

1. In Old Testament literature and theology, the theme of sojourning is a rather central element of thought. What are the origins and generating factors of the widely reflected ancient Israelite thought concerning sojourners? What is the social background behind the Old Testament texts relating to sojourners? What kind of treatment did the sojourners receive within ancient Israelite society? What kind of institutions – customs and laws – controlled the treatment toward sojourners in ancient Israelite everyday life? In fact, the questions that naturally arise when thinking about the subject are questions that belong to the field of social scientific analysis of the Bible. Therefore, to attempt to answer the above raised questions this study seeks social scientific methods and models.

2. While social scientific methods became widely popular in international biblical scholarship, the reception and application of these methods are rather sparse in Hungarian biblical scholarship.

When treating the theme of sojourning in the Old Testament, this study would like to use social scientific methods and results to uncover hidden aspects of this rather interesting topic. Therefore, this study would like to uncover those institutions – customs and laws – that related to the treatment of sojourners in ancient Israelite society.

3. Although the present study belongs to the field of *the history of institutions*, its method still two-folded. While the present study follows a more classical, form-critical grounded history of institutions type structure and method, at the same time, in certain points of the research, it also uses sociological models and comparative results from anthropological and religious studies.

4. While the topic of sojourning is a broad field of research in international biblical studies, but certain fields of the topic still seems sparsely researched: a) Semantic research of the Hebrew terminology of sojourning overly focuses on the research of the late, solid nominal form (גֵּר), therefore, the research of the verbal root (גָּר) and its relevance concerning the topic of sojourning is rather neglected; b) Parallel with the trends of the semantic research, Old Testament studies highly focus on the research of laws regarding sojourners, as these laws use the nominal terminology of sojourning. Therefore, the narrative texts, which prefer the verbal terminology of sojourning are often overlooked, in this case, the narrative representation of sojourning is a highly neglected field of research; c) Because of the above mentioned trends, Old Testament studies mostly focus on the status of the sojourners during the monarchical, or exilic, post exilic times, while the status of sojourners during earlier, pre-settlement, pre-monarchical periods, prior to the legal tradition, are rather undeveloped. Therefore, the present study attempts to focus on the treatment of sojourners before the monarchical times using Old Testament narrative traditions.

5. The reception of the topic of sojourning is rather sparse in Hungarian biblical studies. Only a limited number of lexicon entries and articles exist in this topic. Monographic literature of the topic of sojourning is absent in Hungarian biblical scholarship, only one monograph exist, which treats a related topic: the topic of the asylum-cities. Therefore, this present study could be treated as a monographic endeavour regarding the topic of sojourning in the Old Testament.

6. One of the most central theses of the present study is that the Old Testament narratives represent a dynamic, everyday reality regarding the sojourners. Therefore, contrary to the static and theoretic legal material concerning sojourners, and contrary to a highly law-centred Old Testament sojourner-research, this study states that it is rather relevant to complement the concept of sojourning in the Old Testament with the narrative representation of sojourning.

7. Alongside with the above mentioned, it is presented in this study that the laws regarding the sojourners in ancient Israel only represents a static, ideal treatment, while the actual everyday treatment reflected in the narrative texts seems to contradict with that ideal, legal treatment. Therefore, this study states that regardless of the formal, morally high expectations of the laws, in everyday setting a rather primitive, informal custom – that of patronage – directed the treatment of sojourners in ancient Israelite society, and the outcomes of this customary treatment were rather uncertain.

8. While biblical scholars and ancient historians all agree that patronage as a system was a central institution of the ancient Near Eastern world, the application of the dynamics of patronage to the local-sojourner encounter is seldom seen in international biblical studies. Therefore, the present study attempts to apply the dynamics of patronage to the local-sojourner relationship, moreover, it states that the local-sojourner relationship can be understood as a form of patron-client relationship.

9. The present study states that it is possible to reconstruct the customary practice using Old Testament narratives of sojourning. On the base of the patriarchal narratives it is possible to reconstruct the system of

relations between locals and sojourners. 1) One way of contact between the locals and the sojourners is a very close, dependent patron-client type relationship, in which the sojourners gradually lose their identity to the point when they are fully integrated and assimilated into the local community. From the point of view of the local community, this type of relationship is preferred and forced. 2) The other type of relationship is a much more independent, neighbour type relationship, where borders and peace between locals and sojourners are fixed and agreed. In this type of neighbouring relationship, the sojourners possess a relative autonomy, but only to the point when crises arise (ecological, economic, political) resulting the sojourners to enter again a dependent patron-client relationship with the locals. From the point of view of the sojourners – during peaceful and thriving periods – this type of relationship is preferred and negotiated. 3) On the base of the emblematic story of Exod 1 it is possible to detect a rather cruel type of relationship between locals and sojourners. As patron-client relationships are personal and temporal, without the renewed protection of a patronage relationship, a close, dependent relationship easily becomes oppressive. The oppression could take the forms of temporal corvée labour or – in a worst case scenario – eternal slavery.

10. One of the most central theses of this study is that the above reconstructed system of relations, customs and institutions regarding the treatment of sojourners using Old Testament patriarchal narratives are not merely literary devices and literary types, but authentic reflections of historical, social realities. If this argument is correct, the patriarchal narratives of the Old Testament – even if their historicity in a factual sense cannot be proved – can be used to reconstruct social, cultural realities of the ancient world.

+1. The present research holds in itself a great potential for future research. If we accept the statement that throughout Old Testament patriarchal narratives it is possible to reconstruct conventional mechanisms of the local-sojourner relationship in ancient Near Eastern, Bronze Age, everyday rural context, we can also state that these conserved mechanisms were generally present in later, Iron Age context as well. If this statement could be proved using later deuteronomistic sources and narratives, then it could be understood deeper why later legal material regarding the treatment of sojourners could not significantly change the everyday, customary treatment of sojourners.