

ALIENS

“When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.” (Lev 19:33-34)

I am indebted to Rabbi Daniel Lapin for prompting the following study. He insists that our modern word “alien” does not mean what “alien” meant to the Hebrews. After considering the Scriptures, it seems he is right.

The Hebrew word translated as “alien, sojourner, or stranger” is “ger”. The Hebrews were aliens in the land of Egypt, and Moses named his son “Gershom” because he was, also an alien in a foreign land (Ex. 2:22). Rabbi Lapin states, however, that the “ger”, or “aliens” in Israel were actually proselytes to the Jewish faith. Please consider:

- Aliens were to be present at the reading of the Law (Deut. 31:12).
- The Law concerning unleavened bread applied to aliens (Ex. 12:19).
- The circumcised alien could eat the Passover (Ex. 12:48ff. Nu. 9:14).
- The alien was included in observing the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29).
- The aliens also participated in the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. 16:14).
- The aliens were forbidden to offer sacrifices to foreign gods or eat blood (Lev. 7 - 11).
- An alien, however, could eat something found that was already dead (Deut. 14:21).
- The alien, however, like the native born Hebrews, still had to be cleansed (Lev. 17:15).
- Aliens were included in the rites of cleansing regarding ashes of the red heifer (Nu. 19:10).
- The laws of sexual purity also applied to aliens (Lev. 18:26).
- The Sabbath laws also applied to aliens (Ex. 20:10; 23:12).
- If an alien gave his children to Molech he was to be put to death (Lev. 20:2).
- The cities of refuge were also for aliens (Nu. 35:15).
- David and Solomon used aliens as stone cutters (1 Chr. 22:2; 2 Chron. 2:17).
- Aliens also served in the army (2 Sam. 1:13).

On a number of occasions aliens are mentioned in association with the poor, orphans and widows (Lev. 19:10; 23:22; Deut. 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17; 26:13; 27:19; Etc.) Looking on society as a whole, orphans and widows were often needy because they lacked a family to support them. In this regard, aliens were often in the same category. They also often lacked a family to support them. Consequently, they were not to be mistreated any more than orphans and widows were to be mistreated. They were to be loved. They were, however, to be loved by the Hebrews in the same way they loved themselves. The aliens were to be judged by the same laws as the Hebrews.

Perhaps today there are more aliens on earth than at any other time in history. This is not only due to the fact that there are more people on earth now than ever before, but also because of the unprecedented wars and persecution that rage around us. At the present time the ten biggest refugee camps in the world are: Dadaab, Kenya; Dollo Ado, Ethiopia; Kakuma, Kenya; Al Zaatri, Jordan; Jabalia, Gaza Strip; Mbera, Mauritania; Yida, S. Sudan; Nakivale, Uganda; Nyanugusu, Tanzania; and Tamil Nadu State, India. There are also millions more refugees, and many other refugee camps in other parts of the world as well.

As followers of Christ we are to preach the Gospel to everyone. This includes not only the refugees, but also the tyrants who oppress them. It might be wise, however, not to twist the words of Moses in order to get the job done.