

INTRODUCTION TO SECTION V  
THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM OF ISRAEL  
Leviticus 25:1 – 27:34

The Book of Leviticus closes with two MESSAGES on another aspect of Israel's distinctive way of life. Those MESSAGES concern the economic system Jehovah planned for His called out nation. They reveal that service to Jehovah must include not only religious ceremony and moral living but also responsible handling of money and finances. Jehovah's plan for Israel included instructions about how to make their incomes and how to spend their incomes.

In the beginning, Israel's economy was to be agricultural and pastoral. They were to farm the ground and raise livestock on the ground. Jehovah did not plan that type of economy for Israel because He disapproves of city life, industry, trade, and travel but because farming and livestock were ways of life the Israelites understood and that were natural in the land He was giving them. The principles He taught them about making a living and spending money were more significant than the occupations they would adopt in the beginning.

Economic principles that Jehovah taught to Israel that were conducive to worshiping and serving Him were: (1) personal ownership, which developed responsibility, (2) hard work, which developed stability, (3) honesty, which developed character, (4) and generosity, which developed unselfishness and comradeship. Those principles will provide success and prosperity in any economic system. In the handling of their finances, the Israelites were not to care about themselves only. They were to be fair and generous with each other and with God. Selfish and greedy handling of money is destructive to any nation. Honesty and generosity in handling money builds unity and strength in any nation. Practicing those principles was to build Israel into a nation, not just a mob.

The first MESSAGE of this section deals with economic responsibilities the Israelites owed to each other. Those responsibilities included: (1) the observance of a sabbatical year to allow the land to be restored (Lev. 25:2-7), (2) the observance of a fiftieth year to allow people to be restored to their property and to freedom (Lev. 25:8-22), and (3) the regular observance of practices that promoted recovery from misfortune (25:23-55). Practices that promoted financial recovery included: property redemption (Lev. 25:23-34), financial assistance (Lev. 25:35-38), freedom from slavery and contract labor service to another Israelite (Lev. 25:39-46), and redemption from contract service to a resident alien (Lev. 25:47-55). Jehovah promised the Israelites that, if they would follow such practices of preservation, fairness, and compassion, He would make their economy prosper. He also told them, if they failed to follow those kinds of practices, their economy and their nation would fail (26:1-45).

The second MESSAGE of this section deals with economic responsibilities the Israelites owed to Jehovah. Jehovah promised to give them their own Land and to live with them in that Land. Out of gratitude, the Israelites were not only to use their money in ways that were honest and generous but also in ways that supported His work in the world. Those responsibilities included: (1) vows, which meant voluntarily pledging to give to support God's work, (2) firstlings, which meant giving the first part of every blessing they received back to God, (3) condemnations, which meant total rejection of benefiting from false and evil beliefs and practices, and (4) tithes, which meant giving a tenth of their incomes to support God's ministers.

As with other aspects of Israel's way of life, other nations should not try to follow the specific economic forms God gave to Israel, but any nation that will practice the economic principles God taught to Israel will tend strongly to have prosperity and peace.