

Joshua's Farewell Address to Transjordan Tribes (1400 BC)

Joshua 22:1–8

Joshua's Exhortation

1 Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh,
 2 and said to them, "You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have listened to my voice in all that I commanded you.
 3 You have not forsaken your brothers these many days to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God.
 4 And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as He spoke to them; therefore turn now and go to your tents, to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan.
 5 Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul."

Joshua's Blessing

6 So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents.
 7 Now to the one half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given *a possession* in Bashan, but to the other half Joshua gave *a possession* among their brothers westward beyond the Jordan. So when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them,
 8 and said to them, "Return to your tents with great riches and with very much livestock, with silver, gold, bronze, iron, and with very many clothes; divide the spoil of your enemies with your brothers."

A Crisis of Loyalties (1400 BC)

Joshua 22:9–34

The Crisis Begins

9 The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned *home* and departed from the sons of Israel at Shiloh which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, to the land of their possession which they had possessed, according to the command of the LORD through Moses.
 10 When they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan, a large altar in appearance.
 11 And the sons of Israel heard *it* said, "Behold, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar at the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan, on the side *belonging to* the sons of Israel."
 12 When the sons of Israel heard *of it*, the whole congregation of the sons of Israel gathered themselves at Shiloh to go up against them in war.

The Accusation

13 Then the sons of Israel sent to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest,
 14 and with him ten chiefs, one chief for each father's household from each of the tribes of Israel; and each one of them *was* the head of his father's household among the thousands of Israel.
 15 They came to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them saying,
 16 "Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD, 'What is this unfaithful act which you have committed against the God of Israel, turning away from following the LORD this day, by building yourselves an altar, to rebel against the LORD this day?
 17 Is not the iniquity of Peor enough for us, from which we have not cleansed ourselves to this day, although a plague came on the congregation of the LORD,
 18 that you must turn away this day from following the LORD? If you rebel against the LORD today, He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel tomorrow.
 19 If, however, the land of your possession is unclean, then cross into the land of the possession of the LORD, where the LORD's tabernacle stands, and take possession among us. Only do not rebel against the LORD, or rebel against us by building an altar for yourselves, besides the altar of the LORD our God.
 20 Did not Achan the son of Zerah act unfaithfully in the things under the ban, and wrath fall on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity.'"

The Defense

21 Then the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered and spoke to the heads of the families of Israel.
 22 "The Mighty One, God, the LORD, the Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows, and may Israel itself know. If *it was* in rebellion, or if

in an unfaithful act against the LORD do not save us this day!

23 If we have built us an altar to turn away from following the LORD, or if to offer a burnt offering or grain offering on it, or if to offer sacrifices of peace offerings on it, may the LORD Himself require it.

24 But truly we have done this out of concern, for a reason, saying, 'In time to come your sons may say to our sons, "What have you to do with the LORD, the God of Israel?"

25 For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between us and you, *you* sons of Reuben and sons of Gad; you have no portion in the LORD." So your sons may make our sons stop fearing the LORD.'

26 "Therefore we said, 'Let us build an altar, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice;

27 rather it shall be a witness between us and you and between our generations after us, that we are to perform the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices and with our peace offerings, so that your sons will not say to our sons in time to come, "You have no portion in the LORD."

28 Therefore we said, 'It shall also come about if they say *this* to us or to our generations in time to come, then we shall say, "See the copy of the altar of the LORD which our fathers made, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice; rather it is a witness between us and you."

29 Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD and turn away from following the LORD this day, by building an altar for burnt offering, for grain offering or for sacrifice, besides the altar of the LORD our God which is before His tabernacle."

The Resolution

30 So when Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the congregation, even the heads of the families of Israel who *were* with him, heard the words which the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the sons of Manasseh spoke, it pleased them.

31 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the sons of Manasseh, "Today we know that the LORD is in our midst, because you have not committed this unfaithful act against the LORD; now you have delivered the sons of Israel from the hand of the LORD."

32 Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest and the leaders returned from the sons of Reuben and from the sons of Gad, from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the sons of Israel, and brought back word to them.

33 The word pleased the sons of Israel, and the sons of Israel blessed God; and they did not speak of going up against them in war to destroy the land in which the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad were living.

34 The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad called the altar *Witness*; "For," *they said*, "it is a witness between us that the LORD is God."

Joshua's Farewell Address to All Israel (c. 1380 BC)

Joshua 23

1 Now it came about after many days, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies on every side, and Joshua was old, advanced in years,

2 that Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders and their heads and their judges and their officers, and said to them, "I am old, advanced in years.

3 And you have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the LORD your God is He who has been fighting for you.

4 See, I have apportioned to you these nations which remain as an inheritance for your tribes, with all the nations which I have cut off, from the Jordan even to the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun.

5 The LORD your God, He will thrust them out from before you and drive them from before you; and you will possess their land, just as the LORD your God promised you.

6 Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left,

7 so that you will not associate with these nations, these which remain among you, or mention the name of their gods, or make *anyone* swear *by them*, or serve them, or bow down to them.

8 But you are to cling to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.

9 For the LORD has driven out great and strong nations from before you; and as for you, no man has stood before you to this day.

10 One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who fights for you, just as He promised you.

11 So take diligent heed to yourselves to love the LORD your God.

12 For if you ever go back and cling to the rest of these nations, these which remain among you, and intermarry with them, so that you associate with them and they with you,

13 know with certainty that the LORD your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they will be a snare and a trap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

14 "Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has

failed.

15 It shall come about that just as all the good words which the LORD your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the threats, until He has destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

16 When you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you will perish quickly from off the good land which He has given you.”

Covenant Renewal at Shechem (c. 1380 BC)

Joshua 24:1–28

Judges 2:6

Remembering the Past

1 Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God.

2 Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, *namely*, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.

3 Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.

4 To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, and to Esau I gave Mount Seir to possess it; but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.

5 Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst; and afterward I brought you out.

6 I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and Egypt pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea.

7 But when they cried out to the LORD, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them and covered them; and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness for a long time.

8 Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan, and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land when I destroyed them before you.

9 Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel, and he sent and summoned Balaam the son of Beor to curse you.

10 But I was not willing to listen to Balaam. So he had to bless you, and I delivered you from his hand.

11 You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, *and* the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Thus I gave them into your hand.

12 Then I sent the hornet before you and it drove out the two kings of the Amorites from before you, *but* not by your sword or your bow.

13 I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.’

Renewal of Covenant Loyalty

14 “Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

15 If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

16 The people answered and said, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods;

17 for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed.

18 The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God.”

19 Then Joshua said to the people, “You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins.

20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you.”

21 The people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the LORD.”

22 Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the LORD, to serve Him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.”

23 “Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”

24 The people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice.”

Sealing the Covenant

25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

26 And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.

27 Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God."

28 Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance.

6 When Joshua had dismissed the people, the sons of Israel went each to his inheritance to possess the land.

The Death of Joshua (c. 1380 BC)

Joshua 24:29–33

Judges 2:8–9, 7

29 It came about after these things that

Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old.

30 And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north of Mount Gaash.

31 Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

32 Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons.

33 And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him at Gibeah of Phinehas his son, which was given him in the hill country of Ephraim.

8 Then

Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten.

9 And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

7 The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

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Chronological Notes

- 1) We know that Joshua died at the age of 110 (Josh 24:29; Judg 2:8). However, we are not told how old Joshua was at earlier points in his life. Instead we are told: a) Joshua was a "young man" at the time of the Exodus (Exod 33:11), b) Joshua was "old and advanced in years" at the end of the conquest of Canaan (Josh 13:1), and c) Joshua was "old and advanced in years" when he made his last exhortation to Israel (Josh 23:1—an event that took place "many days" after the conquest).
- 2) How old was Joshua when he was a "young man"? There are a few clues that can help us assign a reasonable age to Joshua at the time of the Exodus: a) Joshua was chosen to lead the attack against the Amalekites at Rephidim in 1446 BC (Exod 17:8–16), b) Joshua was a leader of the tribe of Ephraim and one of the 12 spies sent into Canaan by Moses in 1445 BC (Num 13:8, 16—Caleb was 40 at the time, cf. Josh 14:10), c) the minimum age for military service was 20 (Num 1:2–3), d) the minimum age for performing Levitical service in the Tabernacle was 25/30 (Num 4:3; 8:24), and e) Rehoboam was referred to as being "young" at the age of 41 (1 Kgs 14:21; inferred from 12:8). This data leads us to conclude that Joshua was most likely in his early 40s at the time of the Exodus (we infer that Joshua was older than Caleb due to the disparity in physical condition at the end of the conquest; cf. Josh 14:1–10).
- 3) If we guess that Joshua was 5 years older than Caleb (who was 39 at the time of the Exodus), then we have an age of 44 for Joshua at the time of the Exodus. Does this age make sense of all the relevant data? The age of 44 fits all the requirements of age given by the law, makes sense of Joshua being a tribal leader and a military commander, and yet still fits the description of "young man." It also means that Joshua was 90 at the end of the conquest (Caleb being 85), which is a good age to fit the description of being "old and advanced in years" (cf. Eli in 1 Sam 4:15–18). Thus we conclude that Joshua died approximately 66

years after the exodus in 1446 - 66 = c. 1380 BC.¹

¹ Petrovich suggests c. 1384 BC for Joshua's death, making him 48 years old at the Exodus [Douglas Petrovich, "The Dating of Hazor's Destruction in Joshua 11 By Way of Biblical, Archaeological, and Epigraphical Evidence," *JETS* 51/3 (Sept 2008): 496, n. 27]. Merrill speculates that Joshua was 30 at the Exodus, with a date of c. 1366 BC for his death [Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 147]. Steinmann suggests 1399–1379 BC for the period for the deaths of Joshua and the elders [Andrew E. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 106].