CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION
Agriculture is the cultivation of soil for food products or any other useful or valuable growth of field in gardens. It includes any industry practised by a cultivation of the soil, as fruit raising, animal husbandry, dairying and gardening. Agriculture was the chief occupation of the inhabitants of Palestine. The cities were throughout their history simply the walled residences of farmers. Biblically the record of agricultural pursuits begins with the mandate given in the Garden of Eden 'to till it and keep it.' The immediate post-Edenic situation featured both the agricultural and pastoral way of life as represented by Cain and Abel respectively. Secularly this period is best represented by the beginning of farming in the lower Jordan valley around Jericho in the mid 8th millennium B.C. in a culture closely resembling that of Major Mesopotamian centres. Food, clothing and shelter have been to a great extent, the results of the tilling of the soil and related activities such as raising of domesticated animals. Hence the words,

In toil you shall eat of it (i.e., the ground)
All the days of your life; ...
In the sweat of your face
You shall eat bread.

1 Genesis 2: 1
3 Genesis 3: 17, 19
have had real meaning for the people who had lived in this land through the centuries. It refers to hard work and labour and because of the hard work and labour, people live long through the centuries.

The Israelite religious year revolved around the cultivation of the crops so that the major fasts and feasts have both an agricultural and religious significance. It is most significant, however that from the earliest times the pattern of Israel’s religious observances was based on agriculture rather than on nomadic and pastoral activities.\(^4\) The basis of society was clearly dependant on the cultivation of crops, and every major success or failure religious, military or economic was tied up in some way with this fact.

**The Statement of the Problem**

The present study examines at depth the existence of agriculture from the prehistoric time till the present day. The agriculture started sometime after 10000 B.C.\(^5\) The research also probes into the various stages of agriculture that existed in the ancient period. Also the research points out that agriculture was the chief and prominent activity in the time of Lord Jesus Christ. In this context, the researcher has undertaken a study of agriculture in the Bible.

\(^4\) cf. Ex. 23: 14-16, Lev. 23.
The Various Stages of Agriculture in the Bible

1. Intensive hunting and food collecting (Epi-Paleolithic)

Towards the end of the Paleolithic period in Palestine (Ca 9000 B.C.), the hunters and gatherers established one of the earliest villages in the upper Jordan Valley. They had no signs of domesticating animals or cultivating plants but they were able to exploit enough wild game and cereals.

The wild types had a brittle rachis which shattered when the ears ripened and dispersed the grain. But the hot dry winds from the desert lessened the harvesting season to a short span of time. However the problem disappeared after Neolithic period.

2. Incipient agriculture and husbandry (prepottery Neolithic)

About 7000 B.C. permanent agricultural villages sprang up. The farmers raised sheep and goats and grew domesticated varieties of wheat and barley. The inhabitants of Jericho depended primarily on hunting rather than herding for their meat. The large caprines were probably domesticated, although they would have differed in appearance. Seeing these goats found slaughtered at Beidha, the Neolithic people brought these animals under their control.

The earliest plants cultivated in Palestine were the cereals, wheat and barley. Barley and emmer were the main crops in Beidha. These plants were significant in the diet of the Beidha villagers.
Wild lentils as well as other pulses grown were prohibited in Jerico, Beidha and in the Jordan valley. If rotated, these might have dominated Palestinian agriculture for the next 4000 years.

3. Established grain farming and pastoralism (Pottery Neolithic and Chalcolithic)

The sixth millennium in Palestine was probably a period of elusive evidence of seasonal occupation.

In the fifth millennium, though domestication seems well, flocks were dominated by large caprines. In addition to this, swine and cattle were the domesticated stock of the Neolithic farmers. The faunal and botanical revolution from Pottery Neolithic Jericho were meagre but sufficient source of wheat, sheep, goats, barley continued to be grown.

By the fourth millennium, large caprines had practically disappeared from the flocks. For the first time wool rather than mutton prompted much of the sheep husbandry.

Barley was the most widely cultivated in the semiarid zone (e.g. near Beer-Sheba and at Teleilat Ghassul). Even lentils were grown.

Compared to sheep and goats, the widespread appearance of oxen and introduction of the plow raised their superiority among the settlers. Of the animals controlled by man up to this time, oxen alone had the strength and endurance for pulling the plow.
After the passage of years, cereals, legumes, olive and date cultivation began in Palestine. Today wild olives do not grow but they are found at Ghassul from domesticated trees, hand-irrigated from nearby springs. Wild dates too grow but their fruits are small and unpalatable and discovered from domesticated trees in the vicinity.

4. Mediterranean economy (Early Bronze Age – Iron age)

After 3000 B.C. the major valleys and foothills of the Mediterranean zone were being cultivated. The population lived in walled settlements, frequently more than twenty-five acres in size. To support these, extensive tracts of land had to be cultivated. Despite of more complex societies in the Early Bronze Age, these settlements depended more on the cultivation of the soils around them.

With the development of horticulture in the Early Bronze Age, the economy of Palestine acquired the distinctively Mediterranean characters, which it retains to this day. Pomegranates, dates, and olives were grown and grapes were cultivated for the first time.

In the third millennium agriculture product was best adapted for the first time. After the bronze-age, the second - first millennia B.C. registered no new additions to the plant and animal record. However the technological innovations did occur which extended Mediterranean-type field crops and horitculture into the mountains and deserts.
5. Mountain agriculture (Iron-Age)

About 1200 B.C., the number of settlements were increased. These were small hilltop villages, five acres or less, without fortification. The inhabitants transformed the slopes into a staircase of terraces. These were best suited to vine, olive, and nut cultivation. The Israelites maintained a subsistence cereal agriculture and it had been brought under their control. During Iron Age II terracing was further extended to areas with modest amounts of bottom land and there the slopes could be planted with trees and vines, and the valleys sown, with cereals.

In the Roman-Byzantine period, the transformation of the hill country was evidenced with abundant terrace agriculture.

6. Desert farming (Iron Age)

To make the desert bloom, farmers must have confronted two basic problems: 1) where to find suitable soils: deep, permeable and salt-free and 2) how to increase the water yield, three or fourfold to grow cereals and legumes. To cope with these problems, desert farmers laid out the rectangular terraces between the stone walls and formed fields that were planted during the rainy season when flood waters and hillside runoff had collected in the wadi basin. To attain advantage terrace dams supplied enough water and was harnessed to grow wheat, barley and other field crops.
Objectives of the Study

1. To study about the production techniques and agricultural products in the Bible is the prime objective.
2. To probe into the agricultural foodstuff in the Bible such as mineral food, animal food, vegetable food, food preparation, food regulation and food supply.
3. To find out the agrarian laws in the Bible, which analyses the origin and the meaning of these laws: the laws concerning Damage to Immovable property, the Sabbath year and Jubilee and the Execution of Agrarian Laws.
4. To find out the distribution system in the Bible.
5. To find out the exchange system such as trade and communication.

Methodology

This study is basically a descriptive analysis. It is based on secondary sources of information. The information is collected from the Bible, Biblical commentaries, Fathers of the Church, and Papal encyclicals and related literatures. It is a fact-finding study. As it is more analytical and descriptive based on secondary sources of information, there is no hypothesis.

Limitations

i) The present study primarily relies on secondary sources of Biblical information only.
ii) On account of the time constraint the study covers only the agricultural aspects in the Bible.

**Chapter Arrangement**

The first chapter includes introductory aspects such as statement of the problem, objectives, methodology, limitation and chapter arrangements.

The second chapter gives profile of the study area.

The third chapter analyses the concept and review of related literature.

The fourth chapter includes the analysis of the study.

The fifth chapter presents the Summing-up.
Geographical Situations

Ancient Palestine, showing the areas settled by the various tribes and the principal cities of the region.