

SUMMARY OF BOOK OF JOSHUA

Today I will summarize the Book of Joshua, which recounts the story of how the land of Israel was conquered by the Jews 3200 years ago. This book starts where the Torah leaves off. The Jews had just finished wandering 40 years in the desert, from Egypt to Mount Nvo (in modern day Jordan), under Moshe's leadership. And Moshe had just died.

Joshua took over as leader. The first thing he did was to remind the 2½ tribes (Reuven, Gad and ½ of Menashe) of the deal they made with Moshe, that they must join the other Jews in crossing into Israel and conquering the promised land, and afterward they may return across the river to live outside of Israel.

Next, Joshua sent spies to the city of Jericho. To evade the Jericho soldiers who were looking for the spies, the spies hid in the attic of gentile woman, Rachav. After the Jericho soldiers left, the spies climbed out Rachav's window and returned to Joshua. They reported to Joshua that the people of Jericho were terrified of the Jews, who they knew were coming to destroy them.

The Jews crossed the Jordan River into the promised land. A miracle happened: The Jordan River suddenly dried up so that the Jews could simply walk across it. Then, the Jews erected a monument on the dry riverbed and a similar monument on the river bank.

Upon arriving in Israel, all Jewish males were circumcised. Afterward, they celebrated the Passover holiday. The next day, mana, which the Jews ate for 40 years, stopped falling. The Jews set up camp in a place they named Gilgal.

The first city the Jews conquered was Jericho. Each day for 6 days, the Jewish army marched around Jericho. On the 7th day, the Jews marched around Jericho 7 times. When the priests blew their shofars, the city walls crumbled. The Jews massacred all Jericho's inhabitants and burned down the city. Joshua forbade anyone from taking any spoils from Jericho. But a Jewish soldier took spoils from Jericho. And when the Jews found out, they stoned him to death. Joshua pronounced a curse on anyone who in the future would ever rebuild Jericho.

Next, the Jews captured the city of Ai through a trick. The Jews first appeared at city gates, and then turned and pretended to flee, which lured the city's army out of the city. With the city unprotected, 5000 Jewish soldiers, who had been hiding in a nearby forest, entered the city and burned it. When the gentile soldiers turned around and saw their city burning, they lost heart and were defeated.

The gentile city of Givon heard that the Jews were destroying only the cities located IN Israel, but leaving cities OUTSIDE Israel alone. The gentile Israeli city Givon sent messengers to Joshua. The messengers misled Joshua into thinking that Givon was located OUTSIDE Israel, and they asked Joshua to sign a peace treaty with them. Joshua agreed. When Joshua found out Givon was IN Israel, it was too late to retract the peace treaty and destroy Givon. So Joshua just turned the Givonites into servants, which Givonites agreed to, since it was better than being annihilated.

When 5 gentile Israeli kings (including the king of Jerusalem) heard that the Givonites signed a peace treaty with the Jews, they were so mad that they attacked the city of Givon. The Givonites sent messenger to the Jews requesting help. The Jewish army marched all night, reached Givon in the morning, and destroyed the 5 gentile armies. Joshua asked Gd to make the sun stand still, to give him more time to destroy the enemy.

The book describes how the Jews conquered city after city. Until, by the end 7 years since entering Israel, they had conquered 31 kingdoms. The Book of Joshua lists the 31 kingdoms the Jews conquered. These include several well-known ones, like Jericho, Chevron and Megido (known by Christians as Armageddon). The cities that the Jews did not conquer made peace with the Jews. Amazingly, Jerusalem was one of the cities that Joshua could not conquer, and Jerusalem remained a gentile city for the next 400 years.

When the conquest was over, the Jews divided up the land by splitting up Israel into 9 sections. And 9 of the tribes drew lots to determine which tribe would get which section. And the other 2½ tribes returned across the Jordan to rejoin their families outside of Israel. The tribe of Levi did not receive a section of land. Instead, the Levites lived among the other tribes to serve as teachers. Joshua set aside 6 cities of refuge: 3 IN Israel and 3 OUTSIDE Israel. The Mishkan (Tabernacle) was moved to Shilo in the land of Ephraim, where it remained for the next 370 years.

The tribes of Menashe and Ephraim (which were both Joseph's descendants) complained to Joshua that they didn't have enough farm land, and they wanted the other tribe's to help them conquer more cities to settle in. Joshua essentially told them "We're all done conquering. You'll just have to make your own farm land by cutting down forests." And that's what they did.

After the men of the 2½ tribes returned across the river, they built an altar. The Jews in Israel were initially furious that the 2½ tribes had apparently constructed a place of sacrifice that was in competition with the tabernacle in Shilo. But the 2½ tribes explained that their altar was only a memorial to remind future generations they were just as Jewish as the tribes IN Israel.

Before Joshua died, he assembled the Jews together in Shechem. He delivered a speech, retelling Jewish history starting from the time of Abraham. Joshua told the Jews that if they keep the Torah, they will succeed in conquering even MORE kingdoms. He also warned them that any kingdoms in Israel that the Jews don't conquer will end up attacking the Jews. The Jews all swore that they would stay true to Gd.

Joshua died at the age of 110, after having led the Jews for 25 years. Before his death, he delivered a farewell speech, admonishing the Jews to remain faithful to Gd. The Jews remained true to Gd at least through the next generation. And that is the story of the Book of Joshua.

This Book of Joshua describes events that occurred 3200 years ago. This was during a pivotal period of Jewish history, in which the Jews made the major transition from a nomadic tribal existence traveling 40 years through the Arabian desert, to becoming a sovereign nation settled in their own land.