

## Book of Joshua

### Introduction

The Book of Joshua (Sefer Yehoshua - ספר יהושע) is the sixth book in the Tanakh. This book is the first in the section of the Tanakh called the Nevi'im (Prophets). Joshua is the first of the Nevi'im Rishonim (Former Prophets) which covers the history of Israel from the possession and settlement of the Land of Israel through the Babylonian Captivity.

Joshua contains a history of the Israelites from the death of Moses to that of Joshua and consists of three parts.

### Conquest of the Land (Chapters 1-12)

After the death of Moses, Joshua received the command from God to cross the Jordan and he issued instructions to the people for the crossing of the Jordan. Joshua also reminded the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh of their pledge given to Moses to help their brethren in exchange for land on the east side of the Jordan.

Joshua sent out two spies from Shittim to explore the city of Jericho. The king of Jericho discovered their task and attempted to capture them. A resident of the city, Rahab, saved them from the king in exchange for the spies swearing to save her and her family. The spies then returned to Joshua and reported their findings about Jericho.

Camp was broken and the Children of Israel marched to the Jordan. Before crossing the Jordan, Joshua addressed the people assuring them that God was in their midst and God would drive out the Canaanites. He also told them that when the Ark crosses the Jordan, a miracle would occur. As soon as the priests carrying the Ark stepped into the Jordan, the river stopped flowing.

Joshua was commanded by God to take twelve stones from the Jordan where the priests stood and carry them across to the other side of the Jordan. The people traveled to Gilgal where they camped and the twelve stones were used to make an altar in Gilgal as a commemoration of the crossing over the Jordan.

Joshua was told by God to make flint knives and circumcise the males of the Children of Israel. The manna ceased and the people ate of the produce of the land. As Joshua was standing in front of Jericho he received a visit from "the captain of the host of the Lord" in the guise of a man.

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Joshua began the siege of Jericho and the warriors were commanded to circle the city once a day for six days. The priests were to bear seven shofarim before the ark and on the seventh day, the warriors were commanded to circle the city seven times while the priests blew their shofarim. Joshua then had the multitude raise a great shout and the walls of Jericho crumbled. Joshua commanded that all silver, gold, copper, and iron vessels were to be consecrated unto God and placed in the treasury. Everyone in the city was killed except Rahab and her household who were saved because of her assistance to the spies. A curse was placed upon anyone who should rebuild the destroyed city.

It was revealed that Achan did not heed Joshua's command and he took of the consecrated vessels. As a result, when Joshua sent his men to capture the city of Ai, his men were defeated. God declared that Israel had sinned and taken from the consecrated things therefore, their enemies would defeat them. Joshua was commanded to do a search house by house for the perpetrator. When Joshua came to Achan, Joshua asked for Achan to confess. After his confession, Achan was then taken to the Valley of Achor and where he was judged and stoned to death.

Joshua was commanded by God to take his army to the city of Ai for God said He would deliver the city to Israel. Upon Joshua's signal, those waiting in ambush entered the city and set it on fire. Upon seeing the city on fire Joshua and his men turned and killed the inhabitants of the city. Joshua erected an altar on Mount Ebal where the people offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Joshua wrote a copy of the law of Moses on stone tablets. Half of the people were placed on Mount Gerizim and half on Mount Ebal and Joshua read the law of Moses to the entire congregation and the strangers who were among them.

The Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and the Jebusites heard of the destruction of the cities and formed an alliance to battle against Joshua and his army. The Gibeonites sent ambassadors to Joshua at Gilgal to make a covenant that Joshua would not attack the Gibeonites.

The kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon (known as the five kings) heard what Joshua did to the cities of Jericho and Ai. They responded to the Gibeonites covenant with Joshua by attacking the Gibeonite cities. Joshua responded – with God's blessing – and fought against the five kings. Joshua commanded that the sun and moon stand still to allow time for the complete defeat of the five kings. After the defeat of their enemies, Joshua went to the cave in Makkedah and ordered the five kings to be brought before him. The five kings were killed and hanged on poles until evening when their bodies were thrown into the cave which was sealed with stones. Joshua and his army then went on to conquer six more cities and “all the country (of) the hills and of the south, and of the valley, and of the falls, and all their kings” before returning to Gilgal.

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The king of Hazor heard what Joshua's army had been able to do and he sent notice to the other kings and peoples of the Land. They all met at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel. With God's blessing, Joshua went to battle against these enemies and defeated them all – capturing all their cities. The land was divided up among the tribes and the “land rested from war”.

The final chapter lists the places and kings defeated by Moses on the eastern side of the Jordan and the places and kings defeated by Joshua on the western side of the Jordan.

### **Allotment of the Land, Cities of Refuge, Levitical Provisions, Eastern Tribes (Chapters 13-22)**

Joshua is commanded by God to finish the job of conquering all the land and dividing it up among the 9 ½ tribes. The borders of the tribes of the other 2 ½ tribes are described and the Tribe of Levi was not given an inheritance since they are to be priests unto God and work in the Tabernacle.

Eleazar the priest and Joshua along with the heads of the tribes of the Children of Israel, distributed the land as an inheritance amongst the Children of Israel. Joshua blessed Caleb and gave him Hebron as an inheritance.

The border of the Tribe of Judah is described. Caleb drove the three sons of the giant called Arba out of Hebron and took the city as his inheritance. Othniel took Debir for Caleb and he was given Caleb's daughter Achsah as a wife.

The borders of the Tribe of Joseph and the Tribe of Ephraim are described.

The borders of the half-Tribe of Manasseh are described. Zelophehad's daughters approached Joshua and Eleazar about their father's inheritance and they were given inheritance according to Moses' previous decree. Joshua stated that if the Tribe of Joseph thought their allotment was too small they were to drive out the Canaanites and Perizzites from the forests and take their land as part of the inheritance.

The Tabernacle was set up at Shiloh by the entire congregation. The seven tribes who had not yet been given their inheritance appointed three men from each tribe to walk the land. Upon their return to Shiloh, Joshua cast lots and the land was divided and given as an inheritance to the seven tribes. The borders of the Tribe of Benjamin are described.

The borders of the Tribes of Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan are described.

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God commanded Joshua to set aside specific cities as cities of refuge where a person who accidentally kills another may flee and find safety.

The Children of Israel gave of their cities and surrounding fields to the Levites.

Joshua dismissed the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-Tribe of Manasseh to return to their inheritance on the east shore of the Jordan. The members of these tribes built an altar by the Jordan which enraged the other tribes who assembled at Shiloh to go to war against them. The three tribes stated that the altar was to remind them and their children of the connection with the other tribes and the altar where sacrifices were to be brought. Phineas and the tribal leaders spoke these words to the Children of Israel who were gladdened and swore not to go to war.

### **Farewell Speech of Joshua, Joshua's Death (Chapters 23-24)**

Joshua called together the entire people and blessed them. He reminded them to keep Torah and walk in the way of God.

Joshua called all the tribes to Shechem where the leaders of the people presented themselves before God. Joshua gave a brief recount of the history of the Jewish people from Abraham through the present. The people claimed their loyalty to God and Joshua told the people to destroy all the idols in the land. Joshua wrote this covenant on stone and placed it at the Tabernacle and Joshua dismissed the people. Joshua died at 110 years of age and was buried in Timnath-serah. Joseph who was brought up out of Egypt was re-buried in Shechem and Eleazar was buried in the hill of Phinehas his son, which was given to him in Mount Ephraim.