

## STRANGERS, PILGRIMS AND ISRAEL

By: Arnold Kennedy.

In the Old Testament there are Scriptures that certainly look as if they are saying that non-Israelite strangers could become circumcised, keep the Passover, the Laws of Moses and thus become as *one born in the land*. This is the matter which is being questioned. The immediate necessity is to look at the word *stranger* and similar words like *foreigner*, *sojourner* and *alien*. In both the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament there are many different words loosely translated as *strangers*, *foreigners* and *servants*, etc and this is the problem. Our translators [this includes the NIV] have had no system of consistent rendering of any of these words. That there are *strangers* who are Israelites and *strangers* who are not Israelites, is very obvious.

**IN THE OLD TESTAMENT** there are eight words which are translated as *stranger*, *strangers*, *foreigner*, *sojourners* or *aliens* and some clarification is necessary. Without this clarification we have translations which make the Bible appear contradictory and inconsistent.

**IN THE NEW TESTAMENT** there are ten words which are variously translated, so that it is clear that each word in the original has a different meaning. Some of the New Testament quotations are from Old Testament origins and therefore they show a close alliance between the two languages.

### WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF STRANGERS?

The most commonly mis-understood word is *ger*, which is translated as “stranger(s)” 86 times out of the 92 times it occurs in the Old Testament. The meaning of this word might be summarised as being an Israelite who lives apart from the main body of Israel. That is, living among, or in the land, of other races. The important fact is that this stranger is an Israelite by race.

It is not hard to find instances where the translators have translated the same Hebrew word, in the same context, into two different English words. This makes immediate nonsense of those verses when taken as translated.

Following are the main Hebrew words translated *stranger*, *foreigner*, *sojourner*, etc. The comments include a summation of the meaning of the key terms and the status of the people covered by those terms in the eyes of the Law. The summations are based on usage of the word in Scripture, as shown throughout this chapter. The words are:

**H4033 *maguwr*** (noun) from 1481 in the sense of lodging; a temporary abode; by extens. a permanent residence: - dwelling, pilgrimage, where sojourn, be a stranger. For example: Gen 17:8, *the land wherein thou art a stranger*. It is used of the places where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob dwelled in their travels or pilgrimage. We can use the term *dweller*.

**H1616 *ger*** (noun) a guest; by impl. a foreigner: alien, sojourner. For example, Gen 15:13, *Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs*. A person of one's own blood or race who is visiting in the district and is not known to the residents of the area. Israelites who were not present at the covenant sanctification ceremony in Mount Sinai (such as the descendants of Judah's son, Zerah). Moses named his son, Gershom, because he was visiting from Egypt and Canaan (as opposed to being an exile). The *gerim* have equal rights before the law and can accumulate wealth in Israel. We can use the term *kinsman-visitor* (to show the genetic connection).

**H2114 *zuwr*** (verb - used as a participle with the force of a noun) to turn aside (espec for lodging); hence to be a foreigner, strange, profane; spec. to commit adultery: (come from) another (man, place), fanner, go away, strange (-r, thing, woman). , *land*).

**H8453 *towshab*** (noun) from 3427 For example, Num 16:40, ... *no stranger which is not of the seed of Israel*. The basic thought is of non-acquaintance and non-relatedness. A complete alien; no racial connection. In our context, one who is not an Israelite, Shemite or Hebrew. This

person has no rights or protection under the Law and be killed on sight if found near the Temple.

We can use the term *alien*.

**H5236 nekar** (noun) from 5234. Foreign, or (concr) a foreigner, or (abstr.) heathendom: - alien, strange, stranger. For example, Gen 17:12, *And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed (not of your own immediate family). Refers to what is foreign to a family, tribe, nation.* Hence the son of a stranger refers to the son of a foreigner and these are half-caste Israelite (see Isa 56:3, *Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree*). In this context, we can use the term *foreigner*. (Compare Gen 35:2 which reads ... *put away gods, the foreigners which are in the midst of you* ...)

**H5237 nokriy** (adjective) from 5235. Strange, in a variety of degrees and applications (foreign, non-relative, adulterous, different, wonderful): alien, foreigner, outlandish, stranger. For example, Judges 19:12, *And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel; we will pass over to Gibeah*. Compare with Ruth 2:10, *Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?* - a foreign person with respect to Boaz and his people because Ruth had come from a different Israelite tribe.

Similarly, a strange woman as opposed to one's wife referred to an adulteress. In our context it describes one who is not of Israel but is a Shemite or Hebrew versus an alien (*zuwr*). Harlots, in Israelite times, were typically not Israelite women, but were quite similar in appearance because they were in a broadly related genetic line. Thus it refers to Hebrew people with whom marriage is forbidden - Canaanites, Moabites, Ammonites, etc and with whom Israelites were always led away to other gods. These people had no rights or privileges in Israel. In this context, we can use the term *foreign (one, person. A dweller, (but no outlandish); espec. (as distinguished from a native citizen and a temporary inmate or mere lodger) resident alien, foreigner, inhabitant, sojourner, stranger*. For example, Lev 25:6, *And the sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee*. Compare 1 Ki 17:1 *And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants (towshab) of Gilead, ...* The majority of the references are to a temporary, landless, wage earner, hence, not naturalised. In our context, the lowest order and, basically, had no rights other than access to the cities of refuge. The children of the towshab could be bought as a perpetual servants, without prospect of redemption, and could not hold any position of authority. In this context we can use the expression *temporary resident*.

Each of these terms apply their meanings according to their context and hence can be used of Israelites as well as other people. For example, Abraham described himself as a sojourner to the sons of Heth [Gen 23:4]. However, our interest is the use of these terms with reference to the status of non-Israelites within Israel. By way of example, let us look at one of the standard Scriptures used by universalists:

*Exodus 12:19 Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger [kinsman-visitor], or born in the land.*

This verse makes perfect sense when we realise the stranger in this case is, in fact, an Israelite but not one who was present in Mount Sinai at the time of the formal covenant ceremonies. Compare this with:

*Ex 12:43-49. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, This is the order of the passover. There shall be no stranger [the AV text is deficient here; the Hebrew reads: no son of a stranger - ben nekar - son of a foreigner; a half-caste] eat thereof: But every man's servant [bondservant] that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then he shall eat thereof. A foreigner [a foreign person] or a hired servant [H7916: a man at wages by the day or the year - Not the same as the bond servant, above] shall not eat thereof. In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house, neither shall ye break a bone thereof. All the*

congregation of Israel shall keep it. And when a **stranger** [kinsman-visitor] shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it, and he shall be as one born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the **stranger** [kinsman-visitor] that sojourneth among you.

In the AV version of this quotation there are four categories of people mentioned in regard to the ordinance of the Passover and it looks as if the stranger mentioned as forbidden at the beginning of the verses is suddenly allowed to partake at the end of the verses. However, the translations do not reveal that there is a fifth category, the kinsman-visitor, who is the one is allowed to partake if the males of his family are circumcised.

Let us look at some of the variations in the English translations of these verses:

[a] The NIV calls the first stranger an alien, and the second one a temporary resident which is not correct – the half-caste is not an alien and the kinsman-visitor is not the same as an alien who is temporarily living in the country.

[b] The RSV calls the first a foreigner and the second a stranger – the first one is wrong and the second one is only partly right; the kinsman-visitor is a stranger, but it does not reveal the racial connection that is present in the Hebrew word.

[c] The Living Bible actually calls the second pair of strangers “foreigners” which is so far off the mark that it is completely mis-leading.

The sincerity of the translators is not the issue here, but there are important implications for how we view the New Testament verses on similar subjects. In the New Testament we still have *pilgrims and strangers, aliens and foreigners*. We have been taught or have presumed certain things about these words, but the right teachings are, in fact, the same as are presented in the Old Testament. The New Testament is based on the Old Testament and *it is written* [in the Old Testament].

If certain of the “strangers” in the Old Testament were Israelites **by race**, might not certain of these strangers still be Israelites **by race** in the New Testament?

#### *STRANGERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.*

In the New Testament we also find a variety of words translated as “strangers”, “foreigners” “aliens” and “pilgrims”. As the translators did not understand the differences between the different terms for strangers in the Old Testament, it should not surprise us to find the same confusion in the New Testament. There Greek words translated stranger, pilgrim or sojourner are *allogenes, allotrios, apallotrioo, epidemeo, xenodocheo, xenos, parepidemos, paroikeo, paroikia, paroikos* and *philonexia*. With reference to Strong, Thayer and Vine, the words that are relevant to this chapter are:

**G245 allotrios** (adjective) from G243; another’s, that is, not one’s own: by extens. foreign, not akin, hostile - alien, (an-) other (man’s men’s) strange(-r). Belonging to another (opposite of *idios* - one’s own); foreign, strange; hence not of one's own group, family, nation, kingdom; an alien, an enemy. Matt 17:25, Heb 11:34. This is the equivalent of the Hebrew *nekar*. We can use the term *foreigner*.

**G526 apallotrioo** (verb) *apo* (from) plus *allotrios*. to estrange away, that is (pass. and fig.) to be non-participant: alienate, be alien. To alienate, estrange; to be shut out from one's fellowship and intimacy. To be rendered alien, to be alienated; the condition of unbelievers is presented in a threefold state of alienation (a) from the commonwealth of Israel (b) from the love of God (c) from God Himself. Hence, to be shut out from one’s group. Eph 2:12. There is no obvious equivalent for this word in the Hebrew terms above. We can use the term *estranged*.

**G1927 epidemeo** (verb - used only twice; participle) to make oneself at home, that is, (by extens.) to reside (in a foreign country): - [be] dwelling (which were) there, stranger. To be present among one's people, in one's city or one's native land; to be a sojourner; of a foreign resident,

among any people, in any country. Acts 2:10. This is the participle equivalent of the Hebrew *ger*. We can use the term *visiting*.

**G3581 *xenos*** (adjective) foreign (lit. alien, or fig. novel); by impl. a guest or (vice-versa) entertainer: - host, strange(r). A foreigner, a stranger; alien (from a person or a thing); without the knowledge of, without a share in; new, unheard of; one who receives and entertains another hospitably; with whom he stays or lodges, a host. Strange; denotes a stranger in the sense of an unknown person of the same group (such as people of the same race). Matt 27:7, Acts 2:10, 17:21, Eph 2:19, Heb 11:13. There is no equivalent for this word in the Hebrew terms above. We can use the term *stranger*.

**G3927 *parepidemos*** (adjective used as noun - *para*: from; expressing a contrary condition; *epidemo*: to sojourn and *demos*: a people) from 8344 and the base of 1927. An alien alongside, that is, a resident foreigner: - pilgrim, stranger. One who comes from a foreign country into a city or land to reside there by the side of the natives; a stranger; sojourning in a strange place, a foreigner; in the NT metaph. in reference to heaven as the native country, one who sojourns on earth. Sojourning in a strange place away from one's own people. Used of those to whom Heaven is their own country and who are sojourners on Earth. Denotes a sojourner, an exile; used of OT saints. 1 Peter 1:1. As this term is related to *epidemo* above, it is the equivalent of the Hebrew *ger*. We will use the term *visitor*.

**G3940 *paroikia*** (noun) See *paroikos*. Foreign residence: -- sojourning, as strangers. A dwelling near or with one; a sojourning, dwelling in a strange land; metaph. the life of a man here on earth is likened to a sojourning. This is the equivalent of the Hebrew *towshab*. We will use the term *temporary resident*.

**G3941 *paroikos*** (adjective) having a home near, that is, (as noun) a by-dweller (alien resident): foreigner, sojourn, stranger. Dwelling near, neighbouring; in the NT, a stranger, a foreigner, one who lives in a place without the right of citizenship; metaph. without citizenship in God's kingdom; one who lives on earth as a stranger, a sojourner on the earth; of Christians whose home is in heaven. One who dwells in a place. 1 Peter 2:11 - as sojourners (*paroikous*) and aliens (*parepidemos*). This is the equivalent of the Hebrew *towshab*. We can use the term *temporary resident*.

The New Testament, therefore, has a similar variety of words as has the Old Testament in this area, so we can no longer presume that all strangers and foreigners [as translated] are non-Israelites. Comparisons must be made from the Old Testament foundation in the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets.

There is a certain relationship conveyed by one pair of words used in the Old Testament which always compares with the same sentiment conveyed by a similar pairing of words in the New Testament. These New Testament phrases are derived from the Old Testament, so there is a link between them.

*Ps 39:12 Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry, hold not Thy peace at my tears, for I am a STRANGER [ger: kinsman-visitor] with thee, and a SOJOURNER [towshab: temporary resident], as all my fathers were.*

*Gen 23:4 I am a STRANGER [ger: kinsman-visitor] and a SOJOURNER [towshab: temporary resident] with you.*

*Lev 25:23 For ye [are] STRANGERS [ger: kinsman-visitor] and SOJOURNERS [towshab: temporary resident] with me.*

*1 Chron 29:15 We are STRANGERS [ger: kinsman-visitor] before thee and SOJOURNERS [towshab: temporary resident]*

*1 Peter 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech, as STRANGERS [paroikos: temporary resident] and PILGRIMS [parepidemos: visitors].*

*Heb 11:13 These all died in faith ... and confessed that they were PILGRIMS [xenos: stranger] and STRANGERS [parepidemos: visitors] on the earth.*

*Eph 2:12 Being ALIENS [apalotrioo: estranged] from the Commonwealth of Israel, and STRANGERS [xenos: stranger] from the covenants of promises.*

*Eph 2:19* Now therefore, ye are no more STRANGERS [*xenos*: strangers] and FOREIGNERS [*paroikas*: temporary residents] but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

Here we have a selection of Scriptures from both Testaments in which there are parallel words. In the Old Testament references, the paired words are *ger* and *towshab* in each case. While both terms are used to define race, it is essential to determine the context in which they are used to verify which race is under discussion.

In Hebrews 11:13 the pilgrims and strangers are Israelites because the book is written to the Hebrews; those whose Fathers had been given the Law of Moses. In the other New Testament verses, it is not clear, at first glance, that they are Israelites. But, when we examine the Greek, we find similar terms - ones that identify Israelites in each context. And it is easy to verify that each reference is, indeed, to Israelites. These paired words do not teach that there are two groups of peoples, but rather that they all are Israelites in two different situations. When David said that he was *a stranger and a sojourner* [Ps 39:12], he was one person who was two things. *Strangers* and *aliens* are not necessarily two completely dissimilar groups of people in Ephesians 2:12 and Ephesians 2:19. In this case they are one group of people who are two things. This follows exactly the same pattern as presented in the Old Testament.

When we compare what David is saying in Psalm 39:12 with what Peter is saying in 1 Peter 2:11, we find a common distinction. David refers to *all my Fathers* who were, of course, Israelites. Peter is addressing *the Elect* and not others. This book of Peter is written to *strangers* [*parepidemos*: visitors] *scattered*. Note this well; there is no way around it! This cannot be spiritualised to make it refer to some non-Israelite multi-racial church! Both David and Peter are saying they have no kinship with the races among whom they (Israel) are temporarily living (that is, for the duration of their lives). We find a remarkable affinity and agreement between both Testaments. In both, Israel is totally exclusive. It is now even more difficult to insist that these so-called “gentiles” are non-Israelites!

Before we leave this subject of strangers, let us consider another very significant Scripture.

*John 7:35* ... will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles [Hellenes: Greeks] *reeks and teach the Gentiles* [Hellenes: Greeks].

As we know, the *dispersed among the Greeks* relates to the *Lost sheep of the House of Israel* whom Jesus says He came for only [Matt 10:6 and 15:24]. Those *lost sheep* were the only ones the disciples were instructed to visit. Come now and let us reason together. Could the disciples go to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom to a race they could not find because they were *lost*? They were not so lost that they could not be found, were they? [*Lost*, in this context, has to do with Israelites put aside for punishment].

To read the parables of Jesus in the light that these *lost sheep* are the House of Israel is enlightening! The lost sheep are never non-Israelites! When we come to the regathering of those “strangers” who are scattered, how could it ever be a regathering of any other than that exclusive race of Israel who were scattered in the first place?

When we look again at the 1 Peter 2:9 we find these particular strangers [of 1 Peter 1:1] were:

[a] Chosen ... [Isaiah 41:8 ... *Jacob whom I have chosen*]

[b] A Royal Priesthood ... [Isaiah 61:1 , Hosea 4:6 etc.]

[c] An Holy Nation ... [Deut 14:2]

Please note that “nation” is singular in this context. Some may still wish to deny these “holy” (set-apart) people still exist as being different from all other nations. But Peter knew they still existed when he wrote to them.

[d] A peculiar people [Exodus 19:5 , Deut 26:18 , Psalm 135:4].

Israel and Judah were taken into their respective captivities because of their continued disobedience under the Law. Following the captivities these people moved away from Palestine because God had cast them out of that land. On top of being scattered, they also lost all

knowledge of their law, which means they lost the rituals for reconciliation with God. They were lost as members of the eternal Kingdom of God. However, as a nation of people they did not cease to exist (Jer 31:36,37 and Jer 33:17). Jesus came for these people because, by making the ultimate sacrifice, they no longer needed the Levitical Law as the means of reconciliation with God. They could “go direct” by prayer in Jesus name, because He is now the Mediator for the individual Israelite. It was still limited to Israelites because:

[a] Only they had broken the Law.

[b] Only they had the indwelling spirit that needed to be saved from eternal death.

The physical location of the Dispersed Tribes was well known up to the time of the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. After that, with no Temple in Jerusalem as a focus for ceremony for those who wished to make the journey, the whereabouts of these people was forgotten over time. Nevertheless, the existence of the sun, the moon and the stars says the nation of people still exists today. The words of Jeremiah’s prophecy are quite definite and cannot possibly apply to a “church”.

As a separate matter of prophecy, the nation of Israel would always have a monarchy ruling over them, from the site of the official throne. This is sometimes confused with 1 Peter 2:13 which refers to the people respecting the authority of the King. This is a different matter – the teaching throughout the New Testament, even for the Judeans, is to obey the civilian authorities of the day, (render unto Caesar, etc), and not to foment social upheaval. This directs us to stand up for what is right when formal opportunities and mechanisms are available, but not to incite social unrest by going outside the formal system.

When we go to the book of Hebrews and consider these *pilgrims and strangers*, the *Fathers* and the “Patriarchs” are prominent. God who spoke to these Fathers by the Prophets, *hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son*. We can pretend all we like that the children are now spiritual children, but the Bible still insists that the New Testament is only made with the House of Israel and the House of Judah [Heb 8:8]. How would these Houses be spiritualised? The quoted prophecies are those made to Israel! Israel is still just as exclusive, today!!

< Back