CHAPTER - II

PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA
In this chapter, the researcher wants to deal with the profile of the study such as production techniques and agricultural products, various food stuffs, agrarian laws, distribution and exchange system in the Bible.

1. Agricultural products and production techniques

Three crops dominated the agricultural life of the country: the vine, the olive tree and grain:

Wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen man’s heart.¹

Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil.²

These three products appear together in innumerable passages attesting both to their importance and to their wide spread cultivation.³

a. The Vine

The grape vine was no doubt very widely grown throughout the whole Mediterranean world.⁴ It grew well and, once planted,

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¹ Ps. 104: 15.
² Joel 2: 19.
³ Gen 27: 28; Deut 7: 13, II Kings 18: 32; Neh. 5: 11; Hos 2: 8; Joel 1: 10; Hag 1: 11.
⁴ Num. 6: 4; Judge. 13: 14
required a minimum amount of care; mainly loosening the ground occasionally and pruning in the spring when the first blossoms appeared. Just as today, so in ancient times there may have been a variety of kinds. The fruit of the vine was no doubt eaten fresh, as well as dried into raisins. For the most part, however, the grapes were turned into wine by being trampled in the vine vat located either in the vineyard or nearby.

b. The olive tree

The olive tree was particularly well suited to most areas of the land of Palestine, since it grew in very shallow soil and was able to endure long periods of drought. It does not stand severe cold, however, and consequently does not do so well in South Judah. The olive harvest was the first in the year, but since the ripening process is slow, the farmer might pick his olives as his time permitted. Like the grapes, the olives could have been eaten fresh but were most valued for their oil, which served as substitute for the scarcer animal fats.

c. Grains

The third crop which has been mentioned is grain. Of the grains wheat was undoubtedly the most important. It probably grew best in Galilee. It was planted in the fall when the winter rains had started, sometimes in late October or early November and harvested in May-June. Barley was also widely grown but may have been at times considered a second-class food. Barley was planted at about
the same time as the wheat but harvested about a month earlier.\(^5\)
A third grain was spelt. It is also translated as ‘rye’.\(^6\) It was an inferior kind of wheat and was planted around the borders of the wheat and barley fields.\(^7\)

d. **Flax**

Another important crop was flax from which cloth and rope were made.\(^8\) Flax was harvested a month before the barley, by being hoed off at the ground so as not to lose any of the stalk. After it was cut, it was laid out in the sun to dry.\(^9\)

e. **Dates**

Although there is no explicit mention in the Bible of dates as food, numerous references to the palm tree strongly suggest that its cultivation also played an important part in the life of the farmer. The date palm was known over a large part of the ancient Near East in the south latitudes and in Palestine flourished especially in the Jordan valley north of the Dead Sea.\(^10\)

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5  Ruth. 2: 23  
6  Exod. 9: 32.  
7  Isa. 28: 25.  
8  Judg. 15: 14; Hos. 2: 5.  
9  Josh. 2: 6.  
10  Deut. 34: 3; Judg. 1: 16.
f. Other crops

Other agricultural products included figs and pomegranates; lentils, coarse beans, chick-peas, and cucumbers; and onions, leeks, and garlic for flavouring. Of these the fig was especially important, since it, along with the date, was the main source of sugar in the diet. Of special interest is the sycamore fig; it was specially treated to make it grow larger and more edible. Such passages suggest the general nature of the diet of ancient Israel and hence of the crops were most commonly grown.

Production techniques and their use

Compared to the farmer today in most parts of the world, including modern Palestine, the work of the Israelite farmer was made doubly difficult by the primitive implements which he had at his disposal.

a. Plow

His plow was hardly more than a wooden stick with a small metal point, drawn by oxen. Until Ca. the tenth century B.C. the points were made of copper or bronze, but after that they were made of iron. These were larger and harder but even then hardly more than scratched the surface, perhaps to a maximum depth of five inches. A few references to other operations such as levelling

11 Amos 7: 14.
12 Num. 11: 5; 1 Sam. 25: 18.
13 1 Kings 19: 19.
and harrowing\textsuperscript{14} suggest other processes which may have involved the use of a hoe.\textsuperscript{15}

b. Sickle

Reaping was done with a small hand sickle.\textsuperscript{16} The reaper held the stalks in his hand and cut them off close to the ground with the sickle. This method was still commonly in use in Palestine until Ca. the tenth century B.C. Sickles were made of flints set in a haft; after the tenth century they were made of iron. In both cases they more or less resembled the modern sickle.

c. Threshing instruments

After the grain was cut, it was taken to the threshing place, where the kernels were separated from the stalks. This might be done in any one of several ways: by breaking it out with a stick;\textsuperscript{17} by driving the cattle around on the piled-up stalks until their hoofs gradually trampled out the grain;\textsuperscript{18} by dragging some kind of instrument over the grain.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{14} Isa. 28: 24-25; hos. 10: 11.
\textsuperscript{15} Isa. 7: 25.
\textsuperscript{16} Deut. 16: 9; 23: 25; Jer. 50: 16; Joel 3: 13.
\textsuperscript{17} Judg. 6: 11; Ruth 2: 17.
\textsuperscript{18} Deut. 25: 4.
\textsuperscript{19} Amos. 2: 13; 2 Sam. 24: 22.
d. Winnowing instruments

When the grain was threshed, the next operation was winnowing. Two instruments were used. The former was probably a long-handled fork with several prongs. The latter may have been a shovel-like instrument. In the afternoon the wind started to blow; at this time the winnowing process began. The grain was thrown up into the air, the wind blowing the lighter materials away while the heavier kernels fell to the ground. This was continued until there was little left but a pile of kernels.

e. Sieve

Even then, however, one process remained that of shifting, since in the winnowing process not all the foreign material would be carried away. The implement used for this purpose was the sieve.

f. Seeder

It is doubtful that the Israelite farmer had an instrument for planting seed, although such a seeder, consisting of a tube attached to the plow, did exist in Mesopotamia. Probably the seed was scattered over the land by hand, as in Egypt.

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20 Isa. 41: 16.
21 Jer. 15: 7; Isa. 30: 24.
22 Ps. 1: 4.
23 Amos. 9: 9; Isa. 30: 28.
2. Various foodstuffs

a. Mineral food

In biblical times, as in other times, there were only two kinds of food that were not products of the animal or vegetable kingdom; water and salt. The first was obtained from rivers, lakes, springs, wells and cisterns; the second was produced from the Mediterranean, but especially from the Dead Sea. The Book of Joshua mentions 'the City of Salt'\(^{24}\) which is possibly to be identified with Qumran, where the Dead Sea scrolls were found.

b. Vegetable Food

It is more probable that mankind from the beginning made use of both animal and vegetable food. The dominion given to humans over animals\(^{25}\) included the eating of them. Prehistoric findings point to primitive man as an omnivore. It is only after settling down as an agriculturist that humans became chiefly eaters of vegetable food. Vegetables of different kinds are mentioned in the Bible but more often in post-biblical Jewish literature. Vegetables in general are mentioned in the Book of Daniel.\(^{26}\) Lentils, white and red, the 'red' (brown) thought to be the best variety, were considered very tasty and nutritious.

\(^{24}\) Josh. 15: 62.
\(^{25}\) Gen. 1: 26.
\(^{26}\) Dnl. 1: 12, 16; Isa. 61: 11.
In the desert, the Israelites longed for the cucumber, the melons, the leeks, the onions and the garlic of Egypt. Cucumbers, leeks and onions could be eaten raw with bread, but they could also be cooked. The ‘bitter herbs’ of the passover ritual were probably wild lettuce or wild endive. A ‘dinner of herbs’ was considered a poor dish. The Book of Genesis considers grains and fruits proper human food and assigns ‘evergreen plant’ to the animals. But these herbs are described as a well-known food for humans. The vegetable gardens are mentioned, in the latter passage as supplying the royal kitchen.

Egyptian sources show that fruit trees abounded the Palestine many centuries before it was occupied by the Israelites. So important were they for the economy of the land that to destroy fruit trees in war was forbidden. The parable of Jotham enumerated the most important fruit trees olive, fig and vine.

c. Animal food

Like most Semitic nations, the Hebrews passed through a nomadic stage, during which animal food (meat and milk

27 Num. 11: 5.
28 Ex. 12: 8; Num. 9: 11.
29 Prov. 15: 17.
30 Gen. 1: 29.
31 Gen. 9: 3.
32 Dt. 11: 10; 1 King 21: 2.
33 Dt. 20: 19f.
34 Jgs. 9: 8.13.
products) was the mainstay of their diet. Even the Patriarchs, from Abraham on, were not nomads but transhumants or ‘seminomads’, i.e. though they had their flocks and often went far away in search of good pasture, they also sowed and reaped their own grains. A mixed diet therefore was the rule with them. Abraham offered both animal and vegetable foods to his guests. After the settlement in Canaan, Israel became gradually an agricultural nation and vegetable food prevailed. With the common people animal food was reserved to festival times, mostly in connection with sacrifices.

Among the animals sheep and goats were reared in large numbers. As a meat the goat was less appreciated than the sheep. Goat’s flesh, mostly of the kids, was the cheapest form of meat. Most of the Israelites’ milk came from goats. Milk was consumed both fresh and after it had soured.

The sheep of Palestine were mainly of the fat-tailed species. In honour of a guest or at a festive occasion lambs were slaughtered. Calves supplied a highly appreciated meat, the ‘fatted calf’ of Lucan Gospel.

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36 Gen. 26: 12.
37 Gen. 18: 6-8.
38 Lk 15: 29.
39 Prov. 27: 27.
40 2 S 12: 4.
41 Lk 15: 23.
Although some birds were forbidden, fowls were an important source of food. Fish were especially important for the population in the vicinity of the Sea of Tiberias, but there was also a large import of dried and salted fish from the Tyrian coast to Jerusalem. Water animals without fins and scales were forbidden. No special kinds of fishes used as food are mentioned in the Bible.

d. Food preparation

In general, cooking or broiling took place in the open air, either outside the house or inside. The Book of Ezekiel describes the four kitchens in the four corners of the outer temple court.

Food was prepared by the lady of the house by herself or with servants, both male and female, but it was not considered undignified for a young man to prepare a special dish either for himself or for an honoured guest. In the temple food was prepared by men.

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42 Dt. 14: 12-18.
43 Neh. 13: 16.
44 Dt. 14: 9f.
45 1 King 19: 6; Jh 21: 9.
47 Gen. 18: 16.
48 Gen. 18: 7.
49 Gen. 18: 7.
50 Gen. 25: 29-34.
51 Igs. 6: 19.
Lentils, beans, all kinds of vegetables\textsuperscript{52} and herbs found in the fields\textsuperscript{53} were boiled in a cooking pot. 1 S. 2: 14 mentions four different types of cooking pots, all made of clay. An iron griddle is mentioned in Ezk. 4: 3, a copper pot in Ezk. 24: 11. These utensils were also used for boiling meat. Boiling was the usual way of preparing flesh.

Fish was broiled.\textsuperscript{54} The fish, brought by Tyrian merchants to Jerusalem\textsuperscript{55} was probably dried and salted.\textsuperscript{56} Salt and all kinds of herbal condiments were added to both vegetables and meat, and especially to broth or sauce.\textsuperscript{57}

\textbf{f. Food Regulations}

The rules to distinguish between clean and unclean food were very strict. Since food goes into the body and becomes part of the person, much caution was needed in order to prevent harmful influences from spreading through the body. As a rule, mineral and vegetable foods were considered clean, but if water or food prepared with water was defiled by the carcass of a dead unclean animal, that water or food was considered unclean.\textsuperscript{58} The rules

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} Num. 11. 5.
\item \textsuperscript{53} 2 King 4: 39.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Jn. 21: 9; Lk 24: 42.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Neh. 13.16.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Job. 6: 5.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Jgs. 6: 19f; Isa. 65: 4; Ezk. 24: 10.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Lev. 11: 32-38.
\end{itemize}
about the ‘cleanness’ and ‘uncleanness’ of birds, fish, and insects are given.\textsuperscript{59}

In the New Testament, the food rules were reduced, at least for gentile Christians.\textsuperscript{60} If meat was known to have been sacrificed to idols, it was not to be eaten. In principle the teaching of Our Lord that “there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him”\textsuperscript{61} meant the end of all Old Testament food rules.

\textbf{f. Food supply}

The impression is that in Old Testament times as a rule every household provided food for its own wants. This is certainly true of nomadic life and generally also of the seminomadic life of the Patriarchs. But even after Israel had settled and become an agricultural population, food was produced by every household for its own wants. Every tiller of the soil had also some sheep and goats. Most of them had a few oxen. The towns were the ‘the cities of our tillage.’\textsuperscript{62}

In New Testament times wandering persons had to buy bread.\textsuperscript{63} There was a meat market in Corinth\textsuperscript{64} and sparrows were

\textsuperscript{59} Lev. 11; Dt. 14.
\textsuperscript{60} Acts 15: 20.
\textsuperscript{61} Mk 7: 14-23.
\textsuperscript{62} Neh. 10: 37; Mt 38.
\textsuperscript{63} Jn 4: 8.
\textsuperscript{64} 1 Cor. 10: 25.
sold in Palestine markets. Even in New Testament times most households were self-supporting although a product like oil was then procured from professional shopkeepers.

Irregularities in nature could cause scarcity of food. In such times people tried to buy grain and sometimes wandered far to get supplies. They even changed their abodes in such cases not only seminomads like Abraham and Isaac, but also farmers and town dwellers like Elimelech.

3. Agrarian Laws

Laws related to landed property and cultivated land, including all laws concerning the preservation of soil, regulation of irrigation and protection of rights concerning landed property. The only laws in the Old Testament that can be assigned to this class are those relating to the fallow in the Sabbath year and Jubilee and certain laws of negligence.

The agrarian laws in the Old Testament form a very important part of biblical institutions. In spite of the opinion that those institutions and the agrarian laws are of late date, their antiquity must be held. They are linked in biblical sources to the oldest parts

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65 Mt 10: 29.
66 Mt 25: 9.
67 Gen. 42: 1f.
68 Gen. 12: 10; 26: 1.
69 Ruth. 1: 1.
of legal jurisprudence. In the Old Testament it is, however, closely
linked with religion, as will be seen below.

To grasp the background of the agrarian laws one must turn to
the Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures because almost all
evidence from early times comes from the monuments and tablets
of these two cultures. No literary material is preserved of the old
culture of Jericho or of any other cultures of ancient Palestine. In
Egypt all of life was concentrated around the Nile and irrigation;
even the calendar of the so-called Sothic year was worked out
according to the animal inundation.

In Mesopotamia certain legal codices are preserved that give
us a clear understanding of the legal position in a developed
community. In the code of Hammurabi there are agrarian laws
concerning negligence by the owner or tenant and laws of
irrigation. These laws, and certain other groups of laws such as
those of the Hittites, form part of the background of some Old
Testament laws.

Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that much of the legal
material in the Old Testament originated in the Israelite
community, and is thus to be regarded as native to the Hebrews. In
the Old Testament legal material is closely linked with religion and
with Yahweh. The idea of rest, which is not alien to the ancient
Near East, forms a very important part of the religion of the Old
Testament.
a. Laws concerning damage to immovable property

In the earliest laws of the Old Testament punishments are prescribed for damage done to cultivated land. The Book of Exodus\textsuperscript{70} considers examples of damage to a field or vineyard, with the penalty in each case being full restitution.

b. Sabbath year and Jubilee

Every seventh year, according to the Book of Exodus,\textsuperscript{71} the land was to be fallow.\textsuperscript{72} The Sabbath of the land does not mean that its natural uncultivated increase is to be eaten by the Israelite poor, rather, the probable principle underlying this institution is that the poor must benefit from the blessed harvest of the sixth year. In spite of its close connection with religion, there is a humanitarian undertone observable in this law. The forty-ninth or Sabbath year was followed by the fiftieth or jubilee.

c. The meaning of these laws

The Jubilee was intended to meet the economic evils that befall the poor in ancient societies. The economic climate, with frequent times of war and unfavourable seasons, was not ideal for farming, and a farmer was compelled to borrow. With the laws of the Jubilee concerning restoration of land and the fallow, the danger of an overall slavery was averted. The fallow is prescribed

\textsuperscript{70} Exodus 22: 5f
\textsuperscript{71} Exodus 23: 10 ff.
\textsuperscript{72} Lev. 25: 2-7.
because the land is weary, and the owner lets it rest like a beast of burden or a slave.

d. The execution of Agrarian Laws

It was not harvesting that was forbidden, but only storing up in bins.\textsuperscript{73} The biblical tradition leaves no doubt that the fallow was universally prescribed. The only reference to the execution of the fallow is made in 2 Ch 36: 21, but this is rather vague. In the post-Old Testament there is a reference to the fallow in 1 Macc 6: 49-53.

4. Distribution system

Christ made his apostles witnesses. The early Church in the New Testament times was a witnessing community. It was a sharing community.

And all who believed were together and had all things in common and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all as any had needed.\textsuperscript{74}

So the early Church was
1. a sharing community\textsuperscript{75}
2. a spirit-filled community\textsuperscript{76}
3. a united community\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{73} Lev. 25: 20.
\textsuperscript{74} Acts 2: 40-45.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid. 2: 44-45
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid. 2: 1-13.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid. 4: 32.
4. built in the name of Jesus^78
5. praying and believing community^79
6. proclaiming community^80
7. community nourished by Eucharist.81

Thus the witness of the early community was the typical example for the sharing and distribution system of the foods and commodities.

5. Exchange System – Trade and Communication

The researcher probes into the profile of the study of Trade and Communication. It is the movement and exchange of goods and services that make up commerce. Here it throws light on some major features of trade and transportation in the Biblical world. The term ‘trade’ is based upon one’s occupation in general.82 It contributes to pursuit of prosperity83 and remedy for desperate prisoners, though for lack of honest devices they are considered by Jesus inappropriate. Indeed, the term ‘trade’ remains as an international matter and also King Solomon, who considered it as a kind of special traditional successful model.84

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^78 Ibid. 3: 1-10.
^79 Ibid. 1: 15, 2: 1, 2: 42-47.
^80 Ibid. 5: 41.
^81 Ibid. 20: 7-11.
^82 Ibid. 18: 3.
^83 Gen. 42: 34.
^84 Kings 14: 29; Chron. 1: 16, 9: 14.
To secure a progress, travellers and travel, have played a vital role in transforming a major link in communication. It has its largest history. Since the daytime travel over land reduced the dangers, night travel over land needed moon light for safest progress, sea travel was limited to daytime, voyaging until use of central navigation.

In this respect international travel underlines its nature could be trade, legal business, casual encounter, a deliberate group activity planned. To put it differently, if it was forgotten by travellers, it must have been a future desolation.

**Transportation**

Another noteworthy thing is that transportation and trade were analysed as a human achievement. Before beginning the trade people probably moved to follow food supplies as hunters and gatherers. But the Paleolithic and Mesolithic human life transportation is overland by foot. Later in Egypt, the rivers were used for transport in some locations. This implies no evidence of insufficient grounds moved by crude crafts. Having rendered faithful service the process executed the technological developments that continues to this day.

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85 Acts 19: 29; 2 Cor. 8: 19.
Rivers

To save the city the entire population of Egypt were given an untrammeled water way to the Mediterranean sea. Because the river is evident both for moving people and goods and water available for agricultural development. Therefore, travelling on rivers required some sort of stable vehicles to move goods and water transport devices indicated developments with sufficient large quantities.

Sea

The Maritime trade was introduced by the Phoenicians for substantial proportions. Solomon turned not only for his construction project, but for his maritime development. Both the ship building and ship handling were the new skills to the Israelites of the monarchy. Thus he says seaworthy becomes a benefactor for constructing a project. Similarly Romans were supreme in sail power though they could be able to achieve an unsuccessful attempt.

On the whole, St. Paul’s journey by ship had given some idea of both the normal routing and transportation. On account of travelling in the sea, they had to face indomitable stormy troubles, and to manage to stay for a temporary relief and managed to drift

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86 1 King 9: 26-28.
87 Acts 27: 16-17.
to shore at Malta until the duration of the winter. The above-mentioned sources are prescribed for successful attempts.

**Land Transport**

Land travel was strictly prohibited especially in the major stretches of desert in the biblical period. One could not go on land by river but by walking. Especially animals had been considered, considered as popular runners in all rugged paths. Later on camels were fit for local delivery but unblessed by highway or airports.

In the third millennium B.C. the use of wheeled vehicles is attested in Mesopotamia. Such were noisy but it seemed major improvements in load capacity and ability. Chariots were used in Egypt with teams of four horses. However, footpath was considered the best and essential.

Besides, routes were developed when roads were built. The roads were logically connected to various places and are an essential part of route development. In this basis, stone was the primary construction material in Roman road preparation as well as its paving. The same was used for bridge construction. Thus the parable of the Good Samaritan\(^{88}\) indicated both that travel on roads could be dangerous from thieves but that normal facilities were found worthwhile. Some of the facilities were extensive in order to

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\(^{88}\) Lk 10: 29-37.
accommodate both animals and drivers to handle groups of caravans.

**Trade**

A view of trade was not only essential for a person but also to the cities as well as religious institutions. Though the religious consciousnesses are tied, the Egyptians were concerned with splendid interest in the movement of goods and the accounting of such matters.

**Goods and Services Exchanged**

Just as each man’s personal character must be directed to the public welfare, so too must each man’s property be employed to the public use. Happiness is the result of virtue. Therefore if society becomes prosperous, it looks on certain goods as desirable neither necessary nor acquiring. This is vividly given in the story of Solomon’s dealings for construction goods, services, luxury materials. The next term is ‘Tyre’.\(^{89}\) Tyre is described as the most excellent one for the peoples on many coastlands, with good reason. The term tyre has got its own superiority in making a profitable accessories.

\(^{89}\) 1 Kings 5: 10.
Marketing

From the earliest individual bartering the market ways or market areas are not clear. It seems the temple served as a major gathering point for goods. To utilise the marketing the various special products were available from the producers or processor. Even in New Testament, this style of marketing is reflected in the streets. Biblical references insisted on cottage industry as a mode of marketing in such cases as Jeremiah’s visit to the house of the potter.\(^{90}\) The farther point in shrines became place of an exchange for those unable to supply their own sacrifice materials if not appropriate accommodation.\(^{91}\) Not only that certain products were the result of religious practice but also economically threatened by beliefs rendering them obsolete.\(^{92}\)

Records

The next process is records of trade. The Dead Sea scrolls, i.e., ritual theological and other religious interest attained special attention to economic records. In the vast spectrum of economic texts one finds payment of levies and taxes, records of goods required, materials received. The societies took considerable secure network for the storage of things. There ensued money changing and lending but not major banking institutions outside the temple.

\(^{90}\) Jer. 18: 3.
\(^{91}\) Jh 2: 14-16.
\(^{92}\) Acts 19: 23-41.
Trade agreements were major portions of diplomatic negotiations in national life. Thus record concerning trade in human resources included bills and receipts of slave purchases, as well as manifests of freedom of slaves.

**Means of exchange**

The use of weights and measures fluctuated from country to country and from time to time. The introduction of coinage was traditionally regarded as a sixth century B.C. invention of the Lydian’s. Coins were usually government monopoly sometimes scattered throughout political holdings. There were many varieties of coins used, i.e. metal value, coin, size, design and decoration were thus means of both economic and political control.

Moreover debt was a common social fact. It appeared in Biblical stories as an undesirable condition in both Old Testament and New Testament\(^3\) and delivery from debt became a metaphor for genuine salvation.\(^4\) In the means of exchange equivalents left no mark which the grace of God could be assessed but the grace was more valuable than the most precious pearl a jewel merchant could own.\(^5\)

Above all the expectation of the completion of the fulfillment is as necessary for the attainment of happiness as Jerusalem a city

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\(^3\) 1 Sam 22: 3; Neh. 10: 31; Isa. 24: 2; Prov. 22: 7-26; Matt. 18: 23-34.

\(^4\) Rom. 8: 12-17.

\(^5\) Matt. 14: 45-46.
whose streets were paved with gold and whose gates were made of a single pearl. For such it judged there could be no adequate rate of exchange.

\[96\] Rev. 21: 21.