

Exodus 22:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Analysis

Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

'Stranger' (גֶּר, ger) is resident alien—foreigner living in Israel. 'Vex and oppress' (לֹא־תַּעֲנֵה וְלֹא תַּלְפִּצֵּן, lo-toneh velo tilchatzenu) means 'don't wrong or exploit.' The motivation: 'ye were strangers in Egypt'—remember your oppression, don't inflict it on others. God repeatedly commands alien protection (Exodus 23:9, Leviticus 19:34, Deuteronomy 10:19)—perhaps the Old Testament's most frequent social command. Why? Because God defends the powerless, and Israel's slavery memory should create empathy. The gospel extends this: we were 'aliens and strangers' (1 Peter 2:11), brought near by Christ's blood (Ephesians 2:19).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cultures often exploited foreigners. Israel's laws protecting aliens were revolutionary—granting nearly equal rights with citizens. The Egyptian slavery memory was to cultivate compassion, not bitterness.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Why does God so frequently command protection for strangers/aliens in Israel?
2. How should remembering our own 'alien' status (before salvation) shape treatment of outsiders?

Interlinear Text

גֶּרֶם	גֶּרֶם	לֹא	תֹּוֹתֵךְ	הָ	אַל	תַּלְפִּחְךָ	כִּי	לֹא	תַּלְפִּחְךָ	כִּי	גֶּרֶם
a stranger	H3808	Thou shalt neither vex	H3808	nor oppress	H3588	a stranger	H1616				
H1616		H3238		H3905							
מִצְרָיִם	מִצְרָיִם	בְּאֶרֶץ	בְּאֶרֶץ	הַיּוֹתָה	הַיּוֹתָה						
H1961		H776		H4714							

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 23:9 (References Egypt): Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 10:19 (References Egypt): Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:33 (Parallel theme): And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him.

Zechariah 7:10 (Parallel theme): And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

Jeremiah 7:6 (Parallel theme): If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt:

Exodus 20:2 (References Egypt): I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Deuteronomy 23:7 (References Egypt): Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land.

Leviticus 25:35 (Parallel theme): And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee.

Malachi 3:5 (Parallel theme): And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

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