

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

Joshua 22:1–8

Joshua's Exhortation

- 1 Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh
 2 and told them: "You have carried out all the instructions of Moses the LORD's servant, and you have obeyed all I have told you.
 3 You have not abandoned your fellow Israelites this entire time, right up to this very day. You have completed the task given you by the LORD your God.
 4 Now the LORD your God has made your fellow Israelites secure, just as he promised them. So now you may turn around and go to your homes in your own land which Moses the LORD's servant assigned to you east of the Jordan.
 5 But carefully obey the commands and instructions Moses the LORD's servant gave you. Love the LORD your God, follow all his instructions, obey his commands, be loyal to him, and serve him with all your heart and being!"

Joshua's Blessing

- 6 Joshua rewarded them and sent them on their way; they returned to their homes.
 7 (Now to one half-tribe of Manasseh, Moses had assigned land in Bashan; and to the other half Joshua had assigned land on the west side of the Jordan with their fellow Israelites.) When Joshua sent them home, he rewarded them,
 8 saying, "Take home great wealth, a lot of cattle, silver, gold, bronze, iron, and a lot of clothing. Divide up the goods captured from your enemies with your brothers."

A Crisis of Loyalties (1400 BC)

Joshua 22:9–34

The Crisis Begins

- 9 So the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites in Shiloh in the land of Canaan and headed home to their own land in Gilead, which they acquired by the LORD's command through Moses.
 10 The Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh came to Gilead near the Jordan in the land of Canaan and built there, near the Jordan, an impressive altar.
 11 The Israelites received this report: "Look, the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar at the entrance to the land of Canaan, at Gilead near the Jordan on the Israelite side."
 12 When the Israelites heard this, the entire Israelite community assembled at Shiloh to launch an attack against them.

The Accusation

- 13 The Israelites sent Phinehas, son of Eleazar, the priest, to the land of Gilead to the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.
 14 He was accompanied by ten leaders, one from each of the Israelite tribes, each one a family leader among the Israelite clans.
 15 They went to the land of Gilead to the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and said to them:
 16 "The entire community of the LORD says, 'Why have you disobeyed the God of Israel by turning back today from following the LORD? You built an altar for yourselves and have rebelled today against the LORD.
 17 The sin we committed at Peor was bad enough. To this very day we have not purified ourselves; it even brought a plague on the community of the LORD.
 18 Now today you dare to turn back from following the LORD! You are rebelling today against the LORD; tomorrow he may break out in anger against the entire community of Israel.
 19 But if your own land is impure, cross over to the LORD's own land, where the LORD himself lives, and settle down among us. But don't rebel against the LORD or us by building for yourselves an altar aside from the altar of the LORD our God.
 20 When Achan son of Zerah disobeyed the command about the city's riches, the entire Israelite community was judged, though only one man had sinned. He most certainly died for his sin!'"

The Defense

- 21 The Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered the leaders of the Israelite clans:
 22 "El, God, the LORD! El, God, the LORD! He knows the truth! Israel must also know! If we have rebelled or disobeyed the LORD, don't spare us today!
 23 If we have built an altar for ourselves to turn back from following the LORD by making burnt sacrifices and grain offerings on it, or by offering tokens of peace on it, the LORD himself will punish us.
 24 We swear we have done this because we were worried that in the future your descendants would say to our descendants, 'What relationship do you have with the LORD God of Israel?'
 25 The LORD made the Jordan a boundary between us and you Reubenites and Gadites. You have no right to worship the LORD.' In this way your descendants might cause our descendants to stop obeying the LORD.
 26 So we decided to build this altar, not for burnt offerings and sacrifices,

27 but as a reminder to us and you, and to our descendants who follow us, that we will honor the LORD in his very presence with burnt offerings, sacrifices, and tokens of peace. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to our descendants, ‘You have no right to worship the LORD.’

28 We said, ‘If in the future they say such a thing to us or to our descendants, we will reply, “See the model of the LORD’s altar that our ancestors made, not for burnt offerings or sacrifices, but as a reminder to us and you.”’

29 Far be it from us to rebel against the LORD by turning back today from following after the LORD by building an altar for burnt offerings, sacrifices, and tokens of peace aside from the altar of the LORD our God located in front of his dwelling place!’

The Resolution

30 When Phinehas the priest and the community leaders and clan leaders who accompanied him heard the defense of the Reubenites, Gadites, and the Manassehites, they were satisfied.

31 Phinehas, son of Eleazar, the priest, said to the Reubenites, Gadites, and the Manassehites, “Today we know that the LORD is among us, because you have not disobeyed the LORD in this. Now you have rescued the Israelites from the LORD’s judgment.”

32 Phinehas, son of Eleazar, the priest, and the leaders left the Reubenites and Gadites in the land of Gilead and reported back to the Israelites in the land of Canaan.

33 The Israelites were satisfied with their report and gave thanks to God. They said nothing more about launching an attack to destroy the land in which the Reubenites and Gadites lived.

34 The Reubenites and Gadites named the altar, “Surely it is a Reminder to us that the LORD is God.”

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

Joshua 23

1 A long time passed after the LORD made Israel secure from all their enemies, and Joshua was very old.

2 So Joshua summoned all Israel, including the elders, rulers, judges, and leaders, and told them: “I am very old.

3 You saw everything the LORD your God did to all these nations on your behalf, for the LORD your God fights for you.

4 See, I have parceled out to your tribes these remaining nations, from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, including all the nations I defeated.

5 The LORD your God will drive them out from before you and remove them, so you can occupy their land as the LORD your God promised you.

6 Be very strong! Carefully obey all that is written in the law scroll of Moses so you won’t swerve from it to the right or the left, 7 or associate with these nations that remain near you. You must not invoke or make solemn declarations by the names of their gods! You must not worship or bow down to them!

8 But you must be loyal to the LORD your God, as you have been to this very day.

9 “The LORD drove out from before you great and mighty nations; no one has been able to resist you to this very day.

10 One of you makes a thousand run away, for the LORD your God fights for you as he promised you he would.

11 Watch yourselves carefully! Love the LORD your God!

12 But if you ever turn away and make alliances with these nations that remain near you, and intermarry with them and establish friendly relations with them,

13 know for certain that the LORD our God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. They will trap and ensnare you; they will be a whip that tears your sides and thorns that blind your eyes until you disappear from this good land the LORD your God gave you.

14 “Look, today I am about to die. You know with all your heart and being that not even one of all the faithful promises the LORD your God made to you is left unfulfilled; every one was realized—not one promise is unfulfilled!

15 But in the same way every faithful promise the LORD your God made to you has been realized, it is just as certain, if you disobey, that the LORD will bring on you every judgment until he destroys you from this good land which the LORD your God gave you.

16 If you violate the covenantal laws of the LORD your God which he commanded you to keep, and follow, worship, and bow down to other gods, the LORD will be very angry with you and you will disappear quickly from the good land which he gave to you.”

Covenant Renewal at Shechem (c. 1380 BC)

Joshua 24:1–28

Judges 2:6

Remembering the Past

1 Joshua assembled all the Israelite tribes at Shechem. He summoned Israel’s elders, rulers, judges, and leaders, and they appeared before God.

2 Joshua told all the people, “Here is what the LORD God of Israel says: ‘In the distant past your ancestors lived beyond the Euphrates River, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor. They worshiped other gods,

3 but I took your father Abraham from beyond the Euphrates and brought him into the entire land of Canaan. I made his descendants numerous; I gave him Isaac,

4 and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I assigned Mount Seir, while Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.
 5 I sent Moses and Aaron, and I struck Egypt down when I intervened in their land. Then I brought you out.
 6 When I brought your fathers out of Egypt, you arrived at the sea. The Egyptians chased your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea.
 7 Your fathers cried out for help to the LORD; he made the area between you and the Egyptians dark, and then drowned them in the sea. You witnessed with your very own eyes what I did in Egypt. You lived in the wilderness for a long time.
 8 Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They fought with you, but I handed them over to you; you conquered their land and I destroyed them from before you.
 9 Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, launched an attack against Israel. He summoned Balaam son of Beor to call down judgment on you.
 10 I refused to respond to Balaam; he kept prophesying good things about you, and I rescued you from his power.
 11 You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The leaders of Jericho, as well as the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites, and Jebusites, fought with you, but I handed them over to you.
 12 I sent terror ahead of you to drive out before you the two Amorite kings. I gave you the victory; it was not by your swords or bows.
 13 I gave you a land in which you had not worked hard; you took up residence in cities you did not build and you are eating the produce of vineyards and olive groves you did not plant.'

Renewal of Covenant Loyalty

14 Now obey the LORD and worship him with integrity and loyalty. Put aside the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates and in Egypt and worship the LORD.
 15 If you have no desire to worship the LORD, choose today whom you will worship, whether it be the gods whom your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living. But I and my family will worship the LORD!"
 16 The people responded, "Far be it from us to abandon the LORD so we can worship other gods!
 17 For the LORD our God took us and our fathers out of slavery in the land of Egypt and performed these awesome miracles before our very eyes. He continually protected us as we traveled and when we passed through nations.
 18 The LORD drove out from before us all the nations, including the Amorites who lived in the land. So we too will worship the LORD, for he is our God!"
 19 Joshua warned the people, "You will not keep worshiping the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God who will not forgive your rebellion or your sins.
 20 If you abandon the LORD and worship foreign gods, he will turn against you; he will bring disaster on you and destroy you, though he once treated you well."
 21 The people said to Joshua, "No! We really will worship the LORD!"
 22 Joshua said to the people, "Do you agree to be witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to worship the LORD?" They replied, "We are witnesses!"
 23 Joshua said, "Now put aside the foreign gods that are among you and submit to the LORD God of Israel."
 24 The people said to Joshua, "We will worship the LORD our God and obey him."

Sealing the Covenant

25 That day Joshua drew up an agreement for the people, and he established rules and regulations for them in Shechem.
 26 Joshua wrote these words in the Law Scroll of God. He then took a large stone and set it up there under the oak tree near the LORD's shrine.
 27 Joshua said to all the people, "Look, this stone will be a witness against you, for it has heard everything the LORD said to us. It will be a witness against you if you deny your God."

28 When Joshua dismissed the people, they went to their allotted portions of land.

6 When Joshua dismissed the people, the Israelites went to their allotted portions of territory, intending to take possession of the land.

The Death of Joshua (c. 1380 BC)

Joshua 24:29–33

29 After all this Joshua son of Nun, the LORD's servant, died at the age of one hundred ten.
 30 They buried him in his allotted territory in Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.
 31 Israel worshiped the LORD throughout Joshua's lifetime and as long as the elderly men who outlived him remained alive.

Judges 2:7–9

8 Joshua son of Nun, the LORD's servant, died at the age of one hundred ten.
 9 The people buried him in his allotted land in Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.
 7 The people worshiped the LORD throughout Joshua's lifetime and as long as the elderly men who outlived him remained alive.

These men had experienced firsthand everything the LORD had done for Israel.
 32 The bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem in the part of the field that Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for one hundred pieces of money. So it became the inheritance of the tribe of Joseph.
 33 Eleazar son of Aaron died, and they buried him in Gibeah in the hill country of Ephraim, where his son Phinehas had been assigned land.

These men had witnessed all the great things the LORD 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].