

Dr. Michael Harbin, Social Justice for Social Outliers in Ancient Israel, Part 1, Ancient Israel's Cultural Background

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This is Dr. Michael Harbin in his teaching on Social Justice for Social Outliers in Ancient Israel. This is part one, Ancient Israel's Cultural Background.

Shalom, my name is Michael Harbin. I am a Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at Taylor University, and my background was I was in the Navy for 28 years before I transitioned to teaching, but over the process, I had become an Old Testament student.

I hesitate to say I'm a scholar, but today, we are looking at a series of lectures on Social Justice for Social Outliers in Ancient Israel. The first lesson, part one today, will be Ancient Israel's Cultural Background.

The Bible presents and provides principles given by God that appear to be applicable to all peoples in all cultures at all times. However, many of these principles must be extracted from the particular cultures in which they were embedded. When we read the Old Testament, we see a culture that is very different from ours.

It's especially true in terms of its rural, agrarian, low-tech, locally oriented, and slow-paced. Ours is fairly urban, post-industrial, high-tech, globally oriented, and fast-paced. While we can and should try to derive principles from the culture that God designed for Israel, we need to make sure that we understand that culture.

For example, we will see that rural areas in Ancient Israel were very different from rural areas in the modern world, the region where I live in north central Indiana. This is especially true of the Torah or the Pentateuch, where God's cultural guidelines are found. While scholars debate the origin of the Pentateuch, they seem to generally agree that it was written for a culture tied to the land.

Joseph Blenkinsopp asserts that it "presupposes the peasant agricultural society, agrarian society." Roland De Vaux argues that the purpose of the legal material was to govern a "community of shepherds and peasants." But there are nuances to this description that can trip us up unless we analyze the nature of that community.

I would suggest that one area that needs careful examination is relationships. In this study, we will follow the traditional understanding that as presented in the text, the material in the Pentateuch that describes how the Israelites were expected to relate to each other was either given at Mount Sinai in the last half of the book of Exodus

and in Leviticus or during the journey into the land of Canaan in Numbers and Deuteronomy. Collectively, these materials were intended to provide advanced guidance to the nation on how they were to live once they settled into the land.

However, as shown in the subsequent after the exile, I mean, sorry, after the settlement of Old Testament books, it is likely that if the nation ever followed God's guidelines, it was only done partially and only for a short time. Regardless of the date that scholars claim for the text of the Pentateuch, they generally agree that it is oriented towards a late bronze society. Given the huge cultural gap between an agrarian society that worked the soil with bronze tools and our contemporary Western post-industrial culture, any attempt to apply directives contained in the material to our own world encounters a number of significant problems.

Our goal in this presentation is to look at specific aspects of that complex body of material contained, which address issues of social justice that pertain to three outlier groups: widows, orphans, and resident aliens. A group that I give the title WARA, nice abbreviation, saves lots of effort. In part three, we will define these groups more closely and evaluate their position in the ancient Israelite agricultural culture as well as their commonalities.

Here, we must first clarify some of the agrarian practices of that historical cultural period to establish a cultural baseline. Archaeological evidence suggests that the typical farming community, like that of the Canaanite contemporaries and their predecessors, was close, was a cluster of houses built in close proximity to each other, even to the point of having walls in common. They had a pattern that still exists today.

This village structure, especially with regard to the relationship of the villages with the farmland around it, would profoundly affect community relations. I would contend that there would be very significant implications with respect to issues of social justice, and yet surprisingly, it is largely overlooked by scholars. A source that I have found very helpful in understanding some of these social issues was a study of a modern village in the highlands east of Galilee conducted by anthropologist Richard Antoine with the book title *Arab Village, A Social Structural Study of a Transjordanian Peasant Community*, which was published in 1960.

According to Antoine's report, the farming techniques that he observed were very similar to those that are presented in the Old Testament. However, his study was also very revealing with regard to how the social structure and the physical layout of the village affected community relationships, and that will be the main focus of this study, which is social justice. This picture of an unnamed typical Jordan village is one that we went through on one of my trips to Jordan.

As can be seen, the closely built village housing ends abruptly on either side with fields, unfenced fields stretching out in all directions. This is the same layout that archaeologists have noted when typifying Israelite villages during the late bronze era. Two factors, the close village housing and the unfenced field help explain several aspects of Old Testament social justice issues.

This is a map that Antoine created during his 1960s study of the Jordanian village of Kafr al-Ma'a, which lies about eight miles east of the Jordan River. Note that the village in this study is this entire hashmart area, rather complex. Embedded somewhat in the center is the housing area.

That's this little dark section right here in the middle, and yet the whole area is called the village. This is a surprising identification from a Western perspective. Antoine describes Kafr al-Ma'a as one of about 200 of what he calls serial-growing villages in the Anjouan district of northwestern Transjordan.

At that time, during his study, this village had a population of approximately 2,000. This map covers part of the Anjouan region and which encompasses approximately 170 square miles within the map area or about 440 square kilometers. Antoine identified about 25 villages in this area at that time.

Like Kafr al-Ma'a, each village was really a large geographical region such as we have in this hatched area and with a cluster of houses of the nuclear similar to the example as we've already seen. As shown in this picture, at Kafr al-Ma'a, the village of Antoine's study really consists of two parts. A triangle is up at the top part, and then, this long strip is down below.

As shown in the housing area, lives within this triangular area, roughly triangular area up at the top which is what we're looking at. As shown in this next diagram, this roughly triangular northern portion of the village had a long axis of about three miles. A cross axis, the vertical, the north-south almost, is about a mile and a half.

And on this diagram, Antoine marks the various fields of the villagers, color-coded them by the various clans and villages which possessed them as indicated. So we have these various clans and lineages, each holding particular fields. Additionally, in the center, you can see the housing area.

That's this region here next to the 13. So, you have this housing area in the center of a garden area in the center of the fields. Yeah, the remainder of the village is marked on the first map as woodlands.

So, if we go back to the first map real quick, down in the lower right, you see it's marked as woodlands, which is where they would probably be grazing and cutting wood for various purposes. It is described, or Antoine described it, as the secondary

growth of evergreen oak shrubs. It would appear that the area was also used for grazing.

While the larger village area concept is important for understanding the context for our present purposes, we will focus on this northern triangle which includes the habitations. As diagrammed, the habitation area was part of the Al Balad Basin, area 13 there on the map. As Antoine described it, this basin was basically circular, approximately a kilometer in diameter, a little over a half a mile.

The main point to note here as we look at this is that the agricultural area surrounds the housing area we saw in our first picture. Then, as we hone in on the housing area, I should note that he did not put all the houses in the diagram. The ones that he put in were the ones that he did in his study.

This larger scale map shows that Kfer Amah was surrounded by smaller garden fields in and out of the housing area. Three items should be noted. One, the diagram does not include all the houses which I've already mentioned.

Two, the housing area was densely populated, with an estimated population of about 2,000 people living in an area of less than a tenth of a square mile. Approximately 270 households were included, most of which occupied one-room houses. Third, the shaded areas on this map around the houses and some interspersed are the garden areas where the fields according to divided by the extended families.

Note that this map, looking at the arrow pointing north, is to the left, so the village is rotated from the previous two maps. If we compare the last two pictures, we can visualize a village structure surrounded by gardens, further surrounded by olive groves, and then outside of that your grain fields and then beyond that, the woodlands. As seen in the subsequent picture, which was actually taken in northern Israel, at least in some cases, farmers tilled around the olive trees, and I understand that this is a practice, although I saw it within the last couple of decades, supposedly dates back to the Old Testament period.

This modern layout illustrated in these pictures with a cluster of houses surrounded by the fields of the villages is very similar to the standard village structure of an Israelite in the late bronze period of Israel. These visual images help the Western reader to better understand various aspects of ancient Israel. In his encyclopedia article, Frank Frick points out that village, town, and city tend to be used interchangeably in archaeological literature.

Isn't that great for clarification? He claims that the key difference between a city and a village was the level of administration. That is, a city would be surrounded by

various hamlets, also called villages, and serve to regulate agricultural surplus. A city also was normally but not necessarily always walled.

Another difference might be that the number of lineages incorporated within its confines would vary depending on whether the city has more. As the Israelite culture developed, we will also add that some call industrial areas. Frick calls these threshing floors wine presses, and there were others that we could look at at a later time.

If this model of cluster of houses surrounded by the fields of the villagers was also the standard village structure of Israel in the late bronze and early iron ages, that is, the period presented as the time frame of the judges and the early monarchy, then it would seem that there should have been implications with respect to routine family life, especially for the average farming Israelite. While there have been a number of studies covering families over the years, generally, they focused on individual families rather than the more complex relationships of an entire village. It is suggested that the implications of the larger village culture are both evident in and significant for the biblical material, especially things like the book of Ruth.

While the author of Ruth is not known, the account is presented as taking place late during the period of the judges, and it seems to give a glimpse into the agricultural system of that time. Ruth is presented both as a widow and as a resident alien. As the author traces Ruth's redemption process, he touches on several social justice provisions, which we will address in part four.

At this point, however, we must note that the text also presents several details that suggest social norms determined by the community structure. For example, when Ruth goes out to glean in Ruth 2, the model of the village surrounded by farmland is what best portrays the text. Twice, Ruth 2 and 3 talk about Ruth going out to the field, singular, where the harvesters are at work.

Verse 3 notes again that the portion of that field, again singular, belonged to Boaz. This suggests that while certain portions of the agricultural land surrounding the village belong to different individuals, the totality of the tilled land was viewed as a collective whole belonging to the community. Verse 3 also notes that Ruth happened to come on the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

This language seems to suggest the ownership of the various tracts of land, not only of Boaz but of his lineage, which was seen in Antoine's study. It also suggests that there were no fences between the fields, as seen in this picture, especially in modern times. This picture was taken in northern Israel on one of my trips there, and you can see the fields divided by ridges of vegetation.

If the farmers and harvesters in Ruth were following the guidelines of the Mosaic law as presented in Leviticus 19:9, they were, quote, not reaping to the corner of the field, unquote, as translated by the New American Standard. The word that's translated corner is not clear. Other translators use the word edge.

So, is it a corner or a single edge? Or perhaps it is the outermost section. If the harvesters in two adjoining portions both left behind the corner, there would be no fences that a gleaner could easily happen to come to, that is, pass inadvertently from the standing residue of one portion of the field belonging to one individual to that belonging to another. The lack of fences is somewhat surprising, given the ubiquitous stones found in the farmland throughout the region.

These would need to be removed to prepare the field for agriculture. Luciano Turkowsky notes that when preparing virgin soil, first, larger stones would be removed to mark the boundary of the plot. At first, this suggests stoned fences, as we see in portions of our country, such as New England.

However, Deuteronomy 19:14 warns against moving the boundary marker, suggesting something more easily shifted, as we see in this picture. This does raise questions regarding what happened to the stones that were removed beyond those used for the boundary markers. One possibility might be for houses.

Another might be that they were used to develop terraces, although that innovation likely came later. Another aspect of Ruth's account is the description of the threshing floor in chapter three. Two points are relevant here.

After threshing, the grain needed to be separated and the grain cleaned from the chaff. This process normally took place on an elevated spot exposed to the wind, as seen in this photo of a threshing floor in the mountains of southern Spain, where I lived in the 1970s. In Israel, a threshing floor might be privately owned or, as in the case of Ornan the Jebusite who sold his threshing floor to David after the pestilence was stopped in 1 Chronicles 21, or the threshing floor could be communal under the responsibility of the larger social classes such as the lineage or even the overall clan.

While transportation limitations suggest that the threshing floors would be located near grain-producing fields, the village layout described above, as well as my personal experiences throughout Israel, might suggest that a typical location would be somewhat away from the village to allow the chaff to blow away from the houses. The threshing-windowing process was a several-day process involving several steps—usually, all done on the threshing floor. Given the distances involved, the amount of work required for threshing, windowing, and the subsequent need to transport processed grain back to the village, it apparently was a common practice to collectively spend the night on the threshing floor, as we see in Ruth's chapter 3 verses 3 through 7. We noted earlier how the woodlands extend beyond the

cultivated fields and suggested that this region might be used for the grazing of the village's sheep and goats.

If so, this would be in contrast to the more familiar and more recent Bedouin pattern, which is at least semi-nomadic. The village layout described above would suggest that these pasture regions would be the most distant portions within the village region, the furthest away from the habitation portion, clearly still part of the community. In fact, a number of studies suggest that after the harvest, the sheep would be brought closer to the village and grazed in the harvested grain field, similar to the sheep in this picture taken near Ramoth Gilead.

If so, it would make sense that livestock would be allowed to remain in the pasture land overnight when the weather was better, which gives us an interesting background to Luke chapter 2, verse 8, when we see the shepherds in the fields with their flocks. While far enough from the houses that the animals might not be driven to and from the fields on a daily basis, it would still be close enough to the houses that the shepherds could work shifts returning home at least part-time. The social norms of the pre-monarchial period would be an interweaving of several centuries of tradition traced back to Abraham and beyond and the teaching of the Torah given by God primarily at Sinai and then fleshed out through the settlement process conducted under Joshua.

While the people brought many traditions and practices with them from Egypt, as God set up a new nation, He gave the Torah to refine and replace as necessary to standardize these traditions and practices so that the people conformed to God's standards of justice. As such, there would be some carryover from what other cultures had and what they had developed. There would also be innovations.

Our task here is not to sort out which is which but to look at the final product as a divinely ordained system that would provide a socially just culture in a world populated by fallen human beings. For Israel, that expectation was that when they came into Canaan, they would be divided up not only by tribes, 12 of them, but by smaller groups and that these smaller groups would settle in cities and villages and they would implement local governance for routine issues. The basic demographics described in the settlement process likely were somewhat similar to what the previous several generations had experienced in Egypt.

As such, the Torah modified the social mores of the nation that it was expected to follow, likely to raise the bar in terms of something called social justice. One example might be the prohibition on selling the land that God gave to each family as a product of the distribution following the settlement. While materials such as the incident between Ahab and Naboth suggest that some tried to adhere to those standards, the overall prophetic message indicates that the people largely ignored them.

The demographics of the settlement would have significantly affected the social structure of the culture, where the primary means of transportation was on foot. The layout of the community, as discussed above, affected community relationships, work practices, and the distances between communities, even matters such as marriages. We will address the issue of marriage in Part 3. Here, we want to look at how the village structure affected work and family dynamics.

The land distribution. First, it was by tribe. The land, according to Joshua 13 through 21, was divided between the 12 tribes, which defines the boundary lines between the tribal areas and also lists the cities contained within each tribal area along with their villages or outlying settlements.

The text does not explain the process by which the smaller units, that is, the clan or a portion of a clan, might be divided. They might have settled in a city, or how the various extended families might have settled in both the city and the surrounding villages. This regional or local distribution through clans and extended families would have been more important to the average Israelite on a daily basis since those produced the social organizations that determined both burdens and benefit once the Israelites were settled in the land.

Thus, these provided the foundation for their social justice. Consequently, our present concern is to evaluate the final step, where the local village or city elders divide the collective field, as discussed above, into what might be called nuclear family holdings. Tribal distribution.

The conquest narratives assert that each Israelite tribe was given a portion of the overall piece of land from which they were to live. According to Joshua, this was done by casting lots. This seems to be a generic expression that describes any of a variety of methods used to make decisions that were, from a human perspective, essentially unbiased.

Today, we have flipping coins and drawing straws. We could use those as examples. For Israel, the presumption was that God controlled the outcome, although it appeared to be random.

Because Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh had opted for the land on the east side of the Jordan River over on the right here, the western region was divided into ten regions, the other half of Manasseh, and the remaining nine tribes. Levi, of course, was scattered throughout the rest of the land. The land divisions are described in the last part of Joshua, but we're not told how those land divisions were determined.

What we are told is that each tribe had a territory, and it included all of the clans or the extended families that were in a contiguous relationship. The book of Joshua also asserts that the land was divided into lots in proportion to tribal size, with more territory to larger tribes, Joshua 14:1 through 5. But Joshua gives very little information about the actual process, concentrating rather on the result. Specifically, it gives several lists of specific cities within a general outline of each tribe's portion, Joshua 15 through 19.

Even those lists vary in detail from tribe to tribe. Judah is very detailed. Most of the tribes are not.

Although these cities, along with their villages, are listed, they are not described and, in many cases, are not named elsewhere. What is important is that each tribe was given its portion according to its families. The directions God gave Moses in Numbers 26 is the land was to be divided according to the number of names.

One thing that tends to get overlooked is that, as the text presents it, all the families that were settled in the land were coming out of the same 40-year wilderness experience during which their needs had been taken care of by God throughout the entire period. Now, everyone was being given resources for a new start, but it would be a difficult one. First, while there would have been elders who had lived in Egypt before the Exodus, they would largely have been children while they were in Egypt, and they would have little memory on how to farm.

Even if they remembered how to farm, farming in Israel was going to be different from farming in Egypt. In Egypt, farming was done using irrigation. In Israel, it will depend upon rainfall.

Who received land? The clan areas were divided by clan to specific city regions and then by the extended family. In theory, the individuals receiving land within these extended families were the physical descendants of Jacob, the third person to inherit the covenant that originally gave the land to Abraham. In reality, the group that came out of Egypt as part of the Exodus was a mixed company, as noted in Exodus 12:38. As will be seen below, these also received land.

The names referenced, Numbers 26:53, are males who had been counted in the just completed census. The vague reference to larger groups and smaller groups in verse 54 likely refers to the two groups specified in the first census in Numbers 1-2, which directed the census to be done by their families and by their father's households. What these terms translated as families and father's households mean is not clear and is debated.

As we will address in part two, we will use the terms clan and extended family for the larger and the small groups, seen both as intermediate steps between the tribe and

the nuclear family. Likely, the clan was the larger unit, although we recognize several uncertainties involved in identifying it. In contrast, an extended family seems to have been a family unit containing three generations, including grandparents, a married child, usually a son we're thinking of, and then grandchildren.

One generation beyond our understanding of a nuclear family. However, the extended family may have included a wider range of descendants from an individual who was no longer alive. This could be evident even today in the Middle East.

In that regard, if an extended family in this broader sense settled into a village, it could include several extended families in the smaller sense. They're related but more distantly. So, we're getting into second and third cousins and beyond.

The specific names given in Numbers Chapter 1, verse 2 are probably the clans. The way that the cities are named in Joshua 15 through 19, including boundaries and named cities, implies that the lots divided the land by specific areas, at least to the clan level. This would mean that a given clan was given a specific city area, analogous to Antoine's description of a village, Kafr al-Ma'a, for example, and it is possible that two or more clans were given the same city or were described as settling in that same city.

It seems more likely that in the future, some of these clans would actually grow and divide. The division of the land by the clan leader within the city region may have been primarily by lot, but he also seems to have had the option to give specific land to specific families. How much land was given to each extended family in the narrow sense? It's unknown.

A limiting factor would be how much land a family could realistically farm. I have calculated elsewhere that it would seem that a typical inheritance would have been about five acres per adult male. While this size of a farm seems small by modern Western standards, it does seem to fit what we know of agriculture in the ancient world and even today in areas such as the Far East.

One other factor to consider is that it generally seems to be assumed that all the families were primarily engaged in agriculture without anyone living in the cities applying more specialized skilled trades. By the Iron Age, which began about 1200 BC, Philip King and Lawrence Steger proposed that there were specialists whose primary vocations were in various skills, including weavers, potters, tanners, and smiths, but that's beyond the scope of this current study. As reconstructed, each clan listed in Numbers 26 received a region based on lots.

The clan area would have then been divided based on extended family lineages, most likely producing rather homogeneous families. That is, in a sense, everyone in the village would have been related to everyone else, at least as distant cousins. This

relationship would seem to be very important in terms of widows and orphans, particularly outliers, in that they would have been related to everyone else in the village to varying degrees.

Social norms. The biblical text does not really address the rather mundane process of settlement, nor does it provide much information regarding daily life as already noted. Still, the village layout that we have presented suggests several practical implications that would affect daily life.

These, in turn, would have impacted social justice provisions, which we will discern or discuss in Part 4. The following are specific deductions that I have come to or drawn regarding daily life and family life in an Israelite village. One, communities were related and lived very closely together. Given the proximity of the houses and the extended relationships, families would have been aware of each other's joys and sorrows.

It also seems that there would have been rather significant peer pressure, but it was face-to-face, not Facebook. That would have affected all the relationships within the community. Two, daily work in the field.

Commuting was by foot. So, in terms of daily work when planting, tending fields, or harvesting, the typical Israelite farmer would have left the housing cluster in the morning to walk to the particular portion of the single common field he owned. As a matter of practicality, it would be unlikely that he returned home until the daily work was done late in the morning.

Two, verse 14, the workers ate lunch on site. At the same time, on days that he was not working in the field, the farmer would have been in the village, perhaps in the home or sitting in the gate. Three, field portions are limited by size based on capabilities.

How much field could a plow, plant, and harvest? Working by hand, animal-drawn plows, it appears that each person may have had multiple portions in which he would plow or harvest on different dates. It is estimated these individual portions likely were in the range of a half acre to an acre each and limited community size.

Since everyone walked to his portion of the field, this would put a practical limit on the agricultural community and how far out from the housing area the actual tilled part of the collective farm community could extend. An hour-long trek might be the maximum effective extent of the daily commute, which means that the maximum tilled radius would be about two to three miles, suggesting a diameter of a village area of about four to six miles. A tilled radius of about a mile or a little less from the city gates would probably be more practical and more typical.

Five satellite dwellings. As shown by Frank Frick, it is likely that there would have been a cluster of satellite hamlets or villages ringing a given city. He suggests that the primary function of a city was to extract and invest agricultural surplus and provide social leadership.

He does not address the function of the satellite villages, but the model developed suggests that it might be a small community intended to provide mutual support for a small group of farmers who wanted to be closer to their fields. If this structure were correct, then it would seem that, as noted under point two, the overall territory for a given urban cluster, that is, a city and its villages, might have been in a diameter of about six or seven miles, about 10 kilometers, or an area of about 25 to 30 square miles, 65 to 78 square kilometers. While looking at the overall society, the land between the cities was probably untilled.

This would be an area where wildlife ranged. They might take grazing animals there, but most of this area would have been uncleared. At this time frame, it appears that much of it was forested in a type of forest, which we can see in Joshua 17, 15, as he gives directions to the tribe of Ephraim: if you want more land, go clear it.

Caleb is a model distributor. In Judges, chapter 1, verses 14 and 15 indicate that the extended family, in this case, probably the clan leader, had the prerogative of granting particular portions of territory to specific individuals or nuclear families. In Caleb's case, it's his daughter.

We won't accuse him of nepotism. While Caleb's example is presented as part of the conquest, some of the portions of this diverse number of portions of the field probably were not completely distributed at the beginning. If they are distributing the land based upon how much they could actually handle at the time, it is likely that there would be some, after it was divided, whether by lot or by grant, some portions that were not appropriated, which could be distributed later.

This might have implications, one, in terms of fowl land during the Sabbath years, and that's beyond this study but also might have implications with regard to second or third sons. Continuing with Caleb's model, the portions were likely dispersed. We saw this in Antoine's model of how the different colors kind of intermix.

There were some areas that were all the same color or more or less the same color, whereas others were scattered throughout. The text on Caleb with his daughter notes that she has some portions that had been given to her, and she goes to her father and says, in addition, give me some springs. It's unlikely those springs were right next to the field that she had, so they were somewhere else in a different direction from the community center.

Travel throughout the Middle East today suggests that a typical separate single field portion might be in the one-half to one-acre range. This is where we get that figure of the size. If a typical Israelite had a total inheritance in the range of three to five acres, then likely, several portions would have been located in separate areas of the field.

It's also likely that the different crops may have been grown together with the different portions. For example, wheat might be in one area, with different farmers planting the wheat or the barley in another area. It's also suggested that various portions of the field might differ in productivity, getting into things of microecology.

In this situation, it might be possible for a farmer who needed to sell land would only sell a portion of that land leading up to the year of Jubilee, a portion of what he possessed, having implications with regard to those Jubilee possessions. The grazing region was out beyond the fields. The grazing portions of the community's land were likely to have been beyond the plowed fields, and given the further distance to the housing clusters, it seems likely that the flocks and herds would have normally remained in their pastures both day and night when they were grazing, although once the fields were harvested, they might have been brought closer as the animals grazed to both clean up the stubble and naturally fertilize the field.

Houses were not included in the land distribution. They're in the community center, and they were separated from the field so that if a person leased all of his fields because he is desperately poor, under the Jubilee stipulation, he probably still would have had a place to live. This might explain the situation in Naomi and Ruth after they come back to Bethlehem from Moab, and they have a house into which they can move.

I would suggest that it's very likely Elimelech's house that he still retained ownership of, even though he apparently leased the fields out to go to Moab during the famine. The land remained in the family. The biblical text sets forth a standard that the land that was inherited, which may be suggestive about some of those other areas, land could not be sold but would be passed on from a father to his son.

This does not seem to preclude dividing the farm between two sons. Although the law does say that the oldest son would get a double portion, it does not mean the entire farm. New portions were distributed.

Now, this is open to question, but it would seem that sometimes second sons might be granted new portions of the field that had never been distributed before. I noted earlier that the limitation on the amount of land a family was given during the original distribution was the amount of land that the farmer could process or could handle. So, it's then likely that portions of the field which were initially not tilled, probably those which were less desirable, generally we might say farther out, this

would allow for a situation in future generations where a younger son might start a new family and be granted a new farm, so to speak.

We'll discuss family sizes later. As the landowner aged, as King and Steger's motto points out, the land passed from generation to generation, and the members of the older generation, most likely widows, would have lived with their married sons. In that context, they would have been supported in their old age by the adult children, although it's likely that as long as they were able, they provided some labor to the family pool.

This particular implication is most significant in terms of a baseline for widows, which we will address in parts two and three. Joshua continually cites the number of cities and their villages. While it has been suggested that the cities and villages were distinguished because cities were walled and villages were not, as noted above, this was not always the case, although it was likely the norm.

More importantly, this model shows how the biblical villages would serve as satellite communities, which allowed farmers to live within a reasonable daily walk from their portion of the field, at least in times of peace. As such, spheres of influence of a city would incorporate a number of these little hamlets or villages that surround the larger city center. If cities were indeed walled, then in times of unrest, these farmers could flee there for protection.

However, a more basic function of the city would seem to be that these larger population centers provided locations for commercial development where skilled craftsmen and artisans might set up shops and focus on non-agricultural careers, and these would be signs of a maturing and complex culture. As noted, previous studies have provided a good picture of life in ancient Israel, focusing on individual families and residences. In part one of this study, we have expanded that picture to provide some insight into how the family likely fits within the culture of the local village or city.

This expanded picture might suggest that the extended family was expected to provide support for others within the family lineage. This raises several questions in terms of social justice, which we will explore in the subsequent part, including how the provisions set forth in the Torah especially apply to a widow. While emphasis is on the case of the widow, how does an orphan fit into the picture? More debatable is the question of the resident alien. Furthermore, given the disparate circumstances surrounding the three groups, why are they regularly addressed collectively as one in these terms of social justice? It is with this picture and these questions in mind that in part three, we will evaluate, or rather part two, we will evaluate what constituted each of these three groups of social outliers and how the social justice provisions might apply to them.

But first, in part two, we will look at the concept of social justice and contrast our understanding of social justice with that of the Old Testament. Thank you.

This is Dr. Michael Harbin in his teaching on Social Justice for Social Outliers in Ancient Israel. This is part one, Ancient Israel's Cultural Background.