

29. LAND THEOLOGY: TO STRENGTHENING THE TORAH AS A SOURCE OF EPISTEMOLOGY TEACHING IN GOD’S LAND

By Actavia System

LAND THEOLOGY: TO STRENGTHENING THE TORAH AS A SOURCE OF EPISTEMOLOGY TEACHING IN GOD'S LAND

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to carry out a theological analysis of "land" as one of the important theological themes in the Old Testament. The approach used in this article is an approach with a deductive paradigm. The theological theme of "land" refers to the land that belongs to God which was inherited (nahala) to Israel. The land became one of the prominent features of the series of stories and life in the Old Testament. Israel's responsibility on YHWH's land is to establish the Torah as a source of epistemology for teaching. Strengthening the Torah on God's land becomes the theological starting point in building the paradigm of Christian Religious Education that the Word of God must be confirmed in recognition (response in words) and action (response in action).

Keywords: Land Theology, Torah, Strengthening Torah, Christian Religious Education

INTRODUCTION

Research on the land has been carried out by "Aviv Cohen."¹ Cohen conducted a study of land as a starting point to build the argument that the teaching of geography is connected with nationalism and Citizenship Education as an exploration of history. Roy Charly H. P. Sipahutar² also conducts studies on land. Sipahutar's study of land is in an ecotheological perspective. Both of these studies depart from the same theme, land. If Cohen conducts a study of land from perspective of Citizenship Education and Sipahutar from an ecotheological perspective, then the study conducted in this article is a study on the theme of land theology in the perspective of Christian Religious Education. The "land theology" study in this article is focused on the group of Moses, who entered the land and built in the land of God (YHWH's land is not God's land). Biblical theology based Christian religious education studies must be carried out and reproduced as a way to pave the way for constructive Christian religious education.

The Old Testament speaks of 'land' as "*eretz* and *adamah*." The first term, more often mentioned is also more comprehensive. Land (*eretz*) can refer to the whole earth (Gen. 11: 1). The term land also refers to "land in general (Ex. 8:12; Deut. 11:25) and specifically land as territory (2 Sam. 24:8) and as an area with political boundaries (Deut. 1:5)."³ Instead, the word *adamah*, is connected to the root word (*dm*).⁴ The root *dm* refers to or reflects where humans came from (Gen. 2:7; 3:19; Ps. 90:3; 104:29). And "land as *eretz* and *adamah* is a social entity."⁵

Land in the Pentateuch perspective is an "important theme and even described as a central theme of biblical faith".⁶ This explanation, as discussed by Norman C. Habel in "The Land is Mine."⁷

¹ Aviv Cohen, "Teaching the Land of Israel as Civic Education: A Historical Exploration," *Journal of Geography* 117, no. 2 (2018): 51–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221341.2017.1307437>.

² Roy Charly Sipahutar, "Kajian Ekoteologis Tentang Konsep Tanah Dalam Perjanjian Lama Dan Implikasinya Bagi Pemeliharaan Tanah," *BIA': Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen Kontekstual* 2, no. 2 (2019): 166–78, <https://doi.org/10.34307/b.v2i2.95>.

³ Horst Dietrich Preuss, *Old Testament Theology: Volume 1* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 118.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ N. C. Habel, *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Mineapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 3.

⁶ T. Desmond Alexabder and David W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVersity Press, 2003), 487.

⁷ Habel, *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies*, 3.

Land is also an important subject in the Historical Books. “The land was seen as an integration of theological motives (cf. Boda and McConville⁸),”⁹ because “under Joshua’s leadership, the land would be conquered and inhabited as in the book of Joshua.”¹⁰

Eretz refers to the earth, in general or to the land, specifically, to the theme of land area in the Bible. When the word *eret* is used, it carries or gives the image of God’s sovereignty over the entire earth because of his ownership rights. This is the idea of God “walking” on earth, how He promises to “walk” with His people on the ground (*ha eretz*) if they are obedient, and in God living with humans permanently on the new earth (Canaan).

The Hebrew word for land, “*eret*,” is the fourth noun used in the Old Testament.”¹¹ This word refers to the common word “earth, cosmology and land, territorial. However, when combined with, *ha eretz* it will refer to the land of Canaan, specifically.”¹²

Israel’s liberation from Egypt was seen as an act of God’s redemption and presented a “special” people, placed in a certain place. This place is often referred to as “land” in the Hebrew Bible. As discussed above, the term “land” has become one of the central themes of theology and main ethics of the Israeli religion. The land became the “binder and sign” of God’s relationship with Israel. Land is a means of developing a relationship between God and His people. What about the expression “the land of Israel?”

The use of the expression “the land of Israel” is rarely used in the Hebrew Scriptures (1 Sam. 13:9; Ezr. 40:2; 47:18; 1 Chron. 22: 2; 2 Chron. 2:17).¹³ Instead, the Hebrew Bible generally refers to that land as “the land of Canaan” or land of Canaanites and Amorites. This expression is still used long after Israel settled in the country to remind Israel that the land is not wholly owned by Israel, Israel only “leases” land from YHWH because God chose to give it to Israel and Israel has “land rights”¹⁴ with strict terms of treaty.

The strictness of the treaty can be seen in YHWH’s request to Joshua⁴ “Giving (*ntn*, giving) land is a central theme in the book of Joshua (cf. George¹⁵).”¹⁶ The first fulfillment of the promise of land is recorded in Joshua 1. The passage shows the notion of fulfillment, that is, God gave land to Israel as an inheritance but, “Israel still needs to go conquer and receive land.”¹⁷ In Joshua 1:12, Israel will change their land ownership from a promise to complete ownership. The chronology of Joshua 1-5 indicates that, “Israel crossed the Jordan ... This chronology in Braber Wesselius’s

⁸ Mark J. Boda and J.Gordon McConville, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 489.

⁹ T. Bill Arnold and H.G.M Williamson, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 639.

¹⁰ J. A. Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1999), 165.

¹¹ Victor Hamilton, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 74.

¹² J.G Millar, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL, 2000), 518.

¹³ W. Janzen, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, 4th ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 144.

¹⁴ Habel, *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies*, 3.

¹⁵ W. George, “The Book of Joshua: Heroic Saga or Conquest Theme?,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 12, no. 38 (1987): 15–32, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.1177/030908928701203802>.

¹⁶ Richard D. Nelson, *Joshua: A Commentary* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 31.

¹⁷ Stephen C. Russell, “Enemies, Lands, and Borders in Biblical Crossing Traditions,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History* 4, no. 1–2 (2018): 163–76, <https://doi.org/10.1515/janeh-2017-0024>.

conclusion in his review of the Jordan crossing is of great significance, and the time indication in Joshua 1-8's chronology is very serious."¹⁸

Representatively, "Joshua became a model (character) in obedience (post Moses)."¹⁹ "Joshua must obey the law as it was told to Moses (7-8)."²⁰ This aspect of obedience to the law is what must be carried on for generations in the land given by God. This means, the law (*Tora*) must be enforced on God's land.

2 DISCUSSION

Land theology in the Old Testament

According to Dyrness,²¹ the Old Testament story of election and covenant begins with God's promises to the forefather, Abraham. The central element of the promises, as stated and repeated in the stories of the patriarchs, was that God would give land to Abraham and his descendants.

Norman C. Habel explains the six biblical earth ideologies. Of the six themes, three themes can be seen as an important part of this article. "Land is given as conditional land. This is theocratic ideology and the land belongs to God."²² These conditions refer to the law enforcement on all land given. The law must be responded by "fear and trembling" relating to the *shema* and loving God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind (Deut. 6:4,5). The land is the territory of God and God's law covers the land. This means, the ideology that Habel refers to as (Deuteronomy) promotes a theocracy which God (overcomes) gave it to Israel. The law became a symbol of God's authority over the land and there were no other gods on the land.

This land (will be) "owned by many families; personally, God bequeathed (*nahal*) the land."²³ God gave the land to Israel as a promotion to the ancestors of Israel. This certainly refers to God's promise to the ancestors of Israel, as well as promoting YHWH as a mighty and powerful God in heaven and on earth (over land).

The land revealed "prophetic ideology and God as inheritor of the land."²⁴ YHWH, Israel and land are a series that describes the close relationship that exists and (all three) are in a covenant in which Israel and the land are bound to God. So there is no tolerance for other gods to be in that union (three parties). Deviations (on the part of Israel) would undermine the unity of the relationship. The ideology is theocratic ideology. Deviations are also pollutant actions on land (pollutant actions are not in an ecological context but prophetic), the land must become idolatry free land.

In the "Etan Levine" perspective²⁵ geographically, the land of Israel is the Center of Biblical literature. This is in accordance with the unique relationship between God and the chosen people. The land will be inherited to all subsequent generations as a legacy. This is an indispensable important part of the covenant between God and the nation of Israel.

¹⁸ Marieke den Braber and Jan Wim Wesselius, "The Unity of Joshua 1-8, Its Relation to the Story of King Keret, and the Literary Background to the Exodus and Conquest Stories," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 22, no. 2 (2008): 253-74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09018320802661218>.

¹⁹ Rolf Rendtorff, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2010). Rendtorff views Joshua as a connecting factor between Deuteronomy and Joshua.

²⁰ Nelson, *Joshua: A Commentary*, 32.

²¹ William Dyrness, *Tema-Tema Dalam Teologia Perjajian Lama* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2014), 95-107.

²² Habel, *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies*, 38-53. See, the first theme, *Land as Conditional Grant: A Theocratic Ideology*.

²³ Ibid., 54-75. Second theme, Land YHWH's Personal *nahalah*: A Prophetic Ideology.

²⁴ Ibid. 75-96. Third theme, Land YHWH's Personal *nahalah*: A Prophetic Ideology.

²⁵ Etan Levine, "The Land of Milk and Honey," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 87 (2000): 43-57, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030908920002508703>.

For Preuss,²⁶ the description of the land which consciously reaches beyond its empirical character, seeks to underline the beauty and size of the territory given by YHWH to His people. The promised land is easily marked as “land flowing with milk and honey.”²⁷ Preuss also provides a topographic analysis of the land flowing with milk and honey, that is, “This land is not depicted as the land of the gods or painted with the colours of heaven but is depicted as habitable land even more likely as a nomadic land. Milk and honey are likely to be food from the point of view of farmers who use the land.” Observing Levine’s analysis, Levine is closer to Roland de Vaux,²⁸ that unlike Israel, their ancestors were not like Bedouins who were camel breeders. The ancestors of Israel raised goats and sheep, when we encounter them in history, the ancestors of Israel came as a settled people. This is one factor we can take to limit comparisons when comparing the wandering of the Bedouins and the ancestors of Israel.

The land to be inhabited is “the land that was promised to the ancestors of Israel and will be realized through the group of Moses in the narrative of the group of Moses.”²⁹ John van Seters³⁰ sees the land in the theological theme as pure land given by God. The land that YHWH, your Lord has given you, is equal and often uses the law or introduces the law as a legal motivation, ethical or religious attitude. The function of law is to be the regulation and protection of life and blessings on the land given by YHWH. “Land is immovable property of God whereas Israel is the moveable (divine) property of God.”³¹ The three of them are bound in a treaty relationship.

Seters added that, “There is a connection or connectivity between land and law. Israel as God’s people entered and inhabited God’s land.”³² On that land the law of God (*tora*) became the absolute regulation as conveyed to Moses and passed on to Joshua to govern Israel’s social, religious, political, economic, and educational life. Social, religious, political, economic and educational regulations are based on **law (*tora*)**. Land connectivity and law cannot be seen literally (land and law) but rather **see it in Israel’s relationship with God on that land**. Israel’s socio-political situation is a marker **of the situation of Israel’s relationship with God**, whether near-far, harmonious-not harmonious. In that situation it will be known whether the law is enforced or not.

“Preuss”³³ **sees the land as one of the prominent features** **the series of stories and life in the Old Testament**. **Israel’s departure from Egypt had the goal of entering the promised land (Ex. 3:71)**. **In presenting the promise of land as conquest**, where the traditions of the ancestors and the group of Moses are united in a Deuteronomistic summary which is then given a Deuteronomistic interpretation in which all of Israel (Josh. 1:2; 3:1,7) is united in different groups. In addition, the gift of land is another purpose of the Deuteronomistic creed in Deuteronomy 26:5-9. YHWH gave the land as a gift from His promise to maintain the country’s character as a legacy. In the Psalms, there is the word land as *nahala* from Israel (Ps. 37:18; 47:5; 105:11; 135:12). Only in Psalm 79:1

²⁶ Preuss, *Old Testament Theology: Volume 1*, 117-121.

²⁷ Levine, “The Land of Milk and Honey.”

²⁸ Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Social Institutions*, 1st ed. (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1965), 4.

²⁹ Preuss, *Old Testament Theology: Volume 1*, 119.

³⁰ John van Seters, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2009), 228-229.

³¹ Norbert Lohfink, *Great Themes From The Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982), 119. YHWH’s land is not God’s land is a concept development from Lohfink’s theological theme, “People of God.” Lohfink call it “the people of Yahweh not the people of God. When we search then there is presupposition about “people of Yahweh not people of God. Lohfink’s argument based on these data is that there will be differences in the mention of people of Yahweh where Israel as Yahweh’s people is not the god of Moab or the god of Moabites. So the use of the term YHWH’s land not “god” land is that the land was given by YHWH and not another god.

³² Seters, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis*, 229-230.

³³ Preuss, *Old Testament Theology: Volume 1*, 120.

calls it your land. Psalm 79:1 puts YHWH as the owner of *nahala*. “Israel as God’s chosen people received the land as a gift and lived on the God’s land.”³⁴ Legally, the life that Israel lived on the land took place under YHWH’s regulations as the land owner. “YHWH was identified as the owner and ruler of the land and Israel lived under the *torah* as stated in Deuteronomy. The law will apply throughout Canaan and Israel must agree.”³⁵ What Habel conveyed was a theocratic ideology of land, the position of Israel and the theocratic regulations that apply to inherited land.

Theocratic ideology frames YHWH’s claim of ownership of land and people (Israel), also framing the divine relationship between God and Israel. This is a claim from above (divine claim). In line with claims from above, Israel has the right to claim the land as land owned by Israel (claim from below) for generations. Israel as the holder of land rights.

For Barth, “The land of Canaan occupied by Israel was ²⁴ft from God.”³⁶ The land that God gave was a consequence and necessity on the part of God as fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. This promise applies to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:8,18) The promise to give land was also given to Isaac (10n. 26:3) and Jacob and his descendants (Gen. 28:13).

The involvement of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as heirs of the promised land implies that ¹⁷promise of giving the land was not fulfilled in the near future while they were alive, just as God’s promise to make Abraham a great nation did not occur in a generation (Gen 12:2; 17:2). Even though the promise was certain, during Abraham’s lifetime the land could not yet be claimed as his own. The Bible describes Abraham as a “stranger and foreigner” (Gen. 23:4; 35:27). Jacob also described himself as a stranger before Pharaoh like Abraham and Isaac, wandering as a stranger (Gen. 47:9). The Odyssey confronts the ancestors of Israel (Abraham) living in the tension between the promise and its fulfillment. The fulfillment of a promise is always expected to be the end of the tension.

In Preuss perspective,³⁷ this promised land is not just space but rather a place. A space can be understood as something that is open and neutral, but this is not the case with a place that can be understood as a space that has a special history and meaning, where important events occur, important words are spoken, and where oaths and promises are made. So that the land occupied by Israel is not just space, but a ¹⁶ce that provides an identity relationship with YHWH. Israel and land are two social entities in the Old Testament. “The history of the Israelites in the Old Testament may be said to Center on the promised land (Canaan) which would later be called “the land of Israel” (*eretz yisrael*) or “holy land.”³⁸ Land is a sign of relationship and treaty and “through the composition of Joshua 13-19, the level of holiness of the land is achieved. The place of worship in Shiloh is of concern because God is present at Shiloh.”³⁹

Barth asserted that,⁴⁰ theologically speaking, the Israelites believed that God ruled over the whole world, so according to that belief that the very small land of Canaan was also one of His domains.

³⁴ C.J.H. Wright, *God’s People in God’s Land: Family, Land, and ³roperty in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 3-4. In chapter 1, Wright describes the Land and Israel’s Relationship to God. The land was given in fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. The promise of the land to Abraham as a meeting point ¹¹ee the history of the land.

³⁵ Habel, *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies*, 36-39.

³⁶ Christopher Barth, *Teologia Perjanjian Lama*, 2nd ed. (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2001), 5.

³⁷ Preuss, *Old Testament Theology: Volume I*, 118-119.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ J. Cornelis De Vos, “‘Holy Land’ In Joshua 18:1–10,” in *The Land of Israel in Bible, History, and Theology*, ed. Jacques van Ruiten and J. Cornelius De Vos, 124th ed. (Leiden-Boston, 2009), 61–72, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004175150.i-474.33>.

⁴⁰ Barth, *Teologia Perjanjian Lama*, 5.

This is the basis for the overall activity of the Israelites in the land of Canaan. Land was given to meet the daily needs of Israeli families. The division of land was carried out by Joshua by casting lots (Josh. 14:1-2; 18:1-10). “Verse 14:1,2 is the beginning of the division of land.”⁴¹ “Through Joshua the land was shared (Deut. 19:14). Thus, the boundaries of the family land are fixed and not removed (Deut 19:14). Whoever shifts the boundaries of someone else’s land will be cursed (Deut 27:17). Every eviction in the Old Testament, even if it was done by a ruler and was legally legitimate, was still against God’s law (Hos. 5:10).”⁴²

Land is given so that people have a permanent relationship with God. Wright said, “Land is proof of this special relationship. The Lord called the Israelites my firstborn (Exodus 4:22; compare with Deut. 32:5-6, 18-19 and figuratively in Deut. 8:5).”⁴³ Israel knows that they are God’s people (community of Jewi²¹) because they have received the inheritance. This gift proves the relationship between God’s covenant with Abraham and the Sinai’s covenant with the whole nation (group of Moses).

Drummond explains that, “As sons, the Israelites had a part (*kheleq*) in God’s land (Josh. 22:25, 27), a plot of land called inheritance (*nahala*) or inheritance (Deut. 4:21, 38; 12:9; 15:4; 19:10; 26:1).”⁴⁴ In the story of The Exodus, God called Israel as “my firstborn” (Ex 4:22), who wanted to be delivered from captivity with the intention of bringing him to the promised land.

Law (*torah*) as a Source of Epistemology Teaching

According to Nelson, “The view of the promise of land is an indication of the time of Josiah.”⁴⁵ The concept of total conquest (Josh. 11:23) is “a snare to the optimism of nationalism at that time.”⁴⁶ The land boundary in Deuteronomy 1:7 and Joshua 1:4 is an imperialism based on David’s hegemony in Syria. On the other hand, “Edom, Moab, and Ammon were removed from the promise of the land by *historians* (Deut. 2:5, 9, 11), so Josiah did not conquer it. The tribal lands across from Jordan (Deut. 2:26-3:8, 12-13; Josh. 1:10-18; 12: 1-6; 2 Kings 10:32-33) were Josiah’s targets to expand his territory. The interest in trans-Jordan was understood as a history of exile.”⁴⁷ For the disposal editor, the land was an ambiguous gift, because it could lead to destruction if they did not “listen” to God (2 Kings 21:9). It was not surprising, therefore, that returning from exile was a form of hope (1 Kings 8:50). Listening to God, parallels to enforcing the law and keeping away from destruction.⁴⁸

Theologically, Nelson holds that, “Deuteronomy presents the law for life in the land given by YHWH.”⁴⁹ This land came from the promise given by YHWH to the patriarchs (6:10¹ 8, 23; 8:1; 11:9, 21). The land is very good land (6:10-11; 8:7-9; 11:9-12). The land was the place where Israel lived to obey the law (6:1, 10; 12:1; 16:18; 17:14; 18:9; 19:1), to create the social justice described in it. The land is a safe place to “rest” (12:9-10; 25:19; compare with 15:14). However, the continuity occupation of the promised land and life depends on obedience (4:26; 7:12-15; 11:8-

⁴¹ Nelson, *Joshua: A Commentary*, 176.

⁴² Barth, *Teologia Perjanjian Lama*, 5.

⁴³ Christopher J.H Wright, *Hidup Sebagai Umat Allah: Etika Perjanjian Lama* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1993), 53.

⁴⁴ Celia Deane Drummond, *Teologi Dan Ekologi* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2011), 29.

⁴⁵ Richard Nelson, “The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History: The Case Is Still Compelling,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 29, no. 3 (2005): 319–37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089205053477>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy* (Louisville: Westminster, 2004).

9, 13-17; 25:15; 30:16-18).⁵⁰ Good soil is a reference to land that is full of milk and honey, and deserts to be inhabited.

The final form of Deuteronomy, “The giving of land is a framework that threatens the exile from there, after which the possibility to return again (4:25-31; 29:21-30:10).”⁵¹ Mayes differs from Nelson, where he links the land and the law. “Both are bound by a treaty.”⁵² The covenant came after the Israelites left Egypt, where this “was a deliverance from God.”⁵³ According to Mayes, that the relationship established by the treaty (covenant) “was regulated by the law established by the contract.”⁵⁴ The law “was not addressed to the court, but rather to the teaching.”⁵⁵ Jean Lousi Ska said that, “The Torah is to be didactic as well as liturgical and judicial (the court).”⁵⁶ Torah is embodied in advice and encouragement that persuades the targeted people. The legal motives in which casuistic and apodictic were contained in the clauses of the Book of Promises (17 percent) and Deuteronomy (60 percent). The types of clauses were: ethics (Deut. 24:6); cult theology (Deut. 17:1); Israel's salvation history (Deut. 15:15).⁵⁷ Everything was integrated with the purpose of persuasion in the context of teaching rather than in the context of lawsuits.

Land is the Center of Deuteronomy theology and it springs from traditions and for special purposes. “This context was in the Israeli occupation of the land. This was likely in the early post-occupation period. It was through this tradition that Israel was judged for losing ownership of the promised land.”⁵⁸

Mayes was of the view that, “The book of Deuteronomy has emphasized promise and pressed it as the central of theology.”⁵⁹ Land is a “focus of promise, as a place of reward for obedience or a place where the law is obeyed, as well as an expression of Israel's status as YHWH's chosen people. Life itself for Deuteronomy is living in a land that is in a covenant with YHWH.”⁶⁰ The basis of Israel's obedience refers to the *Torah* on God's land. And on that basis they were taught (didactic) and put on trial (judicial).

The regulations that will take place on the land belonging to God are regulations that refer to “*torah*”⁶¹ as law. “The *TORAH* occupies the primary place of authority, significance, and influence in the mediation of Yahweh's purpose, presence, and power to Israel.”⁶² In this regulation, the *torah* functions as a mediator, director, and instruction on how Israel should live. This is an “epistemological”⁶³ reference for Israel's teaching. “*Torah* is the authoritative rendering of this

⁵⁰ Nelson.

⁵¹ Nelson.

⁵² A.D.H. Mayes, *The New Century Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1981), 72.

⁵³ S.R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary On Deuteronomy* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 102.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Jean Louis Ska, “From History Writing to Library Building: The End of History and the Birth of the Book,” in *The Pentateuch as Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance*, ed. Garry N. Knoppers and Bernard M. Levinson (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 145–70.

⁵⁷ Mayes, *The New Century Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy*, 72.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 73–81.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 81.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Frank Crusemann, *The Torah: Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 1. The *thorah* is in the theme of law.

⁶² W Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Mineapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 578.

⁶³ Noh Ibrahim Boiliu, *Filsafat Pendidikan Kristen* (Jakarta: UKI Press, 2017), 221.

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relationship between YHWH and Israel.”⁶⁴ The *Torah* is not only a mediator, instruction and reference, but the *Torah* is a medium and YHWH’s approach demonstrates His power. As a medium of demonstration, the *Torah* was presented to Musa as the subject of the first receiver but as the interpreter and first giver. After Moses, there were “the Levites, Joshua, Samuel, Josiah, and the prophets”⁶⁵ as the subject of the *Torah* mediator. “The *Torah* is concerned with transmitting the one will of one God creator”⁶⁶ and giving it to Israel as a guide. The *Torah* as God’s will must be responded by Israel. The response includes “response in words and response in action.” The response in words, Claus Westermann refers to “lament and praise ... In Lament and praise people speak to God,” while the response in action is “in action includes the execution of what is commanded for daily life as well as the specific act directed towards God in sanctification, particularly the sacrifice.”⁶⁷ “The response in words and the response in action are two sides of Israel’s response to God through the *Torah* as a mediator.

Mark O’Brien through his article “Deuteronomy 16:18-18:22: Meeting the Challenge of Towns and Nation.”⁶⁸ O’Brien conducted a critical analysis with a synchronous approach to suggest that this section aims to maintain Israel’s firm commitment to the *Torah*. The land that will be occupied by many cities is a challenge for Israel to enforce the *Torah*. The *Torah* is YHWH’s special characteristic and status that is separated from others. Israel must not withdraw YHWH on YHWH’s land. “Israel must pay close attention to the *Torah*.”⁶⁹ The order to enforce the law (*torah*) does not only relate to Israel receiving land and inheritance. Both land and law “were given as a consequence of a relationship with God.”⁷⁰ Important issues in the life and faith of the Israelites as Israel prepares to enter the promised land. The most important of them is the relationship between God and Israel, that is, “The direct relationship between Israel’s obedience to the divine law which must be carried out as a ‘rule of life’ in the promised land.”⁷¹ There is no other choice but law (*torah*) in the regulation of the life of Israel and God as the legal regulator.

The order is a continuity of “Israel’s election and responsibility”⁷² as a “Jewish community. The Jewish community is an Israeli-Exodus community as an Exodus community.”⁷³ The Exodus community is a community with a Jewish faith. Israel is called “the people and community of Jewish” so “all of Israel’s law is connected with YHWH, Moses, and Sinai”⁷⁴ even the law to be carried out “is not only related to human norms but to show the will of God and God is behind this jurisprudence.”⁷⁵

Israel is entitled to the inheritance of the land while Israel is prosecuted and has the responsibility to enforce the law (*Tora*). Removing other gods from YHWH’s presence is imperative in line with

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⁶⁴ Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, 578.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 585-588.

⁶⁶ Crusemann, *The Torah: Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law*, 3.

⁶⁷ Claus Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 2010), 28-31.

⁶⁸ Mark O’Brien, “Deuteronomy 16:18-18:22: Meeting the Challenge of Towns and Nations,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33, no. 2 (2008): 155–72, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089208099254>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Mirosław Łanoszka, “The Relationship between God and Israel as a Biblical Portrayal of the Bond between God and the Person in the Light of Deuteronomy 1:1–4:43,” *The Person and the Challenges. The Journal of Theology, Education, Canon Law and Social Studies Inspired by Pope John Paul II* 4, no. 2 (2014): 5, <https://doi.org/10.15633/pch.658>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Preuss, *Old Testament Theology: Volume 1*, 46.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 81.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

the commandments in the Decalogue. The Decalogue is “God’s will for Israel”⁷⁶ in the land of inheritance while affirming “monotheistic formula.”⁷⁷

Through Israeli law initiated by YHWH, we can see (its) moral dynamics expected by YHWH. In the statement, “Be holy because I am holy” it is important to look at the moral dynamics of Israeli law. The features of “holiness are truth, justice.”⁷⁸ Observing Birch’s explanation of *The Moral Authority of Israelite Law*, “Law becomes the identity of the community, law becomes a moral identity, and law is a divine will”⁷⁹ because “law as *torah*.”⁸⁰ Thus law (*torah*) becomes Israel’s identity. Therefore, it is unethical if Israel as YHWH’s withdrawal from Him and worship other gods, or escape from the *Torah* (Josh. 1:8; Ezr. 7:10). Law (*torah*) is also a source of Israel’s moral epistemology teaching. In other words, Israeli morality is based on the teaching of law (*torah*).

The response in action is the internalization of the *Torah* in daily life. The response in words must be in line with the response in action as proof that there is no gap between “words (recognition) and action.” Both of these had to be demonstrated by Israel when they were on God’s land. The *Torah* must be enforced or responded to in words and actions. The absence of these two things is an indication of Israel’s negligence in establishing the *Torah* on God’s land.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Land theology is preceded by a treaty, in which Israel was previously freed from oppression in Egypt. Thus, Israel has obtained the blessing of deliverance and also the promise of land in Canaan. The purpose of the land given is not only a promise of blessing from God, but also to live in law or the *Torah* which aims to be didactic or educational, which coexist or together in it is liturgy and court or judicial. This education is manifested in the liturgy to worship God, and also in the life of social society, namely a fair trial. This is land theology. Thus, the land extends beyond the limits of matter, but the law for education or didactics, and fair worship and trials.

The land that will be occupied is a challenge for Israel in enforcing the *Torah*. The *Torah* is YHWH’s special characteristic and status that is separated from others. Israel must not withdraw YHWH on YHWH’s land. Israel must pay close attention to the *Torah*. It is unethical if Israel as YHWH’s withdrawal from Him and worship other gods, or escape from the *Torah*. Israel is required to provide a response in words (confession) and a response in action.

There is a connection or connectivity between land, law (*torah*), and Israel as God’s people. Israel entered and inhabited God’s land. On this land the law of God (*torah*) must be an absolute regulation governing Israel’s social, political, economic, religious and educational life. Social, political, economic, religious and educational regulations are sourced from the epistemology of teaching on law (*torah*).

Israel’s life reference must refer to the law (*torah*) as the regulation. Disclaimer and attempts to avoid (deviate) the law have an impact on economic, social and political life, and vice versa.

Response in words and in action must be shown by Israel when it is on God’s land. The *Torah* must be enforced or responded to in words and actions. The absence of these two responses in God’s land as an indication of Israel’s negligence in strengthening / enforcing the *Torah*.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 102.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 111.

⁷⁸ B.C. Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament, Ethics, and Christian Life*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster, 2009), 148-156.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 164-167.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 171.

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In the context of Christian Religious Education, efforts to strengthen the Word of God must be in line with efforts to teach the Word of God. The status of Christianity is not only the verbal response (response in words) but also the response in action.

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29. LAND THEOLOGY: TO STRENGTHENING THE TORAH AS A SOURCE OF EPISTEMOLOGY TEACHING IN GOD’S LAND

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