

The dense fog rolled in early this cool July morning, and with it a sense of utter calmness. In walking the dogs in the wet grass, there was a quiet, a peace far too infrequent in the world in which we live.

I remember peace in days gone by, living with an old mountain man who raised me in the 50s and 60s. He did not say much, just did things that instructed me in the ways of a man. There was a relationship between Ben and me that serves to this day with the Father of all fathers. With Ben all I wanted was to be with him, and be pleasing to him. Whatever he was doing, I wanted to do as well. I wanted to be in agreement with him, having his objectives as my own.

Around 4:00 this morning I had the same feeling with my heavenly Father that I had with Ben 50 years ago. What with the death and destruction all around, just being quiet with the Most High in the still wee hours of the morning is a bit anachronistic. Or at least it seems so. When I think about it, so it was on the farm with Ben; all around us was conflict, wasted energy and loss. Yet if we stayed behind that gate and did what we were supposed to do, we were all right. He often cautioned me to stay away from town.

The above may seem to be at odds with the title, but not really. There is ‘behind the gate’ an interior sub-chamber of our being which belies the surrounding bedlam. As I ponder the events of the past 60-65 years, I realize there is an interior realm within all this mess where things are as they should be, a tranquility which we all seek.

In recollecting the past 40-odd years of devouring the Word, I am reminded Israel was to have been a separate and blessed people who lived in peace. Indeed, Canaan, or the Land of Promise, was to have been just such a place of peace.

As I write, I am aware of how very little even the People of God fathom such a place exists, let alone that it is available to each of His kids. Last night from the first chapter of Isaiah pealed a poignant theme;

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken:

Sons have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me....

Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, **sons** who deal corruptly. They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.”

And then I read the LORD’s promise to the people of physical Israel; and by extension, to us as spiritual Israel;

“I will live in them and move among them, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters.”

II Cor. 6:16-18

I do not know how much plainer this can be said. This is what the Almighty wants, and repeatedly has said so. Now “being a father” adds powerful significance to the phrase, or at least it should. Currently true ‘fathers’ are in the minority, few sons and daughters even realize such a one exists. Most boys are not as fortunate as I was to have a “Ben,” a surrogate father.

The Land of Promise was originally addressed in Genesis 12-50 and given to Abraham and his descendants. Possession was fulfilled in Joshua 13-24, but never completely conquered. It was also called the “Land of Milk and Honey,” but more correctly the “Land of Oil and Honey.” Exodus 3:8 and Deuteronomy 7:1-ff refer to removing the impurities (humans given over to, and possessed by, demons) and to jointly consuming the produce of the land with Yahweh. When one reads the Word in its entirety regarding the Land of Promise, one finds a common thread. That thread is God and His children dwelling together as originally designed.

The thread also indicates a ‘land’ where the human occupants are separate, consecrated, and aligned with the purpose and design of God. It is a ‘place’ where God and His people are in unity, where they enjoy Him, yea, even delight in Him, and vice versa. It is where God protects His people from evil and they look to Him for all things. Basically it is a ‘place’ not unlike a typical home in the country, such as the Waltons. Conflict, yes; growing, yes; work, yes; love, yes; and so forth. John Walton was the father who led, provided, protected, listened, helped, worked, and guided all those things associated with the function and structure of a rural home.

Now ‘substitute’ the Almighty God for John Walton and spiritual Israel for his family and you should get the picture.

Within the *ekklesia*, the longing for ‘peace’ ranges from the relationship with their spouse, children and co-workers to associates of all kinds. Perhaps with an environment of total quiet (a rare commodity) we might even yearn for peace with our Father. Whatever the level, deep peace eludes us, day after day, year after year, until we are worn out. Then we die, the victim of death by a thousand cuts.

Depending on our individual bent, leaning, upbringing, stature, race, gender, etc., we deal with that hole in our soul by camouflaging it. The disguises can be eating too much, talking too much or too loftily, diversions of activities and noise, domination, groveling, anger, academia, work, possessions, or false facial expressions. Some whistle too loud in a public place, subconsciously trying to gain attention to their hole, an inexpressible longing to have someone pay attention and resolve the pain.

Alas, peace eludes us continually, hopelessly, endlessly, and pitifully, until our misery knows no bounds. Our marriage and seed stay in a state of turmoil; loss and pain mount to a place of total bewilderment. Divorce or death ends our window of opportunity, and we flail at a phantom mirage. Eventually we die and someone may read the 23rd Psalm over our dirt-covered carcass, which hears not.

Ah, but this vacuum need not be!! We are, after all, formed in the Image of God Himself! Is *He* not at peace? Did He not create that state in *us* in the beginning? Returning to that state must be possible, or we do not have a just Father. Obviously He must see things differently than we do. Is all this misery due to our lack of perspective? Could it be because we see things from a worm's eye view, as opposed to the view from an eagle's aerie? A view from the point of our origin would seem to be the preferable.

As it turns out, the Author of our origin did and does have a design to deal with the hole in our soul. It is *sensed* as a Place of Rest, *designated* as the Land of Promise and *sealed* by His Covenant. But what is it, and how do I get there?

The impetus for even writing at all stems from a host of stimuli. These range from a dear woman writhing in several kinds of pain from diabetes, to disunity in homes, to a two-year old with induced leukemia, 'having' to succumb to chemo treatments and bone marrow 'harvesting.' All this is within the ranks of the *ekklesia*. Even then, the degree of my grief is minuscule compared to that of the Almighty, who sees millions.

Describing the whole package of man's history with the Most High seems to shed light on our problem with perspective. At least that is how my understanding was resolved as to how the state of peace may be commenced. The first step of a thousand is the hardest. *Many times I am not handed a sword until I begin the battle, nor granted the words until I begin to speak.*

As I look back on the totality of man's history with God, and God's dealings with man, the overall perspective has a common theme of purpose. That purpose is one where the Most High repeatedly seeks to have a people around Him, and He in turn to be their God. This relationship is couched several ways from being a "people, a name and a glory" for Him, to a "people through whom all others would be blessed," to being one with Him as "Christ and He are One." Also, He desires His people to be in single-minded allegiance to Him, and "loving Him with all our hearts and minds."

These are not onerous, dictatorial nor despotic demands. They are no less than any earthly human father would have in wanting to be with his kids, and them in turn to be with him in a wholesome and blessed way. Such was God's purpose in forming Adam, in promising Abram, and in dealing with Israel the man and Israel the nation.

However, most of the time our perception of God the Father is contorted and/or mutated by whatever perception we have of our earthly father (or the dominant adult in our formative years). This perception can be good, bad, straight, twisted, true, untrue, abused, or loving. It is formed in us at an early age, and difficult to correct save by Divine change.

My perception of my Father in heaven is a combination of the three dominant males in my life. These were Ben in my teens, Dr. MacFarland in my early twenties and Leonard in my late forties. From these came proper fear and respect, admiration of the finer things, models, wisdom, laughter, ease of conversation and being comfortable, but reverential with a superior. I guess learning to 'know my place' captures the meaning.

The most intense “feeling” I have about all three is that I simply wanted to be with them, irrespective of anything they might do for me. Stated again, this attitude has carried over into my relationship with my Heavenly Father. This longing to be with our earthly fathers is there by design, the design being in our DNA, as some true Jews say. Such longing is supposed to transfer in our adult years to our heavenly Father, but the Adamic nature both perverts and mutates the original longing, whether by an aberrant father or by a twisted environment of rearing. Recognizing and dealing with that Adamic nature is shown to us clearly in the allegory of physical Israel in the Exodus-Red Sea-Wilderness saga.

The whole saga of the nation of Israel throughout the bondage in Egypt, the Exodus, the Red Sea, Wilderness, Joshua, Jericho, and Canaan is an allegory of the elements of the spiritual journey of the individual believer. The insight gained from that saga is framed in warnings, instructions and examples as to what works and what does not work. We can glean the process by which God separates unto Himself a people that formerly had not been His people. We also see clearly what happens when there is unbelief and/or rebellion.

There is the thought that the Land of Promise is an exclusive place. The people of the Seven Nations of Canaan were to have been exterminated; marriage with them was singularly forbidden for obvious reasons. Therefore it stands to reason dwelling therein highlights marriage and the seed it spawns. Paul’s declaration of marriage being a mystery, a model of Christ and His body, the *ekklesia*, puts marriage near the top rung of significance. This is obviously true in both Testaments.

Along the line of marriage, excluded from the Land of Promise is disunity, particularly between husband and wife or an intermixing of the wrong kind with outsiders. Moreover, pollution of any kind from without the marriage is not tolerated.

This lack of understanding, chronic unrest and disunity is why this paper needs to be written, so that those who have never known a Godly father can understand such a One exists. Moreover, that such a place of refuge and separate peace exists in the here and now. David writes in one of the Psalms about having the blessings of God now in the land of the living. The idea we have no access to His blessings, power and direct fellowship in the here and now is heresy of the gravest kind.

The obverse of this truth is the scornful attitude we elicit every time we discount His reaching out to us. This is what Proverbs 1:24-33 is all about. Hence the outrage on His part when we contemn, disbelieve, or discount His heart’s cry towards us. This is the basis behind His harsh words towards the unbelieving, the apathetic, or the contemning of His invitation to be with Him in the Land of Promise.

Jehovah reached out to Abraham, not vice versa.

Jehovah proffered a promise to Abraham, not vice versa.

Jehovah was proactive in the entire process, not vice versa.

God has reached out to us in the form of His Son Jesus, not vice versa.

The Most High has essentially invited us to come alongside Him.

The Almighty has invited us to His Land of Promise, the place where we would dwell together.

How would you feel if you issued an invitation to a bunch of people to a special gathering and the response in a variety of ways was:

declined, made empty excuses, or gave no response at all
arrived late, or preoccupied in other interests (or buried themselves in their iPad)
behaved vulgarly, rude
dressed dirty, unshaven
brought an uninvited person with them
showed up at wrong time, day
let their cell phone ring?

For a clearly chosen group of people to wax apathetic in a season of supposed maturity is an affront to the Most High. We, as spiritual Israel, having seen so much of God's workings, then to be stiff-necked and rude to an invitation in our latter days of 'maturity' is the height of insult to Him. To be chosen and introduced to the Land of Promise and then cast it aside is treading on most holy ground with shoes of carnality.

Contrary to old wives' tales, Canaan is not Heaven, for Heaven has no battles. Nor is Canaan the salvation experience of deliverance from bondage, for the Exodus from Egypt depicts that. God's requirement to totally cleanse Canaan of any and all evil influences must allude to something much, much deeper than salvation, baptism or even a 'second blessing' or filling with the Holy Spirit. Canaan's Land, or the Land of Promise, is not this fanciful, emotional feeling that is evoked in songs such as "I won't have to cross Jordan alone." It is a real place of the spirit and soul here and now. I repeat, for the here and now.

One of the premier Hebrew scholars told me the phrases "dwelling in the land," "possessing the land," and "inheriting the land" are idioms related to God's promise to Abraham giving him the **land** around the fertile crescent. Since Psalms 37 has seven references to "dwelling in the land," it stands to reason this Psalm holds a major key in understanding our Land of Promise. At least it has a number of illustrations to aid us, as well as promises, commands, and blessings.

Such is the case with my love affair with the 37th Psalm. There the frayed pages on my 40-year old RSV are brown with oil from my fingers. Over the years it has been visited when I was sad, lonely, disheartened, betrayed, slurred, or experiencing any other of the down-type emotions of a human. I have studied the individual words until they are memorized. I cling to them when nothing else suffices.

Psalm 37 has:

- 17 **commands**, 8 saying no to the negative and 7 saying yes to the positive.
- 25 **promises** as results of keeping the commands
- 33 **blessings**, again as results of the commands
 - 10 blessings of the obedient (read 'alignment', 'agreement')
 - 23 blessings of the righteous (read 'upright', a legal term)
- 16 times the LORD is mentioned
- 11 times He, Him is mentioned (as He does everything)
- 11 times 'righteous, righteousness, meek, good
- 11 times the wicked get their due, emphatically
- 52 times 'me' is mentioned
- 21 times 'them' “
- 27 times 'Him' “
- 7 times there are positive attitudes towards Him.

In looking further, I find the 'commands' are not onerous at all, but quite sensible and practical. Imperative verbs such as “**fret not**”, “**trust**”, “**delight**”, “**commit**”, “**rest**”, “**wait patiently**”, “**cease**”, “**forsake**”, “**depart from evil**”, “**keep His way**”, etc, are not only practical but innately beneficial.

What strikes me is that all of these are functions of our will. We *choose* to do any or all of these commands, as opposed to choosing to do foolishly otherwise. And the ratio of blessings to commands is nearly 2:1; that's a pretty good trade! So why then are we *not* denizens of the Land of Promise? If we say we already *are* denizens, then do the promises stated there apply to us? - or any of the power? Or do our lives and our seed exhibit the same symptoms as the world around us?

If not explicitly, then at least implicitly this paper reflects a real-time experience for me. The words express my mental battles in the here and now. In my profession, someone else told me what to do for 21 years; in 1990, I resigned and told myself what to do for another 21 years. Now at 69, I have tried to relinquish all my paths to Him, and trying to wait for *His* plans and designs to unfold; a difficult move to say the least.

Do I delight in Him, or am I obstinate and stubborn ?

Do I commit all my ways to Him, or do I make my own decisions ?

Do I trust in Him, or do I go on my own way of doing things ?

Do I wait patiently on Him, or get anxious and impatient ?

Do I wait on Him, or rely on my own intellect and senses ?

Do I receive His reproof, or turn a deaf ear to His corrections ?

All these are questions for me, perhaps even the reader. They are a daily yielding of the mind, intellect and emotions. Waiting is by far the most difficult, for I cannot “see” any progress or improvement in the problem. Hence the imperative verb “trust.”

As I go along farther, I find choices are relatively easy to make mentally; it is the *execution* of those choices that misses the mark. As Paul wrote somewhere, “What I would do, I cannot, and what I would not do, I do anyway.” As he said, there is a principle, an entity within me that goes against God’s commands. I suggest to you the fox in the henhouse lies in our affections, housed in our middle brain.

The three realms of our brain illuminate the fly in the ointment. With our conscious mind, the cerebrum, we *think* all these things we read in the Word (*if* at all !), and reason them to be correct and the thing to do. (As is the case with many, we can even wax eloquent all day long talking *about* them.). But then the middle brain, housing all our long-term emotions, sense perceptions, affections and drives, intercepts the signals from our thinking cerebrum and begins to modify and qualify any truths perceived. The Land of Promise becomes one of those phrases lost in our high-falutin’ Western mindset.

Ah, but this subconscious part of our mind *feels* so, so, so warm and fuzzy in its hidden analyses of what was correct thinking of the current problem in the first place. No matter that the middle brain (shall we call it the ‘muddle’ brain ?) is illogical and counter to what God said; did He *really* mean it ?

So the end game is that the conscious, thinking analysis of what God said never makes it to the third part of our brain, the brainstem. This is where fight-or-flight and the will to live resides. Put another way, the *will to do what God said* never gets a fair shot at obeying what God said, for the “muddle” brain sucked all the spiritual juices out of the original analysis. Ergo, the will in the brainstem rarely does what it was designed to do.

My bewilderment wanes once there is an understanding of the perverted process. The will, being dubbed the seat of the mind, is the root of our lack of execution. As the ol’ boy says, “Our *wanter* needs fixin’ ”.

All this basically is saying we are *capable* of irrevocably choosing to do what He bids, as did Elijah and Jesus. Still confused? –then read about Elijah, as well as what Jesus said about doing His Father’s will; –kind of frightening.

There seems to be a problem with semantics whenever we talk about “doing the will of God,” particularly if we use Jesus’ definition. Ahhh; the cheese gets binding when we use Him as a standard! Jesus just yielded all of His own wishes whenever it was decision time as to doing what His Father planned, or whether He did His own thing. Now we can shade the meaning of “doing God’s will” to cover all our bases. Helping the old folks get food, attending a gathering on a regular basis, giving 10%, you name it, seems to be our effort.

Thus our outward appearance is impeccable to those around us; but to Him? Ah, a different standard by which to evaluate our behavior. *Easy to tell what's wrong, so very hard to see, the image of Christ created to be...*

But yielding up the whole banana of **everything** we do is a horse of a different color. Now I am not talking about brushing our teeth or driving to work, etc; I am talking about all significant decisions and moves, waiting, seeking and listening 24/7 for guidance. I am talking about getting away from the world as much as practical. I am talking about elevating our thoughts to at least resemble His. Work ? You betcha. Discipline ? Right on. I am talking about having clear communication with the Holy Spirit, an intimacy that bodes badly if there is the slightest drift off-center of what God has in mind.

As A.W. Pink writes in his epic book, *Elijah*, this mindset is where we have Him on our minds practically all the time, have His recognition as our motive and wish to please Him in all things. A.W. Tozer confirms the same by writing in *The Almighty God*, "...since Jesus rose from the dead, God has been busy redeeming people back to Himself, back to the original purpose of their being mirrors of His glory." Thus we return to the concept of the Land of Promise.

I seriously wonder about our redemption; did it **really** cause us to be reflectors of His glory? Or has it taken on an aberrant expression of its own, becoming so much inventory in our deceptive life of ease. ...?

August 26, 2012

Ben-Issachar

A.W. Tozer, *On the Almighty God*, "The idea of the divine-human friendship originated with God. Had not God said first, 'Ye are my friends' it would be inexcusably brash for any man to say, 'I am a friend of God's'. But since He claims us for His friends it is an act of unbelief to ignore or deny the relationship.....God is not satisfied until there exists between Him and His people a relaxed informality that requires no artificial stimulation. The true friend of God may sit in His presence for long periods in silence. Complete trust needs no words of assurance. Such words have long ago been spoken and the adoring heart can safely be still before God."