

## SOJOURNER AND FOREIGNER Biblical Perspectives

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### Abstract

The author studies the two Hebrew terms *gēr* and *noḵrî*. Yahweh liberated Israel from the slavery of Egypt and asked them to treat the sojourners and foreigners as brethren. The people of the covenant imperfectly put into practice that command. Jesus, the Son of God took the form of *gēr* and *noḵrî*, and lived such a life on earth. He became the good Samaritan for the needy, helpless, oppressed and exploited. His followers have to find in the marginalized his person and should serve them. That is the only way to inherit his Kingdom.

### 1. The Term Migrant

*Webster's Dictionary* thus defines migrant: "One that moves from one region to another by chance, instinct or plan." Two biblical Hebrew terms, *gēr* and *noḵrî* convey similar ideas. This study focuses the attention on the main traits of these concepts.

### 2. Etymological Meanings

#### 2.1. *The Concept of gēr*

Although Hebrew lexicography reckons with several roots, the pertinent one for us is *gwr* = to tarry as a sojourner.<sup>1</sup> The root *gwr*

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<sup>1</sup>D. Kellermann, "gūr", *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (henceforth TDOT), Vol. II, ed. G.H. Botterweck, H. Renggren, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973, 439-449.

occurs in the *qal* verbal form 81 times in the OT. The substantive *gēr* appears 92 times, of which 36 examples occur in Priestly literature, and 22 in Deuteronomy. W. Robertson Smith thus defines the Semitic concept of *gēr*: "The *gēr* was a man of another tribe or district, who, coming to sojourn in a place where he was not strengthened by the presence by the presence of his own kin, put himself under the protection of a clan or of a powerful chief."<sup>2</sup>

## 2.2. The Concept of *noḳrî*

The term always refers to a relationship, like other, one outside the family, and foreigner.<sup>3</sup> Concerning the last category, foreigner, the OT itself thus defines the concept: "A *noḳrî* who is not of your people Israel and comes from a distant land" (1 Kings 8:41); "*noḳrî* who is not your brother" (Deut 17:15).

## 3. Non-Biblical Disposition towards Aliens

In the non-biblical societies based on the tribal system, outsiders were considered as enemies.<sup>4</sup> Nobody will welcome the strangers in their families, nor give food and shelter, but will attack them and kill them and plunder their belongings. The story of Abraham provides the best example. Yahweh asked him to leave his country, people and clan and go to the land which He will show him (Gen 12:1). Thereby the Patriarch had to abandon the life of security that he was till then enjoying, and had to, so to say, leap into the dark. He was forced to embrace a life of uncertainties and risks.<sup>5</sup> Because of famine he was forced to go to Egypt (Gen 12:10-20). Then he said to his wife to pretend as if she were his sister, otherwise the Egyptians will kill him. As Pharaoh heard about this beautiful alien woman, he took her to his harem.<sup>6</sup> The same story was repeated when Abraham went to Gerar (Gen 20:1-18). Also Isaac had to encounter the same problem in Gen 26:1-11.

In Gen 19:4-10 we read that the men of Sodom, both young and old while hearing that two strangers had come to the house of Lot, wanted to have sex with them. As Lot was pleading them not to do

<sup>2</sup>Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, Ktav: Inc., 1969, 75-81.

<sup>3</sup>B. Lang, H. Ringgren, *noḳrî*, "TDOT, Vol. IX, 1998, 423-432

<sup>4</sup>B. Recicke, "Fremder," in *Biblich-Historisches Händ-Wörterbuch* (henceforth *BHHW*), Vol. I, ed. B. Recicke, L. Rost, Göttingen: V&R, 1962, 498-499; B. Recicke, "Kultur," in *BHHW* Vol. II, 1964, 1023-1025; C.A. Keller, "Nächster," in *BHHW*, Vol. II, 1274-1275; P. Dalbert, "Proscelyt," in *BHHW*, Vol. III, 1966, 1515.

<sup>5</sup>Paul Kalluveettil CMI, *The Word of the World*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2012, 80-81.

<sup>6</sup>For details C. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, Augsburg: Minneapolis, 1985, 160-168.

such a wicked thing, they said: "This fellow came here as an alien and now he wants to play the judge! We will treat you worse than them." They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door.

#### 4. OT Attitude during the Patriarchal Period

Abraham maintained a very positive attitude towards outsiders (Gen 18:1-16). As he was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the summer heat he noticed three strangers. Immediately he hurried to meet them and bowed low to the ground, beseeching them to come and accept his hospitality addressing himself as their servant. He brought water to wash their feet and made them rest under the shadow of a tree. Then he ran to the herd and killed a tender calf and cooked it. With it he also brought some curds and milk and set them before the three men. After entertaining them he walked along with them to see them on their way.

Lot, as we have seen, also treated two strangers in such a way (Gen 19:1-8). While he was sitting in an evening in the gateway of the city Sodom, he saw two strangers. Immediately he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground, and addressed: "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go your way early in the morning." As they were unwilling he insisted so strongly that they were compelled to accept his invitation. Lot prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. When the men of Sodom surrounded his house asking for the two strangers in order to have sex with them, Lot begged them not to do such an immoral thing to the strangers. He even offered his two virgin daughters to those wicked men. Let us now study specifically the Israelite laws concerning *gēr* and *noḵrî*.

#### 5. OT Laws Concerning *gēr*

The law instructs to treat with honour and generosity the *gēr* who were living among Israelites. They were often mentioned with Israelite orphans and widows, whom the people were inclined to marginalize as in other cultures. Following are the texts where the triad stock: Deut 10:18; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17, 19, 20, 21; 26:12, 13; 27:19; Jer 7:6; 22:3; Ex 22:20-21; Ezek 22:7<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, 356.

### 5.1. *The Reason that Compelled One to Sojourn*

A person may be condemned to separate himself from his people and home and to become an alien in a foreign land. The most frequent reason is famine. Thus Elimelech with his family had to go to Moab (Ruth 1:1). The prophet Elijah had to make his lodge with the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:20). Elisha asked the woman of Shunem and her family to go to the fertile costal region. Because of famine Abraham and Isaac were forced to go to Egypt (Gen 12:10)/ Gerar (Gen 26:3).

Another reason for fleeing one's own land was the fear of military attack (Is 16:4; 2 Sam 4:3). Individual distress or bloodguilt may compel a person to take refuge as a *gēr* among the unknown people.

### 5.2. *Yahweh the Champion of gēr*<sup>8</sup>

In Deut 10:17-19 we read: "Yahweh your God, he is God of gods, and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, does not show partiality and does not take a bribe; the one who does justice to the orphan and the widow and who loves the sojourner, giving to him bread and an outer garment. So you shall love the sojourner, for sojourners you were in the land of Egypt." The motive for loving the *gēr* is divine. Yahweh loves the sojourner and gives him bread and an outer garment. The God of the Bible has a special concern for the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged (Hos 14:3; Ps 10:14, 18; 68:5; 146:9). If these people are oppressed, and cry out to Yahweh, He will hear them and will bring their oppressors to judgment<sup>9</sup> (Ex 22:22-23). The Lord reminds Israel that they themselves were aliens in Egypt. See also Deut 5:14-15; 15:12-15; 16:10-12; 23:7; 24:17-18, 19-22. Therefore they should find in the *gēr* their own image of the past. This should motivate them to love the sojourner in their midst and love him.

### 5.3. *Employing the gēr*

The *gēr* living in Israel were often serving them as servants. Joshua reduced the Gibeonites who deceived him to the status of woodcutters and water carriers for the community and for the altar of the Lord (Josh 9:27), David appointed the Canaanites as stonecutters (1 Chron 22:2). Solomon made the *gēr* burden bearers and stonecutters.

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<sup>8</sup>J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, Vol. 1-2, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, 40-43.

<sup>9</sup>J.R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmann, 2013, 391-396.

#### **5.4. *The Privileges of gēr***

In the laws of Deuteronomy the forgotten sheaf in the field (Deut 24:19) and the gleanings in the olive trees and in the vineyards (Deut 24: 20, 21) are allotted to the *gēr*. The tithe every three years belongs to the *gēr* (Deut 14:29; 26:12). Deut 15:7-11 mandates giving loans to *gēr*. They should not be forced to work on the Sabbath day, which is to be kept as holy (Deut 5:14). The *gēr* is guaranteed an impartial hearing and judgment in the court like the people of the covenant (Deut 1:16-17). Deut 24:17 says: "Do not deprive the alien or the orphan of justice... Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there" (Deut 24:17). In the covenant curses we read: "Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the orphan or the widow; then all people shall say: Amen!" (Deut 27:19). Injunctions of a similar nature are given in the Covenant Code (Ex 22:20-21; 23:6-9), and the Holiness Code (Lev 19:9-10, 15, 33-34). Justice for the sojourner, orphan, widow, and other needy ones is eulogized in Ps 82:3-4; 94:6.<sup>10</sup> The six asylum cities are also regarded as cities of refuge for the *gēr* (Josh 20:9; Num 5:15). According to Ezek 47:22f, the alien who has a family, must receive an inheritance in the territory of the tribe in which he settles down. Is1:17; Jer 7:6; 22:3; Zech 7:10; Mal 3:5 demand that *gēr* should not be oppressed or treated violently. In Ezek 22:7, 29 the *gēr* is listed with the widow, orphan, the poor, and the needy as persons who need to be treated justly. The prophets chastise the people for not carrying out such obligations: Amos 4:1; Is 1:23; 10:2; Jer 5:28; 22:15-16. The deportation to Babylon is presented in Lam 5:3 as a punishment for their neglect.

#### **5.5. *Participation in the Liturgical Assembly***

Deut 23 gives the following instruction: "Do not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. Do not abhor an Egyptian, because you lived as an alien in his country. The third generation of children born to them may enter the liturgical assembly of the Lord" (Deut 23:7-8). Deut 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17, 19, 20, 21; 26:13; 27:19 mention them alongside orphans and widows as the beloved ones of Yahweh.

#### **5.6. *Participation in Celebrations***

On celebrating the Feast of Weeks the covenant people have to rejoice before Yahweh together with their sons and daughters, domestic servants as well as the orphans and widows. In that list is

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<sup>10</sup>R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, Darton, London: Longman & Todd, 1965, 74-76.

also included the aliens. The reason is given: "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt" (Deut 16:11-12). The feast of Booths is to be celebrated together with the aliens (Deut 16:14). In v. 14 the same command is repeated about making merry in the company of *gēr*.

### 5.7. *The Obligations of gēr*

Together with the Israelites the *gēr* is included in the law of not eating anything with yeast during the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, otherwise he is to be cut off from the community (Ex 12:19). The alien who has undergone the rite of circumcision, like the Israelites, should celebrate the Lord's Passover (Ex 12:48-49). The *gēr* is also included in the festival of the great day of atonement (Lev 16:29). The alien who had sought admission into Yahweh's community also is threatened with the death penalty if he offers sacrifice to foreign gods.<sup>11</sup> Both Israelite and *gēr* are strongly forbidden to eat blood (Lev 17:10, 12, 13). The laws concerning sexual intercourse with relatives (Lev 18:6-17) and sins of unchastity (Lev 18:18-23) are applied also to the immigrant. Lev 18:28 says: "The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things."

### 5.8. *Concluding Remarks*

Although the sojourner enjoyed equal treatment in the Israelite society, they were not given the same social status of the covenant people.<sup>12</sup> He was not a full member of their society, but someone of different and lower status. As secondary class he is mentioned together with widows, orphans and the poor who receive special consideration by the Israelites because of his lack of means of support. Lev 19:34 provides the reason: "The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am Yahweh your God." Like the Lord the people whom He had chosen and liberated from the slavery should stand for the marginalized of the world.

## 6. *The Spiritualized Concept of gēr*

Slowly there developed in Israel the spiritualized vision of *gēr*. The Psalmist calls himself a *gēr*:

Hear my prayer, O Lord,  
listen to my cry for help;  
be not deaf to my weeping.

<sup>11</sup>K. Eliger, *Leviticus*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1966, 227.

<sup>12</sup>J.R. Spencer, "Sojourner," *ABD*, Vol. 6, 103-104.

For I dwell with you as an alien,  
a stranger, as all my fathers were.

Here the Psalmist introduces himself as a *gēr* who dwells with Yahweh, and appeals for help. This Psalm may be understood as lament of a suffering devotee, who feels the divine presence in his afflicted life. The Wisdom Psalm 119 has this affirmation: “I am a stranger on land (*’erets*), do not hide your commands from me” (Ps 119:19). It seems likely that in this passage the term *’erets* refers not to the earth in general but to the land of Palestine.<sup>13</sup> The petitioner wants to make his life a meditation on the Word of God. Lev 25:23 states: “The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants.” This means that the covenant people should not consider the land as their private property. Yahweh has entrusted it to them for a while, and they have to keep it as His tenants. Thus in the eyes of the Lord the Israelites enjoy only the same privileges as the sojourners are given. David in his prayer thus confesses: “Everything comes from you... We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope” (1 Chron 29:14-15). Indeed, such a mentality was intended by Yahweh in providing the land of Palestine to the former slaves of Egypt. The vision would have motivated them to consider the sojourners in their land as their brothers, and treat them with love and kindness.

## **7. The New Testament Perspectives**

### **7.1. Jesus the Wanderer**

The NT envisages Christians as pilgrims and strangers in the world.<sup>14</sup> Jesus rejected the concepts of national, ethnic or racial origins. His dealings with a Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk 7:24-30), a Roman centurion (Mt 8:5-13) and a promiscuous Samaritan woman would have scandalized even his disciples. Jesus himself lived the life of a wanderer, who had nowhere to lay his head (Lk 9:58).

### **7.2. Paul, the Wanderer**

Following the model of the Risen Christ Paul took initiative in building a Church, composed of both Jews and Gentiles without distinction (Eph 3:1-6). All believers in Christ are considered as pilgrims and aliens; they, who are journeying toward their true home

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<sup>13</sup>H.J. Kraus, *Psalmen 2*, Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1966, 810-829.

<sup>14</sup>L. Ryken, J.C. Wilhoit, T. Longman III, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1998, 300-302.

in heaven, have to live as strangers on this earth. Then they could experience the exquisite protection of God. Paul himself epitomized the NT concept of a foreigner. Rejecting his prestigious position among the Pharisees, he wandered from city to city as itinerant tent maker and preacher. "To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless"<sup>15</sup> (1 Cor 4:11).

### **7.3. A Re-Interpretation of the OT Historical Books**

The author of the letter to the Hebrews, in chapter 11 re-reads the stories of the OT forefathers in this light. By faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign land. His heirs of faith acknowledged that they were aliens and strangers on earth. They were indeed longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Even though they had to undergo affections and oppressions, God, the champion of the defenceless, miraculously protected them from the wicked powers of the earth. To sum up, the Christians are called to embrace the life of a *gēr* and fix their eyes upon heaven, their true home land.

## **8. The *noḵrî* in the Bible**

Three cases of persons of foreign origin invite our attention.<sup>16</sup>

### **8.1. Ittai, the Gittite**

This *noḵrî* (2 Sam 15:19) was a trustful officer of David, who did not want to leave the fleeing king alone. Even when David tried to dissuade this *noḵrî* from following him, Ittai was not willing: "As surely as Yahweh lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether it means life or death, there will your servant be" (1 Sam 15:21). This declaration of loyalty sheds light on the relationship of this *noḵrî* to the Israelite king. Also it indicates how David used to deal with the foreign officers. Although the king was undergoing a dangerous situation, he was bothered about the future of Ittai, and asked him to go back to his country in order to build up a new life. He thus concluded his words: "May kindness and faithfulness be with you." The two words, *hesed* and *'emeth* are usually attributed to Yahweh. Now the king, although he does not mention the divine name, wishes the same grace to this foreigner.

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<sup>15</sup>Peter also exhorts the Christians to live as aliens and strangers in the world (1 Pet 2:11; 1:17). He addressed his letter "to God's elect, strangers in the world" (1 Pet 1:1).

<sup>16</sup>R. Martin-Achrd, "Fremde," *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, ed. E. Jenni, C. Westermann, München: Kaiser Verlag, 1976, 66-68.



## 8.2. Ruth, the Moabite

In the book of Ruth we read the story of Naomi who, because of famine went to live in the country of Moab. Her two sons married Moabite women. As her husband and sons died, she wanted to return home, asking the daughters-in-law to go back to their homes. But Ruth insisted to stay with Naomi, saying “Your people will be my people and your God my God... May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me” (Ruth 16-17). Later when Boaz showed kindness to Ruth, she said: “Why have I found such favour in your eyes that you notice me — a foreigner?” (Ruth 2:10). Her words make clear that *noḵrî* woman used to meet with hostility in Israel. Finally Ruth became his wife, and her son Obed, the father of Jesse together with Ruth adorned a place of honour in the Genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1:5-6). The inclusion of this *noḵrî* woman in the list of the ancestors of Christ speaks volumes for the OT attitude towards the foreigners.

## 8.3. The Foreign Wives of Solomon

1 Kings 11:1 mentions that Solomon had married many foreign women, the daughter of Egyptian Pharaoh, and women from Moab, Ammon, Edom, Sidon and Hatti. This action may have also a diplomatic dimension. But the fact that nobody from Israel objected to such relationship with the *noḵrî* women, may point to their positive attitude towards the foreigners. Of course the Deuteronomistic historian, who had edited the story during exilic times, finds fault with the royal action, citing the law of Ex 34:16: “You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods” (1 Kings 11:2). Here the religious motive, the danger to Yahweh worship is adduced. It seems then that no animosity towards *noḵrî* as such is implied.

## 8.4. The Prescription Concerning *noḵrî*

The foreigners are not treated with concern like the *gēr*. They are accorded inferior treatment. The creditors may exact claims from them during the Sabbatical Year, and they may be charged interest (Deut 15:3; 23:20). The dead animal may be sold to a *noḵrî* (Deut 14:21). A *noḵrî* must not become king of Israel (Deut 17:15). They are excluded from the cultic and familial systems. However in the oracle in Is 56:6 the foreigner who joins himself to Yahweh, i.e. the proselyte, is welcomed to the temple. Only the temple’s outer “court of the Gentiles” was accessible to *noḵrî*; he is forbidden on pain of death to enter the inner precincts. However it is interesting to note that in the

prayer of dedication Solomon thus speaks: "As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel, but has come from a distant land because of your name — when he comes and prays towards this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you ..." (1 Kings 8:41-43).

### **8.5. Post-Exilic Attitude**

When Israel returned from the Babylonian exile to Jerusalem, they had to encounter political, economic, social, cultural and religious problems.<sup>17</sup> Since the faith of many of them was flagging and the temptation to accept the gentile practices was increasing, the religious leaders concentrated in preserving their religious and ethnical identity. Also in Jerusalem the returned Israelites faced religious oppositions and even persecution. In this situation the stress was put on ethnical and religious distinction from other nations. Hence the leaders promoted exclusivism and uncompromising rigid attitudes. They propagated conservative nationalism, and tried to inject into the mind of the believers intolerant disposition towards other religions and peoples. An objective scholar will find here the phenomenon of struggle for survival, which was a historical necessity of that time. Let us analyse some of these developments.

#### *8.5.1. Third Isaiah and Foreign Nations*

The audience of the prophet was the returned exiles from Babylon with dreams of a bright future. As they met economic hardship, insecurity and taunt of the enemies they became dejected. In order to cheer them up Third Isaiah announced imminent glorification of Israel. In that era other nations and kings will have a subordinate role.<sup>18</sup> Words of judgment are not missing in the texts. However the foreigners could participate in Israel's salvation in the capacity of servants.

#### *8.5.2. Ezra and Mixed Marriages*

The post-exilic leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah worked hard to re-invigorate the religious life of the people. In order to keep intact the purity of religion they stood against the practice of inter-marriage with other people. The priest Ezra, on hearing about the mixed marriages, by which the holy nation had mingled with the *noḵrî* (Ezra 9:2), tore his tunic and cloak, pulled hair from his head and sat down

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<sup>17</sup>Paul Kalluveettil, *The World Becomes 'the Word'*, Thrissur: Marymatha Publications, 2009, 234-237.

<sup>18</sup>C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, London: SCM, 1978, 295-308.

appalled until the evening sacrifice. Then he fell on his knees with hands spread out to the Lord and prayed for pardon and mercy (Ezra 9:3-15). At his tears, penance and supplication people confessed their unfaithfulness to Yahweh and dismissed their foreign wives (Ezra 10). In Nehemiah 10 a copy of this binding agreement is given in which we read: "We promise not to give our daughters in marriage to the peoples around us or take their daughters for our sons" (v. 30).

We should not think that Ezra and Nehemiah hated the people of other faiths, or considered other nations as unrighteous or irreligious. Their only concern was to maintain the religious identity of the covenant people. For this they were forced to take uncompromising attitude of rigorous exclusivism.

### *8.5.3. The Retribution Theology of Obadiah*

One has to evaluate the message of this prophet in the light of the historical situation of the tragic devastation of Jerusalem. The Edomites gloated over it and tried to harm the Israelite people in every possible way. This inhuman and devilish reaction of Edom wounded the humiliated Israel. Obadiah joined with such a sentiment. For him Edom was merely a symbol of the oppressors of human history. The prophet takes the position of Yahweh, the champion of the oppressed and the exploited, and announced the reversal of their fortunes.

## **8.6. Foreigner in the NT**

### *8.6.1. Christ's Teachings*

Jesus includes in the concept of neighbour everyone who needs our care and concern. Behind the parable of Lk 10:25-37 Jesus himself appears as Good Samaritan who spent his time, energy and resources for the wounded Jew, although Jews and Samaritans were then arch-enemies. In the narration of the last judgment, Mt 25:31-46, Jesus takes the role of stranger whom the righteous persons invite in (v. 43). Such acts of mercy will be the deciding factor in one's relation to Jesus and the norm for eternal reward or punishment. In the most alien of aliens Christ himself is loved.

### *8.6.2. In the Early Church*

The first community of Christians put into practice the instructions of the Master.<sup>19</sup> The followers of Christ who considered themselves as

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<sup>19</sup>G. Stäblin, *Xénos Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. V, ed. G. Kittel, G. Friedrich, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1-36.

strangers in the world and rejected the temptation to make this world their homeland, always came forward to the support of the marginalized people. In his letters Paul exhorts the Christians to help the needy in a generous way. It is said that in the fourth century the Church at Antioch was feeding 3000 widows, sick and strangers.

## 9. General Conclusion

The God of the Bible is the Lord of the outcast. Yahweh wanted to make his sort one with the poor, afflicted and exploited.<sup>20</sup> The hymn of Hannah gives vivid articulation to His marginalizing acts of the marginalizers of the world.<sup>21</sup>

The bows of the mighty are broken,  
While the feeble are girded with armour.  
The sated have hired out for bread,  
While the hungry are fattened on food;  
The childless wife has borne seven,  
While the mother of many sons is bereaved.  
It is Yahweh who makes poor and makes rich;  
Who debases and also exalts;  
Who raises the poor from the dust,  
To give them a seat with noblemen  
And grant them a chair of honour (1 Sam 2:48).

He chose Israel as his people, because they were leading a miserable life of alienation, oppression and systematic manipulation. The Lord liberated them and gave them a land for the purpose of forming a radically and totally new society based on the economics of equality, politics of justice and compassion, and a religion of God's freedom.<sup>22</sup> Israel, in a limited way, tried to put into practice this divine vision, in their treatment of *gēr* and *noḵrî*. Jesus, the Word Incarnate, perfectly realized God's dream, and entrusted the Church to follow his path. In this light the community of Jesus should evaluate their present lifestyle, and should be ready to undergo a *metanoia* (conversion).

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<sup>20</sup>Paul Kalluveettil, "A Becoming God and a Becoming People," in *The World Becomes the 'Word'*, 33-49.

<sup>21</sup>Paul Kalluveettil, "A Marginalizing God for the Marginalized People," in *The World Becomes the 'Word'*, 50-65.

<sup>22</sup>For this terminology, see W. Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1997, and its exposition in Paul Kalluveettil, *Word as Metaphor*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2009, 110-119.