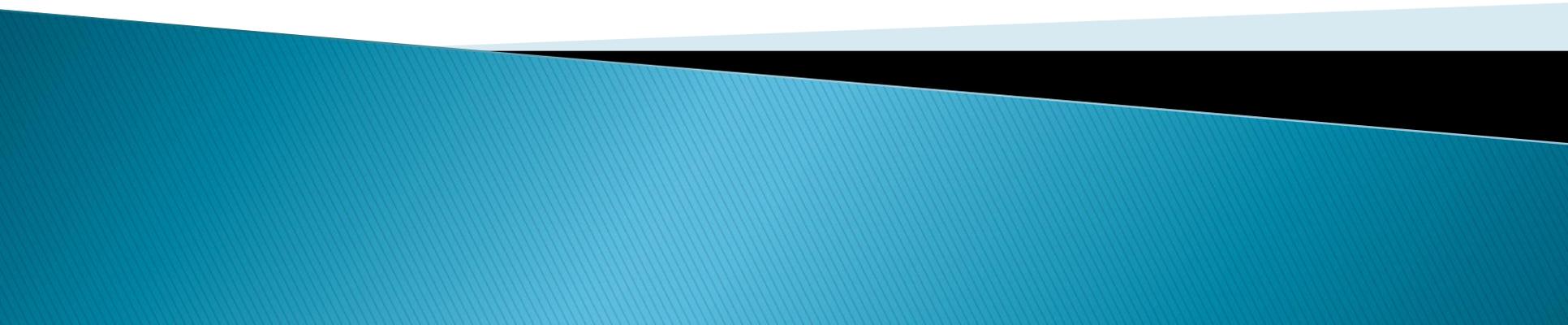


# Strangers and Beggars in the Bible

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# BRIEF Overview of Textual History

- ▶ Biblical stories began as Oral History in Mesopotamia
- ▶ Torah, Pentateuch: First Five Books traditionally ascribed to Moses
- ▶ JEDP Theory: Four sources of written work
- ▶ J– describes God as *Yahweh*, starting in Gen 2:4; 850 BCE
- ▶ E: Elohim; Starts around Genesis 15; 750 BCE
- ▶ D: Deuteronomy; 621 BCE
- ▶ P: Priestly; Scattered from Genesis 1 to death of Moses; 500 BCE
- ▶ Repetition and contradiction and different style and tone

# Beggars Little Known

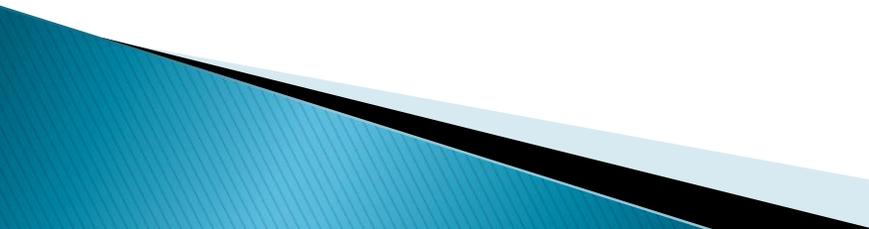
- ▶ Customs made beggars uncommon
- ▶ The Mosaic law proscribed that the poor be allowed to forage crops after harvest
- ▶ When fields were left fallow, the poor could gather what grew there naturally
- ▶ Mortgaged property was returned to borrowers at the Year of Jubilee
- ▶ The blind or lame might beg outside the Temple or the door of a rich man (Lazarus, Luke 16:19–20 and Acts 3:2)

# Year of Jubilee

Seven years of Sabbath times seven plus 1 is the Year of Jubilee.

- ▶ **10** Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan. **11** The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. **12** For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields.
- ▶ **13** “ ‘In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to their own property.
- ▶ **14** “ ‘If you sell land to any of your own people or buy land from them, do not take advantage of each other. **15** You are to buy from your own people on the basis of the number of years since the Jubilee. And they are to sell to you on the basis of the number of years left for harvesting crops. **16** When the years are many, you are to increase the price, and when the years are few, you are to decrease the price, because what is really being sold to you is the number of crops. **17** Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God. I am the LORD your God.

# Abraham Immigrates to Canaan

- ▶ Genesis 11:31
  - ▶ <sup>31</sup> Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together **they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan.** But when they came to Harran, they settled there.
  - ▶ The Hebrews' origins was in Ur.
  - ▶ **As wanderers and nomadic shepherds, perhaps their culture was sympathetic to other outsiders?**
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# Abraham, Genesis 23:3–4

- ▶ <sup>3</sup> Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites.<sup>[a]</sup> He said, <sup>4</sup> “I am a foreigner and stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead.”
- ▶ <sup>5</sup> The Hittites replied to Abraham, <sup>6</sup> “Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead.”
- ▶ **The Hittites welcome the Hebrews among them.**

# Joseph as a Stranger to his Brothers

- ▶ Joseph was sold by his brothers to slave traders and brought to Egypt
- ▶ He became the chief steward for Pharaoh
- ▶ Genesis 42: <sup>6</sup> Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the person who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. <sup>7</sup> **As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked.**
- ▶ "From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food."
- ▶ <sup>8</sup> Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him.
- ▶ **Moral: You never know if the Stranger is God, or in this case, your long lost brother.**

# Land is God's

- ▶ Leviticus 25: <sup>35</sup> “If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, **help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you.** <sup>36</sup> Do not take interest or any profit from them, but fear your God, so that they may continue to live among you.
- ▶ **Implication is that you WOULD help a foreigner or stranger**
- ▶ Likewise, help the poor to stay in your community
- ▶ **God presents himself as a protector of the Poor and the Stranger**

# Job as a Righteous Man

- ▶ Job 29: <sup>15</sup> I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame.  
<sup>16</sup> I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger.  
<sup>17</sup> I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth.
- ▶ **Moral: A righteous Man helps the disabled, the needy and the strangers...**
- ▶ **Job cannot understand why a man who has done these things that God expected is being punished.**

# House and Feed the Stranger

- ▶ Job 31: 31

‘Who has not been filled with Job’s  
meat?’—

<sup>32</sup> but no stranger had to spend the night in  
the street,

for my door was always open to the  
traveler—

- ▶ **Job presents himself as a God fearing and  
righteous man—his evidence is the fact that  
he has fed and housed strangers**

# Strangers could be dangerous, however

- ▶ Proverbs 109: May his children be wandering beggars;  
    may they be driven from their ruined homes.  
    <sup>11</sup> May a creditor seize all he has;  
    **may strangers plunder the fruits of his labor.**
- ▶ Proverbs 5: lest strangers feast on your wealth  
    and your toil enrich the house of another.

# Fear of Transgression

- ▶ Ezekiel 16: 32: “You adulterous wife! You prefer **strangers** to your own husband!
  - ▶ Strangers must respect the home and family of their host, but obviously, this didn't always happen.
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# Christian Bible

- ▶ Matthew 25—Day of Judgement
- ▶ <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'
- ▶ <sup>44</sup> "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'
- ▶ <sup>45</sup> "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'
- ▶ <sup>46</sup> "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

# Strangers May be Angels

- ▶ Hebrews 13: <sup>2</sup> Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, **for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.** <sup>3</sup>
- ▶ This basic belief that God, gods or angels may be the stranger in disguise under lies these moral customs

# Lot and the Angels

- ▶ Genesis 19: The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. <sup>2</sup> “My lords,” he said, “please turn aside to your servant’s house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning.”
- ▶ “No,” they answered, “we will spend the night in the square.”
- ▶ <sup>3</sup> But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate.

# Lot Protects the Strangers

- ▶ Genesis 19: <sup>4</sup> Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. <sup>5</sup> They called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.”
- ▶ <sup>6</sup> Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him <sup>7</sup> and said, “No, my friends. Don’t do this wicked thing. <sup>8</sup> Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don’t do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.”

# Lot is Saved from Destruction of Sodom

- ▶ Because Lot was righteous and gave shelter and protection to the Strangers, God saved him from destruction:
- ▶ <sup>23</sup> By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land. <sup>24</sup> Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the LORD out of the heavens. <sup>25</sup> Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land. <sup>26</sup> But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

# Moral of Sodom and Gomoroh

- ▶ This story is often used to justify laws against homosexuality
- ▶ In fact, the story is not primarily about sexuality
- ▶ The Sodomites were ungodly people and the proof of that was how that they wanted to rape strangers rather than shelter them.
- ▶ Ironically, the next story tells how Lot's daughters got him drunk, slept with him, and got pregnant by him.
- ▶ **This highlights that Lot's family is not saved because they are sexually proper**—they are saved first because Abraham asked that any Righteous Men be saved...and the fact that Lot protected the Strangers/Angels was proof that he was a Righteous Man.