

## Abstract

The aim of the research presented in the thesis is to interpret the concept of **צדקה** as Jewish social ethics. Judaism is determined by its social ethics, which, in turn, is the set of principles of **צדקה**. The main objective of the research is to analyse the diverse aspects of Jewish social ethics. Thus, it is our conviction that the ethical principles of Judaism were present at the dawn of the development of Western civilization and had their influence on it, an influence perceivable in the present as well. The dissertation, first of all, attempts to put the rather archaic terminology of **צדקה** in a scientific context. Therefore, in our research, we have identified the social-ethical, sociological and historical approaches by means of which we can interpret **צדקה** as a systemic expression of Judaism. Consequently, the dissertation, in the first place, aims to demonstrate what **צדקה** means as social ethics.

We have examined Jewish community life through characteristic precedents of medieval קהילות texts from the Carpathian basin containing social-ethical aspects. In the course of the research process, we have tried to verify the principle of love in Judaism. For the social-ethical principles have always impregnated Jewish history, i.e. the Jewish “societas” of all times. This is what is reflected by the **תקנות** ethical aspects of the regulations of the Jewish community of medieval Pressburg/Pozsony, so far unpublished in Hungarian. Jewish communities always responded with ethical solutions to the persecutions, the miserable circumstances, or the crises of the Middle Ages.

Hopefully, as a result of our research, the previously known texts of Jewish science of religion will also appear in a new light. It is a fact that in one of the 11th century records of the Jewish community of the Carpathian basin, there is written evidence of the existence of a **צדקה** fund in the Esztergom community. To our knowledge, this document demonstrates for the first time that the first institutionalized social assistance redistribution system in the Carpathian basin was created in a Jewish community. At the same time, the thesis also aspires to shed light on the fact that despite the dispersion, the continuous physical persecutions, the attempts at liquidation, or the pogroms, the קהילה could only survive due to the existing and pulsating social-ethical principles. We consider that with this, the dissertation introduces a relatively neglected aspect in the social science discourse of Judaism.

We have chosen the concept of Judaism and social ethics of the Hungarian Neology at the turn of the 20th century as our objects of study. The plausibility of the questions raised in the dissertation are manifest in the activities of the Pest Israelite Community around the turn of

the 20th century (*fin de siècle*). The PIC was the richest and most significant organized Jewish community worldwide, both as far as number of members and material aspects are concerned.

Part of the dissertation is a discourse analysis of interpretations of social ethics by contemporary North American Orthodox and Liberal branches of Judaism. Applying an expressly human geographic approach and focusing fundamentally on the local communities of the United States, we have performed a discourse analysis of the communities in question from a social-ethical perspective.

In our dissertation, we represent the concept that Judaism is a religion aimed at bettering humanity, i.e. the world. In our opinion, this fundamental principle of faith is a substantial principle of Judaism. The purpose of the thesis, in the end, is to demonstrate this basic ethical principle of Judaism with the help of the science of religion. We consider that monotheism and the unequivocal and consistent principle of making the world a better place constitute the non-branch-specific and eternal *differentia specifica* of Judaism.