

A note to those interested in this study.

This study is multifaceted. It is a serious study of the person and times in which Joshua lived as well as a Biblical study. It has devotional and inspirational elements to each chapter. It has an extensive historical introduction. It has an excursus on Hebrew numbers that many will find interesting and much more. Or, one can choose to move directly into the text which begins on page 23.

We hope you enjoy this study.

# **THE BOOK OF JOSHUA**

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## INTRODUCTION PART I - THE TIME OF MOSES AND JOSHUA IN EGYPT

The name “Joshua” in the Hebrew is יהושע (ye-ho-shua) meaning “The Lord is salvation”. His name is also “Hoshea” in the Hebrew (See: Numbers 13:16). The book follows immediately after the “Pentateuch” and is frequently included with it as the sixth book of the “Hexateuch”. The book named after this early Israelite hero describes the conquest of the “Promised Land”.

It is interesting that the name of the leader who brought the Israelites into the land God promised in the temporal/physical sense is the same name of the One who brought mankind into the redemption God promised in the spiritual/eternal sense. The first time Joshua’s name is mentioned in the Bible is in Exodus, chapter 17:9, soon after Israel, under the leadership of Moses and Aaron had crossed through the Red Sea and taken the dry ground on the shore of Midian in Arabia.

But let’s look closer at the man Joshua. Who is he? Where did he come from? What brought him to this vital position of leadership? What kind of a man was he? To answer these and other questions, it is important that the general history of the people and events leading up to his assuming leadership of the people of Israel be reviewed. This brings us to the land of Egypt where Joshua was born. His father, we are told, is a man named “Nun”. The name “Nun” is not a Hebrew name, but it is the name of an Egyptian god.

Briefly, the Egyptians had various traditions about the beginnings of all things. One school believed that before the world was formed, there was a watery mass of dark, directionless chaos that ultimately became identified as “Nun”, its character ultimately becoming the god of water or watery chaos. Another tradition believed that the god “Thoth” created four couples who were assigned to build the earth. One of these couples were “Nun” and “Nuntet”. They dwelt in the mass of water from which everything was made. It is quite possible that the father of Joshua was named after this Egyptian deity. Remember, after centuries in Egypt, the Israelites had lost nearly everything relating to their own culture and history and didn’t even know or recognize the name of God.<sup>1</sup>

The Egyptians play a major role throughout Biblical history - both in the Old Testament as far back as Genesis 12 and the early days of Abram – and in the New Testament where Jesus was taken as a child and the gospel was spread by the apostles. They have always been a fascinating people to all ages even to today. Who were they and what did they look like?

As we look at the ancient Egyptian peoples, beginning with the Old Kingdom (c.3000 B.C.–c.2200 B.C.), we find the to be a small, slight people with dark hair and medium

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<sup>1</sup> See: Exodus 3:13-15; 5:2

brown skin, from the Hamitic and Semitic strains. As the centuries passed there was intermarriage with Northern African peoples with dark skin much like those in Ethiopia (ancient Kush or Nubia) today. These people built the Pyramids and the great statues and temples at Giza. We will not discuss this fascinating Period as it is not germane to our subject.

But the Ancient Egyptians were a beautiful and interesting people. They had a different appearance than the Africans further to the south and this seems to stem from intermarriage to many who either were involved in the trade industry, came to live in Egypt or were taken captive by the Egyptians. Though there is considerable discussion about the racial strain of the ancient Egyptians, there is no question of their native African heritage as one simply looks at the art work and statuary they made of themselves. There is also a noticeable “ancient Asian” look about them, especially as time proceeds. Semitic strain is clear and perhaps even a far Eastern cast from time to time.

These were small people, the males averaging five feet in height and the females in the mid four foot range. Some of them had a darker skin than others and mummies have shown all colors of hair including red, blonde, black and brown. This shows that the northern Egyptian peoples had more interaction with outside nations than did the central or southern African peoples. There are people today, all over the world, that look very similar to the ancient northern Egyptians.

As we come to the period of Moses and Joshua, there is considerable debate and discussion about the history, logistics and geography regarding the entire exodus account in the Bible. The period of time in which this occurred is highly debated. The two periods most often in the discussion are the 18<sup>th</sup> (New Kingdom) and 19<sup>th</sup> Egyptian Dynasties, a span of over 300 years. However, the periods allotted for each of these two dynasties are educated guesses because the Egyptians did not use the same astronomical time references as we use now. So the dates given are an approximation based on the work of Egyptologists who often disagree among themselves. We will also see that the time references as recorded in scriptures may be difficult to interpret due to their own way of using numbers relating to time, years, things, inventory and so on. This adds even more controversy and debate to an already challenging task. (Please read the excursus below at this time)

### BRIEF EXCURSUS ON THE HEBREW USE OF NUMBERS

Hebrew numbers often have symbolic significance. For example, the number 6 is associated with man’s power based on the day of his creation and, for example, 666 in the Book of Revelation (13:18) is “the number of the man”. The number 7 reflects the Sabbath, rest or completion and 12 reflects Israel and so on. The Kabala includes an entire philosophy and theology on the significance of numbers in the Scripture which we will not explore here.

The number forty may well fit into this framework meaning, “as long as it took” or “whatever time was necessary to complete whatever is being described”. Multiples of

forty also fit into this framework. Some examples: Acts 7:23 Tells us that Moses was nearing 40 years of age when he thought to visit his own people. In 7:29-30 notes that Moses spent 40 years in Midian after fleeing from Egypt. In Deuteronomy 29:5, Moses, in his final address tells the people he had led them for forty years in the wilderness and in 34:7 he is said to have lived 120 years, three times forty.

The exact number “forty” is used to picture: 1. The duration of the rain at the flood; 2. The number of righteous citizens to qualify for God to withhold judgment on Sodom; 3. The ages of Isaac and Esau when they got married; 4. The number of days Moses was on the mountain with God; 5. The age when Saul became king; and so on.

As we move into the New Testament we have forty days and nights describing the number of days of Jesus fasting and temptation; the length of Jesus’ post resurrection appearances to His disciples; the number of men plotting to ambush Paul; and so forth.

Multiples of “forty” are rampant in the Bible. The “480 years” mentioned in I Kings 6:1 could involve this premise. “Four hundred” men or years or things are often cited. In Genesis 15:13 God tells Abram that his descendants would be enslaved for “four hundred years” while in Exodus 12:40-41 it was 430 years. Paul states in Galatians 3:13 that the Law was given 430 years after the promise was given to Abraham. This of course is not possible in the literal sense because the Israelites were in Egypt some “four hundred years” which began no less than four hundred years after God’s promise to Abraham. So the Law given to Moses on Mt. Sinai was at least 800 years after Abraham. In addition, Paul uses the years noted in Exodus 12:40-41 rather than that of Genesis 15:13.

Even more interesting are the statements made about the accumulated number of Solomon’s horses, stalls, chariots and horsemen. Notice the multiples of “fours”. In I Kings 4:26, “Solomon had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen.” In I Kings 10:26, “Now Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; and he had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.” And in II chronicles 9:25, “Now Solomon had 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.” The number of horsemen is consistent. It is found that numerical notations of the same events or inventories between Kings and Chronicles is reflective of the same pattern, Chronicles often having larger numbers, but the number “four” or a multiple is very commonly used.

To add to this idea is the fact that the Israelites paid little or no attention to the passing of years as such.<sup>2</sup> They did not earmark “birthdays” for example. No one knows when anyone was born in the Bible. They worked from a lunar, not a solar framework and their year was broken up by certain feast days and Sabbaths based on the harvest seasons. They spoke in “how many Sabbaths” something took or of a “Sabbath’s day journey”. Seven’s were important to them as time intervals. Seasons were marked, but not how many unless they were counting “Jubilee years” or some such thing. They celebrated two New Year festivals during a single solar year, one at the cutting of the first sheaf of the new crop, just

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<sup>2</sup> See this author’s paper entitled, “The Super Oldies of Genesis Five” which reflects the possibility that the ages of the Patriarchs may be more significant than the actual ages listed due to the symbolism of numbers in the Hebrew practice.

before Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the month of Nisan (Exodus 12:2), and the other at the Feast of Trumpets in Tishri (September) called Rosh Hashonah.

Even in Jesus' day it was said of Him by Luke that He began His ministry when He was "about thirty years of age". No one was sure exactly how old He was and no one today is sure exactly how long His ministry actually lasted. Why not? Good question! Think about the answer as one considers this excursus.

We also know that the concept of the length of a day was understood differently. In the ancient Hebrew mind, a day was comprised of as little as one hour or as much as a full twenty-four hours.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes a "day" was understood as an epoch.<sup>4</sup> The clincher is the statement by Paul in Acts 13:18 "For a period of *about* forty years He put up with them in the wilderness." (Italics mine)

There are numerous similar statements. In the lineage of Jesus written by Matthew he notes in 1:17, "So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations." Jamieson, Fausset and Brown make the following comment: "...that is, the whole may be conveniently divided into three fourteens, each embracing one marked era, and each ending with a notable event, in the Israelitish annals. Such artificial aids to memory were familiar to the Jews, and much larger gaps than those here are found in some of the Old Testament genealogies. In Ezr 7:1-5 no fewer than six generations of the priesthood are omitted, as will appear by comparing it with 1Ch 6:3-15. It will be observed that the last of the three divisions of fourteen appears to contain only thirteen distinct names, including Jesus as the last. LANGE thinks that this was meant as a tacit hint that Mary was to be supplied, as the thirteenth link of the last chain, as it is impossible to conceive that the Evangelist could have made any mistake in the matter. But there is a simpler way of accounting for it. As the Evangelist himself (Mat 1:17) reckons David twice--as the last of the first fourteen and the first of the second--so, if we reckon the second fourteen to end with Josiah, who was coeval with the "carrying away into captivity" (Mat 1:11), and third to begin with Jeconiah, it will be found that the last division, as well as the other two, embraces fourteen names, including that of our Lord."

In other words, the Scriptural writers used literary forms, vehicles and devices to convey important information in a manner that could more easily be placed in memory.<sup>5</sup> The actual times, generations, periods, ages or years are not as important as the significance of the events and how they are connected to God's redemptive plan, promise and work.

#### END OF EXCURSUS

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<sup>3</sup> Note the discrepancy in our thinking, for example, of Jesus being in the tomb for "three days and three nights" when it is clear that it was only two days at best.

<sup>4</sup> Such as in Genesis 2:4 or II Peter 3:8.

<sup>5</sup> See this author's work and study of Hermeneutics on the literary styles and types used in the Bible by the ancient writers.

A. The Early View of the Exodus – The 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty 1570 B.C – 1300 B.C.<sup>6</sup>  
Beginning with the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, the Israelites were already well established in Egypt (Goshen - in or near to the East Nile delta region) following the governorship of Joseph. However, the Middle Kingdom (2000 B.C. – 1800 B.C.) in which Joseph's influence was felt had faded and fallen into disrepute as Egypt was conquered by the Hyksos, Semitic occupiers of the country. This introduced what is called the second intermediate kingdom and was some 200 years in length. The Hyksos are mentioned because they introduced the chariot, armor, the battle sword and composite bow to Egypt all of which were used by the Egyptians of Moses' day.

The 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty (New Kingdom) ran roughly from roughly 1570 B.C. to 1300 B.C. and began with the reign of Kamose I who began pushing the Hyksos back towards the delta. But it was Ahmose I ("The Moon is born") c.1560 – c.1535 who expelled them and reunited Egypt. Other notable pharaohs of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty include his son Amenhotep I, also known as Amenophis I – "Amun is satisfied (or pleased)" (c.1526 – c.1506 or c.1494). Mathematically, if one uses the Hebrew accounting literally, Moses would have been born during this man's reign. Yet he is a very unlikely candidate. He would more likely have been the Pharaoh who enslaved the Israelites. The reason given for this is the Scripture is found in Exodus 1:8-11.<sup>7</sup> At the time Amenhotep I ruled, Egypt was not under any serious threat from enemies.

The actual history of Amenhotep I is sketchy, and little is said of any reason he might have decided to impose such strict control and birth restrictions on the Israelites. One is left to speculate the reasons for this based on the history of the times, if it was even Amenhotep I who was Pharaoh at the time. His reign was fairly peaceful due to the efforts of his predecessors to defeat enemies of Egypt. Among these enemies were Semitic peoples of a strain close to the Hebrews themselves. This may have given rise for concern as the relationship between the Hebrews and the rulers of the Old Kingdom was now a moot point. Amenhotep did lead military expeditions into Nubia, and Kush (Ethiopia) bringing back captives. If he was Pharaoh when Moses was born, he may have felt that subjugation of the Hebrews was a preventative measure to future rebellion.

During the years he was not involved in campaigns outside of Egypt he was a prolific builder. His most notable projects included building at the Temple at Karnak in the capital city of Thebes. The temple area was continually built and improved for two thousand years. Amenhotep I was devoted to the worship of Amun and built in his

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<sup>6</sup> An excellent and thorough discussion of the entire Exodus question is found in The Master's Seminary Journal article entitled, "Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus Pharaoh" by Douglas Petrovich", published in 2006 and available online at <http://www.tms.edu/tmsj/17f.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 1:8-11, 8: "Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 9: He said to his people, 'Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. 10: Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land.' 11: So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses."

honor. Thebes remained the capital of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. If Moses was born during this period, there is no history to establish the presence of Israelites there let alone their enslavement. He had no living relatives to assume the Throne, and no daughter to rescue Moses from the bulrushes. So we are left with a question mark.

Thutmose I, a close supporter of the king perhaps a distant relative and possibly a military commander and came to power at Amenhotep's death. He was likely appointed as co-regent or successor to the throne before Amenhotep died. He married a woman who may have been either Amenhotep's sister or a commoner as he rose to rule.



Moses lived for “forty years” having been raised in the household of Pharaoh. According to Acts 7:22-23, "Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a

man of power in words and deeds. But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel.”

Since the reign of Amenhotep I was little more than thirty years at most, Moses would have either seen the rise of another king, Thutmose I or been born during this king's reign.

However, Thutmose I only ruled for 13 years at most, (c.1506 B.C.– c.1493 B.C.). During his reign he brought Nubia under Egypt's control and campaigned north through Palestine and Syria clear to the Euphrates gaining allegiance from all he conquered. Like his predecessors, he engaged in massive building campaigns notably once again at Karnak. He also built tombs, monuments, obelisks and many other structures.

Thutmose had two daughters, Hatshepsut and Nefrubity and two sons by different wives, the second of which who succeeded him as Thutmose II, whom Thutmose I married to his fully royally born daughter, Hatshepsut. It was later recorded that Thutmose willed the kingship to both Thutmose II and Hatshepsut, however this was certainly Hatshepsut's propaganda to solidify her claim when she usurped the throne.

If Moses were born during the reign of Thutmose I, we have a five items that add some background support for this. 1. There was encounter with Semitic peoples as Thutmose I campaigned north to the Euphrates and he could have become wary of the great number of Semites in his own country. 2. He had two daughters, one of which could have been Moses' caregiver. 3. Josephus states that “Thurmuthis” gave Moses his name (See: footnote 9). 4. He was a builder who needed labor. 5. This time period is still reasonably within the needed period to place the Exodus some eighty years later under Thutmose III or Amenhotep II.

However, the brief reign of this king in light of his extensive military and building campaigns leaves little time for internal political matters. He seemed under no threat and the history of the time is an awkward fit to his period of time. Further, the cities of Pitnom and Ramses are unknown at this time. Jewish historians place the entire period Exodus speaks of in the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty yet to come.

Thutmose II came to power for a brief time (c.1494 B.C. – c.1479 B.C.) before his famous queen and half sister Hat-shepsut took power from him. Hat-shepsut proclaimed herself “king” to acquire deity. She ruled for 18 years. If Moses was born and grew up during any of these monarchs, all the information we have to date is of little help. Certainly Moses did not appear before Hat-shepsut when he returned to Egypt at the age of eighty. In Acts 7:23 we are told that Moses was forty years old when he fled Egypt, and in Acts 7:29-30 that Moses spent forty years in Midian (making him eighty years old in Hebrew terms)<sup>8</sup>. In Exodus 2:23 and 4:19 the death of both the king of Egypt and those seeking Moses' life is announced. If the “king who died” referred to here is Hat-shepsut, then Moses came back to Egypt during the rule of Thutmose III or his son Amenhotep II.

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<sup>8</sup> See, again, the excursus on the Hebrew use of numbers. This entire sketch falls within the Hebrew use of the number forty which may connote something other than actual years. So we are in a very broad area in terms of real time.

However, in this the early view of the Exodus, it would have likely been during the reign of Hat-shephut or early in that of Thutmose III that Joshua was born.

Hat-shepsut's successor, Thutmose III (c.1479 - c.1439) was the most ambitious ruler of the dynasty. He founded an Egyptian empire reaching as far as Syria crushing the remaining rebellious Hyksos peoples in a final battle in the valley of Meggido. This Egyptian dominance in the Asian province (even into Mesopotamia) lasted a full century. His name means "Thoth is born". He is one candidate as the Pharaoh of the Exodus in the early view, albeit a little early in terms of literal years.

Later, his son, Amenhotep II (c.1439 – c.1406) continued the dominance and during one campaign captured and returned to Egypt 3,600 "Habiru" people. This curious name nearly matches the name "Hebrew" and occurs from time to time in Egyptian history. He also has a cult of priests. He is the second candidate for the Pharaoh of the Exodus in the early view, and the most likely considering that Moses was "eighty" years of age when he returned to Egypt with Aaron (Exodus 7:7).

The son of Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV (c. 1406 – c.1391), for our purposes had a brief and unimportant reign except for a stele he erected which we will discuss later. He died a sickly and early death.

To conclude, the principal rulers of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, the reign of Amenhotep III, (c.1391-c.1361) found Egypt at its height of wealth and power. But also during this period (c.1375 - c.1305) there came a national crisis and division of the country under the reign of the son of Amenhotep III, Amenhotep IV who took the name of Akh-en-Aton in honor of the god Aton, represented by a large sun disk which he understood to be the great life giving power. The reforms he introduced caused a revolution. He came to worship a single god, rejected the pantheon of ancient Egyptian gods, and moved the capital of Egypt from Thebes 200 miles north to Amarna.

A revolt against Akh-en-aton took place and the capital at Thebes was once again restored. Five Pharaohs followed: Smenkhkare and Neferneferuaten who, may have been women, the famous Tutankhamun, Ay, and Horemheb. The 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty came to a close in c. 1292 B.C..

It is at this point we face our first challenge in placing the Exodus somewhere during the reigns of Thutmoses III or Amenhotep II. The possibility of it occurring during the rule of Akh-en-aton will be briefly reviewed as well for reasons to be discussed later.

I. Thutmose III (c.1479 B.C.-c.1439 B.C.) as a candidate as the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Taking an overview of his reign we see that he had a lengthy rule, some forty years, until the last two years of his reign when his son, Amenhotep II, became a coregent for two years. He died in the fifty-fourth year of his reign which includes his coregency with Hat-shepsut. He began his rule as a youth of only twenty-two. He created the largest empire Egypt had ever seen; no fewer than seventeen campaigns were conducted, and he

conquered from north Syria to the fourth cataract of the Nile in Nubia. After his years of campaigning were over, he established himself as a great builder Pharaoh as well. Thutmose III was responsible for building over fifty temples in Egypt and building massive additions to Egypt's chief temple at Karnak. New levels of artistic skills were reached during his reign, as well as unique architectural developments never seen before and never again after his reign. When he died he was buried in the Valley of the Kings as were the rest of the kings from this period in Egypt.

In support of Thutmose III being the Pharaoh of the Exodus, we have several factors.

1. He deliberately took military action into Palestine and Syria to crush what he considered a “rebellion”. This “rebellion” was nothing more than a few small city states organizing an army for defensive purposes. Thutmose III used this as an excuse to ravage the entire land of Palestine including the Valley of Jezreel, Galilee, Beth-shan, and north into Damascus, Aleppo, Phoenicia and Syria. In the following nineteen years he conducted sixteen more campaigns into the same territories in order to assure their allegiance to Egypt. Any potential rebellion was curtailed. This supports the continued and even harsher enslavement of the Hebrews in Egypt through the rule of several Pharaoh’s as told in Exodus chapter 2:23.

2. I Kings 6:1 states, “Now it came about in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.” A conventional date of c. 965 B.C. is given for Solomon’s reign. If we assume “480” are literal years (see Excursus below) and add 965 years to it we get the year of 1445 B.C. This would be during the reign of Thut-moses III at the height of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. He could have been the Pharaoh when Moses returned to Egypt.

3. The chariot, brought to Egypt by the now defeated Hyksos, is now established as an Egyptian war instrument and the eight spoked chariot is in use during the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty.<sup>9</sup>

4. Thutmose III was a prolific builder and the Israelites could have been forced to be a part of this labor force to such an extent that they suffered. Their cry for deliverance went up to God during “Pharaoh’s reign”.

5. The length of his rule almost accommodates the period necessary for the entire encounter and Exodus to occur, but only allows about 60 years from the supposed day of Moses’ birth (if born under the rule of Thutmose I.)<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This is mentioned because an “eight spoked” chariot wheel verified as 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty was recovered in the Red Sea by amateur archaeologist Ron Wyatt. If this was a part of the pursuing army during the exodus, the exodus may well have been during the period of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. Pursuant Egyptian history is unlikely to have been the period of the exodus until the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty began. It is not impossible for an eight spoked wheel to be a part of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century chariot even though chariots of that period were normally six spoked.

<sup>10</sup> Note the excursus on years and numbers.

6. His firstborn son died leaving Amenhotep II to succeed him as Pharaoh. Could he have died as a result of the tenth plague?

II. Amenhotep II (c. 1439-c.1406) as candidate of Pharaoh of the Exodus. His time of rule as well as that of his father's fits in with this early view of the Exodus. He also campaigned in Palestine and Syria for the same reasons as his father. What makes his second campaign interesting is that he brought back some 3,600 "Habiru" prisoners.

But now we face a challenge. On the One hand, if Thutmose III was the Pharaoh of the Exodus, and the "Habirus" were indeed Hebrews" then we are left without a record of this captivity during the conquest of the promised land under Joshua or shortly thereafter during which time it would have occurred. There is no Biblical record of any Egyptian presence in Israel until the time of the kings.

On the other hand, if Amenhotep II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus then not all the "Hebrews" had come to Egypt during the rule of Joseph and this captivity came about before Moses returned to Egypt.

Or, the word "Habiru" does not indicate the Hebrew people at all, although it may indicate people of Semitic origin. The origin of the word "Hebrew" comes from the name "Eber" found in Genesis 10:21 and through chapter 11. He is the son of Shem (from which we get the term "Semite") and his descendants include Abram, Nahor and Lot. Abraham is then the ancestors of the Hebrews and he of course, was a Chaldean. Nahor was the ancestor of the Arameans and Lot the ancestor of the Moabites and three Ammonites. The Hebrew language is a syncretistic development of Phoenician, Canaanite, Ugaritic and influenced by some other languages as well, including Egyptian. So the "Habiru" could be peoples related to but not directly "Hebrews" as we have come to know them. However, the "habiru" are differentiated from other people captured in these raids who are listed. So we are left to ponder.

If the Exodus took place under Amenhotep II, there are some factors to support this.

1. Amenhotep II had brought many prisoners to Egypt, from artisans, princes, intellectuals, and the like to enhance Egypt's development and trade to captive slaves. The blend of cultures was so pronounced that Egyptians began naming their children after foreign gods and foreign peoples began to name their children after Egyptian gods. We have clear evidence of Israelites with Egyptian names.
2. Like his father, the length of his rule accommodates the period necessary for the entire encounter and Exodus to occur, and actually fits the time frame better.
3. He was also an ambitious builder, primarily constructing shrines and statues (many in honor of himself) and enlarging temples and building tombs. He also built a palace for himself at Memphis. More on this later.

4. A message from Jephthah the judge (c. 1150 B.C.) to the king of Ammon mentions that Israel had been in the land three-hundred years making the conquest under Joshua roughly at c. 1450 B.C..<sup>11</sup> Given “forty” years in the wilderness, this would mean an Exodus near 1410 B.C., during Amenhotep’s reign.

5. Thutmose IV, a son of Amenhotep II was not the firstborn son of Amenhotep II, and thus not the crown prince and chosen successor. The firstborn son and heir to the throne died “mysteriously” and so Thutmose IV succeeded Amenhotep II as Pharaoh. Thutmose's most celebrated accomplishment was the restoration of the Sphinx at Giza and subsequent commission of the *Dream Stele*. According to Thutmose's account on the *Dream Stele*, while the young prince was out on a hunting trip, he stopped to rest under the head of the Sphinx, which was buried up to the neck in sand. He soon fell asleep and had a dream in which the Sphinx told him that if he cleared away the sand and restored it he would become the next Pharaoh. After completing the restoration of the Sphinx, he placed a carved stone tablet, now known as the *Dream Stele*, between the two paws of the Sphinx. The restoration of the Sphinx and the text of the *Dream Stele* would then be a piece of propaganda on Thutmose's part, meant to bestow legitimacy upon his unexpected kingship. Based on this, some have speculated that the death of the firstborn of Amenhotep could have been the result of the tenth plague.

6. The Talmud, independently of the time frame listed in I Kings 6:1, lists the Jubilee cycles which agree with a mid 1400’s Exodus date. It lists seventeen cycles from Israel’s entrance into the Promised Land to the last jubilee in c. 574 B.C., some 12 years after the Babylonian captivity. A jubilee year is the fiftieth year of a forty nine year season of seven sabbatical years.<sup>12</sup> Seventeen Jubilee years would encompass 850 years. Added to 574 B.C. we have c.1424 B.C., a year coinciding with Amenhotep’s reign.

B. Discussion questioning whether the Exodus occurred under either Thutmose III or that of his son Ahmenhotep II. Or did it in fact occur in the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty?

I. The city of Thebes was the capital of Egypt through the reigns of both these kings. Looking at a map, one can see that Thebes is hundreds of miles (about 700) from any possible site from which the Israelites journeyed into the wilderness. In fact, if one looks at the map on page 5, it is clear that any “Red Sea Crossing” would have to taken place across the main body of water south of the Sinai Peninsula. This is neither consistent with the Biblical account nor with any conjecture. However, though the main capital was at Thebes, the administrative center of the nation has been found to be at Memphis during the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. Considering that the Israelites inhabited the land of the Eastern Delta, (Goshen) it makes sense that Thutmose I gave his decree to the midwives Exodus, chapter one.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, all major military campaigns of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II were launched from Memphis. Amenhotep II was both born and raised at Memphis, not at Thebes, attesting to the residency of these Pharaohs there. “While a prince, he

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<sup>11</sup> See Judges 11.

<sup>12</sup> The Jubilee Year is outlined in Leviticus 25:2-10

oversaw deliveries of wood sent to the dockyard of Peru-nūfe in Memphis, and was made the *Setem*, the high priest over Lower Egypt.”<sup>13</sup> He also built a palace at Memphis.

Thebes was the capital of Egypt during part of the 11th Dynasty (Middle Kingdom) and most of the 18th Dynasty (New Kingdom), though the administration probably remained at Memphis for much of this. With the 19th Dynasty the seat of government moved to the Delta.<sup>14</sup> The only exception to this was during the rule of Akh-en-Aton who moved the capital from Thebes to Amarna some two hundred miles to the north. This would have been around 1360 B.C.. His kingdom was weak, and was invaded by both the Hittites and the “Habiru” peoples. His famous and beautiful wife Nefertiti was exiled and he bore no sons to succeed him. Further, the distance to travel for the Israelites would have been some 500 miles before entering the wilderness. The history of the period simply rules out the possibility that he was the Exodus Pharaoh.

II. Archaeological evidence has yet to place Israel in Caanan before the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The earliest mention of the Israelites in Caanan is Merneptah’s Stele describing his defeat of Israel in Caanan. This would have been in about 1210 B.C. during the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty. Many Biblical scholars place this as the period of the Exodus.

The flip side of this is of course, that a late date for the Exodus under, Rameses I (Ramesses meaning “Ra has been born” or “fashioned by Ra”) (c.1292 B.C. – c.1290 B.C., Seti I (c.1289 B.C.-c.1278 B.C.) or Ramses II (c.1278 B.C.-c.1224 B.C.) would hardly allow enough time for the wanderings and conquest to have Israel become prominent in the land. Israel was a recognized entity by c.1200 B.C. and the late date Exodus theories place the entrance into the land around 1230 B.C.. But it took about twenty years for the conquest to be accomplished as far as it went. If Israel was already a known people in 1200 B.C. it is possible, but questionable that the Exodus took place during this period.

III. The cities of Pithom and Rameses as mentioned in I Kings 6:1 did not and could not have existed in the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. The city of Rameses was built in honor of the Pharaoh Ramses in c. 1270 B.C. during the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty (late New Kingdom). The rulers of the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty for our consideration are as follows in order, Ramses I (c.1292 B.C.- c.1290 B.C.), Seti I (c.1289 B.C.-c.1278 B.C.), and Ramses II (The Great) (c.1278 B.C.-c.1224 B.C.) and Merneptah (c.1224 B.C.-c. 1214 B.C.). The Nineteenth Dynasty was founded by Ramesses I, whom Pharaoh Horemheb chose as his successor to the throne, this dynasty is best known for its military conquests in modern Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. The warrior kings of the early 18th Dynasty had encountered only little resistance from neighboring kingdoms, allowing them to expand their realm of influence easily. Towards the end of the 18th Dynasty, the situation had changed radically. Helped by Akh-en-aten's apparent lack of interest in international affairs, the Hittites had gradually extended their influence into Syria and Palestine to become a major power in

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<sup>13</sup> Gardiner, Alan. *Egypt of the Pharaohs*. p. 198. Oxford University Press, 1964.

<sup>14</sup> From “Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia” online.

international politics. A power that both Seti I and his son Ramesses II would need to deal with.

Viewing this for a moment, this date would mean that the birth of Moses took place after Tutankhamun, during the reign of Hor-em-heb c.1340 B.C.- c.1303 B.C. or perhaps even Ramses I c. 1290. Hor-em-heb may have been the commander of the army or a close aid to Tutankhamun but seized the throne in order to restore law and order to a chaotic, confused and resentful state. He vigorously put down rebellion and corruption. He died childless and appointed Ramesses I as his successor thereby beginning a new dynasty, the 19<sup>th</sup>. Is it possible that Moses was born during this time? Unlikely. Hor-em-heb ruled from Memphis which is just south of modern day Cairo. Memphis is on the Nile, but Hor-em-heb had no children. So there was no daughter to rescue Moses.

Ramses I was a military commander under Hor-em-heb and was appointed his successor beginning a new (19<sup>th</sup>) dynasty. He was an older man when he came to power and only ruled for less than two years. But his name indicates that the chief god of the Pharaohs went from being Aton to being Ra. Temples would be built. He was succeeded by his son Seti I.

Seti I (“Belonging to Set”) ruled for only eleven to fifteen years, the former more likely. He ruled for about ten years and helped restore power to Egypt. He was involved in several military campaigns one of which defeated the Palestinians and the “Habiru” of Mount Jarmuth near Beth-shan. Having taken control of Caanan he campaigned against the Hittites in Syria (Kadesh) and defeated them. He ruled from the Delta area and Memphis though he did major building operations at Thebes and Abydos. His first son died young, but his second son was Ramesses II. There was also a daughter, Tia, and a second daughter named Henutmire, who would become a minor queen of Ramesses II.

His rule, its length, location, war with the “Habiru” and his family makeup could favor the birth of Moses in his lifetime. Moses could have grown up under his rule, left Egypt and returned under Ramesses II. But this is a very tight time frame as we shall examine in a moment. Ramses II has been a popular figure as the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Exodus 1:11 notes that the Israelites “built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses.” Further, Exodus 12:37 says that the Israelites “journeyed from Ramses....” This city was built in honor of Ramses I, and unless the writer of Exodus is making an editorial comment about the location of the city of departure for his contemporary readers, the Israelites had to have left during the early 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty after the city was build, or at least in the construction stage.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Nearly every facet of this discussion favors the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty as the time of the Exodus with the exception of these city names. However, it is a regular practice of the biblical authors to name an ancient city with a contemporary (to his readers) name. The Rameses city area has been known as Avaris, Tanis, Rameses and Zoan. Zoan and Tanis are probably interchangeable as the LXX lists it as “Tanin”. See: Numbers 13:22. Zoan was rebuilt anywhere from 1750 B.C. to 1350 B.C. thus making Hebron about the same age. But the point of this comment is that Numbers 13:22 refers to it as Zoan, not Rameses, adding to the likelihood that it was indeed during the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty that the Exodus occurred and the the author of Exodus 11:1 is using “modern” terminology.

But the location of the city is under debate even today. Some scholars place it in the East Nile delta region near Tanis (Avaris) and others at Heliopolis just north of Cairo. The same debate goes for the “city” of Succoth in Egypt which may not be a city at all, but simply an oasis, and “Etham” is also a mystery.

If Moses led the children out of Egypt under Rameses II, then the Biblical record of the span of time cannot fit literally as it could in the early view scenario. This is a very tight frame work as it covers only a total of 65-70 years. But remembering that these time frames are very circumspect it is still possible. Again, Seti I (c.1289 B.C.-c.1278 B.C.), and Ramses II (The Great) (c.1278 B.C.-c.1224 B.C.) Add to this the forty years in the wilderness prior to entering the promised land (Moses dying at the age of 120), and you have a crossing of the Jordan under Joshua at c. 1184 B.C., way too late to be noted in Merneptah’s Stele.

Another difficulty for the late period view is the time allowed for the period of the Judges. Being fairly certain of the time of the Kings of Israel, beginning with Saul in c.1050 B.C., this leaves less than two hundred years for the period of the Judges. In addition, as we saw, only a few years for the conquest and dominant presence in the land under Joshua.

So, on the one hand, as we have seen, some Biblical students try to place the Exodus two hundred years earlier. The difficulties with this are numerous including the fact that Biblical time spans can often be symbolic or expressions significant for other reasons outside of a literal number of years as we normally understand them. This is especially true of the number forty and its multiples – (see excursus above) - including the “480 years” of I Kings 6:1. It would be impossible, for example, for a city to be named after King Rameses a two hundred years before he was born. On the other hand, we have numerous times in the Bible, especially in Genesis, when the writer refers to an ancient city by its better known contemporary name. One example is Genesis 47:11, “So Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had ordered.” No Bible scholar attempts to make the settling of Israel in Egypt during the reign of “Ramses”. However, Ramses was the most prominent Pharaoh in the minds of the Israelites and this could attest to he being the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

### C. Conclusion

Both the early and the late view have their proponents and detractors. In either view, something has to be re-interpreted to make it fit in either time period. If we lean toward either period, there are both convincing Biblical and historical arguments. Until further archaeological evidence is unearthed, we may never have a final answer to the mystery.

## INTRODUCTION PART II – JOSHUA BECOMES PROMINENT

Exodus 13:17-18, 17: “Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, "The people might change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt." 18: Hence God led the people around by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up in martial array from the land of Egypt.”<sup>16</sup>

The term “martial array” in verse 18 is interesting. This term is specific in its use of an organized, trained and armed military contingent. But the question is, “Where did they learn this technique?” The answer of course is, in Egypt. There is only one of two possibilities for this to occur. First, a portion of Israelite men may have been involved in the Egyptian army itself and had participated in military training, exercises and campaigns or second, the Israelites had organized an internal militia to defend their northern and eastern Egyptian boundaries from foreign attack. Either, way, this added attribute would have made the Pharaohs of the period increasingly nervous considering the growing strength of the Israelites. Perhaps in recognition of this the increased outcry of the Israelites regarding their plight might have occurred because the Egyptian ruler removed defensive weapons from them as a precaution. (Exodus 2:23-25)

After the successful crossing of the Red Sea, the Israelites traveled into the “wilderness of Shur”. Chapter 17:1 notes that they traveled “in stages”, that is in organized companies, military style.<sup>17</sup> The location of the “wilderness of Shur as well as all the places they traveled are generally designated by assuming that their destination was the traditional Mount Sinai at the tip of the Sinai Peninsula (Mount Horeb). However, there is no support for this being the site and in fact, it is almost universally rejected as the actual Mount of Moses. Therefore, every other geographical designation based on this assumption is suspect as well.

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<sup>16</sup> There is considerable debate over the route of the Exodus, the location of the “Red Sea” and the site of Mt. Horeb. This author has come to the conclusion that the route of the Exodus crosses the Sinai Peninsula to the gulf of Aqaba, and that the crossing was either at Nuweiba or closer to the tip of the Sinai Peninsula. The evidence for an Arabian the location for Mount Horeb is convincing both biblically and archaeologically (as far as it has gone). Though this study does not focus on these matters, the following passages adds to this conclusion: Exodus 23:31, "I will fix your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River *Euphrates*; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out before you." Ezion-Geber to the Mediterranean in Philistine territory was the known border from Solomon onward and is thus so today in 2008 (although Ezion-Geber is now called “Elat”). Also, Deborah’s song in Judges, chapter five verses four and five note: “LORD, when You went out from Seir, When You marched from the field of Edom, The earth quaked, the heavens also dripped, Even the clouds dripped water. The mountains quaked at the presence of the LORD, This Sinai, at the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel.” Both Edom and Seir are East of Sinai and the Dead Sea fault line. Also, when Israel left Mount Hor, Numbers 21:1-4 tells us they went around Edom by the “way of the Red Sea” (see text on page 19).

<sup>17</sup> There should be no debate over the military organization of the Israelite men. Numbers chapter 2 actually notes the number of each “army” of each tribe and their leaders. The “stages” were likely movement by sequence based on tribal affiliation, Judah taking the lead. Joshua was from the tribe of Ephraim (Numbers 13:8).

Their travels over the next few months<sup>18</sup> (camping twice, once at “Marah” and once at “Elim”) finally brought them to Rephidim. “Rephidim” seems to be a word describing some sort of fencing with rails, either in actuality or as a description of some topographical landmark. Assuming an Arabian location for Mount Sinai (perhaps Jebel Al Lawz) it is only about sixty-five miles from any supposed Red Sea Crossing site to this mountain. “Rephidim” is somewhere near or adjacent to Mt. Horeb according to Exodus 17:1-7.<sup>19</sup> However, 19:1-2 seem to indicate that they had to break camp and travel to Mount Horeb where they set up camp for an extended stay.

It was at Rephidim where the Amalekites attacked the Israelites (Exodus 17:8-9), and it is here that we are introduced to Joshua for the first time. His appointment by Moses as his military commander in 17:9 displays a previous relationship between Moses and Joshua and also displays Joshua’s military training and leadership in Egypt. He may have been long recognized by the people in this role and probably was instrumental in organizing and preparing the Israelites to leave Egypt. It is clear from this account that there were many men among the Israelites trained for battle and Joshua knew who they were.

After their victory at Rephidim, the camp moved to the foot of Horeb, the same mountain where God spoke to Moses from the burning bush.<sup>20</sup> In chapter 18, Moses’ father in law, Jethro, comes to visit and counsel Moses. Having his land in nearby Midian (probably to the southwest of Horeb), it was not a long journey. Remember, Moses spotted the burning bush on Horeb while herding Jethro’s flocks.<sup>21</sup> He apparently returned home after his visit as he is not mentioned again in the Old Testament and Midian is not listed as one of the territories Moses traveled through again. In 19:24, Aaron was chosen to accompany Moses to the top of the Mountain.<sup>22</sup> There God spoke to them and told them of the commandments, ordinances for the people, property rights, various laws including their worship, sacrifices and feasts. Moses had these things written down on a scroll and read them to the people.<sup>23</sup> Later, when the stone tablets were finally ready for Moses to receive, he and Joshua rose up to go to up the mountain. Joshua is, at this point, called

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<sup>18</sup> Exodus 19:1 notes it was over two months. Their pattern was to travel for three days and then camp for a time. (Exodus 3:18; 15:22; Numbers 10:33; 33:8)

<sup>19</sup> 1: “Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. 2: Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water that we may drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?” 3: But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, “Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” 4: So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, “What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me.” 5: Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6: “Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7: He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us, or not?”

<sup>20</sup> Exodus 3:1-2; 3:12; 4:27

<sup>21</sup> Exodus 3:1 showing that Moses was west of Horeb when he saw the burning bush.

<sup>22</sup> Aaron remained in Egypt until Moses was called by God in Midian. Then God came to Aaron in Egypt and told him to leave Egypt and meet his brother in the wilderness at Horeb which he did. Aaron’s name is also Egyptian (“Aharon” in both Egyptian and in the transliteration to Hebrew) and its meaning is “the moon is -----”, the last syllable (word) difficult to translate.

<sup>23</sup> Exodus 24:3-8.

“the servant” of Moses (24:13). This designation tells us that Joshua was both Moses’ personal aid and the general in command of the troops. Though it appears that Moses went up into the mountain alone, 32:17 suggests that Joshua was with him the whole time perhaps caring for Moses and helping Moses in the writing of the instructions (See: 17:14). Much of the Book of Leviticus is also attributed to this period (Leviticus 7:38; 25:1; 26:46; 27:34)

Aaron was the leader of the Elders who in turn were responsible for the spiritual life of the Israelites. After Moses went up into the mountain and was gone for a considerable length of time,<sup>24</sup> he and Joshua returned down the mountain to find the people dancing around the golden calf Aaron had made. Shattering the tablets on the ground, Moses instituted a period of judgment and a challenge to the people regarding their spiritual choices. Joshua is next mentioned as the guard of Moses’ personal tent of meeting (33:7-11). He is mentioned as a “youth” in verse 11. Most likely this would place him under the age of thirty.<sup>25</sup> This is the last mention of Joshua in the Book of Exodus.

The tablets are restored, the covenant restored, The Ark of the Covenant constructed along with the tabernacle and the preparations required for them to leave the Mount of God were completed. God had promised, (Exodus 23:20-25)

20: "Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. 21: "Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in him. 22: "But if you truly obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. 23 "For My angel will go before you and bring you in to *the land of* the Amorite:s, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them. 24: "You shall not worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their deeds; but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their *sacred* pillars in pieces. 25: "But you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water; and I will remove sickness from your midst.”

So they headed north in military array, the tribe of Judah leading the way. They had been at Sinai over a year (Numbers 1:1; 10:11), and now they were heading for the promised-land. Chapter ten of Numbers gives us the story. It is clear from this chapter how the “martial array” mentioned in Exodus 13:18 and the “stages” mentioned in Exodus 17:1 took place.

As they left Sinai on their journey and set camp three days later, they were grumbling and complaining (Numbers 11) about being sick of Manna and having no meat to eat. As people were out gathering Manna the spirit of God came upon two men, Eldad and Medad. Here, Joshua appears for the first time outside of the book of Exodus telling

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<sup>24</sup> Exodus 24:18 notes a period of forty days and forty nights. Again, this likely designates an actual indeterminate period and covers chapters 24-31. Moses spent all this time writing down God’s instructions, especially regarding the construction of the tabernacle, the priestly order, and their duties concluding with

<sup>25</sup> See also: Numbers 11:28

Moses to “restrain them” (11:28). It appears that Joshua was concerned that Moses was being supplanted. Moses calmed Joshua down. The Lord supplied Quail until the people grew sick of it. The Lord struck down many with a plague and they called that place “Kibroth-hattaavah” “the graves of the gluttons”. From there they traveled to “Hazereth” and camped. Here, Moss married a “Cushite” woman and was confronted by both Aaron and Miriam about it (Numbers 12). Their attitude was out of line and the lord disciplined them for it.

Journeying northward it wasn’t long before they entered the territory of other nations in the “Wilderness of Paran” (Numbers 12:16). The location of this territory is also debatable, but most scholars place it as a territory extending North, East and West of Ezion-Geber (Elat). Camp was established (near “Kadesh” – Numbers 13:26, a “town” or “city” according to Numbers 20:16) and Moses planned an inspection of the land of Canaan to the north. The heads of each tribe were assigned this task and Moses changed Joshua’s name from “Hoshea” (“deliverer”) to “Joshua” (“God delivers”). The spies journeyed from the camp at Paran. Numbers 13:21-26 tell us the story:

21: So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, at Lebo-hamath. 22: When they had gone up into the Negev, they came to Hebron where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmi, the descendants of Anak were. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) 23: Then they came to the valley of Eshcol and from there cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes; and they carried it on a pole between two *men*, with some of the pomegranates and the figs. 24: That place was called the valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the sons of Israel cut down from there. 25: When they returned from spying out the land, at the end of forty days, 26: they proceeded to come to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; and they brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land.”

It looks like the spies actually journeyed north , through the “Wilderness of Zin” that forms the continuation of the Jordan valley, extending from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba. They continued on to Hebron where they saw the descendants of “Anak”, a people of large stature. From there they went up a valley to an area they called “Eshcol” meaning “clusters (of grapes)”. Then their travels took them north and west into what was later Naphtali and south down the coast to Philistia, across to Eshcol again to gather grapes and back to camp. Their expedition took “forty days” (13:25).

As one continues with the narrative, the only positive reports came from Joshua and Caleb as the rest feared the “giants” and the well fortified cities. Joshua and Caleb had no problem with God being able to give them the victory; they hadn’t forgotten the victory over Amelek. But the people (Numbers 14) refused to believe the “minority report” and rebelled. God made His judgment on the people with these words:

30: “Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. 31: 'Your children, however, whom you said would become a prey--I will bring them in, and they will know the land which you have rejected. 32: 'But as for you, your

corpses will fall in this wilderness. 33: 'Your sons shall be shepherds for forty years in the wilderness, and they will suffer *for* your unfaithfulness, until your corpses lie in the wilderness. 34: 'According to the number of days which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day you shall bear your guilt a year, *even* forty years, and you will know My opposition. 35: 'I, the LORD, have spoken, surely this I will do to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be destroyed, and there they will die.'"

The reminder of Numbers 14 is worth reading in order to establish the mindset of the people and their arrogant attitude. God had simply told them (Numbers 14:25) "Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites live in the valleys; turn tomorrow and set out to the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea." But the next morning the people came together and told Moses they recognized their sin and would go up to the land and take on the Amalekites and Canaanites. Moses told them not to go in yet another violation of the command of the Lord but they went out anyway without Moses, Joshua, Caleb or the Ark of the covenant and were soundly beaten back. From this point we have an abbreviated account of the journeys of the Israelites until they are ready to enter the land of Canaan.

The Israelites retreated once again into the wilderness keeping track of those who died from the sinful generation and quashing rebellion from those who would attempt to usurp Moses' authority.<sup>26</sup> The ten spies who failed to trust God died leaving only Joshua and Caleb (14:38). The "forty years" in the wilderness has now commenced. In Numbers 18-19, more regulations relating to the duties of the priesthood and the worship and duties of the people are further defined. Miriam's death and burial occurred while in Kadesh (20:1), on the border of Edom. After an appeal to Edom by Moses to allow them to pass through their land and Edom's refusal (chapter 20:14-21), the Israelites, under military threat, journeyed to Mount Hor.<sup>27</sup> Here, Aaron died and was buried. In Numbers 21, the efforts of the Israelites to advance toward Canaan were thwarted by the king of Arad on the "road of the spies" (Atharim). But in a subsequent attack at Hormah the Israelites routed the Canaanites<sup>28</sup> and then turned south to skirt around Edom (See footnote 15). The amount of time spent in the Kadesh region could extend into a number of years (See: Deuteronomy 1:46).

They spent considerable time "circling" Mt. Seir, actually a range of mountains in Edom extending from south of the Dead Sea all the way to Aqaba. Apparently their way up the west side of the range was denied, a clearer way and a caravan route. So they were required to circle about and camp around the south side of the Seir range until permission was given for them to move north.

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<sup>26</sup> Note: Korah's rebellion and the rebellion of the Levites in Numbers 16ff.

<sup>27</sup> The traditional site of Mt. Hor near Petra is unlikely. It is probably a place South of the Dead Sea some thirty miles and west of the Wadi Arabah in the Negev just west of the Edomite border. This area corresponds to the account in numbers 21. Jebel Madara has been suggested for this site by H. C. Trumbull.

<sup>28</sup> Deuteronomy 1:19-44 refers to these "Canaanites and "Amorites".

As they traveled north, they passed through Edom (Esau) on the east of Seir buying food and water as they traveled (Deuteronomy 2:4-6). Deuteronomy 2:8 is clear as to the way they went.<sup>29</sup> The Arabah Road is on the west side of Seir, and Elath and Ezion Geber are at the mouth of the gulf of Aqaba. This tells us where they had been encamped until they moved north. In Deuteronomy 2:7, the “forty years” are described as coming to a close. They have passed through the wilderness. Numbers, chapter 33 recaps the journey in more detail.<sup>30</sup>

Numbers 21:13-35 renders the account of resistance of the Amorite king Sihon to Israel passing through the land and an ensuing battle leaving the Amorites in a shambles. Israel was fully battle prepared and slew Sihon with the “edge of the sword” (Numbers 21:24) and took over the capital city of Heshbon and resided there. The same result occurred against Bashan. Israel camped at Shittim (“The Acacias”) and there became involved with pagan women and pagan gods (Baal) and were harshly dealt with (Numbers 25). In Numbers 26, a complete census was taken and the distribution of the land to be conquered was established. After the census, it was determined that not a person who had rebelled at Kadesh was left alive.

Numbers 27:12-23 recounts the Moses position being vacated and Joshua’s appointment to head Israel in Moses’ place.

12: Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go up to this mountain of Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the sons of Israel. 13: "When you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was; 14: for in the wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to treat Me as holy before their eyes at the water." (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.) 15: Then Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, 16: "May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, 17: who will go out and come in before them, and who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the LORD will not be like sheep which have no shepherd." 18: So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; 19: and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. 20: "You shall put some of your authority on him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey *him*. 21: "Moreover, he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the

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<sup>29</sup>“So we passed beyond our brothers the sons of Esau, who live in Seir, away from the Arabah road, away from Elath and from Ezion-geber. And we turned and passed through by the way of the wilderness of Moab.”

<sup>30</sup> Numbers 33:41-49, 41:“Then they journeyed from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah. 42: They journeyed from Zalmonah and camped at Punon. 43: They journeyed from Punon and camped at Oboth. 44: They journeyed from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim, at the border of Moab. 45: They journeyed from Iyim and camped at Dibon-gad. 46: They journeyed from Dibon-gad and camped at Almon-diblathaim. 47: They journeyed from Almon-diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo. 48: They journeyed from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan *opposite* Jericho. 49: They camped by the Jordan, from Beth-jeshimoth as far as Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab.”

judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his command they shall go out and at his command they shall come in, *both* he and the sons of Israel with him, even all the congregation." 22: Moses did just as the LORD commanded him; and he took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation. 23: Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses."

Joshua would have been somewhere between the ages of sixty to eighty years old depending on how literal one takes the "forty years" designations. After some further instructions to the people, Moses was led to Mount Nebo (Pisgah) to view the land (Deuteronomy 34).

1: Now Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, 2: and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, 3: and the Negev and the plain in the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. 4: Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see *it* with your eyes, but you shall not go over there." 5: So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. 6: And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day. 7: Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated. 8: So the sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the days of weeping *and* mourning for Moses came to an end. 9: Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. 10: Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, 11: for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, 12: and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel."

The location of Mount Nebo and Pisgah is not certain. It had to be the summit of a high peak for Moses to see the land from Zoar to Naphtali and all the way to the Mediterranean, if that is even possible with the naked eye on a crystal clear day. Any mountain in the general vicinity has an elevation of only 4,000 feet above the Dead Sea or 2,700 feet above sea level. But the land of Israel is smaller than we imagine. So we are left with a mystery or a miracle.

As we now enter the Book of Joshua, we find the theme of the book to be the invasion and establishment of Israel in the Promised Land as its possession and as an inheritance forever.<sup>31</sup> It is a book of battle, with the outcomes of both victory and defeat. The bases of these victories and defeats can be applicable to the reader. We have found the leader of this invasion, Joshua, to be a man of military expertise, a man of courage, a man of faith and a man filled with the Spirit of God. He is a man of integrity, honesty, wisdom,

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<sup>31</sup> See: Genesis 15:13-21; 17:8; 48:4

faithfulness, and an unswerving allegiance to God and His word. He is a man ready for the challenges that face him. He faces them fearlessly due to his faith and trust in God. Like the children of Israel, we are on a journey of our own and we have not yet come fully home to our Promised Land.

# THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

## CHAPTER ONE

1:1-6

1: Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, 2: "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. 3: "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. 4: "From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. 5: "No man will *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. 6: "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

1: Taking Amenhotep II as the Pharaoh of the Exodus and using the “forty year” increments as fairly literal, we have the time of Joshua’s commission around 1400 B.C. If we place the Exodus under Rameses II, then this period would be closer to 1200 B.C., requiring a non literal view of the “forty year” increments.

The Lord (“Yah-weh”) spoke to Joshua. This is God’s personal name, the name used most often when He is in a relationship with someone. It is translated as, “The One who Causes Existence” or simply, “The Creator”. Joshua is almost always noted as “the son of Nun”. This is to distinguish him from so many who were given the same popular name among the sons of Israel.

2: Today, if one looks across the Jordan to Jericho one only sees desolation with the exception of En-Gedi. It is arid, mountainous, forbidding and uninviting. Only the effort to spy out the land gave Joshua and Caleb any idea of what benefits the land held for them. When God described the territory (verse 4) He began with the word “wilderness” or “desert” from which we can assume a similar appearance to today.

The Jordan River flowed higher than is seen today, much higher. Today, the river is pumped dry by the time it reaches the Dead Sea and only a trickle remains. Because of this the Dead Sea is not being replenished and is evaporating. It is now considerably smaller than it was just a century ago. At one time, the Jordan River flowed several miles wide as the Jordan Valley reveals. Even in Joshua's day, Spring-time run off could see the Jordan run up to a mile wide.<sup>32</sup>

The Dead Sea was once a fresh water lake emptying into the Gulf of Aqaba. Now it is at the world's lowest elevation (1,378 feet below sea level) and the second saltiest lake on earth. It is nine times saltier than the Mediterranean Sea and nothing can live in it. The Dead Sea is now comprised of such a highly mineralized water (the highest Bromide levels in the world for example), that it feels oily to the skin and can hold a temperature of over a hundred and ten degrees. It is no longer actually just water, but a clear, turquoise tinted, liquefied chemical lake. Its toxic nature was well known to the early Israelites and in Ezekiel 47:7-12 and Zechariah 14:8 it is prophesied that the Sea will be restored to fresh water and men will fish from it again.

3: Where their feet would tread within the limits of the land God promised.

4: It would seem that Joshua could be standing on the same mountain where God spoke to Moses in order for "this Lebanon to make any sense. Otherwise, he couldn't begin to see it. The words "this Lebanon" indicates "the heart or center" of the land which extends from the Negev to the south to the Euphrates in modern day Iraq. These borders were only held during the time of Solomon.

The "Hittites" were a Semitic people that populated regions well north of Palestine, specifically Anatolia (modern day Turkey and Northwest Syria). However, they are noted to reside in Central Palestine during the time of Abraham (c. 2000 B.C.) as those among the Canaanites.<sup>33</sup> The land was called the "land of the Hittites" long after their departure, which seems to be hundreds of years prior to Joshua's conquest.

"The Great Sea" is the Mediterranean.

5: This reference is to the military success they will have in fulfilling God's plan. Of course, this success was dependant upon their faith in God and strict obedience to his commands. The words, "I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you" are quoted in Hebrews 13:5 in the context of material need or possessions, the reader being urged to be content with what they have.

We have here the **first premise** we can apply to having a victorious life in general. This study opened with the statement, "It is interesting that the name of the leader who brought the Israelites into the land God promised in the temporal/physical sense is the

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<sup>32</sup> See verse 3:15; comments at: 3:16 and 4:19.

<sup>33</sup> Descendants of "Heth". See: Genesis 10:15-19; and 23:3ff.

same name of the One who brought mankind into the redemption God promised in the spiritual/eternal sense. When we look ahead to the challenges of life in Christ, we can see the same instruction in the New testament for Christians as Joshua was given over three thousand years ago. God tells Joshua He will never forsake Joshua or the people. Jesus told His disciples, "...lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." This statement came after He commissioned them to, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...".

6: "Be strong and courageous ...". This urging is given three times in this chapter and many more times to God's leaders in the Bible. "Strong" is a common Hebrew word defined as "unmovable", "valiant", "like a tree trunk", and "courageous" is defined as, "bold", "brave", and "determined". The LXX uses a Greek word for "courageous" that means "act or be like a man". Paul uses the same idea in I Corinthians 16:13, "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong." Before the famous "Put on the whole armor of God" passage Paul tells the Ephesians, Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." "Courage" in the New Testament (depending on which word is being translated) is accompanied by the idea of being fearless, bold, adventurous and cheerful. Not succumbing to anxiety, worry, and fright. For example, Joseph of Arimathea showed courage going to Pilate to ask for Jesus' body. Paul was told to "have courage" or "be of good cheer" as he was being transported to Rome. Christians are told not to fear persecution or even death, but to have "courage" and be of "good cheer".

This is the **second premise** to stand on. God is always with us, ergo, we have nothing to fear.

1:7-9

7: "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. 8: "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. 9: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

7-8: Verse 8 is parallel to and an emphasis on the subject of verse 7 which is the command to be strictly obedient to the law without variance. They are to meditate on it day and night. The promised result is that those who do so will "make their way prosperous" and have "success".

How does this apply to the Christian life? 1. We are not under law, but under grace (Romans 6:14-15). 2. The mandates of the law are written on tablets of stone and in our hearts but are superseded by the work of the Spirit who raises us to a higher level. 3. Our motives for living righteously have been changed.

The result of these two premises is: “success” and “prosperity”. “Success” is “acting wisely and prudently”. “Prosper” is “Come to a successful completion”, “make headway”, “advance” or have the result of “prosperity”. This “prosperity” is not necessarily wealth, but does not preclude it.

1:10-16

10: “Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, 11: “Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, ‘Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, to possess it.’” 12: To the Reubenites and to the Gadites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, 13: “Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, ‘The LORD your God gives you rest and will give you this land.’ 14: “Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them, 15: until the LORD gives your brothers rest, as *He gives* you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to your own land, and possess that which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise.” 16: They answered Joshua, saying, “All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.”

10-11: It is quite likely that this command was given after the spies returned (chapter two).<sup>34</sup> Preparations are made to move ahead under the promises of God. These preparations include everyone in each tribe and family. Where the leader(s) go, all go. They have been given three days to prepare. Though many have journey for years with their fellow Israelite, the culmination of all that has transpired since the people cried out for deliverance in Egypt is about to transpire. One would think that the hardships of the past forty years would be enough preparation. But now they face even a bigger challenge and it will take all their spiritual and physical fortitude to succeed.

This will be a higher level of commitment. The lives of their brothers and sisters will depend on each one fulfilling their word, “All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go” (verses 16-17). They are committed to be obedient followers. When the Christian makes a commitment to follow Jesus, he is heeding the call of the Lord who has said, “...If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” Matthew 16:24-25

Bonhoeffer said, “When Jesus calls a man, He bids him come and die.” This is the cost of discipleship. In Matthew, chapter twenty, the mother of James and John asked Jesus to sit them on his right hand in glory. “But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you

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<sup>34</sup> See: Commentary at 2:23 and 3:1-2. Chapter two could be a parenthesis, the account actually occurring prior to this command.

are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to Him, "We are able." He said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father." The cup, of course, is death at the hands of others.<sup>35</sup>

A large crowd of people watched as a mighty battleship was being towed into port by a number of tugboats. The ship had been through it. Half the superstructure had been blown away. She had no mast, no gun turrets, and the bridge was gone. She listed to one side and the deck was full of holes and mangled steel debris cluttered the deck. Water could be seen pouring into her and out of her as she was nursed home by a fleet of escorts. On her deck at attention proudly stood twenty-six men, the remnant of the eleven hundred who manned her just a few months ago. She drew near to port, every throat that could cheer raised its voice and every horn and siren that could blow was blown by ships and shore alike. She entered the harbor, broken and battered but still afloat, undaunted by the enemy, unstoppable.<sup>36</sup>

This is like the course of the Christian life. We may be injured, hurt, battered by the world or damaged unto death, but when we enter the heavenly harbor in the arms of Jesus we will receive a welcome not unlike that ship. We will hear the words, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord."

12-14: To those tribes who had encamped East of the Jordan; Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, the promise of the Lord is reiterated so they will know that their possession is secure when they return to the land. Their wives and children will remain behind, but they must accompany their "brothers" during the conquest (verse 14). This applies to us in a wonderful way. Our place is secured by God's promise and provision, so we can venture out to engage in the battle in support of others. In fact, it was these tribes that were assigned to lead the attack (verse 14).

1:17-18

17: "Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you as He was with Moses. 18: "Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous."

17-18: The response of the people is to affirm that they will be obedient to Joshua and they offer the benediction that God be with Joshua as He was with Moses. There may be a subtle implication that their obedience to Joshua is conditioned upon the reality of God's influence in Joshua as was evidenced in Moses.<sup>37</sup> They encourage themselves with the same phrase that has been given to them by God, "Be strong and courageous." Now all that has to be said has been said and action is now taken.

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<sup>35</sup> Matthew 26:39

<sup>36</sup> Adapted from "Victorious Christian Living", Alan Redpath, Revell Co. 1955, page 45.

<sup>37</sup> See comment at 3:7.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

2:1

1: Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two men as spies secretly from Shittim, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there.<sup>38</sup>

1: Jesus is our Joshua in that as He commissioned the disciples to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations", He commissions us also to go forth into foreign places to be His witnesses to everyone. We do this not in our own strength, but because "All authority has been given to Jesus in heaven and on earth." (Matthew 28:18) As God told Joshua that he would never fail him nor forsake him (1:5), so Jesus said the same thing to His disciples and to us who follow (Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5). As Christians we are to be the "light of the world", "ambassadors of Christ", and His Witnesses. The word "witness" comes from the same root we get our word "martyr". Jesus sends us into the land to view it and sooner or later we will encounter people trapped in sin, but desiring to be redeemed and saved. They are simply waiting for someone to come along and direct them into the truth of God's forgiveness, grace, mercy and salvation. Some, unfortunately, get caught into some religious deception that makes their rescue almost impossible. Rahab was such a person.

Joshua had given Israel "three days" (1:11) to prepare for the crossing. During these "three days" two spies were sent out to reconnoiter the land. It resulted in a monumental event.<sup>39</sup> They met a woman of disrepute who wanted to know God but had no opportunity to do so until these two godly men "happened" to come to her place to rest. It's amazing that sometimes God will do the unexpected.

Nearly the entirety of chapter two relates the story of Rahab. Her name (Rah-chavh) means to be hospitable or "to make room". It indicates spaciousness. Some scholars make a very good case that she was not a prostitute (solely) but possibly an innkeeper or tavern keeper. There is substantial evidence to support this. Nevertheless, both Joshua, Hebrews and James clearly use the word "Harlot" to describe her occupation.

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<sup>38</sup> The word "then" does not necessarily indicate a chronological order. Often the narrative includes a parenthesis telling of a previous or simultaneous event. Because of the "three day" theme repeated several times, (1:11; 2:16; 2:22; 3:2). The number "three" is used frequently as a preparation time in the scriptures. For example, the first three days of creation in Genesis are preparation days and the final three days are fulfillment.

<sup>39</sup> The spies were in the land far more than three days. This indicates that either this account actually occurred before the "three day" command to prepare or that the term "three days" is symbolic.

Her name is a Hebrew primitive root and may have been given to her by the spies or by The Lord. It would be unusual as a Canaanite name, but would add credibility to the idea that she was a hostess of an inn, not uncommon in ancient times. That she used this position to ply her trade as a prostitute and earn more money is not uncommon either. Further, the fact of her moral life stands in such a contrast to her statements and actions of faith that it is a greater testimony to the power of God in her life. It brings to mind the story of the prostitute being brought to Jesus. While some sought to stone her Jesus sought to forgive her. There are many stories of God's grace to women such as these who came to faith in Him.

The names of the two spies are not known, but this woman's name is well known. Her acts in this venture made her notable as a woman of faith. She has found her place in the book of Hebrews, chapter eleven, listed among the greatest of the saints of God (11:31). The New Testament mentions her in two additional places as well. She is mentioned in Matthew 1:5 as Boaz' mother, and in James 2:25 as one whose works showed her faith in God by which she was justified.

Her name is not to be confused by the other English translation of Rah-havh (Rahab) which is another Hebrew word altogether even though translated exactly the same in English.

This verse shows that Israel inhabited "Shittim" (The Acacias) before crossing the Jordan. "Shittim" was in Ammon which became the territory of the tribe of Gad. That land today is the nation of Jordan but the name of its capital "Amman" still reflects the territory of ancient Ammon.

The two spies would have had to cross the Jordan River and find their way to Jericho.<sup>40</sup> At that time, Jericho would be about three to four miles from the west bank of the Jordan and three to four hundred feet above the surface of the Jordan in elevation. The Jordan would have been several hundred yards wide, perhaps up to a quarter mile or more. They were sent out by Joshua, unknown to either the Israelites or anyone else. Their instructions were to view the land, especially Jericho. Before coming to Jericho at dusk, they may have looked the surrounding area over to locate strategic places for the Israelites.

How they happened to just "come into the house of a harlot and lodge there" without incident is not explained. However, if one adds to the picture that Rahab also owned an inn, then that would make more sense. It is not as if Jericho was always closed up. The city would have gates like any ancient Canaanite city and be well fortified. Those gates were open during the day and after dusk, then closed sometime after dark. These two men could have been easily taken as travelers and allowed in to find lodging for the

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<sup>40</sup> A popular imagery is that the "crossing the Jordan" is associated with passing into death and onto life. Though the idea of crossing a river is often used in popular thought (and in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's progress") as well as in Greek mythology, I have found no analogy to this idea in the Scripture especially as it relates to the Jordan. On the other hand, "baptism" does illustrate this, but the Jordan River is neither specifically nor uniquely involved.

night. Thus, they would have been naturally directed to Rahab's place. The fact that they "lodged" there adds to this scenario. It is unlikely that the two spies were looking for a prostitute considering the confidence Joshua had in their choice as well as the fact that the Lord was with them (verse 24). The word "lodge" is the simple word "to sleep" or to simply find a place "to lie down, rest and sleep".

2:2-5

2: It was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men from the sons of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." 3: And the king of Jericho sent *word* to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land." 4: But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. 5: "It came about when *it was time* to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them."

2-4a: How the report came to those who told the king of Jericho about the two spies is not known.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps someone at Rahab's house (for the report knew they were there) spotted the strangers, recognized their dress or accent and informed the authorities. The mass of Israelites were on the east side of the Jordan. They were being carefully watched. There had been no movement. The appearance of the two spies was a surprise. The king of Jericho didn't like that surprise. So he sent a contingent of his militia to Rahab's house demanding that she turn them over.

Now we have a secondary report to wonder about. Somehow, before these men arrived to arrest the spies, she had already gotten word that the spies had been spotted at her place and reported to the king and that he was sending troops to arrest them. Perhaps someone loyal to her, like a family member (verses 12-13), overheard the plot to report the spies to the king place and found out about the ensuing arrest. Rahab had her own spies. In any case, her decision showed courage and faith. The same courage and faith the people of Israel had been told to attain. She hid the spies at the risk of her own life and that of her family.

This is reminiscent of the stories of many who hid Jews during the Nazi persecution and attempted genocide of the Jews during World War II. The courage to do so and lie in the face of impending arrest and death is certainly worthy of emulation. And yet, we have the dilemma about her lying to others and yet being honored by her faith for doing so.

4b-5. Rahab clearly lied to the soldiers. There is no comment about Rahab's lie in scripture. On the contrary, her courage and faith are lauded in both the Old Testament and the New. James, illustrating that faith is demonstrated by works, says, "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by

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<sup>41</sup> Canaanite cities were actually independent city states, each having a territory or border and each having its own king.

another way? For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead” (2:24-26). Hebrews 11:31 notes, “By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.”

But what do we say about the lie? Could she have diverted the soldiers another way? Does this give us permission to lie on some occasions? If so, what occasions? If not, why not? What about the command forbidding false witness? These issues must be discussed. The only precedent in Scripture showing any blessing for lying is this one. The fact that no comment or condemnation is forthcoming from the Scripture lends itself to the idea that, other than this one time, lying is generally condemned. In other words, as far as Rahab goes, we have a big “No comment”. Yet when it comes to saving the life of a human being from the grasp of evil, lying may be in order with the same “No comment” from the Lord.

Rahab said that the men being sought escaped out the gate before it was shut for the Night and urged the soldiers to hurry so they could be caught.

2:6-7

6: But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof. 7: So the men pursued them on the road to the Jordan to the fords; and as soon as those who were pursuing them had gone out, they shut the gate.

6: Now we look back to what transpired before the soldiers arrived. The roofs of ancient houses were flat. Rahab’s house, we find out, was located “on” the wall of the city. There was a double rock wall about 15 feet high surrounding the city with about 12-15 feet separating the two walls. The walls themselves were 10 to 15 feet thick. Because Jericho was only about six acres in size, people were housed on top of these walls as timbers were laid across the walls to form a floor. Additional walls made of mud-brick, roughly 6 feet thick, were built on top of these timbers some six feet in height and roofed with more timbers and mud or clay.<sup>42</sup> The side wall of her house was the city wall and the rest of her house had walls in common with others who lived “on the wall”. Jericho’s walls then, were some twenty feet above the ground and quite formidable. Rahab’s residence was within this mud brick structure. She had a window that opened to the outside of the wall (verse 15). It may have been on the north side of the city. Her roof was flat like all ancient roofs.

Upon this she had stored sheaves of flax. The narrative tells us that the time of year was Spring.<sup>43</sup> The Jordan would be a full force due to the winter melt. Receiving communication that soldiers were on the way to arrest the two spies, Rahab spirited the two spies onto the roof by an interior stairway and hid them under the flax sheaves.

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<sup>42</sup> We will come back to this later and see what a miracle it was that this portion of the wall didn’t fall.

<sup>43</sup> See: 5:10; 3:15

7: Rahab was a convincing liar. The soldiers believed her and ran out of the city gates which were closed behind them. This would prevent anyone from leaving or entering the city. The men pursued shadows to “the fords”, passes between two hills, one to the east and one to the south giving access to Jericho.

2:8-13

8: Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, 9: and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. 10: "For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. 11: "When we heard *it*, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. 12: "Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth, 13: and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."

8-11: Rahab's faith resulted first from the word she had heard and believed about the acts of God on behalf of Israel and their destiny, and second from the terror that came upon all the inhabitants of the land. "The fear of the lord is the beginning of wisdom" the scripture says (Proverbs 9:10) and Rahab's choices were based on her fear of the Lord. The word she had heard was accurate. How this came to her and the people of Canaan is not known. But their hearts "melted" (fainted and liquefied). The realization of this Canaanite woman is seen in the following sentence, "for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath." The Canaanites were polytheists to the core. Rahab recognized that the God of Israel was supreme over all gods and her fear, like the fear of the people was that their gods were helpless against the God of Israel. She wisely converted to faith in the true God based on the reports and evidence she had heard.

Rahab's report to the spies is astonishingly close to the words of the song of Moses and Israel after the Exodus, "The peoples have heard, they tremble; Anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia. "Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; The leaders of Moab, trembling grips them; All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. "Terror and dread fall upon them; By the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone; Until Your people pass over, O LORD, Until the people pass over whom You have purchased. "You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, The place, O LORD, which You have made for Your dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established. "The LORD shall reign forever and ever."  
Exodus 15:14-18

One doesn't have to be from Missouri and say, "I won't believe it until I see it" to be persuaded to a well grounded faith in Jesus. But one should expect sufficient evidence to substantiate one's faith. Other wise, one is just swept along with the crowd as are the majority of religious people today.

12-13: Rahab's faith is simply that which any human can generate. It is not a personal relationship until she is given this by God Himself. She reaches out to God through these men based on the reports she had come to believe and makes a confession of faith. Based on her confession of faith, demonstrated by her risking her life on their behalf, she pleads with them for mercy. She asks that the men give her an oath that her family will be spared from the death and destruction to come to the town. Her pleading is based in her faith generated by her terror and her fear for her own life and that of her family.

2:14-21

14: So the men said to her, "Our life for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the LORD gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you." 15: Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall. 16: She said to them, "Go to the hill country, so that the pursuers will not happen upon you, and hide yourselves there for three days until the pursuers return. Then afterward you may go on your way." 17: The men said to her, "*We shall be* free from this oath to you which you have made us swear, 18: unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father's household. 19: "It shall come about that anyone who goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood *shall be* on his own head, and we *shall be* free; but anyone who is with you in the house, his blood *shall be* on our head if a hand is *laid* on him. 20: "But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be free from the oath which you have made us swear." 21: She said, "According to your words, so be it." So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

14: "Our life for yours" means that these men pledge their own lives to save hers upon the condition that she and her family do not reveal their "business". They give her assurance that what she has asked will be done for her. The faith and confidence of these men in the Lord and in His mercy is solid. They speak for God here without reservation, not even knowing what is to transpire here at Jericho. At that reassurance, Rahab's faith becomes a life commitment and a personal relationship with the living God. She puts her life and the lives of her family in His hands.

15-16: Because the city gates had been closed and guarded, the only way out was through this window over fifteen feet above the ground.<sup>44</sup> Rahab supplied a rope with which to let them down. This "rope" is described in verse 18. The word "rope" is from

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<sup>44</sup> See comment on verse 6.

the Hebrew root “to bind” and even includes the idea of an oath or a pledge to which one is bound. A different pronunciation of the same root includes the idea of a measurement, and as such includes the tied nautical “rope” used to sound for the bottom of the sea. The word also includes the concepts of a boundary, territory or coast line. Then it includes other ocean terms such as seacoast, sailor, nets, masts, and so on. It is a word that, based on its pronunciation, can have different nuances. It is used here and then the color and idea may be employed in a play on the word later in the narrative.

Before they descended, she instructed them to go to “the hill country”. This would be the rugged mountain wilderness to the Northwest. “Three days”, as usual, means the completion of the present day, another whole day, and part of the next day, not three whole days. And, as noted in footnote 34, the number “three” is also the number of preparation in the Bible.

17-20: Before the men descended, they reviewed their agreement. The men set conditions upon which Rahab and her family would be saved, and unless these conditions are met exactly, they would be free of the oath (verse 14). First, she must tie the cord by which she is letting them down in her window and let it hang out so it can be seen from the outside of the wall. Second, she must gather into her house her entire family. Third, they must all be silent about the “business” of the spies and Israel. This “business” includes more than the mission of the spies, for that was already known. The “business” would be the attack and destruction of Jericho. This is revealed in verse 19. The implication is clear. Her house and all who are in it will be spared if they abide by their agreement. But if any go out of the house or reveal their “business” then the oath of the spies is rescinded and the blood will be on the heads of her and her family. On the other hand, if any harm comes to her household and they have kept their part of the bargain then the blood will fall on the heads of Israel.

This is an oath of life or death. There are many parallels here to both the Passover and to Christ’s death on the cross. Let’s look at the elements. First, the “rope” is a “cord of scarlet thread”. This is a rope of high cost. The Hebrew indicates that the cord or rope is made by weaving threads together. These threads are the color of scarlet or crimson, the color of blood. Second, the rope is hung in the window to be seen from the outside just like the blood of the lamb splashed on the doorposts and lentils in Egypt, and as in Egypt, ultimately God protects that section of the house from being destroyed. Third, the root of the word “cord” (“tiqvah”) is based in the root word for “hope” (“qavah”). It is something not transitory like “wishful thinking” but that which one relies upon or “trusts in”. Fourth, like the Passover, those who stay within the area indicated by the cord will be protected. Fifth, the color of the cord reminds those within and without of blood, blood that will be preserved or spilled based on the keeping of the oath. And finally, the cord portrays the oath itself, even the word of God Himself.

The Passover and the death of Christ provided for the protection of all who sought refuge under the blood. In one sense, what occurred at Rahab’s house was the first Passover in which Gentiles were involved. The issue, of course, is not physical lineage, but faith in the word and promise of God. Rahab and her family had come to this point without

reservation. They trusted in the word of the spies because they believed it they had the authority to speak for God. What they told her was for all practical purposes the word of God Himself. The word was the gospel. It was believed and on this belief, salvation came to the house of Rahab and her family.

2:21

21: She said, "According to your words, so be it." So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

21: Once the spies had descended, Rahab demonstrated her faith by tying the cord in her window as instructed. Had soldiers of Jericho seen the cord it might have raised their curiosity. But they did not. Several suggestions have been offered to explain this:

- A. Perhaps Rahab's house was situated in a place on the wall, below which was not commonly traveled.
- B. Perhaps this was not the first time Rahab had let a man down outside her wall and this display had become ignored.
- C. Her scarlet rope might hang there on a regular basis as an advertisement of her "trade" to passers by, indicating where her "services" could be procured. This would be a usual sighting, not significant.
- D. Perhaps she only tied the rope in the window when the Israelites approached the city while the attention of the soldiers was elsewhere.
- E. Perhaps the Lord simply kept the cord from being seen.

The question has been asked, "Why did she possess this kind of cord?" The answer could be tied to "C" above, or she procured it as a "tool" of her trade. Here, Glen Kerby<sup>45</sup> notes that the grace and power of God is seen in this event as the tools of Rahab's iniquity are being used by God to bring salvation to many. I put it this way, "God's miraculous power can make flowers out of manure, and He is the only One who can do this." Again, Romans 8:28 is proven true.

But the tied cord was her witness and testimony of her faith in the word which was told to her. She had, "Firmly placed her faith in a kingdom that had yet to be established."<sup>46</sup> Hebrews 11:1 affirms this of all those of faith, "Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Also in verses 39 and 40 we read, "and all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect."

This account also gives us a picture of the faith and confidence the two spies had in God and the faith and confidence Joshua had in these two men. Hand picked by Joshua (verse 1), these two spies were able to establish an agreement they probably had not anticipated.

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<sup>45</sup> A pastor and friend of the author.

<sup>46</sup> Glen Kerby

Yet they were prepared to do so. This is the same preparation Christian believers are told to have.<sup>47</sup>

2:22-24

22: They departed and came to the hill country, and remained there for three days until the pursuers returned. Now the pursuers had sought *them* all along the road, but had not found *them*. 23: Then the two men returned and came down from the hill country and crossed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they related to him all that had happened to them. 24: They said to Joshua, "Surely the LORD has given all the land into our hands; moreover, all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us."

22: When we work for the Lord, we are pursued by the enemy who desires to hobble our efforts and imprison our gifts and abilities. Sometimes we have to hide in the wilderness and wait rather than walk the roads of the world. The best waiting is that which is waiting on God. Psalm 27:14 says, "Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD"; and Isaiah 40:31 tells us, "Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary." This "waiting" is simply allowing God to go before and clear the way. The time of waiting is also a time of gathering strength. But we are not to assume that what is indicated here is a monastic life. There is a time to take action and a time to wait upon the Lord. The wise person is able to distinguish when to wait and when to take action.

The spies waited there for "three days". This makes the "three days" spoken in Joshua 1:11 either symbolic as we have seen in so many designations of periods of time or indicates that this mission came before the command to prepare to cross the Jordan in "three days" (1:11-see footnote 34 in reference to 2:1). It would be many days, perhaps weeks before the crossing actually takes place. There is quite a bit of the total narrative of the book that is either not in chronological order or is shuffled. One needs to read ahead as often those verses tell things occurring prior to the present text. (Compare 4:1 and 4:10-11 for example).

23: The two spies returned to their commander and chief. They related everything that they had experienced. Their report was based on what Rahab had told them regarding the people of Canaan and their fear of the Israelites. Analogous to prayer, and though the Lord knows what we have gone through, He desires to listen and offer encouragement and strength so we might continue on. For us, after service and threat or attack from the enemy to thwart that service, the best place for a Christian to go is to his commander and chief – the Lord.

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<sup>47</sup> See: I Timothy 6:17-19; II Timothy 2:21, 4:1-2; I Peter 1:13; I Peter 3:15

24: This verse shows clearly what kind of men these two spies were. Though their names are not given, the Lord knows their faith, courage and strength as they carried out their assignment on behalf of God's people. Our fame or recognition by men is not important at all in our endeavors to serve God with courage and strength. We will meet saints of great faith, courage and strength whose names we have never read or heard of when one day we join them all in the Kingdom of God.

The report of these men confirmed the words of God in chapter 1:3 when He told Joshua, "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses", and verse 5 which said, "No man will *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you."

## **CHAPTER THREE**

3:1-5

1: Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed. 2: At the end of three days the officers went through the midst of the camp; 3: and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD<sup>48</sup> your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. 4: "However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before." 5: Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you."

1: The Children of Israel have not been "home" for over four hundred years. Egypt had been their world wherein they worked, ate, built and produced children. They adjusted to its environment and security. But that all came crashing down. Persecution arose and deliverance came after much suffering and pleading. Their journey into and through the wilderness began. This is not unlike the experience of the Christian. Born into the world (our "Egypt" or our "Jericho") we acclimate to it until we are delivered by Jesus. Then a new journey commences and we are challenged on every side. We often find ourselves in the wilderness, and at times seem to wander aimlessly until we arrive at a camp site where we lodge for a time and then get on with the next phase of the journey. Then the challenge to our spiritual "status-quo" confronts us and forces us to examine our choices in its face. The counsel of Joshua is the only choice that will bring us successfully across

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<sup>48</sup> The Hebrew word used here is "Yahweh" indicating a personal relationship between God and the nation of Israel. This is God's name, not His title, nature or function. It essentially means "The One who causes everything to exist". The NASB displays the word LORD in all caps to designate "Yahweh".

the depths and cold of the Jordan into a new and higher land, the challenge of which may be greater than that over which we have already trodden. The wilderness experiences are not wasted time and effort if we love God (Romans 8:28). He will use it in our lives to prepare us for greater service.<sup>49</sup>

Here, the comfort and shade of Shittim (“The Acacias”) is now left behind and a new camp is set up at the bank of the river. A new challenge faces the nation. But Reuben, Gad and Manasseh have decided to remain on the Transjordan. One can hardly blame them for establishing a home there after all they have endured. But to do so, the male warriors must join the rest of the nation in leading the charge across the Jordan to the land promised to them through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They set up a full camp near the bank of the Jordan.<sup>50</sup>

2-3: We now return to the “three days”. Could the spies have returned between verses 1 and 2? The camp was fully set up prior to the “three day” comment. The “officers” are appointed leaders of each tribe who, from the root word, are apparently able to read and write.

We are, like Israel, always to follow God, not attempt to lead. In II Corinthians 2:14-16 Paul writes, “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.” This was especially true for the citizens of Jericho as it is for us today.

There are those who pray that God would serve them and do it their way rather than they serve God and do it His way. This is alarmingly frequent among Christians and they end up being spiritually conflicted. God commands our obedience to Him and does not compromise this position because our lives depend on it. He will never be obedient to our whims and will not be manipulated as He knows our hearts. We are to obediently follow and have the same attitude as Jesus did when He prayed, “Not my will but thine be done.” We need to be out “doing His will” not asking Him to do our will. He will minister to our needs and the desires of our hearts (which change commensurately with the impact on our lives we permit Him to have) as we “delight ourselves in the Lord”.

4: 2000 cubits is just short of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile or about a thousand yards. For a company of that size, the distance may have been required for all to “see” it and go after it rather than guess and get sidetracked. They needed to see God and follow Him, not watch the crowds and go, depending on them to get to God’s destination. Matthew 7:13-15 comes to mind, “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and

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<sup>49</sup> See this author’s work on “Our Spiritual Development” entitled “Development, Peace and blessing” (July, 2007).

<sup>50</sup> This encampment had to be at least a mile from the river proper in order for a 2000 cubit gap to be placed between the large number of people and the Ark (verse 4).

the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.” Again, the emphasis on following, especially when in unfamiliar territory, is made so the people will all arrive where God has determined.

5: The Hebrew for “consecrate” is “qua-dahsh” from the word “quo-desh” meaning “holy”, “sacred”, “sanctified” or “consecrated”. The word literally means “to set apart” or, in this case, “to set *oneself* apart” to God and to His will. It has nothing to do with perfection or “holiness” in the Catholic sense (which, in their teaching, is gained by one’s own verified miraculous works) but something or someone that is exclusively dedicated or separated out to God’s service. It may or may not have not required the ritual of washing their clothes and themselves (Exodus 19:10, 14), or abstinence from sexual activity. This was a personal, spiritual matter.

In the New Testament the word is also translated “saint”. To be “consecrated” involves a rejection of one’s own will and selfish goals and a full acceptance of God’s. The word “holy” or “consecrated” can apply to things, like the vessels in the tabernacle used only for service to God. We are to be this kind of vessel as well. Paul wrote Timothy these words, “...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,...”. II Timothy 1:9 The words in Exodus 19:5-6, (“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”) are repeated in the New Testament as well.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, “consecration” also involves “separation”, a key element in the original text. When one “consecrates” him or herself to God, one must separate oneself from everything that would be a stumbling block to a life purpose of serving God. This is illustrated in Numbers 8:14 where God tells Moses, “Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the sons of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine.”

3:6-10

6: And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people. 7: Now the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. 8: "You shall, moreover, command the priests who are carrying the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand *still* in the Jordan.'" 9: Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God." 10: Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will assuredly dispossess from before you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Gergashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite.

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<sup>51</sup> See; Romans 12:1; I Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6, 5:10 for example.

6-7:

6: “Cross over” could mean, “prepare to cross the river by moving to the edge of the water” or, as the ark was normally in the center of the camp in the tabernacle, it might mean to cross over through the encampment (ahead of the people) to the river bank. Verse eleven lends itself to the latter understanding. In either case, they did not yet enter the water.

The “ark” of the covenant was a gilded box made of acacia wood some three to four feet in length, two to two and a half feet wide and two to two and a half feet tall. The word “ark” means chest, box or coffin.<sup>52</sup>

7: God’s word to Joshua suggests a possible doubt on the part of the people that God was with Joshua as he was with Moses.<sup>53</sup> This often occurs in churches where the founding pastor leaves or retires, and though there may have been complaining about some aspect of his ministry, giving the new pastor the same credentials as the old pastor is often difficult. Frequently the new pastor finds himself compared to the old pastor and often criticized as not being as “good” as the old pastor. It often takes years for a congregation to accept their new pastor, if ever for some. Joshua did not have years to wait for the people to recognize his appointment by god in Moses place so God accelerated the process.

8: God continues to give detailed instructions to Joshua as the crossing draws near. This is no ordinary crossing of the Jordan. The spies crossed and came back and there was no fanfare. It had no specific significance. But now, God wants this crossing to be a major event. It has significance beyond the simple fording of the river. The priests carrying the Ark were to approach the Jordan River and upon all entering it until their feet were in the water they were to stand still.

9-10: Joshua now tells the people what the instructions of God are and their significance. What would transpire next is designed to convince the people that 1. God is with Joshua as He was with Moses (1:5); 2. That He is present to protect the people of Israel and; 3. God will go before them and the enemies will be dispossessed from the land. As was discussed,<sup>54</sup>the crossing of the Jordan does not signify death at all but a higher level of service and walk with God. It is a new “Exodus” for the people in that as the previous generation was not able to enter because of their lack of faith, the new generation is given The opportunity to enter in because of their faith. To stimulate that faith, God will perform similar miracles as He did with Moses and the people will cross the Jordan in a miraculous way not unlike the crossing of the Red Sea.

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<sup>52</sup> Though Noah built an “ark”, a different Hebrew word is used but still means “box”. Noah’s ark had no tapered bow or rounded hull. It was strictly built for stability and space as it was only required to float, not be propelled or make headway. There was no necessity for it to have reduced friction required to more efficiently sail through water.

<sup>53</sup> See comment on 1:17-18

<sup>54</sup> See comment on 3:1

The seven nations that inhabited the land are listed here and in Deuteronomy 7:1. But not all the peoples were driven out, displaced or destroyed during the years of conquest to come.<sup>55</sup> In fact, some of them are still in the land today. Israel's failure to be fully obedient to God resulted in the consequences of war, death and conflict as well as losing the land in due time. Even today, these consequences continue on. The entire portrait of these two attempts and failures to conquer the land and defeat the enemies fully and completely was finally carried out by Jesus on behalf of all who are of faith. Those not of faith are left out of the promise of and participation in the kingdom.

3:11-13

11: "Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan. 12: "Now then, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe. 13: "It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, *and* the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap."

11: This is probably the intent of verse 6. Joshua describes God as "the Lord of all the earth" here and in verse 13 to announce that God has power over all the earth. This designates that shortly God's actions in the earth on their behalf will convincingly demonstrate that their God is higher and more powerful than any god of the nations they will encounter. This is no doubt to reinforce their need to "be strong and courageous" (1:6, 7 and 9). This phrase is only used four times in the Old Testament, two of them here. Israel's God is the "LORD"<sup>56</sup> and He is noted as the "Lord" of all the earth. The word "Lord" is "Adonay" indicating God's title as The Most High". The phrase refers entering the Jordan, not necessarily Canaan proper. The Jordan is at full flow, and in fact, overflowing its banks.<sup>57</sup> This presents a formidable challenge. For all to ford the river safely would frighten many, especially those who can't swim. There has been no word of a parting of the river to this point. However, God will go before them "into the Jordan".

The lesson for us might be that when we face impossible or formidable challenges that might cause our hearts to melt, that in Christ we have One who has gone and who will go ahead of us to prepare the way for our progress.

12: This instruction is, at this point, left without a reason for doing so. It is a repeat of the same command in 4:2, and may be a scribal gloss. The only other explanation is that these twelve men were pre-chosen so they could execute the work of carrying stones from the Jordan to the west side (see: 4:4).

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<sup>55</sup> For example, the Jebusites were well fortified in David's day and he finally defeated them I Chronicles 11:4 ff.. Judges 3:5 as well as Ezra 9:1 lists these peoples as still well established in the land some 700 years later. The only one not listed in Ezra 9:1 are the Girgashites, who seem to have disappeared from history.

<sup>56</sup> See footnote 46.

<sup>57</sup> See Joshua 3:15; 4:18.

13: This verse continues the theme of verse 11 as if there were no break. Now it is revealed that when the priests actually enter the Jordan with the Ark of the Covenant that the entire flow of the Jordan River will be restrained and the people will be able to cross on dry land. The word “heap” means a “pile” or “mound”.<sup>58</sup>

3:14-17

14: So when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant before the people, 15: and when those who carried the ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest), 16: the waters which were flowing down from above stood *and* rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho. 17: And the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan.

14: Instructions now complete and preparations made, the priests and the people took their positions and began to move toward the river in proper order. Already used to being well organized militarily, it was not a chaotic move but systematic and orderly.

15: The priests did as instructed and when the last one carrying the Ark stood in the water they all stopped. This verse makes a point of the impressive size and force of the Jordan at the approach of the priests. This reinforces the miraculous nature of the event about to transpire. It is probable that the priests entered the Jordan barefooted. Their “feet” are indicated, not their sandals.<sup>59</sup> And seeing what transpires in chapter four, it can be viewed as a similar event to Moses approaching God on that first visit to the burning bush (Exodus3:1-5, Joshua 5:15).

16: Upon the positioning of the feet of the priests carrying the Ark, God blockaded the entire river some sixteen miles to the north at a place called “Adam” in the vicinity or territory of Zarethan. When the flow began to diminish where the priests were standing, the waters of the Jordan were piling up in a heap at Adam. Adam may be located on the east side of the Jordan just south of where the Jabbok River enters the Jordan.

Many commentators have proposed that a possible earthquake caused a massive land slide into the Jordan halting its flow for a time. There is clear evidence that this has happened several times at this spot, the most recent in 1927 when a 150 foot piece of the west embankment fell into the river and blocked it completely for 21 hours. Other recorded occasions when this occurred are: 1906, 1834, 1546, 1267, and 1160. Excavations at Jericho purport to evidence an earthquake around the time of the conquest.

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<sup>58</sup> See: Exodus 15:8

<sup>59</sup> See comment on verse 18

The Jordan Valley is part of a rift or fault line. Even the word “Adam” is built on the word for “dirt” and could be mustered in defense of this idea.

Whether an earthquake did indeed occur is strictly speculation. The Jordan, running at full steam would be a formidable river to block. An earthquake of that magnitude would have likely shaken the crossing area so badly that people might not have been even able to stand. There would be little need to march around Jericho as the walls would have been long since crumbled to dust.

17: Once the waters had subsided sufficiently enough, the priests marched the Ark to the center of the Riverbed and the people went passed it (at 2000 cubits distance no doubt) until all had crossed. There would have been plenty of room to get across as they had roughly sixteen miles north of the Ark to cross. South of the Ark only a short distance away was the Dead Sea. One can imagine that the people wasted no time getting across<sup>60</sup> as they had no idea when the waters would resume their flow, that flow no doubt returning with quite an impact. It should be noted that they also had their children, livestock, tents and living utensils and so on to get across as well as the Tabernacle and all its accouterments.

Spiritual lessons from this chapter are not to be lost. They include: Preparation for the challenges and battles ahead, planning, communication with loved ones, consecration and commitment, “fixing one’s eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2), obedience to God’s word, and stepping out as directed.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

4:1-14

1: Now when all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, 2: "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from each tribe, 3: and command them, saying, 'Take up for yourselves twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet are standing firm, and carry them over with you and lay them down in the lodging place where you will lodge tonight.'" 4: So Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe; 5: and Joshua said to them, "Cross again to the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel. 6: "Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' 7: then you shall say to them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.' So these stones shall

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<sup>60</sup> See: 4:10

become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever." 8: Thus the sons of Israel did as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, just as the LORD spoke to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel; and they carried them over with them to the lodging place and put them down there. 9: Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan at the place where the feet of the priests who carried the ark of the covenant were standing, and they are there to this day. 10: For the priests who carried the ark were standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything was completed that the LORD had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. And the people hurried and crossed; 11: and when all the people had finished crossing, the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed before the people. 12: The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over in battle array before the sons of Israel, just as Moses had spoken to them; 13: about 40,000 equipped for war, crossed for battle before the LORD to the desert plains of Jericho. 14: On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; so that they revered him, just as they had revered Moses all the days of his life.

1-5: The people hurried across the wet river bed spread out on both sides of the Ark of the Covenant, no closer than 2000 cubits on each side.<sup>61</sup> This was to be a moment not to be forgotten. So the Lord establishes this memorial to Himself so the people will not forget who He is and what He has done as seems to have happened soon after the crossing of the Red Sea. The command is to have twelve select men, one from each tribe cross the Jordan to where the priests stand in the middle of the river bed and each was to pick up a shoulderable stone from the area where the priests were standing and carry it over to the west side to where the people would set up camp. Joshua executed the command.

The stones were to be picked up around the area where the priests stood holding the Ark because that place was "holy ground". These were to be sacred stones because the presence of God stood where the stones were located. We see later that the river bed was muddy and sticky and the task of removing stones and carrying them was no easy one.<sup>62</sup>

#### BRIEF EXCURSUS ON "FEET" AND "SANDALS"

There is significance to the "feet" in specific instances in the Bible. When the situation calls for it, the feet are viewed as a symbol of authority or dominion. In 1:3 God says to Joshua, "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses." Isaiah 66:1 states, "Thus says the LORD, "Heaven is My throne and

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<sup>61</sup> The crossing of the people is mentioned several times in this chapter during and after special events and acts were accomplished. This could cause confusion or criticism, but it is typically Hebrew to recount an event and then do it again adding some special element. This might be done several times until the story is completed. Note, for example, Matthew 24 where Jesus concludes His teaching with "and then the end will come" or "so the coming of the son of man will be" and does so at least five times in this chapter alone. But each time He repeats this conclusion, He has added a new element to the events leading up to His coming. See also the comment on 4:6-7 and 4:20-24.

<sup>62</sup> Note comment at 4:18.

the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest?"

Romans 10:15 quotes Isaiah 52:7 and Nahum 1:15, "How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"

Paul writes in Ephesians 1:22-23, "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. "

When Moses encountered God on Mount Horeb he was told, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." Exodus 3:5

The removing of the sandals signifies the relinquishing of authority and the submission to another. When entering a house, the sandals were removed. To show the servitude of leadership, the one in charge washed the feet of another. In contrast, one might show their humiliation and gratitude by washing someone's feet (Luke 7:36-50).

In God's presence, the sandals were to be removed. Sandals are filled with the dirt and grime of the world and thus represent personal defilement and unworthiness to stand in the presence of holiness. In Joshua 5:15 "The captain of the LORD'S host said to Joshua, 'Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so."

To bare the foot in public or go "barefooted" in public was to express mourning or distress (Ezekiel 24:17).

A transfer of right or authority or the refusal to exercise duty, right or authority in a matter was signified by removing the sandal before witnesses thus terminating the transaction: Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Ruth 4:1-13

There are many more illustrations of the significance of the feet and the sandals. In the presence of God, the sandals were removed signifying the renouncing of one's own authority in deference to another and the recognition of one's personal unrighteousness in the presence of holiness.

#### END OF EXCURSUS

6-8: So twelve stones from the middle of the river bed, where the priests stood holding the Ark of the Covenant, were carried to the west side and on to the place where the Israelites set up their camp. This camp was at a place later called Gilgal meaning "circle (of stones)". There the stones were piled up into a memorial for generations to come. This was a common occurrence to help future generations remember the acts of the Lord and re-ignite their faith in Him alone. Verses 6 and 7 actually occur at 20-24 and so these

verses anticipate but do not fulfill the establishment of the monument. This event is actually formalized later in the chapter.<sup>63</sup>

Many things were used to remind the Israelites of their heritage and the God they served who did mighty acts on their behalf. Altars, memorials, the order of the week, the holy year and its festivals and holidays, the sacrifices, the way they built their houses, the phylacteries, mezuzahs, the way they planted their crops, their diet, the literature and literary devices for memorization, their meetings, music and much more were all ordered to be memory tools so that the nation would never forget their God and His promises and mighty acts.

In modern Christianity, not only are many of these things used, but we also employ symbols: Baptism, communion, worship, music, holidays, stylized jewelry, art work, statuary, and so on to do the same thing

9: The question arises as to whether this statement actually is transcribed properly in that the moving of twelve stones back into the middle of the Jordan is neither a command of God or of Joshua and makes little sense in terms of these stones being a “memorial” when a memorial was set up at Gilgal. Further, regardless of how big these twelve stones were, the Jordan would have easily and immediately toppled them. It is a mystery, but the text can be translated as we have it or, “Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan...”

“To this day.” This phrase and many like it are used throughout the Hexateuch. They indicate a later inscription or formalization of the earlier oral and written “traditions”. Many believe that this was accomplished during the reign of Solomon or thereabouts.

10-13: It is noted for the second time that the people are crossing the Jordan.<sup>64</sup> The nature of the literature as discussed in footnote 58 is easily demonstrated here. The story is actually more congruent if the verses are read as follows: 12, 13, 10 and then 11.

The point is, of course, that the priests stood firm until all had been completed. This may have been several hours. The note that the people hurried may be in simple consideration for the priests and not only or necessarily for fear of the returning surge.

When all had been completed, the priests continued across the Jordan and passed through the people to the center of the camp where the Tabernacle was set up by the sons (or descendents) of Levi, namely the families of Gershon, Kohath and Merari. The care, set up, take down and transport of the tabernacle was their sole responsibility.<sup>65</sup> They had carts and oxen to help carry the equipment and in this case were likely among the first to cross the Jordan after the warriors of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh.

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<sup>63</sup> This is another illustration of the comments made at footnote 59.

<sup>64</sup> See: 3:17-4:1; 4:10-11. One is forced to wonder when, exactly, the stone memorial activity took place. Was it before the people crossed, after or during? See footnote 58.

<sup>65</sup> See: Genesis 46:11; Numbers 3:25; 4:4; 4:15; 7:7; 7:9; 10:17 etc. A considerable amount of attention is given to these families in scripture.

“About” 40,000 warriors is listed as the combined total for these three tribes. Numbers 26 lists the population of these tribes but here an approximation is given as to the number of warriors. This suggests one or two possibilities. The first is that the author of this book is different than that of Numbers and/or that the symbolic number “40” is being employed to signify that there was “adequate” or “enough” or “the complete compliment” of warriors to do the job or be present as Moses had instructed.<sup>66</sup> Verse 14 fulfills God’s promise to Joshua (3:7) and confirms the need of the people to have God “be with Joshua as He was with Moses”. The NASB uses the word “revere” but the Hebrew is “Yare” meaning “to fear” or “stand in awe of” or even “be terrified of”. This is the same word used in 4:24 and in other places which speak of the “fear of the Lord”.

4:15-18

15: Now the LORD said to Joshua, 16: "Command the priests who carry the ark of the testimony that they come up from the Jordan." 17: So Joshua commanded the priests, saying, "Come up from the Jordan." 18: It came about when the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come up from the middle of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up to the dry ground, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and went over all its banks as before.

15-18: The crossing is complete. The priests are now able to come up from the Jordan. Verse 18 says, “... the soles of the priests feet were lifted up to the dry ground...” Two things are of note here. 1. The word “soles” indicates the bare foot, not a sandal. The Hebrew is “kaph” meaning the hollow of the foot (or palm of the hand) and tells us that the priests were indeed barefooted.<sup>67</sup> 2. The term “lifted up” is the Hebrew “nathak” meaning “to be drawn out of”, “burst or torn away” indicating that the priests had sunk into the muck at the river’s bottom. The phrase is contrasted with “to the dry ground”. The ordeal for these priests was exhausting and difficult. We can speculate that since the priesthood was quite large perhaps many priests entered the Jordan and worked in shifts to hold the Ark in place.

Finally, after all were clear of the river bed and had moved to the area of the camp (about a mile inland) the Jordan River was allowed to flow back into its normal course, going over its banks as before. It is doubtful that it was all released at once because in doing so the devastation would have been immense.

The work of the priests is notable as lessons for all Christians. First, there are those leaders who sacrifice much on our behalf and they deserve respect and appreciation as well as our prayers, for their task is difficult. Hebrews 13:7 and 17 note: 7: “Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.” 17: “Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and

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<sup>66</sup> See: Footnotes 8 and 23.

<sup>67</sup> See comment at 3:15.

not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” This counsel is reflected by Paul as well when he says, “Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you....” II Thessalonians 3:1

Second, the scripture tells us that God has made all of us, “to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father--to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Revelation 1:6<sup>68</sup> As such we serve the people of God at various times and in various ways. In this capacity one must accept that there will be burdens to bear, difficult times to endure and occasionally “muck” to walk in. The purpose of course is to facilitate the movement of God’s people to higher ground, where they can stand near the Lord, on firm and solid footing.

4:19-24

19: Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth of the first month and camped at Gilgal on the eastern edge of Jericho. 20: Those twelve stones which they had taken from the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. 21: He said to the sons of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' 22: then you shall inform your children, saying, 'Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground.' 23: "For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed, just as the LORD your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed; 24: that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, so that you may fear the LORD your God forever."

19: This would, in our calendar, be late March or early to mid April. The Spring run off would have swollen the Jordan as has been noted. It is also significant because it is the time of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. They had crossed on the tenth of Nisan,<sup>69</sup> four days before Passover. They established their final camp at Gilgal, apparently so named for the monument of stones set up there (5:9). The location of Gilgal is uncertain today, but the best estimate is that it is located about a mile or so northeast of Jericho proper. At that spot there are a few small mounds or tells which have not been excavated and, according to the Madaba Map, is also located there.<sup>70</sup>

20-24: See comments at verses 4:6-8. The comparison to the Red Sea crossing is made and this generation is given a similar miraculous event so that they “will fear the Lord” only. A second chance is given to Israel. For the world, Jesus is the second chance, there is no other.

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<sup>68</sup> See also: Rev. 5:10; 20:6.

<sup>69</sup> Deuteronomy 16:1 calls it “Abib”. This is the Canaanite name for the same month which later came to be called “Nisan”. This gives us some insight into the ability of these cultures to communicate with each other.

<sup>70</sup> The “Madaba Map” is a mosaic illustration of the Holy Land embedded in the floor of a sixth century Byzantine church located in St. George’s Church at Madaba Jordan. This map can be viewed on line by linking to “Madaba Map”.

## CHAPTER FIVE

5:1

1: Now it came about when all the kings of the Amorites who *were* beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who *were* by the sea, heard how the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel.

1: It must have been heart rending for the citizens of Jericho to watch this crossing with its attendant miracles and ceremony. Those who just heard about it practically collapsed.

5:2-9

2: At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make for yourself flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time." 3: So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. 4: This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way after they came out of Egypt. 5: For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised. 6: For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, *that is*, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished because they did not listen to the voice of the LORD, to whom the LORD had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. 7: Their children whom He raised up in their place, Joshua circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them along the way. 8: Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. 9: Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.

2-3: Passover was only a few days away. Preparations had to be made for this celebration so it is possible that the circumcision took place afterwards. It is difficult to imagine the crossing of the Jordan, setting up camp (possibly twice) especially the tabernacle, the building of the memorial, and preparation for Passover and un-leavened bread PLUS the circumcision of tens of thousands of men all within three days.

Circumcision was “work” so it could not have been done during Passover. It is quite possible that the circumcision would have taken place after the feast days were completed.

The explanation for this circumcision is given in the following verses. Though iron was smelted in Joshua’s time, there was no way for them to do this so Joshua had knives made out of stone. There had to be some hunting around to find the specific stone required. The hardest stone was “flint”, an impure variety of quartz. It is actually chipped not formed and breaks into sharp edges. Flint was used as spear points, arrowheads, cutting stones, scrapers, axe-heads, sickle blades, plow points, awls, picks and so forth even into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, the operation of circumcision was painful and messy and had to be done carefully. The word knives, being plural, suggests that there were a number of “surgeons” - likely priests – involved in the operations.

This operation was done outside of camp at “Gibeath-haaraloth” meaning “Hill of the Foreskins”. It may have been a nearby hilly area hosting a spring of water to aid in the operation. Here, the foreskins of perhaps hundreds of thousands of males were buried and thus the name. To complete the operation may have taken weeks. Then there was a time needed to heal. This is why it is suggested that the Passover may have taken place first in the narrative.

4-8: This is an editorial commentary explaining why the circumcision had to take place. The key reason is so the men would recognize in their own flesh the covenant and promise God had made to Abraham and their legal and full participation in that promise. In the New Testament, all people who have come to faith and relationship with God through Jesus Christ experience the circumcision “of the heart”. Paul explains this in Romans 2:28-29, “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.” Paul notes also in Colossians 2:9-12, “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”

Once the act of circumcision was completed, the men had to heal. This would have taken several days.

9: Once the last of the men had renewed their covenant with the Lord in their own blood, the Lord (Yahweh) announced to Joshua that this same day the “reproach of Egypt” has been “rolled away”. “Reproach” is shame or disgrace. The “reproach of Egypt” reflected the shame of God’s people held in slavery to a pagan rule and pagan gods. In addition, the people had forsaken many rituals such as circumcision and had blended into Egyptian society through intermarriage, and the worship of idols. They had largely forgotten their

God, and the promises He had made to their forefathers. Moses himself had been “raised in all the ways of the Egyptians.”<sup>71</sup>

The Lord used the word “gal-lal” (meaning - “to roll away”) as a play on words to remember the significance of the place of memorial and remembrance – “Gilgal” a “circle” (of stones).

Gilgal, then, is the place of remembrance and renewal. It is marked by a memorial of stones. For us, Gilgal is the same as the communion table. It is our memorial. In the communion we are to “remember” Him who paid it all. It is there that we recognize the promises of God made to us, His loving acts of on our behalf, and the price paid by Christ to secure them. Because of Him we stand cleansed and we stand firm in hope.

Gilgal is also the place of renewal. Time and time again the Israelites returned to this place for inspiration, worship and renewal. Where is this place for you?

5:10-12

10: While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho. 11: On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched *grain*. 12: The manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year.

10-12: There was a considerable amount of work and preparation to conclude to properly prepare for the Passover. This had to be completed by the evening or sunset on the day prior to the Passover as the Hebrew day both ended and began at sunset. The Passover would have been celebrated by individual families. The men of the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh either joined other families or crossed back over to join their families for this night. The next day, the Israelites were able to procure some corn that had been in storage somewhere in the land, grind it up to make unleavened bread (“matzoth”) to continue the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Apparently they had no time to do so prior to the Passover but complied with the ordinance for the remainder of the week (See: Deuteronomy 16:1-8).

As soon as they had eaten of the food of the land, the Manna God provided ceased to fall. It causes one to pause thinking that God, through this entire epic event continued to provide for His people even when battles, challenges, difficulties, were rampant. Even in times of disobedience God provided Manna. Many under similar circumstances might wonder whether God was involved in caring and providing or not. When the battles were hot between Israel and the Amorites, God had not abandoned His people. There are times in the life of the Christian when the battles are hard and the challenges seemingly overpowering. This does not mean the Lord is ignoring His people.

Also, if the surrounding nations saw the Manna falling and being gathered by the

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<sup>71</sup> See: Acts 7:22.

Israelites for food, it had to have had an impact on them. This had never been seen before (or since). God's blessings to His people both in terms of physical provision but more so as spiritual nourishment must boggle the minds of those who mock and belittle the issues of faith. The testimony of the "three children" prepared to be thrown into the fiery furnace comes to mind, "If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. "But *even* if *He does* not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." Daniel 3:17-18

God had supplied the Manna as He promised. Now that He had brought them into the promised land, God's promise was fulfilled and the Manna stopped.

The comment in verse twelve, "but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year" tells us of the future. The word "yield" means "produce" or "crops". Their entrance into Canaan would be successful and the land would be utilized to provide for the nation.

5:13-15

13: Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" 14: He said, "No, rather I indeed come now *as* captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" 15: The captain of the LORD'S host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

13: Joshua was apparently making a visual inspection of the fortifications of the city, no doubt trying to figure out how best to conquer Jericho. It may have been at this time that the sons of Israel had surrounded the city as indicated by 6:1. Thus, Joshua's close proximity could be easily understood. He may also come to a point of prayer, seeking guidance from the Lord. The fact that he had to lift up his eyes to see a man standing across from him indicates this possibility. Perhaps the shadow of the stranger fell across Joshua causing him to look up. In any case, Joshua took a defensive posture and carefully advanced upon the man who held a drawn sword yet did not threaten Joshua with it. Joshua neither recognized the garb or the nationality of the man.<sup>72</sup> This was not a man in any way familiar to Joshua. So he asked right out which side the man fought for.

14-15: The man's response is better translated, "Neither. At this time I am here as the commander of the forces of the Lord (Yahweh)." The identification of this "man" deserves consideration. Some consider him to be the second highest ranked "angel" in

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<sup>72</sup> The word "man" is "eesh" in the Hebrew, indicating a male being, but a stranger. Often the Lord's messengers do not appear as unusual beings, the way we often depict angels. In reality, none of the Lord's angels have wings as often depicted with the exception of the Seraphim ("burning") – See Isaiah 6:1-2, and the cherubim (meaning uncertain but possibly related to the idea of a herald) - See Ezekiel 11:22.

the heavenly hierarchy only superseded by “The angel of the Lord” (Exodus 3:2) who is an epiphany of the Lord Himself. Since he does not identify himself as the angel of the Lord, this might be true. But there are factors that support the view that this is indeed the Lord appearing to Joshua as the “Commander of the Lord’s host. 1. The “man” announces that “at this time” he is coming as the commander of the forces of the Lord suggesting that at other times he might reveal himself differently. 2. The command to Joshua to “remove his sandals” would be an unusual request for any angel, but not for the Lord Himself to declare the ground under Joshua’s feet as “holy”. 3. Angel shun worship, but there was no such shunning when Joshua bowed down to the ground before this “man”. 4. In the dialogue beginning in 6:2 it is the Lord speaking (Yah-weh), and in the first person. 5. Joshua never questioned the “man” as was often done with angelic appearances and statements.

There was no hesitation on Joshua’s part. He fell to his knees and put his face on the ground and indicated he was ready to receive whatever the angel spoke to him. Reminiscent of the encounter of Moses had on Mount Horeb at the burning bush, the commander told Joshua to remove his sandals because he was on holy ground.<sup>73</sup> Joshua was immediately compliant. It is not indicated here what the angel proceeded to say, but the content is likely the contents of 6:2-5.

There are times when we confront a situation and neither know how to assess it or solve it. What is our challenge today? What is it that we are looking at and trying to figure out how to overcome it? The world attempts many ways to overcome its challenges and often it is some evil action that is thought of. For the Christian, it is at those times that we must fall before the Lord and gain His counsel. For us His Word hidden away in our hearts may offer some counsel or lead us deeper into the revealed truth. When we ask for wisdom, we are promised not to be left empty. James 1:5 says, “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” For Joshua, he was given assurance that the strategy and the battle was not just his alone, but God’s as well. The same can be said for all of God’s faithful.

The chapter break at this point is unfortunate as the narrative continues in context through 6:5.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

6:1-5

1: Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in. 2: The LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king *and* the valiant warriors. 3: "You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. 4:

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<sup>73</sup> See Excursus on feet and sandals beginning at chapter 4:1-5.

"Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. 5: "It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead."

1: The city is surrounded and closed up. No person is permitted to enter and no one dares to leave the city. Joshua is receiving instructions from the Lord (likely this is a continuance of 5:15) and discovers that his query about how to conquer the city is answered.

2-5: The first words are a reassurance that God will produce the victory. We are not to understand this as God will produce the victory in a battle of our own making. This mistake has been made by many zealous preachers. The entire episode at Jericho has been hundreds of years in the making and its purpose is the redemption of the world, ultimately through Christ. Anything else that does not fit this eternal plan of God is suspect.

Secondly, a seemingly bazaar set of instructions is given to Joshua to convey to the people. For six days all the warriors are to march (in their regular military formation) around the city once each day for six days. Leading this march is the Ark of the Covenant carried by the priests with seven more carrying ram's horns all preceded by a contingent of armed men (see verses 6-10). On the seventh day they are to march around the city seven times in complete silence and at the completion of this march the priests are to blow a long blast on their horns, and the people are to shout at the top of their lungs.

What is the significance of this operation or procedure? The key is verse two. The Lord gives the city into the hands of the Israelites. This occurs on the Sabbath, the day of rest. The Sabbath week is indeed pictured here as is the creation. God is creating a "new order" so to speak. The long blast of the horns is typical of significant events ordered by God in the life of His people. The blast of the trumpet, for example, occurs at the coming of Christ to establish His permanent rule upon the earth.

As far as the Sabbath pattern goes, Israel will "work" for the six days, but the seventh is the day of the Lord. This pattern is seen clearly in the Book of Revelation, and is coupled with significant events establishing God's judgment and rule. Why then the march on the seventh day? Seven is symbolic of the completion of God's work and of rest. The seventh day, the Sabbath, is set aside for the Israel as not only a day of rest but of remembrance of the mighty works of God. Israel spent this day in worship and celebration. The Shophar would sound and they were allowed to gather and worship and sing the songs of God or later, walk to the synagogue and do likewise. On the seventh day of this march, they were to walk in complete silence until the seventh circumference

of the city was complete. Then the Shophar (Ram's horn)<sup>74</sup> was to be blown in a long blast. After this sounding, Joshua would give final instructions<sup>75</sup> to the people and then commanded a boisterous shout of all the people be heard. At this occurrence, God promised that the walls of the city would fall down flat and that access to the armies of Israel would be opened. They were to enter the city and destroy it.<sup>76</sup>

5:6-10

6: So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD." 7: Then he said to the people, "Go forward, and march around the city, and let the armed men go on before the ark of the LORD." 8: And it was so, that when Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD went forward and blew the trumpets; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them. 9: The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while they continued to blow the trumpets. 10: But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "You shall not shout nor let your voice be heard nor let a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I tell you, 'Shout!' Then you shall shout!"

6-10: In addition to the previous instructions, we have added elements. A contingent of armed men were also to precede the seven priests with the Shophars who preceded the priests carrying the Ark, and a contingent of armed men followed the Ark. The people of Israel were to follow the entire procession as well, but in silence. Verse 8 notes that the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns went "before the LORD" showing that there was no doubt that God was in their midst and was to accomplish the defeat of Jericho. The Ram's Horns were to be blown continually on each of the six days (see 11-16) but apparently there was to be no talking during any of the marches.

## EXCURSUS

### KEIL AND DELITZSCH'S COMMENTARY ON THE OLD TESTAMENT - JOSHUA SIX, THE SEVENDAY MARCH AND TRUMPET BLASTS

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<sup>74</sup> The Shophar was not a musical instrument, but used as a clarion call as an alarm, warning, or to some special appointment such as worship, battle, and so forth.

<sup>75</sup> See: Verses 17-19.

<sup>76</sup> Keil and Delitzsch's Commentary on the Old Testament have an excellent and complete discussion on the meaning of the seven days, horns and procession of the Israelites. See excursus below.

The significance of this repeated marching round the town culminates unquestionably in the ark of the covenant and the trumpet-blast of the priests who went before the ark. In the account before us the ark is constantly called the ark of the Lord, to show that the Lord, who was enthroned upon the cherubim of the ark, was going round the hostile town in the midst of His people; whilst in [Jos 6:8](#) Jehovah himself is mentioned in the place of the ark of Jehovah. Seven priests went before the ark, bearing jubilee trumpets and blowing during the march. The first time that we read of a trumpet-blast is at Sinai, where the Lord announced His descent upon the mount to the people assembled at the foot to receive Him, not only by other fearful phenomena, but also by a loud and long-continued trumpet-blast ([Exo 19:16](#), [Exo 19:19](#); [Exo 20:14-18](#)). After this we find the blowing of trumpets prescribed as part of the Israelitish worship in connection with the observance of the seventh new moon's day ([Lev 23:24](#)), and at the proclamation of the great year of jubilee ([Lev 25:9](#)). Just as the trumpet-blast heard by the people when the covenant was made at Sinai was as it were a herald's call, announcing to the tribes of Israel the arrival of the Lord their God to complete His covenant and establish His kingdom upon earth; so the blowing of trumpets in connection with the round of feasts was intended partly to bring the people into remembrance before the Lord year by year at the commencement of the sabbatical month, that He might come to them and grant them the Sabbath rest of His kingdom, and partly at the end of every seven times seven years to announce on the great day of atonement the coming of the great year of grace and freedom, which was to bring to the people of God deliverance from bondage, return to their own possessions, and deliverance from the bitter labours of this earth, and to give them a foretaste of the blessed and glorious liberty to which the children of God would attain at the return of the Lord to perfect His kingdom (vid., Pentateuch, pp. 631f.). But when the Lord comes to found, to build up, and to perfect His kingdom upon earth, He also comes to overthrow and destroy the worldly power which opposes His kingdom. The revelation of the grace and mercy of God to His children, goes ever side by side with the revelation of justice and judgment towards the ungodly who are His foes. If therefore the blast of trumpets was the signal to the congregation of Israel of the gracious arrival of the Lord its God to enter into fellowship with it, no less did it proclaim the advent of judgment to an ungodly world. This shows clearly enough the meaning of the trumpet-blast at Jericho. The priests, who went before the ark of the covenant (the visible throne of the invisible God who dwelt among His people) and in the midst of the hosts of Israel, were to announce through the blast of trumpets both to the Israelites and Canaanites the appearance of the Lord of the whole earth for judgment upon Jericho, the strong bulwark of the Canaanitish power and rule, and to foretel to them through the falling of the walls of this fortification, which followed the blast of trumpets and the warty-cry of the soldiers of God, the overthrow of all the strong bulwarks of an ungodly world through the omnipotence of the Lord of heaven and earth. Thus the fall of Jericho became the symbol and type of the overthrow of every worldly power before the Lord, when He should come to lead His people into Canaan and establish His kingdom upon earth. On the ground of this event, the blowing of trumpets is frequently introduced in the writings of the prophets, as the signal and symbolical omen of the manifestations of the Lord in great judgments, through which He destroys one worldly power after another, and thus maintains and extends His kingdom upon earth, and leads it on towards that completion to which it will eventually attain when He descends from heaven in His glory at the time of the last trump, with a great shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, to raise the dead and change the living, to judge the world, cast the devil, death, and hell into the lake of fire, create a new heaven and new earth, and in the new Jerusalem erect the tabernacle of God among men for all eternity ([1Co 15:51](#).; [1Th 4:16-17](#); [Rev 20:1](#); 21).

The appointment of the march round Jericho, which was to be continued for seven days, and to be repeated seven times on the seventh day, was equally significant. The number seven is a symbol in the Scriptures of the work of God and of the perfection already produced or to be eventually secured by Him; a symbol founded upon the creation of the world in six days, and the completion of the works of creation by the resting of God upon the seventh day. Through this arrangement, that the walls of Jericho were not to fall till after they had been marched round for seven days, and not till after this had been repeated seven times on the seventh day, and then amidst the blast of the jubilee trumpets and the war-cry of the soldiers of the people of God, the destruction of this town, the key to Canaan, was intended by God to become a type of the final destruction at the last day of the power of this world, which exalts itself against the kingdom of God. In this way He not only showed to His congregation that it would not be all at once, but only after long-continued conflict, and at the end of the world, that the worldly power by which it was opposed would be overthrown, but also proved to the enemies of His kingdom, that however long their power might sustain itself in opposition to the kingdom of God, it would at last be destroyed in a moment.

#### END OF EXCURSUS

The preparations were now complete. It was time to claim the heritage God promised to them through Abraham nearly eight hundred years before.

6:11-16

11: So he had the ark of the LORD taken around the city, circling *it* once; then they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp. 12: Now Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. 13: The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew the trumpets; and the armed men went before them and the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while they continued to blow the trumpets. 14: Thus the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp; they did so for six days. 15: Then on the seventh day they rose early at the dawning of the day and marched around the city in the same manner seven times; only on that day they marched around the city seven times. 16: At the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city.

11-14: Now the actual procession begins and continues. Jericho was not much bigger than a modern football field. The march around would have been a trip of only about a thousand feet right at the wall. Once the march was completed the entire party returned to the camp. This continued for six days.

15-16: On the seventh day the march commenced, but with some changes. They marched in the same order and the priests blew the horns. But they marched around the city seven times and at the end of the seventh circuit the priests gave a long continued blast on the

horns. It is clear by verses 17-19 that Joshua stopped the procession and all activities and as the people were silent, gave final instructions for the attack.

6:17-19

17: "The city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the LORD; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. 18: "But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, so that you do not covet *them* and take some of the things under the ban, and make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it. 19: "But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD."

17-19: The instructions to the people before the great shout are not revealed in the instructions recorded earlier by the Lord in verses 3-5. The city was put under the "ban" by the Lord. This means that all was to be destroyed and that nothing in the city was to be taken as a possession by any person or by Israel as a whole. The only exceptions were the household of Rahab and the valuable metals and anything made of gold and silver which were to be set aside to the "treasury of the Lord". The Hebrew word for "ban" also means "devoted". That is there were things to be banned from personal use or possession but devoted to the Lord. In this case they were to be set aside in the Tabernacle for future application. Numbers 31 recounts the battle between Israel and Midian wherein "...Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it to the tent of meeting as a memorial for the sons of Israel before the LORD." It is unclear at Jericho whether or not the gold and silver included idols and such that could have been plated and the plating removed before transport to the tabernacle.

Verse 18 clearly suggests that possessing things that are banned will bring trouble upon the possessors. The foundation for this is in Deuteronomy 7:25-26, 25: "The graven images of their gods you are to burn with fire; you shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, or you will be snared by it, for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. 26: "You shall not bring an abomination into your house, and like it come under the ban; you shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is something banned." Jericho was under the authority of pagan, false gods represented by idols. Deuteronomy 27:15 notes, "Cursed is the man who makes an idol or a molten image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman..."

When these instructions were complete, the people who had been silent for the entire week gave a great shout at Joshua's command.

6:20-21

20: So the people shouted, and *priests* blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall

fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city. 21: They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.

20-21: Every archaeologist has concluded that the walls of ancient Jericho did indeed collapse. Though they may disagree on the exact date, there is no doubt that the Biblical account of Jericho's walls falling down has been verified. The suggestion has been made that the combined volume and harmonics of the horns and the great shout actually caused the walls to crumble. God, of course, can accomplish His will by any means. If this is indeed the case, then the greater miracle of this event rests in the section of the wall that did not fall, namely Rahab's residence. We can conclude, based on Joshua 10:28 that the king of Jericho was killed with the sword and his death therefore, can be included in this verse (21).

In every Christian's life comes a Jericho. Whatever it is within or outside the Christian's life that would stand to defeat the Christian's usefulness to God, his purpose or simply disable him from being useful to God in the service of the kingdom must be seen clearly, appraised and defeated. In cases like this, only the Lord who dwells in the midst of God's child by the Holy Spirit can assist in defeating the obstacle. Rather than verbalize rationalizations and false confidence, it is at times like this that the Christian be quiet until God tells him the victory is won and he can shout in celebration of the fact. In fact, the victory is won, but only in Christ and one's clinging to him. One's "Jericho", whether it be temptation, materialism, sin or even indifference can be defeated if one realizes he wishes terribly to do so and at the same time realizes he can not do so without the help of Christ.

The destruction of the city and the killing of all the animals and people is done for two reasons. The first is that the entire city and all that is in it is an abomination to God as we saw in Deuteronomy 25-26 above. Everything in the city belonged to the abomination of Jericho and it was all deemed unclean and "diseased" as it were. Today the Jews would say that these animals were not "kosher". This word is not found in the Bible but it comes from the Hebrew "kasher" meaning proper, straight, suitable or "successful". The word "kosher" is a Yiddish derivation. The second reason is to illustrate and foreshadow the judgment of God upon all who engage in such activities, including Israel. It is not only a warning to all the Canaanite cities, but to the world in general as the future and final judgment of God foreseen here.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> In Deuteronomy 20:10-18, Moses instructs Israel in terms of their battle procedure. The cities of Canaan are mentioned specifically; 10: "When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace. 11: "If it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and shall serve you. 12: "However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. 13: "When the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall strike all the men in it with the edge of the sword. 14: "Only the women and the children and the animals and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourself; and you shall use the spoil of your enemies which the LORD your God has given you. 15: "Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations nearby. 16: "Only in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything

6:22-23

22: Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the harlot's house and bring the woman and all she has out of there, as you have sworn to her." 23: So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives and placed them outside the camp of Israel.

22-23: We are once again treated to the two spies that courageously had gone into Jericho to reconnoiter the situation. God honored the oath of the two men to Rahab and her section of the wall did not fall down and no Israelite warrior approached her home because they had spotted the scarlet cord in her window. On the north side of Jericho, even today over 3000 years later, there is one section of the wall that did not collapse. Though in serious decay, it does not bear evidence of falling as do the rest of the walls.

We are told that these two men are "young men". The Hebrew indicates that these were men were indeed young, under thirty years of age, perhaps even under twenty. Rahab recognized the two men and any fears were allayed. She and her entire family were taken outside the city to safety. The term "outside the camp" simply means that Rahab and her family needed to do all that may have been required for reception into the congregation of the Lord, likely including circumcision for the men in her family. For this to occur, teachings of the word of God and His ordinances would have to be communicated so they would understand the foundations for the faith and customs of the Israelites.

6:24-25

24: They burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. 25: However, Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

24: As with the collapse of the walls, there is clear archaeological evidence of a great fire in Jericho. Not only that, but excavations unearthed a considerable number of clay pots and storage jars still full of grain. Had the inhabitants left the city, these would have been taken along. Invaders would have removed them. But everything was left untouched when the city was destroyed, just as Joshua ordered. The temptation to steal gold, silver and precious gems had to be significant. Yet one's faith in God to provide and care for

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that breathes. 17: "But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the LORD your God has commanded you, 18: so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the LORD your God." Deuteronomy 9:1-6ff. also gives God's explanation for the destruction of these peoples.

His people must be more influential. All of Israel's warriors obeyed God and resisted taking anything at all from the city for themselves...all but one man.

25: Rahab and her family were spared but there is a debate as to whether Rahab alone or she and her entire family were accepted and included in Israel. If her family did not become a part of the Israeli camp, it is possible that they were able to follow along under the shelter of Israel, but just outside the camp or, perhaps, they just ultimately went their own way. Tradition tells us that Rahab herself became an Israelite by marriage, perhaps even to Joshua himself. We do know that according to the genealogy of Matthew (1:5) that she is one of four women mentioned in the lineage of Jesus' family and that she was the mother of Boaz, Ruth's husband, and the great-grandmother of King David. Her faith is exemplified in James 2:25 in her works of hiding the spies.

6:26-27

26: Then Joshua made them take an oath at that time, saying, "Cursed before the LORD is the man who rises up and builds this city Jericho; with *the loss of* his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and with *the loss of* his youngest son he shall set up its gates." 27: So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.

26: This curse was spoken by the entire camp against the rebuilding of Jericho. It was not that it could not be rebuilt, but that whoever did so would suffer the loss of his firstborn and to rebuild its walls and gates would result in the loss of his youngest son. There was no ban on living in the area or building disconnected dwellings on the rubble. In fact, this was done. The territory and land given to the tribe of Benjamin included Jericho. Joshua 18:20-21 tells us, 20: "Moreover, the Jordan was its border on the east side. This *was* the inheritance of the sons of Benjamin, according to their families *and* according to its borders all around. 21: Now the cities of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho and Beth-hoglah and Emek-keziz,..."

From that time onward, Jericho was inhabited. In Judges 3:13, Eglon defeated Israel at "The City of Palms" (i.e., Jericho). In II Samuel 10:5, some of David's servants were shamed by the Ammonites and David sent them to Jericho until their shame was no longer visible. Only during the days of Ahab, king of Israel was the curse of Joshua fulfilled. In I Kings 16:33-34 we read, 33: "Ahab also made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him. 34: In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho; he laid its foundations with the *loss of* Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates with the *loss of* his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.

27: Joshua 9:1-3; 9, is an example of how Joshua's fame had spread. The word "fame" is simply "report". When the "Jericho's" of the Christian life are finally and soundly defeated, the word of this will spread and it will be known that the God of Joshua (Jesus) was the power behind it all.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

7:1

1: But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban, for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, took some of the things under the ban, therefore the anger of the LORD burned against the sons of Israel.

1: It is to be underscored here that as one person is found in disobedience, the entire nation is held accountable. So the entire population suffers even when they have no part in the sin or knowledge of it. This is because the nation is seen as one body, one entity. They are often personified as God's son, child, or wife. The New Testament teaches the same thing in the church. We are one body, the body of Christ in this case. Paul repeats this theme frequently in his epistles: "...so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Romans 12:5). "For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ" (I Corinthians 12:12). "And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it." (I Corinthians 12:26). Sinning against God is also sin against the body of Christ and vice-versa.

Achan's name (called "Achar" in I Chronicles 2:7) may mean "troublesome" or "disturbing" and is called . His lineage is listed, and in doing so, Joshua casts the blight of Achan's sin upon the entire tribe of Judah. The consequences of Achan's disobedience are now revealed in the text.

7:2-5

2: Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, "Go up and spy out the land." So the men went up and spied out Ai.  
3: They returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up; *only* about two or three thousand men need go up to Ai; do not make all the people toil up there, for they are few." 4: So about three thousand men from the people went up there, but they fled from the men of Ai. 5: The men of Ai struck down about thirty-six of their men, and pursued them from the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them down on the descent, so the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

2: Why Ai? We learn from 8:1 that this was indeed the city the Lord wanted to be conquered next. But in this part of the narrative, there is no mention of what the Lord told Joshua. We are left with conjecture. It appears that after the spies returned from their reconnoiter that Joshua just took their advice and acted upon it. There is no mention of consultation with the Lord, the Elders or anyone else. There is no time of prayer, no priests involved and the Ark of the covenant was not involved. Add to this the sneak

theft of Achan and Joshua had unknowingly implemented a formula for disaster. Perhaps Israel had become proud of her strength and felt that “bothering” the Lord would not be necessary. We don’t know. But we do know what happened.

From Jericho over the rugged hills, valleys and canyons, it is about twenty miles by foot to Ai (pronounced “Aye-ee” or “aye”) and a rise of some 3,300 feet in elevation. The terrain on this trip is inhospitable. However, there are many streams of water in the canyons and shade provided from the trees growing near the water which would have been welcomed by the spies as it is probably Summer time as they set out on this trip.

“Beth-aven” is unknown, but means “house of iniquity”, and may have been a shrine just outside of, but associated with Bethel as it is noted to have been “east of Bethel”. Bethel is located about ten miles due north of Jerusalem with Ai slightly southeast of Bethel some two miles. The road to Jerusalem would not have been used by the spies. They would have traveled northwest from Jericho through a rugged wilderness rising from 800 feet below sea level to 2,500 feet above sea level in that distance, a formidable climb. After the summit is reached, a mile descent into the rocky, rolling hills upon which Ai was built would be necessary.

Ai had been there for about a thousand years, but had been invaded and destroyed several times. It was a city inhabited by those of Amorite descent. The city the spies saw was built on the ruins of past civilizations giving Ai it’s name “the ruins” or “the heap”.

There are numerous references to this city. In Genesis 12:8 and 13:3 Abraham set up his camp between Bethel and Ai. Two full chapters are given to Ai in the book of Joshua, chapters seven and eight, and it is mentioned numerous other times throughout the book. It is also mentioned in Ezra, Nehemiah and Jeremiah. It’s proximity to Bethel is important as the two cities are often seen together. Because of this, Ai becomes the gateway to Bethel, the more important city and there are over fifty references to Bethel and Ai in the Old Testament. There are two possible sites located for Ai and both have excavated. Both are the same distance from Bethel and about a mile apart. One is about twenty seven acres in size, the other just three. From both sites, Bethel can be seen on the top of the hill to the northwest across the valley.

When the spies viewed Ai, they discovered a town with less fortification than Jericho. In fact, it may have been un-walled or perhaps minimally walled as the town is noted for having a “gate” (verse 5).<sup>78</sup> The population was only about 12,000 men and women (Joshua 8:25) leaving a fighting force of perhaps only a thousand.

3: The recommendation of the spies was simple. The city could be easily taken by two or three thousand men. Because of the sparse population there was no need for more to endure the laborious trek up to the city.

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<sup>78</sup> The word “gate” is from the Hebrew “sha-ar” and is quite general. It basically means “opening” or “passage way” and describes everything from a stout gate in a defensive wall to a simple path into an area between two markers.

4-5: When the Israelite troops approached the city gate, the Ai militia came out to meet them and to the surprise of the Israelite contingent, they were beginning to be beaten back and injuries as well as mortal wounds were being administered by the men of Ai.<sup>79</sup> The Israelites could make no headway. This unexpected and heavy resistance overpowered the Israelites and so they began to fall back and as they did so some thirty-six of their men were killed. So they rapidly retreated, running from the men of Ai. They were pursued for several miles until they began the descent into the Jordan Valley.

They passed through a place called “Shebarim” meaning the “broken place” or “breaks” that could define a pass or a quarry in the mountains. Somewhere after this place, after they began their descent the men of Ai gave up their chase. When the men returned to camp, and the report of their defeat was heard by the people, their hearts “melted”. The Hebrew here means that they lost confidence and became discouraged. It is a lesson to be learned; weakness and defeat are not the result of circumstances but of choices.

Further, we see absent from the preparations for this attack any time of prayer before the Lord, the presence of the Ark or the priests, or any other spiritual foundation. Had this occurred, perhaps Achan’s sin would have been revealed before this attack and the tragedy averted. Herein lies another lesson to be learned.

7:6-9

6: Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, *both* he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. 7: Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord GOD, why did You ever bring this people over the Jordan, *only* to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? If only we had been willing to dwell beyond the Jordan! 8: "O Lord, what can I say since Israel has turned *their* back before their enemies? 9: "For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will You do for Your great name?"

6: Joshua’s response to the report was extreme frustration and mourning. With the elders of Israel with whom he had no doubt discussed the matter, he and the elders, finding no answers in their dialogue walked to the tabernacle. Their conclusion was that God had forsaken them for no good reason. When they entered it they went to where the Ark was placed, tore their clothes, fell to their knees and put their heads in the dirt and threw dirt into their hair. They continued in this until the evening. These acts are the ancient signs of terrible distress, shock and mourning.

7-9: Joshua’s cry to the Lord is so common and so understandable that it needs little explanation. “Why, O God?” Joshua bitterly complains to the Lord and wonders what is going to happen to the people now. They would have been better off staying on the east of the Jordan rather than be miraculously delivered to the west side where nothing but

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<sup>79</sup> The men of Ai (as in 8:5, 14) came out to meet Israel suggesting that there were no defensive walls around the city. To avoid the immediate incursion into the city, it was necessary for the men of Ai to go out to meet Israel in the battle field.

destruction awaits them at the hands of the Amorites. Because the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land (including the Amorites, and Philistines) will hear of it, figure God had abandoned them and make short work of all the people. God's name will be disgraced and all this history will come to nothing. God's promises will fail and the hopes of the people will be dashed. He confronts God much as did Moses<sup>80</sup> and pointedly asks, "What are you going to do about this?"

How familiar this is. How often is the finger pointed at God when it is a godless society that does so. From Adam who blamed God for giving him the woman to the modern world, it seems God is to blame for everything. It may be worth considering that if battles are avoided, there is no defeat. But there is no progress either. The Christian will not face the onslaught of opposition when he does nothing. The child of God who determines to live his life in obedience to God and grow in his or her faith will be the Christian the enemy will seek to disable. Those who do not need not fear opposition from the enemy.

7:10-15

10: So the LORD said to Joshua, "Rise up! Why is it that you have fallen on your face? 11: "Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. And they have even taken some of the things under the ban and have both stolen and deceived. Moreover, they have also put *them* among their own things. 12: "Therefore the sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies; they turn *their* backs before their enemies, for they have become accursed. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy the things under the ban from your midst. 13: "Rise up! Consecrate the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, for thus the LORD, the God of Israel, has said, "There are things under the ban in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you have removed the things under the ban from your midst." 14: 'In the morning then you shall come near by your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the LORD takes *by lot* shall come near by families, and the family which the LORD takes shall come near by households, and the household which the LORD takes shall come near man by man. 15: 'It shall be that the one who is taken with the things under the ban shall be burned with fire, he and all that belongs to him, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has committed a disgraceful thing in Israel."

10: The response of the Lord to Joshua suggests that the Lord is irritated that Joshua and the elders would think that He was the unfaithful one when unfaithfulness was within the people. Joshua's memory appears to be short. Joshua himself had recently told the people before the Jericho battle, "But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, so that you do not covet *them* and take some of the things under the ban, and make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it." The point is, there is no reason for Joshua to be on His face before God, he should have known all along that the problem lay with someone in the camp. "Stand up" the Lord commanded and "take care of business".

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<sup>80</sup> See: Exodus 33:11-12 and Deuteronomy 9:28 for example.

11-12: In His patience, God answers Joshua's "why" question and reminds him of the conditions of His support. Using the same word for "accursed" Joshua spoke to the people, God reminds Joshua and the elders of the conditions of His support. He demands that the things taken that were banned be destroyed and any such further disobedience will result in His leaving them on their own every time. In other words, they will suffer the consequences of their own choices.

13-15: God now proceeds to tell Joshua how to go about discovering who had committed this grievous sin bringing death and defeat upon God's people. God could have simply told Joshua who it was. But He did not. The reason is that God said that Israel had sinned not Achan had sinned. It was important to recognize that the nation was one and each individual had to know that his or her actions affected the entire body and that the body had to deal with it corporately. The process would involve everyone and everyone would be called to the judgment until its culmination.

Today, when a person commits a grievous sin, whether "secret" or not, it will be discovered and have a negative impact not only on him or herself, but on others sooner or later.<sup>81</sup> This is just the way it is. Those in Christ's body who defile themselves defile others as well. For example, when a pastor or Christian leader is caught in some ungodly activity, the reputation and witness of the church and the image of Jesus Himself in the eyes of the world is tarnished. The church becomes disgraced and the ministry of the individual is destroyed. The world is weary of insincere apologies after the individual is caught. These apologies become meaningless after a while and there is no acceptance, because the individual, rather than be truly repentant, is more sorry he was caught than having true sorrow for his actions. Nevertheless, the destruction of his ministry in God's family, and his own family is complete.

So the Lord commands Joshua to get up and rouse the people and have them "consecrate" themselves. This means each person is to wash himself and his clothes and abstain from any sexual activity only seeking the Lord and His will. Then Joshua is to tell the people why this is to be done. "...the LORD, the God of Israel, has said, "There are things under the ban in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you have removed the things under the ban from your midst."

14-15: In the morning they would "come near" by tribes until the tribe was "taken" by the Lord and then by families of that tribe until the family was "taken" and then down to the households until the individual man was found. That man and his family would be executed by burning with fire and the things taken under the ban destroyed because this single act of disobedience of the covenant of Israel with the Lord brought disgrace, death and destruction upon Israel. The response of the people can only be imagined. For

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<sup>81</sup> Note: Numbers 32:23, "But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out"; Psalm 90:8, "You have placed our iniquities before You, Our secret *sins* in the light of Your presence"; Ecclesiastes 12:14, "For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil".

Achan, the fear must have been unbearable. He was no doubt terrified. This is one aspect of what the “fear of the Lord” means.

When these instructions were given to Joshua and the elders and then to the people, it was dark. The morning would see the commencement of the examination. It would take place before the Lord, that is by the tabernacle, possibly with the Ark standing in front. The Lord instructed Joshua and the elders that the tribes would “come near”. What this entailed was that the entire nation would gather by tribes and pass by Joshua and the elders in review. As they did so the text suggests, but does not state, that lots were cast before each assembled tribe.

There are few examples of any kind of lots extant today. At Masada, eleven small Pottery shards were uncovered during excavation, showing the names of Eleazar Ben Yair, the Zealot leader and ten other men, thought to be the ten suicide slaughterers in the first century A.D.. Apparently these shards were drawn to designate who would be the men selected to kill their own people and, after all was done, kill themselves or submit to the sword of Yair who would be the last and kill himself.

In the case here in our text, we must make educated guesses as to what transpired. These lots may have been stones or pieces of pottery upon one side the mark or symbol of each tribe was painted or inscribed. Lots were cast or drawn from a receptacle. The lots could have also been simply two stones, one light, one dark placed in a container from which the High Priest drew or even one stone with sides colored light and dark cast on the ground before each tribal assembly. By the lot, the Lord then would then “take” the tribe, family and so on. The word “take” means to “capture” or “seize”.

7:16-18

16: So Joshua arose early in the morning and brought Israel near by tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. 17: He brought the family of Judah near, and he took the family of the Zerahites; and he brought the family of the Zerahites near man by man, and Zabdi was taken. 18: He brought his household near man by man; and Achan, son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, was taken.

16: The next morning either all of Israel or only the men of Israel appeared before Joshua and the tabernacle assembled in their respective tribes. They passed by Joshua one by one and probably paused as the lots were cast or picked. As Judah paused there, they were “seized” or “captured” and brought to the forefront. The rest of Israel was required to look on. The process now became lengthy and tedious. Next, the families of Judah were brought before Joshua.<sup>82</sup> Judah had five sons whose descendants had become

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<sup>82</sup> Numbers 26:20-22 lists the families of Judah as such: 20: The sons of Judah according to their families were: of Shelah, the family of the Shelanites; of Perez, the family of the Perezites; of Zerah, the family of the Zerahites. 21: The sons of Perez were: of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; of Hamul, the family of the Hamulites. 22: These are the families of Judah according to those who were numbered of them, 76,500.

Also in I Chronicles 2:3-7 the descendants of Judah to Achan are named: 3: The sons of Judah were Er, Onan and Shelah; these three were born to him by Bath-shua the Canaanitess. And Er, Judah's firstborn,

“families”; Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez and Zerah. Each of these, of course had numerous descendants over the past several hundred years. There could have been thousands of people assembling in “family” groups before Joshua. As the descendants of these sons passed by and stood for a moment before Joshua in their family groups, the family of Zerah was “taken”. Then this group of descendants gathered into households and came and passed before Joshua standing momentarily while the examination process took place. There would have been dozens, if not hundreds of these households. The household of Zabdi was “captured”. Zabdi was the current patriarch or the family and grandfather of Achan. Only the men of this household came near one by one and when Achan stood before Joshua, the selection was made.

7:19-21

19: Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I implore you, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me." 20: So Achan answered Joshua and said, "Truly, I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel, and this is what I did: 21: when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it."

19-20: “My son” is a term of endearment and family. Joshua, in using this term, demonstrates that the outcome of this trial did not proceed from anger or hatred, but perhaps from grief, sadness, regret and possibly compassion considering the circumstances to follow. Joshua “implores” Achan to give God the glory due His name and Achan confesses his sin against God and his countrymen.<sup>83</sup> One’s faith in God is revealed by one’s obedience or disobedience to the Lord. This is the point of the Apostle James in 2:7-26<sup>84</sup> Achan’s lack of faith is revealed here. He not only fails to believe God’s word, or give actual praise to God, but believed that what God had said would not affect him, let alone the entire nation. Then, he either didn’t believe the process of elimination would detect him or hoped it wouldn’t. If he truly believed that he would be accurately singled out, would he have had enough faith to confess prior to the ordeal? Or was it simply too late after the judgment was rendered regarding the guilty party prior to the “trapping”. His terror must have been unbearable as the sifting process drew closer

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was wicked in the sight of the LORD, so He put him to death. 4: Tamar his daughter-in-law bore him Perez and Zerah. Judah had five sons in all. 5: The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. 6: The sons of Zerah were Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol and Dara; five of them in all. 7: The son of Carmi was Achar, the troubler of Israel, who violated the ban.

<sup>83</sup> The phrase “the LORD, the God of Israel” is used showing that “Yahweh” (the LORD) is God’s proper covenant and personal name while “the God of Israel” (Elohim) is his position. The Hebrew “Adonai” would designate His title as Lord over all.

<sup>84</sup> It is worth re-reading James 1:1-15, 22-25; 2:12-26.

and closer to him and he knew if caught he and his wife<sup>85</sup> and children would pay the ultimate price.

Are we, or even the world, liable for our sins and disobedience and sentenced to a fate like Achan? No, Christ covered the sins of all including Achan's,<sup>86</sup> but can not cover disbelief. This is the sin against the Holy Spirit in that he communicates to the true believer the will of God and the true believer hears, senses it and responds in obedience.

21: Achan confesses what he did and tries to gain Joshua's understanding that the temptation and the theft was so unavoidable that surely the sentence would be softened. He did this through the use of adjectives regarding the items themselves in order to rationalize his sin. "Beautiful mantle from Shinar" would be a colorful Babylonian robe of fine quality probably embroidered with gold and silver threads in intricate designs. Very expensive, and possibly owned by the king of Jericho. Two hundred shekels of silver (about six pounds) valued in today's market at \$1,500, and a bar (tongue) of gold at fifty shekels is roughly twenty-five ounces valued today at about \$21,000.00. The robe, however, was the central item of his desire, the silver and gold ancillary items (verse 22).

He was overcome by "covetousness" he said. This is the illicit desire to possess regardless of the circumstances. This of course is a violation of the tenth commandment. Because he was overcome, he took the items, dug a hole in his tent and buried them, the silver underneath the robe. The hiding of the items states that he knew that what he had done was wrong.

The "lust of the eye" caught Achan. John notes, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever". (I John 2:15-17) As was said above, "weakness and defeat are not the result of circumstances but of choices."

7:22-26

22: So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was concealed in his tent with the silver underneath it. 23: They took them from inside the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the sons of Israel, and they poured them out before the LORD. 24: Then Joshua and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the mantle, the bar of gold, his sons, his

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<sup>85</sup> There is no mention of Achan's wife or of the fact she even existed at this time, but her reality is attested by the children. This is not unusual in scripture as often a man's name and exploits as well as his children are mentioned, but not his wife or her name. Often we must understand from the Hebrew culture that a man's wife is assumed as husband and wife are considered one. A woman's name is often left unmentioned unless she has some significant role in Israel. For example, among the kings of Israel and Judah, the sons are mentioned but seldom the wives of daughters. We will assume for sake of argument that Achan's wife suffered the same fate as he did.

<sup>86</sup> Christ's sacrifice was sufficient for the sin of all mankind, past, present and future. The issue is not sin, but faith. See: Hebrews 10:12-14; John 1:29; I John 2:2; Jude 1:5; I Peter 3:18-20.

daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent and all that belonged to him; and they brought them up to the valley of Achor. 25; Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." And all Israel stoned them with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. 26; They raised over him a great heap of stones that stands to this day, and the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the valley of Achor to this day.

22-23: "It was concealed" – the robe. The stolen items were brought to Joshua at the tabernacle in front of everyone and there it was, proof of the guilt. If the people were not shocked by this time, this had to do it.

24: The Valley of Achor is south of Jericho and west up into a canyon/valley that exists today. The Jerusalem road from Jericho passes on the north side of this valley even today. The valley got its name from this event even though it is named prior to the event for the sake of the reader's understanding (verse 26). This is a commonplace practice in scripture to refer to the present name of a place, city or person in describing events prior which may have had foreign names unfamiliar to the present day reader.

25: Using a play on words Joshua executed the sentence. In Israel, the family is considered a corporate unity with the husband/father as the head of the household. This is a part of the solidarity of the family which includes not only the immediate family but all the ancestors and descendants as well. The whole family is represented in one member, especially in the patriarch. Therefore, Achan involved his whole household in his sin and in its judgment. Today's western culture has a difficult time grasping this common eastern concept. So Achan died under a hail of large stones along with his wife and everything he possessed, all of which was now considered a part of Jericho, under the ban, as all had been corrupted by the presence of the banned items. The question arises, "Were the children also stoned"? Deuteronomy 24:16 states, "Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* sons, nor shall sons be put to death for *their* fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin." Taking Achan's sons and daughters to the valley might have been done as a warning, or, if accomplices in the crime or knowledgeable of it and keeping silent could have shared his fate. In this case, however, they likely shared their father's fate. It might have been difficult for them to not notice a large hole being dug in the tent floor by their father. By so doing Achan had made his family participators in his theft; they therefore fell under the ban along with him, together with their tent, their cattle, and the rest of their property, which were all involved in the consequences of his crime. Joshua 22:20 reads, "Did not Achan the son of Zerah act unfaithfully in the things under the ban, and wrath fall on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity."<sup>87</sup> The punishment assured Israel that there would be no descendant of Achan to shame or plague them again.

After they were stoned to death, the remains were lit on fire and burned until all was consumed and the evil was purged and Israel purified. Then a great heap of stones was

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<sup>87</sup> See comment at 6:20-21, page 58

piled on the remains.<sup>88</sup> Why this valley? This valley would become a part of the territory of Judah, the very tribe from which Achan was a descendant. The memorial was to Judah specifically and to Israel generally. God's anger was assuaged and the people had received a very harsh and difficult lesson. God's severe judgment in this case as a lesson for Israel explains the intense ordeal the nation had to go through because of one man's sin. It also illustrates the hardness of man's heart as well as the extremes God was willing to go to in order to bring redemption to the world in the person of His Son, Jesus – a descendant of Judah.

The lessons here can be understood in many different personal ways. For example, bringing something into one's life that is clearly contrary to what God would have in one's life could be a stumbling block to the strength of one's witness and leadership, whether in the home, the church, or the world. When children discover some secret corruption in the life of their mom or dad, it can be a stumbling block to them as well. If there is one thing the Apostle Paul emphasized, it can be no greater than the prohibition in placing a stumbling block in the path of another person, believer or not. "But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak." I Corinthians 8:9 "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way." Romans 14:13  
Jesus makes quite an issue about those things that would cause one to stumble. Note Matthew 18:8-9 and John 11:8-10 for example.

The saddest thing is that the consequences of having some detestable thing in one's "tent" is that when it is discovered, the years of progress and work are lost. Regaining lost ground could be rendered impossible. A few minutes of willful disobedience or succumbing to temptation could lead to years of damage to oneself, one's family and one's usefulness to God.

Another important lesson is taking on a serious challenge without seeking the Lord. Joshua was prone to lean on his own experience and judgment when he faced situations outside of the clear instructions of God. It cost him dearly each time (Note: 9:14)

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

8:1-29

A. The strategy, verses 1-8.

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<sup>88</sup> See Joshua 8:29, II Samuel 18:17 for other examples of this type of memorial. The term "to this day" reflects a later compiling of the material as it is an editors comment to his readers. The majority of Biblical events occurring prior "to this day" were formally compiled and written during the time of the kings beginning with Solomon.

1: Now the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear or be dismayed. Take all the people of war with you and arise, go up to Ai; see, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land. 2: "You shall do to Ai and its king just as you did to Jericho and its king; you shall take only its spoil and its cattle as plunder for yourselves. Set an ambush for the city behind it." 3: So Joshua rose with all the people of war to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose 30,000 men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night. 4: He commanded them, saying, "See, you are going to ambush the city from behind it. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you be ready. 5: "Then I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And when they come out to meet us as at the first, we will flee before them. 6: "They will come out after us until we have drawn them away from the city, for they will say, '*They* are fleeing before us as at the first.' So we will flee before them. 7: "And you shall rise from *your* ambush and take possession of the city, for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. 8: "Then it will be when you have seized the city, that you shall set the city on fire. You shall do *it* according to the word of the LORD. See, I have commanded you."

#### A. The strategy - commentary

The instructions and strategy given to Joshua by the Lord as recorded here is less complete than what transpired. Perhaps to simply avoid repetition, the author only gives an outline of God's instructions and completes His orders in the execution of the strategy.

1: The word "now" used like this generally reflects a period of time having passed. This verse reflects on Joshua's frame of mind when his warriors were routed by the men of Ai. The word "fear" is "Yah-rah", the same word used in the phrase "the *fear* of the Lord" found so frequently in scripture. It includes meanings from "reverence" to "awe-struck" to "terrified". "Dismayed" reflects the idea of being "shattered" or "disintegrated". God reassures Joshua that all now is well and that he will be given the city.

But why attack this relatively small city? It held a strategic place in the land. As the gateway to Bethel, it had to be removed. Bethel sat upon a major trade route from the north and south. In conquering Ai and Bethel, Joshua and Israel had driven a wedge into the heart of the country, splitting it in two. Rather than be caught in a battle on two fronts, the enemy was divided in half. Allies resided in the north (as we will see later). The enemies in the south could be confronted with a nearly full force and any to the north could be held at bay.

"All the people of war" is not a contradiction to the "30,000" warriors that Joshua chose in verse 5. This phrase tells us that the entire army journeyed to the territory of Ai and Joshua selected 30,000 out for as a detachment. Actually, the entire nation of Israel seems to have traveled to Ai along perhaps with the priests and the Ark of the Covenant as well (verses 9, 10, 33).

2: “You shall do to Ai...”, not in terms of the attack but in terms of the destruction with the exception that Israel could take all the booty it wished. Had Achan only waited and obeyed the Lord at Jericho, his future and the future of his family would have been preserved.

3-8: The text suggests that these arrangements were made somewhere outside of the city of Ai in an unobservable place. Some state that this took place at Gilgal itself prior to setting out, but verse three suggests that they had traveled to the vicinity prior to the 30,000 being selected for their task. Either way, it may have taken quite a while for the greater number of people to ascend out of the Jordan valley. Joshua appears to be in no hurry and the movements of the warriors needed to be done without being observed. The details of the narrative are somewhat confusing when closely observed and need to be sorted or rearranged as will be demonstrated. Here is how it appears to have transpired.

I. From their concealed position Joshua sent out 30,000 men at night to take up a position “behind” the city to the northwest. Ai and Bethel both faced roughly northwest to southeast along the ridge line. The 30,000 sequestered themselves in the valley to the northwest between Ai and Bethel. At that point, neither the people of Ai or of Bethel could see the troops from their vantage points. The rolling hills, valleys and vegetation would have provided a blind cover in that particular area. Their instructions were to wait until the warriors of Ai left the city in pursuit of Israel and then ambush the defenseless city.

II. When they were in place and ready, Joshua would then approach the city with a detachment early the next morning. When the soldiers from Ai came out to meet them (see footnote 78) Joshua and his contingent would pretend to once again be beaten back fleeing as before, drawing the men away from the city.

III. When the men of Ai were in pursuit of Joshua and such a distance away from their city that a defensive retreat would be too late, the hidden warriors would rush from the valley and overcome or “take possession of” the city (verse 7). This means that they would occupy and render the few remaining inhabitants (note verse 16) harmless and leaving them without possibility of escape.

IV. Then they were to “seize” the city and set it on fire. This verse anticipates a later event. The word “seize” means to “capture” and likely describes the taking of the booty prior to the execution and destruction of the inhabitants. The text makes it clear (verses 27 and 28) that the booty was removed before the city was burned while the rest of the chapter tells of the burning prior to these verses three different times without mentioning the removal of the spoils (verses 8, 20, 21).

(Pictures)

B. Executing the strategy part I. verses 9-17.

9: So Joshua sent them away, and they went to the place of ambush and remained between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua spent that night among the people. 10: Now Joshua rose early in the morning and mustered the people, and he went up with the elders of Israel before the people to Ai. 11: Then all the people of war who *were* with him went up and drew near and arrived in front of the city, and camped on the north side of Ai. Now *there was* a valley between him and Ai. 12: And he took about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. 13: So they stationed the people, all the army that was on the north side of the city, and its rear guard on the west side of the city, and Joshua spent that night in the midst of the valley. 14: It came about when the king of Ai saw *it*, that the men of the city hurried and rose up early and went out to meet Israel in battle, he and all his people at the appointed place before the desert plain. But he did not know that *there was* an ambush against him behind the city. 15: Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. 16: And all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and they pursued Joshua and were drawn away from the city. 17: So not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who had not gone out after Israel, and they left the city unguarded and pursued Israel.

#### B. Executing the strategy part I, verses 9-17 - commentary

9-17: After the 30,000 were dispatched that night, Joshua and the rest of the people rested for the night, but were they able to sleep? At first light (before the sun was visible) Joshua organized the warriors for battle. Then an organized approach to Ai took place. At the head of the pack were Joshua and the tribal elders. Next followed the men of war. They arrived at the top of a hill and there was a valley spanning the distance between Israel and Ai. Joshua assigned an additional detachment of 5,000 men to cover the entrance to Ai after the men of Ai left the city. These were assigned to hide on the west side. But there were already 30,000 men nearby. The easiest explanation is that the 30,000 were “behind the city” in the northeast part of the valley between Ai and Bethel, and these 5000 men were further southwest, in the same valley but nearer the access to the gate of Ai. Verse 13 clarifies the positions. In it these 5,000 are called the “rear guard” and it also states that the 30,000 were on the “north side” of the city. Since Ai faces southeast, the points “north” and “west” indicate areas, the “north” being behind the city more to the east side and the “west” being the southwest corner closer to the gate, yet in the same valley as the valley goes from northeast to southwest behind Ai as one looks from the southeast as Joshua did.

Joshua moved his warriors and a large number of the people of Israel down into the valley before and north of Ai onto a “desert plain” or “arabah” and camped there spending the night with his people. This was in full view of the king of Ai. This was deliberate of course. The King of Ai, seeing the much larger force presented by the Israelites he took action to gather his militia and reinforcements in preparation for any attack. He also went up to Bethel and procured all their warriors and reinforcements gathering them together in Ai and then they planned for the battle to come. They attempted a surprise predawn attack upon Joshua’s position in the valley at the

“appointed place” on the desert plain. This “appointed place” was probably where the king of Ai felt that the Israelites were the most vulnerable to attack. Not knowing about Israel’s detachments set for ambush, he initiated the preemptive strike and Israel pretended to be taken off-guard, fleeing before the men of Ai. A battle never really occurred.

Apparently as Israel hastily retreated it was noticed that not only were the Israelite warriors fleeing but a large number of non military people as well. This prompted many in the city if not most who were not warriors to leave the city in pursuit (verse 16). This left Bethel without a defensive contingent and Ai with few people in the city at all.

### C. Executing the strategy part II. 18-29

18: Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand." So Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city. 19: The *men in* ambush rose quickly from their place, and when he had stretched out his hand, they ran and entered the city and captured it, and they quickly set the city on fire. 20: When the men of Ai turned back and looked, behold, the smoke of the city ascended to the sky, and they had no place to flee this way or that, for the people who had been fleeing to the wilderness turned against the pursuers. 21: When Joshua and all Israel saw that the *men in* ambush had captured the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, they turned back and slew the men of Ai. 22: The others came out from the city to encounter them, so that they were *trapped* in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side; and they slew them until no one was left of those who survived or escaped. 23: But they took alive the king of Ai and brought him to Joshua. 24: Now when Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the field in the wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them were fallen by the edge of the sword until they were destroyed, then all Israel returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword. 25: All who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000--all the people of Ai. 26: For Joshua did not withdraw his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. 27: Israel took only the cattle and the spoil of that city as plunder for themselves, according to the word of the LORD which He had commanded Joshua. 28: So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation until this day. 29: He hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening; and at sunset Joshua gave command and they took his body down from the tree and threw it at the entrance of the city gate, and raised over it a great heap of stones *that stands* to this day.

### C. Executing the strategy part II. 18-29 - commentary

18-22: Joshua led his people in flight to a wilderness area and a point on a hill both far enough away that the men of Ai and Bethel could not get back to the city in time to save it and yet at a point his javelin could be seen waving in the air. It was the prearranged signal to attack. Longer than a spear, the Javelin was of similar shape and had a smaller

stone, bronze or iron tip and was balanced for throwing rather than for hand to hand combat. It could have been around six feet long while the spear was a foot or two shorter. To be seen, one would have to be within a mile from it on a clear day. From what transpires, it can be fairly estimated that Joshua and his people were well within a mile of the city when they halted and Joshua, at the rear of the flight stopped and raised his javelin in the air.

Upon seeing the javelin the 30,000 entered the city and captured it. No doubt a look-out had posted himself on the hilltop of Ai when the pursuit began. The 5,000 went to a position between the city gates and the army of Ai and Bethel. Now the text tells us that the 30,000 set the "city on fire". How does this fit in with the time to take the booty, kill all the warriors, the citizenry, and so forth before the fire consumes the city (note verses 25-29). It appears that a fire was set immediately as a sign to Joshua of the successful capture of the city. The whole city was not consumed as yet.

The men of Ai looked back and saw the smoke of the city rising in the air. When the realization hit them as to what had happened it was too late. Joshua and his warriors attacked their pursuers and a slaughter took place as the 5,000 attacked from the rear of the enemy. Many who left in the city of Ai running through the gate in an effort to escape but were also met by these 5,000 and slain. All the people of the enemy were completely surrounded and trapped. Seeing this, many broke ranks and ran.

23-29: While Israelite warriors were pursuing those who tried to escape into the wilderness, the king of Ai was located and brought alive to Joshua. The narrative pauses in describing the fate of the king of Ai and continues with the report of the total destruction of all the inhabitants of the city numbering them as 12,000. During this raid and the ensuing pursuits, Joshua held his javelin high until the report came to him that every person was dead. He made sure that the king of Ai saw the death of all the people, the plunder of the livestock and goods, and the burning destruction of his city. Verse 28 uses a play on words. The name of the city is Ai, means "heap" or "ruin". Joshua turned it into a "mound", the Hebrew word "Tel" which is still used to describe an ancient city ruin ultimately turned to a mound of rubble. It had not been rebuilt by the time of the formal inscription of the Book of Joshua and even until today.

The king of Ai was hanged on a tree, likely after being executed. This is not done as we might imagine as a hanging old west style, but as a tying or pinning to a tree so that the body was suspended above ground. This would show the disgrace accorded to those who would think to oppose the Living God as well as strike terror among the Canaanites. His body was removed prior to sunset in accordance with Deuteronomy 21:22-23, "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance." The body was thrown as just so much trash at the entrance to the city gate and he was buried with a great pile of stones, as a memorial of all that had transpired.

Regarding Bethel. This sister city of Ai, formerly called “Luz”, was important to God and the descendants of Abraham. It was here that Jacob dreamed of the ladder to heaven and the promise to Abraham reiterated to him by the Lord. Jacob renamed the city “Bethel”, “The house of God”. Years later Jacob was again in Bethel when the Lord said to him, “I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.” (Genesis 31:13) In Genesis 35, a poignant story occurs wherein Jacob left Shechem with all his people and possessions after a disaster with his daughter and the son of the king of Shechem took place (related later in this study) and he traveled to Bethel to live. Here God reminded him that his name would be called “Israel”, The name was prophetic (“my struggle with God”). In Bethel, Rachel became pregnant with Benjamin and it may have been a difficult pregnancy as Rachel’s mother-in-law Rebecca sent her beloved personal nurse, Deborah, to help Rachel. But she was elderly and died while in Bethel. They buried her at the foot of an Oak Tree in Bethel and named it “The Oak of Weeping” picturing the emotions of all who attended her funeral. For an unknown reason, Jacob made the decision to move to Bethlehem, south of Jerusalem, some 45 miles. Genesis 35:16-20 tell us what happened. 16: “Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and she suffered severe labor. 17: When she was in severe labor the midwife said to her, “Do not fear, for now you have another son.” 18: It came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin.<sup>89</sup> 19: So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). 20: Jacob set up a pillar over her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.” Her tomb is the third most revered shrine in Israel today and is just outside Bethlehem.

8:30-32

30: Then Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal,  
31: just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones on which no man had wielded an iron *tool*; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. 32: He wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel.”

30-32: Following the events at Ai, preparations were made for an extended, yet temporary stay at Mt. Ebal. Mt Ebal is twenty five miles north of Bethel and across a valley from Mt. Gerizim to the south. Between the two mountains the city of Shechem was located and it spilled out to the west on the foothills of these two mountains. It is hard to call Ebal and Gerizim “mountains” as they were only 2,850 feet and 2,600 feet above sea level respectively and a mere 800-1000 feet above the surrounding territory, (less than Piestewa Peak at 1400 feet above the parking lot) .

There was a major road leading from Bethel to the mountains which they surely took. Why did they travel to these mountains? It had been commanded by Moses that they do so when they had entered the land. The capture of Ai and Bethel had planted the

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<sup>89</sup> “Ben-Oni”- “son of my sorrow”. “Benjamin” – “son of my right hand”.

Israelites firmly in the land. So, the command of Moses was implemented. This command is found in Deuteronomy 27:1-13 ff.,

Deuteronomy 27:1-4:

1: Then Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people, saying, "Keep all the commandments which I command you today. 2: "So it shall be on the day when you cross the Jordan to the land which the LORD your God gives you, that you shall set up for yourself large stones and coat them with lime 3: and write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over, so that you may enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. 4: "So it shall be when you cross the Jordan, you shall set up on Mount Ebal, these stones, as I am commanding you today, and you shall coat them with lime.

The stones were quite large, indeed monumental stones coated with plaster and then all the commandments were written (painted) on the moist plaster in much the same way as the Egyptians wrote on their plastered walls. In other words, we would be looking at a fresco. There is no mention of the size or number of these stones, but it doesn't take a vivid imagination to estimate their size at up to ten to twenty feet in height when set up on end and it would seem consistent to have twelve of them. They could have been cut stones as well since the altar specifies uncut stones to be utilized. This work would take a long time and employ many skilled craftsmen, stone-masons, artists, and laborers, all numbering into the hundreds if not thousands. The large stones had to be transported to the top of Ebal and set up and no doubt oxen were employed in the process.

Deuteronomy 27:5-8:

5: "Moreover, you shall build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not wield an iron *tool* on them. 6: "You shall build the altar of the LORD your God of uncut stones, and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the LORD your God; 7: and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and eat there, and rejoice before the LORD your God. 8: "You shall write on the stones all the words of this law very distinctly."

This altar was built of uncut and un-hewn stones. It was, as was the custom of Israel from the days of Abraham, quite large.

(Pictures)

Deuteronomy 27:9-13:

9: Then Moses and the Levitical priests spoke to all Israel, saying, "Be silent and listen, O Israel! This day you have become a people for the LORD your God. 10: "You shall therefore obey the LORD your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today." 11: Moses also charged the people on that

day, saying, 12: "When you cross the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. 13: "For the curse, these shall stand on Mount Ebal: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali."

These blessings and cursings take up the rest of Deuteronomy 27 and 28.

8: 33-35

33: All Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them *stood* in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had given command at first to bless the people of Israel. 34: Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law. 35: There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them.

33-35: The assembly was divided by tribes, six on the slope of Ebal and six on the slope of Gerizim facing each other with the Ark and the priests between them on the valley floor. The city of Shechem was slightly off to the east of this valley, but the citizens joined the ceremony and celebration afterwards. The people heard a blessing upon them, the law was read and the blessings and cursings shouted from each side of the respective mountains. The acoustics have been demonstrated to be so good in this area that mere talking can be heard across the two miles between the peaks of the mountains. The assembly was dismissed with a benediction and a celebration of feasting, singing and dancing was begun. The citizens of Shechem were also a part of this celebration. Sometime after the ceremonies and celebration, Israel returned to Gilgal.

A word about the citizens of Shechem. Shechem (also called Sychar, and later Nablus and Neopolis) had been cordial to the Israelites since the days of Abraham. Abram's first visit to Shechem is found in Genesis 12. It is the first time that God announced that the land would belong to Abram's descendants. There it says,

Genesis 12:5-7

5: "Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan. 6: Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite *was* then in the land. 7: The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him."

So it becomes clear why this spot was chosen to celebrate the possession of the land.

The many accounts of events at Shechem are fun to read and are found in Genesis 33 and following. Jacob bought a parcel of land in Shechem and though his daughter Dinah was kidnapped and raped by the son of the king of Shechem who was actually in deeply love with her. Though the king of Shechem offered every possible concession including land and a permanent alliance with Jacob, Dinah's brothers killed all the men of the city and looted the place to the shame of Jacob who was willing to work with the men of Shechem.

The conflict was resolved in time as the remaining Shechemites did indeed intermarry with Israel. Some of their descendants were part of the nation of Israel when they went to Egypt to search for food during the famine years later. It was to Joseph, Jacob's son, to whom they unknowingly appealed. In fact, it had been in Shechem where Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers while they were pasturing their flocks nearby. Later, Joseph's bones (in an ossuary) were carried out of Egypt during the Exodus and finally buried in Shechem by Joshua's decree. So the descendants of Jacob and Joseph had lived in Shechem all these centuries and lived on the land Jacob himself had purchased from Hamor, king of Shechem. Further, Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were given that parcel of land as their inheritance since they actually owned it anyway.

Finally, centuries later when Shechem had become an important city in Samaria named Sychar, Jesus stopped there to speak to a woman at a well called Jacob's well, "...near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph..." During their dialogue the woman said to Jesus, "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?"<sup>90</sup>

Over a thousand years after Joseph's bones were buried in Shechem by Joshua, the Woman at the well knew her ancestry and Shechem was still in possession of the descendants of Jacob who predated this woman by nearly 2000 years. By the way, today, Jacob's tomb is still extant in Shechem.

It is an enjoyable study to track the history of Shechem from Genesis onward. It holds a special place in both the heart of God and in the hearts of Israel.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

9:1-2

1: Now it came about when all the kings who were beyond the Jordan, in the hill country and in the lowland and on all the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittite and

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<sup>90</sup> The Gospel of John chapter four.

the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, heard of it, 2: that they gathered themselves together with one accord to fight with Joshua and with Israel.

1-2: "Beyond the Jordan" still indicates the west side of the Jordan as previously viewed from the eyes of Moses. The territory noted as well as the tribes inhabiting that territory are mentioned by the twelve spies to Moses in Numbers 13:29, "Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan."

The "hill country" is central Canaan, the "lowland" is western Canaan and the Valley of Jezreel, and the "coast" is from Mt. Carmel along the Mediterranean north to Lebanon.

The list of these cultures is also the same as that listed in Deuteronomy 20:16-18 which says,

Deuteronomy 20:16-18, 16: "Only in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. 17: "But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the LORD your God has commanded you, 18: so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the LORD your God."

Only these six independent tribes sought alliances against the common enemy Israel, the perfect example of, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend", as these peoples were not necessarily cordial with each other. "Heard of it" - the rapid advance into the land and the destruction of Ai (possibly Bethel) as well as that of Jericho. The gathering of these small city states demonstrates that they believed they needed a large force of warriors to confront Israel. They did not take Israel lightly and were willing to go to war against Israel and her God.

9:3-6

3: When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, 4: they also acted craftily and set out as envoys, and took worn-out sacks on their donkeys, and wineskins worn-out and torn and mended, 5: and worn-out and patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* had become crumbled. 6: They went to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us."

3-6: Gibeon was located about seven miles southwest of Ai and Bethel, and some six miles northwest of Jerusalem in the "hill country". This agrees with 9:7 identifying the city with the Hivites. In opposition to the rest of their countrymen they developed a scheme whereby they and a few surrounding villages would be protected from conquest

and destruction by Israel. They actually describe their plot after an agreement is made with Joshua and Israel.

Going back to the destruction of Ai, conditions being right, Gibeon could have easily seen the smoke rising up from Ai and soon found out what had happened. When information came to them as to what had happened they constructed a ploy hoping to catch Joshua and the Israelites off-guard. There is no question that they believed firmly that unless they did something to ward off the Israelites, they would be destroyed. So it was worth the gamble and it paid off. So a caravan of courageous men set out to Gilgal.

“Acted craftily” can also be translated, “prudently”, “wisely”, or “discretely”. Perhaps the “also” reflects the tricky ambush Joshua and Israel pulled off on Ai and Bethel. So, a supposed caravan of travelers from a far country came to Gilgal. “Envoys” is also “ambassadors” or “emissaries”. From their long journey they appeared to be ravaged. Their caravan was of the poorest type. They had donkeys of burden but had to walk most of the time. Provisions meager. They did everything they could to gain sympathy from Israel and convince them of their plight and allegiance. One has to admire the cleverness and courage – just plain guts - of the Gibeonites.

When they arrived they explained they desired to make a covenant with Israel. They knew that they must claim a country far away revealing they were fully aware that Israel intended to conquer the entire nation of Canaan as far north as Lebanon. Their “far country” then, had to be several hundred miles distant to the north. This territory is understood to be beyond that which Joshua and Israel had been granted by God. Seeking an alliance at this time was premature it seems, and it raised suspicion.

9:7-13,

7: The men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you are living within our land; how then shall we make a covenant with you?" 8: But they said to Joshua, "We are your servants." Then Joshua said to them, "Who are you and where do you come from?" 9: They said to him, "Your servants have come from a very far country because of the fame of the LORD your God; for we have heard the report of Him and all that He did in Egypt, 10: and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon and to Og king of Bashan who was at Ashtaroth. 11: "So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, 'Take provisions in your hand for the journey, and go to meet them and say to them, "We are your servants; now then, make a covenant with us.'" 12: "This our bread *was* warm *when* we took it for our provisions out of our houses on the day that we left to come to you; but now behold, it is dry and has become crumbled. 13: "These wineskins which we filled were new, and behold, they are torn; and these our clothes and our sandals are worn out because of the very long journey."

7: There appears to be some skepticism or suspicion on the part of the men of Israel about the claims of these men. Was it the ability to converse in a familiar tongue? It

wasn't specifically Joshua who is speaking to the travelers, but men of Israel who knew the tongue. Or was it something else that caused them caution?

The "Hivites" may be related to two other peoples mentioned frequently in the Old Testament. First, their name might be a derivation of the "Horites", a people living in Canaan related to the Hurrians of northern Mesopotamia. This could be a source of their appearance as from a "far country". Second, they are associated with the "Amorites" in II Samuel 21:2, and were quite aware of the victory over the Amorites on the Transjordan leaving them with trepidation about an upcoming conflict.

"Perhaps" is "It might be that", "perchance". Note that the men of Israel called Canaan "our land" and if the travelers inhabited it, there would be no covenant.

8: They cleverly avoided the accusation by answering only the latter half of the question and answered that the basis of the covenant would be their servitude. But Joshua persisted in trying to find out who they were and where they came from.

9-13: In answering Joshua's question, they recited the acts of God beginning with the Exodus and ending with the defeat of the kings on the Transjordan. They made it clear that they feared the God of Israel. They cleverly left out the conquest of Jericho and Ai as there would be no way for them to learn of that after they had left on their journey from a place so "distant". Then they presented "evidence" of the truth of their testimony and this evidence was taken and examined by the men of Israel.

9:14-15

14: So the men *of Israel* took some of their provisions, and did not ask for the counsel of the LORD. 15: Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore *an oath* to them.

14: This indicates that Joshua and the leaders of Israel relied on their own judgment regarding the story they were told and the evidence backing it up, even though they were suspicious. After all, it takes time for bread to dry out, and the Hebrew suggests that it was "speckled" indicating mold (verse 12). Throwing caution to the wind they accepted the Gibeonites and their word as they presented themselves. They did not ask the counsel of the Lord.

For the Christian, the lesson is sharp as a pointed lance. There are multitudes of false teachers sweeping people into destruction because the people do not make the effort to gain the counsel of the Lord even though Bibles by the thousands are available, even for free to those who can't afford one. Claims by those appearing sincere and godly are believed by the gullible and unsuspecting and they follow the "broad path to destruction".<sup>91</sup> "Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light"<sup>92</sup> Paul preaches, and

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<sup>91</sup> Matthew 7:13

<sup>92</sup> Paul discloses this in II Co 11:1-15. It's worth reading in total, 1: "I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me. 2: For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you *as* a pure virgin. 3: But I am afraid

his sarcasm is apparent as he berates the Corinthians. Satan has only two weapons against the believer; the lie, and the fear and destruction stemming from believing that lie.<sup>93</sup>

The men of Gibeon had no compunction about telling whoppers, and included enough truth to make them sound convincing. Even Satan accurately quotes Scripture though he distorts its intent to his own cause. A very familiar ploy. Christians need not complain about being deceived when they have been told countless times to be like the “Bereans” and study to make sure that what they heard was the truth.<sup>94</sup>

15: So based on a tissue of lies and the sand of their own self confidence and judgment a firm and irrevocable covenant was built. “Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore *an oath* to them.” This oath invoked the name of the Lord, the God of Israel (verse 18). The foolishness of this oath and the disaster which would follow is recorded in history to this day.

9:16-20

16: It came about at the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were neighbors and that they were living within their land.

17: Then the sons of Israel set out and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities *were* Gibeon and Chephirah and Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim. 18: The sons of Israel did not strike them because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD the God of Israel. And the whole congregation grumbled against the leaders. 19: But all the leaders said to the whole congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and now we cannot touch them. 20: "This we will do to them, even let them live, so that wrath will not be upon us for the oath which we swore to them."

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that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity *of devotion* to Christ. 4: For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear *this* beautifully. 5: For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles. 6: But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not *so* in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made *this* evident to you in all things. 7: Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? 8: I robbed other churches by taking wages *from them* to serve you; 9: and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so. 10: As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia. 11: Why? Because I do not love you? God knows *I do!* 12: But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. 13: For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14: No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15: Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.”

<sup>93</sup> See: John 8:44; I Peter 5:8

<sup>94</sup> Acts 17:11

16: This verse is a conclusion based on what the following narrative reveals to us. Verse 17 could easily begin with the words, “This came about in the following manner...”

17: Gibeon was about six miles northwest of Jerusalem and seven southwest of Ai. From Gibeon, Chephirah is four and a half miles to the west/southwest, Beeroth four and a half miles to the north, with Kiriath-Jearim five miles to the south. It was the major city of this league. The Israelites left Gilgal and came to these cities on the third day after the covenant was instituted with a sworn oath. Gibeon would have been the first city they encountered as they may have taken the same path over the wilderness that they had taken on their journey to Ai, but heading southwest several miles east of Ai toward Gibeon.

18: Upon arrival near the city, the “travelers” revealed themselves and revealed the foolishness of Joshua and the leaders of Israel. Now, the very oath they had made to these people was contrary to the direct command of God. The fate of the rest of the mission was set. God’s promise to Israel was compromised by the self reliance of the leaders of Israel. Later, these peoples would become a part of the Philistine/Canaanite empire. Upon hearing about the entire ruse and the hasty covenant their leaders made with the Hivites, the people “grumbled” against Joshua and the elders of Israel.

The grumbling of the people could be for one or more of three reasons. First they could have simply been disgusted at the failure of their leaders in being duped so completely. Their confidence in these leaders had finally been established and now it was in question once again. Second, they may have realized that they were now in a quandary as they knew God had commanded the destruction of the peoples and now they were confused as to what they were supposed to do. Third, they may have grumbled now that the cities and their spoil would not come into their hands.

19: In response to this grumbling, the leaders of Israel addressed the nation. They didn’t admit their mistake, but made it clear that the oath in the name of the Lord God of Israel could not be broken even though it was made on the basis of a deception.

Keil and Delitzsch offer the following commentary on the matter.

“But how could the elders of Israel consider themselves bound by their oath to grant to the Gibeonites the preservation of life which had been secured to them by the treaty they had made, when the very supposition upon which the treaty was made, viz., that the Gibeonites did not belong to the tribes of Canaan, was proved to be false, and the Gibeonites had studiously deceived them by pretending that they had come from a very distant land? As they had been absolutely forbidden to make any treaties with the Canaanites, it might be supposed that, after the discovery of the deception which had been practised upon them, the Israelitish rulers would be under no obligation to observe the treaty which they had made with the Gibeonites in full faith in the truth of their word. And no doubt from the stand-point of strict justice this view appears to be a right one.

But the princes of Israel shrank back from breaking the oath which, as is emphatically stated in [Jos 9:19](#), they had sworn by Jehovah the God of Israel, not because they assumed, as *Hauff* supposes, “that an oath simply regarded as an outward and holy transaction had an absolutely binding force,” but because they were afraid of bringing the name of the God of Israel into contempt among the Canaanites, which they would have done if they had broken the oath which they had sworn by this God, and had destroyed the Gibeonites. They were bound to observe the oath which they had once sworn, if only to prevent the sincerity of the God by whom they had sworn from being rendered doubtful in the eyes of the Gibeonites; but they were not justified in taking the oath. They had done this without asking the mouth of Jehovah ([Jos 9:14](#)), and thus had sinned against the Lord their God. But they could not repair this fault by breaking the oath which they had thus imprudently taken, i.e., by committing a fresh sin; for the violation of an oath is always sin, even when the oath has been taken inconsiderately, and it is afterwards discovered that what was sworn to was not in accordance with the will of God, and that an observance of the oath will certainly be hurtful (vid., [Psa 15:4](#)).”

The whole matter of oaths and promises is worthy of study, but suffice it to say that many Christians have fallen from the sacred bond they make with their word or their pen. Giving ones word, making a promise – even to our children, signing a check, endorsing an agreement or contract, making a commitment to man or to God is taken so lightly that more often than not the Christian fails to keep his promise. In my personal experience, I find that the promise of most Christians is no more binding than that of a non-believing con artist.

This ought not to be. Our word should be our bond and we should accomplish that to which we commit ourselves or not make the commitment. Jesus said, "But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil". Matthew 5:37 Our word as Christians is the word of Christ in that we are members of His body. We commit a sin against God, our neighbor to whom we made the promise and against all the brothers and sisters in His fellowship when we make a promise and then fail to remember it or fulfill it. Further, the witness of Christ is damaged before the world.

20: In letting the Gibeonites live according to the oath sworn to them, the Israelites avoided the wrath that comes from God for bearing false witness.

9:21-23

21: The leaders said to them, "Let them live." So they became hewers of wood and drawers of water for the whole congregation, just as the leaders had spoken to them.  
22: Then Joshua called for them and spoke to them, saying, "Why have you deceived us, saying, 'We are very far from you,' when you are living within our land? 23: "Now therefore, you are cursed, and you shall never cease being slaves, both hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God."

21: In agreeing to be the servants of Israel, the Gibeonites were given the task of manual labor in the households of the Israelites described as wood gatherers and water carriers. Gibeon was noted as having an abundance of both. There were one major and seven smaller springs at Gibeon. The "great pool of Gibeon" is noted in II Samuel 2:13 and in Jeremiah 41:12. A major industry of Gibeon due to its abundant water supply was wine and the vineyards were abundant.

One possible reason the Gibeonites were given work close to the Israelite people was so that their religion would not bring the Israelites into idolatry. As we have seen, this was a predominate reason for the destruction of the inhabitants of Canaan.<sup>95</sup> As it happened, this turned out well for the Israelites. The Gibeonites were never accused of leading the Israelites into idolatry. The treatment of the Gibeonites by Israel following this terrible faux-pax was no doubt harsh and any thought of bringing their religious influence into the Israeli camp would have been dealt with severely.

22-23: Joshua asks them about the reason for their deception making it clear that their deception would cost them and their descendant slavery to Israel forever.

"The house of my God" refers to the needs of the tabernacle (and later the temple) as much water and wood would be needed for the sacrifices and washings to be performed. After Solomon became king, the tabernacle and the altar were set up at Gibeon (II Chronicles 1:3,5). However, in service to Israel in this manner, the Gibeonites became servants to the Lord (see verse 27).

The curse Joshua speaks of is found early in Genesis, 9:18-27.

18: Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan. 19: These three *were* the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated. 20: Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. 21: He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. 22: Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. 23: But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness. 24: When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. 25: So he said, "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brothers." 26: He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant. 27: "May God enlarge Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant."

9:24-27

24: So they answered Joshua and said, "Because it was certainly told your servants that the LORD your God had commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you; therefore we feared greatly

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<sup>95</sup> See: Deuteronomy 20:16-18

for our lives because of you, and have done this thing. 25: "Now behold, we are in your hands; do as it seems good and right in your sight to do to us." 26: Thus he did to them, and delivered them from the hands of the sons of Israel, and they did not kill them. 27: But Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, to this day, in the place which He would choose.

24-27: Here the Gibeonites told the absolute truth. Their conviction about what God had commanded them, even going back to Moses had convinced them that they would be destroyed and slavery was preferable to destruction and death. In one sense, they actually exhibited great faith in the word of God and it saved them. Once the arrangements of the covenant were agreed upon, Joshua and Israel returned to Gilgal.

The oath made to Gibeon was never to be broken. It was an eternal promise in the name of the God of Israel. This oath was violated once with dire consequences for Israel. In II Samuel 21:1-14, a three year famine struck the land and it was harsh. In seeking the Lord about it, the Lord said to David, "It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death." There is no mention of this in I Samuel during the time of Saul's reign. It might be associated with the slaughter of the priests of Nob recorded in I Samuel 22. The resolution of the famine in II Samuel 21 was to hang seven of Saul's sons for the violation of their father.

## CHAPTER TEN

10:1-5

1: Now it came about when Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem heard that Joshua had captured Ai, and had utterly destroyed it (just as he had done to Jericho and its king, so he had done to Ai and its king), and that the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were within their land, 2: that he feared greatly, because Gibeon *was* a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men *were* mighty. 3: Therefore Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent *word* to Hoham king of Hebron and to Piram king of Jarmuth and to Japhia king of Lachish and to Debir king of Eglon, saying, 4: "Come up to me and help me, and let us attack Gibeon, for it has made peace with Joshua and with the sons of Israel." 5: So the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, *and* the king of Eglon, gathered together and went up, they with all their armies, and camped by Gibeon and fought against it.

1-4: We enter the period of the conquest of southern Canaan. "Adoni-zedek" ("lord of righteousness" or "justice") was the king of Jerusalem. This would make him a Jebusite, an Amorite and therefore one of the six tribes to be destroyed by God's command to Israel. The point of verse one is that the "fear" of Adonizedek was that if Gibeon

capitulated to Israel given its size, influence and power, what would happen to the neighboring cities that did not capitulate? Adonizedek neither wanted to become enslaved to Israel, nor wanted to be destroyed by Israel. To make matters worse, the conquest and occupation of Gibeon placed Israel with a firm foothold in a strategic territory. Adonizedek's decision was to form a military alliance by convincing four other nations to join him in capturing Gibeon while Israel was at Gilgal in order to re-gain the strategic city for themselves.

The Amarna tablets<sup>96</sup> tell us of the influence of historic "Jerusalem" in the territory and this is likely why Adoni-zedek took the lead in this call to arms. The city of "Salem" was actually located at the southern peninsula of Jerusalem on what we now call "The City of David", due to his capture of the city as recorded in II Samuel chapter 5. But why go into Gibeon rather than attack Israel outright? The text suggests that this attack was to: 1. Punish Gibeon for its alliance with Israel, and 2. Re-establish an Amorite footing in this strategic area interposing a barrier to their vulnerability to Israel. Jerusalem could be the first to be attacked and if defeated, the way to the southern territory would be open.

So he appealed to the southern kings who had the most to lose if Israel went in that direction. Correctly assuming that would be the case, Adoni-zedek appealed to Hoham, king of Hebron, to Piram king of Jarmuth, to Japhia king of Lachish and to Debir king of Eglon. These were the four most powerful cities within the threatened territory. These cities were located as follows from Jerusalem (Salem). Hebron was 20 miles south, Jarmuth 18 miles southwest of Jerusalem, Lachish thirty miles southwest, and Eglon just 6 miles southwest of Lachish. His invitation to these kings in verse four is interesting. He speaks of Gibeon and says, "...for it has made peace with Joshua and with the sons of Israel." These kings did not want peace. Was it possible for these peoples to make peace and avoid destruction? Note: 11:19-20.

5: "Five kings of the Amorites" gather to attack another Amorite clan at Gibeon. Though the clans are described as "Gibeonites", "Jebusites" and so on, their ancient heritage is Amorite.

This reminds us of times when we have led unbelievers to the Lord and immediately the enemy comes to attack the new believer. The counsel prompts us not to leave the new believer to fight alone, but to come to his aid. The ridicule and mocking of friends as well as the counsel of evil suggesting that their new faith is foolishness needs to be opposed by the strength of those who are battle hardened.

10:6-8

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<sup>96</sup> See introduction: Map on page six and comment on page 11, last paragraph. The hundreds of clay tablets excavated from this site written in the Babylonian cuneiform that was the official diplomatic language of the time reveal diplomatic correspondence between Egypt and the nations to the north and east. From this correspondence we have learned much about the political workings of ancient peoples. The actions of Adoni-zedek were a common means among many peoples of diffusing any threat to national security.

6: Then the men of Gibeon sent *word* to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal, saying, "Do not abandon your servants; come up to us quickly and save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites that live in the hill country have assembled against us." 7: So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him and all the valiant warriors. 8: The LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands; not one of them shall stand before you."

6: The Gibeonites know exactly what is going to transpire as the southern clans gathered together in battle array. While they were gathering, the Gibeonites sent word to Joshua at Gilgal. They were stealthy enough not to be spotted by any of the enemy.

The "hill country" is designated separate from the "lowlands" along the coast where Canaanite populations were most prevalent.<sup>97</sup>

7-8: These verses probably tell the chronology in reverse as Joshua would not have failed this time to consult the Lord before leaving Gilgal to ascend to Gibeon, even though there was a covenant in place. Nothing in the covenant spoke of the obligation of Israel to come to the defense of Gibeon in the event of attacks by foreign powers. On the contrary, an attack of this sort could be viewed as solving the contradiction within the whole matter. On the one hand, this would play into Joshua's purpose as God had commanded Israel that all these people must be destroyed. Let the Amorites do it to each other. On the other hand, Joshua had made the people of Gibeon servants forever and this became a part of the final covenant arrangements and a fulfillment of prophecy. Joshua had to get God's counsel.

Once he had the counsel of the Lord assuring him that the defense of Gibeon was not only approved but that He would give Joshua a full and complete victory, Joshua did not falter at talking everyone who could fight with him. "The people of war" and "the mighty warriors" include the entire army (all who were trained to fight) and all those deemed "champions", that is, they have risen above the rest in their skills and were able to fight against and defeat more than one foe. They were more formidable and skilled than the other warriors and viewed with awe and respect. They may have been actually greater in size and strength as well as the phrase for "valiant warriors" includes the translations for strength, might and size in other places.

10:9-11

9: So Joshua came upon them suddenly by marching all night from Gilgal. 10 : And the LORD confounded them before Israel, and He slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and pursued them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah. 11: As they fled from before Israel, *while* they were at the descent of Beth-horon, the LORD threw large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; *there were* more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword.

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<sup>97</sup> See: 9:1

9: This was a forced march uphill, compressing a normal three day trip into less than 24 hours.

10-11: “Confounded them”. Also translated “threw them into a panic”, “confused them”. How did the Lord do this? The sources of the word indicate that sound was involved. It is quite possible from the context that this sound is that of severe and close thunder and lightning. Frighteningly close. It says that “He (the Lord) “slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon and pursued them...”<sup>98</sup> It wasn’t the Lord Himself of course, but the great storm He produced. Meanwhile, all of Israel just basically stood and watched as “before Israel” means “in front of their face”.

We see in verse 11 that this “storm” consisted of large hailstones that caused the panic, the slaughter, and the flight of the Amorites. This storm followed the Amorites even as they fled in different directions. It became “every man for himself”. Some headed for the lower ground to the north toward Beth Horon and were crushed on the descent there, while others headed west and south to either escape or get back to their own country. When all was said and done, the hailstorm had killed more than Israel’s army was to kill. Israel became the “mop up” operation to God’s victory on their behalf.

10:12-14

12: Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, "O sun, stand still at Gibeon, And O moon in the valley of Aijalon." 13: So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go *down* for about a whole day. 14: There was no day like that before it or after it, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel.

12: Verses 12-15 are an interlude in the battle narrative, and are drawn from the Book of Jashar and inserted here. More on this in shortly. The question must be asked, “Why did Joshua need more daylight for that day?” The answer lays in 16-21 which we will examine in a moment. Prior to giving command to the Sun and the Moon to stand still, Joshua spoke to the Lord. We are not told what he said, but we could surmise that he told the Lord that daylight was running out and he didn’t know how he could complete the task given him in the time remaining. So apparently the Lord told him to issue the command. “Aijalon” is pronounced “aye-yah-lone” or “ay-ee-yah-lone” and means “deer” or “stag”. Gibeon lies on the hill of this valley and the city of Aijalon lies in the valley some four and a half miles to the southwest. The proximity of these places is so close that the valley is sometimes called the “Valley of Gibeon”<sup>99</sup>. Joshua’s point of view could have been somewhere midway between Gibeon and the Aijalon as he addresses the sun over Gibeon and the Moon over Aijalon to his southwest. The time of day would be roughly late morning or early afternoon as the moon was still in the sky and

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<sup>98</sup> A map needs to be referenced to locate the path of flight.

<sup>99</sup> Isaiah 28:21

had not set into the western horizon, and the Sun looks to be to the East.

13: This verse summarizes the campaign described in detail from verse 16 on. The sun did not actually appear to come to a halt. It continued and evening eventually fell (verse 26), but the intervening interval added roughly twelve to hours to the day.

What physically happened to extend the day? We know that the Sun does not orbit the Earth. The only answer would lie in the slowing of the Earth's rotation. This would entail a miracle of God Himself as the effects of the Earth stopping or slowing could be catastrophic, but not as some have suggested. For example, Joseph Sizo's comment that, "we would all be thrown into space,"<sup>100</sup> is pure foolishness. The Earth rotates at about 1100 miles an hour. The effect of an abrupt stop would cause the atmosphere, lakes and oceans and everything not tied down to rush eastward causing catastrophic effects, unless all of this was held back also proving the event a miracle. Even if the Earth was slowed rapidly enough, say over a few hours, there would still be lesser but similar effects unless the miracle slowed everything as well. The actual effect of a slowed or stopped planet would be negligible for this length of time. If this occurred in summer, the heat would definitely be felt. All things would weigh slightly more (about three pounds per hundred), and the Earth's magnetic field would be effected for a short time.

In the case before us, evening eventually fell (verse 26), so the planet would have to have slowed.

There are many who would explain that the Earth did not in fact slow or stop in its rotation. A few examples are 1. The miracle did occur in the appearance of extra time but the earth did not stop or slow. Cited is the fact that verse 12b-13 is in Hebrew poetry, and that leaves some latitude for understanding the passage as not necessarily a literal or factual event. There is some possibility for this as long as it is understood that in some way, Joshua and Israel had close to a days worth of extra time. 2. Some try to translate the words "stand still" as "stop shining" or "rest" or "darken" in order to describe some other kind of atmospheric or heavenly condition such as a cooling of the heat or an overcast that would allow Israel to finish the day, but these efforts cannot explain the comment in verse 13 and 14 about the length and uniqueness of the day itself. 3. A "long day" is found in other ancient legends which are fables to demonstrate the power of their particular "god" and this is just another example of a myth to do the same here in Joshua. The event itself never actually happened. On the other hand, if the event actually occurred, it would have been a world wide event and other cultures may well have attributed it to their own god or purpose.

Verse 13 alludes to this same event being recorded in the "Book of Jashar". In fact, verses 12-15 could have actually used the Book of Jashar as a source for the text. We'll look at the argument for this in a moment. Unfortunately, the Book of Jashar, is a lost book, much like the "Book of Wars of the Lord" (Numbers 21:14); the "records of Nathan the Prophet", "The Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite"; the "Treatise" or "visions of Iddo"; and the "Records of Shemaiah" (II Chronicles 9:29; 12:15; 13:22).

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<sup>100</sup> Interpreter's Bible, Abingdon Press, 1953, volume 2, page 605.

The Book of Jashar is also mentioned in II Samuel 1:18, "Then David chanted with this lament over Saul and Jonathan his son, and he told *them* to teach the sons of Judah *the song of the bow*; behold, it is written in the book of Jashar." The following verses in II Samuel 1:19-27 may well come from the Book of Jashar.

The Book of Jasher is probably quoted in the poetic section as well as in verses 13, 14 and 15. The poetic section is as follows,

"O sun, stand still at Gibeon,  
And O moon in the valley of Aijalon."  
So the sun stood still,  
and the moon stopped,  
until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies."

(13:b is an editorial comment –“Is it not written in the book of Jashar?”)

The quotation from Jasher continues in prose, "...And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go *down* for about a whole day. 14: There was no day like that before it or after it, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel. 15: Then Joshua and all Israel with him returned to the camp to Gilgal. (see 10:43) verse 15 completes the quotation from the book of Jasher. It is out of place in the total narrative, and the LXX deletes it.

Verse 14 does makes the point of the extraordinary day that of a day when God listened to the voice of a man, not the length of the day itself.

10:16-21

16: Now these five kings had fled and hidden themselves in the cave at Makkedah. 17: It was told Joshua, saying, "The five kings have been found hidden in the cave at Makkedah." 18: Joshua said, "Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and assign men by it to guard them, 19: but do not stay *there* yourselves; pursue your enemies and attack them in the rear. Do not allow them to enter their cities, for the LORD your God has delivered them into your hand." 20: It came about when Joshua and the sons of Israel had finished slaying them with a very great slaughter, until they were destroyed, and the survivors *who* remained of them had entered the fortified cities, 21: that all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace. No one uttered a word against any of the sons of Israel.

16: Picking up from verse 11, the chase continues. "These five kings" refer to those spoken of in 10:2: Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem, Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of Eglon. They had fled to Makkedah, (10:10) apparently knowing a cave where they could find shelter from the severe hail storm. The cave they hid in was used to secure flocks and herds from various

conditions, be it weather, predators or thieves. It was quite defensible against any such attack. Makkedah itself was a place in Palestine that hosted a great deal of livestock. As Gibeon majored in the wine industry, Makkedah did so in the livestock industry. It must be noted that Makkedah or the cave mentioned here in the text has never been located. It appears to have been to the west of the valley of Aijalon as the campaign has moved in both westerly and northerly directions. Verses ten and eleven place Beth-Horon, Azekah and Makkedah in the same region.

17-20: A report came to Joshua from his detachment that the five kings were holed up in the cave. Joshua's location was with his troops some distance away. He ordered this offensive to block up the cave, set a guard and then continue pursuing the stragglers, killing as many as possible before they found refuge in their cities. Israel didn't know at that time how much daylight they had but it seemed that the Sun hardly moved. And, the Lord had promised to give them all into the hand of Israel. Meanwhile, Joshua and the remaining forces marched to Makkedah and set up camp near the cave. Some of those who fled actually made it into the fortified cities, Makkedah being one. But a great slaughter took place that day none the less.

21: When the slaughter was complete for the day, the entire Israeli force gathered at the camp near the cave of Makkedah. The phrase, "No one uttered a word against any of the sons of Israel", (literally, "sharpened or pointed his tongue") seems to capture the idea of an overwhelming defeat to the extent that there was no longer any more bragging, posturing or ridicule by the enemy regarding Israel or its God.

As the citizens of the land had nothing to say against Israel, wouldn't it be wonderful if the same thing could be said of the people of God today. Christians should be held in awe. They should be the kind of people that draws hearts to God and His fellowship rather than pushing them away. We are the people of God today. We have one life to be a pleasing fragrance to God and refresh others with His love and grace. Too often we shun the very people Jesus died for. We should be known for our love, graciousness, forgiveness at any offense – and in fact take no offense for any reason, for that is what love does. We should be known for our courage to stand against unrighteousness. We should come to the defense of others who we care about rather than attack them and assist them in the battle against their enemies.

10:22-27

22: Then Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave and bring these five kings out to me from the cave." 23; They did so, and brought these five kings out to him from the cave: the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, *and* the king of Eglon. 24: When they brought these kings out to Joshua, Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, "Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings." So they came near and put their feet on their necks. 25: Joshua then said to them, "Do not fear or be dismayed! Be strong and courageous, for thus the LORD will do to all your enemies with whom you fight." 26: So afterward Joshua struck them and put them to

death, and he hanged them on five trees; and they hung on the trees until evening. 27: It came about at sunset that Joshua gave a command, and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves, and put large stones over the mouth of the cave, to this very day.

22-25: The day apparently offered enough time for the disposition of the five kings. After they had removed the stones and brought the five kings out of the cave, Joshua had them placed on the ground and had his commanders put their feet on the necks of the kings. This was to illustrate the future. Joshua explains that this victory was of the Lord and they needn't fear any further battles for the Lord would continue to give the enemies of Israel into their hand. Therefore they were to be courageous. The counsel of Joshua is reminiscent of 1:6, 7, 9 and 18.

26-27: Much like Joshua did to the king of Ai. Finally, the sun was about to set and according to the Law,<sup>101</sup> Joshua removed the dead bodies, cast them into the cave and covered the mouth of it with stones. "To this day" is an editorial comment revealing a later effort in compiling and formalizing the book.

We began this study with, "As we now enter the Book of Joshua, we find the theme of the book to be the invasion and establishment of Israel in the Promised Land as its possession and as an inheritance forever."<sup>102</sup> It is a book of battle, with the outcomes of both victory and defeat. The bases of these victories and defeats can be applicable to the reader. We have found the leader of this invasion, Joshua, to be a man of military expertise, a man of courage, a man of faith and a man filled with the Spirit of God. He is a man of integrity, honesty, wisdom, faithfulness, and an unswerving allegiance to God and His word. He is a man ready for the challenges that face him. He faces them fearlessly due to his faith and trust in God. Like the children of Israel, we are on a journey of our own and we have not yet come fully home to our Promised Land."

Success and victory are based on several things we have seen in the life of Joshua and Israel thus far. 1. Always being mindful of the counsel of the lord and mindful to seek that counsel. But this is not enough. 2. We are to act on His counsel. We are to courageously step into the battle and face the enemy and defeat him at every place he throws up a defense or an attack. 3. We must put out of our "camp" everything that would hold us back. In our own lives, it is time to destroy the personal characteristics that cause us shame, embarrassment and defeat. It is time to recognize these things, see them as enemies and hindrances to our faith and our testimony to others and put our feet on their necks and kill them.

10:28-35

28: Now Joshua captured Makkedah on that day, and struck it and its king with the edge of the sword; he utterly destroyed it and every person who was in it. He left no

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<sup>101</sup> See comment page 75, paragraph 4.

<sup>102</sup> See: Genesis 15:13-21; 17:8; 48:4

survivor. Thus he did to the king of Makkedah just as he had done to the king of Jericho. 29: Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Makkedah to Libnah, and fought against Libnah. 30: The LORD gave it also with its king into the hands of Israel, and he struck it and every person who *was* in it with the edge of the sword. He left no survivor in it. Thus he did to its king just as he had done to the king of Jericho. 31: And Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Libnah to Lachish, and they camped by it and fought against it. 32 The LORD gave Lachish into the hands of Israel; and he captured it on the second day, and struck it and every person who *was* in it with the edge of the sword, according to all that he had done to Libnah. 33: Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish, and Joshua defeated him and his people until he had left him no survivor. 34: And Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Lachish to Eglon, and they camped by it and fought against it. 35: They captured it on that day and struck it with the edge of the sword; and he utterly destroyed that day every person who *was* in it, according to all that he had done to Lachish.

28: Is this another passage that should have been included prior to the just concluded previous account...in this case 10:22 ff.? There is no mention in Joshua, chapter six, of any specific attention to the king of Jericho, but from this we can assume the king of Jericho was killed with the sword.

29-35: The campaign swept through southern Palestine. The pattern was established. What had been done in Jericho to its citizens and king was repeated in Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, and the army of Gezer and its king Horam twenty miles to the north who had come to assist Lachish was also defeated. Lachish, an important city in the region and on a key trade route had lost much of its army as well as its king and was very vulnerable to defeat as was Eglon. Gezer knew that the occupation of these cities would effect them economically and cause serious problems. So they elected to try and preserve their livelihood by assisting the southern cities against Israel in hopes of defeating Israel. It was a futile attempt. The sweep continued on south to Eglon and Eglon was easily defeated as its king and much of its army was already dead.

Though the king of Jerusalem and the king of Jarmuth had been executed, their cities were not included in this campaign. However Hebron, whose king was killed, was attacked and defeated.

10:36-43

36: Then Joshua and all Israel with him went up from Eglon to Hebron, and they fought against it. 37: They captured it and struck it and its king and all its cities and all the persons who *were* in it with the edge of the sword. He left no survivor, according to all that he had done to Eglon. And he utterly destroyed it and every person who *was* in it. 38: Then Joshua and all Israel with him returned to Debir, and they fought against it. 39: He captured it and its king and all its cities, and they struck them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed every person *who was* in it. He left no survivor. Just as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir and its king, as he

had also done to Libnah and its king. 40: Thus Joshua struck all the land, the hill country and the Negev and the lowland and the slopes and all their kings. He left no survivor, but he utterly destroyed all who breathed, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded. 41: Joshua struck them from Kadesh-barnea even as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen even as far as Gibeon. 42: Joshua captured all these kings and their lands at one time, because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.

10:43

43: So Joshua and all Israel with him returned to the camp at Gilgal.

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

11:1-3

1: Then it came about, when Jabin king of Hazor heard *of it*, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon and to the king of Shimron and to the king of Achshaph, 2: and to the kings who were of the north in the hill country, and in the Arabah--south of Chinneroth and in the lowland and on the heights of Dor on the west—3: to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Jebusite in the hill country, and the Hivite at the foot of Hermon in the land of Mizpeh.

1-3: The description given of the territory the king of Hazor recruited includes nearly every city in the country from Jerusalem to Lebanon (Phoenicia). The only peoples not involved were the Philistines, the Phoenicians and Lebanonese, and nations to the far south of the Negev bordering Egyptian territory.<sup>103</sup> Jabin means “intelligent”. He was intelligent enough to gather every possible soldier in the rally against Israel. There was no underestimating the power of Israel this time. A “last stand”, as it were. On the other hand, he didn’t give any thought to the fact that the God of Israel was fighting for Israel (10:42). He dismissed God out of hand and thought only in terms of man power, skill and armament. Not to intelligent after all.

“Chinneroth” is the area of the Galilee.

11:4-5

4: They came out, they and all their armies with them, *as* many people as the sand that is on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots. 5: So all of these kings having agreed to meet, came and encamped together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.

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<sup>103</sup> See: 13:1-6

This will be the largest battle Israel faced thus far. No doubt the total man power was in the tens of thousands. Plus they had horses, chariots, and all the armament available at the time. Gathering in the far north at Lake Merom to battle Israel reveals that these kings knew of Israel's plans to conquer the northern territories. There is seems to be some sort of communication happening in the land as both sides know what the other is up to. Did Jabin send a message to Joshua telling him to meet for battle at Merom? That is where Joshua headed with the Israeli army. How did he know to go there? Joshua and every available man left Gilgal once again. They headed for Merom as we see in verse 7. It would be a long journey and months of fighting. They had to be well prepared in every way, especially spiritually.

11:6-7

6: Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow at this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel; you shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire." 7: So Joshua and all the people of war with him came upon them suddenly by the waters of Merom, and attacked them.

6: It looks as if they may have traveled to within a day's journey when they stopped. Joshua sought the counsel of the Lord. What was reported to him in terms of the fearsome battle array he was to face concerned him. His inquiry of the Lord was answered and Joshua believed God and prepared for battle.

The chariot was a formidable weapon offering not only a forceful advance and multiple weapons but also defense for the driver and warrior. It could be compared to the modern tank. So God Himself promised that they would be able to disable this weapon by hamstringing the horses.<sup>104</sup> Though mighty in number, God also promised to deliver the entire assembly and their cities into the hands of Joshua and Israel.

7: Was this a sudden, that is "sneak" attack? What does the word "suddenly" connote?

A. Assuming this was an unforeseen attack catching Jabin by surprise, then certain conditions would have to be considered. The trip itself was 80 miles as the crow flies and would take over a week just to get there. Surely someone would have spotted this huge contingent moving through the land and taken the message to Jabin. Plus, it seems, they were expecting Joshua.

We do not know which route Joshua took, but we would have to assume that any spies or informants Jabin had on the lookout were prevented from getting to Jabin, and that his spies were incompetent and that their failure to return would be of no concern to Jabin.

There is no indication that the attack was at night, and even if so we must assume Jabin posted no guards, lookouts, scouts, and so on to give advance warning of the

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<sup>104</sup> To "hamstring" the horses meant chopping into the back of the rear legs with a sword, usually at the thigh or "ham" but also anywhere on the back of the leg to disable it.

approach. Plus, we would have to assume that Joshua's tens of thousands of men were absolutely quiet as they moved.

However, Lake Merom (Hula or Huleh Lake today) is surrounded by hills and an approach by an army would not be seen or heard from the valley floor. But this begs the question, "Why would Jabin assemble such a huge army to face Israel and then not keep a sure eye out for their approach? He obviously did not underestimate Israel. So what happened? Some would say that God provided all this cover for Joshua, but the Scripture doesn't confirm this.

B. The only other possibility would be that the translation of the Hebrew word for "suddenly" ("pithom") which normally means "immediately", "instantly" or "quickly" could indicate that Israel, rather than establishing a camp, a base of operations to organize, plan, rest, eat, reconnoiter the situation and so forth as would be expected and as was typically done by every military force in past history (note Jabin's forces for example) was not done. Instead of establishing camp, they just came toward Merom and the forces of Jabin without stopping.

This would fit quite well with the Hebrew and the story and would be completely different to any other campaign fought to date. Further, unorthodox strategies were not unknown to Joshua as we remember Jericho, and Ai for example. Jabin's forces would not be prepared for such an attack, his charioteers un-mounted, horses not readied to the chariots and so on.

11:8-18

8: The LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, so that they defeated them, and pursued them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim and the valley of Mizpeh to the east; and they struck them until no survivor was left to them. 9: Joshua did to them as the LORD had told him; he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire. 10: Then Joshua turned back at that time, and captured Hazor and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor formerly was the head of all these kingdoms. 11: They struck every person who was in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying *them*; there was no one left who breathed. And he burned Hazor with fire. 12: Joshua captured all the cities of these kings, and all their kings, and he struck them with the edge of the sword, *and* utterly destroyed them; just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded. 13: However, Israel did not burn any cities that stood on their mounds, except Hazor alone, *which* Joshua burned. 14: All the spoil of these cities and the cattle, the sons of Israel took as their plunder; but they struck every man with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them. They left no one who breathed. 15: Just as the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses. 16: Thus Joshua took all that land: the hill country and all the Negev, all that land of Goshen, the lowland, the Arabah, the hill country of Israel and its lowland 17: from Mount Halak, that rises toward Seir, even as far as Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon at the foot of Mount Hermon. And he captured all their kings

and struck them down and put them to death. 18: Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings.

8-9: The attack caught the allied forces under Jabin off guard. They scattered to the four Winds with the forces of Israel in hot pursuit. The territories to which Israel pursued her enemies was vast (consult a map of the period).

It is important to recognize the battles we are to fight and the ones we are not to engage in. Our battle is no longer with any person at all except perhaps within our selves. For most Christians, the person that causes them the most trouble is themselves. But the principal battle is described by Paul.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”

Ephesians 6:10-13

10-11: As the battle ensued, Jabin retreated to his fortified city. Hazor was the largest city in Palestine, and the head of all the cities in the territory. The Tel of Hazor (pronounced Haht-zor) is over 200 acres in size. The city was the best defended and most fortified in all Palestine. It was so famous that it is mentioned in nearly every tablet excavated in the mid east from Egypt to modern Iran, and king Jabin is also mentioned in some. Archaeology confirms that the city was destroyed and burned in Joshua’s day. The city also show signs of having been a magnificent Canaanite city prior to its destruction, with great temples and opulent palaces, split into an upper acropolis, and lower city; the town evidently had been a major Canaanite city. It was re-built and re-occupied by Canaanites until the period of the Judges when it was destroyed by Deborah and Barak. Later it was occupied by Israel and Solomon rebuilt it and fortified it to protect the northern plains.

Joshua was able to breach the defenses of Hazor, kill the inhabitants and the king, loot and burn the city.

12-15: Because of the size of the territory and the distance from one city to the other, it would have taken a “long time”<sup>105</sup> to complete the conquest of the north, west, and east including the hill country, the coasts, and the lowlands.<sup>106</sup> Joshua’s work is considered in terms of the specific peoples the Lord told him to destroy, not the total area of the land mass.

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<sup>105</sup> See comment on verses 16-18.

<sup>106</sup> See: 9:1 ff.

16-18: A recap of the territory within which the battles took place. The “long time” has been alluded to. Based on chapter 14:7-10, Deuteronomy 2:14 and on the comments of Josephus, the period of conquest took seven years, and this campaign alone four to five years.

11:19-20

19: There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took them all in battle. 20: For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

19-20: The “hardening of the heart” by the Lord does not mean that God somehow performed a “work” in their hearts to make them fight against Israel. It means that these kings were of no mind to believe in the God of Israel or believe that it was He who made Israel so powerful and successful, as Rahab or the Gibeonites had done. The more Israel succeeded, the more determined these kings were to “prove” the vulnerability of Israel and thus defeat their “so-called” God. With every Israelite victory came the determination (“hardness of heart”) to press on to attempt to defeat Israel and prove their own superiority. Pride is a key element in one’s heart becoming hardened against the Lord.

11:21-23

21: Then Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab and from all the hill country of Judah and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. 22: There were no Anakim left in the land of the sons of Israel; only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod some remained. 23: So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Thus the land had rest from war.

21: Verses 21-22 are an addendum. This campaign was not mentioned in the report of the southern sweep but it is important to remember because it shames Israel who listened to the report of the spies as recorded in Numbers 13:28-33.<sup>107</sup> The Anakim are the

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<sup>107</sup> 28: "Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified *and* very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. 29: "Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan." 30: Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it." 31: But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us." 32: So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of *great* size. 33: "There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight

descendants of Anak, and are great in size. Their size has been exaggerated by teachers of the Bible sometimes claiming them to be eight feet tall. Their size was impressive enough to cause ten of the twelve spies to dissuade the people from attempting to invade the land. Only Joshua and Caleb dissented. Later Caleb was given the land of the Anakim as his inheritance (14:6-15). The size of the Anakim was likely between six and seven feet. This is quite impressive when one considers the average height of the Israelites of the time at five to five and a half feet tall.

As we see later in Joshua and in subsequent records in scripture, not only did many Anakim flee and find preservation, but the same held true for most of the peoples Joshua and Israel conquered. Their survivors show up later once again, some to this day. 23: This verse foretells the division of the land that is yet to be reported in detail in subsequent chapters. However, the respite from battle is noted and a weary Israeli army returns to Gilgal to rest and regroup. There were still battles fought after the distribution of the territories to the tribes, but each tribe became responsible for clearing their possession of enemy forces.

***FROM THIS POINT ONWARD, ONLY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REMAINDER OF THE BOOK WILL BE STUDIED AS MUCH OF THE BOOK IS SIMPLY GEOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE LAND TO THE TRIBES.***

## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

Chapter Twelve is a recap of the territories won in the Transjordan, a list of the kings executed and of land distribution in the Transjordan to the tribes of Reuben and the Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh as a possession.

These three tribes who chose to reside in territories outside of the “Promised Land” (except for the tribe of Manasseh who was given territory on both sides of the Jordan) took little part in the national life of Israel and in time became ineffective or were absorbed by the very nations they were supposed to overcome.<sup>108</sup>

## **CHAPTER THIRTEEN**

13:1-6

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<sup>108</sup> Note: Judges 5:15-16, I Chronicles 5:23-26, Jeremiah 49:1 for example. Ultimately, all the tribes were swept away by Assyria in the eighth century B.C..

1: Now Joshua was old *and* advanced in years when the LORD said to him, "You are old *and* advanced in years, and very much of the land remains to be possessed. 2: "This is the land that remains: all the regions *of* the Philistines and all *those of* the Geshurites; 3: from the Sihor which is east of Egypt, even as far as the border of Ekron to the north (it is counted as Canaanite); the five lords of the Philistines: the Gazite, the Ashdodite, the Ashkelonite, the Gittite, the Ekronite; and the Avvite 4: to the south, all the land of the Canaanite, and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians, as far as Aphek, to the border of the Amorite; 5: and the land of the Gebalite, and all of Lebanon, toward the east, from Baal-gad below Mount Hermon as far as Lebo-hamath. 6: "All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon as far as Misrephoth-maim, all the Sidonians, I will drive them out from before the sons of Israel; only allot it to Israel for an inheritance as I have commanded you.

1-6: Joshua's age at the completion of the basic conquest can be fairly estimated at between eighty and ninety years old.<sup>109</sup> The Lord is pleased with Joshua's effort but tells Joshua that he will no longer be required to lead Israel into battle, even though there are many territories to be possessed. In fact, Joshua's role at this juncture became administrative as the rest of the book shows.

13:13-14

13: But the sons of Israel did not dispossess the Geshurites or the Maacathites; for Geshur and Maacath live among Israel until this day. 14: Only to the tribe of Levi he did not give an inheritance; the offerings by fire to the LORD, the God of Israel, are their inheritance, as He spoke to him.

13-14: The Geshurites and Maacathites are peoples of territories northeast of the Sea of Galilee, south of and surrounding Mt. Hermon. The tribe of Levi was given no territory in the land as such. Their priestly role kept them close to the centers of worship at all times. Service to God was their inheritance, and their privilege. However, Joshua 21 tells us that by lot each tribe gave cities in which the Levites could dwell, forty eight in all and pastures and fields in which they could graze their flocks and herds.

13:22

22: The sons of Israel also killed Balaam the son of Beor, the diviner, with the sword among *the rest of* their slain.

22: In relating the territories given to Reuben, Gad and Manasseh in the Transjordan the slaying of Balaam is mentioned. The story of Balaam covers three chapters in scripture, Numbers 22-24. Balaam's death is not recorded there but is recorded in Numbers 31:8. Balaam is also mentioned in numerous other places in both testaments. Being mentioned

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<sup>109</sup> 24:29 tells us that Joshua died at 110 years of age.

here seems to be for the purpose of recalling the event to the minds of Israel as a lesson, "because the defeating of Balaam's purpose to curse Israel, and the turning that curse into a blessing, was such an instance of the power and goodness of God, as was fit to be had in everlasting remembrance."<sup>110</sup>

13:33

33: But to the tribe of Levi, Moses did not give an inheritance; the LORD, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, as He had promised to them.

33: Once again the portion of Levi is mentioned and is reflective of the promise God first made in Numbers, chapter three. Levi, the tribe of Moses and Aaron were the first to demonstrate allegiance to Moses and to the Lord when the rebellion and idolatry broke out among the Israelites while Moses was on Horeb. Aaron, who had sinned by making the golden calf, was among the Levites when they came to Moses and thus showed his repentance. Later, Levi was promised the role of God's priests (detailed in Numbers 3), exempt from war, and the first mention of the fact that they would not receive an inheritance in the land because of this role is found in Deuteronomy 10:9. It is reaffirmed many times thereafter.

## **CHAPTER FOURTEEN**

14:1-15

1: Now these are *the territories* which the sons of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the households of the tribes of the sons of Israel apportioned to them for an inheritance, 2: by the lot of their inheritance, as the LORD commanded through Moses, for the nine tribes and the half-tribe. 3: For Moses had given the inheritance of the two tribes and the half-tribe beyond the Jordan; but he did not give an inheritance to the Levites among them. 4: For the sons of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, and they did not give a portion to the Levites in the land, except cities to live in, with their pasture lands for their livestock and for their property. 5: Thus the sons of Israel did just as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they divided the land. 6: Then the sons of Judah drew near to Joshua in Gilgal, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know the word which the LORD spoke to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh-barnea. 7: "I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought word back to him as *it was* in my heart. 8: "Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear; but I followed the

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<sup>110</sup> Quotation from John Wesley's explanatory notes.

LORD my God fully. 9: "So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden will be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God fully.' 10: "Now behold, the LORD has let me live, just as He spoke, these forty-five years, from the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, when Israel walked in the wilderness; and now behold, I am eighty-five years old today. 11: "I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so my strength is now, for war and for going out and coming in. 12: "Now then, give me this hill country about which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day that Anakim *were* there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I will drive them out as the LORD has spoken." 13: So Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. 14: Therefore, Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite until this day, because he followed the LORD God of Israel fully. 15: Now the name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath-arba; *for Arba* was the greatest man among the Anakim. Then the land had rest from war.

1-5: In these verses we again have a recap of the inheritance of the tribes beyond the Jordan as a segue into the distribution of land within Canaan proper. Eleazar the (high) priest was the son of Aaron. Again mentioned is the tribe of Levi who gained no possession in this land either. Ephraim and Manasseh were the two sons of Joseph, called "half tribes". With Levi given no inheritance in the land, the two "half tribes" brought the number of divisions to twelve once again.

6-15: Here we have the wonderful account of the generosity of Judah. Caleb, though a "half breed" was one of their own and the territory promised to Caleb was within the territory of Judah. Caleb was not strictly an Israelite. Though listed as a spy from the tribe of Judah (Numbers 13:6) he was a Kenizzite. This clan was a descendant of the first born of Esau, Eliphaz (Genesis 36:15-16). These peoples became the Edomites (Genesis 25:30, 36:8) Yet, Caleb was with Joshua and the other spies when the land of Canaan was reconnoitered (Numbers 13:17 ff.) Caleb had been chosen by Judah in those days because of their great respect for him as a leader. Caleb was one of two spies who gave a report of faith in God's ability to give Canaan into the hands of Israel, Joshua himself being the other. Though the people believed the majority report, God did not forget Caleb's faith and promised him a portion in the land for him and his family. So Judah came with Caleb to speak to Joshua.

Caleb recounts to Joshua the word of the Lord spoken to him forty five years before. This word to Caleb is found in Numbers 14:24, and it reads, "But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it." In Deuteronomy 1:35-36 we read, "Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give your fathers, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and to his sons I will give the land on which he has set foot, because he has followed the LORD fully." Of course Joshua was quite familiar with the entire episode as he was the only other spy to come back with a report of faith and courage.

Caleb had “set foot” on much of the land, but because it was the “Anakim” that ultimately scared off the other ten spies, Caleb requested that their habitat in hill country of Hebron be given to him. The faith and tenacity of Caleb is wonderful as now, at the age of eighty-five, he still feels strong enough to drive the Anakim out of the land. This would fly in the face of any who, like the ten, didn’t believe in the word of the Lord. It would be a confirmation of God’s word and faithfulness and an example to the rest of Israel. Joshua granted his request.

Hebron was formerly Kiriath-Arba meaning “The City of Arba”. It was apparently named for a hero of the Anakites or “giants”. The word “Arba” means “four”. The name was changed to “Hebron” meaning “association”, “league” or “unified”. This suggests that Kiriath-Arba was a league of four cities, Kiriath being the chief and the city was renamed to reflect the same idea only with a new Israeli name to indicate its new character.

After Caleb drove out the inhabitants of Hebron, the land had rest from war. Of all the tribes and leaders in Israel from that day forth, only Caleb drove the enemy from his portion of the land. Caleb’s story continues in the Book of Judges and the first judge God raised up to defend Israel from those who were not destroyed was Caleb’s nephew, Othniel. Caleb’s death and burial is not recorded, but Caleb’s name is always honored as one of few that trusted God completely and had a fearless faith in God and His promises.

His perseverance in totally driving out the despicable people from the land given to him is an example for us who may have enemies within our lives that must be driven out as well. It is a constant battle just to make headway, but a worthy battle none the less.

## **CHAPTER FIFTEEN**

15:13-19

13: Now he gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh a portion among the sons of Judah, according to the command of the LORD to Joshua, *namely*, Kiriath-arba, *Arba being* the father of Anak (that is, Hebron). 14: Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak: Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai, the children of Anak. 15: Then he went up from there against the inhabitants of Debir; now the name of Debir formerly was Kiriath-sepher. 16: And Caleb said, "The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give him Achsah my daughter as a wife." 17: Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, captured it; so he gave him Achsah his daughter as a wife. 18: It came about that when she came *to him*, she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. So she alighted from the donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you want?" 19: Then she said, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water." So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

13-19: The story of Caleb's clearing his possession is reiterated here with the addition of naming the three sons of Anak whom he drove out of the territory. Though Caleb is advanced in years it appears he was involved in the attack upon Hebron. His family as well as the warriors in Judah were involved in the campaign. As Caleb moved to the sister city of Debir, he delegated its capture to anyone who would accept the challenge. Caleb offered the hand of his daughter Achsah<sup>111</sup> in marriage to any who would capture the city. His nephew Othniel accepted the challenge, captured the city and won the hand of Achsah. Othniel went on to become the first judge in Israel. As a wedding gift, Caleb gave them land in the Negev, which seems to be near Debir somewhere within twenty miles south or southwest of Hebron. Neither the city of Debir nor the springs have ever been positively located although the territory of the Negev has and it is our only clue as to the general area of this event. This story is repeated word for word in Judges 1:11-15.

## **CHAPTER SIXTEEN**

16:1-10

1: Then the lot for the sons of Joseph went from the Jordan at Jericho to the waters of Jericho on the east into the wilderness, going up from Jericho through the hill country to Bethel. 2: It went from Bethel to Luz, and continued to the border of the Archites at Ataroth. 3: It went down westward to the territory of the Japhletites, as far as the territory of lower Beth-horon even to Gezer, and it ended at the sea. 4: The sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, received their inheritance. 5: Now *this* was the territory of the sons of Ephraim according to their families: the border of their inheritance eastward was Ataroth-addar, as far as upper Beth-horon. 6: Then the border went westward at Michmethath on the north, and the border turned about eastward to Taanath-shiloh and continued *beyond* it to the east of Janoah. 7: It went down from Janoah to Ataroth and to Naarah, then reached Jericho and came out at the Jordan. 8: From Tappuah the border continued westward to the brook of Kanah, and it ended at the sea. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Ephraim according to their families, 9: *together* with the cities which were set apart for the sons of Ephraim in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages. 10: But they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites live in the midst of Ephraim to this day, and they became forced laborers.

1-10: Verses 1-8 describe the inheritance of the sons of Joseph, namely Manasseh and Ephraim. Joseph, of course was one of only two sons born to Jacob's beloved wife Rachel. After God raised Joseph to power in Egypt, Genesis 46:20 tells us, "Now to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him."<sup>112</sup> When the sons of Jacob came to

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<sup>111</sup> Achsah means "tinkling anklet" or "ornament".

<sup>112</sup> Chapter 48 of Genesis describes how the two sons came to be the heirs rather than the one son representing Joseph and why Ephraim is so often named first of the pair .

Joseph in Egypt, they numbered eleven, Joseph being the twelfth. However, in the inheritance, Levi was given no territory leaving only eleven tribal territories. Joseph was divided into two half tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh bringing the number back up to twelve.

The important matter is found in verse 10. Though much of the land had been conquered already, the remaining work to do by Ephraim was ignored.<sup>113</sup> Joshua, whose tribe of Ephraim died before he saw the failure of his people to conquer the territory. This failure would come back to haunt them.

## **CHAPTER SEVENTEEN**

17:1-6

1: Now *this* was the lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the firstborn of Joseph. To Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, were allotted Gilead and Bashan, because he was a man of war. 2: So *the lot was made* for the rest of the sons of Manasseh according to their families: for the sons of Abiezer and for the sons of Helek and for the sons of Asriel and for the sons of Shechem and for the sons of Hopher and for the sons of Shemida; these *were* the male descendants of Manasseh the son of Joseph according to their families. 3: However, Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, only daughters; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. 4: They came near before Eleazar the priest and before Joshua the son of Nun and before the leaders, saying, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers." So according to the command of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among their father's brothers. 5: Thus there fell ten portions to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which is beyond the Jordan, 6: because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons. And the land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the sons of Manasseh.

1-6: Provision was made for the inheritance to fall to one's daughters if no sons had been born. The account of this provision is as follows from Numbers 27:1-11.

1: Then the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph, came near; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah and Hoglah and Milcah and Tirzah. 2: They stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest and before the leaders and all the congregation, at the doorway of the tent of meeting, saying, 3: "Our father died in the wilderness, yet he was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah; but he died in his own sin, and he had no sons. 4: "Why should the name of our father be withdrawn from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession

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<sup>113</sup> See comment on chapter twelve, at paragraph two.

among our father's brothers." 5: So Moses brought their case before the LORD. 6: Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 7: "The daughters of Zelophehad are right in *their* statements. You shall surely give them a hereditary possession among their father's brothers, and you shall transfer the inheritance of their father to them. 8: "Further, you shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If a man dies and has no son, then you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter. 9: 'If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. 10: 'If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. 11: 'If his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his nearest relative in his own family, and he shall possess it; and it shall be a statutory ordinance to the sons of Israel, just as the LORD commanded Moses.'"

17:12-13

12: But the sons of Manasseh could not take possession of these cities, because the Canaanites persisted in living in that land. 13: It came about when the sons of Israel became strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely.

12-13: Like Ephraim, Manasseh also failed to drive out the remaining Canaanites, and this also would become a mistake leading to the destruction of the effectiveness of these tribes.

## **CHAPTER EIGHTEEN**

18:1-9

1: Then the whole congregation of the sons of Israel assembled themselves at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there; and the land was subdued before them. 2: There remained among the sons of Israel seven tribes who had not divided their inheritance. 3: So Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you? 4: "Provide for yourselves three men from each tribe that I may send them, and that they may arise and walk through the land and write a description of it according to their inheritance; then they shall return to me. 5: "They shall divide it into seven portions; Judah shall stay in its territory on the south, and the house of Joseph shall stay in their territory on the north. 6: "You shall describe the land in seven divisions, and bring *the description* here to me. I will cast lots for you here before the LORD our God. 7: "For the Levites have no portion among you, because the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance. Gad and Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh also have received their inheritance eastward beyond the Jordan, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them." 8: Then the men arose and went, and Joshua commanded those who went to describe the land, saying, "Go and walk through the land and describe it, and return to me; then I will cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh." 9: So the

men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities in seven divisions in a book; and they came to Joshua to the camp at Shiloh.

1: The entire camp was moved to Shiloh. Why? There are several possible reasons, but first and foremost, Joshua is fulfilling the word of the Lord in Deuteronomy 12:5 ff. We find out that this place is indeed Shiloh.<sup>114</sup> Interestingly enough, the same word is used in Genesis 49:10 where Jacob speaks to Judah and says, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples." The word "Shiloh" is personified in an individual and this prophecy is universally accepted as Messianic. The word "Shiloh" means, "To be at rest or peaceful", and the "Prince of Peace" (shalom) spoken of in Isaiah 9:6 is from a related root.

Secondly, Joshua is from Ephraim and moving the seat of government to Shiloh would be helpful to this old man as he could administer his last duties from home. Shiloh was is a strategic position, central to the survey and distribution efforts made by Joshua and the leaders of Israel. The location as a tabernacle site was not a very practical one however, as Shiloh is located on a very rocky hill/plateau just under 5,000 feet above sea level and a climb of several hundred feet from the valley floor. Rather than on the summit, however, the tabernacle may have been located at a lower place where there was room to accommodate it and all the necessary accouterments to serve it.

Today, Shiloh is occupied by Palestinians and is on the border between Israel and the Palestinian West Bank. A wall divides the territory and passes through Shiloh.

Shiloh remained the capital and spiritual center of Israel for 369 years until raided by the Philistines. Yet, Gilgal was still important to Israel as well. Many sojourned to Gilgal as the spiritual heart of Israel including Samuel, Saul and others. The story is worth researching. In the long run, Shiloh was rejected by God as His chosen place to have His name dwell due to the corruption of the priests and the people (see footnote 113).

2-9: Seven tribes had yet to be given their territories. After a lengthy survey of the total undistributed land by twenty-one men (three from each remaining tribe) determining appropriate borders for seven sections, lots were cast to see which tribe got which portion.

18:10-28

The remainder of this chapter describes the borders given by lot to the tribe of Benjamin. The description gives us a good picture of the type of information the "surveyors" brought to Joshua.

## **CHAPTER NINETEEN**

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<sup>114</sup> See: Psalm 78:60; Jeremiah 7:12, 26:6.

Chapter nineteen describes the borders of the territories given to Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and Dan. Simeon's territory was designated within Judah's. As small tribe, it required only little territory but also some security as well, and as 19:9 notes, "The inheritance of the sons of Simeon *was taken* from the portion of the sons of Judah, for the share of the sons of Judah was too large for them; so the sons of Simeon received *an* inheritance in the midst of Judah's inheritance." The tribe of Simeon faithfully cooperated with Judah as did Benjamin (which had a territory on Judah's northeast border next to Ephraim) when the need arose to battle a common enemy or to build within the land.

Though in time most of Israel fell into idolatry and the corruption of the Canaanites, II Chronicles 15 gives a wonderful report of many from these same three tribes as well as from Ephraim and Manasseh repenting of their idolatry and turning with their whole hearts to the Lord. Joshua's heart would have been warmed by this event.

19:49-51

49: When they finished apportioning the land for inheritance by its borders, the sons of Israel gave an inheritance in their midst to Joshua the son of Nun. 50: In accordance with the command of the LORD they gave him the city for which he asked, Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim. So he built the city and settled in it. 51: These are the inheritances which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the households of the tribes of the sons of Israel distributed by lot in Shiloh before the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting. So they finished dividing the land.

49-51: At the end of the distribution, Joshua asked Eleazar and the leaders of the tribes to have the city of Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim (his tribe) as the inheritance for him and his descendants. This act is said to be "in accordance with the command of the Lord". Although we have no specifically recorded command in scripture, it can be unarguably assumed that as God did for Caleb<sup>115</sup> so Joshua was assured of an inheritance as well. No one contested that the Lord had committed an inheritance to Joshua.

The city of Timnath-serah ("Place, Territory or image of the Sun") is a small village located at the center of Ephraim's territory in the hill country north of Mt. Gaash. It is also called Timnath-heres (19:50; 24:30). "Of all sites I have seen," says Lieut. Col. Conder, "none is so striking as that of Joshua's home, surrounded as it is with deep valleys and wild, rugged hills." Opposite the town is a hill, on the northern side of which there are many excavated sepulchres. Among these is the supposed tomb of Joshua, which is said to be 'the most striking monument in the country.' It is a 'square chamber with five excavations in three of its sides, the central one forming a passage leading into a second chamber beyond. A great number of lamp-niches cover the walls of the porch, upwards of two hundred, arranged in vertical rows. A single cavity with a niche for a

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<sup>115</sup> See: Deuteronomy 1:35-39

lamp has been thought to be the resting-place of the warrior-chief of Israel.' It is the modern Kefr Haris, 10 miles south-west of Shechem."

## **CHAPTER TWENTY**

20:1-9

1: Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, 2: "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'Designate the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, 3: that the manslayer who kills any person unintentionally, without premeditation, may flee there, and they shall become your refuge from the avenger of blood. 4: 'He shall flee to one of these cities, and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and state his case in the hearing of the elders of that city; and they shall take him into the city to them and give him a place, so that he may dwell among them. 5: 'Now if the avenger of blood pursues him, then they shall not deliver the manslayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor without premeditation and did not hate him beforehand. 6: 'He shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the manslayer shall return to his own city and to his own house, to the city from which he fled.'" 7: So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali and Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah. 8: Beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, they designated Bezer in the wilderness on the plain from the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan from the tribe of Manasseh. 9: These were the appointed cities for all the sons of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them, that whoever kills any person unintentionally may flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stands before the congregation.

1-9: This chapter describes the fulfillment of the word of the Lord given in Deuteronomy 19:1-13, and Numbers 35:9-34. The purpose was that one who caused an accidental death of another might escape the vengeance of his relatives until the case was either adjudicated by the elders and the people at a trial in the gate of the city, or, if a decision could not be reached, it was the elders choice to offer the offending party refuge until the death of the High Priest or his own, whichever came first.

The death of the High Priest would eradicate any sin of the offender because the High Priest had offered sacrifices on behalf of sin and his own death would be considered atonement for the offender. This prefigures the sacrifice our High Priest, Jesus Christ made for all mankind.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> See: Hebrews 7:26, 8:1-6, 9:11-12.

The six cities of refuge were allotted among all the cities that were given to the Levites to occupy as listed in chapter 21.

1. Kedesh in Galilee in Naphtali is listed in 21:32.
2. Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim is listed in 21:21.
3. Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in Judah is listed in 21:13.
4. Bezer in the wilderness across the Jordan in Reuben is listed in 21:36.
5. Ramoth in Gilead across the Jordan in Gad is listed in 21:38.
6. Golan in Manasseh across the Jordan is listed in 21:27.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE**

21:1-4

1: Then the heads of households of the Levites approached Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of households of the tribes of the sons of Israel.  
2: They spoke to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, "The LORD commanded through Moses to give us cities to live in, with their pasture lands for our cattle." 3: So the sons of Israel gave the Levites from their inheritance these cities with their pasture lands, according to the command of the LORD. 4: Then the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites. And the sons of Aaron the priest, who were of the Levites, received thirteen cities by lot from the tribe of Judah and from the tribe of the Simeonites and from the tribe of Benjamin.

This chapter details the cities and lands to be given to the families among the Levites including, Kohath, Gershon, Merari, in that order, who were the sons of Levi. Aaron, Moses brother, was descended from Kohath who was the grandson of Levi by Amram.<sup>117</sup> Their family was given first cast of the lot, and cities and pastures throughout the land were given to them. Gershon and Merari followed next and received a similar distribution.

The chapter closes with:

21:43-45

43: So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. 44: And the LORD gave them rest on every

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<sup>117</sup> Exodus 6:16 ff. gives a detailed account of these families.

side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hand. 45: Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO**

22:1-9

1: Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, 2: and said to them, "You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have listened to my voice in all that I commanded you. 3: "You have not forsaken your brothers these many days to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. 4: "And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as He spoke to them; therefore turn now and go to your tents, to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan. 5: "Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." 6: So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents. 7: Now to the one half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given *a possession* in Bashan, but to the other half Joshua gave *a possession* among their brothers westward beyond the Jordan. So when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them, 8: and said to them, "Return to your tents with great riches and with very much livestock, with silver, gold, bronze, iron, and with very many clothes; divide the spoil of your enemies with your brothers." 9: The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned *home* and departed from the sons of Israel at Shiloh which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, to the land of their possession which they had possessed, according to the command of the LORD through Moses.

1-9: The tribes having taken the territories across the Jordan as their inheritance had been faithful in supporting the war effort as they had been commanded to do if they were to indeed be given the land of the Transjordan as their own.

22:10-14

10: When they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan, a large altar in appearance. 11: And the sons of Israel heard *it* said, "Behold, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar at the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan, on the side *belonging to* the sons of Israel." 12: When the sons of Israel heard *of it*, the

whole congregation of the sons of Israel gathered themselves at Shiloh to go up against them in war. 13: Then the sons of Israel sent to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, 14: and with him ten chiefs, one chief for each father's household from each of the tribes of Israel; and each one of them *was* the head of his father's household among the thousands of Israel.

10: A legitimate debate follows the question, "On which side of the Jordan was this altar built?" For our purposes, we will take the side that concludes that the altar was built on the east side of the Jordan at the place where Israel crossed when the Lord blocked the waters. This is supported to some degree by verse 19 and by the explanation of Manasseh, Gad and Reuben as the chapter closes. This was a large altar much in the fashion of altars built for the Lord and the sacrifices.

11-12: It was assumed that the act of building this altar was in rebellion to Israel and the Lord and that these tribes were establishing their own worship. The true altar of the Lord was restricted to Shiloh where the Tabernacle stood. This was such an offense that it initiated the need to go to war to settle the issue.

13-14: However, cooler heads prevailed, discussions were held and a committee led by Phinehas, Eleazar's son, was sent to Gilead to meet with the leaders of the three tribes. The committee consisted of the leading man from each tribe.

22:15-18

15: They came to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them saying, 16: "Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD, 'What is this unfaithful act which you have committed against the God of Israel, turning away from following the LORD this day, by building yourselves an altar, to rebel against the LORD this day? 17: 'Is not the iniquity of Peor enough for us, from which we have not cleansed ourselves to this day, although a plague came on the congregation of the LORD, 18 ; that you must turn away this day from following the LORD? If you rebel against the LORD today, He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel tomorrow.

15-18: Peor refers to the sin of Israel as they resided at Shittim on the east of the Jordan prior to their crossing. The account is found in Numbers, chapter 25. In brief, many in Israel were seduced by the women of Moab and Midian and succumbed to the worship of Baal of Peor. This was a god worshipped on Mt. Peor (Peor meaning "the gap") and licentiousness was involved. Phinehas took action against the men of Israel who were involved and 24,000 men were slain. Phinehas reminds them of the dear price paid for a previous infraction against the Lord.

22:19-20

19: 'If, however, the land of your possession is unclean, then cross into the land of the possession of the LORD, where the LORD'S tabernacle stands, and take

possession among us. Only do not rebel against the LORD, or rebel against us by building an altar for yourselves, besides the altar of the LORD our God. 20: 'Did not Achan the son of Zerah act unfaithfully in the things under the ban, and wrath fall on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity.'

19-20: The tribes on the Transjordan were invited back to the western side if they felt that the temptations on the eastern side were too much for them to cope with. In fact Phinehas pleaded with them, reminding them of Achan's fate when he sinned against the word of the Lord.

22:21-29

21: Then the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered and spoke to the heads of the families of Israel. 22: "The Mighty One, God, the LORD, the Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows, and may Israel itself know. If *it was* in rebellion, or if in an unfaithful act against the LORD do not save us this day! 23: "If we have built us an altar to turn away from following the LORD, or if to offer a burnt offering or grain offering on it, or if to offer sacrifices of peace offerings on it, may the LORD Himself require it. 24: "But truly we have done this out of concern, for a reason, saying, 'In time to come your sons may say to our sons, "What have you to do with the LORD, the God of Israel? 25: "For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between us and you, *you* sons of Reuben and sons of Gad; you have no portion in the LORD." So your sons may make our sons stop fearing the LORD.' 26: "Therefore we said, 'Let us build an altar, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice; 27: rather it shall be a witness between us and you and between our generations after us, that we are to perform the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices and with our peace offerings, so that your sons will not say to our sons in time to come, "You have no portion in the LORD.'" 28: "Therefore we said, 'It shall also come about if they say *this* to us or to our generations in time to come, then we shall say, "See the copy of the altar of the LORD which our fathers made, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice; rather it is a witness between us and you.'" 29: "Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD and turn away from following the LORD this day, by building an altar for burnt offering, for grain offering or for sacrifice, besides the altar of the LORD our God which is before His tabernacle."

21-23: Twice invoking the great names of the Lord God of Israel "El", "Elohim", and "Yahweh", the leaders recognize the misunderstanding of their brothers on the western side and with great emotion invite destruction upon them if indeed this is what they have done.

24-28: The explanation is that the altar is to be a memorial that the three tribes, though apart from the portion originally allotted by the Lord to Israel, that they are committed to be a part with Israel and that the altar is to speak to their descendants of this fact that they might not turn away from the Lord or their brothers on the west side of the Jordan.

29: They deny that offerings of any kind will be offered on this memorial altar and give acknowledgement that the true altar is at Shiloh.

22:30-24

30: So when Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the congregation, even the heads of the families of Israel who *were* with him, heard the words which the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the sons of Manasseh spoke, it pleased them. 31: And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the sons of Manasseh, "Today we know that the LORD is in our midst, because you have not committed this unfaithful act against the LORD; now you have delivered the sons of Israel from the hand of the LORD." 32: Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest and the leaders returned from the sons of Reuben and from the sons of Gad, from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the sons of Israel, and brought back word to them. 33: The word pleased the sons of Israel, and the sons of Israel blessed God; and they did not speak of going up against them in war to destroy the land in which the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad were living. 34: The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad called the altar *Witness*; "For," *they said*, "it is a witness between us that the LORD is God."

30-34: The explanation of the eastern brothers pleased Phinehas and Israel and it was noted that the testimony also saved the lives of many in Israel. The altar was given the name "witness".

There is a great lesson here for everyone. Misunderstanding the intent and motives of others based on here say, gossip, or even visual evidence is quite common. In marriage this is a common error. One spouse may assign motives to certain words or actions in the other spouse that are not actually accurate or true. Too often we tend to interpret the motive of a person that causes us some grief as negative when this is not the case at all. This misinterpretation may cause a response or action that is unwarranted as is the case in the text. Children can be taught to be careful in this regard and to view gossip with skepticism. Here, cooler heads prevailed when the matter was directly confronted, and both sides were shocked at what might have transpired had not the truth been discovered.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE**

23:1-8

1: Now it came about after many days, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies on every side, and Joshua was old, advanced in years, 2: that Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders and their heads and their judges and their officers,

and said to them, "I am old, advanced in years. 3 ; "And you have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the LORD your God is He who has been fighting for you. 4 ; "See, I have apportioned to you these nations which remain as an inheritance for your tribes, with all the nations which I have cut off, from the Jordan even to the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun. 5: "The LORD your God, He will thrust them out from before you and drive them from before you; and you will possess their land, just as the LORD your God promised you. 6: "Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, 7: so that you will not associate with these nations, these which remain among you, or mention the name of their gods, or make *anyone* swear *by them*, or serve them, or bow down to them. 8: "But you are to cling to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.

1-8: The reason given for God's people to adhere to His word and His laws is found in verse seven. It is so that His people will not be influenced by the gods and religious practices of the heathens. God has fully demonstrated that he and He alone is the true God and Lord. He will continue to bless them and assist them if they cling to Him. Joshua reiterates these instructions several times in this and the next chapter. He is quite aware of the proclivity of the people to slip into the enticements offered by the pagan religions.

23:9-13

9: "For the LORD has driven out great and strong nations from before you; and as for you, no man has stood before you to this day. 10: "One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who fights for you, just as He promised you. 11: "So take diligent heed to yourselves to love the LORD your God. 12: "For if you ever go back and cling to the rest of these nations, these which remain among you, and intermarry with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, 13: know with certainty that the LORD your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they will be a snare and a trap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

9-13: Conversely, if they begin to mingle with and marry these heathen peoples, it will be a signing of their death warrant. This prophecy, of course, came true. This is one of the reasons the Book of Joshua, one of the Hexateuch is also the first book of "The Former Prophets". The warning continues:

23:14-16

14: "Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed. 15: "It shall come about that just as all the good words which the

LORD your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the threats, until He has destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you. 16: "When you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you will perish quickly from off the good land which He has given you."

This warning has contemporary application. Even Christians are not immune from the enticements the world tempts us with. As our own society continues to deteriorate morally and spiritually, the number of Christians simply being swept away into debauchery is astounding. Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." Matthew 7:13-14

To take a stand and not cave away to the temptations of the world takes strength of character and power in the Holy Spirit. Those who do so today are labeled as "intolerant", "arrogant", "holier than thou" "prejudiced" "hateful" and the like, and are often despised rather than respected. In our society, "freedom" means to do whatever anyone wants with no regard to either consequences or the conscience of others. Those who feel that this is not freedom but self centered license and refuse to participate will face opposition and taunting. Again, Christian children must be trained regarding the consequences of such "freedom" and understand why standing firm in righteousness and in following the Lord is so important. Most importantly is how one responds to such taunting and accusation. To learn how to do so with dignity and grace is vital.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR**

24:1-13

Here Joshua, in his final address, briefly recounts the history of the people now gathered before him. He does this to emphasize how long God has been forming this people and planning for the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham. Verse 13 underscore that God has done what He promised nearly a thousand years before. His purpose is to press the people to renew their covenant with God as Joshua himself will not be there to chasten them or lead them.

1: Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God. 2: Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, *namely*, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. 3: 'Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. 4: 'To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, and to Esau I gave Mount Seir to possess it; but Jacob and his

sons went down to Egypt. 5: 'Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst; and afterward I brought you out. 6: 'I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and Egypt pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. 7: 'But when they cried out to the LORD, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them and covered them; and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness for a long time. 8: 'Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan, and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land when I destroyed them before you. 9: 'Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel, and he sent and summoned Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. 10: 'But I was not willing to listen to Balaam. So he had to bless you, and I delivered you from his hand. 11: 'You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, *and* the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Gergashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Thus I gave them into your hand. 12: 'Then I sent the hornet before you and it drove out the two kings of the Amorites from before you, *but* not by your sword or your bow. 13: 'I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'

1:9-12: These verses deserve special consideration. Once again Balaam is mentioned. The purpose is to show that no one is able to curse those whom God has blessed. This is reflective of Romans 8:33-39.<sup>118</sup> "Then I sent the hornet..." is from Exodus 23:28 (repeated in Deuteronomy 7) in the midst of a relevant instruction found in verses 23-33. The hornet is a stinging wasp and the "sting" of hornets, scorpions, and the like is often used or pictured as an instrument of God's judgment.<sup>119</sup>

24:14-15

14: "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15: "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

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<sup>118</sup> 33: "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34: who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35: Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36: Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." 37: But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38: For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39: nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

<sup>119</sup> Note: Proverbs 23:32; Rev. 9:5 and 9:10

This famous statement by Joshua has been repeated for the inspiration of countless numbers ever since. Its challenge remains today.

24:16-18

16: The people answered and said, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; 17: for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. 18: "The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God."

16-18: These words are spoken, but are they sincere with depth and conviction or are they spoken because they believe this is what Joshua wishes to hear? We find out immediately.

24:19-20

19: Then Joshua said to the people, "You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins. 20: "If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you."

19-20: The answer of the people was too glib for Joshua. Joshua forces them to re-think and reassert their commitment.

24:21-24

21: The people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD." 22: Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the LORD, to serve Him." And they said, "We are witnesses." 23: "Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." 24: The people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice."

21-24: After Joshua presses the people to consider their statement and repeat it he tells them that they have become a witness against themselves, i.e., they have rendered the verdict as judges of themselves and the verdict is destruction if they persist in succumbing to the foreign religious influence. Joshua is not unaware of the influence already "in their midst". There already may be idols in their homes. The people, likely shamed by Joshua's perception, reiterate their solemn vow.

24:25-28

25: So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. 26: And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. 27: Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God." 28: Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance.

25-28: Joshua went as far as writing the words of the people upon a scroll to be retained and read on occasion as a reminder of their promise. Then he set up a large stone under an Oak at Shiloh next to the Tabernacle that the people could not miss when they gazed that way. He told the people that the stone is a witness of the vow and the judgment for breaking the vow. There is no way God could be accused or blamed for the disasters that would befall them when they disobeyed the Lord.

There is little more that Joshua could do to reinforce the importance of faithfulness to the Lord. After all was done, he dismissed them to go and do as the Lord had commanded. After the generation passed who has known Joshua and the Elders of Israel in which Israel did indeed serve the Lord, the spiritual condition of Israel began to deteriorate.

24:29-33

29: It came about after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old. 30: And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north of Mount Gaash. 31: Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

32: Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons. 33: And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him at Gibeah of Phinehas his son, which was given him in the hill country of Ephraim.