

The Economy of God's Kingdom

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In the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, it's stated: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

"Unalienable rights" implies rights that cannot be surrendered. But the fact is God can grant these rights, and he can take them away.

Adam and Eve surrendered the right to life through their sin, as has their progeny (cf. Romans 5:12). Most of humankind have been enslaved to sin since the time of Adam and Eve, through the choices they made and that their progeny have continued to make (cf. John 8:34). God liberated Israel from slavery in Egypt. But God removed them from their homeland and they were enslaved for a time by the Assyrians as a result of their unremitting sins (cf. 2 Kings 17).

It's been suggested that it would be better to state that we have the right to pursue peace, God's way. The Hebrew word often translated peace is not limited to an absence of war, but encompasses the idea of general welfare. "The Hebrew word [often translated peace] is *shalom*..., meaning, primarily, 'soundness,' 'health,' but coming also to signify 'prosperity,' well-being in general, all good in relation to both man and God." (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, "Peace").

We are to pursue peace. "Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace [*shalom*] and pursue it" (Psalm 34:14). Under the rule of Jesus Christ, all nations will have a single government. There will be no war to destroy economies and impoverish nations. And there will be a single economic system based on God's laws.

"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:2-4).

Note that the meaning of *shalom* includes prosperity, financial security, as well as other aspects of security.

What is the key to financial security, the key to prosperity, the key to a life of abundance?

The Bible reveals the answers to these questions, which we will explore, from the perspective of the economy, or economic system, of the Kingdom of God, which will be established when the Messiah, Jesus Christ, returns to the earth and establishes his direct rulership over it (Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 11:15).

It's not wrong to pursue prosperity, which is included in how the Bible defines "peace," in many instances. But we are to pursue it in accordance with God's word.

Some have claimed that the Bible advocates socialism as the ideal economic system. But is that true?

Socialism is a rather nebulous word which means different things to different people:

Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary:

1. any of various economic and political theories advocating collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods
2. a system of society or group living in which there is no private property.

Oxford Dictionary:

1. a political and economic theory of social organization which advocates that the community as a whole should own and control the means of production, distribution, and exchange.

The Collaborative International Dictionary of English:

A theory or system of social reform which contemplates a complete reconstruction of society, with a more just and equitable distribution of property and labor. In popular usage, the term is often employed to indicate any lawless, revolutionary social scheme.

From the standpoint of the most commonly accepted definitions of socialism, i.e., collective or government ownership of the means of production, or the elimination of private property, the economy of the Kingdom of God is NOT a socialist economy.

Someone might object, how then do you explain Acts 4:32, where it says they "had all things in common"? Answer: This was a special circumstance wherein a large number of people who had come to Jerusalem to keep the feast of Pentecost and had been converted to Christianity stayed on in Jerusalem for a time, and other brethren who had the means took care of their accommodations by selling some of their goods. It was not a permanent commune they were setting up, however, as other Scriptures make plain, some of which we will read as we proceed.

Ananias and Sapphira, whom we read of in connection with this episode, were rebuked not because they did not give all the money they had received for the sale of their property, but because they lied about the matter. Peter said to them, "While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God" (Acts 5:4).

The property was theirs. They could have kept all of it, sold it and given some of the proceeds of the sale, or given all of it. But they should not have lied about what they had done.

The fact is the economy of the Kingdom of God has more in common with the traditional economy of the United States than with socialist schemes. In the United States, traditionally, the right of private property has been honored, with some qualifications. And private ownership of the means of production has for the most part been the norm in the United States.

But there are significant differences between any of the world's economies or economic theories, and the economic system of God's Kingdom. Although there may be some similarities, in other ways the economy of God's Kingdom is unlike any of the world's economic systems.

So let's discuss the underlying principles and practices that will characterize the economy of God's kingdom.

God Centered

At the heart of the Kingdom's economic system is God, his character and his laws. God is a giving God, and giving is at the foundation of the Kingdom's economic system. "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38).

God's blessing is the key to abundance. Without God's blessing there is no assurance of prosperity.

"If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, then I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. **I will give peace [shalom] in the land**" (Leviticus 26:3-6).

So the nations obeying God will be blessed with abundance.

God is the owner of everything. "Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, also the earth with all that is in it" (Deuteronomy 10:14).

However, God gives ownership of property to whomever he pleases. "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; But the earth He has given to the children of men" (Psalms 115:16).

"When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, When He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the children of Israel" (Deuteronomy 32:8).

"God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since **He gives to all life, breath, and all things**. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and **has determined their**

preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring'" (Acts 17:24-28).

So God has given the earth to mankind, and distributes the land on the earth among the nations as he sees fit.

What God has given to them is their property to own and manage. When God gave the land of promise to Israel, the land was divided according to the number of families in a tribe, each tribe being allotted an inheritance corresponding to the number of families included in the tribe. "And Moses had given to the tribe of the children of Reuben an inheritance according to their families" (Joshua 13:15). And similarly it was done with all the tribes, except Levi, whose inheritance was a tithe or tenth of all that was produced among the tribes of Israel, along with designated cities in which they were to dwell.

An inheritance was given to each family within an tribe, and the land was to remain within a tribe. "And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a man dies and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter. If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the relative closest him in his family, and he shall possess it'" (Numbers 27:8-11).

If an unmarried daughter wound up owning an inheritance, she must marry only within her own tribe, so that the inheritance would remain within the tribe.

This was the case with the daughters of Zelophehad, of the tribe of Manasseh. The law was established as follows: "...every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel shall be the wife of one of the family of her father's tribe, so that the children of Israel each may possess the inheritance of his fathers. Thus no inheritance shall change hands from one tribe to another, but every tribe of the children of Israel shall keep its own inheritance" (Numbers 36:8-9).

Private Property

Private property rights undergird the system. Each family given a land inheritance owned the property. The right of private property is implicit in the eighth and tenth commandments, which forbid theft and covetousness.

Kings and princes in God's kingdom are to have their own property, and will not be permitted to arbitrarily take what belongs to others.

That God protects private property rights is exemplified in 1 Kings 21. Ahab the king sought the property of a citizen named Naboth, who was not willing to sell his inheritance. So Ahab's wife, Jezebel, conceived a plot to falsely accuse Naboth, and have him executed, so Ahab could claim his property. This was done:

"So it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to **take possession of the vineyard of Naboth** the Jezreelite. Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who lives in Samaria. There he is, in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it. You shall speak to him, saying, "Thus says the Lord: 'Have you murdered and also taken possession?'" And you shall speak to him, saying, "Thus says the Lord: 'In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours'"'" (1 Kings 21:16).

In the book of Ezekiel is a description of the future Israel, Jerusalem and temple following the second coming of Jesus Christ. The prince is to be allotted land of his own in the vicinity of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 45:7). "The land shall be his possession in Israel; and My princes shall no more oppress My people, but they shall **give the rest of the land to the house of Israel, according to their tribes**. Thus says the Lord God: 'Enough, O princes of Israel! Remove violence and plundering, execute justice and righteousness, and stop dispossessing My people,' says the Lord God" (Ezekiel 45:8).

"Moreover the prince shall not take any of the people's inheritance by evicting them from their property; he shall provide an inheritance for his sons from his own property, so that none of My people may be scattered from his property" (Ezekiel 46:18).

Gentiles living among the Israelites upon their return to Israel will be provided for, with property of their own. "'Thus you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. It shall be that you will divide it by lot as an inheritance for yourselves, and for the strangers who dwell among you and who bear children among you. They shall be to you as native-born among the children of Israel; they shall have an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. And it shall be that in whatever tribe the stranger dwells, there you shall give him his inheritance,' says the Lord God" (Ezekiel 47:21-23).

This apparently is in reference to the peoples of non-Israelite descent who will have dwelt among the children of Israel prior to their prophesied end time captivity, endured the tribulation, and become converted and returned with the remnant of the Israelites to the promised land (cf. Ezekiel 6:1-10; 11:13-20; Isaiah 10:21-22). They shall be given an inheritance among the Israelite tribes as specified in the above quotation.

Personal Responsibility

Property owners and citizens in general will prosper in accordance with their individual initiative and diligence, or lack thereof – and in accordance with God's blessing on their efforts.

"He who has a slack hand becomes poor, But the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a wise son; He who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame" (Proverbs 10:4-5).

"Because of laziness the building decays, And through idleness of hands the house leaks" (Ecclesiastes 10:18).

Able bodied people who are able to work and simply refuse to do so will be accountable, and will not be given handouts. "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread" (2 Thessalonians 3:7-12).

Everyone who works will enjoy the fruits of his labor. It won't be confiscated and given to someone else. "They shall build houses and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; They shall not plant and another eat; For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isaiah 65:21-22).

Liberty, within the confines of God's law, is a key to the system. Jesus, in the synagogue in Nazareth, read from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To **proclaim liberty** to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To **set at liberty** those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18).

In God's kingdom people may profit, hire others and profit off of their labor. However, pursuing righteousness must always take precedence over the pursuit of profits or riches. "Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:6-12).

And, as Paul instructs Timothy, we ought to put our trust in God, not in riches, "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

Wage Earners

There's no indication that artificial constraints will be placed on anyone's earnings. There are a number of men of faith recorded in the Bible who became very wealthy, including Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, David, Solomon, and others. But dishonest gain is prohibited. Wages for laborers must be fair and paid promptly.

"You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates. Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the Lord, and it be sin to you" (Deuteronomy 24:14).

This is speaking of a day laborer, who is hired for a day or a few days as needed, and is poor. But the principle of just and prompt payment of wages due applies to all hired workers, whatever the pay period may be.

God condemns riches gained through defrauding laborers of just wages. "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth [Lord of Hosts]" (James 5:1-4).

"And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness ... Against those who exploit wage earners...' Says the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 3:5).

In the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 servants who made a profit for the master were praised and rewarded, but the unprofitable servant was cast out. This parable shows, among other things, that it is permissible to hire servants with the expectation that they will be profitable for the business.

Sabbatical Year

God decreed that the land must rest one year out of seven. This has an economic impact in healthier crops, animals and people, and a healthier environment. Continuous cultivation will eventually ruin the land. The land Sabbath and proper land management with natural fertilizers along with God's blessing will make the land productive and permit the elimination of harmful chemical fertilizers and pesticides which poison the soil, and produce crops of inferior nutritional value.

Although the crops were not to be planted or harvested in the Sabbatical year, what grew of itself could be taken by anyone, the owner of the land, workers, the poor, foreigners living among them, etc., for food.

"And the Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a sabbath to the Lord. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the Lord. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land. And the sabbath produce of the land shall be food for you: for you, your male and female servants, your hired man, and the

stranger who dwells with you, for your livestock and the beasts that are in your land – all its produce shall be for food” (Leviticus 25:1-7).

If brethren were impoverished, it was expected that they would be loaned or given sufficient for their needs. "If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs” (Deuteronomy 15:7-8).

The Israelites were required to be generous in charitable giving to the poor and needy in the land. "You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land” (Deuteronomy 15:11).

It is expected of borrowers that they repay what has been borrowed. "The wicked borrows and does not repay, But the righteous shows mercy and gives” (Psalm 37:21).

It's likely there will be few who will be poor when the economy of the Kingdom is fully established, although there may be many poor at first.

Debts, as long as there are poor in the land, will be released, at the end of every seven years. "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the Lord's release. Of a foreigner you may require it; but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother, except when there may be no poor among you; for the Lord will greatly bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance” (Deuteronomy 15:1-4).

“The law of the Sabbatical year acts also as a statute of limitation or a bankruptcy law for the poor debtor, in discharging his liability for debts contracted, and in enabling him to start life anew on an equal footing with his neighbor, without the fear that his future earnings will be seized by his former creditors” (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, “Sabbatical Year and Jubilee”).

After a time there may be no more poor in Israel during the Millennium. But if there are any who have become indentured servants because of poverty, they are to be released during the Sabbatical year, in accordance with Deuteronomy 15. " If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what the Lord has blessed you with, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today (Deuteronomy 15:12-15).

If a hired servant chooses to remain as a hired servant when he is eligible for release in the Sabbatical year, he is to be released and returned to his inheritance at the time of the Jubilee, discussed below.

The Jubilee year is described in Leviticus 25.

“And if one of your brethren who dwells by you becomes poor, and sells himself to you, you shall not compel him to serve as a slave. As a hired servant and a sojourner he shall be with you, and shall serve you until the Year of Jubilee. And then he shall depart from you – he and his children with him – and shall return to his own family. He shall return to the possession of his fathers. For they are My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves. You shall not rule over him with rigor, but you shall fear your God” (Leviticus 25:39-43; cf. Deuteronomy 15:16-17, “forever,” meaning until the Jubilee, in this case).

Most land inheritances may not be sold permanently, but the land would return to the family of the original owner at the beginning of the Jubilee year, occurring once every fifty years. Those Israelites who had been sold into bondage, and remained so as discussed earlier, are also to be released at the beginning of the Jubilee year.

When Jesus Christ is ruling as King over the earth, the government will be a theocracy. A tithe (tenth) of everything that is produced in the land, plus free-will offerings, will be paid in kind or in the form of money to honor God and support his government. The land will be blessed. There will be no need for harsh chemicals or pesticides to poison the land. “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,’ Says the Lord of hosts, ‘If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,’ Says the Lord of hosts; ‘And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land,’ Says the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 3:10-12).

When God's Kingdom is established, the earth's topography and climate will be changed. “Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth” (Isaiah 40:4). There will be less desert land, if any, and more arable, agriculturally productive land. “For the Lord will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the Lord; Joy and gladness will be found in it, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody” (Isaiah 51:3).

Lending, Debt

Interest on loans may be charged, except on the poor. There will be no predatory lending. In a parable of Jesus he spoke of servants being entrusted with money to manage as their lord left on a long journey. One hid his money and gained nothing during the master's absence. Speaking to the unprofitable servant, the lord said: “So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest” (Matthew 25:27). This implies a robust financial system involving capital, credit and risk taking.

The Bible does not place a strict prohibition on lending money for interest, but the poor were to be lent money or goods without interest to help them get on their feet.

"If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest" (Exodus 22:25).

"If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. Take no usury or interest from him; but fear your God, that your brother may live with you. You shall not lend him your money for usury, nor lend him your food at a profit" (Leviticus 25:35-37).

The Bible does not encourage debt, as the borrower is servant to the lender (Proverbs 22:7). Debt is oppressive, or can be, if excessive. Since each family will have its own inheritance, there will be little need for personal debt or lending and the system will not be burdened with the kind of massive debt loads that can bankrupt entire nations.

Industry, Commerce

Truth will prevail in financial transactions. There will be just weights and measures. "You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume" (Leviticus 19: 35).

"You shall have honest scales, an honest ephah [dry measure], and an honest bath [liquid measure]" (Ezekiel 45:10).

The Bible does not give us a lot of specific information about the nature of industry and commerce during the Millennial period, but we have clues in the prophecies concerning the tribes of Israel, and their fulfillment in the latter days prior to the end of this age (cf. *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*, Herbert W. Armstrong, and *The 'Lost' Ten Tribes of Israel ... Found!*, Steven M. Collins). "And of Joseph he said: 'Blessed of the Lord is his land, With the precious things of heaven, with the dew, And the deep lying beneath, With the precious fruits of the sun, With the precious produce of the months, With the best things of the ancient mountains, With the precious things of the everlasting hills, With the precious things of the earth and its fullness, And the favor of Him who dwelt in the bush. Let the blessing come "on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.'"" (Deuteronomy 33:13-16). In this prophecy is implied not only favorable climate, and agricultural produce, but also mineral wealth, forests, and whatever additional wealth may be obtained from the earth's resources. Taking advantage of these resources will require industry and commerce. Likewise with promises involving other peoples descended from Israel. "For they shall partake of the abundance of the seas And of treasures hidden in the sand" (Deuteronomy 33:19). This implies wealth from commerce relating to the seas, and hidden mineral wealth, including petroleum. Also, "... let him dip his foot in oil. Your sandals shall be iron and bronze" (Deuteronomy 33:24-25). Again this implies mineral wealth and the use of metals, which requires mining and manufacturing.

We also have the example of Solomon's kingdom, a type of the Millennial Kingdom. Solomon's building projects included the use of timber of various kinds, quarried stone, metals, precious stones, and organized labor. The kingdom also owned a fleet of ships for

international commerce and trade (1 Kings 5-7; 9:10-28). With Jesus Christ guiding the world's commerce and industry, God's blessings on it, and universal, sustained peace, the possibilities of what may be achieved are beyond what we may presently imagine!

Bribery will be eliminated. "And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous" (Exodus 23:8). Bribes, fraud, or corrupt dealing will not be permitted. In the current system in the United States, and no doubt other countries to a lesser or greater extent, bribery among politicians is commonplace. One way of circumventing laws against bribery in the United States is hiring family members of politicians on the boards of corporations or foundations. It's remarkable how people with little money enter public office and become very wealthy after a few years.

Needs of the Poor

The needs of widows, orphans, and others who cannot provide for themselves will be taken care of through charitable giving, and a tithe (tenth, in addition to other tithes) required two years out of seven exclusively for that purpose. "At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do" (Deuteronomy 14:28-29).

"When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow" (Deuteronomy 24:19-21).

The whole system will be based on sound laws, personal responsibility, righteous conduct, and giving, with God giving the most. But most everyone will be filled with that same spirit of moral uprightness and concern for others, that the entire society will prosper. "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38).

Symbolic of the abundance that will result from obedience to God's laws, and his blessings, is the following prophecy: "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; The mountains shall drip with sweet wine, And all the hills shall flow with it'" (Amos 9:13).

Eventually, what is said of Jerusalem will extend to all the earth. "For thus says the Lord: 'Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river'" (Isaiah 66:12).

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