

• *Moses now comes to the last stage of this great period of intercession*

• *Three requests*

1. *For God's presence*

• *The modern Christian still needs to seek for the conscious presence of God*

2. *A recognition of sinfulness and therefore the need for God's presence*

3. *A reward for God Himself*

Inheritance in Genesis and Exodus

• *Abraham promised an heir and land for an inheritance*

• *Not Ishmael*

Moses now comes to the last stage of this great period of intercession in his life. He has asked for many things while he has been coming and going upon Mount Sinai and into the prayer-tent of 33:7. At one point God threatened to exterminate the people^{□1}. Then God modified and reduced the punishment He had planned for His people. Yet God has still said that He will not go with the people of Israel^{□2} and it is this aspect of the matter that troubles Moses. He is determined to keep praying until a change is seen. Moses is not willing to give up his hopes. He bows down in worship^{□3} and puts his request^{□4}: “O Yahweh,” he said, “if I have found favour in your eyes, then let Yahweh go with us. Although this is a stubborn people, forgive us our guilt and our sin, and take us as your own possession”^{□5}. There are three requests of Moses here.

1. **A request for God's presence.** ‘Let Yahweh go with us’, Moses prays. God has threatened that He will not go with His people. God had said to Moses ‘You lead the people. My angel will go with you, but my plan to reveal myself in glory in the tabernacle I will leave aside’^{□1}. The presence that is referred to here is the presence of the glory of God in the tabernacle. God had told Moses to build a tabernacle as a dwelling-place for the glory of God. It is this offer that was withdrawn after Israel sinned so badly. But Moses has not been happy to leave things at that. He has persistently sought God in prayer and supplication. Now he puts the request before God that he has been wanting to ask. He wants God to turn aside from the judgement mentioned in 33:34–34:3. He asks that God's glory should accompany them as they travel to Canaan and should be with them in the tabernacle.

The modern Christian does not have a tabernacle in precisely the same way and yet the principle stays the same for he or she is God's tabernacle. The church is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We still need to seek for the conscious presence of God to be with us.

2. **A recognition of sinfulness.** Moses says ‘Although this is a stubborn people, forgive us our guilt and our sin.’ God had accused them of being ‘stubborn’^{□1}. Moses acknowledges that it is true, but he turns it around to be a basis of prayer. God said, ‘It is a stubborn people; let me be angry with them’^{□2}. Moses prays, ‘It is a stubborn people, so they need your presence!’ Moses asks God to recognize His people for what they are – weak and stubborn – and yet he wants God to be with them. Their very need is itself a way of praying for help.

3. **A reward for God Himself.** ‘Take us as your own possession,’ Moses prays^{□1}. We are perhaps used to the idea of God's people having an ‘inheritance’. There are seven words in the Hebrew Old Testament which are translated ‘inherit’ or ‘inheritance’.^a Let us consider them in Genesis and Exodus.

God promises Abraham an heir and an inheritance. This is one of the themes of the story of Genesis. In Genesis 14, Abraham turns down an offer to ‘inherit’ anything from the king of Sodom^{□1} (where ‘share’ is the ‘portion’ one gets as a reward). Abraham was often troubled that the promised ‘heir’ seemed to be so slow in being born^{□2}. God was also offering Abraham land as an inheritance^{□3}, and Abraham often wanted to know how he would inherit it^{□4}. He was told that Ishmael would not be the heir^{□5}.

□1 32:12

□2 33:3b

□3 34:8

□4 38:9

□5 38:9

□1 see 33:34-34:3

□1 32:9, 10

□2 see 32:9, 10

□1 38:9

□1 14:24

□2 Genesis 15:2-

4

□3 15:7

□4 15:8

□5 21:1

• *God's oath*

• *Similar promises to Isaac and Jacob*

• *God speaks to Moses about this promised inheritance*

• *They will inherit the land of Canaan*

A new theme – that Israel will be an inheritance for God

• *A bold and daring turnaround in the language about inheritance*

• *He invites God to take Israel as His inheritance, as the people who specially belong to God*

• *God's purpose moves forward*

Finally Abraham gets the inheritance when God takes an oath. His seed will 'possess' – inherit – the gate of their enemies¹. A similar promise is given to Isaac and Rebekah² and to Jacob³. Rachel realised that no inheritance would come to her through Laban⁴. Jacob refers to the future division of the land of Israel when he speaks of Joseph's sons getting their inheritance⁵.

In the days of Moses there is reference to this promised inheritance. God speaks to Moses about it at the time of the rescue of the Israelites¹. At the time of their escape, Pharaoh, after he changed his mind about releasing them, wanted Israel as his 'spoil', his 'booty' (the language is inheritance-language), he wanted to 'dispossess' them (as the last two words of the Hebrew of Exodus 15:9 may be translated). But it is not possible. God will bring them into Canaan and plant them on the 'mountain of your inheritance, the place you have made' (Exodus 15:17, Hebrew). They will inherit the land². Other nations will be dispossessed (as the Hebrew of 34:24 says).

Moses has already made this inheritance of the land of Israel a theme of his praying¹. But now there comes something new: a theme which has not appeared at all in all of the talk about inheritance. **Moses prays that Israel will be an inheritance for God.** It is a bold and daring turnaround in the language about inheritance. God has been offering the people a reward – the land of Israel. Now Moses offers the people to God as God's reward! He invites God to take Israel as His inheritance, as the people who specially belong to God². It is wonderful to get 'inheritance' from God. It is even more wonderful to be an inheritance for God Himself. It was Moses who introduced this thought into the story of God's people. When Moses reached that point in his praying, God answered! The judgement of 3 3:34–34:3 was left aside. The hope of building the tabernacle was recovered. 'Yes!' said God. 'Your prayer is answered. I will pick up from where I left off. Behold I shall start again. I am making a covenant . . . ' And through Moses' intercession the purpose of God began to move forward with Israel once again.

Note

a See my survey of the idea in A Theology of Encouragement/No Condemnation (Paternoster/IVP, USA, 1995), chapter 13.

1 22:17
2 24:60
3 28:4
4 31:14
5 48:6

1 6:8

2 23:30

1 see 32:13

2 see also Deuteronomy 7:6; 32:9

		<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p> 
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