

## A HEAVENLY HOME FOR THE HOMELESS

### Aliens and Strangers in 1 Peter

Moses Chin

Ever since J.H. Elliott's 'exegetical step-child' was rehabilitated in 1976 more attention has been given to him.<sup>1</sup> The search is still on however, to find 'a home for the homeless' step-child. Published in 1981, Elliott's *A Home for the Homeless*<sup>2</sup> was welcomed as a major contribution to the study of 1 Peter. Indeed it was. For the first time a full scale treatment of the epistle was made from the sociological-exegetical perspective,<sup>3</sup> although this was not new to NT scholarship. What is new in Elliott's case is the attempt to postulate the 'situation and strategy'<sup>4</sup> of the epistle by the examination of the correlation of the two terms: πάροικοι and οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ. He attempts to "reach beyond old conclusions, set categories, and conventional methods" with the aim of transcending old impasses to understanding and thus breaking new ground'.<sup>5</sup>

Elliott's work is based largely on B. Wilson's sociological observations of the 'sectarian phenomena'<sup>6</sup> and thus resulted in an

---

<sup>1</sup>For a survey of recent scholarship on 1 Peter, see Elliott, 'The Rehabilitation of an Exegetical Step-child: 1 Peter in Recent Research', *JBL* 95 (1976) 243–254; D. Sylva, '1 Peter Studies: The State of the Discipline', *BTL* 10, 4 (1980) 155–163; and W. Munro, *Authority in Paul and Peter* (Cambridge, CUP 1983) 3–9.

<sup>2</sup>Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless, A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press 1981) hereafter referred to as *Home*.

<sup>3</sup>For a summary, see Elliott, *Home*, 6ff. See also D. Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive, The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*, SBL Monograph Series, 26 (Chico, Scholars Press 1981). Elliott's heavy reliance on economic history and social theory while Balch's on philosophy and history of religion, resulted in conclusions which are 'diametrically opposed' (Elliott's own words in '1 Peter, its Situation and Strategy', *Perspectives on First Peter*, C.H. Talbert, (ed.) (Georgia, Mercer University Press 1986) 79–101. Hereafter referred to as *Perspectives*.

<sup>4</sup>On the meaning of these terms, see *Home*, 10–11, 19 n. 22, 106–7.

<sup>5</sup>*Home*, 22.

<sup>6</sup>'The comparison of the data of 1 Peter with this model [the sectarian community] leaves no doubt about the sectarian character of its intended recipients', *Home*, 75.

emphasis on a ‘conflict theory’ in interpreting the epistle.<sup>7</sup> The recipients were ‘resident aliens’, πάροικοι, and ‘visiting strangers’, παρεπίδημοι, whom Elliott postulates, were in conflict with society at large. Because of their social status they were deprived of any real home. Becoming Christians had only accentuated the difficulties. God-honouring citizens found themselves in a pagan State, Christian slaves had to serve hostile masters and believing wives continued to live with unbelieving husbands. Such conflicts however proved to have a positive effect on them in that they forced the Christians to be aware of their distinctive group identity and necessitated the maintenance of their group boundaries and cohesion. Such displaced people found ultimate comfort in the ‘household of God’, οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ, the Church.

Any attempt to help us understand better the primary document ought to be welcomed. The question still remains however, whether the evidence warrants the proposed suggestions. Elliott’s ‘starting point’ is the significance of the two words πάροικος and παρεπίδημος.<sup>8</sup> Drawing his evidence from the lexicon, the LXX, the Greco-Roman literature, the New Testament and 1 Peter, he concludes that ‘the letter is addressed to resident aliens (πάροικος) and visiting strangers (παρεπίδημος) who, since their conversion to Christianity, still find themselves estranged from any place of belonging. They are still displaced πάροικοι seeking an οἶκος’.<sup>9</sup>

Elliott is right in emphasising the importance of the two terms πάροικος and παρεπίδημος. The epistle of 1 Peter was addressed to the ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις of the Diaspora (1:1). Because of their status they were admonished to spend their παροικία in reverent fear (1:17b). Given the transient nature of their journey, they were reminded of their obligation to their impartial fatherly judge (v. 17a) who had redeemed them with a great price (v. 18). Exhorted as παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους,

---

<sup>7</sup>For a critique of Elliott’s reliance on B. Wilson’s sociological model, see Winter, ‘The Public Honouring of Christian Benefactors—Romans 13:3–4 and 1 Peter 2:14–15’, *JSNT* 34 (1988) 87–103; ‘Seeking the welfare of the city: social ethics according to Peter,’ *Themelios* 13.3 (1980) 91–4. See also Balch, ‘Hellenisation/ Acculturation in 1 Peter’, *Perspectives*, 84–5.

<sup>8</sup>*Home*, 21ff.

<sup>9</sup>*Home*, 49.

they were to abide by a code that displayed their status (2:11ff). The general call to abstention (v. 11b) and commitment (v. 12) speaks of their standing as πάροικοι καὶ παρεπίδημοι. More particularly, as people on a παροικία καὶ παρεπιδημία, they had certain civil (v. 13–17) and domestic (v. 18–3:7) obligations. What the readers were, determined what they should do. A clear understanding of the use of the terms πάροικος καὶ παρεπίδημος in 1 Peter is indeed necessary.

It is proposed to re-examine the evidence used by Elliott to ascertain the meaning of the two terms. The evidence shall come from, (i) the lexicon and the LXX, (ii) the Greco-Roman literature, (iii) other documents in the New Testament, and, (iv) those of the Early Fathers. The last category is important as it shows us how the two terms in 1 Peter were understood by the Early Church. Some implications for 1 Peter will be discussed at the end.

### I. The Lexicon and the LXX

The word παοικέω (lit. ‘to dwell beside’) meant firstly, ‘to dwell along’, ‘to live near’, ‘to dwell among’; and secondly, ‘to live in a place as πάροικος, sojourn’. Thus a πάροικος may be translated as firstly, ‘a dwelling beside or near, neighbouring’; and secondly, ‘a foreigner’ or ‘an alien’.<sup>10</sup> The term πάροικος occurs 33 times in the LXX, and together with its cognates etc., occurs no fewer than 92 times.

To appreciate fully the use of this term in the LXX, we need to look at the Masoretic Text (MT) from which it is translated. In the MT there are four general terms used to designate the ‘outsider’: *ger*, *tosab*, *nokri*, *zar*.<sup>11</sup> Their translations and occurrences in the LXX may be tabulated as follows:

<i>ger</i>	προσήλυτος, πάροικος	92
<i>tosab</i>	πάροικος, παρεπίδημος	13
<i>nokri</i>	ἀλλότριος, ἀλλογενής, ξένος	45
<i>zar</i>	ἀλλότριος, ἀλλογενής	71

<sup>10</sup>Liddell, Scott & Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford 1948). Hereafter referred to as *LSJ*.

<sup>11</sup>For a helpful discussion of the semantic relationship of these terms, see D.I. Block, ‘Sojourner’, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, G.W. Bromiley, (ed.) (Michigan, Eerdmans) 561–4.

A few observations of the above deserve comment:

1) the LXX sometimes used one Greek term to translate two different Hebrew words. For example, *πάροικος* is used to translate *ger* in Genesis 23:4 and *tosab* in Leviticus 25:35.<sup>12</sup>

2) the word *tosab* is never used by itself but is used consistently with another term. Of the thirteen times, it is used with *sakir*, hireling, three times (Ex. 12:45; Lev. 22:10, 40); and with *ger*, ten times (Gen. 23:4; Lev. 25:6, 23, 35, 45, 47[X2]; Num. 35:15; 1 Chron. 29:15; Ps. 38:13[MT39:13]). Since it is never used by itself it is difficult to assess its meaning. Its Hebrew root, *ysb*, suggests the meaning of ‘resident alien’ (cf. 1 Kgs. 17:1); but to be more precise is difficult. We do not have any evidence to show a clear and definite distinction between *ger* and *tosab*; and thus any attempt to do so should be resisted.<sup>13</sup>

3) in the ten occasions when *ger* is used with *tosab*, only in two of them are the two terms translated as *πάροικος καὶ παρεπίδημος* in the LXX (Gen. 23:4 and Ps. 39:13). On three occasions *ger-tosab* is translated as *πάροικος* only (Lev. 25:6, 45; 1 Chron. 29:15). In the remaining five occasions (Lev. 25:23, 35, 47[X2]; Num. 35:15), *ger-tosab* is translated as *προσήλυτος-πάροικος*. Of the seventy other references, about sixty of them appear in the legal code, where *ger* is similarly translated, i.e., as *προσήλυτος*.<sup>14</sup> The strong suggestion that the word *προσήλυτος* is used in the LXX with a ‘religious sense’, though the concept of ‘religious conversion’ or ‘proselytising’ of later Judaism is yet to be developed, is not to be dismissed lightly. In other words, as far as the LXX was concerned, when a ‘resident alien’ is somehow involved in the religious life of Israel, and thus benefiting from such a linkage, he is a *προσήλυτος*.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup>See also 1 Chron 29:15 and Ps 39:13. The same may be said of *ἀλλότριος* and *ἀλλογενής*, for *nokri* and *zar*.

<sup>13</sup>See Block, ‘Sojourner’, *ISBE*, 562: ‘the distinction is perhaps minor; the terms are readily interchanged’; Skinner, *Genesis*, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark 1930) 337: ‘the distinction is obscure’; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36, A Commentary*, Scullion S.J., tr., (Minneapolis, Augsburg ) 373: ‘*ger-tosab* is a hendiadys, a more or less fixed phrase’.

<sup>14</sup>See W.C. Allen, ‘On the Meaning of *PROSELUTOS* in the Septuagint’, *The Expositor*, 4, X (London, Hodder & Stoughton 1894) 264–75.

<sup>15</sup>Allen, *The Expositor*, *ibid.*, 271, argues that the LXX usage of *proshvluto* for the word *ger* influenced the Targums, the Syriac and the Ethiopian translators. Kihn, ‘*προσήλυτος*’, *TDNT*, VI, 727–44, argues similarly with evidence from the Rabbinic writings.

In short, if the distinction between *ger* and *tosab* is not to be pushed, then neither should their equivalents in the LXX, *viz.*, πάροικος καὶ παρεπίδημος. The suspected reason for the LXX translators to have made a distinction, by substituting προσήλυτος for πάροικος and πάροικος for παρεπίδημος, is that they deem the context demanded it. Thus it is not improper not to insist on any significant difference between the two terms πάροικος and παρεπίδημος.

This observation is further confirmed in the lexical usage. As early as the third century BC, παροικέω meant ‘to dwell transitorily’. It is often contrasted with κατοικέω, ‘to dwell permanently’. The word πάροικος never lost its meaning as a ‘sojourner’s stranger’ but is sometimes used in the sense of “a licensed sojourner in a town whose protection and status were secured by the payment of a small tax”.<sup>16</sup> The word is sometimes contrasted with ξένος, ‘a mere passing stranger’. παρεπίδημος is translated as “a sojourner” or “a stranger” settled in a particular district only for a time’. Again the contrast is with κάτοικος. A reference is cited (c. 118 BC)<sup>17</sup> where παρεπίδημος is distinguished from κατοικουντες. No evidence is given however, of the contrast between πάροικος and παρεπίδημος. To summarize:

ξένος	πάροικος/παρεπίδημος	κάτοικος
passer-by	sojourner	permanent dweller

Apart from the two occasions mentioned above when πάροικος and παρεπίδημος are used together (Gen. 23:4 and Ps. 39:14) the LXX used πάροικος to refer to the ‘sojourner’. Its usage can be found from the patriarchal period of Genesis through the monarchic period to that of the exilic, and even that of the inter-testamental. It must be added that its usage is fairly evenly spread throughout the corpus. In other words, the concept of the Israelite nation as one on a παροικία is something which the Jews were

<sup>16</sup>Moulton & Milligan, ‘πάροικος’, ‘παρεπίδημος’, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London, Hodder & Stoughton 1930). See also Lee, *A Lexical Study of the Septuagint Version of the Pentateuch*, *Septuagint and Cognate Studies* 14, H.M. Orlinsky, (ed.) (California, Scholars Press 1983) 50–1.

<sup>17</sup>P. Tor, II.8.13—*Papyri Graeci Regii Taurinensis Musei Aegyptii*, 2 vols, A. Peyron, (ed.) (Turin 1826–7).

never able to shed, and it may be further argued that it was one of the dominant if not distinguishing marks of the Israelite people.

Its usage in the LXX may be classified into two broad categories: legal/secular and cosmological/spiritual. It is used predominantly in its legal/secular sense. When a group of people was called *πάροικοι*, they were (i) actually living in a land or country not their own, (ii) physically estranged from their homeland and perhaps even emotionally dissociated from their beloved people, (iii) denied any right of permanent stay and they saw themselves as only passing through the land; though the journey may take them a couple of years or a few generations, and (iv) naturally looking forward to returning to their homeland and being reunited with their people.

For the purpose of our discussion we shall divide the Israelite history into the pre-Canaan period, the Canaan period and the post-Canaan period. The determinative factor is that of the land; the same factor that decides whether a person is an alien or an aborigine. Broadly speaking, the pre-Canaan period refers to the time from the Abrahamic era to the Conquest. From the Conquest to the eve of the Exile shall be referred to as the Canaan period, while the post-Canaan period shall refer to the years from the Exile onwards.

Abraham is rightly seen as the prototype and progenitor of the *πάροικος*. This is so not only during the pre-Canaan period but throughout Israelite history. His call may be seen as a call to the life of a *πάροικος*. Though the word is never used, the implication of the call is clear: ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you’ (Gen. 12:1). He was definitely called to start on a *παροικία*, one which in a sense ended with the possession of the Promised Land by Joshua (Josh. 24:1–15) but in another sense, as we shall see later, never really ended.

If some of the functions of Gen. 12:1–3 in the Genesis narrative are to reverse the centrifugal aimless wanderings typical of Genesis 1–11 and to set a centripetal counter movement in motion back to the Edenic situation,<sup>18</sup> then the *παροικία* on which Abraham was called to embark does not only fulfil a divine

---

<sup>18</sup>This is the suggestion of W.J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation, an Old Testament Covenantal Theology* (Exeter, Paternoster Press 1984) 64–79.

purpose but also characterises the way in which the divine intention is to be satisfactorily met. That is to say, Abraham's name shall be 'great' and his descendants shall become a 'great nation' only when he sets out as a πάροικος. In fact the Pentateuchal history shows that these descendants moved from being a kindred of different households to a fairly organised social entity with a great potential of political power while they were on the παροικία (Exodus *passim*). The blessings of God's presence ('be with you') promised to Abraham were notably experienced during the παροικία (Gen. 12:5–9, 13:14–18, 15:1—note the strong πάροικία language in each case). Abraham became a mediator of blessings precisely when he was a πάροικος in the 'nations' (Gen. 18:17–33, cf. 19:27–9). Thus we see that the divine covenant with Abraham and the notion of a παροικία are inseparable. The former can only be fulfilled by the latter. The latter is the only means by which the former is achieved.

This is further confirmed when we look at the subsequent recital of the covenant with Abraham's descendants Isaac and Jacob. The παροικία appeared consistently as a term in the covenant. To Isaac it was said: 'Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, πάροικει, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham', (Gen. 26:3). To Jacob it was said: 'May he give you and your descendants the blessing of Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien, τῆς παροικίσεως σου, the land God gave to Abraham', (Gen. 28:4).

God's people were consistently known as πάροικοι. After all, the objective of the παροικία was to claim 'the land' which God would show them. Being πάροικοι was not just an identifying mark of their nomadic way of life, but more importantly, marked their theological and covenantal status.

Furthermore, it was a term by which the early Israelites introduced themselves in the Genesis narrative (Gen. 23:4, 28:4), and one by which they were known, both by God (Gen. 17:8) and by their neighbours (Gen. 19:9, 21:23).

Moses saw himself as a πάροικος in Egypt (Ex 2:22, 18:3). It was during the Mosaic period that certain laws and regulations

were received and developed. These ‘household codes’ bear a distinctive mark of possessing provisions for the πάροικοι who were not Israelites (Lev. 25:6–7, 45; Num. 35:15; Deut. 5:14; see also Jdt. 4:10). The Israelites’ status as πάροικοι in Egypt became the rationale for the empathy one Israelite ought to have towards another fellow Israelite who is poor: ‘If one of your country men becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien and a stranger, προσηλύτου καὶ πάροικοι, so that he can continue to live among you’, (Lev. 25:25).

It was also the rationale for the land laws: ‘The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants, προσηλύτου καὶ πάροικοι, (Lev. 25:23). This particular text is important. It serves as the theological principle that governs the Jubilee practices of Leviticus 25. Certain land laws were given to protect the poor who had to sell their land in order to pay their debts, from remaining permanently in that position. On the Jubilee Year, their land would be returned to them (v. 28). This shall be so because no Israelite can have a real claim on the land—all of it belongs to the Lord. Every Israelite is ‘a foreign guest or squatter’,<sup>19</sup> or ‘a resident alien and a settler’.<sup>20</sup> This law was given to Israel for the Canaan period. In other words, as far as God was concerned the Israelites were πάροικοι in the land. They were living in the land but they did not belong to the land.

The influence of this pre-Canaan period of sojourning was to be seen in the works of the later kings, prophets and other writers (e.g. Ps. 104:12 [105:12], Is. 52:4, Wis. 19:10, Jdt. 5:9), so much so that even evil was personified in the sojourning language: ‘You are not a God who takes pleasure in evils; with you evil cannot dwell, παροικήσει,’ declares the Psalmist (5:5[4]). In the same Psalter (54:16 [55:15]), the death of the enemies was called for because their intentions were clear: ‘for evil finds lodging among them, ἐν ταῖς παροικίαις.’ God on the other hand was seen as the

---

<sup>19</sup>M. Noth, *Leviticus*, (London, SCM Press 1965) 188.

<sup>20</sup>G. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, (Michigan, Eerdmans 1979) 314.



refuge for the refugees: ‘Let the Moabite fugitives stay with you, παροικήσουσιν, to be their shelter from the destroyer’, (Is. 16:4).

The post-Canaan period was also described as a παροικία (1 Esd. 5:7, Neh. 1:4). During the Exile, the Israelite nation once again found herself in a foreign land, alienated from her cradle and dislocated in a strange crib. God had left His people for so long and had gone so far away that the prophet Jeremiah asked why He was ‘like a stranger, πάροικος, in the land, like a traveller who stays only a night’ (Jer. 14:8). By contrast to the desperation of the exilic era, hope was promised in the New Temple. The land on which it was to stand would be divided even for ‘the aliens who settled among you, παροίκουσιν ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν, and who have children’, because ‘you are to consider them as native-born Israelites, καὶ ἔσονται ὑμῶν ὡς ἀυτοχθονες ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ (lit. as homeborn/ indigenous/native among the children of Israel)’, (Ez. 47:22).

In summary, the importance of the πάροικος-παρεπίδημος phenomena in the whole life and history of the people of Israel as depicted in the LXX cannot be overlooked. The nation began with a πάροικος-παρεπίδημος Abraham and grew to a nation on a παροικία-παρεπιδημία. The Abrahamic covenant initiates and encapsulates a relationship with God which is most aptly described by the ‘sojourning language’, so much so that the whole national thinking and philosophy displays for us ‘a nation on the move’. Its social and religious outlook reflect that of travellers journeying towards a land they can call their home. Nationalism is equated with the cessation of the journey, and yet ironically, the nation was formed only because it was on the journey. To be driven out of the Land then, as during the post-Canaan era or more specifically the exilic period, is to be on sojourn again. A question still remains for us—whether Israel ever saw itself on the sojourn while they were in the Land. How did Israel see itself during the Canaan years? Can a nation be sojourning while it is not moving?

This brings us to the other usage of the terms πάροικος and παρεπίδημος, viz., in their cosmological/spiritual sense. This means the terms do not just refer to a literal journey from point A to point B, but is now extended to refer to one’s whole sojourn on

earth. Whether or not the person is physically a πάροικος-παρεπίδημος is not the determinative factor. What is, is his attitude to life. His life on earth is seen as a παροικία-παρεπιδημία.

In 1 Chronicles 29:14–15, the Chronicler recorded a thanksgiving prayer of King David for all the gifts received for the building of the Temple:

But who am I and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? v. 14a.

Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. v. 14b.

We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers, ὅτι πάροικοί ἐσμεν ἐναντίον σου καὶ παροικοῦντες ὡς πάντες οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν 15a.

our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope, ὡς σκιὰ αἱ ἡμέραι ἡμῶν ἐπὶ γῆς, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὑπομοή v. 15b.

This was uttered after the people of Israel had long ceased to be sojourners. They were entering into the Solomonic era where peace and prosperity reigned. A peace that would last long enough for the Temple to be built—a sure sign that the Abrahamic covenant would be fulfilled. The people were in their Land. Yet the king described himself and his people as πάροικοι because ‘our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope’ (there is not abiding—*RV*) verse 15b. Having all that they had, they still acknowledged the transitory nature of life and the impermanency of things material (v. 14, 16).

Elliott<sup>21</sup> confused the significance of these verses with the modesty of Abraham, by putting the accent on verse 14b, i.e., that because the people were πάροικοι καὶ παρεπίδημοι (v. 15a), therefore their attitude should be one of gratitude for God’s blessing (v. 14b). The context however, suggests otherwise: verse 14b is the obvious answer to the question posed in verse 14a, and not to be understood as the disposition of the πάροικοι καὶ παρεπίδημοι (v. 15a).

The King described himself and his people as πάροικοι καὶ παρεπίδημοι, and did so for two reasons (note the ὡς . . . ὡς construction in v. 15): ‘as, ὡς were all our forefathers’, and ‘as, ὡς, our days on earth, ἐπὶ γῆς, are like a shadow, without hope’.

---

<sup>21</sup>Home, 28.

Not only the nature of their forefathers' lives made them realise their status but life itself made them acknowledge they were πάροικοι καὶ παρεπίδημοι ἐπὶ γῆς. Elliott glossed over such significant verses.

In Psalm 118[119]:19, a psalm ascribed to King David, he could describe himself as 'I am a stranger on earth, πάροικος ἐγὼ εἶμι ἐν τῇ γῆ, and therefore pleaded with God that He would not hide His commands from him (v. 19b). The king needed instructions for his earthly sojourn. Again later in verse 54, he could testify: 'Your decrees are the theme of my song wherever I lodge, ἐν τόπῳ παροικίας μου, (in the house of my pilgrimage—*RV*; cf. during my brief earthly life—*GNB*). Kraus argues strongly for such cosmological interpretation. L. Allen agrees to a 'spiritualization of the concept'.<sup>22</sup>

The same may be said of Psalm 38:13–14[39:12–13], where both the words πάροικος and παρεπίδημος are used. The Psalmist, in an individual lament, cried: 'Hear my prayer, O Lord, listen to my cry for help, be not deaf to my weeping, for I dwell with you as an alien, a stranger as my fathers were, ὅτι πάροικος ἐγὼ εἶμι παρά σοι, καὶ παρεπίδημος καθὼς πάντες οἱ πατέρες μου. The context of the Psalm tells us that the Psalmist was in a life and death situation. In 'anguish' (v. 2), he reflected on the transient nature of life itself (v. 4), counted his remaining days (v. 5) and questioned his achievements (v. 6). Reaching his final days as a πάροικος καὶ παρεπίδημος, he longed that the Lord may hear his cry before he departed (v. 12–13). A cosmological/spiritual use of the two terms is clear.

## II. Philo

When we turn to the contemporary Greco-Roman literature, the works of Philo stand out in the use of the terms in their cosmological/spiritual sense. In his *De Cherubim* (120, 121), while referring to Lev. 25:23 (where the word πάροικοι appears), he wrote: '...to God [all created beings] are aliens and sojourners, ἐπελύτον καὶ πάροικον. For each of us has come into this world

---

<sup>22</sup>See Kraus, *Psalms 60–150, A Commentary*, Oswald, tr., (Minneapolis, Augsburg 1989) 415; Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, (Texas, Word Books 1983) see also Westermann, *Genesis 12–36, A Commentary*, 373, on his comment on Gen. 23:4; similarly, Schmidt, 'πάροικος', *TDNT*, V, 847, also draws attention to such a 'religious understanding' of the Psalm.

as into a foreign city, in which before our birth we had no part and in this city he does not but sojourn, πάροικει, until he has exhausted his appointed span of life'. In *De agricultura* (65), he wrote: 'for in reality a wise man's soul ever finds heaven to be his fatherland and earth a foreign country, and regards as his own the dwelling-place of wisdom, and that of the body as outlandish, and looks on himself as a stranger and sojourner, ὡ καὶ παρεπιδήμειν οἶεται, in it'. In his *De Confusione Linguarum*, he uses παρεπιδημία (76) in conjunction with παροικία (75–82). It is important to note that according to his exposition of Genesis 11:1–9 in (76), the men who founded Shinar 'did not sojourn there as on a foreign soil, οὐχ ὡς ἐπὶ ξενῆς παρώκησαν. . . For were it a passing visit, παρεπιδημήσαντες γάρ, they would have departed in course of time'. παροικέω is used synonymously with παρεπιδημέω. By and large however, Philo prefers to use παροικέω (77–82).

It has been pointed out by Schmidt<sup>23</sup> that Philo's meditation on the παροικία is best understood from his world-view of the conflict of man against the attractions of the world. The 'body', is 'a corpse and a dead-thing', and therefore the soul is 'a corpse-bearer', (*Leg. All.* III, 69). The former is further seen as the 'tomb', of the latter (*Leg. All.* I, 108). The soul is seen to have descended into the body (*Conf.* 77–82).<sup>24</sup> The war ceases when 'the soul, that is shepherded of God . . . is naturally exempt from want of other things' (*Agric.* 54). The call to such a high ethical standard of life, described as abstention from things of the earth, as a 'soul-conflict', follows quite naturally if life is viewed as a pilgrimage.

Elliott dismisses Philo's use of the two terms in the cosmological/spiritual sense as 'a far cry from the social consciousness of apocalyptic Judaism and Christianity',<sup>25</sup> but admits there is such a parallel in the New Testament but only in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Without going into the details of Philo's concept of the πάροικος καὶ παρεπίδημος, it suffices us to note

<sup>23</sup>Schmidt, 'πάροικος', *TDNT*, 849.

<sup>24</sup>See Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*, (Leiden, E.J. Brill 1986) 346–9, and his chapter on 'The Doctrine of Man', 467–75.

<sup>25</sup>*Home*, 32.

that Philo can use these terms in a cosmological/spiritual sense.

The use of *παρεπίδημος* to describe the whole of life as a journey in this literature is no less convincing. According to the *LSJ*, as early as the days of Plato, he wrote of *παρεπιδημία τις ἔστιν ὁ βίος* (*Ax.* 365b). The same may be said of Hipparchus (ap. *Stob.* 4.44.81), and of Plotinus (2.9.6). These references are missed in Elliott's treatment.

### III. The New Testament

The New Testament writers, apart from using the term *πάροικος* literally (*Lk.* 24:18; *Acts* 7:6,29; 13:17—the *Acts* references being descriptions of Abraham), used it fairly freely in its cosmological/spiritual sense.

The writer of *Ephesians* could speak of the Gentile Christians as 'no longer foreigners and aliens, *ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι*, but fellow-citizens of God's people' 2:19. Some of the readers may legally be *πάροικοι*, but in relation to 'God's people' and 'God's household', *οἰκεῖοι*, they were no longer so. That is to say it did not matter whether they were *πάροικοι* in the legal/secular sense or not, what really mattered was their relationship to God's household.

Elliott did not deal with *Ephesians* 2:11–22 in detail. He pointed out in passing that it is replete with political terminology.<sup>26</sup> It is important to note however, that in verse 14 the Gentiles had not ceased to be 'foreigners and aliens', *ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι* in the legal sense, assuming that they were in the first place, because their legal status in the secular and political society could never be altered merely by a religious conversion (v. 13). What had changed was not their political status but their theological status, i.e., their relationship with God and therefore their relationship with the church of God. 'But now in Christ. . . you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God's people and members of God's household' (v. 13, 19). The term *πάροικος* in verse 19 could never be taken in the legal/secular sense.

The writer to the *Hebrews* described the heroes of faith of the Old Testament as 'aliens and strangers on earth', *ξένοι καὶ*

---

<sup>26</sup>*Home*, 34–5.

παρεπίδημοι εἰσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (11:13). We read that ‘they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one, τοῦτ’ ἐστὶν ἔπουρανίου . . . for God had prepared a city for them’, ἠτοίμασεν γὰρ αὐτοῖς πόλιν (v. 16). The contrast clearly is one of a cosmological/spiritual sojourn from earth to heaven. These people were longing for the heavenly country, one which God had prepared for them. It is beyond doubt that they were παρείδημοι before in their time, but something of a deeper significance was taking place, and the writer was not slow in recognising it. ‘Abraham made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country, παρώκησεν εἰς γῆς τῆς ἐπαγγελίας. . . as did Isaac and Jacob. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God’ (v. 9, 10). There is no evidence in the Genesis narrative to show that Abraham understood his pilgrimage in such terms but the writer of Hebrews recognised the theological/spiritual significance of the patriarchal παροικία καὶ παρεπιδημία. The Christ event brought about the significance. The writer even went on to draw the expected admonition ‘therefore, . . . let us throw off everything that hinders [as are required of πάροικος-παρεπίδημος] . . . and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us [note again the πάροικος-παρεπίδημος language]’ (12:1).

#### IV. The Early Fathers

It is possible as R. Michaels suggests,<sup>27</sup> that the Early Fathers were influenced by 1 Peter in using the πάροικος-παρεπίδημος language. Thus Polycarp (*Pol. Phil*) wrote: ‘Polycarp and the elders with him to the church of God τῇ παροικουσίῃ, sojourning in Philippi’. Similarly in 1 Clement we read: ‘The church of God that sojourns at Rome to the church of God that sojourns at Corinth’.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to those cited by Michaels, there is a second century *Epistle to Diognetus* (5.5), where it is said of the early Christians: ‘They dwell in their own fatherlands, but as if

<sup>27</sup>Michaels, *1 Peter*, (Texas, Word 1988) 8.

<sup>28</sup>It is interesting to note that Lightfoot does not hold the πάροικος-παρεπίδημος distinction in his commentary on this text; see *The Apostolic Fathers, Part I, S. Clement of Rome, Vol. 2.*, (London, Macmillan and Co. 1890) 5–6

sojourners in them', πατρίδας οἴκουσιν ἰδίας, ἀλλ' ὡς παροικοί. . . Every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is a foreign country', πᾶσα ξένη πατρίς ἔστιν αὐτῶν, καὶ πᾶσα πατρίς ξένη. Here is a portrayal of the early Christians who seriously viewed their life as a sojourn. The epistle continued to chronicle their contributions to the society in which they found themselves (5.6–17). Eusebius also wrote of the 'episcopate, παροικίας, in the community at Alexandria' (*HE*. 3.28.3). The corrupted Latin form, *parochia*, has come to us to mean 'a parish'. It seems that the church, like Israel, could not shed off its πάροικος identity—as a people on the move, as sojourners in a pilgrimage from their earthly abode to their heavenly home.

## V. Conclusions

A clear understanding of the meaning of the terms πάροικος and παρεπίδημος in 1 Peter is of vital importance in the interpretation of 1 Peter. From a re-examination of the evidence supplied by Elliott in his *A Home for the Homeless*, and other additional evidences, we may draw the following conclusions:

1) A distinction between the two words πάροικος and παρεπίδημος in 1 Peter cannot be convincingly maintained because of the evidence. It is difficult to discern from the MT from which the LXX is translated that such a distinction exists. There is a high probability that the translators of the LXX introduced προσήλυτος with a slight nuance to reflect the religious involvement of the 'alien/stranger'; a probability confirmed by their latter usage of the term to mean a 'proselyte'. Thus it cannot be concluded that 'these terms depict the addressees of 1 Peter as an admixture of permanent and temporary strangers and aliens, some of whom are residing permanently (*i.e.* πάροικοι) and others of whom are living temporarily (*i.e.* παρεπίδημοι) in the five regions of Asia Minor'.<sup>29</sup>

To maintain that in 1 Peter the two terms are used with very similar meanings, if not interchangeably, would make better sense in the letter.<sup>30</sup> In 1:1 the readers were addressed as παρεπίδημοι,

<sup>29</sup>*Home*, 47.

<sup>30</sup>Michaels, *ibid.*, 116, draws attention to the common Petrine usage of words with similar sound or meaning; see 1:4, 10, 19 and 2:4.

while in 1:17 they were taken to be on a παροικία, and in 2:11 they were admonished as παροίκους καὶ παρεπίδημους. If Elliott's distinction is to be held then one is forced to conclude that 1:1–16 is meant just for the παρεπίδημοι and not the πάροικοι, while 1:17–2:10 is *vice-versa*, and finally 2:11 to the end of the letter is meant for both groups. This strange idea should be denied a home.

2) the use of the terms πάροικος and παρεπίδημος is not confined to their legal/secular sense only. There is ample evidence to show that they were frequently used in a cosmological/spiritual sense. The social status of the readers of 1 Peter needs not to be denied. However, the long theological and literary tradition suggests that something more significant ought to be recognised, *viz.* their cosmological and spiritual journey on earth.

Thus it is incorrect to say that 'none of the occurrences of πάροικος and related terms in the LXX is a purely 'spiritual' sense or a cosmological distinction (between heaven and earth) required or even likely'.<sup>31</sup> Neither is it correct to conclude that '... (the terms) have not been used to compose a 'theology of Christian exile or pilgrimage on earth', for the consistent contrast in this letter of abundant contrasts (*viz.* *1 Peter*) is sociological, not cosmological'.<sup>32</sup> The evidence to conclude otherwise is quite overwhelming. At one point Elliott himself acknowledged the two words 'are used to describe religious as well as social circumstances',<sup>33</sup> but this possibility was never pursued in the book.

3) the whole concept of a παροικία-παρεμπδημία is tied up with the sojourning as God's covenantal people.<sup>34</sup> To be the covenantal people of God is to be on a παροικία-παρεμπδημία. This was so not only with Abraham, Moses, and the people of Israel. The New Testament writers, among whom the writer of 1 Peter is one, wrote within the same tradition, and the Christian Church has been doing so ever since.

This whole covenantal emphasis is neglected by Elliott. Some of the readers could well have been legally and politically

---

<sup>31</sup>Home, 29.

<sup>32</sup>Home, 49.

<sup>33</sup>Home, 42; also 46.

<sup>34</sup>See also J. Pryor, 'First Peter and the New Covenant' *RTR* 45/1 (1986) 1–3 and 2 (1986) 44–51.



πάροικος and παρεπίδημος of the first century. Elliott has helpfully listed the many references of people with such status in the contemporary world.<sup>35</sup> But the readers of 1 Peter are bound by something more significant than their immediate social setting. They were people on a cosmological journey. ‘Elected. . .and chosen according to the foreknowledge of God’ (1:1–2), they were moving towards the promise of ‘an inheritance. . .kept in heaven for [them]’ (1:4). Only when they have received it, would the παροικία, started with Abraham, be completed. Meanwhile, as the covenantal people of God they would find the life in transit one of difficulties and tensions with the Gentile world at large, the State, their harsh employers, their unbelieving spouses, and even within themselves—an experience nothing less than a ‘soul-struggle’ (2:11). Yet as the covenantal people of God, they were to declare the wonderful deeds of him who had redeemed them. They were to ‘do good’ in society so that through them ‘the nations may bless themselves’. They should see themselves in continuity with the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant.

If a ‘sociological model’ ought to be used, then perhaps one much closer to home serves the purpose, *viz.*, the theological theme of God’s covenantal people on a παροικία. It is only with such a ‘model’ that the homeless exegetical step-child of Elliott can be promised a heavenly home.

---

<sup>35</sup>*Home*, 24ff.