

Ezekiel 46:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after it shall return to the prince: but his inheritance shall be his sons' for them.

Analysis

But if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after it shall return to the prince—Land given to עֶבֶד ('eved, 'servant/slave') reverts in שְׁנַת הַדֶּרֶוֹר (shĕnat hadĕrôr, 'year of liberty/release')—the Jubilee year (Leviticus 25:10, Isaiah 61:1-2).

But his inheritance shall be his sons' for them—Sons retain inheritance permanently; servants only temporarily. This preserves family land tenure, preventing permanent alienation of tribal inheritances—a Jubilee principle (Leviticus 25:23-28). Land ultimately belongs to God; families are stewards across generations. The prince's gifts to servants revert, ensuring sons' inheritance remains intact. This demonstrates that God's ultimate inheritance (salvation, eternal life) belongs to sons (believers—Romans 8:14-17, Galatians 4:6-7), not hired servants. Sonship, not servanthood, secures eternal inheritance.

Historical Context

Jubilee year (every 50th year) returned ancestral lands to original families, released debt-slaves, and reset economic inequalities (Leviticus 25). There's debate whether it was consistently observed, though Jeremiah 34:8-22 references slave release (if related). Ezekiel's vision includes Jubilee principles, showing that even in millennial kingdom, restorative justice operates. Christ proclaimed Jubilee's fulfillment (Luke 4:18-19)—ultimate liberation from sin's slavery.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does Jubilee's land restoration teach about God's ultimate ownership?
2. How does servant vs. son distinction relate to salvation (servanthood vs. sonship)?
3. How did Jesus proclaim Jubilee's fulfillment (Luke 4:18-19, Isaiah 61:1-2)?

Interlinear Text

וְכִי H3588	יֵתֵן H5414	מִתְּנָה H4979	נַחֲלָתוֹ H5159	לְאֶחָד H259	מֵעַבְדֵי יוֹ H5650
	But if he give	a gift	but his inheritance	to one	of his servants
וְהָיָה H1961	לּוֹ H0	עַד H5704	שָׁנָה H8141	הַדֶּרֶךְ H1865	וְשָׁבָה H7725
			then it shall be his to the year	of liberty	after it shall return
לְנָשִׁיךְ H5387	אֶל H389	נַחֲלָתוֹ H5159	בָּנָיו H1121	לָהֶם H1992	תִּהְיֶה H1961
to the prince		but his inheritance	shall be his sons		

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 25:10 (Parallel theme): And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.