



THE EMERGENCE AND DYNAMICS OF LAND FROM A PENTATEUCHAL PERSPECTIVE: RECONCEPTUALIZING SOCIO-POLITICAL GRAVITY, COSMIC ORDER, AND THE JEWISH CONCEPT OF *REALA*

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Abstract

*This paper presents a comprehensive theological and philosophical exploration of the emergence, sustenance, and ontological significance of land from a Pentateuchal perspective. It establishes that within the Torah, land is not merely an inert geological asset or an economic commodity; it is the foundational "basis of gravity"—the central axis—for human socio-political organization and religio-cultural systems. Utilizing a tripartite triangular model, this study illustrates the dynamic, covenantal relationship between God the Creator, Humanity created in the Imago Dei, and the Land as a responsive participant in divine cosmic order. Furthermore, this paper explores how land defines Judaism, utilizing the Jewish philosophical concept of *Reala* (objective reality embedded in divine teleology) to understand the land of Israel as a literal, historical, and metaphysical space. To provide an intercultural dialogue and contextual alignment, this Pentateuchal framework is juxtaposed with the traditional Igbo worldview of *Omenani* (cultural tradition and cosmic order) and the concept of *Ikpu-alu* (land purification), showing how biblical principles purify, elevate, and fulfill indigenous understandings of land and morality. Aim/Objective: This study examines land as the foundational basis of Igbo philosophy of *Omenani* (*Omenani*), portraying it as God's (*Chukwu Okike's*) sacred creation and earthly altar. It explores the theological centrality of land in regulating morality, ethics, cosmic order, and communal identity in traditional Igbo society, while conducting a comparative analysis of parallels with Jewish theological concepts of land (*Eretz Israel/Reala*) to highlight shared understandings of divine ownership, stewardship, moral defilement, and covenantal relationship. Method: The research draws on extensive Igbo scholarly sources, oral testimonies from elders, etymological analysis of *Omenani*, and key traditional concepts such as *Nso Ani*, *Ani Obu*, and *Ikpu-alu*. It employs a comparative theological approach, juxtaposing Igbo cosmology with biblical texts (e.g., Genesis, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Psalms, 1 Kings) and Jewish philosophical notions of *Reala* to identify structural and conceptual resonances. Findings: Land is etymologically and structurally inseparable from *Omenani*, serving as the sacred sanctuary of divine-human fellowship, a dynamic moral agent responsive to human conduct, and an inalienable ancestral heritage. Profound parallels exist between Igbo and Jewish societies: both view land as ultimately belonging to God, defiled by major sins (murder, idolatry, etc.), requiring ritual purging to restore cosmic harmony, and functioning as the arena for covenantal blessings or curses. These similarities stem from shared creational monotheism, stewardship theology, and moral-cosmic order.*

Keywords: Land, *Omenani*, *Reala*, Covenant, *Ikpu-alu*, Stewardship, Cosmic order



Introduction

This paper examines the emergence, sustenance, and ontological significance of land from a Pentateuchal perspective. It establishes that land is not merely an inert geological commodity but the foundational basis of gravity—the central axis—for human socio-political and religio-cultural systems. Utilizing a textual framework complemented by biblical and Near Eastern scholarship, this study investigates how land came into existence under divine mandate and why it serves as the host for both the immanent Creator and humanity, who are created in the *Imago Dei*.

The research introduces a tripartite triangular model to illustrate the dynamic, covenantal relationship between God, Humanity, and Land, demonstrating that human ethical conformity to divine law directly regulates ecological and territorial stability. Furthermore, this paper contrasts the Pentateuchal concept of land with Islamic jihadist-conquest frameworks and African ancestry-blood-based paradigms.

Land as the Divine Foundation of Igbo *Omenani*: Theological Perspectives on Land as God's Creation and a Comparative Analysis of Parallels Between Igbo and Jewish Societies. This study aims to examine the architectural and structural centrality of land within the Igbo philosophy of *Omenani* as a sacred creation of God (*Chukwu Okike*), while establishing a profound theological and conceptual parallel with the traditional Jewish understanding of land (*Reala*). Additionally, it seeks to explore the contemporary ecological and social implications of divorcing human morality from creational frameworks. The paper utilizes a multidisciplinary methodology, integrating an extensive literature review of materials written by Igbo scholars with oral testimonies from contemporary traditional elders. It applies a theological lens and a comparative analysis to evaluate the shared cosmological and anthropological worldviews between traditional Igbo society and biblical Jewish traditions. The study reveals that *Omenani* is etymologically and structurally inseparable from the land, acting as a physical-spiritual intersection where God and humanity meet. Striking parallels exist between Igbo and Jewish societies, including the view of land as a sacred, inalienable domain (*Ani Obu* mirroring Naboth's vineyard), the cosmic defilement of the earth by human transgression, and the mandatory requirement for ritual purging (*Ikpu-alu* or biblical atonement) to restore cosmic equilibrium. Furthermore, contemporary global crises—such as climate change, pandemics, and ecological degradation—are found to be the direct structural penalties of modernity's rift between human conduct and divine creational order. The paper positions Igbo land philosophy as inherently theistic, moral, and structurally aligned with Jewish covenantal theology, arguing for a contextual harmony that purifies *Omenani* via biblical principles—such as elevating *Chukwu*'s supreme sovereignty—rather than erasing indigenous wisdom. Ultimately, it asserts that humanity must reject secular materialism and technocratic supremacy, engage in global solidarity, and recognize God as the ultimate owner of the cosmos to heal the land.

The study further shows the indigenous worldviews and ancient theological systems, that land frequently transcends its utilitarian definition as mere economic real estate or physical asset. Within Igbo cosmology, land serves as the dominant, architectural foundation that defines the cosmos, regulates human conduct, and establishes social law. It is the very basis for the Igbo philosophy of *Omenani* (or *Omenala*), drawing its ultimate meaning and credibility from its status as a sacred creation of God (*Chukwu Okike Abiama*). Etymologically derived from *Ome* (conduct or deed) and *Ani* (land), *Omenani* literally translates to acting according to what obtains in the land, underscoring that human righteousness is entirely measured by this philosophy.



This structural centrality of the soil is not unique to the Igbo; a profound conceptual parallel exists within Jewish biblical theology, where the land (*Reala*) is central to covenant, morality, law, and divine relationship. In both traditional societies, the earth is viewed as a physical-spiritual intersection—an earthly altar—where the Creator meets humanity in direct fellowship. This comparative framework reveals shared understandings regarding the cosmic defilement caused by human sin, the necessity of ritual purging (*Ikpu-alu* or biblical atonement), and the concept of stewardship over absolute ownership.

However, contemporary modernity has systematically fractured this ancient link by separating the physical management of the earth from divine moral law. The resulting secular materialism and technocratic exploitation have provoked a mechanistic penalty from the earth, manifesting as severe ecological degradation, pandemics, and global climate crises. By exploring the internal logic of both *Omenani* and Jewish *Reala*, this paper investigates how a theological realignment and a return to the principles of creational stewardship can address the planetary emergencies facing our shared global community.

Land occupies a central, irreplaceable position in the worldview and philosophy of the Igbo people. Far from being mere economic property or physical territory, land (*Ani*) constitutes the architectural foundation of *Omenani*—the comprehensive Igbo system of conduct, morality, ethics, law, and cosmic order. Etymologically embedded in the very term *Omenani* (*Ome* “conduct/deed” + *Ani* “land” + *Na* “in/on”), the philosophy derives its meaning, authority, and relevance directly from the land as a sacred creation of *Chukwu Okike Abiama*, the Supreme Creator.

In Igbo cosmology, the earth functions as God’s earthly altar and the primary sanctuary where the divine meets humanity. It is dynamically responsive to human behavior: moral violations (*Nso-ala*) defile the land, disrupting cosmic harmony and inviting consequences, while righteousness sustains fertility, community, and divine fellowship. Ancestral land (*Ani Obu*) remains inalienable, linking individuals to patrilineal heritage, communal rites, and historical identity, with strict customs against permanent sale and provisions for redemption. This paper investigates these theological perspectives on land as divine creation within Igbo *Omenani* and undertakes a comparative analysis with Jewish understandings. It seeks to illuminate shared ancient cosmological roots rooted in monotheistic creational sovereignty and stewardship, while proposing a biblically informed renewal of *Omenani* that honors indigenous wisdom and addresses the moral and ecological dislocations of modernity.

Finally, it explores how land defines Judaism, utilizing the Jewish philosophical concept of *Reala* (objective reality embedded in divine teleology) to understand the land of Israel as a literal, historical, and metaphysical space. The paper concludes by analyzing how contemporary global crises—including ecological degradation and pandemics—are mechanistic responses of a defiled land reacting to breaches of universal physical and moral laws. This profound reverence for land finds striking parallels in Jewish theology, particularly in the concept of *Eretz Israel* and the philosophical notion of *Reala*—where spiritual realities must manifest in concrete historical and geographical terms. Both traditions affirm God’s ultimate ownership of the land (Psalm 24:1; Leviticus 25:23), its susceptibility to moral defilement, the necessity of ritual and legal purging, and its role as the stage for covenantal relationship, blessing for obedience, and judgment for transgression.



This paper investigates these theological perspectives on land as divine creation within Igbo *Omenani* and undertakes a comparative analysis with Jewish understandings. It seeks to illuminate shared ancient cosmological roots rooted in monotheistic creational sovereignty and stewardship, while proposing a biblically informed renewal of *Omenani* that honors indigenous wisdom and addresses the moral and ecological dislocations of modernity.

Introduction: The Metaphysics of Land and the Creational Problem

The discourse on land consistently occupies the center of human history, philosophy, and socio-political organization. Land is the primary matrix within which human life unfolds, yet its origin, purpose, and management remain subjects of intense contestation. To adequately address the question of land, one must look beyond materialist economics or political geography and investigate its creational ontology. This paper discusses land based on how it came into existence, how it is understood by the peoples of the world, and the dynamics of its sustainability. In doing so, it considers foundational variables that shape the creational account and land dynamics in human history: namely, creational issues, creational law, land allotment or inheritance, and the human quest for land.

The Problem of Human Speculative Reason

Creation is an unfathomable mystery that cannot be unraveled by the autonomous human mind. Any intellectual attempt to decode the origins of the universe without the direct revelation of the Creator—who is Himself a mystery—inevitably ends in severe errors of interpretation, meaning, and purpose. Historically, metaphysicians, philosophers, theologians, and scientists who attempted to discover the origins of the universe prior to, or independent of, the Pentateuchal narrative arrived at speculative ideas and theories devoid of true, revelatory creational knowledge.

As Langdon Gilkey (1965, Chicago: University of Chicago Press) postulates, metaphysicians and philosophers look at the entire universe and seek to find its meaning and purpose based on abstractionism, which strips the material world of its personal, covenantal origin. Commenting on this epistemological limitation, Yusufu Turaki (2001, Kaduna: Zahir Publishers) notes:

"Human speculative reason in metaphysics or philosophy is also limited in scope. Human speculative reason is a false place to start seeking answers to the ultimate question of creation and life." (p. 45)

Without a divine "creational manual," humanity misinterprets the land, treating it either as an object of raw exploitation or as an autonomous deity to be worshiped, rather than as a sacred trust established by divine decree.

Ancient Near Eastern Conceptions vs. Pentateuchal Revelation

The doctrine of land and its creation account has occupied human thought since antiquity. To understand the uniqueness of the Pentateuchal perspective, it must be juxtaposed with the myth-based cosmologies of the ancient Near East—specifically those of the Akkadians, Sumerians, and Babylonians. In the Babylonian epic *Enuma Elish*, for instance, the material world and the dry land are formed out of the violent, severed carcass of the defeated chaos-monster Tiamat. Creation in these traditions is born out of cosmic conflict, caprice, and polytheistic strife; land is a byproduct of celestial warfare, and humans are created as slaves to feed the gods.

None of these ancient Near Eastern accounts received their understanding of creation as it was received in Judaism. In Judaism, the creation account was not the product of mythological



evolutionary speculation but was received through God's direct revelatory knowledge to Moses as recorded in the Book of Genesis. While Islam similarly claims that creation was given by revelation to Mohammad, the Messenger of Allah, as recorded in the Qur'an, the theological architecture of the Pentateuch remains distinct in its moral, relational, and covenantal presentation of the land.

1. The Emergence of Land from a Pentateuchal Perspective

In the Pentateuch, the emergence of land is presented as an intentional, orderly, and speech-act-driven event initiated by the sovereign will of YHWH. The narrative of Genesis 1 and 2 demonstrates that the land did not evolve by blind chance, nor did it emerge from primordial violence. Instead, God prepared and turned an uninhabitable, chaotic state (*tohu va-bohu*) into a habitable land.

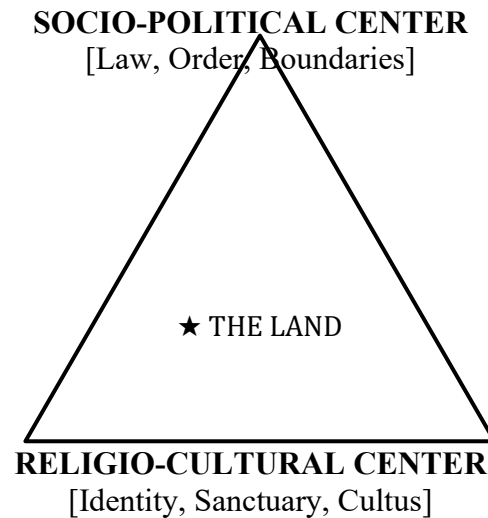
The Divine Speech-Act and Separation

The primary mechanism of the land's emergence is the divine command. In Genesis 1:9, the text records: This command established a physical law that separated the land from the waters, bounding the chaotic seas and creating a stable, physical order designed specifically for human habitation. The command came from the mouth of God, a spiritual and moral Being, establishing creation and using His word to sustain and establish these structural boundaries (Hebrews 1:3). The land emerges as an act of grace. It is a beautifully designed environment meant to give humanity a place of rest, productivity, and communion. Christopher J. H. Wright (1997, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press) notes that one of the central pillars of the faith of Israel was that the land they inhabited was uniquely YHWH's land:

"One of the central pillars of the faith of Israel was that the land they inhabited was YHWH's land. It had been his even before Israel entered it (Ex. 15:13, 17). This theme of the divine ownership of the land is often found in the prophets and the Psalms. Far more ever than it is never called 'Israel's land', it is referred to as 'YHWH's land.' At the same time, although it belonged to YHWH, the land has been promised and then given to Israel in the course of the redemptive history. It was their possession, their inheritance, as Deuteronomy repeatedly describes it." The Pentateuch establishes that land exists first and foremost in relation to God. It is His property by virtue of creation, and its subsequent availability to humanity is framed entirely around the concepts of gift, promise, stewardship, and inheritance.

2. Land as the Basis of Gravity for Human Civilisation

Land is not merely a physical stage upon which human history is acted out; it is the fundamental "basis of gravity" that holds human socio-political systems and religio-cultural identities together. Far beyond its value as economic real estate, land serves as the ultimate lens through which a worldview determines holiness, measures socio-religious defilement, and regulates human conduct. It forms the immutable foundation for morality, ethics, attitudes, social practices, and judicial administration. Most crucially, the earth is the sacred sanctuary where the divine Creator meets mortals in direct fellowship.



The Socio-Political Center

Socio-politically, land provides the objective criteria for human organization: boundaries, governance, and jurisdiction. When the global community or tribal units form legal systems, those laws require a territorial sphere of enforcement. The Pentateuch reveals that God Himself initiated this territorial ordering:

This text is a clear demonstration of God's universal sovereignty over His creation. In His sovereign will, He assigns all nations and tribes with their respective lands in accordance with His divine purpose (Psalm 74:17, Acts 17:26). Political stability depends on the recognition of these divinely superintended boundaries. Land provides the material basis for sovereignty, citizenship, and distributive justice.

The Religio-Cultural Center

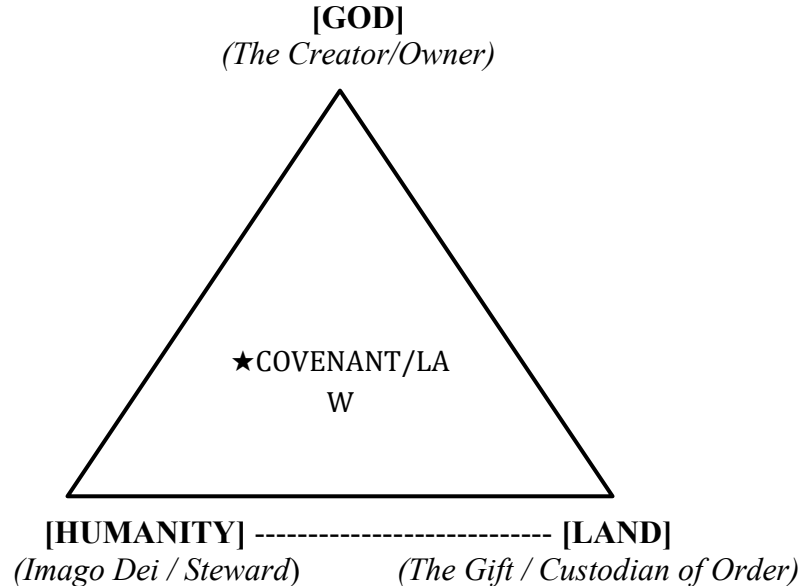
Religio-culturally, land serves as the custodian of sacred space and communal identity. It is the locus of the sanctuary, the place where the immanent God chooses to dwell among His people. Culture is intrinsically tied to geography; agricultural seasons, sacrificial altars, historical memories, and ancestral inheritances are rooted in specific soil. Land functions as a visual and tangible source of identity. It tells a community who they are, where they belong, and what their collective destiny entails. As oral testimony from elders corroborates, God created the earth to be a holy place to sustain human living, meaning that whenever humanity sins against the land, the land dynamically pursues the offender.

3. The Tripartite Relationship: God, Humanity, and Land

The theological core of the Pentateuchal worldview lies in an unbreakable, three-dimensional relationship. In Judaism, there is a distinctive bond of relationships that connects the people to God and land. This tripartite covenantal relationship unifies the three bodies (God, humanity, and land) that are tied by God's universal theistic laws. This relationship can be effectively conceptualized using a **Triangular Shaped Design**, where God, Humanity, and the Land occupy the three vertices,



and the connecting lines represent the covenantal laws and moral obligations that bind them together.



The Vertices of the Tripartite Triad

1. **God (The Sovereign Creator):** Positioned at the apex of the triangle, God is the absolute owner of the land ("The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof"). He sets the physical and moral laws governing the cosmos.
2. **Humanity (The Moral Agent):** Created in the image and likeness of God (Imago Dei), humans are endowed with a unique status. In Genesis 1:26, God said: "Let us make man in our image after our likeness" and let them have dominion over his creation. In Genesis 2:7, God formed man out of dust from the ground and breathed His breath into his nostrils, and man became a living being. The breath he received gave worth, dignity, and reasoning. By this act, mankind shares, though imperfectly and finitely, in God's nature—that is, His communicable attributes (life, personality, truth, wisdom, love, holiness, and justice)—and thus has the capacity for spiritual fellowship with Him.
3. **The Land (The Material Matrix):** The land acts as the recipient of human action and the physical manifestation of divine blessing or judgment. Land is not only a creation set up by an act of law, but it is also designed to host both the creator and humans who are created in his image. It is a place where the immortal God designed to express his relational nature with human creation.

The Dynamics of Sustenance: Physical and Moral Laws

The lines connecting these vertices represent the dual systems of law inscribed by the Creator into the cosmic order: **Universal Physical Laws** and **Universal Moral Laws**. The sustenance of the land depends entirely on the equilibrium between these two systems.

The Universal Physical Laws

These laws are the spoken words of God that came from His mouth during the act of creation. They are a demonstration of His creative powers that brought physical creation into existence. God's physical laws govern His physical order and creation. These laws, however, are not eternal; they are



subject to time, meaning they will expire at God's appointed time. The law functions in a mechanistic manner by determining the cause and effect of physical creation and upholding the physical and material order of creation. Whenever any action initiated by a human agent is not consonant with the laws that establish land, land reacts against what it perceives as a contrary law, having been programmed at creation to act negatively whenever an infringement is imputed into her. As Turaki (2001, Kaduna: Zahir Publishers) notes: "...it behaves mechanistically as a result of physical laws which God inscribed into creation. The universal physical laws are not moral in their functions but mechanical because all causal relationship and outcomes had been programmed creationally by its creator." (p. 62)

The Universal Moral Laws

The universal moral laws are resident in God. They are not part of creation. They are rooted and derived from God's moral nature, character, and attributes. These laws are eternal since they are resident in God and cannot be vacated by any law. Primarily, they are designed to sustain the moral order of creation. God has designed these laws to maintain a moral equilibrium between Him (God) and moral agents (human beings). Moral laws ensure harmony, peace, unity, and sequence in the physical order and with the creator. According to Turaki (2001), moral principles: "...assume universality based on the fact that (1) God as the creator is the only source of all existence in the universe (2) creation itself reflects its universal nature and scope. The moral principles are what we call the universal moral law." (p. 78) It has its root in God and it is the essence and bond of relationship between the creator and humanity.

The Ecological Spillover of Human Sin

The land acts mechanistically whenever there is an infringement or contrary order. But without law and order, creation and humanity are nothing but chaos and anarchy. Human conduct and actions in the design of God are supposed to conform to God's nature, character, action, and attributes, such as love, justice, faithfulness, and holiness. Any breach by human conduct and actions that violates any of these laws (moral and physical) will result in total disorderliness in the creation order. This in return will bring curse, pain, disease, separation, hopelessness, plague, unproductiveness, and finally physical and spiritual death.

The climax of human disobedience to God's creational laws and order through their conduct and action separates humanity from God the creator. God being immanent in his creation though not being part of creation, his presence makes land a holy place. But this ceases whenever and wherever his land has been corrupted or defiled by human conduct and action. It is the presence of God in a place or land that makes such a place holy, not the land on itself. When human beings sin against the Creator, the act of sin affects the moral-spiritual order on one hand and the universal physical order on the other hand, generating independent penalties. On the moral law, the relationship with the Creator is broken and severed, which results in moving from physical death to spiritual death, while the penalty for breaking the physical law results in a curse to the land.

4. Defining "Judaism" and "Reala"

To fully capture the Pentateuchal perspective on land, we must explicitly define the religio-historical framework of Judaism and the philosophical tool of interpretation known as *Reala*.

Judaism

Judaism is defined as the monotheistic, covenantal religion, culture, and comprehensive way of life of the Jewish people. It is structurally anchored in the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew



Bible), which contains the divine revelations, laws, and creational accounts received by Moses from God. Far from being a mere collection of abstract dogmas, Judaism is defined by a distinctive, tripartite bond of relationships that connects Israel to God and the land. This framework unifies God (the sovereign Creator and owner), Israel (the covenant people), and Eretz Yisrael (the physical Land of Promise) under universal and particularistic theistic laws. In Judaism, faith is explicitly organized around a historical and spiritual journeying in and out of this land.

Reala

Reala is defined as the philosophical concept of objective reality embedded in divine teleology. Derived from theological realism, *Reala* posits that spiritual covenants, divine promises, and moral mandates are not abstract, symbolic, or purely allegorical ideas; rather, they must manifest in literal, concrete, historical, and material reality.

In understanding the Jewish concept of land, *Reala* explains that the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is a physical space characterized by specific geographic boundaries, dirt, water, and agricultural capacity. It means holiness is materialized: the execution of the Torah's laws requires physical soil. For example, letting the land rest during the Sabbatical Year (Shmita) or paying agricultural tithes are material obligations performed on a literal earth. *Reala* demonstrates that the land is an active, objective partner in the covenant—it possesses a real structural existence that responds mechanistically to human moral compliance or defilement.

How Land Helps in Defining Judaism through *Reala*

Through the lens of *Reala*, land is not an optional backdrop for Judaism; it is definitional. Because Judaism demands the actualization of God's moral character within a visible, historical society, the physical land provides the necessary material canvas. The land defines Judaism because the covenant remains incomplete without its territorial realization. Under *Reala*, the land is recognized as YHWH's exclusive property, loaned to Israel as a permanent inheritance that cannot be sold in perpetuity (Leviticus 25:23-24). If the people maintain moral purity, the land reflects divine favor through material abundance; if they defile it, the land literally vomits them out (Leviticus 18:25). Thus, *Reala* prevents Judaism from dissolving into a disembodied philosophy, anchoring its religious identity firmly to the holiness of a literal, physical soil.

5. Comparative Frameworks: Pentateuchal, Islamic, African, and Igbo Traditions

To fully comprehend the ethical weight of the Pentateuchal concept of land, it must be contrasted with the alternative geopolitical and existential frameworks found in Islamic theology, generalized African traditions, and the acute Igbo worldview of *Omenani*.

The Islamic Concept of Land Inheritance and Jihad

In Islam, the concept of land is not as it is in traditional settings or Judaism. In Islam, all lands belong to Allah and his prophet, Allah's messenger, and are given to the Muslims to own and rule. As Turaki (2001) writes:

"In Islam, an ancestral land cannot be just had, it must be conquered or be humiliated and subjugated and taken over through a jihad... Land must be rid of its ancestry and be turned into an Islamic land. Land has no ancestry because those who own such land are infidels who are in a state of war against God and his Messenger. Land belongs to God and infidels who hate God have no right to it. Land must be rescued from their hands through a jihad, otherwise, it remains a Dar-al-Harb, the abode of war." (p. 112)



The Islamic concept of land and land dynamics are the ideas that shape and propel Muslims to see land as something that should be kept and recovered from non-Muslims for purification.

This concept is derived from Islam's account of creation: the Qur'an states that "Allah created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, in six days" (7:54). After completing the creation, Allah "settled Himself upon the Throne" (57:4) to oversee His work, creating "from water every living thing" (21:30). The Qur'an describes that Allah created Adam from sounding clay, from mud moulded into shape (15:26).

However, the Qur'an does not explicitly define the person of Allah as a moral Being, nor does it show Allah as a relational Being who formed man in his image and likeness; if that had been defined, it would have initiated a platform for a moral relationship to exist between a moral creator and a moral agent. It would have provided the basis to show how their relationship affects the land in a time of any breach. Furthermore, the Qur'an does not state any responsibilities for natural Muslims on how they should care for the land, manage, and maintain it, and what happens to the land if their conduct violates the law of creation. The concept of law focuses more on horizontal relations: *Ibada* (religious practices) regulates religious life, while *Mu'amalat* (transaction) regulates social conduct under the divine umbrella of *Sharia*. Under the doctrines of *Fitrah* and the covenant, Muslims view themselves as natural persons with a right to inherit Adam's land, from the Garden of Eden to every available space on the planet.

The African Traditional Definition of Land

In the African traditional concept of land, land inheritance is ancestry-blood-based and is exclusive only to those who have a blood-ancestry link. Land to the traditional African is received in trust from their ancestry and shared. It must be kept, defended, and honored. Land is a bond between the living and the dead. It helps to shape their eschatological beliefs on where they should spend their eternity, serving as a place where they will eventually join with their ancestors. Land creates pictures that elevate its status to a position of exuding life and holiness, thus making it deserve honor, sacredness, and respect. In the light of these beliefs, land can neither be sold nor given to a stranger to inherit.

Reconceptualizing Igbo *Omenani* through Biblical Theology

A profound intersection occurs when evaluating the specific worldview of the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria. Within this worldview, *Omenani*—the traditional corpus of moral, ethical, social, and cultural codes—functions as the ultimate framework for communal harmony and spiritual alignment. Etymologically, *Omenani* is a compound word comprising a verb and a noun. The word "*Ome*" is an action, which suggests acting according to our land or according to our tradition, conditioned and shaped by the Igbo philosophy of land. T. Uzodinma Nwala defines it through the phrase, "*Anyi neme Omenala*"—we are acting according to tradition (doing that which obtains in the land).

Nkeonye Otakpo explains *Omenani* as an action derived from a conjunction of *Ome* and *Ani*. *Ome* means "as it is done" (3rd person impersonal from *ime*, meaning "to do", "to happen", "to obtain"). *Omume* means conduct, deed, and righteousness. *Ani* refers to land or earth, which is highly symbolic because it points to a source of life and a representation of *Chukwu* (the Supreme Creator God), while *na* is a preposition denoting "in" or "on". *Omenani*, in its summation, draws its relevance, meaning, purpose, and credibility from the Igbo understanding of land, its creation, and its sustenance from *Chukwu Okike Abiama*.



In traditional cosmology, the earth goddess *Ani (Ala)* is revered as the physical and spiritual foundation of morality and the custodian of the land who judges human conduct and ensures communal equity. This traditional emphasis on equity resonates deeply with Genesis 1:27 (“He made them male and female”). Furthermore, the traditional reverence for the sacredness of the land aligns perfectly with biblical theology, which establishes that “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof” (Psalm 24:1) and recognizes ground as sacred when housing God’s presence, such as the burning bush in Exodus 3:5.

Other scriptural parallels reinforce this respect for the earth:

- **Leviticus 25:23-24:** God commands that the land must not be sold permanently because “the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers,” proving that the land belongs to the Creator.
- **Leviticus 25:1-7:** The establishment of the “Sabbath year,” where God commanded the Israelites to let the land rest every seventh year, prohibiting farming or pruning to ensure the earth could replenish itself.
- **Psalm 24:1:** Reaffirms that “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it,” reinforcing the requirement for honorable treatment of the physical world.

Dimension	Pentateuchal / Judaic Concept	Islamic Concept	African Traditional Concept	Igbo Omenani Concept
Primary Source	Divine Revelation to Moses (Torah)	Divine Revelation to Mohammad (Qur'an)	Ancestral Bloodline and Oral Tradition	Chukwu Okike via the Philosophy of Land
Ultimate Ownership	YHWH absolutely; Humans are tenants	Allah absolutely; delegated to Muslims to rule	Held in trust by the living for the ancestors	Chukwu Okike; Ani as custodian
Mechanism of Acquisition	Divine Promise, and Allotment, Covenant	Geopolitical Conquest (Jihad) over infidels	Bloodline continuity and lineage inheritance	Inalienable Ancestral Heritage (Ani Obu)
Ecological Condition	Tied to moral purity and obedience to God	Regulated by horizontal Sharia/Mu'amalat	Tied to ancestral veneration and burial ground	Tied to moral integrity and avoiding Alu

Reconceptualizing Inheritance: *Ani Obu* and Naboth's Vineyard

The Igbo tradition of holding land as an inalienable ancestral heritage has direct scriptural precedents, such as the biblical account of Naboth’s vineyard in 1 Kings 21:3. In the Igbo traditional concept, this ancestral heritage is called *Ani Obu*, and it is never for sale. *Ani Obu* is what defines and links an individual to the history of the land and their patrilineal heritage to their ancestors. It defines an individual's inalienable rights to communal membership and participation in communal rites.

If a member violates the corpus of the community's moral, ethical, and cultural codes—which derive their meaning from the concept of land—they can be completely ostracized. This is why land in traditional Igbo society is never sold in public; even when sold, it must be to a close relative and remains fully redeemable whenever the seller desires to buy it back at a given period of time. Reinterpreting Ani through biblical principles grounds the concept of creation care and



environmental stewardship, showing that the land is not a source of independent indigenous worship but a manifestation of God's dominion.

Reconceptualizing Spiritual Intermediaries

The Igbo world is highly spiritually charged. Historically, the Igbo recognize the Supreme God (*Chukwu* or *Chineke*) as the Creator, while acknowledging earthly deities and spirits (*Alusi*) as intermediaries and guardians of local domains. This hierarchical structure shares a remarkable affinity with biblical theology, where angelic beings and ministering spirits exist under the total sovereignty of the Almighty God.

Through the biblical prism, the supreme transcendence of *Chukwu* is elevated to its fullness in Christ. The concept of divine presence is no longer localized in multiple earthly *Alusi*, but unified in the omnipresent Holy Spirit, while the role of traditional intermediaries naturally transitions into the foundational doctrine of Jesus Christ as the sole mediator between God and humanity (1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 12:24).

When this cosmic equilibrium is breached by human wrongdoing, traditional Igbo society initiates *Ikpu-alu*—a ritual cleansing literally translated as "dragging evil out of the land." This purification highlights a striking parallel between Igbo *Omenani* and traditional Jewish society. In both cultures, fundamental crimes that defile human sanctity, the purity of the land, and the personhood of God are graded as abominations (*alu*) requiring immediate legal and spiritual purging through atonement or corrective sacrifices. Scriptural precedents across Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy mirror this exact mechanism, demanding the eradication of evil to keep the dwelling place of God unpolluted. Major offenses, such as murder, theft, and idolatry, contaminate the land and necessitate systematic purging to restore cosmic equilibrium and divine fellowship.

However, contemporary *Omenan* practices diverge from biblical mandates by cultivating a "double allegiance" through the introduction of surrogate idol altars and unauthorized *Alusi* deities on what is traditionally understood as God's earthly altar, which compromises the absolute divine sovereignty of God over the earth. This introduction of surrogate deities mimics historical compromises inherited from ancient migrations, leading to spiritual alienation, a cursed environment, social decay, and divine withdrawal. By aligning the Igbo worldview with the monotheistic, Abrahamic model of direct fellowship with God, *Omenani* can be structurally transformed and renewed, reframing traditional morality from a system of ancestor-enforced coercion into a vibrant covenantal relationship with the Creator.

Defilement: *Omenani* *Ikpu-alu* and Jewish *Tihur* (טיהור) Purging

Omenani, by its very structure and essence, has nothing to do with paganism. Therefore, any idea, belief, or practice that emerges within *Omenani* but bears the hallmarks of paganism—or aligns with customs devoid of the community's shared moral and ethical values, and runs contrary to the purity of the land (*Ala*) and the moral character of *Chukwu Okike Abiama*—is paganistic in nature and cannot form a genuine part of the *Omenani* concept. *Omenani* is fundamentally a cosmic and social order rooted entirely in moral integrity, ethical values, and spiritual purity. Any practice aligned with corruption, injustice, or the denial of rights violates the sacred purity of the land (*Nsọ Ani*) and represents a corruption of the tradition itself.

Similarly, in Jewish context, we could also see parallels in how abominable acts demand immediate cleansing/purging in traditional Jewish society. Purging can be explained based on the kind of act committed by a moral being. The most direct Hebrew word for "purging" or "purification" is *Tahor*



(טְהוֹר), which means to cleanse or become pure, or *Tihur* (טִּיהוּר) for the active process of ritual cleansing. If you are referring to the spiritual “purging of sins” mentioned in the Bible, the primary Hebrew word used is *Kaphar* (כָּפַר), which translates to atone, cover, or wipe away sin. Depending on the exact context of your study, here are the most specific terms used in Jewish scripture and tradition: *Kaphar* (כָּפַר): Used frequently in the Torah to describe the purging/covering of guilt. This is the root word for *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement), a holy day entirely dedicated to the cleansing and forgiving of sins. *Tahor* (טָהוֹר) and *Tamei* (טָמֵא): The fundamental biblical concepts of “pure/clean” and “unclean/defiled”. The active verb for purifying or making something clean is *Metaher* (מָטָהַר). *Barar* (בָּרַר): A Hebrew word meaning to sift, select, or refine. It is often used metaphorically for the process of spiritual purging or refining. Here are biblical texts referencing different moral acts classified as abominable before God. Each act has its level of intensity of wickedness attached to it, as we have also seen Igbo *Omenani*.

Deuteronomy 24:7

“If anyone kidnaps a fellow Israelite and treats him as a slave or sells him, the kidnapper must die. In this way, you will purge the evil from among you.

Deuteronomy 17:7,12

“The witnesses must throw the first stones, and then all the people may join in. In this way, you will purge the evil from among you.”

“Anyone arrogant enough to reject the verdict of the judge or of the priest who represents the lord your God must die. In this way, you will purge the evil from Israel.”

Judges 20:13

“Give up those evil men, those troublemakers from Gibeah, so we can execute them and purge Israel of this evil.” But the people of Benjamin would not listen.”

Purging In Judaism

Sin is so abhorrent to God that it cannot coexist with him. The same should be true for his people. God is holy, and he expects his people to reflect his holiness (Levi 11:45; 19:2). God required severe measures to remove sins and sinners from the covenant community. God offered forgiveness, but only for the truly repentant; those who hardened their hearts could expect God's judgment—a devouring fire, a purging process that devours sinners and their sins and leaves nothing behind. (Deu 9: 3; 13:5; Isa 33: 14; Heb12:28-29). This explanation is in tandem with the dragging of alu out from the covenant community in Igbo atonement of *Ikpu alu*. Such cleansing is meant to heal the community of believers and deter orders from rebelling against the Lord (Deu 17:13). (NLT, Commentary on Deuteronomy 17:2-13: Purge the Evil, 2008, p341)

6. Contemporary Implications: Modernity, Pandemics, and Ecological Crisis

The ancient Pentateuchal laws governing the relationship between human morality and material geology carry profound implications for how modern society treats the land. Modernity—characterized by secular materialism, industrial exploitation, and technocratic hubris—has systematically divorced the physical laws of the earth from God's universal moral laws.

The Mechanistic Penalty of Modern Disobedience

Looking at Genesis 1 and 2, God prepared and turned the uninhabitable land into a habitable land, given as a gift to keep, a promise, and an inheritance. But whenever human beings sin against the Creator, the act of sin affects the moral-physical order on one hand and the universal physical order on the other hand. When humanity disobeys, just as Adam and Eve did, the land is cursed, and human relationships are severed with God. The penalty for breaking the physical law results in a



direct curse to the land: it creates war, makes areas unlivable, drives climate change, starvation, land degradation, poverty, unproductiveness, social disharmony, pain, disaster, disease, and death. One of the phenomenal expressions of these diseases in modern history is the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic can be understood in the light of human conduct and actions on land. The good land reacts so negatively because the laws that brought it into existence have been breached (Genesis 1:9-14); human action has failed to realize that land is sustained by law (Hebrews 1:3) and functions strictly under law and order (Genesis 2:15, Leviticus 18:25). Hence, the world must seek the face of God for His divine intervention and healing (2 Chronicles 7:13-15).

Global Solidarity and Theological Realignment

This perspective is in direct tandem with Pope Francis' Easter Message of 2020 to the world during the global health crisis. The Pontiff stated:

"I encourage political leaders to work actively for the common good, to provide the means and resources needed to enable everyone to lead a dignified life and, when circumstances allow, to assist them in resuming their normal daily activities. This is not a time for indifference, because the whole world is suffering and needs to be united in facing the pandemic. This is not a time for self-centeredness, because the challenge we are facing is shared by all, without distinguishing between persons. Let us not lose the opportunity to give further proof of solidarity, also by turning to innovative solutions. The only alternative is the selfishness of particular interests and the temptation of a return to the past which is where the world is going therefore divorcing what would enable it to overcome the rivalries of the past- that is common solidarity."

The Pontiff's charge is driven by the need to dismantle whatever has falsely replaced God in our world today—be it science, technology, or unchecked materialism—and restore the recognition of the Creator (Replacement Theology). The gift of land in biblical accounts began with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and extended to the nation of Israel, and it must be kept in sacred trust until Christ returns.

Research Findings

The findings of this research on land demonstrate that land provides a people with a multiplicity of values that shape their social, cultural, traditional, economic, political, and religious life. The core conclusions are summarized as follows:

- a. **Land as a Source of Identity:** Land serves as a fundamental source of cultural and religious identity. The physical spaces where communities are established define their historical continuity, communal rights, and connection to the Creator.
- b. **The Custodian of Law and Order:** The land operates as a physical mirror of human morality. Because it is bound by mechanistic physical laws programmed at creation, it reacts negatively with curses, plagues, and ecological degradation whenever human moral agents violate the eternal moral laws of God.
- c. **The Tripartite Covenant:** As demonstrated by the triangular design, human socio-political and religio-cultural systems rely on a structural balance between God, Humanity, and the Land. Breaking the vertical relationship with God automatically disrupts the horizontal relationship with the soil.
- d. **The Material Reality of Realta:** Through the lens of Realta, Judaism proves that spiritual promises are tethered to literal geography. The land is an active participant in the covenant, requiring tangible, environmental stewardship and ethical purity to maintain its productivity and host the Divine Presence.



- e. **Intercultural Harmony and Purification:** The parallel between Jewish purging of abominations (alu) and Igbo land purification (Ikpu-alu) demonstrates a shared cross-cultural understanding of cosmic defilement

Conclusion

The text demonstrates that land is not merely a physical asset but the spiritual, moral, and architectural foundation of both Igbo *Omenani* and Jewish theology. The striking parallels between these two cultures—rooted in a shared worldview of monotheistic creational sovereignty, environmental responsiveness to human behavior, and the necessity of ritual cleansing—underscore that humanity is a tenant, not an absolute master, of the earth. When modern society divorces material geology from divine moral laws, the land mechanistically generates penalties in the form of climate change, degradation, and global pandemics. Ultimately, the study advocates for a crucial theological realignment and global solidarity. By purifying and renewing indigenous wisdom like *Omenani* through biblical principles, humanity can dismantle secular materialism, affirm the Creator's sovereignty, and restore its original mandate to responsibly tend and keep the earth.

The paper went on to show that land is the indispensable, architectural anchor of both Igbo *Omenani* and Jewish theological frameworks. Rather than being treated as a casual commodity, the soil is recognized as a living participant in the divine-human covenant, functioning as a sacred sanctuary that is dynamically responsive to human morality. The striking structural parallels between these two cultures—evident in the concepts of inalienable ancestral heritage (*Ani Obu* and Naboth's vineyard), the cosmic contamination of the earth by human abominations, and the vital necessity of ritual cleansing—point to a shared foundational worldview rooted in creational sovereignty and human stewardship over absolute ownership.

Investigation as revealed in this paper sufficiently underscores that the contemporary environmental and social crises plaguing modern society are not isolated technical failures, but the direct structural consequences of a deep theological rift. When humanity abandons its role as a responsible tenant and treats the earth with technocratic hubris, the land independently generates its own penalties. Resolving these global disruptions requires more than scientific interventions; it demands a profound theological realignment and global solidarity. By purifying indigenous frameworks like *Omenani* through biblical principles and re-centering the ultimate sovereignty of the Creator, humanity can restore the original creational order and actively seek the healing of the land.

This is a manifestation that land stands as the divine foundation of Igbo *Omenani*, embodying God's creative purpose and serving as the living intersection of spiritual and material reality. Through its etymological roots, role as sacred sanctuary, dynamic moral responsiveness, and function as inalienable ancestral heritage, land provides the ultimate measure of ethics, identity, and cosmic order in traditional Igbo society. The remarkable parallels with Jewish theology—particularly regarding divine ownership, moral defilement and purging, stewardship, and covenantal geography—underscore a shared theological anthropology rooted in the recognition of a singular Creator who sustains the earth and holds humanity accountable as tenants rather than absolute owners.

In an era of ecological crisis, climate disruption, and secular detachment from creational moral order, these ancient insights carry urgent contemporary relevance. Modernity's mechanistic exploitation of the land, divorced from divine law and ethical responsibility, has precipitated the very penalties the biblical and Igbo traditions forewarn. True restoration requires theological realignment: reaffirming Chukwu's sovereignty, embracing biblical principles to purify and elevate



Omenani, and cultivating global solidarity and stewardship as articulated in calls such as Pope Francis's message during global crises.

Ultimately, the paper affirms that renewing Igbo land philosophy in harmony with its original divine intent—while integrating the redemptive mediation of Christ—offers a powerful pathway toward healing both the land and human communities. By re-centering land as God's sacred domain, societies can move beyond exploitation toward sustainable, morally grounded flourishing that honors the Creator and preserves cosmic harmony for future generations.

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