

## Economic Principles, Part 3

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It is impossible to understand the story of God's Covenant People apart from the Promised Land. See Genesis 12:1, 15:5-7, 17:1-8; Deuteronomy 11:8-12. God owns the Land. It is His, as is all Creation; but, He gives a portion of it to His People for their Homeland. The Land is a gift- the People do not deserve it or anything that comes from it. Israel (the Covenant people) are totally dependent upon God for the Land. All they possess will come from this Land, meaning, from God. They need to believe that God is absolutely dependable to provide the Land and its blessings. He will keep His Covenant Promises.

The Land-Gift is proof of the Covenant relationship: How do we know (how did they know) Israel is God's People? He gave the Land to them for their use and benefit. God entrusts the care of the Land in parcels to families within Tribes. This is the source for the concept of [conditional, not absolute] Property Rights. Dividing up the Land this way, at God's instruction, is the main validation of that concept. It should be noted here that God assigned different amounts of land, subject to great variation in topography, to the different Tribes. (This is important. There was equity, but not equality.)

See Joshua 13:1-14, 14:1-5; Numbers 26, 34 and Joshua 13-19

One of the greatest sins in Israel was to deprive, steal, a man's parcel of land from him. He not only lost his land (and livelihood), he lost the major evidence of his covenant relationship with God. An Israelite without his land, is a man without a country and without his God. The classic story illustrating this is found in 1 Kings 21.

The greatest punishment that God could bring upon Israel for its sins was exile from the Land. The greatest Redemption was to return Israel to its Land. The Prophets sounded this Message repeatedly.

All of the Land and its resources were to be shared by all the people through their respective families. Every Household had a part of the national inheritance from God. This was their Right as a member of the Covenant People. The Israelite was to never forget that he was always and ever a steward. As God said, "...the Land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants." See Lev.25:23; Deut.26:8-10. This is very, very important.

The concepts of Private Property, working that property, making a profit from that work and thus accumulating wealth, are all Scriptural. "Ownership" conveyed responsibility to develop, care for and use the land (and the profit and wealth gained from it) as God wanted, according to His Law, and for His glory.