

THE CENTURY OF JOSHUA

Moses' mission had ended on Mt. Nebo. As we saw in the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses had been called by God to guide the people and to make them "go up" from slavery in Egypt to the doors of the Promised Land. The people had arrived there, at the very edge of that land that God had given them as their heritage and at that moment, it was Joshua, the first Jesus (since in Hebrew Joshua and Jesus spelling) who was going to take the people into the Promised Land.

A People of Immigrants

To speak of a people may be going too far. In fact, they were no more than a few clans who had been led by Moses through the desert and who had no doubt grown by incorporating the new elements that they had encountered in the sacred place of Kadesh-barnea. However few these nomads now entrusted to Joshua, may have been, they were bringing with them such a rich experience, that after joining the other tribes that had

not abandoned Palestine, they were to transform that experience into the spiritual heritage of everyone.

In the presence of the Canaanites who were living in cities and cultivating the lands surrounding them, these nomads became gradually aware of their originality and their identity. The One who had revealed himself to Moses at Sinai and who had multiplied his marvels for the fugitives from Egypt. Yahweh—God made a Covenant with these nomadic people, with these tribes of Bedouins. Yahweh God gave them his law and his promise at the same time. From that moment on, they would be the people that God chose for himself and he would be their God. It was during that period of Joshua and the Judges that the people of Israel would really be established.

However, even though they must have felt blessed by Yahweh, these nomads must have felt admiration for the Canaanites among whom they were living. Historians tell us that this period of the second millennium before Christ was the most prestigious period of the history of Palestine at the cultural level. Compared to the Canaanite cities with their fortifications, their temples and their palaces with coffered cedar ceilings decorated with marble inlays, these nomads seemed to have a very poor standard of living. The same contrast was found at the religious level: the Canaanites of the cities had countless celebrations, feasts and rituals in full view of the Bedouins who did not even have a temple.

The temptation was great and the Books of Joshua and Judges as well as the Books of Samuel and Kings would constantly show us how easily the Israelites let themselves be carried away. Attracted by that brilliant civilization, they abandoned their own customs and their faith at the same time, to adopt the rites of the inhabitants of the country. During this entire period of the kings, the prophets would never stop reminding the people of the demands of the Covenant and of fidelity in Yahweh.

The Truth about the Conquest

A people seduced by Canaanite culture, men of God who resisted and proclaimed the call to fidelity, such was the permanent conflict that the texts of the Scripture present to us with regard to this period. The Book of Joshua seems to present a systematic conquest of the country carried out by Joshua as the head of the tribes but in reality, things must have happened in a very different way.

City people and nomads were very different and the fact that they were forced to live together on the same territory did not prevent conflicts. At times, the Canaanites won and at times, the nomads did. However, little by little, the tribes began to impose their own law on the early inhabitants of the country and in Saul's days, the nomads of former times who had become city people as the years went by, had seized power in the country. First, David and then, Solomon were to confirm this situation.

Active minorities are the ones who make up history. When we speak of the Church and of its impact in the world, oftentimes we are only dealing with a minority of believers. The groups of prophets, who several centuries after Joshua, compiled the traditions and the documents on the conquest, did not claim to give us an exact and complete history of that conquest. We should not allow ourselves to be deceived by the triumphant aspect of these accounts in which all of Israel obtains victories with Joshua: the Book of Joshua relates small things that made up a great history.

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA AND ITS AUTHORS

When the book was written, the history of Joshua was lost in a past whose many details had already been forgotten. However, a few images and memories were sufficient to illustrate the vocation of the people of God and the meaning of their adventures.

Joshua inaugurates the series of books that the Hebrew Bible calls the Early Prophets, meaning by this title that these historical books tell us about a history that started long before the prophets. However, these books were conceived and written in the prophets' groups. The entire series that takes us from Joshua to the Books of the Kings actually forms a unit with a reflection on Deuteronomy. Today, we usually speak of *Deuteronomic* history to refer to this series.

For the most part, the Book of Joshua was written in the last days of the kingdom of Judah. Thus, the idea that the land of Palestine was God's great gift to this people and the sign of his Covenant, was an invitation to find in the past a correspondence between the conquests and fidelity to the Covenant, between infidelity and failure.

The author was familiar with the days of Joshua, by way of many sources: oral traditions (no doubt very distorted due to the 500 years that had elapsed) (and documents that may have been kept in Israel's ancient Sanctuaries (like the one in Gilgal and documents) going back to the days of the monarchy, concerning the official land registry of the tribes.

The book must have been modified at the time of the Babylonian Exile. This was the time when priests intervened and imposed another interpretation in many passages. At the same time, they emphasized the liturgical aspect of important events.

First Part (1:1—12:24):
THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

I will be with you

1 • ¹After the death of Moses, Yahweh spoke to Joshua, the son of Nun and the minister of Moses, and said to him: ²“My servant Moses is dead; therefore, the hour has come for you to cross the Jordan River, and all the people shall go with you to the land which I give to the sons of Israel. ³I give you all the places where you set your feet, as I promised Moses. ⁴Your frontiers will extend from the mountain of Lebanon in the north, to the desert in the south, as far as the great Euphrates in the east and the Great Sea in the west.

⁵As long as you live, no one will be able to stand against you. I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not leave you or abandon you. ⁶Be valiant and have courage for I will give this people the land I swore to their fathers I would give them. ⁷Therefore, be brave and faithfully fulfill the whole law which Moses, my servant, gave you. Do not turn aside from it either to the right or to the left, and you shall succeed wherever you go.

⁸Constantly read the book of this

law and meditate on it day and night that you may truly do what it says. So shall your plans be fulfilled and you shall succeed in everything. ⁹It is I who command you; be strong, then, and be valiant. Do not tremble or be afraid, because Yahweh, your God, is with you wherever you go.”

¹⁰Joshua ordered the secretaries of the people: ¹¹“Pass through the camp and give this command: ‘Store up enough food for, in three days’ time, you shall cross the Jordan and enter the land which Yahweh, your God, will give you.’”

¹²To the people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad and to half of the tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, ¹³“Remember the command of Moses, the servant of Yahweh; Yahweh has provided you with a place of rest and has given you all this region. ¹⁴The women and children, as well as the livestock, shall remain on this side of the Jordan, in the region which Moses gave you; but you who are valiant shall cross over, armed, ahead of your brothers and shall help them ¹⁵until Yahweh gives them rest, as he has given you, that they may also conquer the land which Yahweh, our God, gives them. So you shall return to the region which Moses gave us and take possession of that land at the east of the Jordan.”

• **1.1** The hero of the Book is Joshua, son of Nun, who succeeded Moses (Dt 34:9). The conquest of the Promised Land is narrated here as if Joshua had directed everything. In this way the image of a savior is enhanced (“Joshua,” like “Jesus,” means Yahweh-saves) who leads the people of God into their land and to their rest. Joshua prefigures Jesus, as we are told in the Letter to the Hebrews (4:8). The phrase *Yahweh spoke to Joshua* should not be taken literally. This merely means that, in taking such an initiative, Joshua fulfilled Yahweh’s plan. Like all the prophets seen later in Israel, Joshua appears here as the “servant of Yahweh” who day and night ponders his word (Ps 1:2). The first biblical image that will come to the mind of the primitive Christian community when speaking of Jesus will be that of the “holy servant of God” (Acts 3:13; 3:26; 4:27; 4:30).

I give you all the places where you set your feet (v. 3). In this way we ought to expect God’s benefits. He does not do the work for us; instead, he sees to it that we make the necessary effort. The land which Yahweh gives to the Israelites will belong to them once they conquer it.

Sometimes religious people have the reputation of being unconcerned about social problems, and of not committing themselves to tasks involving the common good. It is true that the Gospel does not speak of earthly conquests, but biblical history shows that the Gospel could not have been understood deeply except by people who had fought to conquer their land and to forge their own identity, so as later to create their own culture. The Church knows by experience that evangelization cannot be divorced from human development.

Dt 34

Dt 11:24

3:12

Dt 17:19

Num 32

¹⁶They answered Joshua: "We will do all you have commanded us and go wherever you send us. Just as we have obeyed Moses, so shall we obey you in the same way. ¹⁷May Yahweh, your God, be with you as he was with Moses. ¹⁸He who contradicts your words and disobeys your orders shall die. But be valiant and courageous."

The history of Rahab

Heb
11:31;
Jas 2:25;
Mt 1:5

2 • ¹Joshua sent two spies secretly from Shittim with the following order "Go and look over the land well, especially the city of Jericho."

The spies went and as soon as they came to Jericho, they went to the house of the prostitute named Rahab. ²But someone told the king of Jericho: "Some Israelites have entered here tonight to spy on us." ³So the king of Jericho sent word to Rahab: "Send those men out of your house because they came to spy on the land." ⁴But the woman had hidden them, so she said: "It is true; they came to my house but I did not know where they came from. ⁵And at nightfall, shortly before the city gates were to be closed, they went out. I do not know where they went, but hurry and you will surely overtake them." ⁶The woman had hidden them on the roof of the house, under the stalks of flax which she kept there.

⁷The pursuers went to search for them by the road leading to the valley of the Jordan, and as they went out, the city gates were closed.

⁸Then the woman went up to where she had hidden the spies of Joshua, ⁹and she said to them: "I know that Yahweh, your God, has given this land to you; we are frightened and the inhabitants of the land tremble before you. ¹⁰We know how Yahweh dried up the waters of the Red Sea to let you cross when you came out of Egypt. We know what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who lived at the other side of the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you destroyed by anathema.

¹¹The news has frightened us, and eve-

ryone has lost courage because of you, for Yahweh, your God, is God in heaven above as he is on earth below.

¹²Now then, swear to me by Yahweh that just as I have been faithful to you, so shall you be towards my family, ¹³and respect the life of my father, mother, brothers and sisters, and all that belong to them."

¹⁴The men answered: "Provided that you do not reveal our talk, then we will pay back life for life when Yahweh hands over to us this land, and we will deal generously and faithfully with you."

¹⁵Then she let them down by a rope through the window, since her house was built into the city wall. ¹⁶But she said to them: "Go through the mountains so that you do not meet those who pursue you. Remain in hiding for three days, until they return, and then you may go your way." ¹⁷They answered: "See how we shall fulfill our oath. ¹⁸When we enter this land, tie this scarlet cord as a sign on the window through which we have escaped. Bring into your house your father, mother, brothers and sisters, and all your relatives. ¹⁹If any of them leaves the house, he shall be the one responsible for his death, and the guilt will not be ours. But if anyone who is with you is killed, then may the punishment for his death come upon us. ²⁰However, be careful not to reveal our plan. If you do, then we are freed from the oath we have sworn." ²¹Rahab said to them: "So be it." And after she had sent them off, she tied the scarlet cord to the window.

²²The men went into the mountains and hid there for three days, until their pursuers had returned. These men had searched in vain for them everywhere. ²³Then the two spies came down again from the mountains and, crossing the Jordan River, came to Joshua, son of Nun, and gave him an account of their mission and everything that had happened. ²⁴They said to Joshua: "Yahweh has given all this land into our hands; their inhabitants already tremble before us."

• **2.1** A prostitute receives Joshua's spies. They, in turn, promise to spare her life and that of her entire household. The huge walls of Jericho had been destroyed a century earlier but new inhabitants had settled inside without bothering to repair them. We may imagine all these people assembled together in a house which was built from the debris of the same walls.

This minor incident has symbolic value. The author of the book places on the lips of Rahab a profession of faith in Yahweh, the living God, who will entrust the country to the Hebrew people. Because of this faith, Rahab will be saved.

Jewish tradition recognizes her as an ancestress of king David, and the Gospel mentions her name in the genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1:5).

Acts
9:25

Crossing the Jordan

3 • ¹Early in the morning, Joshua rose and set out from Shittim with all the people of Israel and came to the Jordan River. There they encamped while waiting to cross the river.

²After three days, the officers went around the camp ³and ordered the Israelites: “When you see the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh go by, carried by the priests from the tribe of Levi, then you shall set out from your camp and follow it, ⁴that you may know the way you shall go. Because you have never been that way before. But you shall follow it at a distance of a thousand meters. Do not go near it.”

^{19:11} ⁵Joshua said to the Israelites: “Purify yourselves, for tomorrow Yahweh will be in your midst doing wonders.”

⁶And Joshua ordered the priests: “Take the Ark of the Covenant and cross the river at the head of the people.”

⁷Then Yahweh said to Joshua: “Today I will begin to make you great in the eyes of Israel and they shall know that I am with you as I was with Moses. ⁸Give this order

to the priests who carry the Ark of the Covenant: As soon as you come to the banks of the Jordan, stand still in the river.”

⁹And Joshua said to the Israelites: “Come nearer and listen to the words of Yahweh, our God. ¹⁰Do you want a sign that Yahweh, the living God, is in your midst, he who drives away before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, as well as the Girgashites, Jebusites and Amorites?

¹¹See, the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the earth is going to cross the Jordan before you. ¹²Now, choose twelve men from the twelve tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. ¹³When the priests who carry the Ark of the Lord of all the earth put their feet into the water of the Jordan, the water coming from upstream shall stop flowing and stand in one single mass.”

¹⁴When the people set out from their camp to cross the Jordan, the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant went before them. ¹⁵There was much water in the Jordan, for it was overflowing its banks at this time of the barley harvest. Nevertheless, when those who carried the Ark went down to the river and their feet touched the edge of the water, the water from upstream stopped flowing.

• **3.1** The Jordan has not always been the boundary of Israel: according to its victories or defeats Israel possessed the land to the east of the Jordan or lost that in the west. Nevertheless the Jordan has always been recognized as the border of the Promised Land of the people of God. Consequently we see how the tribes of Reuben and Gad, already settled to the east of the river, are constrained by Moses, and later by Joshua to cross the river with their families: only on this condition will they be recognized as true heirs of the Promised Land. That is why the passage of the Jordan led by Joshua has had such importance in both Jewish and Christian traditions.

In this crossing as in that of the Red Sea, God alone has the major role. It is at the moment that the bearers of the Ark, on which rests the glory of Yahweh, touches the river, that it ceases to flow. When the bearers go up from the river, the water begins to flow again.

God, resting on his Ark, opens and closes the gate of the Promised Land (Rev 3:7). Likewise Jesus, the new Ark of the Covenant, in whom resides the fullness of the divinity (Col 2:9), will

go down into the water of the Jordan to open the gates of the Promised Land. This crossing is, together with that of the Reed Sea, the baptism of the people of God. Reading this narrative, we understand that this book is not a military record of Joshua's conquest; it is a liturgical book in which we see God at work: he grants or withdraws his blessings according to the fidelity or infidelity of his people. At the end of the book, we see his people invited to make a solemn profession of faith (Jos 24). Each time that the Church invites us, like Joshua, to renew our profession of faith, whether at baptism or the paschal vigil, we are taking part in a long established Christian tradition.

The water stood still, forming something like a dam (v. 16). In 1267 a landslide took place in the Jordan valley much higher than Jericho, leaving the riverbed dry until a current washed out the obstacle a few hours later. A similar phenomenon could have allowed Joshua and his people to enter the Promised Land dry foot after crossing the riverbed. The miracle lies in the fact that the event happens at the moment when Joshua and his followers are waiting for

¹⁶The water stood still, forming something like a dam very far from that place, near Adam, the neighboring city of Zarethan. The water flowing down to the Dead Sea was completely cut off, and so the people could cross opposite Jericho. ¹⁷The priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant remained in the middle of the river which dried up, until all the Israelites had crossed the Jordan.

4 ¹Once the whole nation had crossed, ²Yahweh said to Joshua: “Choose twelve men, one from each tribe, ³and give them the following order: Take twelve stones from the riverbed of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests stood still. Bring them with you and put them where you will encamp tonight.”

⁴Joshua then called the twelve men he had chosen from the twelve tribes of Israel ⁵and ordered them: “Walk to the Ark, up to the middle of the Jordan and take from there a stone for each tribe and carry it upon your shoulder. ⁶They will remain with you as a sign of what happened, so that when your children ask you in the future: What do these stones mean for you? ⁷you may answer: When the Ark of Yahweh crossed the Jordan, the water parted before it. So these stones shall serve as a memorial to the Israelites forever.”

⁸The Israelites carried out Joshua’s order and picked up twelve stones from the riverbed of the Jordan, one for each tribe, just as Yahweh had ordered Joshua. They brought these to the place where they encamped and placed them there.

⁹Joshua piled up twelve stones on the riverbed of the Jordan, at the spot where

the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant stood. They are still there to this day.

¹⁰The priests who carried the Ark stood in the middle of the Jordan until Joshua finished saying everything that Yahweh had ordered him. ¹¹Then when all the people had finished crossing the river, the Ark also crossed, and the priests walked at the head of the people again.

¹²The men from the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh went ahead armed, as Moses had ordered them to do. ¹³They were about forty thousand, well-armed, and they marched before Yahweh, ready for battle, to the plains of Jericho.

¹⁴On that day, Yahweh exalted Joshua before all Israel, and henceforth they respected him all the days of his life as they had done with Moses.

¹⁵Yahweh said to Joshua: ¹⁶“Command the priests who carry the Ark of the Covenant to come up from the Jordan.”

¹⁷Joshua, therefore, ordered them to come up from the river. ¹⁸And when these priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh came up from the middle of the Jordan, when their feet touched the banks, the waters of the Jordan returned as abundantly as on previous days and overflowed its banks.

¹⁹It was on the tenth day of the first month when the people came up out of the Jordan and encamped in Gilgal, on the eastern border of Jericho. ²⁰There in Gilgal, Joshua set up the twelve stones taken from the riverbed of the Jordan.

²¹Then Joshua said to the Israelites: ^{4:6-7}“When your children ask you in the future what these stones mean, ²²then you shall tell them that the people of Israel crossed the Jordan without getting their feet wet, ²³for Yahweh, our God, dried up the waters ^{14:21}of the Jordan before us just as he did to

Yahweh to open a passage for them. God often uses natural causes to keep a seemingly impossible promise.

What do these stones mean for you? (4:6) What is the meaning of such a monument, of such a feast? Each time, this was answered by narrating some event in which Yahweh had helped his people. In Israel the faith was taught through similar questions. The Israelites did not have much knowledge of religion; yet every place in their land reminded them that God was the savior of his people.

Joshua pitches his camp in Gilgal from where he organizes his assaults, and he returns wisely

to Gilgal after each victory before the Canaanite forces can regroup.

It is evident that several accounts which are not entirely in accord with one another are combined here. Did they put twelve stones in the camp (cf. 4:3), or did they put them *on the riverbed of the Jordan* (4:9)? It really does not matter. At best, these stones were already near Gilgal even before Joshua and the Israelites arrived; this was a sanctuary devoted to pagan cult. But after the conquest, the priests wanted to give them a religious meaning in consonance with their faith, as we saw in Exodus 12:15.

the Red Sea which he also dried up before us to let us cross. ²⁴He did this so that the people of this land may know the power of Yahweh, our God, and that you yourselves may fear him forever.”

The Israelites are circumcised at Gilgal

5 • ¹The kings of the Amorites on the west of the Jordan and all the kings of the Canaanites who lived in the neighboring lands of the Mediterranean Sea came to know how Yahweh dried up the bed of the Jordan for the Israelites to cross. So they lost their courage and spirit to face the Israelites.

Gen 17:10 ²At that time, Yahweh said to Joshua: “Make flint knives and celebrate a new circumcision for the sons of Israel.” ³Joshua obeyed the order of Yahweh and circumcised the Israelites at a place called the Hill of the Foreskins.

Num 32:13 ⁴This is the reason why Joshua did this second circumcision: all the men of Israel who left Egypt were circumcised, but they died during their journey in the desert. ⁵But all those born in the desert were not circumcised. ⁶For the Israelites walked in the desert for forty years until the whole nation died—the whole generation who did not obey Yahweh. For Yahweh had sworn that they would not enter the land flowing with milk and honey which he promised to their ancestors. ⁷But it was their children, whom Joshua circumcised.

⁸After circumcising all, they rested in the camp until they were healed. ⁹Then Yahweh said to Joshua: “Today I have removed from you the shame of Egypt.” So the place is called Gilgal up to this day.

• **5.1** At their first encampment, Joshua’s men celebrated their first religious cult performing circumcision (see Gen 17:10). In Israel, this was the sign of one’s entrance into the religious community. In order to insist on this obligation, the book notes that, upon entering the Holy Land, all the men were circumcised.

On the following day, they ate of the produce of the land (v. 11). See commentary on Exodus 16 for the explanations concerning the manna and legends about it.

Then begins a new era. Up to this time, the religion of the Israelites had been that of a nomadic people. Now begins a deep crisis which will last until king David’s time, with the Israelites trying to adapt themselves to their new situation as farmers and city-dwellers and gradually evolving a kind of religion suitable for this new

¹⁰The Israelites encamped in Gilgal where they celebrated the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. ¹¹On the following day, they ate of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain on that very day. ¹²And from that day on when they ate of the produce of the land, the manna ceased.

There was no more manna for the Israelites, and that year they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan.

Num 22:22 ¹³When Joshua was near Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and saw before him a man with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua approached him and said: “Are you for us or for our enemies?” ¹⁴And he answered: Dn 12:1; Rev 19:11 “No, I have come as the commander of the army of Yahweh.” Joshua lay prostrate on the ground, worshiped him and said: “What does my Lord ask of his servant?”

3:5 ¹⁵The commander of the army of Yahweh said to him: “Take off your sandals from your feet; the place where you stand is holy.” And Joshua did so.

The conquest of Jericho

6 • ¹The inhabitants of Jericho had closed the city and had fastened their bolts so that the Israelites could not enter. No one came in and no one went out. ²But Yahweh said to Joshua: “I will give you the city, its king and all its men of war. ³For this, you shall have to go around the city once every day for six days. ⁴Seven priests shall go before the Ark bear-

situation. This text goes even further: the time of the journey, the time of the march towards the Promised Land is over; the people have entered this land. The manna, nourishment for the journey, no longer falls and the people satisfy their hunger with the fruit of the country. So it will be at the end of time when all humanity will have reached the Father and his kingdom, no longer will the Church give people bread for the journey—what they will have is the eternal presence of God.

• **6.1** With the capture of Jericho, the conquest begins. Jericho is made “anathema,” i.e., set apart for God. The people renounce all booty, entrust the spoils to Yahweh’s treasury and kill all living beings instead of taking possession of the animals and reducing the inhab-

ing the seven trumpets used in the time of the Jubilee. On the seventh day, they shall march around the city seven times,⁵ and when they blow the horn, all the people shall come up to attack, shouting their battle cry. At that moment, the walls of the city will fall and everyone shall enter straight ahead of him.”

⁶Joshua, son of Nun, called the priests and said to them: “You shall carry the Ark of the Covenant; seven priests shall go ahead with the trumpets they use for the Jubilee.”⁷ Then Joshua said to the people: “You shall march around the city and the vanguard of the army shall go before the Ark of Yahweh.”

⁸When Joshua finished speaking, the priests began to blow the seven trumpets they used to blow on the Feast of the Jubilee, and they went before the Ark of Yahweh. ⁹The vanguard of the people went before the priests, and the rest of the people came after the Ark. ¹⁰The trumpets blew continually. Joshua had given this order: “Do not shout or utter anything,

nor let even a single word be heard, until the day comes when I say: Shout and cry out!”

¹¹That day he had the Ark of Yahweh carried around the city once, then all returned to the camp where they spent the night. ¹²On the following day, Joshua rose early in the morning¹³ and the priests took the Ark and those who blew the seven trumpets again went before the Ark. The vanguard went before them and the rest followed the Ark while the trumpets blew.

¹⁴So they did the next day, and for six days they marched once a day around the city and then returned to the camp. ¹⁵On the seventh day, the Israelites rose early at dawn and marched around Jericho in the same way as on the previous days. But on that day, they did it seven times. ¹⁶At the seventh time, as the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua ordered the people: “Shout your battle cry for Yahweh has given you the city!”

itants to slavery. This same word “anathema” will eventually be used to refer to someone who bears the curse of God (see Rom 9:3). This was a practice among a number of peoples. By destroying everything Canaanite, Israel safeguarded itself from adopting the culture and materialism of the Canaanites.

Sometimes the modern reader is scandalized: how could God order such a war? And how could Joshua think of pleasing God by ordering the killing of all the inhabitants including babies?

One should bear in mind when this conquest took place and when the book was written.

The conquest took place in the thirteenth century B.C. It is difficult for us to understand the mentality of such ancient times. In Canaan, babies were burned as an offering to the pagan gods. In Assyria, prisoners were skinned alive. Israel conquered Palestine by force like any nomadic people in the world. God was beginning to instruct his people. To start with, he could not expect that they had already been educated. The bloody victories were a step on the way to the shaping of a national conscience. In this sense, we cannot, in the name of peace, despise heroes of past wars.

Moreover, the present book was written in the seventh century B.C., in the small kingdom of Judah, which was surrounded by powerful

neighbors with whom they tried to be at peace. Hence, the accounts of past victories and massacres were amplified (compare 2 S 12:31 written by contemporaries of the events, and 1 Chr 20:2, written four centuries later). The author wanted to show his contemporaries that they had nothing to fear, since God was with them. By imaginatively amplifying the massacres of Canaanites in times past, he wanted to say to his compatriots: do not follow any pagan practices, but preserve the holy germ of Israel’s faith. Using these bloody examples, the Scripture gives us a lesson: since the people of God had a unique hope for the world, no sacrifice would be too big to keep it intact. The Gospel is no less sharp than the sword of Joshua, it is no less indulgent against our idols and our fears, even when it refuses the violence and, of course, the fanaticism of these primitive times.

In like manner then, when we read: *Yahweh ordered Joshua the anathema* (v. 21), we should not think this was a special intervention of God (see commentary on Gen 16). These words only mean that Joshua decided to declare and implement the anathema, and in so doing preserved Israel’s faith from idolatry, a situation even more contradictory to God’s plans. But they did this as a people who did not yet know the value of human life.

It is difficult to know really what is true in this story: see footnotes on Joshua 2:1.

¹⁷The city and all that is in it shall be given in anathema to Yahweh. Only Rahab the prostitute with all who may be with her in her house shall live, since she hid the spies we sent. ¹⁸But for your part, be careful not to touch anything, big or small since everything shall be consecrated in anathema; do not take anything for yourself lest the curse be upon the camp of Israel and bring trouble upon it. ¹⁹All the gold, silver, copper and iron are to be consecrated to Yahweh and shall go into the treasury of Yahweh.”

Num
31:54

²⁰The people shouted and the trumpets blew. At this precise moment, the walls of the city fell. Then everyone went straight into the city to the place before him.

Heb
11:30

²¹They seized Jericho. And with sword in hand, they killed all the men and women, both young and old, as well as the oxen, sheep and asses, and they gave these as anathema or, rather, sacrificed them to God.

²²Two men had been sent to explore Jericho, (and upon entering the city, were hidden by a prostitute). Then Joshua said to them: “Go into the house of the prostitute and bring her out with all her family as you had sworn to her.”

²³These young men then brought out the woman named Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers and sisters with all her relatives to safety outside the camp of Israel. ²⁴Afterwards, they burned the city and all that was in it. They saved only the silver, gold and the vessels of bronze and iron which they put with the precious things in the Sanctuary of Yahweh. ²⁵Joshua saved the prostitute and all her family, and she lived in Israel, because she had kept the spies sent by Joshua.

²⁶Joshua asked the people to pronounce this curse: “May Yahweh curse the man who rebuilds Jericho. May its foundation rise on the body of his eldest son, and the gates on that of his youngest son.”

1K
16:34

²⁷So Yahweh was with Joshua and made him famous in all the land.

The sacrilege of Achan is punished

7 • ¹The Israelites did not keep the anathema. It happened that Achan, son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerach, of the tribe of Judah, appropriated for himself some of the things consecrated by anathema, and because of this, the anger of Yahweh burned against Israel. 6:18

²Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which was near Bethaven, east of the city of Bethel. And he said to them: “Go up and explore the land.” ³The spies said to Joshua on their return: “It would not be necessary to mobilize the whole army: some two or three thousand men will be enough to conquer the land. It would be useless to tire the people for that nation is but few in number.”

⁴So about three thousand men attacked Ai but were repulsed by the city’s defenders. ⁵The people of Ai killed thirty-six men and pursued them outside the gate as far as Shebarim, defeating them on the slopes. Upon seeing this, all the people were disheartened.

⁶Then Joshua and all the leaders of Israel rent their garments, put ashes on their heads and remained prostrate before the Ark of Yahweh until evening. Joshua lamented: ⁷“Alas, Yahweh, why have you made this people cross the river Jordan just to give us into the hands of the Amorites who will destroy us?”

32:11;
Num
14:13

It would have been better for us to remain on the other side of the Jordan. ⁸Yahweh, my God, what can I say when I see Israel fleeing from their enemies? ⁹The Canaanites and all the inhabitants of this land will know of this. They will unite to surround us and drive us out. And you, what are you going to do for the honor of your Name?”

¹⁰Yahweh answered: “Stand up! Why are you prostrate on the ground? ¹¹Israel sinned and has violated my covenant; Israelites have taken from what was set apart by anathema and have hidden stolen

• **7.1** All the spoils had been made “anathema,” i.e., consecrated to God. Whether they were burnt or deposited in the treasury of the Sanctuary, they were offered to Yahweh. Achan had robbed God and, in the manner of speaking and thinking of ancient people, the stolen

thing turned into a curse which clung to his person and to his family. Perhaps this event should make us reflect on the seriousness of our commitment once we have decided to consecrate our time and person to God.

objects with their belongings. ¹²So Israel cannot face its enemies, but shall flee from them, since it has come to be an anathema. I will not be with you anymore unless you remove the curse from your midst. ¹³Go then, and sanctify the people. Say to them: 'Cleanse yourselves for tomorrow. Yahweh, the God of Israel, says to you: Oh, Israel, the anathema is in your midst and you shall not face your enemies until you have removed the anathema from you.' ¹⁴Therefore in the morning you shall come near, grouped according to tribes. The tribe that Yahweh designates by lot shall present itself by families. And the family that Yahweh designates shall present itself by households, and the household by individuals. ¹⁵He who turns out to be responsible for this offense shall be burned, together with all his household goods, for having violated the Covenant of Yahweh and having done a detestable crime in Israel."

1S14:41

¹⁶Joshua rose early in the morning and ordered the tribes of Israel to present themselves. ¹⁷The lot fell on the tribe of Judah. Lots were drawn among the families, and the family of Zerah was left. Lots were drawn among the households of this family and the household of Zabdi was left. ¹⁸And then lots were drawn among the members of this household which revealed that the guilty one was Achan, son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zoreh, of the tribe of Judah.

¹⁹Joshua then said to him: "My son, confess the truth before Yahweh, the God of Israel, and render him praise. Tell me what you have done without hiding anything." ²⁰Achan answered: "It is true that I have sinned against Yahweh. This is what I have done: ²¹I saw among the plunder a beautiful mantle from Shinar, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels. I was tempted so I took them. Then I hid them in the ground inside my tent with the silver underneath."

²²Joshua then sent some messengers who ran to the tent of Achan and found the booty inside the tent with the silver underneath. ²³They took all these and presented them to Joshua and to the people; everything was put before Yahweh.

²⁴Then Joshua took Achan together with the silver, the mantle and the gold, his sons as well as his daughters, his oxen,

asses and sheep, his tent and all that he had. All Israel accompanied him and they brought them to the Valley of Achor.

²⁵There Joshua said to him: "Since you brought us misfortune, may Yahweh bring this misfortune upon you today." Then all the people stoned him. ²⁶And of those that were his, some were crushed and others were burned. They piled on him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from his anger.

Henceforth the place was called the Valley of Achor.

Num
16:32;
Dt 24:16

Joshua conquers Ai

8 ¹Then Yahweh said to Joshua: "Do not fear or be discouraged. March with all your warriors against the city of Ai. I will give into your hands its king and its people, the city and its territory. ²You shall deal with Ai as you have dealt with Jericho and its king. But you may take possession of the plunder and all the animals. So now, prepare an ambush behind the city."

³So Joshua left with all his warriors and went up to Ai. Then he chose thirty thousand valiant warriors, and sent them out by night. ⁴And he commanded them: "Lie in ambush behind the city. Do not go very far and be ready.

⁵I and all the people who are with me shall close in on the city. But when they come out against us, as they did before, we shall flee from them. ⁶Then they shall pursue us and go out far from the city, thinking that we are fleeing from them as before. ⁷But then you shall rise from where you are hiding and occupy the city. Yahweh, our God, will give it to us. ⁸After taking the city, you shall burn it according to what Yahweh has commanded. These are my orders."

⁹So Joshua sent them out and they went to the place of ambush, between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city, while Joshua slept that night in the midst of his people.

¹⁰Very early in the morning, Joshua rose and mustered his army, and then marched at the head of the people, accompanied by the leaders. ¹¹All the warriors who were with him went up and marched until they reached the front of the city. Then they encamped opposite the northern side of the city. The valley separated them from the city.

¹²(Then he took five thousand men whom he set in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city.)

¹³The people then set up their camp to the north of the city and their rearguard to the west. That night Joshua was in the valley.

Battle of Ai

¹⁴When the king of Ai saw the situation, he made haste with all his people to attack Israel on the slope opposite the valley of Jordan, without knowing that the Israelites had prepared an ambush behind the city. ¹⁵Joshua and the Israelites pretended that they were being defeated, and so fled to the road leading to the wilderness. ¹⁶Then all the people of the city began to shout and left to pursue them. ¹⁷No one remained to defend the city, and they left the city open.

¹⁸Then Yahweh said to Joshua: "Stretch out toward Ai the javelin you have in your hand because I have given you this city."

¹⁹So Joshua did this, and at this sign the warriors rose out of their places in the ambush and ran to the city. They entered and seized the city, and set it on fire.

²⁰The men of Ai looked back and saw the smoke of the city rising up to heaven, and at the same time, the Israelites who were fleeing turned back upon them. ²¹They lost their courage as they were trapped by the Israelites: ²²for on one side were Joshua and all the people of Israel, and on the other, those who had just set the city on fire.

The Israelites killed them until none were left to survive or to escape. ²³Only the king of Ai was taken alive and they brought him to Joshua.

²⁴The Israelites killed the inhabitants of Ai who went into the fields or who fled to

the wilderness; they killed them all. Then they returned to the city and killed all by the sword. ²⁵The total of those who fell that day was twelve thousand. ²⁶Joshua did not give the order to stop the war until all the inhabitants of Ai had been killed in accordance with anathema. ²⁷But the Israelites took for themselves the livestock and plunder as Yahweh had commanded.

²⁸Joshua burned the city and left it in ruins. That place has remained as it was to this day. ²⁹As for the king of Ai, Joshua had him hanged on a tree until the sun set. Then he had his body taken down; they cast it at the entrance of the city and raised over it a great heap of stones which can be seen to this day.

Joshua renews the Covenant in Shechem

• ³⁰Joshua then built an altar to Yahweh, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal. ³¹He fulfilled what Moses had commanded the children of Israel. And according to what is written in the book of the law of Moses, the altar was made of uncut stones and was built without the use of an iron tool. On this altar, he offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to Yahweh. ³²There in the presence of the Israelites he wrote upon the stones a copy of the law which Moses had written.

³³All the people stood on both sides of the Ark, with their leaders, secretaries and judges. Opposite it were the priests and the Levites who carried the Ark of Yahweh. Israelites by birth and aliens were together. Half the people were in front of Mount Gerizim and the other half were near Mount Ebal according to Moses' commandment for the blessing of Israel.

³⁴Joshua proceeded to read the words of blessing and curse, and all that is writ-

• **8.30** What is the meaning of this Covenant celebrated in Shechem? Scripture presents the ancient history of Israel in a hyperbolic form when it writes that the twelve tribes were together in Egypt, that they left together with Moses, and that all twelve tribes reached the Promised Land with him. At best, the whole history of the Exodus is that of a much smaller group who freed themselves with Moses' leadership and went through the decisive experience of an encounter with the Saving God.

Later, in the oasis of Kadesh, they encountered other Hebrew groups who had also been in Egypt and who accepted their faith (see commentary on the map of Exodus).

Subsequently, when they settled in Palestine, they allied themselves with other tribes from their own race who were already living in the midst of the Canaanites. It was then that Israel first became a people of twelve tribes. Among them, Ephraim and Manasseh were the predominant tribes. Later, however, in the south, the tribe of Judah developed. It was formed from diverse groups particularly the Calebites (Jdg 1:12; Num 13:30) and the Kenites (Jdg 1:16).

Finally, the Covenant at Shechem could have been the occasion when all of them accepted the faith and the commandments given by Moses.

Dt 11:29
Dt 27:1-13

ten in the book of the law. ³⁵He did not omit any word from all that was written by Moses. He read it with a loud voice before the assembly of all Israel, including women, children and foreigners who lived among them.

The ruse of the Gibeonites

Jdg 1:9

9 ¹The kings who lived west of the Jordan, on the mountain, on the plain and on the seacoast heard of these events. The Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites ²made a pact and came to an agreement to fight as one against Joshua and Israel.

³The inhabitants of Gibeon came to know what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, ⁴and decided to deceive the Israelites. They prepared provisions for themselves, loaded some worn-out, torn and mended sacks and wineskins on their asses, ⁵put on worn-out and patched sandals and clothes. For their journey, they brought some dry bread, broken into pieces. ⁶Then they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him: “We come from a far land to make a pact with you.”

⁷The Israelites answered: “Do you live near us? If so, then we cannot make a pact with you.” ⁸They answered Joshua: “We are your servants.” And Joshua asked them: “Who are you? Where do you come from?” ⁹They answered: “Your servants come from a very far country and through the greatness of Yahweh, your God, we came to know of his power and all that he did in Egypt ¹⁰and with the two kings of the Amorites who reigned in the eastern part of the Jordan—Sihon, the king of Heshbon, and Og, the king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth. ¹¹The leaders and the rest of the inhabitants of our country told us: ‘Take provisions for a long journey, go out to meet them and say to them: We are your servants; may you make a Covenant with us.’ ¹²Look at our bread which was warm when we took it from our houses to come and meet you, but see how dry it has become and how it has broken into pieces. ¹³These wineskins that we filled up with wine were new, now they are ripped and worn-out. The clothes and sandals that

we use have worn out because of the very long journey.” ¹⁴The Israelites shared their food with them without having asked Yahweh what must be done. ¹⁵Joshua made a Covenant with them without waiting for any answer from Yahweh. So he as well as the leaders of the community promised to let them live.

¹⁶Three days later, the Israelites learned that these people lived near their own territory. ¹⁷On hearing this, the Israelites set out and entered their cities: Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim. ¹⁸They spared their lives because of what the leaders of the people had sworn to them by the name of Yahweh. ¹⁹But all the people criticized their leaders. Then all the leaders said to them: “We have sworn by the name of Yahweh, therefore, we cannot kill them. ²⁰But this we can do: we shall let them live so that the anger of Yahweh may not be upon us, ²¹but they shall serve by cutting firewood and fetching water for the community of Israel.”

²²Then Joshua summoned the Gibeonites and told them about the decision of the leaders: “Why did you deceive us and say to us that you come from very far when in fact, you live right in our midst? ²³Henceforth, you are cursed and shall always cut wood and fetch water for the house of my God.” ²⁴The Gibeonites answered: “We came to know that Yahweh had commanded Moses to destroy all the inhabitants of the land he gave you. We were afraid so we opted for this measure. ²⁵And now, we are in your hands: do with us whatever seems good and just to you.”

²⁶Joshua fulfilled his promise and did not let the Israelites kill them. ²⁷But from that day on, they cut firewood and fetched water for the whole community and for the altar of Yahweh in the place he would choose.

“The sun stood still”

10 • ¹Adonizedek king of Jerusalem came to know how Joshua had conquered and leveled Ai, doing to it and its king what he had done to Jericho and its king. He also knew how the Gibeonites had made peace with the Israelites and were living in their midst. ²He feared greatly, for

• **10.1** The sun of Gibeon has caused enough worry to those who take everything they read in the Scriptures literally.

Some thought that at that moment the sun stood still in the sky. Later, when people learned that it is the earth that revolves around the

Gibeon was a very important city, a royal city greater than Ai and its men were very brave.

³In view of this, Adonizedek sent for Haham king of Hebron, for Aram king of Jarmuth, for Japhia king of Lachish and for Debir king of Eglon saying: ⁴“Come and help me conquer Gibeon for it has made a pact with Joshua and the Israelites.”

⁵So the five kings of the Amorites—the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon—joined forces and set out, each one with troops. They encamped opposite Gibeon and surrounded it.

⁶The Gibeonites sent word to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal: “Do not leave us alone, but come and help us, for all the Amorite kings who live on the mountains have united against us.”

⁷So Joshua left Gilgal that day with all his valiant warriors. ⁸Then Yahweh said to Joshua: “Do not be afraid because I have placed them in your hands and no one among them will be able to stand up against you.” ⁹Joshua marched from Gilgal, journeying throughout the night and came upon the Amorites by surprise.

¹⁰Yahweh defeated them. The Israelites gained a great victory in Gibeon and pursued the Amorites by the slope of Bethhoron up to Azekah and Makkedah.

¹¹As they were fleeing, Yahweh rained huge hailstones on them and pursued them up to Azekah, and they were killed. There were more who died because of the hailstones than by the sword of the Israelites.

¹²On that day when Yahweh gave the Amorites over to them, Joshua addressed Yahweh and said in the sight of all Israel:

“Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and you, moon, in the valley of Aijalon.”

¹³And the sun stood still and the moon stopped until the people had taken revenge on their enemies: so it is written in the Book of the Just, “The sun stood still in mid-heaven and did not hasten to set for almost a whole day. ¹⁴There has not been a day like this before or after in which Yahweh obeyed the order of a man. It was Yahweh who fought for Israel.”

¹⁵Then Joshua and all Israel returned to the camp at Gilgal.

¹⁶But the five kings fled and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah. ¹⁷And so it was told to Joshua: “We have found the five kings. They are hiding in a cave at Makkedah.”

¹⁸So Joshua ordered: “Roll great stones against the entrance of the cave and set men to guard it. ¹⁹But do not stay there. Pursue your enemies and fall upon their rear. Do not let them return to their cities for Yahweh, our God, has placed them in our hands.”

²⁰Joshua and the Israelites destroyed and finished them off. Only a few survivors were left who took refuge in the fortified cities ²¹while all Israel returned unscathed to the camp with Joshua. Henceforth, no one dared challenge them.

²²Then Joshua ordered: “Open the entrance of the cave, take the five kings out and bring them to me.” ²³They did this and brought the five kings before Joshua: the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Lachish, Jarmuth and Eglon. ²⁴Joshua assembled all Israel and said to the captains of the troops: “Come here and step on the necks of these kings.”

So they came near and put their feet on the necks of the kings.

²⁵Then Joshua said to them: “Do not be afraid or lose courage, be valiant and firm, for Yahweh will do so to all your enemies against whom you will fight.”

²⁶Joshua immediately put them to death by hanging them on five trees until evening. ²⁷At nightfall, they took down the bodies of the kings and threw them into the same cave where they had hidden and closed it with great stones which remain there to this day.

Joshua conquers the southern part of Canaan

²⁸On that same day Joshua seized Makkedah. He slew its king and its inhabitants. And he consecrated it and all that was in it in anathema to Yahweh, without sparing anyone. The king suffered the same fate as did the king of Jericho.

Sir 46:4-6; Is 28:21

Is 28:17

Hb 3:11

2S 1:18

2K 20:10

Ps 110:1

Dt 21:22

sun, they thought the earth must have stopped turning. But this explanation is not acceptable either; for, had the earth suddenly stood still, the resulting momentum would have caused total destruction. Therefore, we have to remark that Scripture is citing in this case poetic litera-

ture, the “Book of the Just,” and that the poets are led by their imagination and do not write in the manner of historians or scientists. Hence, they may have wanted to say that simply it was a great day.

²⁹Then Joshua and all Israel went to attack Libnah. ³⁰Yahweh gave the city and its king to the Israelites, and they put to the sword all its inhabitants without sparing anyone. The king met the same fate as the king of Jericho. ³¹From Libnah Joshua went to Lachish, laid siege to it and attacked it. ³²Yahweh also gave them this city; and its king and inhabitants suffered the same fate as Libnah. ³³Then Horam king of Gezer came to help Lachish. But Joshua destroyed him together with all his people without leaving anyone alive.

³⁴From Lachish he then went to Eglon; he besieged it and conquered it on the same day. ³⁵The king and the inhabitants of Eglon were also put to death by the sword. They consecrated the city in anathema as they had done to Lachish.

³⁶From Eglon they went to Hebron. Joshua conquered it together with ³⁷all the towns which were subject to it, put to the sword its king and all its inhabitants, without letting anyone survive. He consecrated it in anathema as he had dealt with Eglon.

³⁸Joshua and all Israel with him turned back to Debir and attacked it. He took it as well as the towns subject to it. ³⁹He put to the sword its king and inhabitants, consecrating them in anathema, without sparing anyone. Debir and its king received the same punishment as Hebron and Libnah.

⁴⁰In this way, Joshua struck the whole region of the Mountains, the Negeb Desert, the plains and the mountain slopes with their kings.

He did not let anyone survive but consecrated all living beings in anathema according to what Yahweh had commanded. ⁴¹Joshua destroyed them all from Kadesh-bamea to Gaza and from Goshen to Gibeon. ⁴²Joshua defeated all these kings and seized all these lands in one single campaign because Yahweh fought for Israel.

⁴³Then he and all Israel returned to their camp at Gilgal.

Conquest of the North

11 • ¹When Jabin king of Hazor came to know all this, he sent ambassadors to Jobab king of Madon, to the king

of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph, ²to the kings in the northern mountains, on the lowland to the south of Chineroth in the plains, and in the heights of Dor on the west, ³to the Canaanites in the east and the west, ⁴to the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites and Jebusites in the mountains, and the Hivites at the foot of Mount Hermon in the region of Mizpah. ⁵And they set out with their troops, a multitude as numerous as the sand of the sea, accompanied by a great number of horses and chariots ready for combat. ⁶All these kings joined forces and encamped together at the spring of Merom to attack Israel.

⁶Then Yahweh said to Joshua: "Do not be afraid, for tomorrow at this hour I will give them to you that you may sacrifice them to me. Cut the hocks of their horses and burn their chariots of war."

⁷So Joshua and all the armed men with him went to Merom and attacked them by surprise. ⁸Yahweh gave them into the hand of Israel; the Israelites destroyed and pursued them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim and as far as Mizpah to the east, without leaving anyone alive. ⁹Joshua also carried out what Yahweh had commanded—cutting the hocks of the horses and burning the chariots.

¹⁰At once Joshua turned back and conquered Hazor, and killed its king. At that time, Hazor was the capital of all those kingdoms. ¹¹He put to the sword all the inhabitants of that city, consecrating it in anathema. No one was left alive, and they immediately set the city on fire.

¹²Joshua took all the cities of these kings and all their kings, and consecrated them in anathema according to what Moses, the servant of Yahweh, had commanded.

¹³Israel set on fire all the cities except those lying on the slopes and on the heights; of these only Hazor was burned by Joshua.

¹⁴The Israelites divided among themselves the plunder and the livestock of these cities, but they put to the sword the whole population without sparing anyone. ¹⁵So what Yahweh had commanded Moses, and what Moses had entrusted to

• **11.1** In Chapter 11, Joshua's campaign in the north of Palestine is described. There he captured Hasor which, with its 40,000 inhabitants, could be called a big city. We are given the

impression that he conquered the entire country. Yet, Chapters 13–19 show that each tribe had to conquer a section of land in a series of individual operations.

Joshua was completely fulfilled. Joshua did not neglect anything that Yahweh had commanded Moses.

¹⁶So Joshua conquered all this land: the mountains, the Negeb, Goshen, the plains, the lowland, and the mountains of Israel with its plains. ¹⁷From the region of the mountain range that rises up to Seir, as far as Baalgad in the valley of Lebanon, to the foot of Mount Hermon, he destroyed all their kings—vanquishing and killing them.

¹⁸The war Joshua waged against these kings lasted a long time. ¹⁹There was no city that made peace with the Israelites except the Hivites of Gibeon; all were conquered.

²⁰Yahweh gave all of them courage to fight against Israel, so that at the end, they could be consecrated in anathema and destroyed without pity as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

²¹At that time, Joshua came back and wiped out the Anakim from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab and from all the mountains of Judah and Israel. They and their cities were given in anathema.

²²No Anakim was left in the land of Israel except in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod. ²³Joshua seized the whole land as Yahweh had directed Moses and gave it as an inheritance to the Israelites to be distributed among their tribes. With this, the land rested from war.

12 ¹These are the kings of the country whom the Israelites defeated, taking their land beyond the Jordan eastward, from the valley of Arnon to Mount Hermon, including all the lowland:

²First, Sihon, king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon, and ruled from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Arnon (the border was at the middle of the valley), as far as the Jabbok River, that was the boundary with the Ammonites. ³To him belonged half of Gilead and the lowland from the east side of the Lake of Chinneroth to the

Beth-jeshimot road, on the east side of the sea of the lowland, that is the Salt Sea, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah.

⁴Secondly, the border of Og, king of Bashan, one of the survivors of the Rephaim, who lived at Ashtaroth and Edrei, ⁵ruled over Mount Hermon, Salecah and all Bashan to the boundary of the Geshurites and Macathites, and over half of Gilead beyond the land of Sihon, king of Heshbon. ⁶Moses, the servant of Yahweh, with the Israelites, defeated them and Moses gave their land to the Reubenites, the Gadites and half the tribe of Mannaseh as their inheritance.

⁷Now these are the kings of the country whom Joshua and the Israelites defeated on the west side of the Jordan, from Baalgad, in the valley of Lebanon, to Mount Halak rising toward Seir. This is the land that Joshua divided among the tribes of Israel: ⁸the hill country and the lowlands, the Arabah, the hillsides, the wilderness and the Negeb. This land had belonged to the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And these were the defeated kings:

⁹king of Jericho, king of Ai near Bethel.

¹⁰king of Jerusalem, king of Hebron.

¹¹king of Jarmuth, king of Lachish.

¹²king of Eglon, king of Gezer.

¹³king of Debir, king of Geder.

¹⁴king of Hormah, king of Arad.

¹⁵king of Libnah, king of Adullam.

¹⁶king of Makkedah, king of Bethel.

¹⁷king of Tappuah, king of Hopher.

¹⁸king of Aphek, king of Sharon.

¹⁹king of Madon, king of Hazor.

²⁰king of Symoon, king of Achshaph.

²¹king of Taanach, king of Megiddo.

²²king of Kadesh, king of Jokneam in Carmel.

²³king of Dor on the hillsides of Dor.

king of Goim in Galilee, ²⁴and king of Tirzah.

Total number of all these kings: thirty-one.

Jdg
1:10-15

Second Part (13:1—22:34):

JOSHUA DISTRIBUTES THE TERRITORY OF CANAAN

Joshua divides the country of Canaan

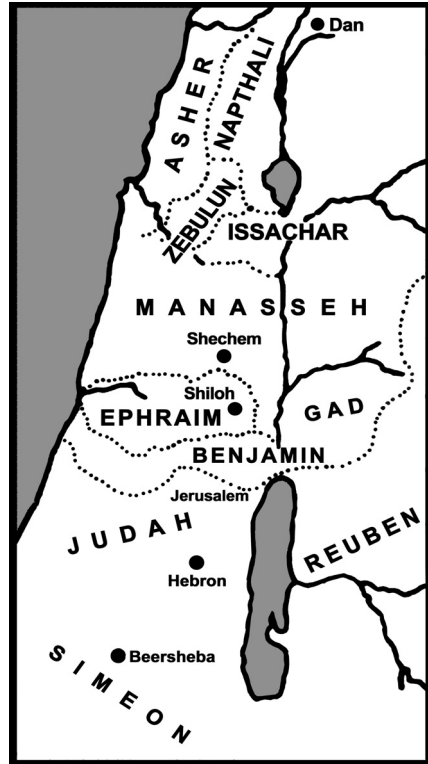
Gen 49;
Dt 33

13 ¹Now Joshua had grown old and advanced in years. Yahweh said to him, “You are old now, yet much of the land is still unconquered, including:

²All the territory of the Philistines and the Geshurites. ³All the land from the river east of Egypt, to the boundary of Ekron in the north that is considered Canaanite territory. (The five chief towns of the Philistines: Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron; the Avvites also in the south.)

⁴The whole country of the Canaanites from Arah, which the Sidonians hold, to Aphekah at the Amorite border, ⁵and then the country of the Gebalites with all Lebanon eastward from Baagad at the foot of Mount Hermon to the Pass of Hamath. ⁶All the land of the Sidonians who live in the highlands from Lebanon to Misrephoth-maim westward.

I myself will drive them all out before the Israelites. In the meantime, share out the land among the Israelites by drawing lots as I have commanded you. ⁷The time has come to divide this land among the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh: from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea westward you shall give it to them; the Mediterranean will mark their boundary.”



• **13.1** Joshua divides the Promised Land among the twelve tribes.

Different people left together, as we read in Exodus 12:38. In Palestine, others joined them (see Jos 8:33). They did not belong to one race nor were they a closely-knit group; and they were certainly not yet an organized nation. Nevertheless, they were already a group of tribes of unequal strength. Two of these tribes assumed a predominant role: Ephraim in the north, and Judah down south.

Among nomads such as these, the members of each tribe all claimed to be descendants of the founder of their tribe, a prestigious man of the past whose name they bore. Inasmuch as the Israelites considered themselves descendants of Jacob-Israel, each of the twelve tribes considered itself as descending from one of the sons of their ancestor, Jacob, from whom they had received their name.

In reality, there were thirteen tribes in all and not twelve. Let us compare the list of Jacob's sons in Genesis 35:23 with that of the

twelve tribes listed in the present book. The list shows agreement in the following names: Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher and Benjamin. The “house of Joseph” formed two tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh (Jos 16:4). Including the tribe of Levi, there were thirteen. But this last tribe was formed by families traditionally dedicated to religious cult who did not have their own territory (Jos 21:10). In this way, the number twelve will be restored when Joshua divides the land.

They apportioned the land by casting lots. In this manner, the lesson is imparted that the Promised Land is a gift from God (Ps 16 uses the same imagery). Each tribe receives a portion which they did not choose and which they must now conquer in order to own. Each of us has received from God his or her own share in life. We have to accept our share in the same way the tribes accepted their “share of their inheritance.” Then we must achieve our destiny with courage and confidence in God just as they did.

⁸As for the other half tribe of Mannaseh, they and the tribes of Reuben and Gad had already received the land given them by Moses on the east side of the Jordan River. Moses the servant of Yahweh had given them ⁹the land as far as Aroer, which lies on the edge of the Arnon valley, with the city in the middle of that valley and all the high, flat land from Medeba to Dibon. ¹⁰All the towns of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who had reigned in Heshbon, were included, as far as the boundary of the Ammonites. ¹¹Gilead and the territory of the Geshurites and Maacathites with all the highlands of Hermon and with the whole of Bashan as far as Salecah. ¹²In Bashan the whole kingdom of Og, who reigned in Ashtaroth and Edrei and was the last survivor of the Rephaim. Moses had conquered these people and driven them out. ¹³But the Israelites did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maacathites, and therefore Geshur and Maacah still live in the midst of Israel to this day.

¹⁴To the tribe of Levi alone no land was given; Yahweh the God of Israel was their inheritance, as he had told them.

Land given to Reuben, Gad and Manasseh

¹⁵Moses had given the tribe of Reuben a part of the land according to their clans. ¹⁶The land they received stretched from Aroer, on the edge of the Arnon Valley, including the town within the valley itself, and all the high, flat land up to Medeba, ¹⁷and Heshbon and all the towns on the high, flat land: Dibon, Bamoth-baal, Beth-baal-meon, ¹⁸Jahaz, Kedemoth Mephaath, ¹⁹Kiriathaim, Sibmah and Zereth-shahar in the highlands of Gor; ²⁰Beth-peor, the slopes of Pisgah, Beth-jeshimoth, ²¹all these towns and the whole kingdom of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon; he had been defeated by Moses, and with him the princes of Midian, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, who had ruled the land for king Sihon who used to live in this country. ²²As for Balaam son of Beor, the seer, the Israelites had put him to the sword with others they had killed. ²³Thus the land of the Reubenites stretched to the Jordan River. This was the inheritance of the tribe of Reuben according to their clans, with the towns and their outlying villages.

²⁴Moses had given the tribe of Gad, a part of the land according to their clans:

²⁵Jazer, all the towns of Gilead, half the country of the Ammonites as far as Aroer facing Rabbah, ²⁶and from Heshbon to Ramathmizpeh and Betonim, and from Mahanaim as far as the territory of Lodebar, ²⁷and lastly, in the Jordan valley: Beth-haram, Beth-nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon the king of Heshbon. The Jordan River was their western border as far north as the Sea of Galilee, on the eastern side of the Jordan. ²⁸This was the inheritance of the tribe of Gad according to their clans, with the towns and their outlying villages.

²⁹Moses had given half the tribe of Manasseh a part of the land according to their clans: ³⁰from Mahanaim right through Bashan, including the whole kingdom of Og the king of Bashan and all sixty villages of Jair in Bashan. ³¹Half of Gilead as well as Ashtaroth and Edrei, the royal cities of Og in Bashan, were given to half the families from Machir, son of Manasseh.

³²This was how Moses divided the land when he was in the plains of Moab, beyond the Jordan east of Jericho. ³³But to the tribe of Levi, Moses had given no land; Yahweh the God of Israel is their inheritance, as he told them.

Num 35:1

14 ¹The land of Canaan was divided among the Israelites by Eleazar the priest and by Joshua son of Nun and by the heads of the families of the tribes of Israel. ²They divided the land by drawing lots as Yahweh had commanded through Moses for the nine. ³(Remember that Moses had given the two and a half tribes beyond the Jordan their own property; to the Levites, he had given no land, ⁴but the sons of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim.) The Levites were given no share of the land except certain towns to live in, with pasture lands nearby for their cattle and property. ⁵In dividing the land, the Israelites did as Yahweh had commanded Moses to do.

Land given to Caleb

⁶When the sons of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal, Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, said to him, "You know what Yahweh said to Moses, the man of God, at Kadesh-barnea concerning you and me. ⁷I was forty years old when Moses, the servant of Yahweh, sent me from Kadesh-

barnea to spy on this land, and I made an honest report about it to him.⁸ But the men who had gone with me discouraged the people, whereas I myself faithfully obeyed Yahweh my God.⁹ That day Moses made this promise to me, 'Because you have obeyed Yahweh my God, the land your foot may walk upon shall be the land which you and your children will own forever.'¹⁰ From then till now, Yahweh has kept me alive in accordance with his promise. It is forty-five years since Yahweh made this promise to Moses (Israel was then journeying through the wilderness), and now I am eighty-five years old.¹¹ Today I am still as strong as the day when Moses sent me out on the raid; for fighting, for going and coming, I am as strong now as then.¹² Give me then the highlands that Yahweh promised me. You know that they are a race of giants called the Anakim and their towns are great and strong. But if Yahweh is with me, I shall drive them out as Yahweh said."

¹³ Joshua blessed Caleb, son of Jephunneh, and gave him the city of Hebron as an inheritance.¹⁴ And hence Hebron down to the present day belongs to the descendants of Caleb son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, because he obeyed Yahweh the God of Israel.¹⁵ The name of Hebron in earlier times was Kiriath-arba. Arba had been the greatest man of the Anakim.

And the country had rest from war.

Boundaries of the tribe of Judah

15¹ The land given to the tribe of Judah according to their clans was near the border of Edom from the wilderness of Zin to Kadesh southwestward.² Their southern border began at the end of the Dead Sea; ³ went south from the Ascent of Akrabim and crossed through Zin. It went south of Kadesh-barnea, passed Hezron, went up to Addar and from there turned toward Karka, ⁴ skirted Azmon, came out at the stream on the border of Egypt and ended at the Mediterranean.

⁵ On the east, the border was formed by the Dead sea as far as the mouth of the Jordan.

⁶ On the north the border began at the Sea Tongue at the mouth of the Jordan. This border went up to Beth-hoglah, passed through the north of Beth-arabah and reached the Stone of Bohan of Reuben. ⁷ The border then went up to Debir

from Acor Valley and turned toward the circle of stones opposite the Ascent of Adummim, south of the valley; the border went on to the waters of En-shemesh and ended at Enrogel. ⁸ Then it went on up the Benhinnom Valley on the south side of the hill where the Jebusite city, that is to say, Jerusalem, was located. The border then climbed to the top of the mountain on the west side of Hinnom Valley and at the northern end of the plain of Rephaim. ⁹ From the mountain the border bent toward the source of the waters of Nephtoah, passed from there toward Mount Ephron and then turned toward Baalah, that is to say, Kiriath-jearim. ¹⁰ From Baalah the border bent westward to the mountain country of Seir, went on the northern slope of Mount Jearim, that is to say, Chesalon, went down to Beth-shemesh and through Timnah, ¹¹ reached the north side of Ekron, turned toward Shikkeron, passed by the Hill of Baalah, then on to Jabneel, and ended at the Big Sea, that is, the Mediterranean.

¹² The western border was the Big Sea itself. This was the border that enclosed the lands given to the clans of the tribe of Judah.

¹³ Caleb son of Jephunneh was given part of the territory of Judah, as Yahweh had commanded Joshua to do. Joshua gave him Kiriath-arba, the chief city of the Anakim, which is now Hebron. ¹⁴ Caleb drove the descendants of Anak out of it: the clans of Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmai. ¹⁵ From there he marched up to attack the people living in Debir, the name of which was once Kiriath-sepher. ¹⁶ Then Caleb said, "To the man who conquers and captures Kiriath-sepher, I will give my daughter Achsah as wife." ¹⁷ Othniel, son of Kenaz, Caleb's brother conquered the city; Caleb gave him his daughter Achsah in marriage. ¹⁸ When she came to her husband, he urged her to ask her father for a field. When she jumped down from her donkey, Caleb asked her, "What do you want?" ¹⁹ She answered, "Grant me a favor; since you have sent me away to the wilderness of the Negeb, at least grant me some springs of water." So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

List of the cities of Judah

²⁰ This was the land given to the tribe of Judah according to their clans.

²¹These are the furthestmost towns of the tribe of Judah, toward the boundary of Edom in the Negeb: Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, ²²Kinah, Dimon, Adadah, ²³Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, ²⁴Ziph, Telem, Bealoth, ²⁵Hazor-hadattah, Kerioth-hezron (that is to say, Hazor), ²⁶Amam, Shema, Moladah, ²⁷Hazar-gaddah, Heshmon, Beth-pelet, ²⁸Hazar-shual, Beer-sheba, Biziothiah, ²⁹Baalath, Lim, Ezem, ³⁰Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah, ³¹Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, ³²Lebaoth, Shilhim, En-rimmon. In all, twenty-nine towns, with their outlying villages. ³³In the lowlands there were fourteen towns with their villages: Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah, ³⁴Zanoah, En-gannim, Tappuah, Enam, ³⁵Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah, ³⁶Shaaraim, Adithaim, Gederah, Gedero-taim: fourteen towns and their villages.

³⁷Zenan, Hadashah, Migdalgad, ³⁸Dilean, Mizpah, Joktheel, ³⁹Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon, ⁴⁰Cabbon, Lahmas, Chitlish, ⁴¹Gederoth, Beth-dagon, Naamah, Makkedah, altogether sixteen towns with their villages.

⁴²Libnah, Ether, Ashan, ⁴³Iptah, Ashnah, Nezib, ⁴⁴Keilah, Achzib, Mareshah, altogether nine towns with their villages.

⁴⁵Ekron with its towns and villages near Ashdod.

⁴⁶From Ekron to the sea, ⁴⁷Ashdod and Gaza with their towns and villages as far as the stream on the border of Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea.

⁴⁸In the highlands: Shamir, Jattir, Socoh, ⁴⁹Dannah, Kiriath-sannah, which is now Debir, ⁵⁰Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, ⁵¹Goshen, Holon, Giloh—eleven towns with their villages.

⁵²Arab, Dumah, Eshan, ⁵³Janum, Beth-tappuah, Aphekah, ⁵⁴Humtah, Kiriath-arba, which is now Hebron, Zior—nine towns with their villages.

⁵⁵Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, ⁵⁶Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, ⁵⁷Kain, Gibeah, Timnah—ten towns with their villages.

⁵⁸Halhul, Beth-zur, Gedor, ⁵⁹Maarath, Beth-anoth, Eltekon—six towns with their villages.

Tekoa, Ephrathah, which is now Beth-lehem, Peor, Etam, Kulon, Tatam, Sores, Carem, Gallim, Bether, Manach—eleven towns with their villages.

⁶⁰Kiriath-baal, which is now Kiriath-jearim, and Rabbah—two towns with their villages.

⁶¹In the wilderness: Beth-arabah, Mid-

din, Secacah, ⁶²Nibshan, the City of Salt and Engedi—six towns with their villages.

⁶³But the people of Judah could not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; the Jebusites lived there side by side with the sons of Judah, as they still do today.

The tribe of Ephraim

16 ¹The land given by lot to the descendants of Joseph stretched from the Jordan opposite Jericho eastward. From Jericho onward the southern border climbed the highlands into the hill country as far as Bethel; ²it left Bethel and Luz and went on toward the border of the Archites of Ataroth; ³then it went westward to the area of the Japhletites as far as the area of Lower Beth-horon. From there it went to Gezer, and reached the Mediterranean Sea. ⁴The tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, descendants of Joseph, divided this inheritance among themselves.

⁵The border of the tribe of Ephraim ran from Ataroth-addr as far as Upper Beth-horon, ⁶and it ended at the Mediterranean Sea. Michmethath was to the north. From there the border turned east towards Tanaath-shiloh and ran beyond it on the east to Janoah. ⁷Then it went down from Janoah to Ataroth and Naarah, touched Jericho and ended at the Jordan. ⁸From Tappuah the border went westward to the stream Kanah and ended at the Mediterranean Sea. This was the land given to the tribe of Ephraim according to their clans, ⁹as well as the towns set apart for the Ephraimites inside the territory of the descendants of Manasseh, all those towns and their villages. ¹⁰The Canaanites living in Gezer were not driven out; they have lived among the Ephraimites to the present day, but are submitted to obligatory works.

The tribe of Manasseh

17 ¹A part of the land awarded to Manasseh, who was Joseph's first-born son, was given to Machir, Manasseh's eldest son and father of Gilead. To him was given, as was fitting for a military hero, the country of Gilead and Bashan. ²Land was also given to other families descended from Manasseh according to their clans: the families of Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hepher, Shemida. These were the

clans of the male descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph.

³Zelophehad son of Hopher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, had no sons, only daughters, whose names are: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. ⁴These daughters went to the priest Eleazar and to Joshua the son of Nun and to the leaders, and said, "Yahweh commanded Moses to give us some of the land among our brothers as our own." According to Yahweh's command, therefore, they were given land along with their male relatives.

⁵In this way Manasseh received ten shares besides the country of Gilead and Bashan which lies across the Jordan, ⁶since Manasseh's female descendants received a share in the land as well as his male descendants. The country of Gilead itself belonged to the rest of the descendants of Manasseh.

⁷The border of Manasseh stretched from Asher to Michmethath, which is opposite Shechem. From there the border went south to the spring of Tappuah. ⁸The land surrounding Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, but the town of Tappuah on Manasseh's border belonged to the descendants of Ephraim. ⁹The border passed down to the stream, south of the river, where the towns set apart for Ephraim from among the towns of Manasseh were situated. The border of Manasseh passed north of the stream and ended at the sea. ¹⁰Ephraim was to the south and Manasseh to the north, and both were bounded on the west by the Mediterranean Sea. They touched Asher to the north and Issachar to the east. ¹¹Within the territories of Issachar and Asher, Manasseh had Beth-shean and Ibleam with their surrounding towns, as well as Dor and Endor, Taanach and Megiddo and their surrounding towns, and a third of the Nepheth. ¹²But the people of Manasseh could not conquer these towns, and the Canaanites continued to live there. ¹³However, when the Israelites became stronger, they forced the Canaanites to work for them, but they never drove them out.

¹⁴The descendants of Joseph spoke to Joshua, "Why have you given us only one share of the land when there are so many of us because Yahweh blessed us?"

¹⁵Joshua answered, "If your people are so many, go up to the forest and clear out

a place for yourselves in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim, since the highlands of Ephraim are too small for you."

¹⁶The descendants of Joseph answered, "The highlands are not enough for us, and, in the plain, the Canaanites have iron chariots, and so have those in Beth-shean and its surrounding towns, and those in the plain of Jezreel." ¹⁷Joshua said to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, "You are a numerous people and very powerful; you will not be left with only this share ¹⁸for you will go up to the forest and clear it. All the land shall be yours, and you will drive out the Canaanites despite their iron chariots and great strength."

Joshua divides the rest of the land

18 ¹After they had conquered the land, the whole community of Israel gathered at Shiloh, and the tent of meeting was set up there.

Jdg
21:19;
1S 1:3

²Among the Israelites were seven tribes which had not yet been given their share of the land. ³Then Joshua said to them, "How much longer will you wait before going in and taking possession of the land which Yahweh, the God of your fathers has given you? ⁴Choose three men from each tribe. I will send them out to make a survey of the whole territory so that it can be divided. ⁵They must divide the land into seven parts, because those of the tribe of Judah have already their territory to the south, and those of the tribe of Joseph have their territory to the north. ⁶You are to survey the land in seven divisions and bring your findings to me here, so that I can cast lots for you before Yahweh our God. ⁷The Levites have no share in the land with the rest of you; their share is to serve as priests of Yahweh, and the tribes of Gad and Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh have received their land beyond the Jordan eastward, as Moses, Yahweh's servant, gave it to them."

⁸To those who were to survey the country, Joshua gave this command before they started on their way: "Go, survey and map the whole country, and then come back to me. Here in Shiloh I will consult Yahweh for you by drawing lots." ⁹So the men left and went all over the country, making a list of all the towns and how they were to be divided into seven parts. When they brought it back to Joshua in the camp at Shiloh, ¹⁰he drew lots to consult Yahweh

for them and divided the land among the Israelites according to their clans.

The tribe of Benjamin

¹¹The first share of land went to the tribe of Benjamin according to their clans: their territory lay between that of the tribes of Judah and Joseph.

¹²The northern border began at the Jordan, climbed to the northern side of Jericho, rose through the hill country westward and ended at the wilderness of Beth-aven.

¹³From there it continued toward the south side of Luz which is now called Bethel; then downward to Ata-roth-addar, on the mountain south of Lower Beth-horon.

¹⁴The border then curved, and on the western side of this mountain turned southward and ended at Kiriath-baal, which is now called Kiriath-jearim, a city of the tribe of Judah. This was the western border.

¹⁵The southern border ran from the edge of Kiriath-jearim toward Gasin, and to the spring of Nephtoah. ¹⁶It continued to the foot of the mountain facing the Valley of Ben-hinnom, at the north end of Rephaim Valley. It then went south through the Valley of Hinnom, south of the mountainside of the Jebusites and reached En-rogel. ¹⁷It then curved northward to En-shemesh coming out at the circles of stones facing the Ascent of Adummim, ¹⁸then on to Cheteph in sight of the Arabah and down to the Arabah and ¹⁹the stone of Bohan (Bohan was a son of Reuben) and from there passed north of the mountainside overlooking the Jordan Valley. The border ended at the bay of the Dead Sea, at the mouth of the Jordan. This was the southern border. ²⁰The Jordan itself was the eastern border. Such was the land given to the tribe of Benjamin, with the borders defining it.

²¹The towns of the tribe of Benjamin, according to their clans, were Jericho, Beth-hoglah, Emek-keziz; ²²Beth-arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel; ²³Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, ²⁴Chephar-ammoni, Ophni, Geba: twelve towns and their surrounding villages. ²⁵Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth; ²⁶Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah; ²⁷Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah; ²⁸Zela, Haeleph, Jerusalem, Gibeah and Kiriath: fourteen towns with their surrounding villages. This was the land given to the tribe of Benjamin, according to their clans.

The share of the other tribes

19 ¹The second share of land went to the tribe of Simeon, according to their clans; their land was encircled by the land of the tribe of Judah. ²For they had Beer-sheba, Shema, Moladah; ³Hazarshual, Balah, Ezem; ⁴Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah; ⁵Ziglag, Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susah; ⁶Beth-lebaoth and Sharuhén—thirteen towns and their surrounding villages: ⁷Ain, Rimmon, Ether and Ashan—four towns and their surrounding villages. ⁸Moreover, they were given all the villages lying outside these towns as far as Baalath-beer, Ramah of the Negeb. This was the land given to the tribe of Simeon according to their clans.

⁹This land was taken from the territory of Judah, because their share of these was too large for them; this is why the tribe of Simeon was given land within the territory of the tribe of Judah.

¹⁰The third share of land went to the tribe of Zebulun according to their clans; their border reached as far as Sarid.

¹¹From there the border climbed westward to Maraalah, touching Dabbesheth first and then the stream east of Jokneam. ¹²From Sarid it went eastward toward the sunrise to the border of Chisloth-tabor, then to Dobrath and to Japhia. ¹³From there it continued eastward to Gathhepher and Ittahkazin; it came out at Rimmon and turned toward Neah. ¹⁴On the north the border bent toward Hannathon and ended at the valley of Iphthahel. ¹⁵It included Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Iralah and Bethlehem—twelve towns with their surrounding villages. ¹⁶This was the land received by the tribe of Zebulun according to their clans: these towns and their surrounding villages.

¹⁷The fourth share of land went to the tribe of Issachar, according to their clans. ¹⁸Their border reached to Jezreel and included Chesulloth and Shunem; ¹⁹Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath; ²⁰Dobrath, Kishion, Ebez; ²¹Remeth and En-gannim, En-haddah and Beth-pazzez. ²²Their border touched Tabor and Shahazimah and Beth-shemesh, and ended at the Jordan: sixteen towns with their surrounding villages. ²³This was the land given to the tribe of Issachar, according to their clans: the towns with their surrounding villages.

²⁴The fifth share of land went to the tribe of Asher, according to their clans. ²⁵Within

their territory were Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph, ²⁶Allammelech, Amad and Mishal; on the west their border touched Carmel and the stream of the Libnath; ²⁷on the other side it went eastward to Beth-dagon, touching Zebulun and the Valley of Iphtahel on the way north to Beth-emek and Neiel. It continued north to Cabul, ²⁸Abdon, Rehob, Hammon and Kanah as far as Sidon the Great. ²⁹The border then turned back toward Ramah reaching the fortress city of Tyre. From there it turned to Hosah and ended at the Mediterranean Sea. It included Mahalab, Achzib, ³⁰Acco, Aphek, Rehob: twenty-two towns with their surrounding villages. ³¹This was the land given to the tribe of Asher, according to their clans; these towns with their surrounding villages.

³²The sixth share of land went to the tribe of Naphtali according to their clans. ³³Their border went from Heleph and the Oak of Zanaanim to Adami-negeb, to Jabneel as far as Lakkum, and ended at the Jordan. ³⁴From there the border ran west to Aznoth-tabor and went on to Hukkuk, touching Zebulun on the south, Asher on the west and the Jordan on the east. ³⁵The fortified towns were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth; ³⁶Adamah, Ramah, Hazor; ³⁷Kedesh, Edrei, En-hazor; ³⁸Yiron, Migdalel, Horem, Beth-anath, Beth-shemesh: nineteen towns with their surrounding villages. ³⁹This was the land given to the tribe of Naphtali according to their clans.

⁴⁰The seventh share of the land went to the tribe of Dan according to their clans, ⁴¹Within their territory were Zorah, Eshtaol, Irshemesh; ⁴²Sha-alabbin, Aijalon, Ithlah; ⁴³Elon, Timnah, Ekron, ⁴⁴Eltekeh, Gibbethon, ⁴⁵Baalath; Jehud, Bene-berak, Gath-rimmon; ⁴⁶Mejarkon and Rakkon with the land around Joppa.

⁴⁷But the territory of the tribe of Dan was too small for them; and therefore they went up and attacked Leshem and captured it and killed its people. Having seized the town they settled in it, and changed the name of Leshem to Dan after Dan their ancestor. ⁴⁸This was the land of the tribe of Dan, according to their clans: these towns with their surrounding villages.

⁴⁹When the Israelites finished distributing the land by drawing lots, they gave Joshua son of Nun a part of the land as his own; ⁵⁰at the command of Yahweh, they

gave him the town he had asked for, Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim; he rebuilt the city and settled there.

⁵¹These are the shares of land which Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of each family divided among the tribes of Israel by drawing lots at Shiloh, in Yahweh's presence, at the door of the tent of meeting; and thus they finished dividing the land.

The cities of refuge

20 ¹Yahweh said to Joshua, ²“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: Choose the cities of refuge about which I told you through Moses, ³towns where a person who kills someone accidentally may find safety; they are to be your refuge from the dead person's relative who is looking for revenge.

⁴The man who has killed may run away to one of these towns; he shall appear at the entrance to the town and explain his case to the elders of the place. They shall welcome him and assign him a place to live among them. ⁵If the person who wants revenge follows him there, they are not to hand him over, since he has killed his neighbor accidentally and not out of hatred.

⁶The man who has killed must remain in that town until he has received a public trial and until the death of the high priest then in office. Only then may the man who has killed go back to his own town and his own house, to the town from which he has escaped.”

⁷For this purpose they set aside Kedesh in Galilee, in the hill country of Naphtali, Shechem in the highlands of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba, which is now Hebron, in the hill country of Judah.

⁸East of the Jordan, in the desert east of Jericho, they chose Bezer in the territory of Reuben, Ramoth-gilead in the territory of Gad, and Golan in Bashan in the territory of Manasseh. ⁹These were the towns set aside for all the Israelites and for any foreigner living among them, where anyone who had killed a person accidentally could find safety from the dead person's relative looking for revenge, until he had been given a public trial.

The Levitical towns

21 ¹The heads of families among the Levites came to Eleazar the priest

21:13;
Num
35:3;
Dt 19:1

Num
35:1-8;
6:39-66

and to Joshua son of Nun and to the heads of families of all the tribes of Israel. ²At Shiloh in the land of Canaan, they said to them, "Yahweh commanded through Moses that we should be given towns to live in, with the pasture land around them for our cattle."

³In accordance with Yahweh's command, the Israelites gave the Levites certain cities and pasture lands out of their own territories.

⁴First among the Levite clan of Kohath, the families descended from Aaron the priest, were given thirteen towns from the territories of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin; ⁵the other Kohath families received, clan by clan, ten towns from the territories of Ephraim, Dan and half the tribe of Manasseh. ⁶The clan of Gershon was given thirteen towns from the territories of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and half the tribe of Manasseh in Bashan. ⁷The families of the clan of Merari were given twelve towns from the territories of Reuben, Gad and Zebulun.

⁸These towns and the pasture lands near them the Israelites gave to the Levites by drawing lots, as Yahweh had commanded through Moses.

⁹These are the towns of Judah and Simeon that Joshua gave ¹⁰to the descendants of Aaron who were of the Kohathite clan of the Levites, the first to be given some cities.

¹¹They gave them Kiriath-arba, the chief city of the Anakim, which is now Hebron, in the hill country of Judah, with the pasture lands around it. ¹²But the fields and surrounding villages of this town had already been given to Caleb son of Jephunneh as his property. ¹³To the descendants of Aaron the priest, they gave Hebron, a city of refuge, and the pasture lands near it; also Libnah with its pasture lands, ¹⁴and Jattir, Eshtemoa, ¹⁵Holon, Debir, ¹⁶Ashan, Juttah and Beth-shemesh, each with its pasture lands: nine towns taken from these two tribes. ¹⁷From the territory of Benjamin four towns: Gibeon and Geba with their pasture lands, ¹⁸Anathoth and Almon with theirs. ¹⁹The towns of the priests, the descendants of Aaron, were thirteen towns in all, with their pasture lands.

²⁰Some towns from the territory of Ephraim were given to the other families of the Levite clan of Kohath: ²¹the city of

refuge, Shechem, with its pasture lands, in the hill country of Ephraim, together with Gezer, ²²Kibzaim and Beth-horon, each with its pasture lands: four towns. ²³From the territory of Dan, Elteke, Gibbethon, ²⁴Aijalon and Gathrimmon with their pasture lands: four towns. ²⁵From the territory of half the tribe of Manasseh they were given two towns: Taanach and Jibleam with their pasture lands. ²⁶In all, ten towns with their pasture lands were given to the families of the clan of Kohath.

²⁷To the Levite clan of Gershon were given the city of refuge Golan in Bashan and also Ashtaroth, each with its pasture lands: two towns, both from the territory of the half tribe of Manasseh. ²⁸From the territory of Issachar four towns: Kishion, Dobrath, ²⁹Jarmuth and En-gannim, each with its pasture lands. ³⁰From the territory of Asher four towns: Mishal, Abdon, ³¹Helkath and Rehob, each with its pasture lands. ³²From the territory of Naphtali three towns: Kadesh, the city of refuge in Galilee, Hammoth-dor and Rakkath, each with its pasture lands. ³³The Gershonites according to their clans were given thirteen towns in all with their pasture lands.

³⁴To the clans of Merari, the rest of the Levites, were given four towns with their pasture lands from the territory of Zebulun: ³⁵Jokneam, Kartah, Rimmon and Nahalal. ³⁶From the territory of Reuben, beyond the Jordan four towns: the city of refuge Bezer, Jahaz, ³⁷Kedemoth and Mephaath, each with its pasture lands. ³⁸From the tribe of Gad four towns: the city of refuge Ramoth-gilead, Mahanaim, ³⁹Heshbon and Jazer, each with pasture lands. ⁴⁰A total of twelve towns were given to the clan of Merari.

⁴¹The towns thus given to the Levites from the Israelite inheritance were ⁴²forty-eight, with their pasture lands. All these towns, as well as the pasture lands around them, were given to the Levites.

⁴³So it was that Yahweh gave the Israelites all the land he had solemnly promised to give their ancestors. They took possession of it and began to live there. ⁴⁴Yahweh gave them peace throughout their land just as he had promised their ancestors. Not one of their enemies was able to stand against them; Yahweh gave them victory over all their enemies ⁴⁵and kept all the promises he had made to the people of Israel.

The question of the altar across the Jordan

22 • ¹Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh ²and said to them, ³“You have observed all that Moses, the servant of Yahweh ordered you, and you have obeyed me constantly. You have never deserted your brothers over this long period of time; at every point you have obeyed the orders of Yahweh your God. ⁴Now that Yahweh your God has granted your brothers the rest he promised them, go back to your tents, to the land given into your possession by Moses the servant of Yahweh, beyond the Jordan.

⁵But take care above all to keep the commandments of the law which Moses the servant of Yahweh gave you: love Yahweh your God, follow his paths always, keep his commandments, be faithful to him and serve him with all your heart and all your soul.” ⁶So Joshua blessed them and sent them away; they went home to their tents.

⁷Moses had given territory in Bashan to one half of the tribe of Manasseh; because of this Joshua gave land to the other half of Manasseh among their brothers on the west bank of the Jordan. As Joshua sent them home to their tents he blessed them ⁸and said to them, “You are going back to your tents with great wealth, with cattle in plenty, with silver and gold, bronze and iron and great quantities of clothing; these are the spoils of your enemies that you shared with your brothers.”

⁹The Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh went home again; they left the Israelites at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, and made their way back to the land of Gilead, the territory which belonged to them and where they had settled in accordance with the order of Yahweh given through Moses. ¹⁰When they came to the stone circle at the Jordan which is in Canaanite territory, the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built there beside the Jordan, an imposing altar of great size. ¹¹The Israelites were told, “The Reubenites, the Gadites and the

half-tribe of Manasseh have built this altar facing the land of Canaan near the stone circle at the Jordan, beyond the territory of the Israelites.”

¹²When the Israelites heard this, the entire Israelite community assembled at Shiloh to launch an attack against them.

¹³The Israelites sent the priest Phinehas son of Eleazar to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, in the land of Gilead, ¹⁴and with him ten leading men, one leader from each tribe in Israel; every one of them was head of his family among the clans of Israel. ¹⁵When they came to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh in the land of Gilead, they said to them:

¹⁶“The whole community of Yahweh asks you: What do you mean by this treachery committed against the God of Israel? Why turn aside from Yahweh today, building yourselves an altar? You are sinning against Yahweh himself.

¹⁷Was the sin at Peor not enough, the sin from which we are not cleansed even now, in spite of the plague that ravaged the whole community of Yahweh? ¹⁸You have stopped following Yahweh today, and you have set yourselves in revolt against him today. Tomorrow his anger will be roused against the whole community of Israel.

¹⁹Do you think your land is unclean? Then cross over into the territory of Yahweh, where his Holy Tent is and come to live among us. But do not rebel against Yahweh or set yourselves apart by building an altar to vie with the altar of Yahweh our God. ²⁰When Achan, son of Zerah betrayed his trust in the matter of the anathema, did not Yahweh vent his anger on the whole community of Israel, although he was only one man? Did he not have to die for his sin?”

²¹The Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered the heads of the clans of Israel:

²²“Yahweh is the God of gods! Yahweh well knows, and let Israel know it too: Let Yahweh punish us immediately if there has been defiance or treachery on our part

• **22.1** The situation of the tribes settled towards the east of the Jordan was ambiguous: they were outside the Promised Land with the Jordan as its boundary (see note Jos 3). Chapter 22 affirms the rightful claim of Transjordanian tribes as belonging to the people of Israel and

wants to justify the existence in those times of the provincial Sanctuaries. It was only in the time of Josiah, at the end of the seventh century B.C., that all cult would be centered at the Sanctuary of Jerusalem.

Num
32:20

3:21;
12:35

Dt 12

Num
25:3

against Yahweh. ²³Let Yahweh punish us if we have built an altar to turn away from Yahweh and offer holocaust and oblation and communion sacrifice on it. ²⁴We made it to prevent what might happen one day when your children say to ours: ‘What link have you with Yahweh the God of Israel?’ ²⁵Has not Yahweh set the boundary of the Jordan between us and you, you sons of Reuben and sons of Gad? You have no share in Yahweh.’ Thus your children might make us turn aside from Yahweh.

²⁶So we said to each other, ‘Let us build this altar, not for holocausts or other sacrifices ²⁷but as a witness between us and you and among our descendants after us. It will prove that we, too, worship Yahweh with our holocausts, our victims and our communion sacrifices in his presence. So that your children will never be able to say to ours: You have no share in Yahweh. ²⁸For, in this case, we should say to them: Look at this structure, Yahweh’s altar made by our ancestors not for holocausts or other sacrifices but as a witness between us and you.’ ²⁹We have no intention of defying Yahweh or turning away from him today. We are not building

an altar for holocaust or oblations or sacrifices to compete with the altar of Yahweh our God that stands before his tabernacle!”

³⁰When Phinehas the priest, and the leaders of the community who were with him, heard the answer of the sons of Gad and of Reuben and of Manasseh, they approved of them. ³¹Then the priest Phinehas son of Eleazar said to the sons of Reuben and sons of Gad and sons of Manasseh, “Now we clearly see that Yahweh is among us, because you have not sinned against him; you have saved the children of Israel from the punishment of Yahweh.”

³²The priest Phinehas son of Eleazar and the leaders left the Reubenites and the Gadites and returned from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, and they brought back this answer to the Israelites. ³³The Israelites were pleased to hear this; they gave thanks to God and spoke no more of making war and ravaging the country where the sons of Reuben and of Gad had settled. ³⁴The Reubenites and the Gadites named the altar: ‘Witness’, “Because,” they said, “it will be a witness between us that Yahweh is God.”

Gen
31:48

Third Part (23:1—24:33):

THE FAREWELL AND DEATH OF JOSHUA

Joshua’s last discourse

23 ¹A long time after Yahweh gave peace to Israel in all its borders, ²Joshua, who was now very old and burdened with age, summoned all Israel—their elders, leaders, secretaries and judges—and he said to them: “I am now very old. ³You have seen all that Yahweh has done to all these nations for your sake and how he himself has fought for you. ⁴See, I have distributed to you the territory of all these nations that we destroyed from the Jordan to the Great Sea, as well as those nations that still remain. ⁵Yahweh, our God, will continue driving them back before you and will deprive them of their lands that you may take them as Yahweh has promised you.

⁶Therefore be very valiant and have the determination to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, without turning

aside from it either to the right or to the left. ⁷Do not intermingle with these nations that are left among you. Do not call upon their gods or swear by their name. Do not serve them or bow before them, ⁸but remain united to Yahweh, our God, as you have done to this day. ⁹For that reason, Yahweh has driven away before you many powerful nations. No one was able to stand before your presence. ¹⁰One of you pursued a thousand since Yahweh, our God, fought for you as he had promised. ¹¹So then, be very careful to love Yahweh, your God.

¹²But if you separate yourselves from him and become one with the rest of these nations that still remain among you, if they come to be your relatives and you intermarry with them, ¹³know very well that Yahweh shall no longer drive out these nations before you, but they shall be a

23:13;
Jer 5:7

snare and a trap for you, a scourge on your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this beautiful land Yahweh, our God, has given you.

¹⁴I am now about to go the way of all creatures, so I say to you: know in your soul and in your conscience that all the promises of Yahweh, our God, have been fulfilled; not one of them has failed. ¹⁵But just as all these promises of Yahweh in your favor have been fulfilled, so shall Yahweh bring all the evil he has threatened against you until you have been wiped out from this magnificent land he has given you, ¹⁶if you break the Covenant that Yahweh, our God, has given us. If you follow and serve other gods and bow before them, the wrath of Yahweh shall rise against you, and you shall suddenly perish from this fertile land he has given you.”

The Covenant renewed at Shechem

24 • ¹Joshua summoned all the tribes of Israel in Shechem, and assembled the elders, leaders, judges and secretaries. And together they presented themselves before God.

²Addressing the people, Joshua said to them: “Yahweh, the God of Israel, commands me to say to you: Your ancestors lived beyond the Euphrates River—Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor—serving other gods. ³But I brought Abraham your father from beyond the Euphrates and led him through the whole land of Canaan. Then I gave him a son Isaac, that he might have numerous descendants. ⁴And to Isaac, I gave two sons: Esau and Jacob. Esau received the mountains of Seir as his inheritance, while Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.

⁵Then I sent Moses and Aaron to

punish Egypt in the way that you know, that you might leave. ⁶Then I brought your ancestors out of Egypt and you came to the sea. The Egyptians pursued you with chariots and horses as far as the Red Sea. ⁷Then you cried to Yahweh, and he put immense darkness between you and the Egyptians. He made the sea go back on them and they were drowned. You have witnessed all the things he did in Egypt, and then you lived in the desert for a long time. ⁸Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites who were on the east of the Jordan. You fought them but it was I who gave them into your hand; you destroyed them and you seized their lands.

⁹Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab, declared war on Israel and commanded Balaam son of Beor to curse you. ¹⁰But I would not listen to him, so Balaam blessed you and I saved you from the hands of Balak.

¹¹Then you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the landlords of Jericho fought against you: the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Gergashites, Hivites and Jebusites declared war on you, but I gave them to you. ¹²The two Amorite kings fled from you because of the swarm of hornets that attacked them and not because of your sword and bow. ¹³I gave you lands which you have not tilled, cities which you did not build but in which you now live. I gave you vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant but from which you now eat.

• **24.1** By the time Joshua disappears, the presence of Israel in the hills and plains of Palestine was well-established. They had asserted themselves either by peaceful infiltration or conquest. What is even more important, they were aware of their common destiny.

The twelve tribes gather together in Shechem in central Palestine, where the tribes of Joseph have settled and are stronger and keep the memory of Moses alive zealously. Here the Cov-

enant celebrated by Moses is renewed. See Exodus 24 and last chapters of Deuteronomy.

After recalling the interventions made by Yahweh to help Israel, Joshua invites the assembly to choose Yahweh and to reject foreign gods. The law of the Covenant is committed to writing.

Remembrance of the Covenant of Shechem will keep alive the aspiration for unity and fidelity to Yahweh during those dark moments after Joshua's death, that is, during the period of the Judges.

Ezk 20:7

¹⁴ So fear Yahweh, and be sincere and faithful in serving him. Set aside those gods your ancestors worshiped in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Serve only Yahweh. ¹⁵ But if you do not want to serve Yahweh, make known this very day whom you shall serve—whether they be the gods your ancestors served in Mesopotamia or the gods of the Amorites who formerly occupied the land in which you now live. As for me, I and my household will serve Yahweh.”

¹⁶ The people answered: “May God not permit that we ever abandon Yahweh to serve other gods! ¹⁷ For it was he who brought us and our ancestors out of Egypt, the house of slavery. It was he who did those great wonders that we have seen; he protected us on the way and through all the land where we passed, ¹⁸ driving away before us all the nations especially the Amorites who lived in this land. So we shall also serve Yahweh: he is our God!”

34:14

¹⁹ Joshua asked the people: “Will you be able to serve Yahweh? He is a holy God, a jealous God who does not tolerate wickedness or faults. ²⁰ If you abandon Yahweh to serve other gods, he will turn against you and just as he has done you so much good, so shall he punish you and destroy you.”

²¹ The people replied: “No, may it not be as you say. We will serve Yahweh.”

23:21;
24:3

²² Joshua said: “You yourselves are witnesses that you have chosen Yahweh to serve him.” They answered: “We are witnesses.”

²³ Joshua then said, “Remove now from your midst any other gods and serve Yahweh, the God of Israel, with all your heart.” ²⁴ The people answered: “We will serve Yahweh, our God, and obey his commands.”

Gen
35:2;
15 7:3

²⁵ On that day at Shechem, Joshua made a Covenant with the people and fixed laws and ordinances. ²⁶ He also wrote down everything expressed in the book of the law of God; he chose a great stone and put it under the oak tree in the sacred place of Yahweh.

Dt
29:11;
31:26;
Ne 8:18;
9:3

²⁷ Then Joshua said to the people: “This stone shall be a witness to all that Yahweh said to us, for it heard all these words. It shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with Yahweh.”

Gen
31:48;
Is 59:13

²⁸ Joshua immediately sent the people away and everyone returned to his land.

Jdg 2:6

²⁹ After all these deeds, Joshua, son of Nun and servant of Yahweh, died at the age of a hundred and ten. ³⁰ They buried him in his land at Timnath-serah, in the hill country of Ephraim, to the north of Mount Gaash. ³¹ Israel served Yahweh throughout the whole life of Joshua and of the elders who outlived Joshua and who had witnessed all the wonders Yahweh did for Israel. ³² The Israelites brought from Egypt the bones of Joseph. They buried them at Shechem in a place in the field which Jacob bought from the children of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for a hundred pieces of silver. This became the possession of the children of Joseph.

Jdg
2:8-10

Jdg 2:7

³³ Eleazar the son of Aaron also died and they buried him on the hill given to his son Phinehas on the mountains of Ephraim.