

Deuteronomy 19:14

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-19/deuteronomy-1914/>

Moses warned the Israelites against moving the boundary mark of their neighbors, which their ancestors have set in the Promised Land.

Next, Moses prescribed a law against fraudulent acquisition of land. He told the Israelites not to *move* their *neighbor's boundary mark*. Boundary markers—often made with stones or piles of stones—served as evidence of ownership in ancient times. They were supposed to be inviolable since they were established to show the limits of someone's property. That is, they showed where a person's land ended, and another person's land began. Thus, to *move* the *boundary mark* of your neighbor was to enlarge your own field. This was not permitted among the Israelite community.

To *move* the *boundary marker* was to steal the neighbor's land, in violation of the eighth commandment: "You shall not steal" ([Exodus 20:15](#)). This command makes clear that moving a boundary marker is a form of stealing, and is not to be tolerated. Honoring the property of others is a part of loving one's neighbor as one's self, and is a core pillar of the system of self-governance God is setting up, in order to maximize benefit for His people.

Therefore, Moses commanded the Israelites not to *move* their *neighbors' boundary marks* which had been *set* by their *ancestors*. The word *ancestors* refers to the first group of Israelites who will conquer and inhabit the land of Canaan. Clearly here God is giving this command for the benefit of future generations, since the ones hearing this from Moses are the first generation, and the command is being given prior to the conquest of the land, where boundary markers will be set up afterwards. The book of Joshua tells that after the people conquered the land, the land was divided among the tribes, at which time boundary markers would presumably have been set. These boundary marks would determine the exact *inheritance* which each Israelite would *inherit in the land that the LORD their God gave him to possess*. Once set, they are to be honored.

Moses made it clear that the Israelites would occupy the land of Canaan because the Suzerain (Ruler) God has given it to them *to possess*. The vassals (Israel) were supposed to live in the land with integrity, which includes showing respect for their neighbors' possessions. They are to care for one

another's property as they would want others to care for their property. By honoring one another's property, the energy of the community is freed to produce bounty, rather than expending energy to defend existing possessions. This would naturally lead to increased benefit for all, as all aspects of God's self-governing system was designed to produce.

Property boundaries was a common source of strife between people in the Ancient Near East. Many wars were waged in order to dispossess others of land. This command is particularly important since Israel is about to cross the Jordan and wage war in order to dispossess the Canaanites and take their lands. God is making it clear that this practice was not to continue among the brethren. The Canaanite culture of human exploitation was to be replaced with a self-governing culture that respected others and sought mutual benefit. In doing this, Israel was to be a holy or different nation, and show neighboring nations a better way.

Biblical Text:

¹⁴ You shall not move your neighbor's boundary mark, which the ancestors have set, in your inheritance which you will inherit in the land that the Lord your God gives you to possess.