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

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EBF Mission Conference 2013, Vienna

1 Introduction

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.

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.

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.”
Joseph and his brothers in Egypt

Gen 47:6

Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Your father and your brothers have come to you, 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.”

Ex 22:21

“Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt.

Moses and the people of Israel

Ex 18,1-7

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.

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.

Jethro starts to praise the God of Israel:

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.

The experience of oppression and being foreign in Egypt has impacted the Israelites: Foreigners are not to be oppressed and abused.
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: “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 5 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. 6 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
8 The same law applies to the native-born and to the alien living among you.
Ex 20:10
9 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
Ex 22:28-7
10 You are to love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. I am the L ORD your God. Do not oppress the alien or the fatherless and the widow.

10 Practical Experiences

Ps 146:9a
1a The L ORD 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
9 This is what the L ORD 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