

On the Notion of Exile

Even a cursory reading of this list shows that the experience of exile was formative in Israel's history, especially as noted by the prophets. For the most part, going into exile was viewed as punishment for the sins of the people; at the same time it provided an occasion for spiritual renewal and preparation to return home. The very first biblical instance of a person going-into-exile is Abraham, a decisive experience for all forms of Western spirituality which trace their roots to this patriarch. In contrast, New Testament references are much less frequent; despite this, very early on in Christian circles the feeling of not being at home in the world became a salient feature of spirituality which later became translated into the monastic movement.

Another way of handling the paucity of references to exile in the New Testament is by keeping in mind those references to the world (*kosmos* in Greek). For example, Jesus prays to his Father in John 17 that his disciples be protected from this *kosmos* while they are in it. Surely it wasn't a big step to pass from this latent hostility towards an outright rejection of it whose classical form was the monastic way of life.

The feeling of not being at home in one's native environment has several elements in common whether this uneasiness stems from involuntary or voluntary circumstances. Being a stranger suggests the perception that everything—absolutely everything grasped by senses, emotions and the mind—can be ultimately abstracted into a basic pattern: a beginning, middle and an end. Where this perception comes from, nobody really knows, but it can be attributed to a person's spiritual nature for lack of a better term. Next, insight into the fact that all things "are begotten" is translated into assuming a lifestyle which best approximates the original perception. As with the case of (biblical) exile, it's mostly involuntary but eventually leads to a willing acknowledgment that this state is salutary. Regardless of how "exile" comes about, the final product is a different way of conducting one's life and thus being in the *kosmos* but not of it.

As just noted, the concept of exile or wandering is important in the monastic context and can trace its beginnings to the first Christian martyrs and later to the desert fathers who sought to imitate their other-worldliness. Living in the monastery as an exile or wanderer is at first paradoxical because life in such a community is marked by stability and constancy of observance which extends from the day one enters to the day one dies. The life there is not subject to the same vicissitudes as in society, but this stability is designed as both a sacred space and time to ponder the human condition in ways not normally accessible to busy people. In fact, the Prologue in St. Benedict's Rule calls this life a "truce," a strong, even alien word which makes you stop and listen to what he is trying to convey to his listeners. For anyone spiritually inclined, such a truce is intended for amendment of one's past failings and to prepare for life hereafter. Perhaps this term could be mentally inserted into the following excerpts to give them broader scope. Again with St. Benedict in mind, his Rule concludes with the words, "You, therefore, who hastens to the heavenly home, with the help of Christ fulfil this least rule written for a beginning; and then you shall with God's help attain at last to the greater heights of knowledge and virtue which we have mentioned above."

In order to enhance the understanding of these excerpts I have inserted references to the Hebrew and Greek terms. At the end of each section (i.e., the Old and New Testaments) these words are briefly discussed which hopefully will flesh out the passages and allow them to be seen in a broader context. The list is not exhaustive but simply representative. All citations are taken from the Revised Standard Edition of the Bible.

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Old Testament

-And when God cause me to wander (tahah) from my father's house, I said to her, "This is the kindness you must do to me: at every place to which we come, say of me, 'He is my brother.'" [Gen 20.13]

-I am a stranger and a sojourner (ger) among you; give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." [Gen 23.4]

She bore a son, and he called his name Gershom; for he said, "I have been a sojourner (ger) in a foreign land." [Ex 2.22]

-For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses; for if any one eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a sojourner (ger) or a native of the land. [Ex 12.19]

-No sojourner (toshav) or hired servant may eat of it. [Ex 12.45]

-And when a stranger (ger) shall sojourn (gor) with you and would keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised [Ex 12.48]

-There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger (ger) who sojourns (gor) with you. [Ex 12.49]

-And her two sons, of whom the name of the one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been a sojourner (ger) in a foreign land") [Ex 18.3]

-But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner (ger) who is within your gates. [Ex 20.10]

-You shall not wrong a stranger (ger) or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. [Ex 22.21]

-No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger (ger) who sojourns (gor) among you eat blood. [Lev 17.12]

-And every person that eats what dies of itself or what is torn by beasts, whether he is a native or a sojourner (ger), shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening; then he shall be clean. [Lev 17.15]

-And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner (ger): I am the Lord your God. [Lev 19.10]

-When a stranger (ger)sojourns (gor) with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. [Lev 19.33]

-An outsider shall not eat of a holy thing. A sojourner (toshav) of the priest's or a hired servant shall not eat of a holy thing. [Lev 22.10]

-When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field to its very border, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger (ger). [Lev 23.22]

-He who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him; the sojourner (ger) as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death. [Lev 24.16]

-You shall have one law for the sojourner (ger) and for the native; for I am the Lord your God." [Lev 24.22]

-The sabbath of the land shall provide food for you, for yourself and for your male and female slaves and for your hired servant and the sojourner (toshav) who lives with you. [Lev 25.6]

-And if your brother becomes poor, and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall maintain him; as a stranger (ger) and a sojourner (toshav) he shall live with you. [Lev 25.35]

-He shall be with you as a hired servant and as a sojourner (toshav). He shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. [Lev 25.40]

-If a stranger (ger) or sojourner (toshav) with you becomes rich, and your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger (ger) or sojourner (toshav) with you, or to a member of the stranger's family. [Lev 25.47]

-And if a stranger (ger) sojourns (gor) among you, and will keep the Passover to the Lord, according to the statute of the Passover and according to its ordinance, so shall he do; you shall have one statute, both for the sojourner (ger) and for the native. [Num 9.14]

-For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the sojourner (ger) be before the Lord. [Num 15.15]

-But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner (ger), reviles the Lord, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. [Num 15.30]

-He made them wander (nuah) in the wilderness forty years until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was consumed. [Num 32.13].

These six cities shall be for refuge for the people of Israel, and for the stranger and for the sojourner (toshav) among them, that any one who kills any person without intent may flee there. [Num 35.15]

-But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, or your manservant, or your maidservant, or your ox, or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the sojourner (ger) who is within your gates, that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you. [Dt 5.14]

-He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner (ger), giving him food and clothing. [Dt 10.18]

-Love the sojourner (ger) therefore; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. [Dt 10.19]

-And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner (ger), the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled; that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do. [Dt 14.29]

-And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner (ger), the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place which the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell there. [Dt 16.11]

-You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your

manservant and your maidservant, the Levite, the sojourner (ger), the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns. [Dt 16.14]

-You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother; you shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were a sojourner (ger) in his land. [Dt 23.7]

-You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner (ger) or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge. [Dt 24.17]

-When you reap your harvest in your field, and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the sojourner (ger), the fatherless, and the widow; that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. [Dt 24.19]

-When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the sojourner (ger), the fatherless, and the widow. [Dt 24.20]

-When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the sojourner (ger), the fatherless, and the widow. [Dt 24.21]

-And 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 sojourner (ger) who is among you. [Dt 26.11]

-When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year, which is the year of tithing, giving it to the Levite, the sojourner (ger), the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within your towns and be filled. [Dt 26.12]

-Then you shall say before the Lord your God, "I have removed the sacred portion out of my house, and moreover I have given it to the Levite, the sojourner (ger), the fatherless, and the widow, according to all your commandment which you have commanded me; I have not transgressed any of your commandments, neither have I forgotten them." [Dt 26.13]

-“Cursed be he who perverts the justice due to the sojourner (ger), the fatherless, and the widow.” And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’ [Dt 27.19]

-The sojourner (ger) who is among you shall mount above you higher and higher; and you shall come down lower and lower. [Dt 28.43]

-Your little ones, your wives, and the sojourner (ger) who is in your camp, both he who hews your wood and he who draws your water. [Dt 29.11]

-Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner (ger) within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law. [Dt 31.12]

-And all Israel, sojourner (ger) as well as home born, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark...as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded at the first, that they should bless the people of Israel. [Jos 8.33]

-These were the cities designated for all the people of Israel and for the stranger (gor) sojourning (ger) among them, that anyone who killed a person without intent could flee there. [Jos 20.9]

-And David said to the young man who told him, "Where do you come from?" And he answered, "I am the son of a sojourner (ger), an Amalekite." [2 Sam 1.13]

-Go back and stay with the king; for you are a foreigner and also an exile (galah) from your home. [2 Sam 15.19]

-You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about (halak) with us, seeing I go I know not where? [2 Sam 15.20]

-I will not cause the feet of Israel to wander (gor) any more out of the land which I gave to their fathers, if only they will be careful to do according to all that I have commanded them. [2 Kg 21.8].

-And the rest of the people who were left in the city...Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile (galoth). [2 Kg 25.11]

-So Judah was taken into exile (golah) out of its land. [2 Kg 25.27]

-He took into exile (galah) in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword. [2 Chr 36.20]

-It (Passover lamb) was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile (golah). [Ez 6.21]

-The survivors there in the province who escaped exile (shevy) are in great trouble and shame. [Neh 1.3]

-He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth and makes them wander (tahah) in a pathless waste. [Job 12.24]

-The maidservants count me as a stranger. [Job 19.15]

-The sojourner has not lodged in the street; I have opened my doors to the wayfarer ('orach). [Job 31.32]

-Who provides for the raven its prey when its young ones cry to God and wander about (tahah) for lack of food? [Job 38.41]

-Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; hold not your peace at my tears! For I am your passing guest (ger), a sojourner (toshav), like all my fathers. [Ps 39.12]

-Yes, I would wander (nadad) afar, I would lodge in the wilderness. [Ps 55.7]

-I have become a stranger to my brethren, an alien to my mother's sons. [Ps 69.8]

-They slay the widow and the sojourner (ger), and murder the fatherless. [Ps 94.6]

-He pours contempt upon princes and makes them wander (tahah) in trackless wastes. [Ps 107.40]

-May his children wander about (nuah) and beg. [Ps 109.10]

-With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander (shagah) from your commandments. [Ps 119.10]

-I am a sojourner (ger) on earth; hide not your commandments from me! [Ps 119.19]

-You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones, who wander (shagah) from your commandments. [Ps 119.21]

-She does not take heed to the path of life; her ways wander (nuah), and she does not know it. [Prov 5.6]

-Let another praise you and not your own mouth; a stranger (nakry) and not your own lips. [Prov 27.2].

-God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger (nakry) enjoys them. [Eccl 6.2]

-My people go into exile (galah) for want of knowledge. [Is 5.13]

-Measure by measure by exile (shalach) you did contend with them. [Is 27.8]

-They wander about (tahah) each in his own direction; there is no one to save you. [Is 47.15].

-All Judah is taken into exile (galah), wholly taken into exile (galah). [Jer 13.19]

-Why should you be like a stranger in the land? [Jer 14.8]

-They have loved to wander (nuah) thus, they have not restrained their feet. [Jer 14.10]

-Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles (golah) whom I have sent into exile (galah) from Jerusalem to Babylon. [Jer 29.4]

-but seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile (galah) and pray to the Lord on its behalf. [Jer 29.7]

-I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile (galah). [Jer 29.14]

-He committed to him men, women and children, those of the poorest of the land who had not been taken into exile (galah) to Babylon. [Jer 40.7]

-Prepare yourselves baggage for exile (golah), O inhabitants of Egypt! [Jer 46.19]

-Flee, wander (nod) far away, dwell in the depths, O inhabitants of Hazor! [Jer 49.30].

-Judah has gone into exile (galah) because of affliction and hard servitude. [Lam 1.3]

-The punishment of your iniquity, O daughter of Zion, is accomplished; he will keep you in exile (galah) no longer. [Lam 4.22]

-Therefore, son of man, prepare for yourself an exile's (golah) baggage and go into exile by day in their sight; you shall go like an exile (golah) from your place to another place in their sight. [Ezk 12.3]

-I am a sign for you; as I have done, so shall it be done to them; they shall go into exile (galah), into captivity. [Ezk 12.11]

-Father and mother are treated with contempt in you; the sojourner (ger) suffers extortion in your midst; the fatherless and the widow are wronged in you. [Ezk 22.7]

-The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery; they have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner (ger) without redress. [Ezk 22.29]

-Then they shall know that I am the Lord their God because I sent them into exile (galah) among the nations. [Ezk 39.28]

-Therefore I will take you into exile (galah) beyond Damascus says the Lord. [Am 5.27]

-Therefore they shall now be the first of those to go into exile (galah). [Am 6.7]

-Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile (galah) away from his land. [Am 7.11]

-You yourself shall surely go into exile (galah) away from its land. [Am 7.17]

-They shall wander (nuah) from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it. [Am 8.12].

-Make yourselves as bald as the eagle, for they shall go from you into exile (galah). [Mic 1.16]

-Do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner (ger), or the poor; and let none of you devise evil against his brother in your heart." [Zech 7.10]

-Therefore the people wander (nasah) like sheep; they are afflicted for want of a shepherd. [Zech 10.2]

-Half the city shall go into exile (galah), but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. [Zech 14.2]

-Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against those who thrust aside the sojourner (ger), and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts. [Mal 3.5]

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Some of the most common Hebrew terms noted in parentheses may be defined briefly as follows:

Ger or sojourner: from the verbal root gur, to turn aside from with the intent to tarry in that spot to which one had turned and as has been noted in references above. Thus gur does not necessarily have a negative sense. However, the noun ger derived from this verbal root almost always has a sense of forcefully being wrenched from one's native environment.

Toshav or sojourner in effect means an unnaturalized citizen. The verbal root yashav means to dwell, usually associated with a settled life as opposed to nomads but in the context of this list, means the opposite.

Galah or go into exile has the alternate meaning to make naked, to reveal. "He opens their ears to instruction" [Job 36.10]. And, "Saying to those who are in darkness, 'Appear'" [Is 49.9]. With this notion in mind of making something previously hidden known, galah can be seen as an opportunity, namely, one's "exile" has become a change to "reveal" the true state of things seen from God's perspective.

Tahah or to wander, often used in the moral sense. "That the house of Israel may go no longer astray from me nor defile themselves" [Ezk 14.11]. In the background lurks the connection with wandering in a desert place which was not always far from Israel's awareness.

New Testament

-I was a stranger (xenos) and you welcomed me. [Mt 25.35]

-So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field to bury strangers (xenos) in. [Mt 27.7]

-A stranger (alotrios) they will not follow, but they will flee from him. [Jn 10.5]

-At this retort Moses fled and became an exile (paroikos) in the land of Midian. [Acts 7.29]

-Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers (xenos) to the covenant of promise. [Eph 2.12]

-You are no longer strangers (xenos) and sojourners (paroikos), but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. [Eph 2.19]

-And will turn away from listening to the truth and wander (ektrepo) into myths. [2 Tm 4.4]

-Having acknowledged that they were strangers (xenos) and exiles (parepidemos) on the earth. [Heb 11.13]

-Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers (philoxenia), for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. [Heb 13.2]

-If you invoke as Father him who judges each one impartially according to his deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile (paroikia). [1 Pt 1.17]

-It is a loyal thing you do when you render any service to the brethren, especially to strangers (xenos). [3 Jn 1.5]

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Some of the Greek terms in parentheses may be defined briefly as follows:

Xenos or stranger in the sense of someone living in a foreign country.

Allotrios or stranger in the sense someone being hostile towards the native inhabitants.

Paroikos or sojourner in a foreign land; not the preposition para prefixed to oikos (house), "living by the house." Paroikia or exile is very similar.

Parepidemos or exile, the only other term being used in 1 Pt 1.1. This is the most intriguing word in the brief list, for it is composed of two prepositions: para (by) and epi (on, upon); the noun to which they are prefixed is demos or dwelling. Thus you get a sense that such an exile is one who lives "by-upon" a (foreign) dwelling.