

Day 69 Joshua 1 to 5

With Moses now dead, Joshua takes up the leadership of Israel. His name in Hebrew is *Yehoshua* (Heb. יהושע) meaning Lord (YHWH)-rescued or Lord-salvation. In his name, Joshua reflects the mission of God for His people to rescue. He is called elsewhere *Hoshea* (Heb. הושע) meaning ‘salvation’, but somewhere along the line, the Y letter of God’s name is attached to his own. The name Joshua is related to the Hebrew name for Jesus (Heb. ישוע *Yeshua*) but is not the exactly the same name form.

Reading 1.1-9

1 v.1ff God repeats the ancient covenant promise of the land to Joshua, and promises to be with him as He was with Moses. The only thing God asks of him personally is to be courageous and alert, and adhere to the terms of the covenant which God has given.

1 v.8ff We know of Joshua that he has a heart for intimacy with the Lord as Moses did. It would be fair to say that it is this, rather than any military genius or prowess which makes him the man for the job. We read of him in Ex.33.11 that when Moses went back to the camp, Joshua stayed in the Tent of meeting, to continue in the Lord’s presence, giving an indication of his heart of worship and communion with God.

1 v.9 The third time, the Lord tells him to be courageous and alert.

Reading 3 v 1

At the beginning of chapter 3, we find the move to camp on the shore of the Jordan within sight of the promised land.

Reading Josh 2. 1- 24

The scene jumps back here to the decision by Joshua to send spies to reconnoiter the situation. He must have been painfully aware of the previous intelligence mission in which he himself had been involved. This time, he is sending spies secretly, two of them, to scout, but he is not making it a public event as before.

v.1 The spies infiltrate Jericho, and stay overnight in the house of Rahab, a prostitute. Some suggest that the word prostitute (Heb זונה *zonah*) might mean an innkeeper, although such places would have been less than respectable, and it is impossible to avoid the fact that a *zonah* even if she ran an inn would be equivalent of a bordello madam. Perhaps this story gives good warrant for Jesus’ later fellowship with harlots and sinners as well.

v.2-7 A search is made for the spies. After all, Jericho would have been aware of the arrival of the huge host of Israel camped across the river from its gates, and such cities would have been aware of the traffic coming in and out of the gates through elders and watchmen.

Rahab therefore takes the spies and hides them on the roof, covering for them to the city authorities, saying they went at sunset.

v.8-16 Rahab then makes provision for herself and her family to escape the coming destruction. Hospitality is a covenantal matter in the east, and she has protected these men under her roof and shown them *covenant obligation* (Heb. חֶסֶד *chesed*) by keeping their presence secret. Therefore she now makes a covenant claim on them. She reveals that the city is in panic over the Israelite arrival, and knows that their God is with them. She actually makes a confession of faith in the Lord herself. (v.11)

Therefore, in v.12, because she has *done chesed to them* (Heb. כִּי־עָשִׂיתִי עִמָּכֶם חֶסֶד *Ki-asiti imachem chesed*) by her hospitality, she calls on them, *do chesed to me* (Heb. עֲשִׂיהֶם חֶסֶד *asitem hesed*) and her father's household. They then advise her that, under the obligations of covenant, they will meet her demand, but only if she is in one place, and only if she uses the sign of a scarlet thread hung from her window. (v.17-21)

She lets them away down a rope, and gives them counsel not to head east to the Jordan, but to head west into the hills nearby, to outfox those who will be pursuing them on the basis of her misinformation.

Returning to camp, the spies bring news that Jericho is terrified of their coming.

Reading Joshua 1.10 – 18

Joshua now calls for the mobilization of the people to cross the river in three days. He also calls the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh to be true to their promise to go ahead of the rest of the tribes, even they already have obtained their inheritance east of the Jordan. The three tribes agree.

Reading Josh.3. 2 – 5.15

In a miraculous sign akin to the crossing of the Sea of Reeds in Exodus, the Lord parts the waters of the Jordan and the people cross over; the priests go ahead, carrying the ark. In case anyone might think that the Jordan just happened to be at a trickle and the people easily forded it, the writer points out in 3.15 that the time of their crossing was at harvest, when the Jordan is in full spate. The waters were actually dammed by the divine hand upriver, and stopped flowing down into the Dead Sea.

While they are crossing over, twelve stones are collected from the middle of the dry river bed to be erected as a cairn-memorial to the action of God, so that when their children ask 'What do these stones mean?'(4v6) the story will be told of the crossing not only of the Jordan, but also of the Sea of Reeds, as a sign of the Lord's power.

4v14 Because of this outcome, Joshua is established as the leader with the same respect of the people which they had for Moses.

5v1 The news of the miracle of Jordan reaches the territorial leaders west of the Jordan, and they decide to hole themselves up in their defences, rather than face such a formidable foe on the open field of battle.

5v2 It is a sign of the brokenness of the relationship of the previous generation with the Lord that the men have not been circumcised in the wilderness. While the fathers who died had had their foreskins removed, their sons had not.

Now, then, it is time for the covenant to be etched in the most intimate flesh of the Israelite males. Making knives of flint, the painful work is done at the place called *The Hill of Foreskins* (Heb. גִּבְעַת הַעֶרְלֹתָהּ *gibhe'at ha-'aralot*)

Because of this, the Lord proclaims 'I have rolled away (Heb. גָּלוּתִי *galoti*) the reproach that has been upon Israel because of her disobedience and so the place of their camp is renamed *Gilgal* (Heb. גִּלְגָּל)

Josh.5.10-11 It seems the people must have overwintered at Gilgal before the campaign on Canaan begins. The crossing of the Jordan was at harvest time, but the manna does not stop until after they have celebrated Passover, in March/April, on the 14th Nisan. Thus God keeps providing supernaturally for them until they have the promised land under their feet, and can eat of it.

vv.13-15 There is a very important encounter with Joshua by the Lord's messenger here. It is important, because God refuses here to take sides with Joshua. 'Are you on our side, or on their side?' Joshua asks the man with a drawn sword. 'Neither,' the warrior replies, 'I am here as commander of the Lord's forces.' There is a clear statement here that God is not putting Himself at Israel's disposal to further their ends. Rather, they will be His instruments for judgment on the nations around them, to clear the land of the shocking sin and depravity of the Canaanite idolaters. There is no place for Israel to reckon herself more self-righteous than the Canaanites.

v.15 Joshua is called to the same place of separation to which Moses was called before the burning bush, and dead animal skins on sacred ground are not permitted, so he must remove his sandals. This is ground that belongs to God alone.

Day 70 Joshua 6 to 8

The wholesale destruction of the Canaanite cities by the Israelites is appalling to us in the twenty-first century. We find it hard to reconcile such horror with the knowledge we have of God as a loving father. Yet we need to also hold on to the realization that there is something very salutary for Israel in what is happening. They know they are not strong enough as a nation to take on the natives of the land; they have already once refused to go in and possess the land, so afraid were they of the threat. Therefore, although it is their swords which will fall on the Canaanites, it is the Lord's power which will make it possible. Through this, the Israelites will learn how holy God is, and how disgusting sin is in His eyes, that He would even kill children to remove its dark effluent from His land.

In the unfolding of the story, though, it is worth standing back to consider the outcome of the approaching actions. If we say that God the adventurer is set on clearing His landscape for a people He Himself has rescued and appointed to represent His Name on earth, so that through them He can reconcile to Himself mankind and win them back from darkness, then ultimately the conquest of Canaan is a real failure. What we now see is

that, even with His supernatural intervention, Israel cannot fulfil the command to wipe the land clean, and the tyranny of evil will continue in the land through them and the natives they permit to remain.

Perhaps we can see a narrative learning process even in this, that the way of the sword, the way of violence will not achieve the aims of salvation. While the campaign makes space enough, the Israelites will still be centuries in establishing prominence there, and they will never be rid of the scourge of pagan idolatry.

Something even more radical, even more awesome than the swords of supernaturally-empowered men will be required to bring the Lord the entrance He seeks to rescue earth.

Reading 6.1-21

When we imagine the people of Israel marching around the walls of Jericho, so often we have in our minds Sunday school pictures or children's Bible images of a ragged, disorganized mob in festive mood, being laughed at by the people on the walls.

The account in Joshua tells us, first (v.3) that it was just armed men who marched, with the priests, around the walls. Add to this the fact that from Numbers 26 (see Day 44 above) we know that the number of men of military age was around 600,000, and we have a rather different impression of the action at Jericho. To a people already melting with fear, the sight of half a million armed men encircling the city, shouting and trumpeting for a week would have been terrifying.

v.20 At the final shout, the walls crack and fall, and every living thing, apart from Rahab and her family, is slaughtered as forfeit (Heb. חֵרֶם *cherem*) to the Lord (v.18)

v.22ff. Rahab and her family are rescued as promised, and transferred to a place of safety, nearby but not within the camp of Israel. There is a comment in v.25 that she is living at the time of the writing of this account in Israel. In fact, Rahab is included in the ancestry of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 1.5, also making her the great-great grandmother of King David through a later marriage to Salmon, an Israelite. This is an amazing sign of the grace of God, who is not averse to including those beyond Israel's ethnic lines who fear Him (cf. also Ruth the Moabitess, who is the great-grandmother of David.)

Jericho is totally burned to the ground, and a curse put on anyone who seeks to build it again. Although a later city of the same name appears nearby, the foundations of the destroyed city can be seen to this day, having never been rebuilt in that place as can be seen online at <http://howardbloom.net/jericho.htm>

8.1ff Despite the clear prohibition on taking any kind of booty or spoils from Jericho, a man called Achan helps himself, and the Lord is at odds with Israel as a result.

Although the town of Ai is considered easy prey, needing only three thousand to capture it, the Israelite army is driven back and routed as they try to attack, and are decimated on the hills and round the quarries.

7.6 Like his predecessor Moses, Joshua's position in such circumstances as a response is facedown on the ground in intercession, seeking the Lord's face, joined by the tribal

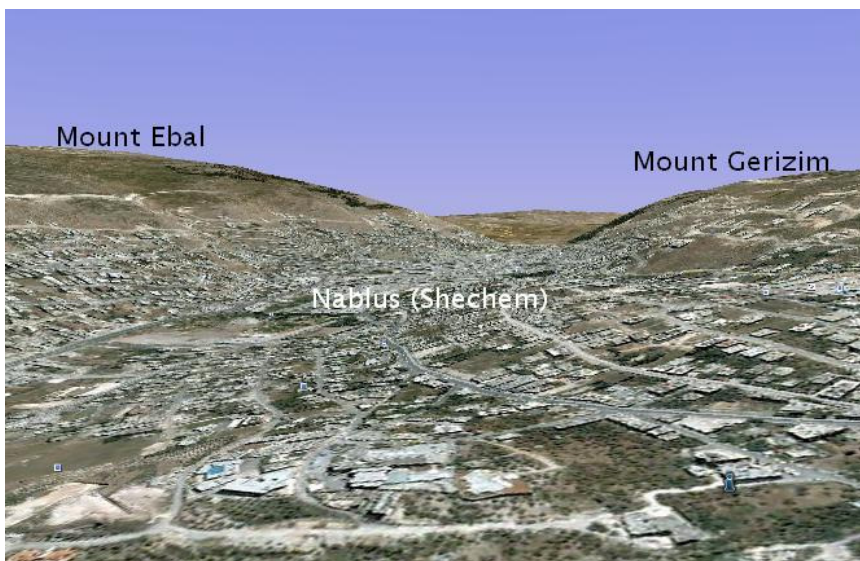
leaders. Joshua complains that God has been unfaithful, to which the Lord responds by telling him to stand up – how can he worship, when there is sin in the camp?

v.16ff The whole story comes out, that Achan has helped himself, overcome by his greed, to a Babylonian outfit, about 2.3 kilos of silver and 600 grams of gold, now hidden in his tent.

The clear warning had been given in 6.18 that anyone who touched forfeited things for himself would himself become forfeit (Heb. **חֵרֵם** *cherem*) to the Lord. Thus, Achan and all his family and property are destroyed by stoning and burning, thus turning away from them as a nation the consuming fire of God's holy character. In case we should think that this was an easy matter on the minds of Israel, we note that the place was named *Emeq-Akhor* (Heb. **עִמְק־עֵכֹר**) the Valley of Trouble thereafter.

8.1ff Now Ai is promised to Israel, as well this time as its livestock and goods as plunder. In a carefully orchestrated campaign, Israel feigns retreat before the men of Ai who leave the unguarded city empty of defence, chasing them out into the desert. Then well-placed, hidden Israeli forces enter the city and destroy it, burning it from within. The fleeing Israelites turn and then fight the Ai men, who, turning back to their smoking city, find the Israeli troops now coming towards their rear from its gates, and they are surrounded. Twelve thousand men and women die in the slaughter, a fearful action, and the king of Ai, hung on a tree after he is killed, is dumped lifeless at the gate of the fallen fortress, with a pile of rocks over him as a memorial.

8.30ff. After this battle, in fulfillment of the word of the Lord to Moses in Deut.27, (see day 66 above) Joshua leads the people in the erection of the altar on Mount Ebal, with the reading of God's law, half the people stationed on Mount Ebal, and half on Mount Gerizim, a nearby peak, to speak out the blessings and the curses of the covenant. (Ebal and Gerizim are either side of a pass leading up from Shechem on the modern-day West Bank territories.) A modern-day shot of Nablus (Shechem) looking east, shows the location of the two hills either side of the pass.

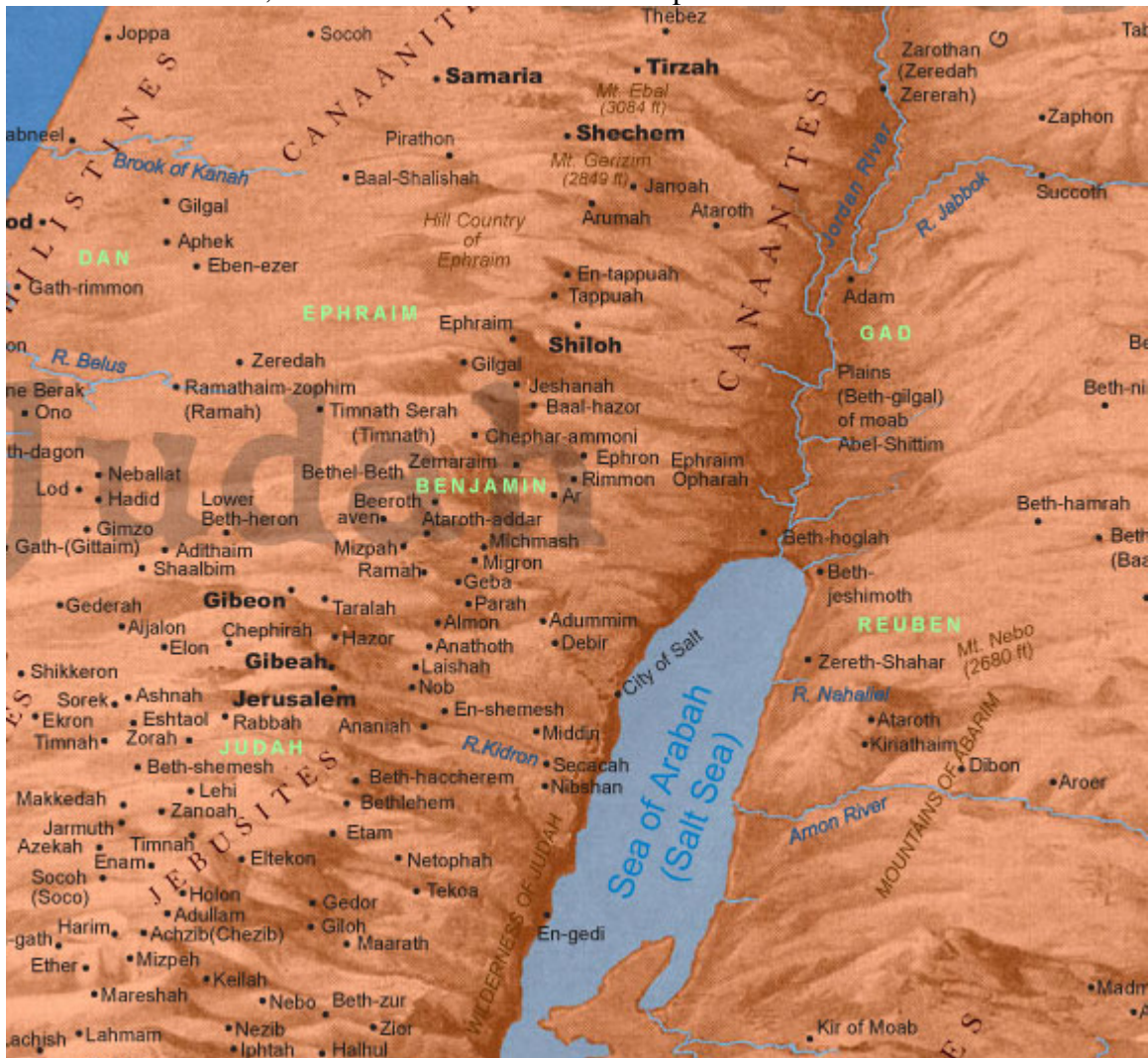


Day 71 Joshua chapter 9 to 12

Given the aggression with which Israel has entered Canaan, it is not surprising that the Canaanite tribes now take action against them, forming alliances to increase their strength against the incomers.

9. 1- 2

There is a general mobilization of all the tribes living between Jordan and the Mediterranean coast, as far north as Lebanon to repel Israel.



Area of the Southern Campaign

9. 3 – 27

The Hivite tribe living in Gibeon and its region, however, has a ruse. They have recognised the futility of standing against the Lord and His people, but also realise the power of covenant which the people of Israel know and honour, in common with them.

They resort to a ‘cunning plan’ (Heb. עֲרֻמָּה *ormah* from root word meaning clever, prudent but also wily and guileful.) They act as though they have come from a distant province by presenting themselves as travel-weary ambassadors, while the settlement of Gibeon was actually just eight miles north-west of Jerusalem, the Jebusite stronghold.

They flatter Israel, and sue for a peace-treaty with them, under the false pretences of living outside the territory of conquest.

The Israeli leaders then looked at their provisions, which are stale and mouldy, and come to the conclusion that the Gibeonites are telling the truth. Then in v.14 is a key statement which marks an important step in the eventual failure of Israel to take the land completely; *they sampled their provisions, but did not ask the word (Heb has literally, פִּי Pi, mouth) of the Lord.* On the basis of what he sees, Joshua accepts their deceit and makes an oath of peace with the Gibeonites.

Three days after, they learn the truth. The people are angry with Joshua, and the army sets out to Gibeon and its satellite settlements of Kephirah, Be'erot and Kiriath Ye'arim, to take them to task for their lies. However, because of the oath, the Gibeonites are spared, and are instead made bondslaves of Israel. They become woodsmen and water-carriers for the Israelites. However, Israel now has a pagan tribe operating in its territory, something God warned them against.

10. 1 – 14

The Amorite tribes hear that Gibeon now is in alliance with Israel, and decide to attack them. The Gibeonites call on their new allies to protect them – something most unplanned, but this gives the pretext for Joshua to confront a key army of the Canaanite clans.

God promises them victory and then aids the process by pelting the Amorites with huge hailstones, killing more of them that way than the Israelites were able to with their swords. (v.11)

One of the most amazing miracles of the Scriptures take place in v.12-14. Joshua calls on the Lord, maker of heaven and earth, to stop the sun in its place so that the battle can be finished, and the Lord does so – causing the rhyme to arise which is placed here in Joshua 10.12-13, which has been reproduced to give a feel of the rhythm of the original poetry of the language used, apparently taken by the writer of this account from *The Book of Yashar*.

שֶׁמֶשׁ בְּגִבְעוֹן דָּוָם וַיָּרָח בְּעֵמֶק אַיָּלֹן

(Above is read right to left)

Shemesh b'Giv'on dom ve-yare-ach be-emeq 'Ayalon

Sun in Gibeon stop, and moon in valley Aijalon

וַיַּעֲמֵד הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּחַצֵּי הַשָּׁמַיִם

(Above is read right to left)

Va-ya'amod ha-shemesh b'chatsi ha-shamayim

And stopped the sun amid the heavens

וְלֹא-אָץ לָבוֹא כִּיּוֹם תָּמִים

(Above is read right to left)

Ve- lo ats la-vo' ke-yom tamim

And not hurried to go for a day complete

For long enough, an urban legend has existed about this story that American scientists discovered a gap in time of twenty four hours, which needed to be accounted for; the puzzle, according to the myth, was solved by inserting the day of Joshua, plus a later miraculous occurrence from Isaiah when Hezekiah asked for the sundial to go back, giving the scientists the answer to their problem. Although this has been propagated, there is no evidence it ever happened.

However, something did happen on that day, powerful and impacting enough for it to pass into the memory of the people of Israel. The Amorites were overwhelmed.

v.15-27

The five Amorite kings have hidden in a cave; they are walled in, their armies destroyed, and then they are brought out and slain as well.



Area of the Northern Campaign

v.28 – 43

The Amorite territories are overwhelmed and the inhabitants destroyed in one campaign.

11. 1 – 15

Having dealt with the south of the land, the Israelites now face the northern tribes of the Galilee, the hill country overlooking its sea and the lands up to Mount Hermon on the border. They meet at a river valley running down into the north-west corner of the Sea of Galilee called Merom Waters. The Canaanites pool their resources, and present a formidable challenge.

With Joshua attacking suddenly, the Canaanites are routed, and chased all the way to the north and east. The horses are hobbled and the chariots destroyed, and no quarter is given.

Joshua then turns the army back south towards Hazor, between the Sea of Galilee and the northern Lake Huleh, on the western slopes of the Jordan Valley as it goes up into the Galilee Hills. He captures Hazor, and the other royal cities, destroying all human life as commanded by the Lord.

11.16 – 23

Thus the first phase of the conquest is complete, with much of the land in Israeli hands. Only the Hivites of Gibeon have survived, by their subterfuge, and they are bonded now. The point is made that the terrible destruction is the work of the Lord (11.20) to rid the land of the stench of their practices.

v.21 Joshua goes and destroys the ‘giants’, (most likely, a taller race of men, perhaps like the Masai of Africa or the Norsemen, seen by other, smaller races as unnaturally tall.) These are the ones who terrified the early spies so much – known as the Anakim, descendants of the legendary Anak (see Numbers 13.28). Joshua wipes them out of the hill country, but they survive on in the Philistine territories on the south-west coastal strip in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod – to later produce the infamous Goliath and his ilk.

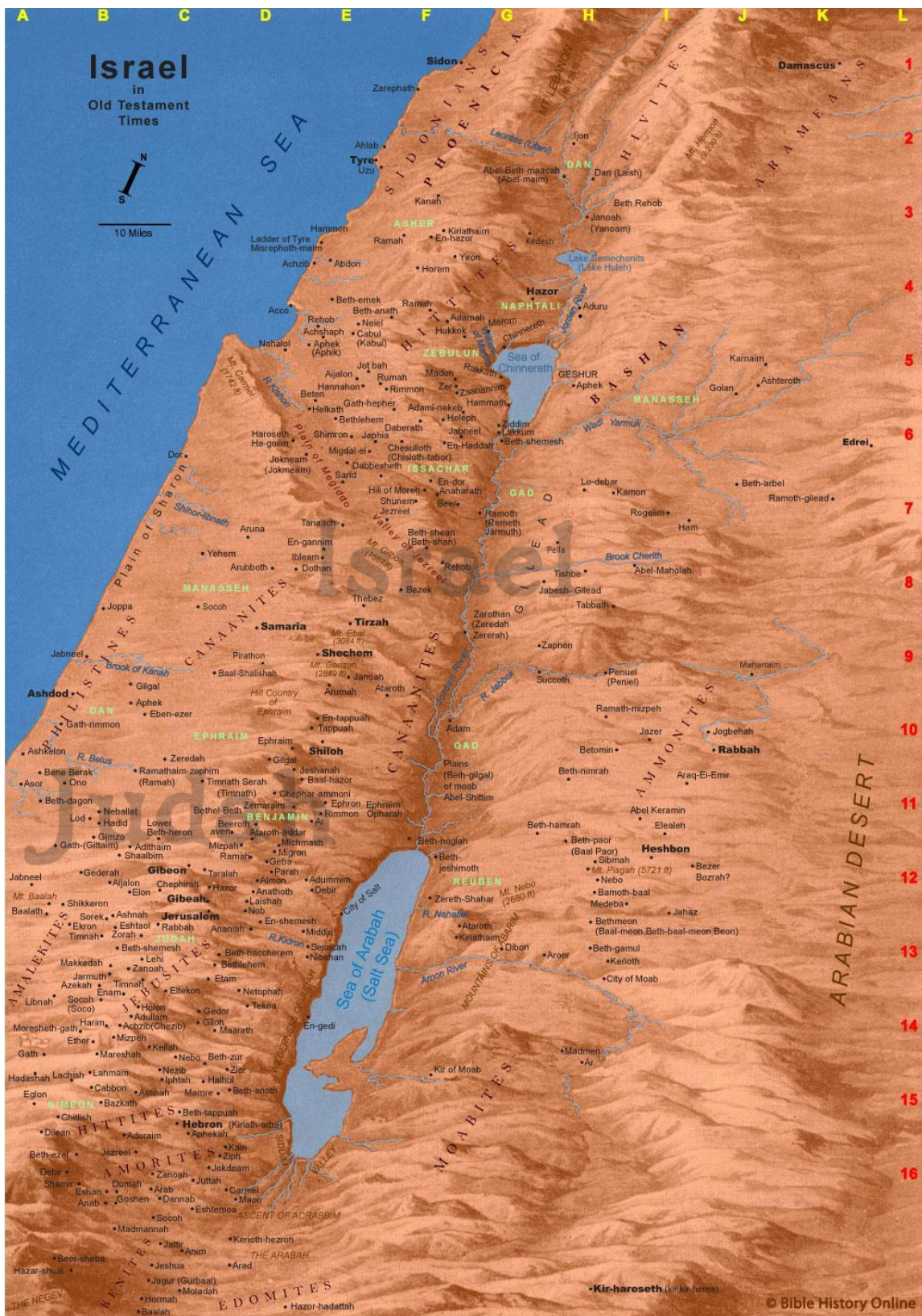
Now, the land has a period of rest from war.

12.1 – 24.

This chapter is a resume of the conquests of Israel thus far. First, the areas taken when Moses was leader, east of the Jordan, in the lands of Sihon and Og, now in the hands of the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh. (see maps above.)

Then a long catalogue of chieftains whose land was taken, to be distributed to the rest of Israel, a total of thirty-one rulers. With conquest over for the time being, but not completed, the land is now to be divided.

Day 72 Joshua chapters 13 to 17



The Land of Israel

With the land now widely subdued under Joshua's leadership, it is time to allocate territory to the remaining nine and a half tribes. (Reuben, Gad and some of Manasseh's lands are east of the Jordan – though Manasseh will receive an additional area on the west bank as well.)

13.1 – 7. Although much of the land has been taken, the Lord reminds Joshua that there are still significant areas not subdued, including the Philistines in the south, (who would become a thorn in the flesh of Israel for many years yet to come.) and the Sidonians in Lebanon in the north. However, the time has come to settle the people of Israel in the land.

13.8-12, 14 After being reminded of the fact that the Reubenites, Gadites and , it appears, half of the Manasseh tribe (v.8) have received their lands east of the Jordan, the account goes on to outline the borders and towns of those territories.

13.15-23 The Reubenites, in essence have the land to the east and north-east of the Dead Sea, with their southern boundary as the Arnon River, which flows from the east into the Dead Sea from the high hills where Mount Nebo and Mount Pisgah are found. They also have the cities, further east, on the high plateau. Reuben, then, forms the most south-easterly of Israel's tribes.

13.24 – 28 The Gadites are their northern neighbours; their territory extends along the Jordan's eastern bank, with the former lands of Sihon to the east, up into the hills, extending as far north as the Sea of Galilee.

13.29-31 The Manassites receive the lands of Og King of Bashan, stretching from the eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee, up onto the Golan Heights. It also includes some of the northern parts of Gilead, on the south-eastern side of Galilee. It appears that this allocation of land for Manasseh was in honour of his being the eldest son of Joseph; through Makir, a son of Manasseh, this part of the tribe of Manasseh became known as Gileadites, because of their area. But the rest of Manasseh's sub-tribes would inherit elsewhere.

13.32-33. There is no territorial allocation for the Levites, for they are the Lord's own tribe.

14.1ff The land on the west of the Jordan is allocated by the priest, Eleazar, working with Joshua and the tribal heads. This land commission operates by lot, possibly using the Urim and Thummim of the priest. The Levites are given cities scattered throughout the tribal lands.

14.6-15a (mirrored in Judges 1.20a) One exception to the lottery is Caleb, who was one of the two spies back, a generation who brought a good report to Moses of the land they were entering. He is now 85 years old, and still going strong, ready for another battle. He was promised by Moses that his inheritance would be his choice, where he 'placed his foot' and so he asks for the city of Kiriath Arba, an Anakite fortress, which he says he will capture and subdue. He is blessed by Joshua, and given the land there. That city is known today as Hebron, high above the south-western shores of the Dead

Sea, in the Judean hills, a key place of pilgrimage for people of faith, as it also the burial place of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

15.1-12 The tribe of Judah is allocated a parcel of land which forms the south-western limits of Israel. They are placed between the Dead Sea and Mediterranean, with southern boundaries roughly in a line from the south end of the Dead Sea west to the Med, and then their northern boundary runs from the north end of the Dead Sea, south-west past Jerusalem, and out to the Mediterranean. On their patch live the Philistines along what is today roughly the Gaza Strip.

15.20-62 The settlements that belong to Judah are catalogued here, and include Beer-Sheba, the well of Abraham's day,(v28) and En-Gedi, by the Dead Sea. (v.62)

Joshua 16.1-4. Joseph is mentioned here, because as well as the lot for his son Ephraim's clan, there is also a part still to be given to his elder son, Manasseh, above that already granted east of the Jordan.

16.5-9 Ephraim received the land west of Jericho, going up into the hill country of central Canaan, (which become known as the Ephraim Hills) with a strip of their land extending to the Med. Their territory includes Shiloh, where the tabernacle was set up, and Joppa on the coast. They also have some towns allocated among the lands of Manasseh.

Joshua 17.1 – 10 The tribe of Manasseh is granted land north of Ephraim's, to the west of Samaria, on to the sea. This is the lot for the rest of the clans, apart from Makir's, who got the east bank lands. (There is short addendum inserted here at this point about Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah, the daughters of Zelophehad the Manassite already mentioned in Number 26.33. There, because they had no brothers to inherit land and care for them, they are promised land to be their father's portion, and so they are given territory on the east side of the Jordan in this allocation, as agreed.)

17.14-18 Not surprisingly for Israel, a dispute arises over the allocation of land. The two tribes of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, now say they do not have enough land for their numbers. Thus, on their appeal, they are allowed to take the forested hills which are north of Shechem and Tirzah, up to the fertile Jezreel valley, on the northern edge of their hills. They also complain that that the Canaanites in the valley are too well equipped, but Joshua encourages them that they are big enough for this task, and they can do it.

Day 73 Joshua chapters 18 to 20

The rest of the tribes, seven in all, have yet to receive their inheritance. Thus the process is speeded up, and Joshua urges an early completion to the mission.

18.1 The Tent of meeting is set up at Shiloh, in the region of Ephraim's hill country. This will be its resting place for the foreseeable future.

- 18.3 Joshua wants an early resolution to the allocation of the rest of the territory to the remaining seven tribes.
- 18.4ff Benjamin's territory runs up north-west of the shore of the Dead Sea, bordering Ephraim on the north, and Judah in the south. Among their cities are Jericho and Gibeon.
- 19.1ff Simeon's portion lies to the south, near the desert; they have Be'er Sheva'.
- 19.10ff Zebulun's allocation falls in the northern region, from the western shores of the Sea of Galilee, up into the Galilee hills.
- 19.17ff Issachar's allocation is also in the north, from the south-western end of the Sea of Galilee, south to the valley of Jezreel, bordered by the Jordan River to the east.
19. 24ff Asher is allocated land in the far north-west of the land, toward the coast at Tyre
- 19.32ff And Naphtali is directly to the north of the northern end of the Sea of Galilee, running up towards Lake Huleh.
- 19.40ff The seventh parcel of land is for Dan, the furthest north of the tribes, bordering on Lebanon and running into the foothills of Mount Hermon
- 19.49 Lastly, land is given to Joshua himself, the city of Timnathserah in the Ephraim hills, bringing to an end the division of the land.
- 20.1ff The cities of refuge are designated from the various tribes, the cities to which manslaughterers are to go to evade their pursuers. The six cities selected are Kedesh in Galilee, Shechem in Ephraim, Hebron in Judah, Bezer in Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead and Golan in Manasseh's Bashan territory, east of the Jordan.

Day 74 Joshua 21 to 24

- 21.1ff The Levites now come and stake their claim to the cities which they were promised out of the inheritance of Israel, divided between the three sub-clans of Kohathites, Merarites and Gershonites. They do not have set territories, but are ceded towns and their pastures for their places to live and for their upkeep.

The chapter catalogues the places within the tribes which are given them. In particular, in 21.11, we find that Caleb's chosen city of Hebron is actually granted to the Levites, although he retains the fields and satellite villages as his possession.

Also included in these allocated cities are a number which have been designated as cities of refuge to which fugitives can flee.

- 21.43ff The chapter closes with the statement that the land has been obtained, which God promised to them. However, it has to be said that the native Canaanites have not been removed, but are left to live alongside the Israelites. However, no enemies are still withstanding them, and they are in possession of the land.

- 22.1-6 Now that the nine tribes have obtained their inheritance, the men of the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh are given permission to return to their lands east of the Jordan, the territories won from Sihon and Og earlier in the story. The only stipulation, because they are living away from the rest of the tribes, is that they remain true to the Lord God.
- 22.7 The anomaly is mentioned here of the split territories belonging to the tribe of Manasseh. Half of their allocation is back on the east of Jordan, in Bashan, but half is on the west side, in the western part of the country, down onto the plain of Sharon, and the port of Joppa.
- 22.7b – 9 So laden with booty and possessions from their wars, the tribes return.
- 22.10ff An unfortunate interlude occurs when, returning to the Jordan, the two and a half tribes stop to build an altar. This has been specifically forbidden by the Law of Moses. News returns to the western tribes, and Eleazar the high priest and the tribal leaders are up in arms, literally, and pursue Reuben, Gad and Manasseh to take them to task.
- 22.17ff The western tribes accuse the easterners of bringing the same judgment on them as at Peor, when the Israelites were led into idol-worship. (see Numbers 25).
- 22.22ff The eastern tribes, however, protest their innocence of any wrongdoing; the altar is not for sacrifice, but as a memorial for future generations who might disclaim any connection to the trans-Jordan tribes of Israel. The memorial altar is to be a reminder to the west-of-Jordan tribes that the river is not their border, because their relatives live the other side of it also.
- 22.30ff Now, everyone calms down, and realises this is a good idea and recognise that the Lord is among them in their doing this. They return home, and report back to the other Israelites that no rebellion is intended.
- 22.34 As a result, the altar is named *Ed* (Heb עֵד) meaning ‘witness’.
- 23.1ff Joshua is now aged and makes his farewell address to Israel, praising God for His kept promises to Israel to drive out the nations before them, urging Israel to stay faithful to the Lord and His instructions.
- 23.13 But if they disobey, the nations around them will become snares to them, and they will lose that favoured place.
- 23.14ff Joshua is going to die, but his testimony is that God has never failed them in keeping His promises.
- 23.16 Joshua ends his address with a solemn prophecy that if they transgress the covenant, it will end in disaster for the nation.

- 24.1 Joshua gathers the leaders and judges of Israel together at Shechem, the settlement in the shadow of the mountains of blessings and cursings, Gerizim and Ebal, to share with them a prophetic word, prefaced with the words *Thus says the Lord* (Heb. כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה *Koh amar Adonai (YHWH)*)
- 24.2ff The Lord reminds them of their story, starting with Terah, Abraham's father, who lived beyond the Euphrates river, and worshipped idols. The whole unfolding story thus far is told, through Abraham, Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Aaron and Moses, the blessing of Balaam (24.9,10) up to the present time.
- 24.13 The Lord reminds them that they do not have this land by their own effort, but by His action and favour.
- 24.14 Therefore they are to serve the Lord alone, with no reference back to idols of Mesopotamia or Egypt.
- 24.15 Joshua makes it clear to whom he has given his allegiance – ‘*as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*’
- 24.16ff The people respond that they will certainly serve the Lord, but
- 24.19 Joshua doubts their ability to stick to their word.
- 24.21 The people protest that they will serve the Lord, but in v23, Joshua accuses them of still having idols hidden away which they have not disowned.
- 24.25ff The culmination of the appeal by Joshua is a written covenant, memorialised in a great stone set up beside the Tent of meeting. After this, Joshua dies at 110 years, and is buried in Timnathserah in Ephraim.
- 24.31ff Israel has managed to stay true to the Lord all the days of Joshua and the other leaders who came out with him.
- 24.32,33 In a last act of establishment of the nation, the bones of the patriarch Joseph, carried out of Egypt at the Exodus, are finally laid to rest in Shechem, in a piece of land bought by Joseph centuries before. And finally, Eleazar the High Priest, son of Aaron, also dies.

Day 75 Judges 1.1 – 2.5

The book of Judges, called in Hebrew *Shoph'etim* (Heb שֹׁפְטִים), second book of the division of the Bible the Jews refer to as the Prophets (Heb. נְבִיאִים *Nevi'im*) narrates the onset of major problems for Israel after the conquest, particularly resulting from their failure to remove the Canaanites from the land. As a result, the peoples around them become snares to them, and also attack them – the Midianites and the Philistines in particular. However, because of His covenant, God establishes the *Right-wisers*, those who will restore the Lord's equilibrium to the land, whom we call ‘Judges’, although that gives the impression of old men in wigs to us. Rather, these are national

heroes, fighters for freedom, who are empowered by the Holy Spirit to deliver the nation.

Among these *Right-wisemen* are Gideon, Jephthah and a woman, Deborah. However, the tragedy of the book of Judges unfolds inexorably, and despite the periods of national repentance and restoration of reliance on the Lord, the tribal infighting increases, until the book closes with terrible consequences. A constant theme throughout Judges is that there is no central cohesion in Israel, no King, and so *everyone did what was right in their own eyes*. It is a terrible episode in the story of God's determination to establish His people as the vehicle of His salvation purpose for the whole planet.

At the opening of the book, despite the strong military offensives of the Israelites, pockets of native Canaanites are still living in the land.

1.1-10, 16-19. Following Joshua's death (which will be reported in Judges 2.8-9) the tribes of Judah and Simeon wipe out the Canaanites and the Perizzites and their leaders from their neighbouring allocated territories west of the Dead Sea. They take Jerusalem, although we know from later writings that they did not dislodge the Jebusites from their stronghold, a task left later to David and his armies. (2 Sam 5.6ff)

v.16 In an interesting note, the descendants of Moses' father-in-law Jethro, called the Kenites, seem to have been moving alongside or behind the Israelites. They had been in Jericho (called here City of the Palms) and now, with the conquest of Judah, they move up and lead a nomadic lifestyle in the Judean desert, between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, where the land falls away to below sea level. They are manifestly accepted among the Jews as near relatives.

v.17ff Although the two tribes are very successful, taking even Ashkelon and Gath in the Gaza territory of the Philistines, they are not able to dislodge the plains people, because of their chariots.

1.11-15 Judah's great champion is the hero, Caleb, who has his eyes set on the city of Hebron, (earlier called Kiriath-Arba, city of Arba, the Anakite.) He has driven out the unusually tall Anakim from the area, but the city of Kiriath-Sepher, later known as Debir is still in the hands of the Anakim.

Caleb now sets a quest with a prize; to the man who captures Debir he will give the hand of his daughter, Acsah in marriage. The city is then overrun by the troops of Othniel, Caleb's nephew, who claims his prize, his cousin's hand to wed.

Acsah realises that the land that they have been given in the Negev is arid and that they will need water. She seems to have been very insistent to her new husband to ask her father, his uncle to cede to them more water-bearing land. Whether her husband is dithering in the negotiation, or whether he is unwilling to do this, is not known. But Acsah, seeing her father, gets down from her donkey, and personally makes her request to her father for not just land but wells to go with it. Perhaps she knows a father cannot resist the request of a daughter, and so she receives upper and lower springs in their territory.

1.22-26 With the help of a mole inside the city, who is later spared with his family, Ephraim take the city of Bethel (formerly called Luz) up in the hill country. The man spared then moves away and builds another Luz in Hittite lands.

Conquest incomplete

- 1.7 to 2.5 We have already learned from some key verses in Joshua that significant areas of Israel are still in Canaanite hands
- The Geshurites and Maacites are still in place (Josh 13.13)
 - The Jebusites are still in Jerusalem, in the fortress of Zion (Josh 15.63)

Now in Judges 1, the rest of the situation is evaluated;

- As mentioned, Benjamin is unable to overcome the Jebusites (v.21)
- Significant pockets of Canaanites are holding out in Manasseh, Issachar and Asher's territory in the north west. (v.27,28)
- The Canaanites are still in Gezer (v.29, see also Josh.16.10)
- Zebulun, Naphtali and the Danites still have Canaanites among them, although many are taken into forced labour. (v.30-36)

A Terrible Consequence

Judges 2.1-5 The angel of the Lord comes and reveals to them the judgment of their time so far in the Promised Land. They have been delivered and brought to this land as a holy people, and should be living with no mixture, therefore. However, they have reneged on the covenant, allowing the Canaanites, whom God has judged, to remain.

Because of this, the peoples who remain will become, as Moses and Joshua had predicted, a distraction and a temptation to idolatry.

The people lift up their voice and weep, so much so that the place where they meet is remembered for the bitterness of soul that came on the people of Israel from this awful evaluation of their effort. The place is therefore called *Bokhim* (Heb בֹּכִים), the weepers. In response, they share a meal with God in sacrifice.

It seems so harsh to us to see this judgment; but if we keep in sight the unfolding narrative, this process is one which God now has to discount as a way of bringing in the kingdom to earth. For all the destruction, the removal of much of the Canaanite ways and culture, they still live in the land. Moreover, Israel has shown again and again her fickle and selfish tendency to live in less than holiness before the Lord.

In that sense, the conquest of the land is a failure. But God still has His stated aim to reach the whole world through this wayward people. He will devise other means, just as desperate, to redeem creation.