

SOJOURNER

[גֵר, *see* GER; תושב, from שָׁב, dwell; LXX πάροικος, *later* προσήλυτος]. A person living in mutually responsible association with a community, or in a place, not inherently his own.

The technical term in Hebrew is גֵר, which is translated "sojourner" or "stranger" (Exod. 22:21 RSV KJV; 23:9; Lev. 23:22 RSV KJV), as in the case where the noun and a verbal form appear ("the stranger [גֵר] who sojourns [הִגֵר] among you"; Exod. 12:49 RSV KJV P; cf. vs. 48; Lev. 19:33 RSV KJV-34; etc.), or "alien" (Exod. 23:12 RSV KJV; Deut. 1:16 RSV KJV; 14:21; Jer. 22:3 RSV KJV; Ezek. 47:21 RSV KJV-23; etc.; *see* STRANGER; ALIEN). The term תושב appears in H and P I Chr. 29:15 RSV KJV; Ps. 39:12 RSV KJV), usually along with גֵר (Lev. 25:47 RSV KJV, etc.; Num. 35:15 RSV KJV; I Chr. 29:15 RSV KJV; Ps. 39:12 RSV KJV). The LXX usually translates both גֵר and תושב by πάροικος, and in late texts frequently uses προσήλυτος. In the NT, παρώκησεν is translated "he sojourned" (Heb. 11:9 RSV KJV); πάροικον, "aliens" (Acts 7:6 RSV KJV); ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι, "strangers and sojourners" (Eph. 2:19 RSV KJV); παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους, "aliens and exiles" (I Pet. 2:11 RSV KJV).

In the basic meaning of the term, a sojourner is a person who occupies a position between that of the native-born and the foreigner. He has come among a people distinct from him and thus lacks the protection and benefits ordinarily provided by kin and birthplace. His status and privileges derive from the bond of hospitality, in which the guest is inviolable. The *ger* is everyone who comes traveling and, settling in a strange place for a shorter or longer period, has claims to protection and full sustenance (cf. Gen. 18:1 RSV KJV-8; 24; Judg. 19:16 RSV KJV-21; Job 31:32 RSV KJV). Placing himself under the protection of a particular clan or chieftain, or a person, the sojourner in turn assumes responsibilities. Abraham sojourned in Egypt (Gen. 12:10 RSV KJV J), and in Gerar in a relationship of loyalty to the chieftain Abimelech (20:1 E; 21:23 JE); as "a stranger and a sojourner" (גֵר-ותושב) among the Hittites he had no right to own land but asked for this right so that he might bury Sarah (23:4 P; cf. Heb. 11:9 RSV KJV). Lot as a sojourner had no right to stand against the practices of the men of Sodom (Gen. 19:9 RSV KJV J). After going to Abimelech, Isaac became a sojourner there and Abimelech protected Isaac and his wife from maltreatment at the hands of the Philistines (26:1-11 J). Jacob was a sojourner with Laban (32:4 J) and claimed maltreatment (31:3-7 E). Esau and Jacob sojourned in the land of Canaan and so increased in property and flocks that Esau moved to Seir (36:6-8 P). The covenantal promise to Abraham (17:7-8 P), reiterated in Isaac's blessing upon Jacob (28:1-4 P) and in God's disclosure to Moses (Exod. 6:4 RSV KJV P), was that he would give to Abraham's descendants "the land of Canaan, the land in which they dwelt as sojourners" (cf. Ps. 105:6 RSV KJV-15 I Chr. 16:13 RSV KJV-22). When the brothers of Joseph told Pharaoh that they had come to sojourn in Egypt, he granted their petition to dwell in the land of Goshen and asked them to supply him with overseers

of his cattle (Gen 47:16 J). Israel sojourned in Egypt (Isa. 52:4^[RSV KJV]) and was oppressed (Gen. 15:13^[RSV KJV] J; Deut. 26:5^[RSV KJV]-11; Ps. 105:23^[RSV KJV]-25; Acts 7:6^[RSV KJV]). According to popular etymology the name of Moses' son is interpreted as though it were Gersham--i.e., "sojourner there" (Exod. 2:22^[RSV KJV] J). A man from the hill country of Ephraim sojourned in Gibeah (Judg. 19:16^[RSV KJV]). David as a sojourner made the interests of his Philistine patron Achish, king of Gath, his own I Sam. 27:2^[RSV KJV]-3, 12; 28:1 ff). The man who claimed he had dispatched Saul said: "I am the son of a sojourner, an Amalekite" (II Sam. 1:13). Elijah sojourned with a widow in Zarephath who acted for his welfare and he pleaded with God for hers I Kings 17:20^[RSV KJV]). The exiles in Babylon who had acquired wealth and position are referred to in Cyrus' decree as sojourners (Ezra 1:4). The worshiper in the temple is God's personal guest who receives divine protection and must do God's will (Ps. 15:1^[RSV KJV]). Some of the reasons for a person or group's becoming sojourners may be cited: to escape famine (Ruth 1:1^[RSV KJV]; II Kings 8:1^[RSV KJV]) or military attack II Sam. 4:3^[RSV KJV]; to find sanctuary after a land has been destroyed by conquest (Isa. 16:4^[RSV KJV]); to be in Jerusalem for celebration of the Feast of Weeks II Chr. 15:9^[RSV KJV]); to maintain the nomadic ideal, the Rechabites dwelt as sojourners in Judah (Jer. 35:7^[RSV KJV]); a Levite might settle down as a sojourner wherever he found a place or a person or group where he could perform his function (Judg. 17:1^[RSV KJV]-18; 19:1; cf. Deut. 12:12^[RSV KJV]; 16:11, 14; etc.). The basic meaning of גֵר, "sojourner," cited in the above passages, underlies Acts 7:6^[RSV KJV]; Eph. 2:19^[RSV KJV]; Heb. 11:9^[RSV KJV]; I Pet. 2:11^[RSV KJV].

The above instances show that the root meaning of "sojourner" is especially evident in early texts, and that this basic meaning persists in the later stages of biblical history and literature. Two further connotations developed in the Covenant Code and D, and in the postexilic period.

In the Covenant Code (Exod. 20:22-23:33) and preceding decalogue (20:1-17) and D, *ger* ("sojourner," "stranger") designates, not the immigrant Hebrew, but the indigenous population of Palestine conquered by the Hebrews. The popular conception that close connection exists between a land and its tutelary deity, a connection which demands that whoever settles in a land must serve the national deity, had not been followed in the cosmopolitan syncretism prevailing in Israel before the Deuteronomic reformation (cf. I Kings 11:7^[RSV KJV]-8; 16:31-33; 20:34). A check on syncretism, the Deuteronomic reformation renewed the popular conception just cited at the same time that it was primarily an attempt to make Israel's heritage with Yahweh the structure and content of life in Israel.

Three perspectives informed the laws concerning the sojourner: (a) Israel is to remember that once she was a sojourner in Egypt and that God saw her oppression, delivered her, and established her in a bounteous land (Exod. 22:21; Deut. 5:14-15; 10:17-22; 16:10-12; 23:7; 24:14-22; 26:5-11).

b) The God who saved Israel from bondage is the protector of the poor and weak and disinherited; the purpose of Israel's economy is to supply need, and special attention must be given to the welfare of those who need help. "You shall not oppress a stranger [*ger*]; you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exod. 23:9). "For the LORD

your God ... is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner therefore; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (Deut. 10:17-19; cf. Exod. 22:21-24; Deut. 14:28-29; 24:14-22; see also Pss. 94:6; 146:9; Jer. 22:3; Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5).

c) The covenant between God and Israel depends upon the participation of all members of the community in its requirements and benefits; Israel is a holy people, the land is not to be defiled (Deut. 21:23), and the sojourner must conform as far as possible to the covenant regulations. "You shall rejoice in all the good which the' LORD your God has given to you and to your house, you, and the Levite, and the stranger who is among you" (Deut. 26:11; cf. vss. 12-15; 29:10-13; Exod. 22:21-24). The sojourner is subordinate, dependent upon Israel's charity and forbearance; his position of inferiority is indicated: by the personal pronominal suffix "your" (of you) attached to גר (Exod. 20:10; Deut. 1:16; 5:14; 29:11), by the fact that he is classed with those occupying a position of dependence like the fatherless and the widow (24:17-22), he can eat the flesh of an animal that has died a natural death, forbidden to the Israelites (14:21), the *gerim* are called wood-gatherers and drawers of water for the Israelites (29:11). At the same time he is almost an Israelite (cf. 23:7-8); he participates in the assembly (29:10-13; Josh. 8:30-35); he is entitled to the benefit of the tithe (Deut. 14:28-29); he is to be judged the same way as an Israelite (1:16); he is entitled to equal justice (24:14); he is expected to keep the law and observe festivals along with the native Israelites, joining in the celebration of the sabbath, the festival of deliverance in the D decalogue (5:14-15), the Feast of Weeks (16:10-12), Tabernacles (16:13-14), the offering of first fruits (26:11).

In the postexilic period the trend in the D perspective (c) cited above is extended. Deutero-Isaiah takes up the promise to Abraham ("By you all the families of the earth will bless themselves"; Gen. 12:3b J) and sets forth the universal scope of Yahweh and Israel:

This one will say, "I am the LORD'S,"
another will call himself by the name of Jacob,
and another will write on his hand, "The LORD'S,"
and surname himself by the name of Israel
(Isa. 44:5; cf. 42:1-4; 49:6; 55:4-5).

Also accentuating the D perspective (c) were the drastic reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah, which excluded from the community all who would not conform. In postexilic writings, *ger* ("sojourner," "stranger," "alien") designates a naturalized alien, a proselyte (in the Holiness Code and P, the LXX translates *ger* by προσήλυτος; cf. Aramaic גֵּוֹר, "proselyte"; in the Mishna *ger* denotes one who has become incorporated into the covenant people by circumcision and adoption of Israel's laws, and the verb נִהְיֶה means "to become a convert"). The PROSELYTE is as much a member of the community of Israel as the native-born. Again and again it is reiterated that there is one law for the native-born and the proselyte: "For the assembly [קְהָל], there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger [גר] who sojourns [הגר] with you, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the sojourner [גר] be before the LORD. One law and one ordinance shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you" (Num. 15:15 RSV)

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[KJV]-16; cf. 9:14; Exod. 12:49 [RSV KJV]; Lev. 17:15 [RSV KJV]; 24:16, 22; etc.). For the proselyte equally as for the native-born, Israel was "his people" (Lev. 17:8 [RSV KJV]-9). A sojourner is to show the same fidelity to Yahweh as an Israelite (Lev. 20:2 [RSV KJV]; Ezek. 14:7 [RSV KJV]). He has the same rights (Num. 35:15 [RSV KJV]; Ezek. 47:21 [RSV KJV]-23), and is bound by the same laws, whether civil (Lev. 24:13 [RSV KJV]-22), moral and religious (18:26; 20:2; 24:16), or ceremonial (Exod. 12:19 [RSV KJV]; Lev. 16:29 [RSV KJV]; 17:8-15; 22:18; Num. 15:14 [RSV KJV], 26, 30; 19:10). Certain distinctions do persist: if he would keep the Passover, he must be circumcised (Exod. 12:48 [RSV KJV]); a Hebrew sold into servitude to a *ger* may be released before the Jubilee year (Lev. 25:47 [RSV KJV]-55); in certain passages where גֵר (19:10), תושב (22:10), גֵר and תושב (25:23, 35, 47; Num. 35:15 [RSV KJV]) appear, the sojourner is in an inferior position.

The basic meaning of גֵר, "sojourner," is employed to express Israel's relation to God's favor. Israel lives by God's invitation, "Come and live over at my place," and by doing the will of the divine host: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers [גֵרִים] and sojourners [וְתוֹשְבֵי] with me" (Lev. 25:23);

Hear my prayer, O LORD,
and give ear to my cry;
hold not thy peace at my tears!
For I am thy passing guest [גֵר],
a sojourner [תושב], like all my fathers
(Ps. 39:12);

I am a sojourner [גֵר] on earth;
hide not thy commandments from me!
(119:19).

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