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Four Phases Of Existence Part 4a - The Wrong Side of Jordan By Mark Gorman

Did you know that many of God's chosen people, the Israelites, did NOT settle in the Promised Land?

That's right, of the 12 tribes of Israel, 2 ½ tribes never lived in the actual Promised Land. Instead, they settled on Jordan's East Bank, which is the opposite side of the Jordan River, from the rest of Israel.

In the book of Joshua, we find the people of Israel taking those last few steps necessary, to enter the Land Of Promise. Moses has died, and now Joshua, his assistant, has assumed the role of leading this massive group of people into the land which God had promised to their ancestor, Abraham, more than 500 years before.

They had been told of this land since childhood. In fact, most of them had been born in the desert, between Egypt and the Land Of Promise. Imagine that – they had lived their entire lives "on the move". They were always in transition – never able to "put down roots" and stay in one spot.

Can you imagine how frustrating that must have been? I know that one of my least favorite things when I travel, is to pack, and move from one place to another. In fact, I'd rather drive an extra hour in each direction, going to and from a speaking engagement, than to have to pack up and unpack, changing hotel rooms every night. So I can imagine how anxious they must have been, to finally get to a "stopping place", where they could settle and stay.

In Joshua chapter 1, we find them making the final preparations to cross the Jordan River, and enter into the Promised Land. After addressing the leaders of all 12 tribes of Israel, in verse 12, Joshua speaks directly to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and to half the tribe of

Manasseh. As he addresses the leaders of these 2 ½ tribes of Israel, he confirms an agreement which they had made with Moses, some time ago. Basically, Joshua is sort of reminding them of the “arrangement” to which they had agreed. And in actuality, they were the ones who had requested it.

It began in Numbers chapter 32, and at that time, it was only the Reubenites and the Gadites who asked Moses about this matter. The half tribe of Manasseh was not mentioned then. As Israel approached the Promised Land, they had come to the Jordan River. The leaders of these two tribes, Reuben and Gad, came to Moses with a proposition. They asked permission to settle on “this side” of Jordan, instead of on the West Bank, with the rest of Israel.

Why?

Quite simply, they wanted a “sure thing”.

They explained to Moses that, because they had large numbers of livestock, cattle and sheep, they needed to settle in a place where there was plenty of grass, where their animals could graze. So, since this land was fertile and grassy, they wanted to “make a deal” with Moses, to allow them to settle here, and not on the other side of Jordan, in the Land of Promise.

Now, to be fair, we need to remember that they’d been walking around in circles in a desert for the past 40 years! So, I can’t blame them for wanting to “lock in” on some property where there was grass. To them, this was the best land they had seen in their entire lives!

So, I do understand why they would want to settle here.

But, if we look at the bigger picture, we see that if they settled here, they would really be **SETTLING**, in more ways than one.

Why?

Remember that when God described the Promised Land to them, he referred to it as a Land Of Milk & Honey. Do you know what that means?

Did it mean that there would be puddles of milk everywhere, and honey sticking to everything? Obviously not! So, what did it mean?

Where do milk and honey come from? Obviously, we get them from cows and bees. But, what “raw materials” are needed by cows and bees, to produce the milk and honey? Basically, they need food and water. Cows need grass, and bees need flowers.

So, when God called it a Land Of Milk & Honey, He was actually implying that it would be an ideal environment in which cows and bees could produce milk and honey. That

means that, not only would there be plenty of green grass, and water, for the cows, but also, there would even be wildflowers, for the bees to make honey!

Do you get it?

They were **SETTLING** for grass, instead of **TRUSTING GOD**, that He had something better for them, on the other side of Jordan!

By coming to Moses, and asking permission to stay on the East Bank of Jordan, they were actually implying, “We don’t believe God, when He says that there is something better ahead. And since we’ve spent most of our lives in a desert, where there wasn’t a ready supply of grass or water, now that we’ve finally come to a place like this, we want to put down roots here! We would rather settle for a sure thing, than to believe God, that He really does have something better in store for us, on the other side of Jordan.”

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