human Mobility Programme Funded by the MacArthur Foundation Comparative Report 2009,” *International Migration Institute James Martin 21st Century School University of Oxford* (2009): 4-7.

¹⁷ Bruno Schoumaker et al., “Changing Patterns of African Migration: A Comparative Analysis,” in *Migrations Between Africa and Europe Paper 18* (2013):3.

¹⁸ Alain Antil et al., “Understanding African Migrations,” *Politique étrangere* (2016):2

¹⁹ Nora McKeon, “Getting to the Root Causes of Migration in West Africa- Whose History, Framing and Agency Counts,” *Globalizations* (2018):3; <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2018.1503842> accessed July 21, 2023..

transformed through wars of conquest, such as the conflict between French colonizers and Samory Toure, the founder of the Wassoulou Empire (1880–98), which reshaped a region that is now Mali, Guinea, and Cote d'Ivoire. The impact of colonialism on human movement also includes forced relocations, whether to plantations and mines owned by European companies or to build transportation infrastructure in places where a considerable labour force was not readily available. Of course, not every migration during the colonial era was brought about by force. Major population shifts resulted from developing transportation infrastructure and cities, where new economic opportunities were growing in increasingly monetarized surroundings.²⁰ The movement of persons from one region to another and across borders is without consequences like loss of cultural identity. Many migrants are trapped between their cultural elements and the cultural elements of the host nations or states.

Displacement and Loss of Cultural Identity

The idea of displacement is frequent and common in Africa. According to Maha Hamdan, displacement is defined as a meandering path instead of a linear movement of paths that place, person, or country predetermines. When one understands that displacement is a process of transition rather than just an end to a journey, one can observe the violence perpetrated on a changing identity. Displacement does disrupt a person's identity, forcing them to forge an unchosen identity.²¹ Displacement paths often do not appeal to those who engage in it. Marie-Laurence Flahaux and Hein De Haas argue that Africa is frequently thought of as a continent of mass migration and displacement because of its extreme poverty and brutal war.²² One can question why Africans are renowned for mass migration. However, it could also indicate that African leaders are out of touch with the situation. Better still, Alain Antil et al. opine that large-scale migrations, such as the Bantu migrations in central and southern Africa, the Arab migrations in North Africa, and the Nilotic migrations in the east, result in processes of cultural synthesis or new local mobilities as people attempt to flee the military, political, cultural, or religious dominance of the invaders or settlers.²³ The Antil et al. assertion that war because of political instability is recurring in Africa has some elements of truth.

Moreso, M. Antriya Bertilla and Alby Grace note that identity crisis has a significant role in the immigration issue. One of the most critical themes in postcolonial literature is the alienation brought on by a loss of identity. The true meaning of existence and its purpose in the hostile world

²⁰ Antil et al., 4.

²¹ Maha Hamdan, "Syrian Intangible Cultural Heritage in Displacement: Reinstatement or Demolition of Cultural Identity," Master of Arts Thesis in Lebanese American University, (2021): 16-17.

²² Marie-Laurence Flahaux and Hein De Haas, "African Migration: Trends, Patterns, Drivers," *Flahaux and De Haas Comparative Migration Studies* (2016):1; also see Dirk Kohnert, "African Migration to Europe: Obscured Responsibilities and Common Misconceptions," *GiGa Working Papers*; www.giga-hamburg.de/workingpapers, 49(2007): 5-6.

²³ Antil et al., 2.

are concepts that modern mankind cannot comprehend. The current and contemporary book frequently includes estrangement, alienation, identity struggle, and uprooting themes.²⁴ Humanity may not understand the purpose of life if those that protect the life of citizens and property have proven that life is worthless, with the prevailing killing and kidnapping for ransoms common in society. Hamdan notes that cultural identity links similarity and diversity. When we tie it to shared cultural components rooted in shared history, we might think of cultural identity in terms of sameness. However, when cultural identity and difference are linked, it becomes a process of becoming and existing. Similarly, cultural identification becomes a privilege denied in the country of residency when there is a displacement or, more precisely, when someone qualifies as a refugee. Refugees do have a crisis of belonging and struggle to assert their own cultural identities.²⁵ Once separated from their communities, migrants or refugees risk losing their sense of cultural identity. Every immigrant is concerned about the need for social advocacy and fairness.

Social Justice and Advocacy for Migrants

The aspect of social justice and advocacy for migrants, in particular, is worth noting in this paper. Roland Walter observes that according to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, all people have the same fundamental rights that are based on universal principles like justice, freedom, independence, fairness, dignity, equality, liberty, security, respect, and peace to ensure their physical, social, and material well-being on earth, regardless of their age, sex, gender, location, nation, origin, language, religion, class, ethnicity, or any other status.²⁶ This code implies that everyone has a right to personal autonomy and space. Therefore, it is the obligation of human rights activists, in particular, to ensure the welfare of migrants. The Human Rights Commission takes a while to seek justice for migrants in some circumstances, like Nigeria, which many people don't seem to get.

Equally, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Vienna notes that according to international law, countries are obligated to exercise due diligence in preventing violence against migrants, migrant workers, and their families, in addition to conducting investigations, bringing charges, and providing protection and support to migrant victims of violence. The enjoyment of human rights and the dignity of migrants, migrant workers, and their families should not be affected by any measures used to combat violence against migrants since the human rights of migrants must be at the centre of all efforts to achieve these purposes.²⁷ The combat for the rights

²⁴ Anriya Bertilla and Alby Grace, "Investigation of Culture and Cultural Displacement in Khaled Hosseini's *Na the Mountain Echoed*," *International Research Journal* Vol. 10, Issue 2 (2023): 2.

²⁵ Hamdan, 18.

²⁶ Roland Walter, "Identity, Displacement and Memory: A Decolonial Approach to Amerindian and African American Literature of the Americas," *Mester*, Vol. XLIX (2020):51.

²⁷ The United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime Vienna, "Combating Violence against Migrants: Criminal Justice Measures to Prevent, Investigate, Prosecute and Punish Violence against Migrants, Migrant Workers and their families and to Protect Victims," New York, 2015, 8.

of migrants may have to be everyone's responsibility since the Commission cannot be everywhere to take off the plights of the migrants.

Still, on this social justice issue, George Mason and Shippensburg suggest that multicultural social justice counsellors and psychologists face challenges in not only offering services that are culturally sensitive to immigrants but also in advocating for their rights, which will ultimately result in the development of harmonious intercultural societies. Counsellors and psychologists need to learn about and comprehend the problems the immigrant community faces to be effective.²⁸ The place of knowledge and understanding cannot be undermined in the process of immigrants' awareness. Mason and Shippensburg note that as it relates to immigrant adjustment and adaptation, counselors and psychologists are to work with the immigrant population and host communities while offering culturally relevant treatments that involve social justice advocacy work related to immigrant rights. Too often, the emphasis has been on teaching immigrants "our way of life" in a one-way manner. To eradicate xenophobia and intolerance and build unified, cohesive, and peaceful communities and societies, this limited education perspective must broaden to become more inclusive, encouraging two-way dialogue and interventions with the immigrant population and the host society.²⁹ According to Mason, inclusive education is possible on this matter.

Moreover, Mason and Shippensburg further note that with host communities adjusting to the arrivals and migrants changing to the new community, adjustment challenges affect the community. Therefore, it is necessary to interact with the wider local community rather than having a narrow ethnocentric response to migrant groups on their cultural practices and ideas about healing. For instance, cultural conflicts around child disciplining methods have arisen due to differing views on child-rearing.³⁰ The fallout of mixed cultures and how disciplines are melted in the face of immigration are unpalatable.

Further, Mason and Shippensburg also argue that to create harmonious intercultural communities, it is crucial and effective to use the media as a vehicle for social justice advocacy, highlighting the achievements and contributions of immigrants to society. Counsellors and psychologists must collaborate and partner equally with civic and religious leaders to accomplish this goal.³¹ Counsellors and psychologists risk doing more harm than good to migrants if they cannot overcome their bias.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Vienna also notes no matter their status, migrants under their control must be protected and helped by the state due to the priority of human rights.

²⁸ George Mason and Shippensburg, "Multicultural-Social Justice Leadership Strategies: Counselling and Advocacy with Immigrants," *Journal for Social Action in Counseling and Psychology* Vol. 3, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 89.

²⁹ Mason and Shippensburg, 90-91.

³⁰ Mason and Shippensburg, 91.

³¹ Mason and Shippensburg, 91.

Law enforcement and other goals, including any relating to migration, are subordinate to the duty to protect and assist. For instance, the Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Protocol clarifies that human rights come before other goals.³² The states are responsible for protecting and aiding migrants in establishing themselves far from home. Mason and Shippensburg postulate that Migrating to another country comes with various political, social, and institutional challenges. Working with immigrant clients to promote fair and equal treatment and access to resources and chances is crucial for counsellors and psychologists.³³ The molestations of immigrants are not uncommon in many African countries like South Africa, and xenophobia is attached to migrants. To this end, Kevin C. Snow et al. observe that counselling programs should aim to increase the foundational understanding of working with immigrants and refugees while developing advocacy, leadership, and consultation abilities.³⁴ In some settings in Africa, this is still happening.

Still on this concern of counsellors and psychologists, Mason and Shippensburg state that counsellors and psychologists need to be familiar with the pre-migration and post-migration issues that affect immigrants' psychological adjustment to a new culture and their intercultural competencies. Understanding issues like migration motivations, the political and economic environment of the home country, language barriers, loss and grief, identity changes, dealing with xenophobia, discrimination, and stereotypes, family relationships and intergenerational conflicts, acculturation, cultural shock, survivor's guilt, and mental and physical health issues are crucial for counsellors and psychologists. Counsellors and psychologists must simultaneously be able to work in interdisciplinary teams and collaborate to help with the numerous pre- and post-migration concerns that affect immigrants' psychological adjustment and adaptation.³⁵ The build-up of these prevailing concerns for counsellors and psychologists to intervene have a theological undertone.

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION

The following theological perspective on migration are considered: the image of God and the dignity of migrants, the call to hospitality and compassion, and God's concern for the sojourner and foreigner.

The Image of God and the Dignity of Migrants

The image of God and the dignity of migrants are essential concerns in the face of immigration. Groody avers that although the concept of imago Dei has its roots in Christian theology, it has

³² The United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime Vienna, "Combating Violence against Migrants: Criminal Justice Measures to Prevent, Investigate, Prosecute and Punish Violence against Migrants, Migrant Workers and their families and to Protect Victims," New York, 2015, 9.

³³ Mason and Shippensburg, 93.

³⁴ Kevin C. Snow et al., "Advocacy and Social Justice Approaches with Immigrants and Refugees in Counsellor Education, Les approches de defense des droits et de justice soiale aupre immigrants et refugies et leur avec la formation des conseillers," *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy/Revue canadienne de counseling et de psychotherapie* Vol. 55, no. 1 (2021): 18.

³⁵ Mason and Shippensburg, 95.

universal connotations and has ramifications in various intellectual, theological, and humanitarian traditions. The 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1951 United Nations Convention* relating to the Status of Refugees, which is still the guiding document for refugee rights and protections, express human dignity in language deeply rooted in theological principles. No matter their political, economic, social, or geographic standing, every individual has inherent value and worth, highlighted by human rights and dignity terminology.³⁶ The concept of the *Imago Dei* says that every immigrant, regardless of religion or culture, carries the imprint of God.

Several persons have defined the *Imago Dei*. M. Daniel Carroll R. opines, according to one view, the image of God is about everything humans are and have, including their intellect, will, emotions, and spiritual nature. According to the second viewpoint, the image is best understood in terms of relationships and refers to the special communion with God made possible by Christ, who is the ultimate manifestation of the divine image (2 Corinthians 4:4; Col. 1:15). The third choice, which derives from biblical theology, asserts that the image serves a purpose. Humanity's unique responsibility is to rule and subdue the planet as God's substitute regents (Gen. 1:26, 28).³⁷ This is one way to describe the *Imago Dei*, according to Carroll.

Equally, Groody also notes that Since the Trinity is inextricably linked to *Imago Dei*, it is not primarily an individualistic but rather a relational idea. The majority of migrants leave their homes to give their families as well as themselves more dignity.³⁸ Additionally, it has been noted that *Imago Dei* has two opposing sides that work together to evaluate and challenge any tendencies toward oppressing the poor and needy or degrading them through various manifestations of racism, nativism, and xenophobia. It serves positively as an affirmation of the value and worth of every person. Sin distorts the *Imago Dei*, resulting in a fallen world that causes relationships to become strained.³⁹ This implies that *Imago Dei*, in Groody's view, serves as an affirmation of every person's value and worth. That being said, the call to hospitality and compassion is always sensible.

The Call to Hospitality and Compassion

Hospitality and compassion are interrelated concepts that are deeply rooted in the heart of Christianity and remain valid assert in the kingdom of God. The Archdiocese of Louisville submits that the Latin word *hospes*, which also means host and visitor, is where the word hospitality originates. It has been described as the act, practice, or quality of being kind and considerate to

³⁶ Groody, 647.

³⁷ M. Daniel Carroll R. "Missio Dei: Exploring God's work in the World," *Immigration and the Bible* 2010:6.

³⁸ Groody,647.

³⁹ Groody, 648.

visitors and newcomers.⁴⁰ This implies that everyone, especially Christians, is responsible for the act and practice of greeting a friend or a stranger.

Cliff McManis argues that since the beginning of time, various social groups worldwide have engaged in hospitality, or integrating a stranger into society by providing for their basic requirements like food and shelter. Under God's role as the ultimate Host throughout history and Christ's dual roles as Host and Guest during His earthly ministry, the Bible elevates this practice with higher spiritual and theological nuances and more significant implications regarding the roles of the host and the guest. Therefore, biblical hospitality is clearly distinguished from and wholly distinct when contrasted with all other definitions and expressions of hospitality.⁴¹ The practice of hospitality could be measured by the value of gold in society.

Compassion, like hospitality, is a vital substance in human relationships. The Women in Focus notes that compassion is a feeling of sadness and sympathy for another person's suffering or misfortune, frequently accompanied by the desire to help. Latin *com-* with + *pati* (to endure, suffer) means to feel with. Literally to suffer alongside. A strong desire to relieve suffering and a profound empathy for another person's emotions or problems are the hallmarks of compassion.⁴² God wants us to be hospitable and kind to one another in our society.

God's Concern for the Sojourner and Foreigner

The pages of the Old Testament are coloured with a fascinating discourse on God's design for the sojourner and foreigner. He instructed the Hebrew people to reciprocate hospitality and compassion to foreigners, for they were once in that situation in Egypt. Lori Goss-Reaves et al. maintains that a belief in the Triune God, who reconciles all people to Himself, shapes a Christian attitude to migration and refugee resettlement. Our treatment of the sojourner changes when we acknowledge that we are all temporary residents waiting for our permanent homes in heaven. Christian social workers are called to experience Christ's transformation, which generates motivation for inclusive and loving reconciliation.⁴³ The basis of our moral obligation towards others stems from our understanding and relationship with the Triune God, Similar to how Jonathan C. Augustine claims that during the Exodus, God used Moses to guide the Israelites out of Egypt's oppressive, authoritarian authority and into the promised, one day, Canaanite

⁴⁰ The Archdiocese of Louisville, *Christian Hospitality: A Handbook for Parishes* (Louisville: Catholic Services, 2013), 8.

⁴¹ Cliff McManis, *What the Bible Says About Hospitality* (Cupertino, California: GBF Press, 2019), 17.

⁴² The Women in Focus, "The Call to Compassion" n.p., 1.

⁴³ Lori Goss-Reaves et al., "Bearing God's Image to All People: A Social Worker's Response to the Sojourner," *Social Work and Christianity* n.p., 10.

homeland.⁴⁴ This may imply that the mighty God's greatness is always ready to intervene to save His people.

IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICANS IN THE DIASPORA

Identity Formation and Cultural Hybridity

The issue of 'identity' is paramount among immigrants in the foreign land. Brian Fiu Kolia describes identity in connection to a person's social, communal, or cultural context and in light of that person's continuing personal development.⁴⁵ Kolia adds that immigrants experience identity issues since they live in a country vastly different from their culture. According to Stuart Hall, cultural identity is a question of becoming and being.⁴⁶ In a similar vein, Casey Strine emphasizes that immigrants are subject to the phenomena known as reverse culture shock, which practically everyone who has spent more than a few months away from their home has experienced. The Patriarchs are referred to as sojourners in the book of Genesis, implying their transient residence that differs from the host population and their limited legal protection.

Jana Simonis notes that international students are expected to integrate into and function within the new culture to better fit in with their host society. This is referred to as hybridity. As a result, they must create a hybrid identity that fuses aspects of their host society and home culture. However, because they are hybrid creatures that do not adhere to the cultural norms of either culture, this hybridization, therefore, puts them in a marginalized position within the host culture and the home culture.⁴⁷ 'Culturally hybrid beings' may result through blending elements from the home and host cultures. Simonis adds that although hybridized persons must blend in with their surroundings and be aware of the various cultural frameworks they operate within, they usually unintentionally pick up cultural traits that form a part of their own cultural identities.⁴⁸ The idea of being a hybrid can also make one feel as though they don't fit in anywhere, which makes them stand out from other people.

The Quest for Belonging and Home

The quest for belonging and home are two contrasting issues. The quest for belonging is a human concern and must be treated to meet that need. According to Simonis, a person's sense of belonging depends on their willingness to integrate into society and adhere to its norms, values, and standards

⁴⁴ Jonathan C. Augustine, "A Theology of Welcome: Faith –Based Considerations of Immigrants as Strangers in a Foreign Land," in *Connecticut Public Interest Law Journal* Vol.19, no. 2 (Spring 2020): 256.

⁴⁵ Brian Fiu Kolia, "Hybridized Surviving: The Diaspora Narratives of Joseph, Esther, and Daniel," in *Religions* (2022): 3, <http://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions> accessed July 20, 2023.

⁴⁶ Kolia, 5.

⁴⁷ Jana Simonis, "Home and Identity: Displacement, Belonging, and Hybridity in International Students on U.S. Campuses," *Research paper*. Paper 243 (2012):11.

⁴⁸ Simonis, 12.

and their ability to be accepted by it.⁴⁹ He also points out that, although some characteristics and values of the host culture are adopted for integration, and the creation of a bond with the host culture, other aspects of the person's home culture are still preserved as part of their identity. As a result, the international person develops a hybrid identity that enables them to function in both cultures. Thus, the experience of displacement arises when one's hybridized identity disqualifies them from belonging to their home and host cultures.⁵⁰ If the migrants want to fit in with the host culture, it is expedient for them to accept it.

Bertilla and Grace note that alienated People have difficulty figuring out where they fit in. Loneliness fuels the psychological debate over what "home" really means. Displacement and dislocation play a significant role in a feeling of unhappiness that leads to alienation and estrangement.⁵¹

Empowerment and the African Diaspora Community

The word 'Diaspora' may mean different things to several persons. According to V. Sahithi Raj and Sandhya Tiwari, the term "diaspora" is frequently used today to refer to virtually any population that is deemed "deterritorialized" or "transnational," that is, that has its origins in a different country than where it currently resides and whose social, economic, and political networks transcend national boundaries or even span the globe.⁵² According to Raj and Tiwari, all diaspora are unhappy, but each diaspora is unhappy differently. People who identify as diaspora are those who are uncomfortable with their non-hyphenated passport identities. Diasporas are those who would like to investigate the hyphen's significance but may be reluctant to go too far for fear of sparking widespread social insanity. They have an unstable episteme of actual or imagined displacements and a sense of exile that they impose on themselves. They are also haunted by spectres and ghosts that emerge from within and support separatist or irredentist movements.⁵³

Implications for African Diaspora Movements

Crossing international borders has both advantages and disadvantages for both the migrants and the host societies. Due to the difficulty of cultural hybridity, immigrants will inevitably develop a different culture that is either their own or that of their host country. This could indicate that there may be a period when some people are unwilling to identify with their family because of disparities

⁴⁹ Simonis, 16.

⁵⁰ Simonis 17-19.

⁵¹ Bertilla and Grace, 2.

⁵² V. Sahithi Raj and Sandhya Tiwari, "Aspects of Diaspora and Cultural Displacement in Kiran Desai's Novel *The Inheritance of Loss*," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)* ISSN (Online):2319-7722, (Print):2319-7714 www.ijhssi.org//volume 12 Issue 3 (March 2023): 75.

⁵³ Raj and Tiwari, 76.

in worldviews, philosophy, and culture. Another issue is that since migrants might not wish to invest at home, advancements may be concentrated more in one country or region. In addition to these crime waves, prostitution and other vices may proliferate because some scrupulous people occasionally use these helpless people. Depending on the circumstances at the time, the government's expenditure on particular facilities may rise or fall. For instance, the host government may have more mouths to feed, which could lead to accepting responsibility or letting the migrants suffer for themselves.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the Old Testament's view on migration and how it affects Africans living abroad. In addition to providing an understanding of the lives of Africans in the diaspora, the researcher aimed to shed light on migration's theological and ethical aspects. While embracing the complexity and diversity of the African diaspora experience, the article focused on the themes of displacement, liberation, justice, and cultural preservation in the context of migration. The results showed that cultural hybridity is one of several issues that some migrants must deal with. This cultural fusion severely challenges migrants' sense of self while away from home.

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