

JOSHUA THE NEW LEADER OF ISRAEL

Case Study: Joshua the new leader of Israel

Joshua Chapter 1-9

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The phrase after the death of Moses (Josh1:1 NIV) connects Joshua's book to Moses' five books, especially Deuteronomy (Deut 34:7-9). Moses' death reported in Deut. 34 discusses Joshua's succession (Josh 1:7-9). Joshua started from where Moses ended (1:1-2). Before the death of Moses, the Lord appointed Joshua to succeed Moses (Deut. 31:14, 23). Following the Lord's command, Moses openly laid his hands on Joshua and commissioned him, signaling the transfer of the mantle of leadership to the entire nation (Num. 27:18-23; Deut. 34:9; 3:28; 31:1-8). Joshua was ready for the moment. He was not only a man of experience and strength, but a man of spirit and wisdom. These are attributes that Godly leaders will embody.

The divine charge to Joshua was to build trust in the promises, courage and obedience of God and to assure victory (1:2-5). While Israel's was allotted land to the west part of the Jordan (22:19; Deut. 32:48-52; 34:4), Israel's influence went far beyond the Jordan. God promising to be with Joshua (1:5:9; Deuteronomy 31:23) as He was with Moses. Yet the divine assurances of success do not mean that human leaders have no part to play. For him to conquer Canaan Joshua thus required two things: bravery and absolute adherence to God's rule (1:6-9). In order to assert God's promises he needed courage as a king. He also had to study the word of God diligently in order to prevent any deviation from the treaty and keep himself focused on the Lord's will.

Meditation as instruction upon the law of the covenant provides the foundational platform for reverence and courage (1:8). The leaders use the infinite resources of the Lord through meditation and prayer. Constant reflection on the scripture brings the knowledge of the will of God. However, it is not only in recognition of the will of God that we ultimately reflect on the Bible, but doing that will. According to the commission of Heaven, he is empowered and addresses the camp by officials to brace themselves to cross the Jordan (1:10-11).

JOSHUA THE NEW LEADER OF ISRAEL

Joshua received power from the Lord, and with that authority he communicated to the people. He provided a straightforward correspondence (i.e. a concise course of action) and a reasonable one (i.e., a fast and effective chain of command). His original command and the people's response reveal Joshua's conviction and convincing convocation to the people of the divine promise in his conference. Joshua's unanimous support and cooperation prove that the citizens had accepted him as the choice of God. The two and a half tribes promised not just to cross the Jordan but also to help the other tribes in their war (1:16-17). They also affirmed that Joshua was the preferred replacement of Moses and that they would punish all those who rebelled against him (1:18). The response of the citizens often emphasizes Joshua's moral duty and demands of the values of bravery and obedience (1:18).

Joshua may not have secretly sent the agents, as if to maintain Israel's mission. It was the secret act of spying (Josh 2:1). The dispatch of spies was not an act of incredulity but an act that strengthened Israel's march against their enemy (2:24). The pledge of God's involvement does not exclude human obligation. Spies went to see the land, especially Jericho (2:2). The king of Jericho wanted Rahab to collaborate as was the custom with many ancient prostitutes in matters of intelligence (2:3), but Rahab betrayed the king to save the spies (2:4-5). She would wish her allegiance to her lord and citizens to be on the side of God's chosen people, Israel, a choice that would give rise to their redemption and membership in the covenant (6:17). By sending the king's guard to vain action, Rahab succeeded in deflating all suspicion about her and any possible investigation into her house (2:7).

This was noteworthy, although Rahab was a pagan, she had a reasonable grasp of Israel's past and God's intentions for them. This led her to believe that the Lord gave the land to them (2:9). God's acts in the sea, and in the nation of the Amorites, influenced Rahab's conviction that

JOSHUA THE NEW LEADER OF ISRAEL

God had already promised Israel their land. She told Israel of the great terror and distress that befell the inhabitants of Jericho on account of Israel (2:11), in a manner reminiscent of Exodus (15:15-16). Joshua's spotlight is the declaration of faith by Rahab: For the Lord your God is god in heaven above and on the earth below (2:11). Upon her confession Rahab had the Spies to take an oath to save the entire family (2:12-13). She endangered her life by transporting the spies from king's officers and turned herself against her own men. In addition, she enjoyed her own protection and the protection of her kin. The spies granted Rahab's request that Rahab (1) she would not divulge what they had discussed to any company, (2) she would tie the scarlet cord in the window, and (3) she would invite her extended family to her house (2:14, 17-20). Rahab appears to have attached the scarlet rope to her window immediately (2:21), as a sign of hope and her entire family's salvation.

Spies and Rahab had a degree of reciprocal confidence. She hoped that the spies would rescue her entire family as planned while the spies also expressed their confidence in her inability to betray them. The spies yet again trusted Rahab and hid in the hill country for three days when the pursuers returned from their search (2:16, 22-23). The Israelite spies returned to Joshua with a promise of hope: God has already delivered the land into their possession, as shown by the terror of Jericho's people (2:24; 9, 11). Unlike most spies sent by Moses to Canaan (Num. 13-14), spies sent to Jericho brought encouraging words to Israel (2:24). In these terms, Israel was prepared to seize the fertile land.

The Israelites traveled through the Jordan from Acacia Grove, about ten miles away, and camped for three days on the banks of the river (3:1-2). The Jordan Crossing directives were simple. The people were to wait for the ark, which the Levite priests carried, to lead on, and then follow it, a distance of two thousand cubits or a half miles. In preparation of the Lord's

JOSHUA THE NEW LEADER OF ISRAEL

glorious deeds, the citizens needed to "sanctify" themselves (3:5). The Lord is Almighty and his followers also ought to be consecrated. The Vow required shaving, garment washing and abstention from marital intimacy (Ex 19:14-15; Gen 35:1-2).

The Lord promised to elevate Joshua up before Israel so that the people could recognize him as the successor of Moses, ordained by God (3:7). The miracle of the Jordan crossing would confirm Joshua as the leader as well as prove that the Lord was with Him as He was with Moses. Joshua, as leader had the responsibility of the ark instructing the priests and the Levites, when to move and when to stand still (3:8). However, Joshua would not usurp the dignity of the Creator. He guided people's faith and trust in the Lord and his word as a good leader (3:9-11). He assured that the congregation had the assurance of the promise of the Lord to deliver the people of Canaan to Israel. Then Israel would know that the living God was among them and that without fail He would drive out the inhabitants of the land from among them (3:10) confirming His authority over the world by separating the ocean (3:11-13).

Jordan's waters were cut off as soon as the feet of the priests carrying the ark touched the water, probably upstream, allowing people to cross over on dry ground about half a mile downstream (3:13, 15-17). Like Red Sea crossing, Jordan was a solemn religious event. It offered Israel the chance to reflect profoundly about the wondrous works God has done for His men. With this miraculous Jordan crossing, Israel had no reason to doubt the fulfillment of the exodus' covenant promise and hope.

While God would work a miracle to encourage people to cross the Jordan on dry land, Joshua realized that those who witnessed it would recall it. Since Joshua wished to leave a legacy for the next generation born long after the miracle had happened, he planned a way of expressing the glory of God by installing twelve people from each group of the children of Israel, and asking

JOSHUA THE NEW LEADER OF ISRAEL

them to cross before the ark of the Lord, each bearing a stone on their shoulders as a perpetual symbol, a remembrance and a lesson for the next generation (4:1-7). We see another collection of twelve stones put up by Joshua in the center of the Jordan, particularly at the position where the ark-bearing priests' feet stood before the entire congregation crossed (4:9-11). The clans of Ruben, Gad, and half Manasseh, 42,000 armed people pursued the order to cross over and enable the other clans seize the territory (4:12-13).

Israel stood in admiration of Joshua just as they had previously pledged their loyalty to Moses. Joshua obeys the order of the Lord and Moses (4:10), the two and a half nations follow Moses and Joshua (4:12-13), the Levites obey Joshua (4:15-17), the rivers obey the Levites that hold the ark (4:18), and the congregation obeys Joshua (4:14, 20). Hence, the basis of Joshua's exaltation was his humility and obedience to the Lord. Hence his modesty and devotion to the Lord was the foundation of Joshua's exaltation. Followers may be in awe of their leaders only when they lead after the Lord. Like Joshua, spiritual leaders are at the forefront of the chain of command hence disobeying of the divine directive, leads to anarchy from the adherents. On the tenth day of the first month, Israel crossed Jordan and camped at the east border of Jericho, at Gilgal. For the period of the conquest, Gilgal would be the Israeli base of operations. God's redemptive force was demonstrated both by the previous generation entering the Red Sea and by the current generation entering the Jordan. These supernatural events would both lead nations to recognize the power of the God of Israel and instill fear of Him in His chosen nation. Miracles, usually, promote trust. Historically, the Red Sea and Jordan crossings marked Israel's washing away bondage filth and their glorious entry into the holy land (4:19-24).

JOSHUA THE NEW LEADER OF ISRAEL

However, Israel has in the meantime had to renew the agreement in order to claim its entire blessings. The Land of Canaan was a land of covenant, and Israel was only allowed to own it if its covenant with the Lord was upheld. It is not possible to overemphasize the affinity between Abrahamic and Sinai agreements (5:1). It was important to consecrate the service of the Lord until Israel could take up the battle of the Lord and take over the land. The people had to be circumcised with flint knives for the second time (5:2). The statement "second time" can be translated as a renewal of the ritual that had been discontinued for around 40 years. But since there was widespread circumcision in Egypt before the Passover (Exodus 12:43-49), Josh's second widespread circumcision in Josh 5 was aimed at the new generation.

All the males from Egypt were circumcised, but they died in the wilderness because of their disobedience (5:4-7). Those who were circumcised at Gilgal were the male of the second generation, sons born during the exodus, all of whom were uncircumcised. While metal knives were usable, flint knives were considered surgically more powerful. This was a massive circumcision drive that marked another memorial, which would remind Israel of the first treaty ratification upon reaching Canaan. Circumcision was certainly a time when Israel would be most vulnerable militarily (Gen. 34), but this act also demonstrated their faith in the Lord. Although Israel was vulnerable, the Lord's presence was all they needed. Gilgal thus is a position where the country is formed a new as God's people (5:7-9).

The precipitation on manna ceased that day, because people could feed from the produce of the land. God gave Israel manna because they were on a journey. He wouldn't provide manna now that they could consume fruit from the land of the promise. Divine laws are not simply substitutes, meaning that what is possible by normal processes is not necessarily supernatural (Josh 5:10-12). Revived by the Lord's Word (5:13-15), Joshua saw a theophany. The man with

JOSHUA THE NEW LEADER OF ISRAEL

the sword drawn was deity (5:14). It was this angel of the Lord that God sent to lead Israel to Canaan, and who appeared as the leader of the Lord's army and Joshua worshiped him (5:13). Like Moses, Joshua was ordered to reverently remove his sandals as the spot where he stood was sacred land (5:15). Joshua was now granted the privileges granted to Moses. This theophany persuaded Joshua that the Lord was able to conquer Canaan with the drawn sword at the hands of the Israeli force.

Jericho's people became demoralized by the great acts of the Almighty (Josh 2:9-11; 5:1). The city was shut up inside, frozen by Israel's terror (Josh 6:1). This city of great fighters was already all too eager to attempt an assault against Israel, even after Israel was left impotent by the circumcision for a period of time. It was a definite indication that before Joshua had already overcome Jericho (6:2). While the victory was assured for Israel, the military had to comply with some instructions to claim the victory: (6:16). (1) the army had to march around the city once every day for six days; (2) the ark of the covenant had to be taken along (6:6); (3) seven priests were to sound seven trumpets of the ram horn before the ark (6:4, 6); (4) the royal forces were to go ahead of the ark. Out of Israel marching across the city for seven days, the Lord would allow the wall to collapse. The order to march through the city with its ark and its trumpets would prove to Israel that the Canaan invasion was not military but religious. The ark's presence on the battle ground sufficed to warn Israel that the ensuing conflict was religious in nature and that the Lord Himself led the procession (6:8-14).

In the Bible the number seven is important because it signifies excellence and completeness. The army had been ordered to yell only on the seventh day at the seventh round of the six-day march. Additionally the army had to march seven times on the seventh day which meant victory was assured, and Jericho was absolutely paralyzed in its operations. The inter link

JOSHUA THE NEW LEADER OF ISRAEL

between the trumpet sound and the human voice would mark the town's downfall. The great shout was a cry of war, which generally served both to encourage the army and to scare the enemy. Despite Jericho's five to six acres of land, the army possibly had to have enclosed the city with many columns of fighting men. Hence, these columns of fighter men would strike from all corners at the same time. Possibly not all of the wall fell down, since Rahab's home had been constructed on or against the city wall, and was still standing after the wall collapsed (6:15-21).

The text suggests that spies were young people, perhaps young enough to flee when faced with a threat. The scarlet thread on Rahab's window, like the blood on the Israelite 35 door posts at the Passover night, described her faith in the Lord; that became her hope and her salvation. While the wall collapsed, the wall where Rahab's house was situated was saved. The two spies determined save Rahab since an oath taken once in the Lord's name was irrevocable. Joshua honored that oath and Rahab and his family was placed outside the Israelite camp, until they had been fully integrated into the community of the covenant (6:22-25).

Joshua's ban on anyone restoring Jericho was not a pure moral utterance. It was built on the Lord's word. Jericho's ashes will constantly remind Israelites of the Lord's glorious defeat of Jericho's rival. The curse was meant to prevent potential generations from restoring the region, being the first fruit of the Lord's triumph in the Promised Land. This curse was fulfilled in Hiel, whose two sons died when the city was restored (6:26; 1 Kin 16:34). Joshua was popular only because he let the Lord use himself. In Scripture, leadership success depends entirely on the Lord's reliance on the leader. This passage reveals the Lord's faithfulness in upholding His vow to exalt Joshua before the people (6:27).

Joshua advised the army not to covet and keep all of Jericho's suspected items for themselves, should they bring trouble to the entire assembly. Joshua reports that Israel, following

JOSHUA THE NEW LEADER OF ISRAEL

this warning, desired and stole some of the consecrated artifacts in Achan's person, and thus invited trouble. This behavior represented a violation of the bond of the Lord, and thereby incurred His wrath. Though only Achan did the theft, Israel's whole community was accused of such high-handed sin it warranted capital punishment (7:1-5).

It was a great tragedy to annihilate thirty-six men of Israel; it put the community into a state of hysteria (7:5). The ripping of clothing and the dust on the head were grieving signs in ancient times. Although Joshua had not consulted with the Lord before the war, he does so with an open query (7:6). The terms of v. 7 are not farewell phrases, even though Joshua regretted Israel's expulsion. We can't just see Israel turning its back against its enemy. His prostration was an expression of trust before the ark. Yet in his anger, he came close to accusing God of killing his own people (7:9)?

Joshua is a man of faith who seeks answers desperately honest with God. He is certainly concerned to cut off Israel's name from the earth, but he is more concerned about the Lord's great name (7:9). The Lord's reaction to Joshua's concerns was straightforward: Israel was lost for having sinned (7:11-12). His safe presence would not continue with a people who would not keep His commandments. Stealing accursed items was a breach of the law (7:11), an egregious offense (7:15), to be purged. The people were to sanctify themselves, undergo a search process, and ultimately they would punish the offender. We find in this chapter a basis for church discipline. Although individual responsibility is not overlooked, believers share a corporate identity and responsibility, so that the sin of one member affects the whole (1 Cor. 5:6-13; 2 Cor 7:5-12).

Achan effectively concealed from the congregation the accursed items but he did not conceal them from the Lord. The presentation of the citizens by groups, and then the tribe

JOSHUA THE NEW LEADER OF ISRAEL

selected, by clans, households, and individuals was not meant to allow God to recognize the sin or its perpetrators. God knew everything and that is why Israel suffered a great loss. Even though God knew that the culprit was Achan, He did not call him outright. He ordered a cycle of digging in order to both demonstrate to the citizens that nothing should be withheld from Him, and to warn them that this was a horrible act of defiance, and the remedy to which involved the intervention of the entire congregation (7:19-21). Anything that people believe they are covering is already put out bear before the Lord (7:23). Achan's family and belongings, including the stolen items, were destroyed because they shared his identity. The pile of stones above Achan's remains would warn against similar rebellions. The stoning ceremony was perhaps done by tribal leaders, signifying their corporate heritage and duty in coping with revolt as a covenant nation (7:22-26).

The Almighty, purging the accursed from within them, promised Israel victory over Ai in the second assault. Israel, as always, claimed only the victory the Lord had won (8:1-2). Having the army set up camp at night indicated having Ai's citizens wouldn't notice the presence of the Israeli force until the next day. While the warriors set to ambush the city of Ai numbered thirty thousand in verse 3, verse 12 reports that Joshua set out five thousand men. The figure in verse 3 could be the full size of the Israeli army fighting Ai, whereas the figure in verse 12 is the ambush squad. The Israeli army was completely in place until Ai's king set out to strike. Battles were fought at specified places, making reference to the appointed place before the plain. Being nearby, Bethel joined Ai in the Israel assault. But in their hasty pursuit, they left Ai's gate open behind them, giving Israelite troops an easy entry (8:17). The Israeli army succeeded in deceiving Ai and Bethel's entire army to follow them, leaving the city open.

JOSHUA THE NEW LEADER OF ISRAEL

There is no place for escape once the adversary is engaged. The Lord gives victory, but believers must face the enemy or contend with them as though they were in an actual war front (2 Chr. 20). Each soldier of the Lord has this obligation. There was hardly any reason to join Israel as they looked back in bewilderment their city up in flames (8:20). Therefore the control of the enemy was absolutely undermined by tactical deception and decoy. The inhabitants of Ai were exterminated and the city destroyed (8:22-28).

Moses had commanded the Israelites to construct an altar on Mt. Ebal and to have six tribes stand on Mt. Ebal and the other six on Mt. Gerizim for the reading of the law, and particularly the recital of the blessings and curses of the Covenant (8:30-33; Deut. 11:26-30; 27:1-26). The Lord's appearance as signified by the ark and the pronouncement of blessings and curses and the writing down of the law indicate that we have a ritual for the restoration of the covenant. All Israel, including men, women and children, citizens or aliens (Ex 19:33, 35). The covenant was meant for all, not just people in Israel. These were fundamental components of worship: construction of the sanctuary, offering offerings and rising for the congregations, announcing the blessings and reading the law (8:34-35).

Once they learned of the conquests of Jericho and Ai, the town States of the nation of Canaan organized a joint force to fight against Israel (9:1). What the city-states did not know was that Joshua was just a symbol of representing another, and that the real Israeli army general was one they should not attempt to fight with. These Canaanites did attempt to oppose him, given their knowledge of the heroic works of the Lord in Israel. And, despite their persistent defiance, they would quickly be swallowed up. The Gibeonites, on the other hand while other Canaanites formed a coalition to fight against Israel, they purposed to enter into an agreement with Israel to

JOSHUA THE NEW LEADER OF ISRAEL

save their lives (9:3-6). That change of heart was based on their assumption that the Lord had granted Israel the entire region (9:24).

The Gibeonite delegation's bad apparel was meant to make Israel think they came from a distant country and were poor people (9:6, 11). When Israel established a treaty with Gibeon in the Lord's honor, the agreement could not be reversed. Though Israel learned three days later that the Gibeonites were Israel's neighbors residing inside the Promised Land (9:16), a three-day ride from Gilgal (9:17), Israel could not attack Gibeon because of Israel's vow made in the name of the Lord to them (9:18).

Gibeonites effectively deceived Israel into a peace treaty, yet they had to suffer the consequences; Israel will allow the existence of Gibeon, and in turn they would compensate for the deceit. Joshua confronts the Gibeonites and learns that they deceived Israel because they feared for their lives (9:24). Gibeon, like Rahab, sought refuge in Israel and their deity. By asking Joshua to do what feels appropriate they were reminding him of the covenant (9:25). They knew once the treaty was in effect Israel would spare their lives. As a result of their deception the Gibeonites attracted the curse of slavery (9:23). As slaves, they would generally forever hew wood and draw water on behalf of the congregation for the altar of the Lord (9:21, 23, 27).

JOSHUA THE NEW LEADER OF ISRAEL

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