

Between the lands of promise and memory

- Dt 26:1-11
- A "historical reenactment" of Moses speaking to the people just before they are to enter the promised land
- Standing at a key moment looking at their future, and looking at their past
- Their future
 - a land that they will possess — note the sequence, 'an inheritance to possess, you possess, and settle in it'
 - an inheritance — a promise they have been given
 - possess — coming into the land
 - settle in it — they settle down and 'get comfortable'
- A ceremony they were to fulfill, giving "the first fruits"
 - so settled that even God has a house there :)
 - a priest and a yearly practice
 - The ceremony
 - gather the first fruits
 - put it in a basket
 - give to priest
 - recite a history
 - bow before the Lord
 - have a party ('you' that is the families, the Levites, and aliens)

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- Their past
 - "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous.
⁶ When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us,
⁷ we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸ The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; ⁹ and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. "
- Who was the wandering Aramean? (I've been getting this wrong for years!)
 - It is Jacob who wandered into the land of Aram (present day Syria) and worked for years to marry Rachel and Leah — a life full of surprises
- What is this history?
 - Went from a small group to a mighty nation
 - Went from a secure family to an oppressed minority
 - But they are to remember that "The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand"
- What is the significance of this ceremony?
 - When things are going well or you are 'settled' or even 'too settled'
 - remember God is with you and brought you to where you are. You were once not in a good situation, but now you are.
 - remember that things can change at a moment's notice — or even a slow decline

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- remember to celebrate and share with 'the alien' that is, people not like you, those for whom things are not going so well. (also, invite your local Levite – I think that's CarolSue and me :)
- When things are going badly, or you are 'unsettled'
 - remember that God has always been a God of sojourners and wanderers
 - remember God is with you
 - that God will hear your cry
 - God will be with you and make a strong difference in your life (maybe with real fireworks, maybe with the slow patience of Jacob)
 - Look for your invitation in the mail from the people for whom it's going well!
- When things are just the way they are — not especially good, not especially bad
 - to give 'first fruits' to God
 - to tell these stories to yourself and your children and one another
- As we go into a time of 'prayer and praise' for one another — maybe you can reflect on how this story is touching you in your life.