

THE MOSAIC ECONOMY

„There never was a saner law than the Mosaic. It loved nature, could not bear to see the fields impoverished, and decreed that they should not be. It could not bear to see the human form mutilated, and declared only the unblemished beautiful in the sight of God. It did not love to harass or burden the dumb creation; the ox that trod out the corn was not to be muzzled. The young, tender tree was protected, and was not unduly taxed to yield abundance. The law was full of a great sense of the good of nature, a great sense of the glory of humanity, and of the large and lovely harmony without. ... There never was so careful a law about what we call sanitation. It cared for the cleanliness of the body. It feared infection, and separated those with infectious diseases from the great multitude, declaring them unclean. Its laws of ceremonial uncleanness had great health in them—a real human sanity. Then, though it knew slavery, as all the ancient world did, the slavery it knew was the gentlest, and most generous. Every man taken slave could in the sabbatic year, regain his freedom, go forth a free man. Its laws, too, of property, were noble laws. They made property sacred, did not allow its accumulation into a few hands, or into one, but secured its fair and equal distribution. Every Jubilee year the land was redistributed: the old families that had lost it, might again possess their inheritance. If by misfortune or by crime a man had lost his estate, he had a chance given to redeem himself and his place in the community, to go back into his old and better order. Capital, also, was carefully guarded, that it should not become an immense and oppressive power in the hands of the rich, to make them extortionate over the poor. Jewish law is the justest law to the poor yet framed, to the man that toiled, to the man prepared honestly by sweat and labor to earn his bread. Do it justice. I ask for it from you only justice, but justice I do ask; and that is but a just demand.”—*Sel.*

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