

Stranger or Neighbour?

1983 ✓

Exod. 22: 21-27, Lev 19: 9, 10, 33, 34.

Matthew 25: 31-40.

Compassion and justice are two Biblical con-
cepts regularly occurring in both ^{the} Old & New Testa-
ment - normally where there is a reference to stranger
and the manner in which Israel was instructed
to treat them. If therefore we wish to understand
more clearly the ~~concept~~ ^{meaning} of compassion and justice
we can only do so by first of all informing our-
selves about the meaning of the words stranger
and alien and of their position in Israeli
society.

1. The terms stranger or alien occur more than
100 times in the Bible and normally refers
to individuals or groups who were not seen
to be part of the nation of Israel but who
because of circumstances outside their control
were forced to stay in the land and amongst
the people of Israel for shorter or longer periods.
Normally there were 3 causes for people finding
themselves in this unfortunate position:

1.1. Famine: Drought, floods, other natural disasters mostly ~~caused~~ ^{forced} the individuals and families to seek their future outside their normal abode. Thus people like Abraham, Isaac, Elihu and Naomi became strangers and aliens.

1.2. Fracture, tribal warfare: Cain ~~vs~~ Abel ^{vs} Abraham.

1.3. Fear for legal or political persecution: Moses, Jeroboam

2. Another very important fact to notice is the clear and explicit demands which God presented to the people of Israel of ~~how~~ ^{their} what ~~the~~ attitude ~~of~~ to strangers should be and how they should be treated.

2.1 - It strikes us that God rules out any discrimination ^{in treatment} between Israel and stranger based on race, ethnic origin, class or religion. All strangers or aliens, regardless of their background, were required by God to be treated in the same way and all be granted certain basic rights, privileges and opportunities. E.g. he should be loved as any Israeli, he should be treated as justly as any Israeli, he should ~~be~~ not

be exploited but be given the opportunity to earn his livelihood (Lev. 19: 9, 10). As far as participation in the Passover was concerned (the 'cruel test of Israelhood) the stranger was excluded from partaking in the Passover but the moment he was circumcised he was free and welcome to partake in the most intimate part of the children of Israel (Ex. 12 vs 43-49 - "He shall rank as native-born") ^{Through circumcision this child of} God becomes a son of Israel

2.2 - The motivation for God's demand in the treatment of strangers and aliens is shown to be the Israel's own history - that they were foreigners and strangers in Egypt and that as they were given life and shelter and bread for survival equally they had to treat all strangers in the same way. This we find to be an ever recurring theme in the O.T. ^{have} of such

2.3 - The last ^{Biblical} aspect that I wish to mention is the close connection between compassion and justice as emphasised in the pronouncements on the treatment of strangers and aliens. These two concepts are inseparably linked in Scripture:

compassion and justice always go hand in hand; the urge towards ~~true~~ compassion always leads to the urge towards justice; he who is truly compassionate & will also find himself being wanting to be truly just.

MB

Paragraph: It was taken for granted that any fellow - Israeli would in any case have to be treated as brother with at least the same rights and opportunities as the stranger and the foreigner (the concept of basic justice).

Why have I gone to the trouble to give this extensive explanation of the Biblical understanding of the position and treatment of the stranger & alien?

S.A.: Q: Who are the stranger in our midst?

A: The refugees, the temporary sojourners, the migrant labourers from surrounding Afr. states like Malawi, Mozambique, or Zimbabwe or Lesotho, Swaziland or Botswana (seeking a livelihood for themselves and their families).

Many whites simply assume that S.A. Blacks from the homelands are strangers.

in our midst. The truth is that they are historically S.Africans who have been made Shogun by the poakt. policy of the government - but ^{in common} they don't regard themselves as such and refuse to be discussed as such.

But even if they are then the Bible gives us very clear & explicit guidelines of how they should be treated: ① love ② justice ③ brotherhood ④ acceptance

Then it becomes clear how the whole policy violates the basic concepts of compassion

& justice:

1. ~~Resettlement~~ Pass laws

2. Resettlement: 3 1/2 mill. / 2 mill.

Names like hinchill, Crossroads, Dombago, Disfranchisement household words of suffering & deprivation

● Drought: crippling & widespread.

● Unemployment: Recession & drought

Sunday Evening

August 7th.

Chimes before worship service

Welcome

Hymn 57.

Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer (sung)

Bible Reading?

Hymn 898

Bible Reading

Anthem

Sermon —————→

Hymn 431

"Family News Time" — including the announcements and offering.

Poem

Intercession — a time of open prayer for anyone.

Hymn 910.

Benediction.