

Jeremiah 32:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey;

Analysis

And hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them—God's gift of Canaan fulfilled the covenant promises made to Abraham (Genesis 12:7, 15:18-21), Isaac (Genesis 26:3-4), and Jacob (Genesis 28:13-15). The Hebrew *nishba* (נִשְׁבָּע, swear) indicates a solemn oath. When God swears by Himself (Hebrews 6:13), His promise is absolutely certain—He cannot lie or fail. The land grant was pure grace, not earned by Israel's merit (Deuteronomy 9:4-6). **A land flowing with milk and honey**—*Erets zavat chalav u-devash* (אֶרֶץ זָבַת חָלָב וּדְבַשׁ) describes Canaan's abundance and fertility. 'Milk' indicates plentiful pastures for livestock; 'honey' may refer to date or grape syrup, suggesting rich agriculture. This phrase appears over twenty times in Scripture, embodying God's generous provision for His people.

Jeremiah's prayer emphasizes God's faithfulness—He fulfilled His sworn promise by bringing Israel into Canaan. The conquest under Joshua demonstrated God's power to accomplish what He promised. Yet now (588/587 BC), Jeremiah stood in that very land watching Babylon prepare to destroy it and deport the inhabitants. How can this devastation align with God's covenant faithfulness? The following verse (v. 23) provides the answer: Israel's disobedience forfeited their enjoyment of the land, but God's ultimate purposes for the land remain. The promised 'land flowing with milk and honey' finds eschatological fulfillment in the new creation where God's people dwell with Him eternally (Revelation 21-22).

Historical Context

God's promise to give Israel the land of Canaan was made to Abraham circa 2000 BC (Genesis 12:7) and confirmed through Isaac and Jacob. The fulfillment came approximately 600 years later when Joshua led Israel's conquest of Canaan (circa 1400 BC, or 1200 BC on alternate chronology). For nearly 800 years, Israel occupied the land, though often incompletely and inconsistently due to disobedience. The land was always conditional upon covenant obedience (Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28)—persistent rebellion would result in exile. By Jeremiah's day, generations of idolatry, social injustice, and covenant unfaithfulness had exhausted God's patience. The Babylonian exile would temporarily remove Israel from the land, but God's covenant promises remained valid. After seventy years, exiles returned to rebuild Jerusalem and reoccupy the land (Ezra 1-6), demonstrating that God's sworn promise outlasted the judgment. Ultimately, Jesus Christ—the true Israel—perfectly inherits all covenant promises, and believers inherit them through union with Him (Galatians 3:29, Ephesians 1:3-14).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does remembering that the promised land was God's gracious gift (not Israel's achievement) shape understanding of salvation by grace alone?
2. What does Israel's loss of the land due to disobedience teach about the relationship between God's unconditional covenant promises and conditional blessings?
3. How does the 'land flowing with milk and honey' point forward to the eternal inheritance believers receive in Christ?

Interlinear Text

אֲשֶׁר	הִזָּאת	אֶת	אֶתְכֶם	לָהֶם	לָתֵת
H834	H2063		H853	H0	H5414
			them a land		And hast given
			H776		
אֶתְכֶם	לָהֶם	לָתֵת	לְאֲבוֹתָם	נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ	עַתָּה
H776	H0	H5414	H1	H7650	
them a land		And hast given	to their fathers	which thou didst swear	
וְדָבָשׁ:	חֵלֶב	בַּ	זָבַח		
H1706	H2461		H2100		
and honey	with milk	flowing			

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 3:8 (Parallel theme): And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Exodus 13:5 (Parallel theme): And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month.

Jeremiah 11:5 (Parallel theme): That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O LORD.

Exodus 3:17 (Parallel theme): And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

Deuteronomy 1:8 (Parallel theme): Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.

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