

Joshua 23:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God hath promised unto you.

Analysis

And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God hath promised unto you. This verse promises divine assistance for completing the conquest. The verbs "expel" (yehdo, יְהַדּוּ) and "drive... from out of your sight" (vehorish otam, וְהַרְישָׁתָם) emphasize God's active role in displacement. Hadaph (הַרְשָׁתָם) means to thrust away or push out, while yarash (יְרַשָּׁתָם) means to possess or dispossess—forcefully removing occupants to install new ones.

The promise "ye shall possess their land" (virishtem et-artsam, וְיִרְשָׁתֶם אֶת-אֶרְצָם) maintains the tension between divine action and human responsibility. God expels, but Israel must possess. This synergy appears throughout Scripture: God saves, but we must believe; God sanctifies, but we must pursue holiness. Neither divine sovereignty nor human agency stands alone; both operate together in covenant relationship.

The grounding clause "as the LORD your God hath promised unto you" (ka'asher dibber Yahweh Eloheikhem lakhem, כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהָוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לְכֶם) anchors future hope in past promises. God's word (dibber, דִּבֶּר) remains reliable across generations. Promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:7; 15:18-21), Isaac (Genesis 26:3), Jacob (Genesis 28:13; 35:12), and Moses (Exodus 3:8, 17; 6:8) find ongoing fulfillment. What God speaks, He performs (Numbers 23:19; Isaiah 55:11).

Historical Context

The promise of continued divine assistance proved conditional on Israel's obedience, as subsequent verses make clear. Israel's failure to completely drive out the Canaanites stemmed from disobedience, compromise, and eventually covenant unfaithfulness. Judges 2:1-3 records the Angel of the LORD's rebuke: "Ye have not obeyed my voice... I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides."

The gradual nature of conquest appears also in Exodus 23:29-30: "I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate... little by little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land." This reveals divine wisdom—too rapid conquest would leave Israel unable to occupy and control the land effectively. Gradual expansion allowed population growth and infrastructure development.

Complete Canaanite removal eventually occurred under David and Solomon, who expanded Israel's borders to approximately the limits described in God's promises (1 Kings 4:21, 24). However, even this achievement proved temporary, as Israel's later covenant unfaithfulness led to exile and loss of the land. The ultimate fulfillment awaits the Messianic kingdom, when Christ establishes perfect rule over all nations.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How do you balance trusting God's promises with taking active steps of obedience to cooperate with His work in your life?
2. What areas of partial obedience or incomplete conquest in your spiritual life might God be calling you to address through renewed commitment?
3. How does God's pattern of gradual rather than instantaneous victory inform your expectations for Christian growth and sanctification?

Interlinear Text

וְיְהִי הָאֱלֹהִיךְ מִלְּפָנֶיךְ מִן הַיּוֹצֵא מִן הַבָּא	And the LORD your God	H1931	he shall expel them from before	H6440
H3068 H430 H1920 H6440				
וְיַרְשָׁתֶם אֶת מִלְּפָנֶיךְ מִן יְהִי הָאֱלֹהִיךְ וְיַרְשָׁתֶם	and ye shall possess them from before	H853 H6440	and ye shall possess	H853
H3423 H3423				
לְכָם אֶלְהִיךְ מִן הָאֱלֹהִיךְ רְאֵת מִן דָּבָר פָּאֵשֶׁת	their land hath promised And the LORD your God	H834 H1696 H3068 H430		H0
H776				

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 34:11 (Parallel theme): Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

Exodus 33:2 (Parallel theme): And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite:

Deuteronomy 11:23 (References Lord): Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves.

Joshua 13:6 (Parallel theme): All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon unto Misrephoth-maim, and all the Sidonians, them will I drive out from before the children of Israel: only divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance, as I have commanded thee.

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