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## UNDERSTANDING THE MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: FOCUSING ON THE PROBLEM OF THE STRANGER (*ger*)

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### 1. Starting Point: South Korea as a country with a multicultural society

The economic integration and interdependence of national economies have increased through a rapid augmentation in cross-border movement of goods, services, technology and capital. The effects of Globalization exert intense influence on the social, political and economic condition of a given nation. Specifically, globalization accelerates to give birth to multicultural societies in countries who participate in the world market. Korea, for instance, is heading toward being a multicultural society. Due in part to the growing number of foreign brides, migrant workers and expats, the number of foreign residents exceeded the 1 million mark as of August 2007, according to immigration office data. The coexisting heterogeneous elements of the multicultural society could be causes for social conflicts and disputes. Among the problems of the current multicultural society the problem of immigrants is becoming one of the most important issues. In order to understand the multicultural society and to seek the biblical point of view concerning our problem, I will focus on the problem of the stranger (*ger*) in the Old Testament, which might shed light on the nature of modern multicultural societies and solving some of its problems. The goal of the study is to find positions regarding the problems of current societies that are theologically and practically sound, and to discover new ways and insights for dealing with social and political challenges.

### 2. The Stranger (*ger*) in the Old Testament

#### 2.1 Types and Definition of Strangers

In the Old Testament strangers can be distinguished in three types: 1. Stranger who was travelling through; 2. Stranger who was often called a sojourner or a refugee; 3. Whole nations as strangers for whom Israel was predestined to become a blessing.<sup>1</sup> Among three types of strangers our concern here is with the second type which is significant for understanding the multicultural society. The stranger was the one who had to flee and live in another land owing to various reasons. The lexicon of Koehler and Baumgartner defines the strangers as following: The stranger is a man who either alone or with his family leaves his home, where he as far as his rights and

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<sup>1</sup> Cf, W. Lorenz, "For We are Strangers before Thee and Sojourners" – 2 Chron. 29:15, *American Baptist Quarterly*, 9/4 (1990), 271.

possession, marriage, justice, worship and war are concerned, has somewhat been cut short, and looks for refuge and sanctuary.”<sup>2</sup>

## 2.2 Reasons for being Strangers

### 2.2.1 Economic Reasons

The major reason for being a stranger in the Old Testament is economic.<sup>3</sup> A famine would especially cause people to abandon their homeland and to dwell as strangers in foreign lands. As individuals or a group they immigrated seeking refuge in another country. The Old Testament reports numerous cases of such immigration. The famine forced Abraham to move to more fruitful land such as Egypt or the land of Philistines (Gen 12:10; 20:1; 21:23, 34; cf. Gen 23:4). Isaac’s moving in Gen 26 is triggered by the same problem as that of Abraham. The Israelites’ residence in Egypt is traced back to immigration of Joseph’s brothers with Jacob caused by severe food crisis (Gen 47:4). Elimelech and his family went to Moab looking for protection from starvation (Ruth 1:1). Elijah lodged with the widow in Zarephath of Sidon when there has been no rain in few years (1 King 17:20). Elisha sent the woman of Shunem and her family to the land of the Philistines while the famine lasted seven years (2 King 8:1).

### 2.2.2 Political Reasons

Political conflicts and crises can also drive people to leave their own country. Isa 16:4 mentions the outcasts of Moab who were to find a hiding place in Judah or Edom. Due to Moabite destruction they are to move to the neighboring lands and dwell as strangers. 2 Sam 4:3 states that the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and remained there as strangers. This statement indicates that there was a military encounter between the Canaanite inhabitants of Beeroth and the Benjaminites.<sup>4</sup> According to Jer 35:7 the Rechabites who were living as strangers in Judah

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<sup>2</sup> HAL I, 193. On the problem of ger see also: R. Albertz, "Ihr seid Fremdlinge Ägypten gewesen" – Fremde im AT, in: Albertz, R., *Der Mensch als Hüter seiner Welt*, Stuttgart: Calwer, 1990, 61-72; M. Görg, Fremdsein in und für Israel, in: Fuchs, O.(Hg), *Die Fremden* (Theologie zur Zeit, Bd. 4), Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1988, 194-214; H. Spieckermann, "Die Stimme des Fremden im AT," *PTh* 83, 1994, 52-67; F. Crüsemann, "Ihr kennt die Seele des Fremden", (Ex 23:9), *Conc* 29, 1993, 339-347; Chr. Bultmann, *Der Fremde im antiken Juda*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992; O. Kaiser, "Die Ausländer und die Fremden im Alten Testament," *JRP* 14 (1997), 65-83; J. Schreiner, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Würzburg: Echter, 1995, 194-202; R. Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992, 289f, 245-261; Wright, Christopher J. H. *God's people in God's land: family, land, and property in the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.; Exeter, England: Paternoster Press, c1990. 99-103; Daniel J. Estes, "Metaphorical Sojourning in 1 Chronicles 29:15," *CBQ* 53 (1991) 45-49.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ThWAT*I, 984.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *ThWAT*I, 984.

preserved the nomadic tradition. Jeremaih pointed out Israel's disobedience in contrast to loyalty and obedience of the Rechabites to their founder.

In Deuteronomy the problem of the stranger plays an important role, because at the time of the Josianic Reform in 622 B.C. the problem of emigrants from the northern kingdom became one of the main public interests. The stranger mentioned alongside orphans and widows (Dt 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17, 19, 20, 21; 26:13; 27:19) would indicate fugitives from the northern kingdom who had settled in the southern kingdom from the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C.<sup>5</sup> The Stranger can be regarded as the deuteronomistic terminology for emigrants from the northern kingdom. Such a viewpoint is reflected in the deuteronomistic historical books (Jos 8:33, 35; 2 Sam 1:13; cf. Dt 31:12-13).<sup>6</sup> In addition we can find many texts which allude to political refugees (cf. Jer 44:14; 49:18, 33; 50:40; Isa 23:7).<sup>7</sup> The most influential moment for understanding political refuge in the Old Testament is the Babylonian Exile. Daniel is a representative case. Behind the Book of Daniel lies the exilic experience as a stranger in Babylon.<sup>8</sup> In the decree of Cyrus in Ezr 1:2-4 the Jew who dwelled in a strange land is called a stranger in contrast to the people of the place.<sup>9</sup> Here the stranger is not the proselyte, but the protected citizen (Schutzbürger).

### 2.2.3 Individual Reasons

The Old Testament shows us many cases in which the flight from one's own country is triggered by the various individual circumstances. When Pharaoh tried to kill Moses due to his murder, Moses fled into Midian from Pharaoh and stayed there as a stranger (Ex 2:22). Absalom killed Amnon because of the dishonor done to his sister. After his revenge he had to go into exile to his grandfather, the king of Geshur (2 Sam 13:38). According to the statements of Judges there was a considerable freedom of choosing the dwelling place for the Levite before the centralization of the cult. The Levite could settle down wherever he found a place or person or group where he

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *ThWAT* I, 986. "Nach dem Fall Samarias (722) wurde Jerusalem nicht nur zum Fluchtort vieler Leute aus dem ehemaligen North-Reich Israel und erfuhr damit einen starken Bevölkerungszuwachs, Jerusalem wurde auch zum Sammelbecken der theologischen Traditionen des North-Reiches (Elohist, Hosea) und damit zum einzigen Zentrum der vom YHWH-Glauben inspirierten Theologie(n)" (M. Küchler, "Jerusalem", in: *NBL* II, 301). Due to the immigration from northern kingdom a new residence called Mishne (מִשְׁנֵה) is formed in Jerusalem. The prophetess Huldah dwelled there (2 King 22:14).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. J. Schreiner/R. Kampling, *Der Nächste-der Fremde-der Feinde: Perspektiven des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, Würzburg: Echter, 2000, 26.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. J. Schreiner, *Der Nächste-der Fremde-der Feinde*, 27.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. G. Burck, "Fremdlingsschaft im Alten Testament," 7-17.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *ThWAT* I, 990.

could practice his profession (Jgs 17:7, 8, 9; 19:1, 16; cf. also Dt 16:11, 14). At this time the Levite stayed as a stranger.<sup>10</sup>

### 2.3 The Legal Position of the Stranger

The stranger is distinguished from the foreigner who has settled in the land for some time and is recognized as having a special status.<sup>11</sup> In 2 Sam 1:13 the alleged murderer of Saul who informed David of Saul's death, introduced himself as the son of an Amalekite stranger (2 Sam 1:13). On the basis of this statement we can assume that a stranger could have a family and even be admitted into the Israelite Army.<sup>12</sup> Accepting the viewpoint of Pentateuch which regards Abraham (Gen 12:10; 20:1; 21:23, 34), Lot (Gen 19:9), Isaac (Gen 26:3), Jacob (Gen 32:4), and Jacob with the brothers of Joseph (Gen 47:4, 9) as strangers, we can imagine that a stranger could have properties such as herds of cattle, man-servants and maid-servants. Lot, who dwelled as strangers in Sodom, even had their own house (Gen 19:9).<sup>13</sup>

According to 1 Chr 22:2, the strangers who would be primarily the pre-Israelite Canaanite population, were employed as stonecutters. In 2 Chr 2:17f. is told that Solomon took a census of all the aliens who were in Israel and assigned 70,000 of them to be carriers and 80,000 to be stonecutters in the hills, with 3,600 foremen over them. So we can imagine that the social position of the stranger is located between citizen and slave. Strangers are like the day laborers (Dt 24:14-

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. *ThWAT*I, 984.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *DOT*, 831. It is difficult to determine the distinction between *toshabh* and *ger*. These two words in Ps 39:12 and 1 Chr 29:15 are used in parallelism. It is clear that these two terms were understood as closely connected. Elliger suggested a explanation that from the economic standpoint *toshabh* would be same man that is called a *stranger* when speaking of his legal status, and thus one who, without any property of his own, is taken in by a fully enfranchised Israelite citizen. Cf. Elliger, *HAT*, 4, 293f. There is another terminology for the stranger to be compared. It is *nokri*, the real stranger who is only temporarily in the country. So it is usually translated into the "foreigner" who has not given up his original home (Dt 29:21-23; 1 Sam 15:19-20; 1 Kings 8:41-43; 2 Chr 6:32-33). What is characteristic of *nokri* therefore is the fact that he maintains the connection with his native country or with the country which he has left. In this he differs from the *ger* who in reality had also come from afar, but has severed the connection with his former country. While the *ger* thus seeks to become a member of the new community, the *nokri* persists in keeping, politically and socially, his former status. Cf. M. Guttmann, "The Term 'Foreigner' (יָרֵכָן) Historically Considered," 1; see also G. Steins, "Fremde sind wir ... ": Zur Wahrnehmung des Fremdseins und zur Sorge für die Fremden in alttestamentlicher Perspektive, in: *Jahrbuch für christliche Sozialwissenschaften* 35 (1994), 137.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *ThWAT*I, 984-5.

<sup>13</sup> At the same time this verse, however, indicate that the *ger* is not apparently taken into consideration as a judge.

15). They can change employers, but they can be exploited. They were economically and legally dependant on the citizens.<sup>14</sup>

The strangers were allowed to take part in the festivals. 2 Chr 15:9 reported that emigrants from the northern kingdom (from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon), who had taken refuge as protected citizen in Judah, participated in the assembly of Judah called by Asa. According to 2 Chr 30:25, the strangers who had come from Israel and those who lived in Judah were also participants in Hezekiah's Passover festival.<sup>15</sup> In late strata of P the stranger is regarded as the fully integrated proselyte (Lev 18; 20; Num 19). In this portion all laws for the community of the Israelites are also applicable to the stranger. The stranger has his place in the community as a proselyte by circumcision and modes of life.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless the stranger had no share in the land.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.4 Regulations for the Protection of the Stranger

In the Old Testament the protection of the stranger is regulated in many ways.<sup>18</sup> First of all, the stranger is considered as the one who is in special need of protection like the orphan and widow. It was a habit in Israel to practice hospitality for strangers. Abraham (Gen 18), Lot (Gen 19), and Gideon (Jud 6) show good examples for this kind of hospitality. There are also negative examples for hospitality that is denied (Jud 19:22f). So hospitality is regarded as one of God's highest mandates and commands.<sup>19</sup> The regulations for protecting strangers are of wide distribution in the Old Testament including so called covenant law (Ex 22:21f; 23:9; Dt 10:18; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:19, 20, 21; 26:13; Jer 7:6; 22:3; Ez 22:7; Zec 7:10; Mal 3:5; Ps 94:6; 146:9). Israel's God is the protective Lord of strangers. It is a sin to oppress and mistreat them.<sup>20</sup> They are to be treated righteously in judgment (Dt 1:16; 24:17; 27:19).<sup>21</sup>

Secondly the stranger is observed as a member of Israel's covenant community. He is invited in the various cultic ceremonies and situations. He is mentioned in particular in the Sabbath command (Ex 20:10; Dt 5:14). The Sabbath shall also be observed by the stranger. And he has the

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. G. Burck, "Fremdlingsschaft im Alten Testament," 7-17.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *ThWAT*I, 986.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. G. Burck, "Fremdlingsschaft im Alten Testament," 7-17; *ThWAT*I, 988.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore it is to be a peculiarity of restored Israel that the *ger* shall inherit along with the native born (Ezekiel 47:22).

<sup>18</sup> No similar concern for resident strangers appears in the literature of other ancient Near East; cf. D. E. Gowan, "Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament; The Case of the Widow, the Orphan, and the Sojourner" *Interpretation* 41/4 (1987), 343.

<sup>19</sup> W. Lorenz, "For We are Strangers before Thee and Sojourners" – 2 Chron. 29:15, 272.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *ThWAT*I, 991.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. G. Burck, "Fremdlingsschaft im Alten Testament," 7-17.

right to take part in the religious-historical festivals such as Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths. In Ex 12:19 the law concerning unleavened bread is applied to the stranger as well as the native. Ex 12:48f say that the stranger can celebrate the Passover as well as the native Israelite, if he has been circumcised. In Nu 9:14 it is told explicitly that the same regulations concerning the Passover must be applied to the stranger and the native Israelite.<sup>22</sup> According to Dt 16:14 the stranger is eligible to celebrate the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Booths.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore the stranger is invited in the festival of the great Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29).

Not only permission regulations but also penalty regulations are applied to the stranger. According to Lev 17:8-9, the stranger is going to face the prospect of being cut off if he offers an illegitimate sacrifice. This rule is binding just as on the stranger as on the native Israelite.<sup>24</sup> Both the Israelite and the stranger are strongly forbidden to eat blood (Lev 17:10, 12, 13). Also the laws of purification are valid to the strangers as much as to the native Israelite (Lev 15-16).<sup>25</sup> The laws concerning forbidden sexual intercourse with diverse relatives (Lev 18:6-17) and the sins of unchastity (Lev 18:18-23) are valid equally to both natives and strangers (Lev 18:26). The life of the stranger is restricted by a range of regulations because the stranger has the membership of Israel's religious community.

Thirdly the stranger must be supported by various aids and considerations of the community. All the tithes of every three years should be used for the stranger including the Levites who have no inheritance of their own and the orphans or the widows (Dt 14: 29-30; 26:12). The forgotten sheaf in the field and the gleanings in the olive trees and in the vineyards (24:19-22; Lev 23:22) are allotted to the stranger as well as to the orphans and the widows. We can find an example of it by the Boaz's kindness for Ruth (Ruth 2:15).

Fourthly the stranger is protected by the six asylum cities. In Jos 20:9 and Nu 35:15 it is emphasized that the six asylum cities would be also a place of refuge for the stranger, although

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<sup>22</sup> In Ex 12:45 *toshabh* is excluded from the Passover feast. *Toshabh* who is understood as a temporary resident is not allowed to keep Passover, probably because he is not circumcised. Therefore it can be said that the criterion for the membership of Israel's covenant community is circumcision. Cf. J. I. Durham, *Exodus* (WBC) (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 173.

<sup>23</sup> In contrast to Dt 16:14 the *ger* is not mentioned explicitly in Lev 23:42 for keeping the Feast of Booths. The reason why the *ger* is not included in this feast is not clear. It can be inferred only from the statement about the historical origin of this feast (Lev 23:43).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (NICOT) (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979), 243-244.

<sup>25</sup> Concerning to the laws of purification we can observe variations. Ex 22:31 shows us a strict regulation that the flesh of an animal torn by a wild beast must be cast to the dogs. In Dt 14:21 a alleviation of the rule can be observed. According to this verse it is permitted to give a carcass to *ger* and foreigner.

the law relating to asylum cities in Dt 19:1-13 does not refer to the stranger. In conclusion the strangers are to be protected from various aspects such as the economical, legal, and religious.

### 3. Motivations for Protecting the Strangers – Why should the stranger be protected?

#### 3.1 Israel's historical Experience with God

The requirement that Israel should protect the stranger is based on the fact that the Israelite themselves were strangers in Egypt (Ex 22:20; Lev 19:33; Dt 10:19). From their historical experience of the stranger they would know what it is to be a stranger ("the soul of a stranger") (Ex 23:9). In the short historical summary of Dt 26:5-9 also it is emphasized that Israel's father went down to Egypt and stayed as a stranger (cf. Isa 52:4; Ps 105:23; 1 Chr 16:19).

Israel's status as a stranger has been continued through the history of Israel. The fathers of Israel were strangers in Canaan (Gen 23:4). After the exodus from Egypt the Israelite could not settle down immediately in the land. They had to continue wandering in the wilderness for a long time. Although the time of the monarchy began in Israel after settlement, it did not stand long. By the invasion of the Babylonian Israelite monarchy was ceased and the Israelite was to be exiled in Babylon. The life of Israel as a stranger has continued after the returning from the exile as in Ezra-Nehemiah.<sup>26</sup>

The *modus vivendi* of Israel can be identified as a wandering existence with God. The Existence of Israel has been totally dependent on the guidance and protection of God. The responsibilities and requirements for protecting the strangers would be the natural consequences, if Israel could reflect on their own historical experiences.

#### 3.2 God's Love to the Weak

The command to love the stranger, to give him or her protection and support, is nothing more than what God does, as we read in Deut 10:17-19. The strangers are economically and legally weak. They are in need of special protection in the community. Therefore God commands special concern on them. It is said that God protects the strangers and supports the fatherless and the widows (Ps 146:9) as he does \_\_ for Israel (Ps 121:4). The commandment of protecting the weak is stressed especially in Deuteronomy (Dt 10:18; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:19, 20, 21; 26:13). At that time three major groups (the stranger, the orphans and the widows) are mentioned as the representatives of the weak.<sup>27</sup> The commandment of protecting the weak appears also in the

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. J. Schreiner, *Der Nächste-der Fremde-der Feinde*, 24. See also the *hapiu* as a relating word to Hebrew.

<sup>27</sup> In Hammurabi Code the stranger is not included as an object of the protection.

prophetic proclamations in various forms (Am 5:11; 6:4ff; 8:4; Isa 2:23; 5:8ff; Mi 3:2f; Jer 7:5ff; 22:3f; Ez 22:7; Zec 7:10; Mal 3:5).

God loves the strangers as he loves Israel (Isa 5:1-7; Hos 2; Jer 2:2; Ez 16; 23; Dt 4:3f etc). So to love the stranger is to recognize God's love to the stranger and to accept God's love to Israel. But loving the stranger must be concrete acts like in Dt 10:18. It must be to give bread and clothes to him. The requirement in Jer 19:33f is not far from the commandment of loving neighbor (Lev 19:18).<sup>28</sup> The law of the protection of the stranger is to be understood in the extension of the law of loving their neighbor as themselves (Lev 19:18): "The stranger who resides 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 the LORD your God" (Lev 19:34).<sup>29</sup> This divine Command to love the strangers (see also Dt 10:19) is the unique commandment for loving a particular group of people except for the commandment of loving neighbors in Lev 19:18.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.3 Israel's Self-consciousness as the Stranger before God

Jacob speaks of the time of his life as a sojourning (Gen 47:9). His response is not far from that of Ps 119:54, which speaks of life as place of sojourning. This is the word used to describe the land of the patriarchs given as a promise to their descendants (Gen 17:8; 28:4; Ex 6:4), a motif that lends itself as a metaphor for the pilgrimage of life.<sup>31</sup> The word is used in the general sense of a place of residence that is not a native home (Job 18:19; Ez 20:38).

The owner of the land is God. So the land shall not be sold permanently. Israel is nothing but stranger and *toshabh* with Him (Lev 25:23). Man cannot be owner of the land. He is just a temporary resident in the land. In the Old Testament we can hear the echoes of this verse. The prayer confesses that he is a stranger and *toshabh* like all his ancestors before God (Ps 39:13). David says the same thing: "For we are strangers before Thee, and tenants, as all our fathers were; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope" (1 Chr 29:15). Here David as the ideal king of Israel confesses that Israel fundamentally has to live its life as a stranger in its total existence, not only in Abraham's day, or later during the exile, but even in the times of the

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<sup>28</sup> G. Burck, "Fremdlingsschaft im Alten Testament," 7-17.

<sup>29</sup> In Dt 23:8 it is forbidden to abhor an Egyptian. That the Israelite lived as an *ger* in his country is pointed out as the grounds for this commandment.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. G. Steins, "Fremde sind wir ... ": Zur Wahrnehmung des Fremdseins und zur Sorge für die Fremden in alttestamentlicher Perspektive, in: *Jahrbuch für christliche Sozialwissenschaften* 35 (1994), 144.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *DOT*, 831.



kings.<sup>32</sup> All these texts are showing the transitory nature of life and all existence and at the same time Israel's conviction that it has to continue to exist as a stranger before God.

This self-consciousness leads to the eschatological faith that doesn't have the ultimate hope in this world (Cf. 1 Pet 2:11; Heb 11:13f). Those who have the eschatological faith are longing for the better heavenly home. So they are living in the world as a stranger and thus they can help \_\_ strangers who are in the same situation.

#### 4. Conclusion

##### 4.1 Vision of the Old Testament for the Integration of the Society

Deuteronomy 29:10-15 is a text showing the principle and example of the Old Testament for the integration in society. In there all categories of people responsible for the covenant are enumerated (Dt 29:10-11): the leaders, men, women, children and the resident strangers. The purpose of the covenant is the establishment of Israel as God's people (v. 13). All the people who are mentioned here are raised up to be people for God. The Stranger also belongs to the covenant community. Interestingly not only those who were present but also those who would be born later were mentioned as the contracting party (v.14-15). It indicates that this covenant shall function as the principle of God's covenant with Israel which is valid to the coming generations as well. Including the stranger in the covenant community can be confirmed also in the provision for future covenant ceremonies. According to Dt 31:12, all the people who belong to the community, namely, men, women, children and strangers should come together for the public reading of the law.

In the vision of Ezekiel we find the statement that the stranger has the right to receive lands (Ez 47:22f). The Stranger had been prohibited from having land ownership. It prevented the stranger from full integration into the community of Israel. But by the new order all distinctions between strangers and native Israelite shall be eliminated.<sup>33</sup> The stranger shall receive an inheritance in the territory of the tribe where he settles down, and thus he is to be integrated into that tribe. It is a striking statement indicating that the stranger has full citizenship and social equality within the community of Israel (cf. Isa 56:3). It could be the most radical regulation in all the legal corpora of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. W. Lorenz, "For We are Strangers before Thee and Sojourners" – 2 Chron. 29:15, 273-4.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48* (NICOT) (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 718; W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel* (OTL) (London: SCM Press, 1970), 592.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. J. D. Levenson, *Theology of the program of restoration of Ezekiel 40-48*, MT: Scholars Pr, 1976, 123.

Through this study we can realize that the Old Testament is showing us the ways and steps for the integration of strangers in society. From the concrete regulations for protecting the weak and strangers to the ideal vision for their integration into society various measures and provisions are presented.

#### 4.2 Theological Consequences for the Multicultural Society

The bible is the guideline for the Christians. It has a paradigmatic significance for the actions of the believers. The new ways and insights that we have found are not always conformable to the society in which we find ourselves in. Nevertheless we have to ask for our spiritual and practical stand concerning social and political challenges. And we have to seek the biblical point of view and to follow the directions of the bible.

All people are identified with a variety of categories. A man can be identified as a human being. Physical conditions and social-cultural backgrounds can be criterion for the classification. For the integration of the society we need a new perspective above and beyond these categories. The concern and care for the stranger fundamentally should spring from the consciousness as children of God. God is the creator of the world and the parent of all humanity. Although he entrusted the earth to us, he is the true owner. So to share its goods and resources with all people belongs to our basic responsibility. God chose Abraham as a mediator of blessings for all nations (Gen 12:3). Israel also has the mission to act as a light to other nations (Isa 42:6; 49:6; 60:3; see also Mat 5:16; Gal 3:8). Responding to the need of the stranger is sharing the gifts of God. The differences of race, languages, cultures and countries do not exist to create adversaries, but they could contribute to the diversity and creativity of the multicultural society. What we need is not hostility, but hospitality towards the stranger. If we confess all people are members of God's family, we cannot continue with our rigid boundaries and borderlines between nations and races. We can tolerate the difficulties in the acceptance of the stranger and become his neighbor. Boundaries and animosities are not simply erased, but they are to be overcome by standing under a new perspective. We are living as a stranger and sojourner before God, but in Jesus Christ we have no strangers and no foreigners (Gal 3:8).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Theo. Sundermeier distinguish three basic ways of encountering the other (cf. Theo. Sundermeier, "Understanding the Stranger: Aspects of Interreligious Hermeneutics," *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 29/3 [2002], 184-186): 1. The alterity model: The stranger is the enemy. 2. The trader model: At all times and in all societies the traders have been excepted from this fundamental enmity toward the stranger. 3. The equality model: This model is founded on the conviction that all people are equal, think equally, trade equally, and finally have or should have the same ethical moral concepts.

The witnesses of the bible are formed in the dynamics of the reciprocal relationship between social experience and theological insights. They are the mirror of an inner-process of reception and updating that evokes to continue interpreting and adapting the words of God in the current world. The following steps and tasks are needed for the successful multicultural society overcoming the human and social problem of the stranger. 1. The particular care and concern of native people should be done to the underprivileged stranger. 2. The support of the stranger should be done with concrete help and actions. 3. All the efforts for strangers have to be aiming for integration into a society in which all members enjoy equal rights and protection.

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## Abstract

The economic integration and interdependence of national economies have increased through a rapid augmentation in cross-border movement of goods, services, technology and capital. The effects of Globalization exert intense influence on the social, political and economic condition of a given nation. Specifically, globalization accelerates to give birth to multicultural societies in countries who participate in the world market. The coexisting heterogeneous elements of the multicultural society could be causes for social conflicts and disputes. Among the problems of the current multicultural society the problem of immigrants is becoming one of the most important issues. In order to understand the multicultural society and to seek the biblical point of view concerning our problem, I focused on the problem of the stranger (ger) in the Old Testament. For being a stranger in the Old Testament there are economic, political and individual reasons. In the Old Testament the protection of the stranger is regulated in many ways. The requirement that Israel should protect the stranger is based on Israel's historical Experience, God's Love to the Weak and Israel's Self-consciousness as the Stranger before God. The Old Testament is showing us the ways and steps from the concrete regulations for protecting the weak and strangers to the ideal vision for their integration into society. The study on the problem of the stranger(ger) in the Old Testament sheds lights on the nature of modern multicultural societies and solving some of its problems. The witnesses of the bible are formed in the dynamics of the reciprocal relationship between social experience and theological insights. They are the mirror of an inner-process of reception and updating that evokes to continue interpreting and adapting the words of God in the current world. The following steps and tasks are needed for the successful multicultural society overcoming the human and social problem of the stranger. 1. The particular care and concern of native people should be done to the underprivileged stranger. 2. The support of the stranger should be done with concrete help and actions. 3. All the efforts for strangers have to be aiming for integration into a society in which all members enjoy equal rights and protection.

## Keywords

Globalization, Multicultural Society, Immigrant, Stranger, ger, Ethics of the Old Testament, Interpretation and Application of the Bible