

**Deut. 26:1 ¶ And it shall be, when thou *art* come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein;**

This chapter begins with a “when” statement regarding the people of Israel possessing the land God promised to give them. Again, the emphasis is on the fact that God is giving this land to them; implication being that they could not take it in their own strength.

I got to wondering about the use of the words *inheritance*, *possess* and *dwell*. For them to inherit the land acknowledges the authority and ownership of the benefactor.

Deuteronomy 10:14 “Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD’S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.”

Psalms 24:1 “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”

The Hebrew for *possess* includes “to occupy (by driving out previous tenants, and possessing in their place); by implication, to seize, to rob, to inherit...” I was surprised to find that this idea of taking by seizure was included in Webster’s definition of the word. I think we normally just think of it in connection with ownership. God is very clear in instructing His people to take possession of the land by completely destroying the current occupants of the land.

Deuteronomy 7:1-2 “When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:”

To *dwell* is a reference to settling down, marrying and becoming established in the land. We would describe it as being home and having an expectation of enjoying fellowship with friends and family and reaping the fruit of one’s labor. We find this same thought echoed in the book of Numbers.

Numbers 33:53-54 “And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and **dwell** therein: for I have given you the land to **possess** it. And ye shall divide the land by lot for an **inheritance** among your families:”

The important key to their success is that they trust and obey God as LORD.

Deuteronomy 30:16-18 “In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.”

**Deut. 26:2 That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put**

*it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there.*

**Deut. 26:3 And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD sware unto our fathers for to give us.**

**Deut. 26:4 And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD thy God.**

This section of verses begins to give instruction regarding the harvest that they reap in their new land. This whole section through verse 15 is making reference to a prescribed ritual of thanksgiving and acknowledgement of God's provision and to make provision for "the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow" (cf verse 12). This basket is obviously just a representative portion of the tithe that they were to give from each harvest.

It's always interesting to note that the people were to act in accordance with God's instruction at the place of His choosing. My mind immediately jumped to thoughts of Cain and Abel. Cain obviously chose to deviate from God's instructions while going through the motions of worship. True worship is an act of complete submission and thankfulness to God. Do we not also continually struggle with serving God according to our own ideas and justifications rather than just accepting the truth and direction given us in God's word according to His will?

It is also interesting to note that when bringing this basket of firstfruits, the people are to make public declaration before the priest that their possession of the land is a result of God's promises to their fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). Only then is the priest to take the basket and place it before the altar of YHWH.

**Deut. 26:5 And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish *was* my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous:**

**Deut. 26:6 And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage:**

**Deut. 26:7 And when we cried unto the LORD God of our fathers, the LORD heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression:**

**Deut. 26:8 And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders:**

**Deut. 26:9 And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, *even* a land that floweth with milk and honey.**

The person is then to continue with a recitation that acknowledges their humble beginnings as a nation and how God had raised them up to such a place of blessing.

The father in verse 5 seems to be a reference to Jacob who began his family in the land of Syria while working for his father-in-law Laban. His whole family eventually ended up in Egypt as a result of God's miraculous provision for His people in a time of famine through the faithful service of Joseph before Pharaoh.

They went down a few dozen and grew to be great in number. They are to remember the harsh treatment suffered at the hands of the Egyptians and that YHWH responded to the cries of His people for deliverance. They are to remember that YHWH brought them out of Egypt with an awesome miraculous display of power and authority over His creation. They are to once again reiterate that the land of abundance and blessing they now call their own is a gift from God.

**Deut. 26:10 And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God:**

**Deut. 26:11 And thou shalt rejoice in every good *thing* which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that *is* among you.**

They are to continue by declaring that their gift of firstfruits is in honor of all that God has given them. They are then to prostrate themselves before the LORD as an act of worship. Verse 11 implies that this offering is being given by the head of the house, who will then lead all who are part of his household in giving thanks to YHWH for His bountiful blessing. The importance of spiritual leadership in the home is an ongoing theme throughout scripture.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Psalms 34:11 "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD."

Proverbs 29:17 "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul."

Isaiah 38:19 "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth."

Ephesians 6:4 "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

**Deut. 26:12 ¶ When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, *which is* the year of tithing, and hast given *it* unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled;**

This issue of tithing instructions is still a bit confusing to me. In chapter 14 it was made clear that the tithing of all increase was to be done yearly.

Deuteronomy 14:22 "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year."

A bit further down in the same chapter the instruction seemed to indicate that the tithing every third year was not only to be used by the Levites, but was to be stored and used to provide for the "stranger, fatherless, and the widow."

Deuteronomy 14:27-29 "And the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee. At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest."

The Levites were not exempt from tithing; they were instructed to offer up a heave offering of a tenth of the tithe they received from the people.

Numbers 18:26 "Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, *even a tenth part* of the tithe."

I also remember reading in Leviticus that the people were not to harvest from the land for their first three years in the land.

Leviticus 19:23 "And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of."

In spending a bit of time in research, I found that no one seems to be definitive on the biblical instructions for tithing; opinions are quite varied. Emphasis is given more to teaching the principle rather than understanding the specifics.

It makes sense that it would only take a tithe of every three years to provide for the poor. The poor and needy of the land were to be a small percentage of the whole of the nation. Somehow, I don't think our welfare system in the United States could operate under similar guidelines.

**Deut. 26:13 Then thou shalt say before the LORD thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of *mine* house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten *them*:**

**Deut. 26:14 I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away *ought* thereof for *any* unclean use, nor given *ought* thereof for the dead: *but* I have hearkened to the voice of the LORD my God, *and* have done according to all that thou hast commanded me.**

I think the CJB gives a clearer understanding of these verses.

'I have rid my house of the things set aside for God and given them to the *Levi*, the foreigner, the orphan and the widow, in keeping with every one of the *mitzvot* you gave me. I haven't disobeyed any of your *mitzvot* or forgotten them. I haven't eaten any of this food when mourning, I haven't put any of it aside when unclean, nor have I given any of it for the dead. I have listened to what *ADONAI* my God has said, and I have done everything you ordered me to do.

The focus in this section is on the desire of those bringing the tithe to honor God through careful diligence in following His instructions. This should be the heart of every child of God as he/she applies the teaching of scripture to his/her own

life today. Our desire should be to do ALL that He has commanded us, not just the part that fits in easily and conveniently with our way of living.

**Deut. 26:15 Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey.**

When one honors God through submission and obedience, he can confidently lift up prayers asking for God's blessing. The people of Israel at this time were focused on God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to establish their descendants in the Promised Land, the land of Canaan that was rich in all the resources needed to live with abundant provision.

**Deut. 26:16 ¶ This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.**

Moses again drives home the importance of obeying every one of God's commands. The phrasing is very interesting; they are to "keep and do them" with all their "heart and soul." This is an instruction regarding the attitude of the heart as one performs the physical, observable actions of obedience. In other words, it is a statement that declares the importance of one's relationship to YHWH as he demonstrates obedience. He is obeying from a heart of love and gratitude rather than just going through the motions of a ritual with no heart involvement. I couldn't help but think of these verses from my study of Isaiah that emphasize this truth.

Isaiah 1:11-14 "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them."

And from the prophet Micah.

Micah 6:6-8 "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

**Deut. 26:17 Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice:**

Moses marks this day as one of public declaration that the people have declared their desire to follow YHWH as their Lord and to obey Him according to His every command and instruction. I'm not sure I can discern between statutes and commandments; but after looking at the Hebrew, I think *judgments* makes

references to the consequences or penalties that God established for choosing to disobey. After looking at Webster, maybe the *statutes* are a reference to the civil laws established for the nations, while the *commandments* made reference to spiritual laws.

**Deut. 26:18 And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that *thou* shouldst keep all his commandments;**

**Deut. 26:19 And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.**

Moses is also marking the day as one of YHWH's public affirmation of His promise to set the people of Israel apart as His "peculiar" people, a people He treasures as a special jewel among the nations. In accordance with such privilege, He expects the people to keep all His commandments. They are to stand out as living clean and sanctified lives before the LORD in stark contrast to the rest of the nations.

The balance sheet is way out of whack in my opinion. All the people have to do is submit and obey. In return they will be given special status over all other nations. His desire is to establish them in "praise...name...and honor." The record shows that only for a brief time in their history did they experience such blessing, basically during the reign of Solomon. Even then it was a time of God's mercy, because Solomon certainly didn't continue in leading the nation to maintain spiritual purity. Throughout most of their history, the Jewish people have been despised and mistreated.

Satan has certainly proven himself to be a master at deception and in tricking people into giving up the blessings of God in exchange for experiencing the pleasures of sin for a season. It began with Adam and Eve, continued on with the nation of Israel, and continues to this day in the church. You would think we would learn to recognize the lies of the enemy at some point along the way and to reject them and embrace the promises of God.