

Learning to Possess and Dwell in God's Promised Land

One of the most amazing things about the Bible is that as you read and study the words written by the hands of so many different people over so many years, you find consistent patterns of promises throughout the text. Each of these patterns seem to build upon themselves to establish foundational truths that we as believers can hold onto to strengthen our faith. One example of such a pattern is found in Deuteronomy 26, beginning with verse 1 (TLV): "Now when you enter the land that Adonai your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it."

I know that many times when we read a verse like the one above, we simply read the words at surface level, instead of taking a moment to notice the pattern of promises that exists within these few words. To help you understand what I mean by the statement "pattern of promises," I want to go through this verse looking a little more closely at what it says in light of its connection to a pattern established in Genesis.

First, notice that G-D is speaking to the children of Israel just before they enter the promised land after their 40 years in the wilderness. But, let's look a little further back than the 40 years in the wilderness to the 400 years they were in Egypt. Then let's look a little further back, and we will find a time when Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived in the promised land to which Israel was returning.

When we look back, we find that G-D gave the promised land to Abraham and his descendants to dwell in; however, because of the sins of Abraham's children and grandchildren, his descendants ended up in slavery in Egypt. Then G-D, by grace, delivered them from Egypt, only to have them demonstrate a lack of faith, which caused them to spend 40 years in the

wilderness, instead of directly entering the promised land.

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As we read in Deuteronomy 26:1, G-D has brought them to the border of the promised land and uses the words: "Now when you enter." Notice He doesn't say: "If you enter" but "When you enter." This is a promise from G-D that this group of people who have a history of sin would enter the promised land. Not because they deserved to enter, and not because they were righteous, but because He had promised they would return to their promised land, just as He had promised that Abraham would possess the land.

The fact that G-D is showing once again that He will always keep His promises to His people is important for us to see, to know and to believe. But, that isn't the end of the verse we are examining. The verse doesn't just say they would enter the land; it goes on to say that G-D is giving the land to them as an inheritance, just as He had promised Abraham. Once again, this isn't because they deserved the land, but because G-D promised it to them.

But, the verse doesn't end with G-D's promise to give them their inheritance; it goes on to say that they were to possess it and dwell in it. Notice that there is a change of responsibility at this point. The first part of the verse tells us what G-D will do: He will give them the land. The second part tells us what the children of Israel must do: possess the land and dwell in the land.

This is where the pattern connects with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and where this pattern connects through time to us. G-D gave the land to Abraham and he possessed the land. He even purchased a part of the land. However, the Bible describes both Abraham and Isaac as sojourning in the land. "Sojourning" describes something temporary. It isn't until Jacob that we

read that Jacob dwelled in the land. However, it was Jacob's children, as a result of their sin, who moved out of the land to Egypt, and eventually Jacob also moved out of the land to Egypt. Notice that even though G-D did everything He said He would do in giving Abraham and his descendants the land, they chose to not remain in the promised land, and that choice resulted in slavery in Egypt.

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So, when G-D spoke these words in Deuteronomy 26, He was reminding the children of Israel about the promise He not only made to Abraham but had fulfilled. He didn't remind them of the promise only to encourage them that they would soon be entering the promised land. He was also reminding them that they had a responsibility to not only possess the land, but also to dwell within it.

You may be wondering how this pattern can or should be applied to our lives. We need to know that just as G-D promised to give Abraham and the children of Israel the promised land by and through grace, even though they didn't deserve His promise, we have had redemption promised to us, which makes us a part of the redeemed people. As such, we have received the blessings of Abraham's seed through faith.

However, just like Abraham's children, and just like those who were entering the promised land, as we read in Deuteronomy 26:1, we have the responsibility not just to enter the promised land of redemption, but to possess those promises and dwell within them. Otherwise, we will reap the same results Abraham's descendants did and, ultimately, the results that caused the Babylonian captivity and the Roman dispersion.

As redeemed believers and part of the commonwealth of Israel, we have a responsibility to both possess and dwell within the

promises. Nothing can remove us, but we can choose to no longer dwell.

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