

## JOSHUA

### Introduction

Author. Early Jewish tradition (Talmud) attributes the authorship of this book to Joshua, except for the final section concerning his funeral which is ascribed to Eleazar, the son of Aaron. Several details indicate that Joshua did write the book, including: 1) the text itself reports writing at the command of Joshua (18:8), 2) the writer appears to have been a participant in the action (5:1-6), 3) the author's observations are accurate and precise (cf. the antiquated names of Jerusalem and Hebron in 15:8; 18:16, 28 and 14:15; 15:54 respectively). Other factors, however, seem to indicate that the book underwent some later editing. The phrase "until this day" would imply at least some later editing, perhaps by Samuel.

Date. If in fact Joshua was the original editor/author then the writing likely occurred within a generation of the entrance into the land, approximately 1380 B.C.

Structure. The structure of the book is rather unremarkable. The book may be divided into the two sections: conquest (1-12) and settlement (13-24) of the land. For more detailed notes on structure please see the argument.

Message Statement. As the nation had inherited a major portion of the promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob they needed to understand at least two things about their newfound homeland. First, the reason why they had conquered so much was due God's faithfulness in fulfilling his promises to the patriarchs. Second, the reason so much was left to be conquered was due to their own appropriation or lack of the same of the promises of God. The message of the book then, may be *The conquest and settlement of the land fulfills God's promises in proportion to the nation's obedience.*

Argument

- 1A THE CONQUEST OF THE LAND FULFILLS GOD'S PROMISES IN PROPORTION TO THE NATION'S FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE 1:1--12:24  
 God's hand in initiating and empowering the conquest of the land is clearly taught in the book of Joshua. The victory however is seen not only as a supernatural feat but more importantly as a fulfillment of the promises of God. God's faithfulness to His promises to Abraham concerning the land is finally coming to realization. Success, however, is dependent upon the necessary condition of the people's obedience. Though the promises of Abraham will be completely fulfilled at some point, the very real truth is that each generation's acquisition of those promises is dependent upon personal obedience. These two balancing factors, God's fulfillment of His promises and the people's appropriation of them, are interwoven throughout this section, and the book as well.
- 1B Israel's Preparation for Conquest Rests in God's Promise and the Nation's Obedience 1:1--5:12  
 Before the land could be conquered several lines of preparation had to be accomplished. Joshua had to assume the leadership of the nation after Moses' death, the Jordan had to be crossed and the people had to be circumcised. In all of this God's initiative and the people's obedience are clearly seen.
- 1C God's initiation of the action 1:1-18  
 After the death of Moses God commands Joshua to prepare to cross the Jordan. The basis for this command is twofold: God's promise to the people through Moses (1:1-5) and his promises to the patriarchs (1:6). Thus, the possession of land as the fulfillment of God's promises is immediately addressed. Also critical to this introductory portion is the balanced emphasis upon the obedience of the people. Joshua is warned that although the people have the promises of God, their enjoyment of them is conditioned upon their covenantal obedience (1:8). Joshua then obediently conveys this message to the people who respond with full cooperation.
- 2C Rahab's faithful response to God 2:1-24  
 Although the spies' search of the land may appear to be the main thrust of the chapter, it seems that Rahab and her responses to God and his people is the real focus of the story. She is introduced before the end of the first verse of the chapter and continues to dominate throughout. Her response to the king of Jericho and then the King of Israel demonstrates remarkable faith. Although her faith is given several tests (2:14, 17, 20), it stands as an exceptional testimony of the kind of faith and obedience to God which will inherit the promises of God. Joshua's later use of Rahab as a foil for Achan helps confirm her contribution as an example of faith.
- 3C The peoples' obedient crossing of the Jordan 3:1--4:24  
 In the crossing of the Jordan, Israel's response is one of full obedience. The priests, the leaders, the people and the eastern tribes all comply fully with God's commands. Thus, God responds with a miracle which serves as a basis for further faith in the conquering of the land (3:10). Because the Jordan was at flood stage God's parting of the waters was a miracle of major proportion. It is in fact stated to be the equivalent of the Red Sea miracle for this generation (4:23).
- 4C The people's faithful observance of the covenant 5:1-12  
 God filled the inhabitants of the land with fear which enabled Israel to engage in the right of circumcision. As Moses' sons had to be circumcised before he could continue his mission, so also God's son had to be circumcised before the land could be con-

quered. In a ritual which commemorated the promises to Abraham, the nation expressed faith in the God's word. They also began celebrating the Passover the truth of which (deliverance from Egypt) they were about to fully experience. At this point the people were poised to begin their military exploits.

2B Israel's Conquest of the Land Rests in God's Initiative and the Peoples' Obedience

5:13--12:24

In the conquest of the land the same principles of God's initiative and promises, and the people's necessary obedience in teract to produce a fascinating narrative. Hindered only by their sin, the people either participate in miraculous victories over in surmountable foes, or humiliating defeats before feeble enemies.

1C The divine initiative and direction 5:13-15

As Joshua is near Jericho he is presented with a theophany which is reminiscent of Moses' experience at the burning bush. In both instances, God clearly takes the initiative to begin the fulfillment of a major portion of his promise to Abraham. Like Moses, Joshua is instructed to remove his sandals because of the holiness of the occasion. In contrast to Moses' experience, however, God appears as a soldier, a figure more appropriate to the task at hand. Once again, at the beginning of a major section, God takes the initiative in fulfilling His promises. Neither Joshua nor the people are merely achieving a place to live, rather God is the One Who is fighting His battle in order to fulfill His word to Abraham.

2C The Central Campaign 6:1--8:35

In the central campaign Israel begins to experience the blessing and curse of holy war. The supernatural victory in Jericho due to obedience is offset by the defeat of Ai due to sin. The primary dynamic in holy war is not the power of the enemy but the power of holiness.

1D The successful battle for Jericho 6:1-27

The victory at Jericho is a model for holy warfare. When a pure people follows God's direction the result is wonderful blessing. Rahab's part in the battle is emphasized as a foreigner, and an unholy one at that, is blessed because of her faith. The city is totally destroyed and devoted to the LORD. Joshua's curse was intended to prevent the rebuilding the city so that it might be totally devoted to the LORD as an offering of the firstfruits of conquest. God also used the battle to exalt Joshua among the people of the land.

2D The defeat of Ai 7:1-26

The defeat at Ai is a model of the curse of holy war. When the nation sinned the military outcome was defeat at the hands of a frail enemy. Lest Israel feel that the promises of God assured her of victory, this defeat served notice of the seriousness of sin. The significance of the story is stated in the first verse of the narrative, "But the Israelites acted unfaithfully . . ." (7:1).

Achan's pedigree shows that he was of the tribe of Judah, a man with covenantal promises flowing through him. All of his apparent advantages were of no help however when he failed to faithfully obey. Achan serves as a tragic example of one who possessed every natural advantage yet failed because of disobedience, while Rahab is the prototype of one without natural advantages or righteousness succeeded because of faithful obedience, was spared. While Rahab deserved to be devoted to destruction as a citizen of Jericho, she

was spared while Achan was devoted to destruction though as an Israelite he should have enjoyed the land. While Rahab's faith spared her whole family, Achan's lack of faith caused his whole family to be destroyed. Although Achan should have been in the line of the Messiah, Rahab actually turned out to be in the lineage of Christ. The contrast of these two clearly illustrates the role which faithfulness plays in the inheritance of God's promises. Israel, though blessed with the promises of God, must faithfully obey the covenant if she is to enjoy the fulfillment of those promises.

3D The victory at Ai 8:1-29

Once again, God's initiative in the conquest of the land is clearly seen. At two crucial intervals before the battle and during the battle, God's word interrupts the action to direct the nation. Her first lays the battle plan for Joshua (8:1-2) and then instructs Joshua to signal his troops in battle at the critical moment (8:18a). Throughout all of this God is the overseeing and producing the conquest of the land.

3C The Means of the Conquest: Covenant Renewal 8:30-35

After two crucial demonstrations of the positive and negative aspects of holy warfare at Jericho and Ai respectively, Joshua fulfills the orders of Moses by renewing the covenant at Mt. Ebal. It was time to remind the people of the principles of the covenant and to reconfirm their allegiance to it.

4C The Southern Campaign 9:1--10:43

The southern campaign begins with the Israelites' covenant with the Gibeonites. This relationship then pulls them into warfare with the kings of the southern region, providing them opportunity to conquer the whole area.

1D The failure with the Gibeonites 9:1-27

For those who would begin to take sin lightly after the victory at Ai, the experience of Israel with the Gibeonites teaches that some sin has abiding consequences. While nearly all the nations which heard of Israel had banded together for war, the Gibeonites chose another method of self-preservation. Rather than inquiring of God for their direction, in self-sufficiency, Israel made a covenant with Gibeon. This sin placed them in a no win situation. They either had to sinfully break their treaty with the Gibeonites or sinfully allow certain inhabitants of the land to live. They chose the latter and subjugated the Gibeonites to forced labor. If the consequences of the sin of Achan had been easily forgotten, the results of this treaty would haunt Israel permanently.

2D The success over the Amorites 10:1-39

Israel did honor their commitment to the Gibeonites by coming to their aid in wartime. Their victory over the Amorite coalition is told in two parts: the success over their kings (10:1-28), and then their cities (10:29-39). The victory over the kings was made possible as God intervened with three miracles: 1) sending confusion into the enemy camp, 2) sending hailstones upon them and, 3) stopping the sun. All of this happened so that glad testimony was "Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel!" (10:14). After the destruction of the kings and most of the soldiers the conquering of the cities was a mundane matter.

- 3D The summary 10:40-43  
 The force of the summary of Joshua's southern campaign is captured in the words "All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign, because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel" (10:42). As before, the victories of Israel are the direct fulfillment of God's promises.
- 5C The Northern Campaign 11:1-15  
 The emphasis of this short account of Joshua's northern campaign seems to be upon the leader's obedience to God's direction. The success thus far had been exceptional because the degree of obedience had been high, ". . . he left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses" (11:15).
- 6C The Summary of Warfare 11:16-23  
 This section summarizes and closes the narrative account of the war for the land. It records both the obedience of Joshua and the faithfulness of God. It is very pointedly divided into two parts. The first records the general victory of Israel over the inhabitants of the land. The second account is a bittersweet chronicle that Joshua even destroyed the Anakites, the very people whose awesome size had initially precipitated Israel's and seemed to be such an insurmountable obstacle. If only the first generation had viewed these people through eyes of faith rather than fear they might have been standing where their children were.
- 7C The list of defeated kings 12:1-24  
 This list of defeated kings summarizes the whole account of the conquest. It was not just one people against another but ultimately the King of Israel Who was subduing the kings of the land for His people.
- 2A THE SETTLEMENT OF THE LAND FULFILLS GOD'S PROMISES IN PROPORTION TO THE NATION'S FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE 13:1--24:33  
 God had promised to the patriarchs and to Moses that the nation would not only conquer but also live in the land. Thus, the promise was not complete until Israel had actually settled the land. This portion records, like the first, the faithfulness of God in giving the land to Israel and at the same time their partial inheritance of the promise.
- 1B The Land Yet to be Taken 13:1-7  
 At the outset of the apportionment of the land God recognizes that several undefeated areas still exist. This is a factor not God's promise but of the people's appropriation. Thus, while the book records God's initial fulfillment of his promise to Abraham it is also clear that the complete fulfillment has not yet occurred. On one level, Joshua completed what Moses could not; on another level, because of his human frailties, Joshua could not attain the complete success which God promised.
- 2B The Allotment of Land East of the Jordan 13:8-33  
 In accordance with the commands of Moses, Joshua allotted the land east of the Jordan to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh. It is mentioned in this section for the first time that the Israelites did not drive out certain peoples. This is only one of many reminders that total possession was not yet a reality.
- 3B The Allotment of Land West of the Jordan 14:1--19:51  
 The remaining nine and one half tribes were allotted territory to the west of the Jordan. The first allotment went to the man of faith, Caleb. He took the most difficult portion of land which was inhabited by the Anakites (Numbers 14:24). The phrase "Then the land had rest

from war" is repeated here (cf. also 11:23) perhaps to reinforce the fact that it was only from the kind of faithfulness which Caleb displayed that this goal could be achieved.

The next allotment belonged to Judah, a tribe which also could not drive out the remaining inhabitants (15:63). The sons of Joseph, were allotted the next portion. That the Ephraimites could not drive out all of the occupants of their land is stated (16:10), and the failure of the Manassites is narrated (17:12-18). Their appeal to Joshua is for more land, while his response to them simply is to conquer more land. The teaching seems to be that their problem of possessing sufficient land was not one of space but of will.

Finally, the rest of the land is surveyed and occupied by the remaining seven tribes (18:1--19:48). One more time, at the end of the section it is stated that ". . . the Danites had difficulty taking possession of their territory . . ." (19:47).

- 4B Assignment of Levitical Cities 20:1--21:45  
 In obedience to the commands of God through Moses Joshua assigned all of the cities of the levites. He first apportioned the six levitical cities of refuge, stating their purpose (20:1-6) and then their position (20:7-9). Three were placed on the east and three on the west side of the Jordan. Then he allotted the cities from each tribe for the levites themselves. The clan of the Kohathites from which Aaron's descendants come were allotted cities in the three tribes nearest to the eventual site of the Tabernacle. The remaining two clans, Gershonites and Merarites were spread throughout the rest of Israel in such a fashion that no Israelite was farther than approximately ten miles from a center where the Law was taught.
- 5B Summary of the Fulfillment of God's Promises 21:43-45  
 Joshua summarizes the thrust of the book thus far by centering upon God's action of giving the land to the people in fulfillment of his promise, "So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers . . . . Not one of all the Lord's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled" (21:43, 45).
- 6B Conditions for Continued Settlement 22:1--24:33  
 In keeping with the emphasis of the book, Joshua warns and encourages Israel to remain faithful to the covenant in order to fully possess the land.
- 1C The altar of witness 22:1-34  
 After a long message of encouragement to remain faithful, the tribes on the eastern side of the Jordan built an altar of memorial to the Lord. Although the situation was eventually resolved to the satisfaction of the current leadership it underlined the problem of the geographical separation of the eastern tribes. Although the altar was finally allowed to remain its very presence was enough to arouse the suspicions of the faithful.
- 2C Joshua's address concerning fulfillment of God's promises through obedience 23:1-16  
 In an address of the consequences of faithfulness and disobedience reminiscent of the cursings and blessings of the book of Deuteronomy Joshua once again encourage the people to faithfulness to the covenant. If any further possession of the land was to occur, this would be the key.
- 3C Joshua's address concerning breaking the covenant 24:1-27  
 Joshua's address to the tribes began with a simple historical survey of God's goodness to the patriarchs, the exodus generation and finally the current generation. God's

faithfulness in the past was a sure basis for obedience in the future.

Upon this basis He appealed pointedly for Israel to renounce her idolatry not once but three times. In a passionate appeal Joshua states "Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. *Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt . . .*" (24:14). With each appeal of Joshua the people responded with an affirmation of their desire to serve the Lord but never with a renunciation of foreign gods. Their reluctance to abandon their idols was a snare that eventually led to their exile from the land.

- 4C The passing of leadership 24:28-33  
Both the deaths of Joshua and Eleazar are recorded here with the bittersweet note that "Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua . . . (24:31). Unfortunately, with the seeds of failure sown, it would not be long until a new generation would arise which would soon depart from the Lord. Upon a more promising note, the author ends the book on a high note of God's promise. The bones of Joseph were finally buried at Shechem, finally climaxing in a tangible way the fulfillment of God's promise to the patriarchs. A major hope of the patriarchs, possession of the land had been achieved. What remained was the continuing hope for the seed Who would conquer not only the remaining evil inhabitants of the land but more importantly, the evil One himself (Genesis 3:15).

## Outline

1A	THE CONQUEST OF THE LAND FULFILLS GOD'S PROMISES IN PREPARATION TO THE NATION'S FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE	1:1--12:24
1B	<u>Israel's Preparation for Conquest Rests in God's Promise and the Nation's Obedience</u>	1:1--5:12
1C	God's initiation of the action	1:1-18
1D	God's words to Joshua	1:1-9
1E	concerning the fulfillment of His promises to Moses	1:1-5
2E	concerning the fulfillment of His promises to Abraham	1:6-9
2D	Joshua's words to the people	1:10-15
1E	to all	1:10-11
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3D	The people's response to Joshua	1:16-18
2C	Rahab's faithful response to God	2:1-24
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2D	Her response to God	2:8-13
3D	Her response to the directions of the spies	2:14-21
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2D	Their crossing	3:14-17
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