




To be a stranger
and to deal with foreigners
— an Old Testament survey

Rev. Prof. Dr. Michael Rohde
EBF Mission Conference 2013, Vienna

Theologisches Seminar Elstal
FACHHOCHSCHULE

1 Introduction



Theologisches Seminar Elstal
FACHHOCHSCHULE

1 Introduction



Theologisches Seminar Elstal
FACHHOCHSCHULE

2 The Bible challenges our attitude towards migrants

Ex 23:9
⁹ Do not oppress an alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in Egypt.

Lev 24:22
²² You are to have the same law for the alien and the native-born. I am the LORD your God.

Theologisches Seminar Elstal
FACHHOCHSCHULE

2 The Bible challenges our attitude towards migrants

- ... integration or assimilation, living the own identity, but being considered as a foreigner...
- Being a foreigner is a common experience throughout the Bible.
- Equal rights for natives as well as for strangers are secured for many aspects of life.

Theologisches Seminar Elstal
FACHHOCHSCHULE

3 Abraham and Sarah – Migrants forever

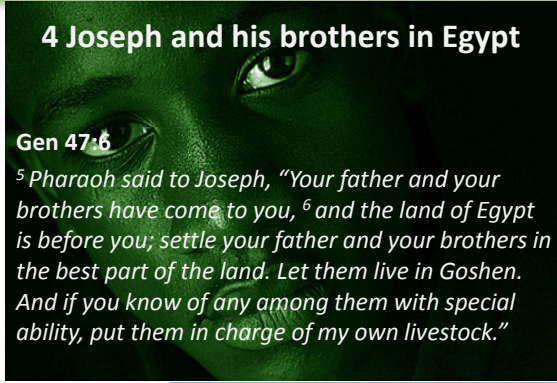


Gen 12:1
The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you."

Theologisches Seminar Elstal
FACHHOCHSCHULE

4 Joseph and his brothers in Egypt

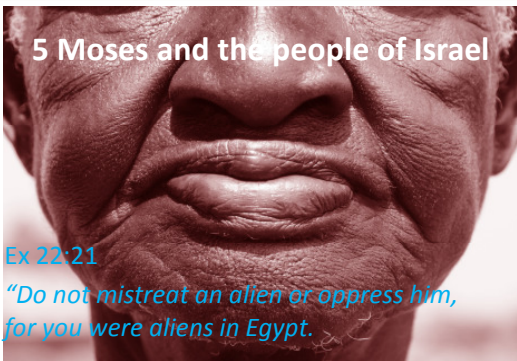
Gen 47:6
⁵ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you, ⁶ and the land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land. Let them live in Goshen. And if you know of any among them with special ability, put them in charge of my own livestock."



Theologisches Seminar Elstal
FACHHOCHSCHULE

5 Moses and the people of Israel

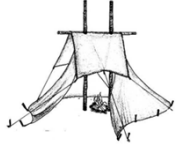
Ex 22:21
"Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt."



Theologisches Seminar Elstal
FACHHOCHSCHULE


6 Encounter in the tent – relationship opens possibilities for faith and the ability to take criticism

*Now Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law of Moses, heard of everything God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, and how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. ² After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro received her ³ and her two sons. One son was named Gershom, for Moses said, "I have become an alien in a foreign land"; ⁴ and the other was named Eliezer, for he said, "My father's God was my helper; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh." ⁵ Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, together with Moses' sons and wife, came to him in the desert, where he was camped near the mountain of God. ⁶ Jethro had sent word to him, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons." ⁷ So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. They greeted each other and then went into the tent.
 Ex 18,1-7*



Theologisches Seminar Elstal
FACHHOCHSCHULE

6 Encounter in the tent




Theologisches Seminar Elstal
FACHHOCHSCHULE

6 Encounter in the tent

*⁸ Moses told his father-in-law about everything the LORD had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the LORD had saved them.
⁹ Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the LORD had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians.
 And Jitro starts to praise the God of Israel: ¹⁰ He said, "Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians."*

Theologisches Seminar Elstal
FACHHOCHSCHULE



The experience of oppression and being foreign in Egypt has impacted the Israelites: Foreigners are not to be oppressed and abused.

Theologisches Seminar Elstal
FACHHOCHSCHULE

7 Jeremia and his challenge to seek the shalom of the foreign city

Jer 29:4-7

4 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. 7 Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

8 Ruth – sharing hospitality to a foreigner

Ruth 2,10

10 At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?"

9 Biblical commandments protect the foreigners

Ex 12:49

The same law applies to the native-born and to the alien living among you."

Ex 20:10

but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.

Eze 22:6-7

See how each of the princes of Israel who are in you uses his power to shed blood. 7 In you they have treated father and mother with contempt; in you they have oppressed the alien and mistreated the fatherless and the widow

10 Practical Experiences

Ps 146:9a

The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked

11 Hospitality in the Bible

Sach 7:9-10

This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. 10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.'

12 Conclusion : Foreigners among us

