

**GOD SAVES A PEOPLE
GOD AS DELIVERER IN OT
June 5, 2019**

*Bible is the book of truth and not a book of facts
Bible shares the story of our relationship with God*

Background

Joshua 1-12 and 23 are part of the Deuteronomistic History.
It is a combination of overlapping sources (with multiple editions) that span almost 400 years.
It tells the story of Joshua (the one who kept the Law and was able to enter the Promised Land).
According to the writer, he was the one who led the Israelites into battle to conquer Canaan.
Joshua had the assurance that God would be with him just as God had been with Moses.
Presence of God was crucial for the survival of the people.

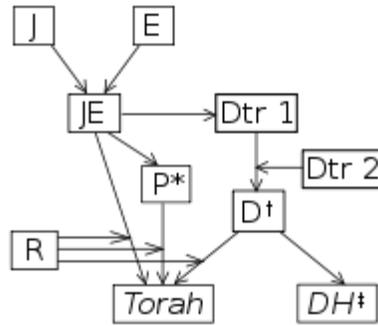
In the wilderness lack of drinking water indicated their fear that God might abandon them.
After the golden calf incident, Moses had to beg God to remain present with his people.
Israelites knew the presence of God was vital for their success in upcoming military conflicts.

We start to see the establishment of a nation where politics and religion are inseparable.
Joshua 1-12 tells the dramatic story of the Israelite conquest of Canaan.
Entire land falls into the hands of Joshua in three swift, decisive military campaigns.
First twelve chapters are known as the *Book of Conquests*.
Second half of Joshua is known as the *Book of Apportionments* (source is the Priestly writer).

Book of Joshua reads like a historical account.
There is the conquest of land and then the division of territories.
But the connection with history is questionable.
Archaeological investigations have established no sweeping conquest of Canaan at this time.
Many of the towns listed were either uninhabited or did not come under their rule until later.
Ex: Jericho was an important fortified city two or three centuries before Joshua (Bronze Era).
Lachish only fell under Israelite domination during the period of the monarchy (1050 BC).
Practice of total destruction of towns was not unique during the time of the Israelites.
Some evidence that it was occasionally carried out in warfare by other people in the region.
However, scholars believe the massacre of entire populations of towns never happened.

Our Problem: Now we need to determine why these accounts were included in Scripture.
Some things we need to consider as we attempt to resolve our problem:
Deuteronomist articulated an agenda of uncompromising monotheism.
Included was the understanding that the centrality of the Israelites needed to be in Jerusalem.
Israelites needed to be totally separate from the Canaanite population.

Underlying message:
Worship of YHWH in local sanctuaries made the Israelites susceptible to paganism.
Writer wanted to get the Israelites away from the Canaanites so he told the story of a *ban*.
Scholars use the word *ban* to describe the practice of total destruction.



- J (Jahwist Source) (7th Century BC)
 E (Elohist Source) (Late 9th Century BC)
 Dtr 1 (Deuteronomist Historian) (7th Century BC)
 Dtr 2 (Deuteronomist Historian) (6th Century BC)
 P (Priestly Source) (6th – 5th Century BC) (most of Leviticus)
 D+ (Deuteronomist Source) (most of Deuteronomy)
 R (Redactor)
 DH (Deuteronomistic History) (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings)

Book of Joshua is a report of the subsequent conquest and is presented as a historical account. By 7th century BC there was evidence that there was no Israelite-Canaanite population. Where did all the people go? Answer in Joshua is that they were wiped out in the conquest. Greater evidence points to the Canaanites assimilating with the Israelites. Good reason to believe the Canaanites intermarried with the Israelites. As a result, these stories belong (not to historical memory) but to cultural memory. In Numbers 23:9 we learn that Israel was to be a people that needed to dwell apart. However, life of Israelites seemed to be intricately entangled with Canaanites and other cultures.

In addition, Egypt was to the south and Mesopotamia was to the east. Israel sat at the crossroads between these two powerful empires. Northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed in 721 BC by the Assyrians. Conquest of the southern kingdom of Judah was accomplished by Babylonia in 586 BC. It was the same time period in which the early portions of Deuteronomy were formulated. Israelites would have thought of themselves as chosen by God for a grand destiny. But they were suffering disastrous defeats and placed in exile. They were overwhelmed by these foreign powers. Story of the conquest served as a countermove in their cultural memory.

Initially, Israel needed to enter the land of Canaan in a stirring triumphal drive. Presence of God was a power before which no one could stand. Theological thought was that as long as Israel remained faithful to God they were invincible. Triumph is repeatedly attributed to the power of God and not to the abilities of Israel. Writer wanted to demonstrate that God caused Israel to prevail when loyal to the covenant. Israelites were defeated when Israel betrayed its commitment to God.



JOSHUA

In the second half of Joshua there is an elaborate outline of tribal borders. It was meant to convey a sense of systematic and orderly division of land. Determination of territories was made by casting lots. It was a clear indication that God dictated the boundaries. Aim was to provide theological authenticity to the existing tribal territories. Mapping of boundaries was also an indication that the conquest of land was not comprehensive. Countering parts of the first twelve chapters, Israelites could not conquer all the Canaanites. Writer smoothed that over by noting those people became forced laborers.

Book of Joshua offers a double awareness of the history of Israel. People had been promised the land of Canaan by God. God also promised the Israelites would be an autonomous state. Fulfillment of that promise is described for us in the first twelve chapters.

However, the conquest was not total and its permanency was threatened by foreign powers. *Book of Joshua* translates this contradiction into theological terms: Israel (in the middle of military triumphs) is seen as staunchly loyal to God (except for Achan). Israel took possession of the land and drew boundaries. Based on new disloyalties that evolved, the Israelites then experienced disastrous consequences. Israel's time in the land was unstable.

Joshua 3

In Joshua 3 the Hebrew verb *avar* (to cross over) is repeated eight times in this chapter. It was significant for the Israelites to cross over from the wilderness into the Promised Land. Israelites had to cross the Jordan River which was at flood stage. Ark of the Covenant went before Israel into the waters. It contained the stone tablets of the Law.

Parallels of this story with the crossing of the Red Sea are very apparent. Some see it as a repetition of the story in Exodus because both use a shared, rare Hebrew word. History for Biblical writers moves forward but also repeats itself in significant patterns. Hebrew word *ned* נד means *mound* or *heap* and is found in Exodus 15:8 and Joshua 3:13 and 16. However in the Exodus story an angel and a pillar of cloud and fire are central elements. In the story in Joshua the focus is on the Ark of the Covenant. In both stories these elements represent the presence of the Lord.

Joshua 4

In our assigned lesson (finally) the people had crossed the dry river bed with the Ark in the lead. Once across the river the Israelites camped at Gilgal.

Gilgal means *circle* but has a different but similar meaning in 5:9 (wheel).

Assumption is made that the stones were set up in a circle.

Gilgal is an important site in the stories of Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha.

It was the Israelites of Joshua's generation who experienced the miracle at the Jordan.

All Israel (of every generation) participates in the defining moment of the parting of the Red Sea. It is replicated at the Jordan.

Once more we see parallels with the Exodus story.

Vs. 6 and 21 are found in Exodus 12:26-27 and Exodus 13:14-15.

It is considered a liturgical formula.

Commemorative stones become an educational occasion for recounting the miracle.

Other nations recognize the power of God through this miracle (5:1).

Israel reveres God both because of this miracle and the confirmation of the surrounding people.

Three Campaigns (Joshua 5-12)

First campaign gave the Israelites a firm foothold on the western side of the Jordan River.

From Gilgal they laid siege to Jericho which fell at the sound of trumpets.

Encouraged by their victories a military force went to the West Bank and captured Ai.

Israelites found no resistance so they moved north as far as Shechem.

It was there that Joshua built an altar on a mountain overlooking the city.

In a second campaign the Israelites penetrated into the southern hill country.

Near the fortress of Jerusalem they were tricked into making a treaty with four federated cities.

Because of their treaty with Israel, the Gibeonites were threatened by Canaanite kings.

Israelites moved swiftly to their defense.

From this victory the Israelites moved on to further conquests in the south.

In the third campaign the Israelite forces won victories in the northern hill country (Galilee).

Joshua was victorious over a coalition of northern kings.

He won a decisive victory at the fortified city of Hazor which was destroyed and burned.

Thoroughness of the conquest is stated in the summary found in Joshua 11:16-23.

6:17 – *And the town and all that is in within it shall be under the ban to the Lord.*

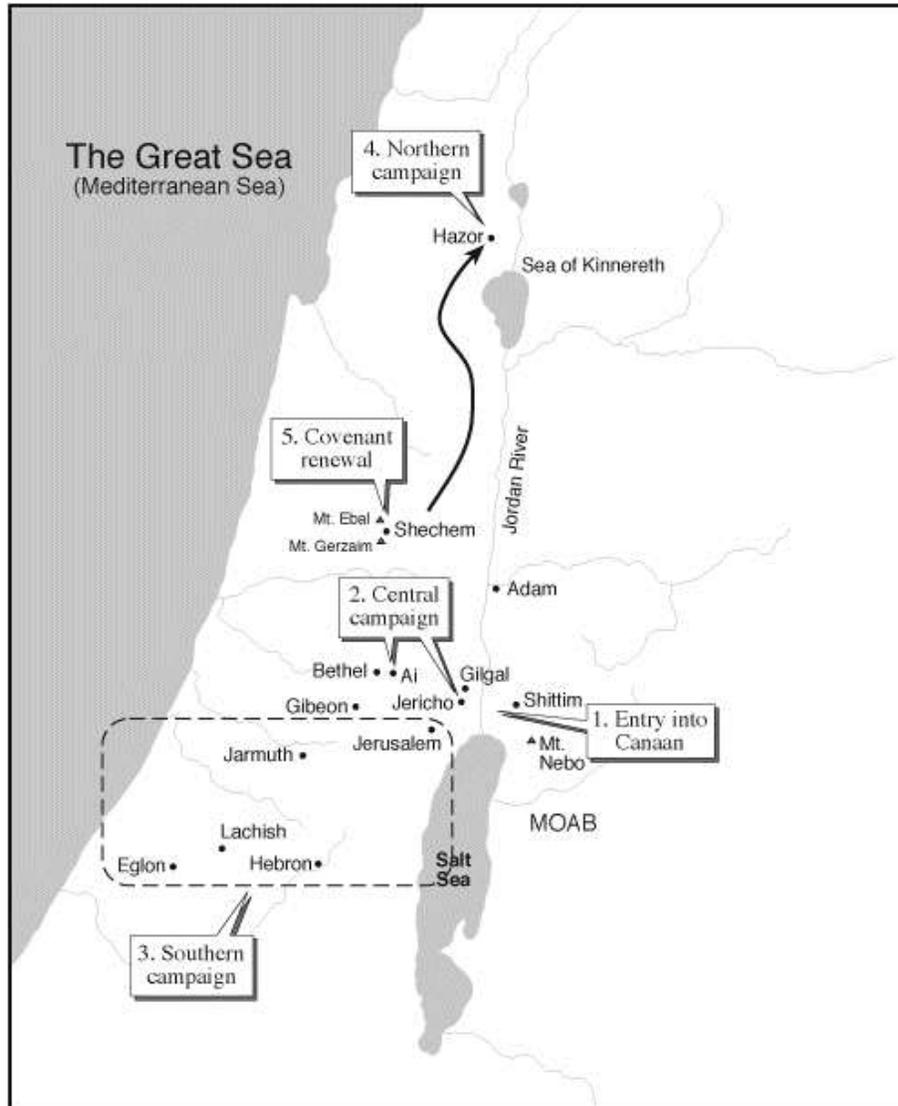
Enactment of the ban is in keeping with the injunction in Deuteronomy 7:2.

Israelites were to exterminate the native population of Canaan.

Called by some as the *utopian* plan because it is highly unlikely it was ever acted upon.

For the Deuteronomist, it was a brutal way of expressing absolute separation from the pagans.

Story of Jericho is framed to vividly illustrate how conquest was due to the intervention of God.



Scholars have come to different conclusions about the Israelite conquests.

- 1) Gradual infiltration implies the settlement took place over several generations and was not completed until the time of David. Initially there was no military assault on the land but only a gradual, nomadic infiltration. As a rule, the Israelites would have lived on good terms with the Canaanites and even intermarried with them. In this view, the story of Joshua is a product of the religious imagination of the writer who sought to stress the mighty power of God.
- 2) Military invasion implies that the Israelites made a forced entry into Canaan. Joshua 1-12 is still considered by some as a glorified account of a historic reality. In spite of some exaggeration they hold there is good evidence for these accounts are true. In the 13th century BC the Israelites were victorious in wresting a good part of the central hill country from the Canaanites.

- 3) Peasant revolution implies the conquest was not so much an invasion from the outside as it was an uprising inside the land of Canaan, inspired by the faith of the people in God, the liberating God of the Exodus. Local people would have sympathized with the newcomers under the leadership of Joshua and in their own way assisted them in this sociopolitical upheaval. It helps us understand why there was no resistance in some areas. It may explain why there is no archaeological evidence for the destruction of some cities.

Three models of the conquest show that the occupation of Canaan was complex. Scholars agree that the Israelites were successful in living in the hill country. No claims that the Israelites attacked the major Canaanite strongholds and Egyptian outposts. Against the weapons of the others, Israel would not have been very effective. Major assaults had to be followed up by continued struggle for possession of land after Joshua.

Source

The Hebrew Bible (A Translation with Commentary) by Robert Alter

Assignment for June 5

We continue with the Old Testament Prophets

Judges 1-8