

JOSHUA

How would you like to be called on to fill the shoes of the greatest leader in the history of your country—someone who spoke face-to-face with God Himself?

AUTHOR

Jewish tradition credits Joshua himself with authorship of the book. He is identified as the writer of certain parts of the book, such as 24:1-26. He was obviously an eyewitness to much of its content. Therefore, it seems likely that Joshua was its author. A few parts were apparently written after his death.

DATE

The book begins at Moses' death in 1406 B.C. The events cover a period of 25-30 years, ending with Joshua's death at 110. Thus the dates covered in the book are from about 1406 to 1380 B.C. (25 years).

BACKGROUND

Israel has just completed 40 years of wandering in the wilderness as God has disciplined them for their unbelief and disobedience.

They have been camped on the plains of Moab, preparing to enter Canaan and possess the land God promised them.

Just before their entrance to the land, God called Moses up to Mt. Nebo to die. The great leader is no longer present.

Previous to Moses' death, God appointed a new leader whom Moses prepared to lead them.

Now the time has arrived to move on. Joshua is to rise up and lead the people across the Jordan and into the land.

Critical question: Will it work for him too?

Under his leadership they will conquer, possess, and distribute the land.

He directs the distribution of the land as each tribe and family is assigned their inheritance. They follow the rules God established in Numbers.

The book concludes on a spiritual mountain top as Joshua moves into the presence of his Lord and the people continue on without him.

PURPOSE AND THEME

As the first of the O.T. historical books, Joshua introduces the theme which will continue through each of them.

HISTORICALLY, each Old Testament historical book demonstrates the main historical events affecting God's people during that period.

Joshua reveals the events God uses to:

- bring Israel into the land
- conquer the pagan Canaanites who were residing in the land
- distribute the land to each tribe and family.

DOCTRINALLY, each Old Testament historical book reveals God's character and His relationship to His chosen people.

In Joshua, *God's holiness* is seen as He eradicates the pagan and perverted Canaanite people insists on the purity and holiness of the covenant people.

God's love is demonstrated as He patiently draws His people to Himself corrects them when they fall forgives them for their unbelief and disobedience

God's faithfulness is revealed as He fulfills His promises to His people brings them into the land blesses them there.

God's power and sovereignty are demonstrated as He miraculously delivers the land into the hands of His people controls surrounding international events so they may achieve victory.

Joshua describes the condition of God's covenant people during this time period.

God's choice and love for them is not because of their merit.

They are a rebellious and often a disobedient people.

The book reveals their failure to obey completely God's instructions.

Their failure to obey God by eliminating the Canaanites lays the foundation for even greater rebellion in the future.

The Canaanites will be an affliction to them and will influence them to be unfaithful to their God.

Israel must learn the importance of submission to God's authority and of obedience to His Word.

In summary, Joshua's message is that:

The God of Israel has fulfilled His covenant promise to His people by establishing them in the land which He promised them.

In spite of God's faithfulness to them, His people fail Him by partial obedience to God's command to eliminate the pagan Canaanites.

Disobedience by God's covenant people results in judgment.

Repeated theme: In spite of God's complete provision of all that His people need, they are unfaithful to Him and He will have to correct them.

ORGANIZATION

Joshua is organized around three major stages by means of which Israel takes possession of the land:

- | | | | |
|------|--------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| I. | Entrance into the land | 1-5 | INVASION |
| II. | Conquest of the land | 6-12 | SUBJECTION |
| III. | Distribution of the land | 13-24 | DISTRIBUTION |

ARGUMENT

INVASION OF THE LAND 1-5

As Joshua begins, Moses, the mediator God used to communicate His covenant and to establish a covenant relationship with the people, had died.

God wants to demonstrate that His relationship with His covenant people was not dependent on Moses.

God establishes a new mediator and assures him of His presence with him.

Under Joshua's leadership, God gives His people the land He promised them.

PREPARING FOR BATTLE 1-2

Joshua commissioned 1:1-9

God calls Joshua to lead His people.

Death of Moses 1:1-2a

Joshua is informed of Moses' death.

Command to conquer 1:2b-4

God commands Joshua to lead the people into the land to conquer it.

Promise of God's presence 1:5

He promises His presence with him.

Call to courage 1:6-9

He encourages him to bravely lead the people in accordance with His Word.

God is the source of his power and abilities. Therefore, he must continually recognize his dependence on God and obey Him.

Numerous times problems arise because he forgets to check with God.

People prepared 1:10-18

Joshua immediately assumes command and prepares to enter Canaan.
His faith in God is demonstrated by his immediate obedience.

Officers organized 1:10-11

He orders the officers to organize the camp for departure.

Transjordanites reminded 1:12-15

He reminds the tribes who were planning to settle in Transjordan that they must first go support their brethren.

Obedience promised 1:16-18

Joshua's confidence of his divine appointment is contagious.

The people assure him of their support and encourage him to obey God's voice and to tell them what God wants them to do.

Land surveyed 2

Joshua sends two spies to look over the situation and to report back.

Why two? Is this a flashback to last time?

Spies sent to Jericho 2:1-3

Spies hidden by Rahab 2:4-21

Rahab, a prostitute, convinced that Yahweh is going to give Israel victory over the people, helps the spies escape.

Protection 2:4-7

Profession 2:8-13 *"Where have you been?"*

Provision 2:14-16

Preservation 2:17-21

Spies encouraged by results 2:22-24

They return to Joshua with the encouraging report that God has planted fear in the hearts of the people of the land.

With this positive confirmation, the people are encouraged to go.

CROSSING THE JORDAN 3-5:1

God's supernatural power over the flooding Jordan is demonstrated as God stops the water's flow and causes the people to cross over on dry land.

Following the ark 3:1-6

Cutting off the water 3:7-13

Crossing on dry ground 3:14-17

Remembering the event 4:1-9

They build a memorial of twelve stones taken from the river.
So they won't forget what God has done for them!

Restoring the flood 4:10-18

Teaching their descendants 4:19-24

The memorial is to be used for the education of their children.

The children need to learn how God has dealt with His covenant people.

Discouraging the enemy 5:1

This clear demonstration of God's power causes additional fear among the opposing nations.

CIRCUMCISING GOD'S PEOPLE 5:2-12

While Israel is camped at Gilgal, God commands the males to be circumcised.

Circumcision was the sign that Israel was God's covenant people.

They had carried the sign previous to the discipline in the wilderness.

Now that generation has died.

Before Israel can claim the land as God's covenant people, they must again be identified with Him by the sign of the covenant, circumcision.

Once this important step has been taken, they are ready to approach God by means of the celebration of the Passover.

Israel is about to experience another new beginning in their fellowship with their God.

The command 5:2-3

The need 5:4-8

The effect 5:9

The celebration of Passover 5:10-12

MEETING GOD'S COMMANDER 5:13-15

Previous to the first battle in the land, God adds one more important revelation to Joshua's orientation program.

Joshua meets the true commander of God's armies.

Joshua recognizes immediately the importance of this Person and submits to His authority.

The victory in the battle will not be the result of Joshua's feeble attempts.

They will be victorious because the Commander of the army of the Lord is fighting for them.

God will give them the victory.

DOMINATION OF THE LAND 6-12 CONQUEST

After Joshua leads Israel into Canaan, the hardest task remains to be accomplished.

They must take the land away from the Canaanites who live there.

God will use Israel to destroy these perverted heathen peoples.

Israel must trust God and obey His commands in order to do it.

CONQUEST OF CENTRAL CANAAN 6-8

As they begin this important task, they first conquer the central section of Canaan, thereby making cooperation of southern Canaan with northern Canaan impossible.

Defeat of Jericho 6

The first objective in central Canaan is Jericho.

Israel's reputation had arrived in Jericho years before their arrival.
They were afraid of them.

While God's instructions for victory were unusual, the people trusted Him and followed His orders.

God honored their faith and gave them victory over the city.

Rahab and her family were spared because of her faith in the God of Israel.

Jericho's fear 6:1

God's orders 6:2-5

Israel's marches 6:6-19

Jericho's destruction 6:20-27

Sin of Achan 7

When Israel went up against the next town, Ai, Joshua failed to reconfirm his plans with God.

Failure by one man to obey all God's orders at Jericho resulted in their defeat at Ai.

Joshua lamented the loss before Yahweh because His name was at stake.

God corrected Joshua, indicating that the problem was sin in the camp.

God's people will always suffer defeat when they allow sin in their midst.

God leads the people to Achan as the source of their problem.

He had stored up just a few of the spoils of the battle for himself.

The severe judgment of God, first on the people, then on Achan himself, demonstrates that God demands total obedience. He will not be mocked nor taken lightly.

The offense 7:1

The defeat 7:2-5

The lament 7:6-9

The accusation 7:10-13

The designation 7:14-18

The confession 7:19-23

The judgment 7:24-26

Destruction of Ai 8:1-29

After Israel stones Achan in obedience to God's command, they are directed to go up against Ai for the second time.

This time God gives them the victory.

God was never defeated at Ai!

The assurance 8:1-2

The plan 8:3-8

The trap 8:9-13

The attack 8:14-17

The surprise 8:18-20

The defeat 8:21-29a

The memorial 8:29b

Reminder of the covenant 8:30-35

After these victories in central Canaan, Joshua reminds them of the conditions for blessing God has placed on them in the covenant.

He reads the entire book of the law before all the people as Moses had commanded them.

CONQUEST OF SOUTHERN CANAAN 9-10

As Israel prepares for their military encounter with the southern Canaanites, the local peoples exhibit two contrasting responses:

Deception by Gibeon 9

Allied opposition to Israel 9:1-2

The pagan kings allied their forces to fight together against Israel.

Deceitful submission to Israel 9:3-13

The Gibeonites, fearful that they will be destroyed by the people whom God is apparently blessing and directing, recognize God's hand on them and submit to them, using deception to convince Israel to become their allies.

Joshua again fails to consult God!

While they are criticized for their deception, they are nevertheless preserved.

In the future they will be identified with the people of God.

Naive agreement by Israel 9:14-15

Frustrating revelation to Israel 9:16-21

Angry accusation by Israel 9:22-23

Respectful confession to Israel 9:24-25

Enslaving acceptance by Israel 9:26-27

Defeat of southern confederation 10

When the southern cities heard what Gibeon had done, they formed an alliance to attack Gibeon.

Gibeon called on Israel for help.

Thus Joshua's failure to consult God obligated Israel to fight for Gibeon.

Nevertheless, God helped them and used the weather (hail) and the sun to give them victory.

Their kings and cities were destroyed.

Then God delivered the rest of the southern region into Joshua's hand.

Southern alliance against Gibeon 10:1-8

Nature's alliance against southern alliance 10:9-21

Death of five kings 10:22-28

Destruction of remaining cities 10:29-43

CONQUEST OF NORTHERN CANAAN 11:1-15

When the kings of the northern area of Canaan heard what Israel had done in the south, they formed a massive alliance to defeat Israel.

Israel defeats the northern army and then returns to destroy their towns and plunder them.

Joshua's obedience to God's command was absolute.

SUMMARY OF CONQUEST 11:16-12:24

The author summarizes the period of conquest, describing the territory and kings defeated.

God hardened the hearts of each city so they would fight until He destroyed them all.

Joshua was able to take control of the entire land God promised them.

Territory conquered 11:16-23

Kings defeated 12

Under Moses east of Jordan 12:1-6

Under Joshua west of Jordan 12:7-24

DISTRIBUTION OF THE COVENANT LAND 13-24

Once Israel took control of the land, it had to be divided by tribe and family.

Joshua was old and no longer able to lead the nation in its battles.

God ordered Joshua to divide the land by its tribes and let each tribe be responsible for eliminating the Canaanites in their own area.

TERRITORY ASSIGNED FOR PERMANENT INHERITANCE 13-21

Command to divide land 13:1-7

Division of eastern territory 13:8-32

The description of the division of the territory starts with the tribes which settled on the eastern side of the Jordan.

Description of territory 13:8-13
Exclusion of Levites 13:14
Territory of Reuben 13:15-23
Territory of Gad 13:24-28
Territory of Manasseh 13:29-31
Summary 13:32-33

Division of western territory 14-19

Then the division of the western side is described.

The Levites received no land inheritance because God Himself was their inheritance. They were to be supported by the tithes of the other tribes.

Throughout the description of the land division, the tribes failed to obey God's instructions concerning the Canaanites completely.

They did not drive them out completely.

Division of territory introduced 14:1-5

Inheritance for Caleb 14:6-15

In stark contrast to that general disobedience was Caleb.

In spite of his age, he still trusted God to enable him to remove the enemy from his inheritance.

Allotment for Judah and Joseph 15-17

Judah and Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) received special attention in the distribution of the land because of their critical importance in the future of Israel in the north and in the south.

The other tribes are to fill in around them.

Judah 15

Joseph 16-17

Summary 16:1-4
Ephraim 16:5-10
Manasseh 17:1-13

Complaint and challenge 17:14-18

When the descendants of Joseph complain about their limited territory, Joshua challenges them to stretch out and drive out the surrounding Canaanites. There will be plenty of room for them if they believe God and claim their entire territory.

Allotment for remaining tribes 18-19:48

Surveying expedition commissioned 18:1-10

Distribution by lots 18:11-19:48

Benjamin 18:11-28

Simeon 19:1-9

Zebulun 19:10-16

Issachar 19:17-23

Asher 19:24-31

Naphtali 19:32-39

Dan 19:40-48

Inheritance for Joshua 19:49-50

At the conclusion of the division of the land, Joshua received a city for his inheritance.

He built up the town and settled in it.

Conclusion 19:51

Thus the task of dividing the land was concluded.

Cities of refuge established 20:1-9

Having divided all the territories of Israel among the tribes, two special provisions had to be made to obey God's requirements.

First, cities of refuge were assigned for untried people who had killed someone unintentionally, to protect them from the families of the deceased who would be chasing them.

Cities for Levites designated 21:1-42

Second, cities were to be set aside as a place of residence for the Levites.

Forty-eight cities were designated for this purpose.

Commanded by God 21:1-3

Casting of lots 21:4-8

Cities of Aaron 21:9-19

Cities of other Kohathites 21:10-26

Cities of Gershonites 21:27-33

Cities of Merarites 21:34-40

Cities of Levites summarized 21:41-42

Fulfillment of covenant land promise summarized 21:43-45

Having completed the description of the distribution of the land, Joshua uses the fact to draw attention again to God's faithfulness to His covenant.

God gave them the land just as He promised.
He fulfilled every promise He made.

BORDER DISPUTE CONCERNING ALTAR 22

Permission given for eastern tribes to return home 22:1-9

Once the land has been conquered and divided among the tribes, the eastern tribes could return to their homes.

Joshua warned them of the importance of remaining obedient to God's Word, though separated from their brethren.

Accusation made for construction of the altar 22:10-20

When the eastern tribes arrive back in their land, they built an altar as a reminder to them and to their brethren that they too belong to Yahweh's covenant people.

They don't want future generations to forget.

After they build the altar, their brethren become aware of it and fear they have established a different center of worship.

They prepare to go to war, lest God judge all Israel for their disobedience.

Explanation given concerning altar as a witness 22:21-29

The eastern tribes explain their purpose, that this altar serve as a witness to their relationship to Jehovah.

Explanation accepted with praise to God 22:30-34

The people accept the explanation and praise God for preventing this tragedy.

FINAL CHALLENGE BY JOSHUA 23-24:28

Warning to be faithful to the covenant 23

Previous to Joshua's death, he calls together the people to warn them of the importance of faithfulness to the covenant.

God has been faithful to them; they should likewise be faithful to Him.

Reminder of God's faithfulness to the covenant 24:1-13

He reminds them of God's dealings with them in the past.
God has always been faithful to His word.

Joshua challenges them to serve Him faithfully also.

*Make a choice:
Get rid of all other gods.
Serve Yahweh alone.*

They respond with a promise to serve Yahweh alone.

Joshua warns them of the seriousness of this promise and the consequences of disobedience.

Reconfirmation of relationship under the covenant 24:14-28

They repeat their affirmation and confirm their allegiance to Yahweh with a special act of renewal.

Joshua sets up a stone as a witness to their promise before God.

They had better not treat this commitment lightly or God will deal with them severely.

THREE BURIALS IN CANAAN 24:29-33

The book concludes with a triple burial which points to the conclusion of an age.

Joshua 24:29-31

Joshua has led the people into the land God promised them and directed the distribution of the land to each tribe.

He has brought the people to a renewed commitment to Yahweh.

He has completed his ministry.

Thus he is ready to move on into the presence of his Lord.

The concluding testimony is that Israel served the Lord faithfully as long as Joshua and his colleagues in the ministry lived.

He had led and trained them well.

Joseph 24:32

In addition to Joshua's burial, the bones of Joseph, which he had faithfully brought from Egypt, were also buried in the land.

Eleazar 24:33

As that generation died, so also Aaron's son, Eleazar, the priest who served with Joshua during this critical generation died.

An age has come to an end.

How will Israel respond to its renewed commitment?

What lies ahead, blessing or cursing?

Judges continues the story.

WHAT LESSONS SHOULD WE LEARN FROM THIS BOOK FOR OUR LIVES?