

Foreigner-Immigrant-Stranger

or

Neighbor

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How do we define Foreigner, Alien,  
Stranger?

When you encounter these adjectives  
what are your first thoughts?

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In the Old Testament we have four different people groups; the natives, strangers, immigrants and foreigners.

Attempting to differentiate between these different people groups can be very difficult if you are using a translation as it is not uncommon for a translation to use the same English word for different groups.

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## **NATIVES**

The natives (sometimes translated as “home-born”) are those who are born to one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Hebrew word for a native is אֶזְרָח- *ezrahh*, which means to “come up” or “come out of.” So an *ezrahh* is one who has “come out of” Israel.

## **STRANGER**

The Hebrew verb זָרַח (Z.W.R, Strong’s #2114) means “to be separated out.” The participle form of this verb means a “stranger,” one who is separated out. This word is frequently used in the Torah for someone who is not from one’s own tribe.

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### IMMIGRANT

The Hebrew word for an immigrant (often translated as “stranger” or “sojourner”) is גֵּר *-ger*, and is derived from the verb גָּר, which means to “dwell with” or “dwell among.” So an immigrant is one who is not a native born Israeli, but lives with the natives.

This is used in Exodus 12:49 & 22:21 in the ASV or ESV translations. According to the Torah, the immigrants are to live according to the same customs and laws as the natives.

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### FOREIGNER

A foreigner is one who was born in a foreign land, but unlike an immigrant, is not bound to the customs and laws of the native or immigrant.

There are two Hebrew words for a foreigner; נכרי - *nakhriy*, and נכר - *nekhar*. Both of these words are derived from the root נכר meaning “to be recognizable,” probably because a foreigner is easily recognizable due to their very different culture and lifestyle.

This is used in Deuteronomy 23:20 (ASV or ESV translation)

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What does the scriptures share about Foreigners?

- Genesis 23:4 (passage vs 1-9)
- Exodus 12:38 & 49
- Exodus 23:9
- Leviticus 19:18
- Leviticus 23:22

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Over and over, the Levite sources E, P, and D command that one must not mistreat an alien. Why? “Because we were aliens in Egypt.” The first occurrence of the word “torah” in the Torah is: “There shall be one torah for the citizen and for the alien who resides among you” (Exodus 12:49). In the three Levite sources, the command to treat aliens fairly comes up 52 times! And how many times in the non-Levite source, J? None. William Propp’s commentary on Exodus makes a strong case on the etymology of the very word “Levi” that its most probable meaning is an “attached person” in the sense of resident alien.

*The Exodus- Prof. Richard Elliot Freedman*

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“You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. Exodus 23:9

What is the heart of a Sojourner? Foreigner?

When have you felt strange? Out of place, like a Foreigner?