



Parasha picture

“And God blessed them, saying: ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.’”
(Genesis 1:22)

Bereishit, Genesis 1:1-6:8, is read on October 17.
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Judaism 3.0

The decades that transformed Judaism



By **GOL KALEV**

Judaism was shaped through three brief periods of radical changes, each lasting just a few decades: the Abrahamic revolution that shaped Judaism 1.0; the 1st-century CE destruction of the Temple and expulsion of the Jews that shaped Judaism 2.0; and the 20th-century Zionist revolution that seeded Judaism 3.0.

Judaism 1.0

The Book of Genesis describes humanity’s defining event – the exodus from the land of Shinar in the aftermath of the Tower of Babel debacle. Since The Flood (the re-beginning), the entirety of humanity was bunched together in one place with one language and one narrative – the ultimate utopia of universalism that today, 4,000 years later, some aspire toward.

That era of John Lennon-like “Imagine” lasted for at least a century, but then global reality was shaken to its core: Mass migration occurred, nations were formed, languages and cultures developed. Universalism ended and particularity began. Into this environment of maximalism and radical changes, Abraham comes to the world.

Born 292 years after The Flood while Noah was still alive, Abraham grew up at a time when all of reported humanity was still alive – 11 generations! But when he was 50 years old, the first reported death occurred: that of his grandfather Nahor. Some 10 years later, the patriarch Noah died as well. This inevitably changed things. Noah was the one person who lived at the time of Adam, who spoke to God and who seeded this all. A third death hit Abraham much closer: His brother Haran died prematurely.

Through those events, Abraham recog-

nizes that humanity is transforming. He hears God’s call, receives his blessing and plants the seeds for Judaism 1.0.

And then, a new feature of humanity came about: war. Just like later in the cases of Judaism 2.0 and Judaism 3.0, war was about to shape the course of Judaism 1.0.

The split into nations created hierarchies and competing interests. This by itself is not a cause for war. After all, God emphasized after The Flood that hierarchy was to be part of the new world order. But when a coalition formed of five kings rebelled against a hierarchy that had been in place for 12 years, a massive world war erupted. Abraham inserted himself into this war and single-handedly changed its course. Abraham’s strength led nations to seek treaties with him, as reflected in the accords with the King of Salem and then King of Gerar: peace for peace. It also led to broad recognition of God, Whom Abraham served.

In those few short decades, Abraham’s military intervention also shaped the course of events that are described in the Torah centuries later. The Book of Deuteronomy delineates the population replacement that occurred in the aftermath of that war. This in turn provided the ideological legitimacy for the population replacement that was about to happen in Canaan.

That first world war also likely gave rise to the global philosophical divide of that time. Every era has its guiding global philosophical divide: monarchy vs republicanism in the 19th century; communism vs capitalism in the 20th; and seemingly European universalism vs American particularity in the early stages of the 21st century. In that biblical era, it was Egypt vs Israel – paganism vs monotheism – as depicted in the Book of Exodus.

Abraham planted the seeds, but it would take centuries for Judaism 1.0 to more fully develop: the Exodus from Egypt, receiving

of the Torah, “education through migration,” settlement of land, worship and the inauguration of the Temple, which became the anchor of Judaism 1.0.

Judaism 2.0

1,500 years of Judaism 1.0 went by, and then, just a few short decades in the 1st century CE, events again transformed Judaism.

Here too, war played an important role, but this was no longer the biblical-era type of wars that were driven by disputes over land, resources and taxes. The European invaders introduced a humanity-altering cause of war: ideological negation.

The Greeks and then Romans aggressively imposed their own ideology on the region’s nations. Nearly all nations capitulated and are now extinct. One nation resisted and is still intact: the Jews.

Europe would continue to carry this flag of negation until today, serving as a primary cause of destabilization in the Middle East. Indeed, European actions in the 1st century – destroying the Jewish Temple, banning Jewish worship, deporting Jews from Jerusalem and then from Judea – were meant to obliterate Jewish particularity. Yet the Jewish nation-religion survived by going through a transformation and adopting a new anchor that was suited for the new reality of exile: Rabbinical Judaism. The synagogue replaced the Temple, prayer replaced sacrifices, the insular ghetto replaced the insular life in Judea, and the yearning to return to Zion replaced the actual presence in Jerusalem.

It would take centuries for Judaism 2.0 to fully develop, but here too, the seeds took root in just a few short decades.

Judaism 3.0

In the following 1,800 years, the Jewish nation-religion, now in exile, was preserved through both an internal glue of religiosity

and an external glue of insularity. But starting in the 19th century, there was a steep decline in Jewish religious observance (from arguably close to 100% observance then to less than 10% today), alongside the crumbling of outer walls that confined Judaism. Once again Judaism was losing its anchor. Yet, as the Jewish religious connector faded, the Jewish national connector was dramatically augmented.

In just a few decades, Judaism was once again transformed. A dream in 1895 turned into a Jewish political entity – the Zionist Congress – and cumulated in the reestablishment of the Jewish state in 1948. Judaism got a new anchor: Zionism. Described by Theodor Herzl as an “infinite ideal,” Zionism became the conduit for the Jews’ return to Judaism.

Just like in the previous transformations of Judaism, war also played an important role in shaping Judaism 3.0. Once again, European negation was at the forefront. In 1920, France overthrew the pro-Zionist Arab king of Syria, Faisal bin Hussein, ending the prospects of a nearly utopian Jewish-Arab peace, forcing a domino effect of land-carving, and igniting the first shots (in the 1920 Battle of Tel Hai) of what later became known as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Europe also provided a lifeline to the Iranian regime that threatens the Jewish state and other Abrahamic nations of the region. But this also has turned Arab nations closer to Israel, leading to the historic 2020 Abrahamic accords – a testament of the triumph of Zionism and a déjà vu to that utopian biblical era, before the string of debilitating European interventions.

Just like with Judaism 1.0, which was seeded in Abraham’s times, and Judaism 2.0, which was seeded in the 1st century CE, the radical changes that seeded 3.0 took only a few short decades – but just like then, it will take a long time for Judaism 3.0 to mature. We are still in the early days. ■

The writer is the author of the upcoming book, Judaism 3.0. For details, visit: JewishTransformation.com or email Comments@jewishtransformation.com. For his geopolitical articles visit: EuropeAndJerusalem.com