

## 2. Israel

### I. The People enter the Land

#### Exodus from Egypt

The sons of Jacob/Israel (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל sons and grandsons) who entered Egypt numbered 70 (Gen 46:27; Exod 1:5), equal to the number of nations in the Table of Nations (Gen 10). This was the nucleus of a new nation. It was in Egypt that God multiplied these 70 into a numerous people (Exod 1:7, 12, 20; cf. Gen 47:27). They were fruitful and multiplied and spread out over the land (cf. Gen 1:27; 9:1). Pharaoh tried to prevent this multiplication by subjecting the Israelites to harsh labor (עֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה) and by ordering the killing of all the baby boys, but God frustrated his purposes (cf. Gen 12:3 “him who dishonors you I will curse”).

The Israelites cried for help; God heard and remembered his covenant with the patriarchs (Exod 2:24). He appeared to Moses in the burning bush: “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (3:6). God would deliver his people (עַמִּי “my people” for the first time, Exod 3:7) from the Egyptians, bring them out of Egypt, and into the land (3:7-11).

Pharaoh tried to thwart God’s purpose, but again God frustrated his efforts, overpowering him, his magicians and the Egyptian gods in a series of ten plagues.

The Israelites left Egypt:

1. on the 15th day of the 1st month of the 1st year of their new calendar
2. 430 years to the very day (בְּעֶצְמָם הַיּוֹם) that Israel had been in Egypt (Exod 12:40-41; cf. Gen 15:13)
3. 600,000 men, plus women and children, and a mixed multitude came out with them (Exod 12:37-38)
4. with many possessions; they plundered the Egyptians

#### In the Wilderness

God did not bring his people directly into the land. Instead he brought them to Mt Sinai, to himself, where he stated his purpose for them:

You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Exod 19:4-6)

1. treasured possession (סְגֻלָּה *segullah*): out of all the peoples, God had chosen the Israelites to be especially his.
2. a kingdom of priests and a holy nation: sanctified (set apart for God) from the other nations, but also for the other nations.

Condition: Israel was to keep God’s covenant:

1. the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant, added on top of and after the Abrahamic covenant.
2. a covenant specifically with Israel (i.e. today it has no validity for the church!)
3. a treaty between God and his people. The heart of the treaty is the Ten Commandments (Ten Words = Decalogue). Two copies of the treaty (i.e. all ten commandments on each stone tablet) were kept in the ark of the covenant; one copy for God, one for Israel.
4. Sealed with blood and a fellowship meal (Exod 24:1-11).

Format of the Treaty

Preamble: what God had done for his people

Commands:

Blessings and Curses: for obedience/disobedience

The Law (תּוֹרָה Torah = instruction) instructed Israel how to live in the presence of a holy God. At its heart lay the command, “Be holy as I am holy, says the LORD.”

Only after the covenant had been sealed, the tabernacle made and filled with God’s glory (Exod 35-40), the priests consecrated (Lev 8), and the sacrificial offerings commenced (Lev 9), were Israel ready to move on from Sinai into the land.

### Failed Entrance into the Land

After a census of adult (20+) males who came out of Egypt (Num 1) and celebration of Passover, the people left Sinai on Y2 M2 D20 (Num 10:11). They quickly came to Kadesh-Barnea in the wilderness of Paran (Num 12:16), from where Moses sent 12 spies into the land for 40 days:

1. Report: ten brought back a negative report, while Joshua and Caleb brought back a positive report (13:25-33)
2. Rebellion: the people rejected Moses’ leadership and sought a new leader to take them back to Egypt (Num 14:1-4)
3. Judgment: God condemned the people to 40 years of wandering (one year for each day of the exploration) until the entire generation of adults (20+) who came out of Egypt died.
4. Rebellion 2: the people tried to enter the land without permission and were defeated (14:39-45)

### Passage through Trans-Jordan

The period of wandering ended when the Israelites crossed the Zered River, 38 years after leaving Kadesh-barnea (Deut 2:14; cf. Num 21:12). Israel faced opposition from nations on the e. side of the Jordan rift valley:

1. Edom: refused Israel permission to pass through along King’s Highway (Num 20:14-21). Israel made a big detour down to the Red Sea to skirt to the east of Edom.
2. Sihon king of the Amorites (capital: Heshbon): refused Israel’s request to pass through, he attacked and was defeated (Num 21:21-30).
3. Og king of Bashan attacked at Edrei; also defeated (Num 21:31-35). Israel took possession of the lands of Sihon and Og.
4. Balak king of Moab: hired Balaam to curse the Israelites.

By this time the first generation had died out and a second census was taken (Num 26).

Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh requested permission to settle in trans-Jordan, so they were given the lands of Sihon and Og. This was not really part of the land. Moses ordered the men to accompany the other 9½ tribes across the Jordan.

This second generation camped on the plains of Moab opposite Jericho. Here Moses gave a second telling of the law (Deuteronomy = second law). Much of this concerned the land.

### The Land

The land God promised to Abraham and his descendants is called simply The Land (אֶרֶץ *ha-aretz*). “The Promised Land” is not a Biblical phrase. The land is described in 3 ways:

1. geographically: the borders or the regions.
2. ethnographically: the inhabitants
3. characteristically: the nature of the land

## 2. OT Israel

### 1. Geographically

the land is described in two ways: expansively and minimally:

expansive: from the river of Egypt (נַהַר מִצְרַיִם) either e. branch of the Nile or Wadi el-Arish) to the Euphrates (נַהַר) (חֲגֹדֶל נַהַר-פָּרָת) (Gen 15:18; cf Josh 1:4).

minimal: 7 regions, encompassing an area similar to Biblical Israel (Dan to Beersheba).

- The Hill Country הַהָר
- The Shephelah הַשְּׁפֵלָה
- The sea coast חוֹף הַיָּם
- The slopes הַאֲשֵׁרוֹת
- The Arabah הָעֲרָבָה
- The desert הַמִּדְבָּר
- The Negev הַנֶּגֶב

### 2. Ethnographically

The land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites (Gen 15:19-21). The list varies: 6 peoples (10×), 7 peoples (3×), 10 peoples (1×).

These peoples have defiled the land through their abominations, thereby forfeiting their right to the land which is vomiting them out (Lev 18:24-25). Their sins are complete (cf Gen 15:16). Israel is warned not to repeat these abominations lest it too be vomited out (Lev 18; 20).

There are also giant people in the land: Anakim, Rephaim, Nephilim, Emim. But Israel need not fear these.

### Characteristically

- a good and broad land (אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה וְרַחְבָּה)
- a land flowing with milk and honey (אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ). A land of great fertility (Deut 8:7-10; 11:9-12).
- a land sensitive to the spiritual condition of the Israelites (Deut 11:13-17). Obedience would bring fertility; disobedience would bring drought, famine, and ultimately expulsion.

## Entrance into the Land

Joshua led Israel across the Jordan to take possession of the land.

Canaanite genocide: God ordered his people to completely destroy the inhabitants = the *herem* (חֶרֶם), devoting to complete destruction.

- Israel couldn't do this to any people it liked; only the inhabitants of Canaan, at God's express command.
- Fulfillment of the curse on Canaan
- Always a way of escape: contrast Rahab the Canaanite prostitute and Achan, who traded places (Josh 2, 6-7).

After completing the conquest (taking possession of the land, which involved dispossessing the inhabitants), Joshua allocated the land by lot to the tribes as their inheritance. Each tribe was to complete taking possession of its inheritance.

Failure again: Israel failed to fully take possession of the land.

## King David

## Solomon and the Temple

