

Chapter Ten

1. When Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it, doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king, and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them, 2. he feared greatly because Gibeon was a great city like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty. 3. So Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, sent to Hoham king of Hebron, to Piram king of Jarmuth, to Japhia king of Lachish and to Debir king of Eglon, saying, 4. "Come up to me and help me, and let us smite Gibeon; for it has made peace with Joshua and with the people of Israel." 5. Then the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish and the king of Eglon gathered their forces and went up with all their armies and encamped against Gibeon and made war against it. 6. And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, saying, "Do not relax your hand from your servants; come up to us quickly and save us, and help us; for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the hill country are gathered against us." 7. So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him and all the mighty men of valor. 8. And the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands; there shall not a man of them stand before you." 9. So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal. 10. And the Lord threw them into a panic before Israel who slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and smote them as far as Azekah and Makkedah. 11. And as they fled before Israel while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, the Lord threw down great stones from heaven upon them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died because of the hailstones than the men of Israel killed with the sword. 12. Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord gave the Amorites over to the men of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, "Sun, stand still at Gibeon and you, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon." 13. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. 14. There has been no day like it before or since when the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel. 15. Then Joshua returned and all Israel with him to the camp at Gilgal. 16. These five kings fled and hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah. 17. And it was told Joshua, "The five kings have been found, hidden in the cave at Makkedah." 18. And Joshua said, "Roll great stones against the mouth of the cave and set men by it to guard them; 19. but do not stay there yourselves, pursue your enemies, fall upon their rear, do not let them enter their

cities; for the Lord your God has given them into your hand." 20. When Joshua and the men of Israel had finished slaying them with a very great slaughter until they were wiped out, and when the remnant which remained of them had entered into the fortified cities, 21. all the people returned safe to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah; not a man moved his tongue against any of the people of Israel. 22. Then Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave and bring those five kings out to me from the cave." 23. And they did so and brought those five kings out to him from the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish and the king of Eglon. 24. And when they brought those kings out to Joshua, Joshua summoned all the men of Israel and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, "Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings." Then they came near and put their feet on their necks. 25. And Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and of good courage; for thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight." 26. And afterward Joshua smote them and put them to death and he hung them on five trees. And they hung upon the trees until evening; 27. but at the time of the going down of the sun, Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves, and they set great stones against the mouth of the cave which remain to this very day. 28. And Joshua took Makkedah on that day, and smote it and its king with the edge of the sword; he utterly destroyed every person in it, he left none remaining; and he did to the king of Makkedah as he had done to the king of Jericho. 29. Then Joshua passed on from Makkedah and all Israel with him to Libnah, and fought against Libnah; 30. and the Lord gave it also and its king into the hand of Israel; and he smote it with the edge of the sword and every person in it; he left none remaining in it; and he did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho. 31. And Joshua passed on from Libnah and all Israel with him to Lachish and laid siege to it and assaulted it: 32. and the Lord gave Lachish into the hand of Israel, and he took it on the second day and smote it with the edge of the sword and every person in it as he had done to Libnah. 33. Then Horam, king of Gezer, came up to help Lachish; and Joshua smote him and his people until he left none remaining. 34. And Joshua passed on with all Israel from Lachish to Eglon; and they laid siege to it and assaulted it; 35. and they took it on that day and smote it with the edge of the sword; and every person in it he utterly destroyed that day as he had done to Lachish. 36. Then Joshua went up with all Israel from Eglon to Hebron; and they assaulted it, 37. and took it and smote it with the edge of the sword and its king and its towns and every person in it; he left none remaining as he had done to Eglon and utterly destroyed it with every person in it. 38. Then Joshua,

with all Israel, turned back to Debir and assaulted it, 39. and he took it with its king and all its towns; and they smote them with the edge of the sword and utterly destroyed every person in it; he left none remaining; as he had done to Hebron and to Libnah and its king, so he did to Debir and to its king. 40. So Joshua defeated the whole land, the hill country and the Negeb and the lowland and the slopes and all their kings; he left none remaining but utterly destroyed all that breathed as the Lord God of Israel commanded. 41. And Joshua defeated them from Kadesh-barnea to Gaza and all the country of Goshen as far as Gibeon. 42. And Joshua took all these kings and their land at one time because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel. 43. Then Joshua returned and all Israel with him to the camp at Gilgal.

Like many others, this chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “when” along with *k-* prefaced to *shamah* or “heard.” Such hearing represents the rapid way news traveled, especially during a crisis as at present when the Canaanites are being invaded by Israel (cf. 9.1). In the chapter at hand, it applies to Joshua’s destruction of Jericho and Ai as well as the Gibeonites, a fate they just managed to escape. Adoni-zedek is king of Jerusalem not far from the Gibeonites who had allied themselves with Israel through deception. It was natural for him to consider these neighbors both as cowards and traitors while at the same time secretly admiring their successful ruse. Adoni-zedek had to downplay this with his own people who might entertain the idea of going over to the Israelites openly or in secret. Of course, the Gibeonites are an exception; Joshua wouldn’t tolerate any further alliance with native inhabitants.

Vs. 2 gives good reason for King Adoni-zedek’s fear of Israel under the leadership of Joshua who at this early stage is considered some kind of up-start, albeit a dangerous one. The RSV begins with “he feared greatly” or *me’od* whereas the Hebrew has the third person plural, “they” which is more corporate, if you will. The source of this fear is that Gibeon was a royal city. Note the past tense; the inhabitants went over to Israel while its “mighty men” had abandoned this prosperous ally of Jerusalem. Use of the word “city” or *hyr* can also mean a town, by no means a bustling metropolis. The next move by King Adoni-zedek is to seek allies against the invading Israelites described as “sent to” (the common verb *shalach* without an object) four neighboring kings to form an alliance. Certainly these kings weren’t ignorant of recent events and were thrilled that at last one of them was bold enough to take the initiative.

King Adoni-zedek makes a threefold appeal with regard to Gibeon in vs. 4: come up, help and smite. He lack the confidence to confront Joshua on his own and figured an alliance would suffice because of Gibeon's betrayal and having abandoned the city, easy prey for the Israelites. Without hesitation the four kings "gathered" their forces which is rendered by the verb *'asaph*, the last time translated as "continuously" in 6.9. The idea is that all four dropped what they were doing, summoned their troops and went to the aid of their fellow king. Then they pitched camp against Gibeon, a former trading partner. Although its inhabitants made a covenant with Joshua, they were allowed to return home, a rather dangerous proposition given what had happened. Joshua knew these people would be threatened and perhaps appealed to their cunning as means of deceiving their neighbors as they had done to him. In other words, they were to lay as low as possible. In one sense Joshua may have wished the neighboring kings to slaughter the Gibeonites, but he was bound by the covenant which he had cut with them.

Although the Gibeonites were surrounded, they managed to send messengers to Joshua requesting military assistance keeping in mind the significance of his name, "he who saves," which is the same as the proper name Jesus. They put their desperate situation in terms of Joshua not to "relax" his hand from them, *raphah* (alternately as *rapha'*) which also means to heal. There comes to mind Joshua at the second battle of Ai: "And Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city" [8.18]. That image had stuck in the minds of everyone who witnessed it and quickly spread around Canaan as symbolic of Israel's collective determination. Without delay Joshua responded to the delight of the Gibeonites who may have had reservations about his willingness to help even though he had made a covenant with them. As for the Israelites, they were bound to assist their new ally despite having been deceived, so many of them having mixed emotions of risking their lives. Anyway, the four kings would have to be dealt with eventually so better to do this sooner than later.

Joshua decided it was best to march to Gibeon not during the day but at night (cf. vs. 9), this a necessary maneuver deep within enemy territory in addition to not being familiar with the terrain. Most likely some of the Gibeonites acted as guides in this regard. Now the Lord decided to intervene, having been quiet for some time, allowing Joshua to handle the deception by the Gibeonites on his own. Such divine assistance comes at the right time or when Israel is putting itself in jeopardy with regard to being faithful concerning a recently made covenant. The Lord spoke with

Joshua during the night march, the relative silence being the best time to make such a communication. Then after having marched all night Joshua comes upon the four kings surrounding Gibeon “suddenly” or *pit’om*. “So Joshua came suddenly upon them with all his people and fell upon them” [11.7].

Naturally the four kings had their forces, their total attention focused forward or upon Gibeon, having it surrounded completely with one king on each of its sides. It must have been unnerving for their troops gazing upon the walls and *visa-versus*. All are neighbors, friends and even relatives now locked in a do-or-die situation. The text doesn’t say the time of Joshua’s arrival, but it must have been in the pre-dawn hours when he could deploy his troops stealthily behind those of the four kings who were just getting up in preparation for an assault on Gibeon.

Without wasting a moment and before it got lighter, Joshua made his move which is put as “threw into a panic” or *hamam*, this verb meaning to impel, disturb. “And he sent out his arrows and scattered them; he flashed forth lightnings and scattered them” [Ps 18.14]. Note a similar situation with *haman*: “In the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down upon the host of the Egyptians and discomfited them” [Ex 14.24]. With these two verses in mind, the attack upon the four kings’ troops happened like a bolt of lightning, completely unexpected. Although the Gibeonites knew Joshua was hastening to their rescue, he wanted to keep this quiet even from them in case word got out and spoiled the element of surprise. Not only did Joshua take the four kings by surprise, he engaged in a pursuit, most likely with that javelin outstretched (cf. 8.18), to the ascent of Beth-horon which leads to the coastal plain west of Gibeon. While the enemy troops were fleeing in that direction the Lord decided to intervene by throwing down “great stones” from above. In the same verse (11) are mentioned hailstones which seem to be the same as these “great stones.” Thus the Lord killed more this way than Joshua had done by the sword. All he and Israel could do was to look on and marvel at what was unfolding before their very eyes.

After this miraculous defeat, Joshua composed a hymn as with Moses in vss. 12-13 with regard to the sun and moon standing still in their respective positions, that is, enabling Israel to have sufficient light to take vengeance upon their foes. Joshua calls Israel “nation” or *goy* which normally refers to non-Israelites. However, the idea seems to be a contrast Joshua is making between these vanquished kings, including Jericho and Ai, and Israel as it is attempting to conquer the land of

Canaan. And so Israel-as-goy “took vengeance” or *naqam*, the only use of this verb in the Book of Joshua. “You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people [Lv 19.18].

Vs. 13 contains a rhetorical question of sorts about the sun and the moon standing still as written in the Book of Jashar, a collection of poetry which no longer exists. “Behold, it is written in the Book of Jashar” [1Sam 2.18]. As for the sun, it remained or *hamad* (implies standing or being stationary as in 3.8) in the midst of heaven most likely meaning at high noon. In contrast to this *hamad* is *uts* or “hasten” and implies urging or pressing on, that is, with regard to its setting. For another sense of this verb, see 17.15: “since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you.” The extraordinary thing about this celestial event is that the Lord “hearkened” to a man, that man being Joshua, and fought for Israel. The verb is *shamah* (cf. vs. 1) which has the preposition *b-* or “in” prefaced to *qol* (‘voice’) reading literally as “heard in the voice of a man.” In addition to this, the Lord fought for Israel, the preposition *l-* being prefaced to Israel reading literally “fought to Israel.” Interestingly, this takes place in the context of Israel coming to the aid of the Gibeonites, those who had assumed a deceptive demeanor in order to escape annihilation. So despite the divine injunction to wipe out the Canaanites, ultimately the Lord is concerned for them as well.

As with most verses, vs. 15 has the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” in reference to Joshua returning to camp at Gilgal. The idea is that despite the incredible divine intervention and miracles, everyone must return home and ultimately go about the business of living. Joshua knew that the victories thus far are only the beginning. There will be more along with tragedies and all the rest.

As for the five kings who laid siege to Gibeon and whom Joshua defeated so recently, they didn’t rush home but took refuge in a cave located in Makkedah supposedly some twenty-five miles north of Jerusalem. It seems an unwise thing to do, but they figured it was a temporary hiding place as they attempted to figure a way to get back to their respective cities and take it from there. “It was told” of vs. 17 is a generic type of statement which means information about the king could have come from anywhere and from anyone. Implied is that although these men were in their own land, their subjects have turned against them. And why not? They failed to destroy Gibeon, and their best soldiers fell prey to the Israelites. Their subjects were as good as dead, so why not squeal on the kings as they cowered in their pathetic hiding

place?

At once Joshua set off for Makkedah with vengeance in mind. Here was a prize...truly a golden opportunity...that could greatly expand his reputation as invincible before the Canaanites early on in his career after having entered their land. First he trapped the five kings inside the cave by rolling a huge stone over its entrance and set guards over it. Once this had been secured, Joshua bids his soldiers not to hang around but to pursue “your enemies” [vs. 19] and overtake them from behind. Hopefully this would be easy since the Canaanites were without their leaders to rally them. The total victory Joshua obtained is summed up in the words “a very great slaughter” or *makah* [vs. 20; cf. vs. 10] which also means a plague. “Then if you walk contrary to me and will not hearken to me, I will bring more plagues upon you” [Lv 26.21]. This *makah* was pursued with unremitting ruthlessness until the Canaanites were “wiped out” or *tamam* which means bring to a full completion (cf. 4.11). However, some managed to escape and took refuge in their fortified cities, possibly those capitols of the five kings and other garrisons. Joshua would deal with these later after making an example of their kings which hopefully would dishearten them further.

Vs. 21 in another way speaks of the total or near total victory Joshua had won by saying that no man dare move his tongue against Israel, this after they had returned “safe” to the camp which reads literally “in peace” or *shalom* (cf. 9.15).

Vss. 22 through 27 go into gruesome detail as to what Joshua does next to the five kings literally holed up in the cave. They were sitting there in almost total darkness not knowing if their subjects had the ability to resist Joshua. While the Israelites were engaged in slaughtering them, the kings could hear muffled, excited reports outside as word got back about the victory achieved. With that, they knew their end was nigh when Joshua himself ordered the stone to be rolled back and say with delight, “bring those five kings out to me.” Immediately some soldiers rushed in, looking in every corner for the kings cowering any place they could. While they stood before Joshua trying to adjust their eyes to the bright light, he ordered his “chiefs” or *qatsyn* or those in charge of troops to come near. “Without having any chief, officer or ruler she (the ant) prepares her food in summer and gathers her sustenance in harvest” [Prov 6.7].

We don't know how many of these *qatsyn* were present, but Joshua had each of them

place his feet on the necks of the five kings. This doesn't mean standing on them but a symbolic gesture. Right after this humiliation Joshua tells them, along with the Israelites assembled there, not "to be afraid or dismayed; be strong and of good courage" [vs. 25]. The verbs are *yare'*, *chatat*, *chazaq* and *'amats* (the first two and the last are in 1.18 whereas the third is found in 8.1). If these leaders don't set an example before the people, their chances of inspiring the Israelites to achieve total victory might be in doubt.

Immediately after the five kings had been humiliated and perhaps the object of jeering by the people, Joshua orders them to be executed, the means not being specified. This is secondary, however. Joshua wishes their bodies to be exposed for public viewing for the day, hoping that some Canaanites might catch a glimpse of five trees with five bodies hanging from them. When evening came, Joshua had their bodies cast into the same cave where they had sought refuge. The importance of this incident lies the fact that their burial site "remains to this very day" [vs. 27], *hetsem* fundamentally meaning a bone and hence the hidden essence of something. Applied to the situation at hand, *hetsem* suggests the importance and durability of the cave as a warning to any would-be Canaanite desiring to drive Israel out from the land. A previous reference to *hetsem* is found in 5.11: "And on the morrow after the Passover, on that very day."

Joshua wasted no time going after another king, the one over Makkedah "on that day" which mirrors "that very day" just noted. The verb *charam* is employed here ('utterly destroyed') just as in 2.10, that is, twice, rendering it something not unlike "destroyed to destruction." Words such as "edge of the sword" and "left nothing remaining" mirror the extreme action taken here through *charam-charam*. And to add insult to injury, reference is made to Jericho, that Makkedah, its king and inhabitants are to be treated like that city. Obviously Joshua was keenly aware of the Achan incident, the hapless Israelite who stole from the ruins of Jericho, and put everyone on guard never to allow this.

Although words such as "on that day" aren't used, Joshua then moved against Libnah, Lachish, Horam, king of Gezer, Eglon, Hebron and Debir (cf. vss. 29-39). The rapidity with which he does this is indicated by use of the verb *havar* meaning to pass (cf. vvs. 29, 31 and 34); its alternate translation is to transgress as in 7.15. The idea is that Joshua had one battle, was triumphant and used the same brutal way to describe it after which he went on to another and so forth down the line. The

destruction of one town, its king and population are in reference to the previous one treated with equal ferocity. For example, “as he had done to Lachish” [vs. 35]...and Lachish as well as the other connect all the way back to Jericho, Ai being excepted by reason of the first humiliating defeat. Obviously Joshua wished to terrorize and then subdue as much of Canaan as possible. There were a number of survivors, of course, who later regrouped and dedicated themselves to harass Israel for as long as it would take to drive them out.

This rapid-fire process of determined destruction and extermination comes to a conclusion (at least for the time being towards the end of Chapter Ten) with the conjunctive *v-* translated here in vs. 40 as “so” and prefaced to *nakah* or “defeated” which fundamentally means to strike (cf. 9.26). This time *nakah* is used with regard to “the whole land” which includes the Negeb, lowland, slopes and their kings. Again, Joshua “utterly destroyed” anyone who got in his way, the verb being the now familiar *charam* [vs. 40] which is with the noun *neshamah* or all that “breathed” or every living being. “There was none left that breathed” [11.11]. Compare *neshamah* with *nephesh* found in vs. 37 as “person” and commonly refers to the soul.

Chapter Ten concludes with more relentless killing or *charam* of the native peoples in what seems one grand battle or slaughter: (Joshua) “took all these kings and their land at one time” [vs. 42]. However, *charam* and its derivative *cherem* as first noted in 6.18 applies to that which is devoted to the Lord. Thus through these conflicts and near mass exterminations the result is an accumulation of things devoted exclusively to God. If it weren’t for this sustained divine intervention, neither Joshua nor Israel could pull off their string of victories, for the “Lord fought for Israel,” the preposition *l-* (‘to’) which renders it literally as “to Israel,” directly on behalf of that nation. So once this crucial first phase filled with so many victories was over, Joshua and Israel returned to Gilgal, the place where the Passover had been celebrated for the first time in Canaan (cf. 5.9).

Chapter Eleven

1. When Jabin king of Hazor heard of this, he sent to Jobab king of Madon and to the king of Shimron and to the king of Achshaph 2. and to the kings who were in the northern hill country and in the Arabah south of Chinneroth and in the lowland

and in Naphoth-dor on the west, 3. to the Canaanites in the east and the west, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites and the Jebusites in the hill country and the Hivites under Hermon in the land of Mizpah. 4. And they came out with all their troops, a great host, in number like the sand that is upon the seashore, with very many horses and chariots. 5. And all these kings joined their forces and came and encamped together at the waters of Merom to fight with Israel. 6. And the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will give over all of them, slain, to Israel; you shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire." 7. So Joshua came suddenly upon them with all his people of war by the waters of Merom, and fell upon them. 8. And the Lord gave them into the hand of Israel who smote them and chased them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim and eastward as far as the valley of Mizpeh; and they smote them until they left none remaining. 9. And Joshua did to them as the Lord bade him; he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire. 10. And Joshua turned back at that time and took Hazor and smote its king with the sword; for Hazor formerly was the head of all those kingdoms. 11. And they put to the sword all who were in it, utterly destroying them; there was none left that breathed, and he burned Hazor with fire. 12. And all the cities of those kings and all their kings Joshua took and smote them with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded. 13. But none of the cities that stood on mounds did Israel burn except Hazor only; that Joshua burned. 14. And all the spoil of these cities and the cattle, the people of Israel took for their booty; but every man they smote with the edge of the sword until they had destroyed them, and they did not leave any that breathed. 15. As the Lord had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses. 16. So Joshua took all that land, the hill country and all the Negeb and all the land of Goshen and the lowland and the Arabah and the hill country of Israel and its lowland 17. from Mount Halak that rises toward Seir, as far as Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. And he took all their kings and smote them and put them to death. 18. Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. 19. There was not a city that made peace with the people of Israel except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon; they took all in battle. 20. For it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle in order that they should be utterly destroyed and should receive no mercy but be exterminated as the Lord commanded Moses. 21. And Joshua came at that time and wiped out the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab and from all the hill country of Judah and from all the hill country of

Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. 22. There was none of the Anakim left in the land of the people of Israel; only in Gaza, in Gath and in Ashdod did some remain. 23. So Joshua took the whole land according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war.

Chapter Eleven is an account of Israel's victories over kings of the north in the land of Canaan which admittedly gets boring because of the relentless graphic detail. Also it leaves a lot to one's imagination as Joshua carries out his campaign. A brief list of words pertaining to these encounters are listed at the end of this chapter.

The conjunctive *v-* begins this new chapter, this time along with *k-* prefaced to the verb *shamah* or "heard," thereby indicating the close proximity of recent defeats of local kings and Jabin, king of Hazor. As soon as Jabin received this report he extended the *shamah*, if you will, to summon a whole bunch of fellow kings in the northern part of Canaan who are listed in this verse as well as the next two. Indeed, it was impressive response, all answering to Jabin's cry, their *shamah* to his *shamah*. Their alarm at being overwhelmed by some obscure tribe that had been wandering in the Sinai wilderness forty years startled them, more so because of reports about having their God drown the cream of Egypt's army in the Red Sea. What made the Israelites especially threatening was the difficulty in locating them with some accuracy in the vast Sinai Desert which served to exaggerate stories about their defeat of the Egyptians. Now this mystery tribe had crossed the Jordan River, hell-bent on the same path of destruction. Surely they must have sent on reports about their exploits ahead into Canaan in order to sew discord.

The rapidity with which King Jabin's *shamah* traveled is revealed by his fellow kings who "came out," *yatsa'* (cf. 8.14 but not noted there). It pertains to "host" or *rov* in vs. 4 which means a multitude (cf. 9.13 as 'long') equal to sand on the seashore along with chariots, etc. In vs. 5 this impressive array of force "joined" together, *yahad* being the verb as in Ex 29.22: "at the door of the tent of meeting before the Lord where I will meet with you, to speak there to you." Once each king had brought his army, most likely by a forced march to a designated place, they encamped by the water of Merom, a wise choice, since they had to water the troops and horses. The place of assembly isn't specified in order to conceal it from any spies Joshua had sent out. By now his notorious reputation for such covert operations as with Jericho had become well known, and the kings wished to take

precautions against it.

Despite the largest assembly of a hostile force Israel had encountered since entering Canaan, the Lord decides to intervene with the intent of offering encouragement. Vs. 6 begins with the conjunctive *v-* as all the verses thus far in this chapter which demonstrates the rapidity with which *shamah* had passed to King Jabin, then on to the other kings and finally to the Lord himself. The Lord comes right out and tells Joshua not to fear the array before him. Most likely Joshua had sneaked up to the waters of Merom to assess the situation and had second thoughts as he gazed at these soldiers “like the sand that is upon the seashore” [vs. 4]. Hopefully the Lord will do the fighting, achieving victory the next day and presenting the Canaanites as “slain” to Israel, *chalal* which means to pierce or perforate. “Balaam also, the son of Beor the soothsayer, the people of Israel killed with the sword among the rest of their slain” [13.22]. Such is what the Lord intends to do on his own; the Israelites are to render the cavalry useless by hamstringing the horses and burning the chariots. Apparently the Lord wanted any mobile units incapacitated lest any other Canaanites confiscate them and go after Israel.

“And so” or the conjunctive *v-* begins vs. 7 which is a continuation of that rapid-fire series of events characteristic of Chapter Eleven. In this instance Joshua wastes no time coming “suddenly” or *pit’om* as he had done when coming to the rescue of the Gibeonites (cf. 10.9). The abruptness with which Joshua made his attack is borne out by use of the verb *naphal* meaning to fall (cf. 2.9). The text doesn’t give a time for this attack but presumably it happened at night or just before dawn to maximize the element of surprise. Keeping in line with the use of *v-*, vs. 8 has the Israelites routing thoroughly all the forces of the kings. Obviously what the Lord communicated to Joshua in vs. 6 had to transfer over to the Israelites. That means Joshua had to use his power of persuasion yet again which means that each time he’s forced to do this, his stature grows before the people.

Joshua turns back (*shuv*; cf. 7.26) in vs. 10, that is, while dealing with what most likely is a frontal assault upon the forces which King Jabin had summoned against him. While engaged in this act, Joshua goes the other way, if you will (*shuv*), to take Hazor. This is indicated by the words “at that time” or *heth* (cf. 10.27 but not noted there) intimating that Joshua was engaged in a two front campaign. He felt confident enough to engage in this *shuv* because Hazor was the “head” (*r’osh*; cf. 7.6 but not mentioned there) of all the kingdoms. It’s not clear whether he planned to

take Hazor; perhaps this was an option provided the current battles against King Jabin and his allies went favorably which they did.

Vss. 11 and 12 describe in what now is vivid detail the process of utter destruction (regarding Hazor), *nephesh* being used as in 10.40 for “none” or no person and literally meaning soul (*nephesh* being similar to *neshamah* as in 10.40). Vs. 12 brings up the name of Moses once again (cf. vs. 15 and 9.24) with regard to this, namely, “utterly destroying” these peoples, the now familiar verb *charam* being used (cf. 10.28). As applied to cities, *charam* involved burning with the exception of those located on mounds as with Hazor (cf. vs. 13) possibly because Joshua wished to retain their easily defensible positions as well as to keep watch over the countryside.

Throughout this extended period of annihilation the Israelites came into close contact with temples and images of the gods of Canaan. Although they were obliged to consign them to oblivion, they couldn’t help but be influenced by what they had come across. Most objects and places were of a more concrete and physical nature than what the Israelites had been accustomed to and thus held a magnetic appeal. This, of course, would prove to be a persistent problem throughout much of Israel’s history long after the conquest of Canaan.

The non-stop battles of Chapter Eleven may be summed up in the succinct words of vs. 18: “Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.” What sustained him was the Lord having spoken to him in vs. 6 and the persistent memory of Moses’ words to carry out the task set before him. Obviously it required a constant sell to the Israelites who thus far complied. Then again, the just mentioned exposure to Canaanite religious practices and objects must have troubled Joshua for its long term effects on the people.

Vs. 19 says that the only people to have “made peace” (*shalam*; cf. 10.4 but not mentioned there) were the Gibeonites and that, of course, was done stealthily on their part and reluctantly with Israel’s cooperation. All along the Lord had intended or it was his “doing” (literally rendered as ‘from the Lord’) to “harden” the collective “hearts” of everyone else in Canaan. The verb here is *chazaq* (cf. 10.25) as applied to *lev*, and has drastic results, *charam* again along with *shamad* (cf. 9.24) or extermination in accord with Moses’ command.

Vs. 21 continues with Joshua on the rampage “at that time” (*heth*, cf. vs. 10) or against the Anakim who lived in the hill country and had been reputed to be giants. Dt 2.10 refers to them also as Rephaim (cf. 13.12). Despite what must have been a formidable confrontation, yet again Joshua succeeds, the verb *karath* meaning “wiped out” and also found in 9.16 with respect to making...cutting...a covenant.

Chapter Eleven comes to an end not so much with continuous battles and victories won by Israel but the wholesale slaughter of the native Canaanites, the real goal Joshua has in mind as sanctioned by the Lord as well as by Moses. With this having been accomplished, Joshua was in the strong position to bestow Canaan as an “inheritance” to Israel, *nachalah*, this the first time it is mentioned, the next being 13.6. He had to feel secure enough both in victories won, people slaughtered and the condition of his own people in order to make this rather bold gesture.

Chapter Eleven comes to a conclusion with vs. 23, perhaps the most meaningful conjunctive *v-* to date, almost an understatement: “And the land had rest from war.” The verb *shaqat* is used (literally as ‘rested from war’) and implies being tranquil. Chapter Fourteen concludes similarly, “And the land had rest from war.”

By way of summary, note the following verbs as pertaining directly to killing as found in Chapter Eleven, that is, minus burning and the like: slain (vs. 6), fell upon (vs. 7), gave into the hand, smote, smote (twice in vs. 8), smote (vs. 10), put to the sword, utterly destroying (vs. 11), smote, utterly destroying (vs. 12), smote, destroyed (vs. 14), smote, put to death (vs. 17), made war (vs. 18), utterly destroyed, be exterminated (vs. 20), wiped out, utterly destroyed (vs. 21).

NB: Chapters Twelve through Twenty-One deal with an account of Israel’s victories followed by an extended list relative to the distribution of land in Canaan among Israel’s twelve tribes. Because these chapters boil down to essentially lists, a series of brief notations are presented minus inclusion of the biblical text. The last chapter—Twenty-Four which concludes the book—is treated in its own right.

Chapter Twelve begins with the conjunctive *v-* as with the others under consideration minus Chapter Twenty-Two. Here it translates as “now” with respect to the kings of Canaan called “the land” or *‘erets* (cf. 7.21). The conjunctive is significant, for at last Israel can lay claim to their ancestral land as their very own

after some four hundred years in Egypt followed by forty years of roaming in the Sinai desert. In this same verse we have the verb *yarash* first found in 1.11 and uttered by Joshua: “to go in to take possession of the land which the Lord your God gives you to possess.” The verse at hand situations this *yarash* when Israel crossed the Jordan and includes everything east of that river as laid out.

Vs. 1 begins with the Lord speaking and continues through vs. 8 after which we have a continuation of the distribution of Canaan to Israel’s tribes or more specifically, the **RSV** concluding its parentheses with that verse. However, we could take the remaining verses and well into the other chapters peppered throughout with the name of Moses as basically coming from the Lord. This combination of the Lord and Moses (almost as though the latter were present and never had died) minus mention of Joshua until 14.1 intimates that the two are conspiring on Israel’s behalf. In other words, Joshua’s role is secondary though he had been responsible for leading Israel to so many victories. Joshua knew this all along and was content with playing a more or less subordinate position.

In vs. 6 we have reference to Moses whose name appears not unlike a refrain in order to remind Israel under Joshua’s leadership of the purpose of their venture: “Moses, the servant of the Lord...defeated them; and Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave their land for a possession” (*yerushah*; from the verbal root *yarash*).

The conjunctive *v-* introducing Chapter Thirteen translates as “now” as with the preceding chapter and begins with a statement that Joshua was old. Thus far—about half way through the book—we wouldn’t expect this, but essential the book comes to an end around here. Everything from Chapter Twelve onward is simply a detailed summary of how Canaan was distributed among the twelve tribes of Israel. Despite the achievements of Israel under Joshua’s leadership, the Lord says that “there remains yet very much land to be possessed” [vs. 2]. Here again *yarash* is used meaning that Israel isn’t simply to move into these parts of Canaan but to make them as their own for a purpose commanded by the Lord but still not completely clear to them. Throughout this process Joshua reminded the people of their ancestral heritage, that they weren't dividing Canaan as something brand new but as reclaiming what essentially belonged to them. It seems that the patriarchs in Canaan didn't divide the land accordingly, so the Israel's new arrived did it on their own with, of course, consultation from the Lord who knew more about how to do this than they did.

Midway through Chapter Thirteen we have Moses again, this time with respect to the tribe of Levi receiving no “inheritance” or *nachalah* [cf. 11.23]. Instead of a part of Canaan, this tribe will receive an “offering of fire,” suggestive of sacrifices to the Lord. The Hebrew text reads literally “inheritance of fire.” This unique form of inheritance harkens back to Dt 18.1-8 and summed up by vs. 2 as “the Lord is their inheritance.” Such words are repeated in vs. 33. So that makes the Levites landless, if you will, for later they be assigned cities in which will be erected temples sacred to the Lord.

Chapter Fourteen begins typically with the conjunctive *v-*, here as “and.” Though one might get the impression from the past chapter that the Lord and Moses had been at work to divide up the land, here Joshua is mentioned since 13.1 when the Lord told him that he was old yet much work remained. The Lord doesn’t specify how this will be carried out but most likely not under Joshua’s leadership. That means once the land is divided according to the twelve tribes of Israel, serious thought must be given as to whom will succeed him. Given all the battles since Jericho, surely someone persons must have emerged as candidates for a leadership position. Perhaps each of the twelve tribes might submit a candidate and Joshua chose from them.

The second verse of Chapter Fourteen says that the inheritances had taken place by lot which intimates randomness, the two being apparently incompatible. However, Eleazar the priest is mentioned (that is, for the first time) which means the allotment is done by the Urim and Thummim, an accepted method of discerning the Lord’s will. It harkens back to Ex 28.30: “And in the breast piece of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be upon Aaron’s heart when he goes in before the Lord. Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually.”

During this extended process of distribution Joshua tried as hard he could to recall past memories of Israel in Canaan prior to taking up residence in Egypt under the protection of Joseph. That means he canvassed the land for people who may have remained in Canaan and preserved memories of which tribe dwelt where and so forth, Rahab included, as noted earlier. Obviously he did the same among any Israelites who could have preserved stories that have been kept alive while they were in Egypt four hundred years.

While the chapters dealing with this allotment seem boring along with a list of tribes and various parts of Canaan, it was crucial for Israel as a nation. This process set the foundation for the future nation and subsequent developments of history. During the allotment the people of Judah assembled at Gilgal (cf. 14.6) last mentioned in 10.43, one member being Caleb who had been forty years old when Moses sent him to reconnoiter Canaan (cf. 14.7). Caleb is making an appeal to Joshua for an allotment of the hill country (cf. 14.12) which includes Hebron. The incident he's referring to is recounted in Num 13.30-33 with the famous observation in vs. 32, "a land that devours its inhabitants." Joshua is mentioned in Num 14.6 as going along with Caleb on this perilous mission, so the two must have been pretty much the same age. Ever since then, Joshua couldn't get Caleb's words out of his mind. Despite them, he had been successful in turning the tables, having devoured the land of Canaan in their march of conquest. Chapter Fourteen concludes with "And the land had rest from war" as in 11.23.

Chapter Fifteen deals with the territory assigned to the tribe of Judah; Chapter Sixteen with the tribe of Joseph, Chapter Seventeen with the tribe of Manasseh and Chapter Eighteen with the other tribes, all beginning with the conjunctive *v-* which intimates both the methodological approach to this division as well as the rapidity with which it had been accomplished.

For the first time in 18.1 Shiloh is mentioned where the "congregation" of Israel "assembled," *hedah* (cf. 9.27) and *qahal*, the first time this verb is used in the Book of Joshua. Putting both together intimates a solemn assembly with divine and national implications within the land of Canaan. Even more significantly and for the future of Shiloh is that the Israelites set up the tent of meeting, vs. 1 concluding with the words "the land lay subdued before them." Shiloh is situated in the hill country later renowned as the principle sanctuary for Israel and the home of Samuel. And so the image we have is the entire nation of Israel at this newly established place of worship (though perhaps they didn't realize it would become permanent) looking down from that location as far as they could see, Canaan at last as their own. *Kavash* is the verb for "subdued" meaning to tread with the feet and thus intimating being brought into submission by force. "And the land is subdued before the Lord" [Num 32.22].

Vs. 2 continues with mention of seven of the twelve tribes not having received their

allotment which amounts to over half the population. *Chalaq* is the verb here and found in 14.5 but not mentioned and associated with dividing by lot and hence the Urim and the Thummim. Joshua rebukes them in vs. 3 for not having been “slack” or *raphah* which as noted in 10.6 also means to heal. This rebuke is loaded with shame, telling them with some scorn that they had failed to following the allotment designated originally by the “God of your fathers,” this association driving home Joshua's disgust. Obviously it struck them with shame and fear. It seems these tribes were riding, as it were, on the coattails of their fellows. Now that things had settled down somewhat, matters that had been passed over now are taken note of, allotment of the land being of the highest order. With this in mind, would Joshua muster the other tribes against them and do what he had done to the Canaanites? Certainly that threat loomed over the seven tribes.

Because seven tribes is a substantial number of Israel's overall population, Joshua has to be tactful and not alienate these fellow Israelites. He decides upon a plan, that is, he has three men from each tribe explore the land and write a description of what they had seen, that is, with a view of inheriting it. Joshua doesn't seem to refer to any specific part of Canaan but left it up to these representatives. A bit later in vs. 7 we have mention of the Levites again, almost as a refrain, saying that they won't have an inheritance. This seems related to their unique role within Israel, and many if not most perhaps settled upon Shiloh as their dwelling place. From there they could spread out eventually to other parts of Canaan and perform their priestly duties for the Israelites.

Joshua bids the total of twenty-one men (three from each of the seven tribes) to divide what they had surveyed into seven section after which he will cast lots “here” before the Lord, this “here” being Shiloh which quickly was gaining importance early in Israel's presence within Canaan. The seven pairs of three men set out, did their survey and returned to Joshua. Surely they must have been tempted to exaggerate on behalf of each of their tribes, even quarrel bitterly over what they had seen. In brief, who could outdo the other. Chances are that Joshua had questioned them closely to see if their reports corroborated with other information at hand. Anyway, things worked out well with vss. 11 through to the end of Chapter Eighteen detailing the allotment of these seven tribes. Actually it continues through Chapter Nineteen. Throughout it all the other five tribes were looking on anxiously to see if these people would get better portions, a fact Joshua was keenly aware of.

Chapter Twenty is quite short, nine verses, describing cities of “refuge” or *miqlat* [vs. 1], there being eleven references in the Book of Numbers which has first mention of this concept. “The cities which you give to the Levites shall be the six cities of refuge where you shall permit the man-slayer to flee, and in addition to them you shall give forty-two cities” [Num 35.6]. The verbal root *qalat* means to contract or draw together as well as to receive a fugitive. What prompted this was considerable tension and jealousy during the process of allotting land in Canaan among the twelve tribes. Included, of course, are the seven whom Joshua had accused as being slack in their obligations. Feelings were bound to simmer after the allotment, hence this wise decision to set aside certain places for any offender to escape immediate death.

Not only were Kedesh, Shechem, Bezer Ramoth and Galon designated as *miqlat* for the Israelites, the “stranger” or *ger* among them (cf. 8.35) is included. Chief among them, of course, are the Gibeonites who had employed stealth tactics to avoid being slaughtered when Israel invaded Canaan. Also a *ger* could apply to hangers-on going all the way back to Egypt as well as anyone picked up in the Sinai desert. Since the Levites had no vested interest in preserving a portion of the land, they were more impartial and hence put in charge of these cities. At the same time their relationship with owners of the land among the other tribes must have given rise to some conflict at this early stage that needed to be worked out. If it didn't happen, some of the surviving Canaanites might take advantage and seek outside help to exploit the situation.

The repeated reference about the Levites not having any allotment is to be distinguished from those cities Joshua distributes to them along with the help of Eleazar the priest (cf. 14.1), this being the subject of Chapter Twenty-One. Obviously Eleazar received his priesthood from Aaron who right from the start is called a Levite (cf. Ex 4.14), that is, the brother of Moses who similarly belonged to that clan. The heads of the clans assembled in the newly established Shiloh (cf. vs. 2) which quickly became a center of religiously centered activity for the nation of Israel. They claim cities by referring to Lev 25.32: “Nevertheless, the cities of the Levites, the houses in the cities of their possession, the Levites may redeem at any time.” With this verse in mind, the process of casting lots or *gorel*, that is, through the Urim and Thummim, got underway with regard to the Levitical tribes and continues through the rest of Chapter Twenty-One.

Vs. 43 bring this casting of lots to a conclusion by a reference to the Lord's promise to Moses who was forbidden to enter Canaan as recorded in Dt 34.4: "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there." Right afterward is mention of "rest" or *nuach* which differs from *shaqat* as in 11.23 and found in 3.13 with regard to the position of the priests' feet in the middle of the dried-up Jordan River. The former applies to that which is extended and continues for some time whereas the latter applies more to a quiet state. In vs. 44 *nuach* pertains to Israel's enemies who are visualized as being "on every side" or hemming in Israel, especially during the process of doling out the land of Canaan. Again reference is made to God's promise to Moses as in Ex 23.21: "And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines and from the wilderness to the Euphrates; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you." Actually this promise is with memory of some Israelites who might be alive, having heard it directly from Moses.

Vs. 45 amplifies what was said in the previous verse, that is, concerning *nuach*. It refers to the "promises" or *davar* which are presented here as "good." *Davar* is more than a promises; not unlike *logos*, it means expression, an expression from the Lord which endures. And so this *davar* "came to pass," the simple verb *bo'* meaning to go and here suggests that *davar* doesn't stop with the allotment of Canaan but continues indefinitely.

Chapter Twenty-Two

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 obeyed my voice in all that I have commanded you; 3. you have not forsaken your brethren these many days down to this day but have been careful to keep the charge of the Lord your God. 4. And now the Lord your God has given rest to your brethren as he promised them; therefore turn and go to your home in the land where your possession lies which Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you on the other side of the Jordan. 5. Take good care to observe the commandment and the law which Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded you, to love the Lord your God and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cleave to him and to serve him with all your heart and with

all your soul." 6. So Joshua blessed them and sent them away; and they went to their homes. 7. Now to the one half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given a possession in Bashan; but to the other half Joshua had given a possession beside their brethren in the land west of the Jordan. And when Joshua sent them away to their homes and blessed them, 8. he said to them, "Go back to your homes with much wealth and with very many cattle, with silver, gold, bronze and iron and with much clothing; divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren." 9. So the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned home, parting from the people of Israel at Shiloh which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, their own land of which they had possessed themselves by command of the Lord through Moses. 10. And when they came to the region about the Jordan that lies in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by the Jordan, an altar of great size. 11. And the people of Israel heard say, "Behold, the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar at the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region about the Jordan, on the side that belongs to the people of Israel." 12. And when the people of Israel heard of it, the whole assembly of the people of Israel gathered at Shiloh to make war against them. 13. Then the people of Israel sent to the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh in the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest 14. and with him ten chiefs, one from each of the tribal families of Israel, every one of them the head of a family among the clans of Israel. 15. And they came to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh in the land of Gilead, and they said to them, 16. "Thus says the whole congregation of the Lord, `What is this treachery which you have committed against the God of Israel in turning away this day from following the Lord by building yourselves an altar this day in rebellion against the Lord? 17. Have we not had enough of the sin at Peor from which even yet we have not cleansed ourselves and for which there came a plague upon the congregation of the Lord 18. that you must turn away this day from following the Lord? And if you rebel against the Lord today he will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel tomorrow. 19. But now, if your land is unclean, pass over into the Lord's land where the Lord's tabernacle stands and take for yourselves a possession among us; only do not rebel against the Lord or make us as rebels by building yourselves an altar other than the altar of the Lord our God. 20. Did not Achan the son of Zerah break faith in the matter of the devoted things, and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel? And he did not perish alone for his iniquity.'" 21. Then the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh said in answer to the heads of the families of Israel, "The Mighty

One, God, the Lord! 22. The Mighty One, God, the Lord! He knows; and let Israel itself know! If it was in rebellion or in breach of faith toward the Lord, spare us not today 23. for building an altar to turn away from following the Lord; or if we did so to offer burnt offerings or cereal offerings or peace offerings on it, may the Lord himself take vengeance. 24. Nay, but we did it from fear that in time to come your children might say to our children, `What have you to do with the Lord, the God of Israel? 25. For the Lord has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you, you Reubenites and Gadites; you have no portion in the Lord.' So your children might make our children cease to worship the Lord. 26. Therefore we said, `Let us now build an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice 27. but to be a witness between us and you and between the generations after us that we do perform the service of the Lord in his presence with our burnt offerings and sacrifices and peace offerings; lest your children say to our children in time to come, "You have no portion in the Lord.'" 28. And we thought, if this should be said to us or to our descendants in time to come, we should say, `Behold the copy of the altar of the Lord which our fathers made not for burnt offerings nor for sacrifice but to be a witness between us and you.' 29. Far be it from us that we should rebel against the Lord and turn away this day from following the Lord by building an altar for burnt offering, cereal offering or sacrifice, other than the altar of the Lord our God that stands before his tabernacle!" 30. When Phinehas the priest and the chiefs of the congregation, the heads of the families of Israel who were with him, heard the words that the Reubenites and the Gadites and the Manassites spoke, it pleased them well. 31. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the Reubenites and the Gadites and the Manassites, "Today we know that the Lord is in the midst of us because you have not committed this treachery against the Lord; now you have saved the people of Israel from the hand of the Lord." 32. Then Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, and the chiefs returned from the Reubenites and the Gadites in the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan to the people of Israel and brought back word to them. 33. And the report pleased the people of Israel; and the people of Israel blessed God and spoke no more of making war against them, to destroy the land where the Reubenites and the Gadites were settled. 34. The Reubenites and the Gadites called the altar Witness; "For," said they, "it is a witness between us that the Lord is God."

This chapter describes events after the conquest of much of Canaan. Like most chapters, this one begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” which introduces the designation of the land of Canaan among Israel's twelve tribes. The

Levites didn't receive any land, but they were given cities in which to perform their priestly duties. The three Transjordanian tribes of the Reubenites, Gadites and Manasseh are mentioned at the beginning of this book, that is, in 1.12. Before crossing the Jordan into Canaan Joshua bids them to remember “the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you,” that is, with respect to the land he will give these people. Apparently all three tribes kept their word through thick and thin, which included obeying Joshua. In addition to this *shamar* or keeping (cf. 6.18) another *shamar* is involved, namely, the “charge” belonging to the Lord or the *mishmereth* which derives from this verbal root. “The people kept the charge of the Lord and did not set out” [Num 9.19]. This *mishmereth* seems different...special...from the other tribes and isn't spelled out. Since it applies directly to the Lord, we can assume it has something to do with religious observances and the like.

The reward meted out to the three tribes is that they are to return to their home on the other side of the Jordan, that is, in accord with what Moses had commanded (vs. 5). In other words, the Reubenites, Gadites and Manasseh have their homes already designated compared with the other tribes. A major part in the land distribution is memory of places inhabited by Israel's patriarchs which had persisted throughout the four hundred years sojourn in Egypt followed by forty years in the Sinai wilderness. In these places the Lord had given them “rest” or *nuach*, the same *nuach* of 21.44 belonging to Israel as a whole.

Once in their respective homelands, the three tribes are to continue their *shamar* or keeping (cf. vs. 5) which is the true purpose of being there. Vs. 5 spells out this *shamar*, expanding on the famous words of Dt 6.4, “Here, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.” Then Joshua dismisses them:

-*Shamar* which is with *me'od* as 'good' connoting excessive-ness.

-*Hasah* or to do regarding the commandment and law handed down from Moses.

-*Ahav* or to love the Lord, that being the essence of the just mentioned commandment and law.

-*Halak* or to walk in the Lord's ways.

-*Shamar* again or to keep the Lord's commands.

-*Davaq* (cf. 23.12) or to cleave to the Lord.

-*Havad* or to serve the Lord with one's whole “heart and soul,” *lev* and

nephesh. This, along with the rest, encapsulates Dt 6.5: “and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

Vs. 10 has the Reubenites, Gadites and Manasseh coming to the land assigned to them, their native place, where in response to what Joshua had said to them, they erected an altar “by the Jordan.” The preposition *hal* translates as “by” and alternately can mean “upon.” Such an altar resting *hal...upon...the Jordan River* was possible since it was on the exact spot from which the twelve stones were removed from the riverbed. It was special, that is, of great “size” or *mar'eh*, literally as sight or appearance so that everyone could see this remarkable structure. “Every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food” [Gn 2.9].

Unfortunately erection of an altar had repercussions for the rest of the Israelite tribes. The congregation gathered at Shiloh (cf. vs. 12) in order to make war against the Reubenites, Gadites and Manasseh, *qahal* and *hedah* (cf. 18.1) being used which suggest a solemn assembly for a specific purpose. The reason for this inter-tribal conflict, so unfortunate after successfully subdue Canaan, can be traced to a violation laid out Dt 13.12-18 which is quoted in full because of severe rupture among the Israelites with implication for the future:

“And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your menservants and your maidservants and the Levite that is within your towns since he has no portion or inheritance with you. Take heed that you do not offer your burnt offerings at every place that you see; but at the place which the Lord will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you. However, you may slaughter and eat flesh within any of your towns as much as you desire according to the blessing of the Lord your God which he has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it as of the gazelle and as of the hart. Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it out upon the earth like water. You may not eat within your towns the tithe of your grain or of your wine or of your oil, or the firstlings of your herd or of your flock or any of your votive offerings which you vow, or your freewill offerings or the offering that you present; but you shall eat them before the Lord your God in the place which the Lord your God will choose, you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant and the Levite who is within your towns; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God in all that you undertake.”

Strange to say, Joshua is absent from all this perhaps due to old age. Hopefully to ward off internecine warfare the Israelites send a representative to the three tribes of the Reubenites, Gadites and Manasseh, “sons of Israel” being used in vs. 13 which intimates a consensus reached by the *hedah* or assembly of all the people. Surely such a major crisis couldn't be kept secret and quickly made its way among pockets of Canaanites still holding out hope to evict the newcomers. Civil war would suit them perfectly, and they would seek any chance to exploit the division at hand.

The Israelites decided upon Phinehas, son of Eleazar the priest (cf. vs. 13) and hence a Levite who, as the early chapters recounted, had no vested interest in dividing up the land of Canaan and was suited as a neutral representative. Phinehas was accompanied by members from each of the tribes, more specifically, heads of families (cf. vs. 14). This rather large delegation approached the three so-called wayward tribes in Gilead and didn't get off on a positive note, blurting out “What is this treachery” [vs. 16] or *mahal?* This verb brings back memories of the failure to capture Ai which is fresh in everyone's minds as the following verse states clearly: “But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things” [7.1]. Despite that painful interlude, everything went well afterward with regard to the conquest of Canaan. Avoiding another Ai was tantamount to Israel's success and even more so, her relationship with the Lord.

The delegation sees a parallel between the three tribes having turned away from the Lord and building an altar in rebellion (cf. vs. 16), *shuv* and *marad* being the verbs at hand, pretty much identical as far as the Israelites are concerned. The sense of both are intensified by use of the preposition *b-* ('in'), that is to say literally, “in the Lord.” They bring up the incident at Peor recounted in Num 25.3-5 when the Israelites engaged in sexual relations...harlotry...with the women of Moab. If this weren't bad enough, these women lured Israelites to idolatry which turned out to be a “plague” or *negeph*, the nature of which isn't spelled out but not necessarily was of a physical nature. Chances are this *negeph* was a disease, if you will, that stayed in the collective assembly or *hedah* which the people couldn't shake. Such was the danger posed now with the Canaanites and would plague Israel in future generations. As a result, the Lord bade Moses to hang the chiefs of the people in the sun in order to avert divine “fierce anger” or an '*aph* which is *charon*, both found in 7.26 referring to the incident when Achan had stolen from the spoils of Jericho. In other words, there's a parallel between the physical sun and divine wrath, two types of burning. That was such a traumatic incident that even today the Israelites

claimed they hadn't cleansed themselves (cf. vs. 17). What spooked everyone, of course, was the fact that Achan “did not perish alone for his iniquity” [vs. 20]. Anyone who commits a similar crime will have his entire family pay the price, that being a substantial percentage of the population which Israel could ill afford at this moment.

In vss. 21 through 29 the Reubenites, Gadites and Manasseh offer an eloquent argument to Phinehas and the representatives from Israel's tribes as to why they had erected an altar to the Lord. They knew just as well as all the other tribes that they have to take every precaution to avoid dissension which would suit the Canaanites perfectly. The words of vs. 30 sums up the overall attitude, “it pleased them well.” That is to say, Phinehas and his side as well as the three tribes. Phinehas take the occasion of averting civil war by saying that “we know the Lord is in the midst (*betok*, cf. 8.22) of us” [vs. 31]. Vss. 32 and 33 mention the noun *davar* first as “word” and then as “report” relative to this reconciliation.

In conclusion, the Reubenites and Gadites (Manasseh isn't mentioned) call their altar “Witness” or *Hed* between them and the Lord, a kind of unintended rub, if you will, against the rest of Israel for having stood them down. As for their part, these tribes found themselves out-manuevered and couldn't do anything. As for the real meaning of this *Hed*, refer to vs. 28 where the three tribes (Manasseh included compared with vs. 34 where it isn't) call their altar a “copy” of the Lord's altar, *tavnyth* also applied to a structure or manner of building. “According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture so you shall make it” [Ex 25.9]. And so this altar called *Hed* is the first of its kind, that is, not one for sacrifice but more as a monument which is of “great size” or sight (*mar'eh*, vs. 10) situated there upon (*hal-*) the Jordan River.

Chapter Twenty-Three

1. A long time afterward when the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about and Joshua was old and well advanced in years, 2. Joshua summoned all Israel, their elders and heads, their judges and officers and said to them, "I am now old and well advanced in years; 3. and you have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the Lord your God who has fought for you. 4. Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for

your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west. 5. The Lord your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight; and you shall possess their land as the Lord your God promised you. 6. Therefore be very steadfast to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left 7. that you may not be mixed with these nations left here among you or make mention of the names of their gods or swear by them or serve them, or bow down yourselves to them 8. but cleave to the Lord your God as you have done to this day. 9. For the Lord has driven out before you great and strong nations; and as for you, no man has been able to withstand you to this day. 10. One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the Lord your God who fights for you as he promised you. 11. Take good heed to yourselves, therefore, to love the Lord your God. 12. For if you turn back and join the remnant of these nations left here among you and make marriages with them so that you marry their women and they yours, 13. know assuredly that the Lord your God will not continue to drive out these nations before you; but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a scourge on your sides and thorns in your eyes till you perish from off this good land which the Lord your God has given you. 14. "And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God promised concerning you; all have come to pass for you, not one of them has failed. 15. But just as all the good things which the Lord your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you so the Lord will bring upon you all the evil things until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God has given you 16. if 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 be kindled against you, and you shall perish quickly from off the good land which he has given to you."

Here we have yet another chapter beginning with the conjunctive *v-* which isn't translated into English serving to introduced "a long time afterward" literally as "many days afterward." So despite the unspecified long period of time between the events of the previous chapter—the potential conflict between Israel's tribes---and the present farewell address of Joshua we have little or no details. Most likely this period of "many days" consisted of wiping out as many Canaanites as possible and taking over their habitations. Two very important tasks, however, consisted in the establishment of places of worship as Shiloh and making contact with any possible

connections with descendants from the patriarchs who survived while the Canaanites had been in charge for so many years. After all, the whole enterprise was religiously oriented as begun by Abraham. So once the Israelites settled down and started to organize themselves, many must have wondered not so much as why they had come to Canaan but what will happen next.

The opening verse speaks of a “rest” the Lord bestowed upon Israel, that is, after the period of “many days,” the verb being *nuach* as in 22.4. Such rest connotes a settling down made all the more significant by association with enemies who were “round about” or *savyv* found in 21.42 but not mentioned there. The feeling of being hemmed in on all sides, including guerrilla style warfare, had been eliminated not by Israel's efforts but by the Lord himself.

Vs. 1 contains a second conjunctive translated out-rightly as “and” inserted to introduce Joshua who had been absent, if you will, since Chapter Twenty-Two. Not only was Joshua old but “advanced in years,” literally as “he came in days,” *yom* being mentioned here as with “many days.” However, the latter can intimate that Joshua had completed his God-given mission as successor to Moses. In fact, the chapter at hand parallels Moses' much more extended speech and final blessing in Chapters 31-33 of Deuteronomy. Surely Joshua had been present with him and couldn't help but recall what he uttered. Those eloquent words were spoken not within Canaan but on its boundary whereas Joshua is speaking within Canaan.

In vs. 2 Joshua summons the leaders of Israel telling him the obvious which is stated in the previous verse. Like everyone else, they knew Joshua was about to die, and foremost on their minds was whom did he have in mind as a successor. No details had been revealed as of yet. The days of governing Israel as a mobile group of people—throughout Sinai and Canaan—are over. The challenge of the new leadership is how for the very first time since the patriarchs to govern Israel. As we know from history, judges eventually took over followed by what the Lord disliked the most, a king: “for they have not rejected you (Samuel), but they have rejected me from being king over them” [1Sam 8.7]. Joshua could anticipate this even now and feared it most which means an easy path to idolatry from contact with the surrounding peoples.

To the elders Joshua makes eloquent appeal to what they had witnessed, that is, what the Lord had done to all the “nations,” *goy* being used more in reference to the

tribes within Canaan. Not only did the Lord destroy them, but he had fought with Israel (cf. vs. 3). Joshua next speaks of the allotment of Canaan, Israel's inheritance going back to the patriarchs and ultimately to Abraham. Here in vs. 4 he mentions nations which remain, a clear implication that Canaan in its entirety had not been subdued totally. Included are other peoples from the Jordan to the Great Sea or the Mediterranean. This is the area north of the Sinai from which Israel had come and shouldn't prove too great a challenge given the small stretch of land involved. When Joshua says that the Lord will “push back” these tribes, he intimates that they will end up in the sea. *Hadaph* is the verb connoting a thrusting away. “And if he stabbed him from hatred or hurled at him lying in wait so that he died” [Num 35.20]. Such is the promise of the Lord, *davar* being the verb which as noted earlier means to speak in the sense of giving expression.

In vs. 6 Joshua gets to the heart of the matter by urging the Israelites not just to be steadfast but “very steadfast” or the verb *chazaq* noted last in 11.20 with its alternate meaning of to harden. In the verse at hand, *chazaq*, along with the adverb *me'od* which connotes excessive-ness (cf. 22.5), suggests being resolute to the extreme. Of course, this is necessary in the newly conquered land of Canaan but more so with regard to following what Moses had enjoined as written in the book of the Torah. Such words towards the end of the Book of Joshua sum up what was said in the beginning, namely, “Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you” [1.7]. Turning neither left nor right means bring the focus of *chazaq* coupled with *me'od* to the Torah.

Despite their failures both collective and individually, the Israelites had been doing this since the days when Moses gave them the Torah from Mount Sinai. Such is the real purpose of living in Canaan, but after the people settle down to doing what they've been accustomed to doing for some time, inevitably will come temptations to follow Canaanite gods. Even when this is dealt with, many people must have entertained thoughts running along something as where do go from here, etc. Is the rest of the world to come to Israel and hence be converted?

In vs. 7 Joshua addresses the real fear and threat he and everyone else had, namely, contamination with alien gods. The Hebrew has for the RSV “mixed” the verb *bo'* which reads literally “go in (*b-*) the nations” or the *goy*. He acknowledges readily that there are still some *goy* “left” (*sha'ar*), a quasi-admission of failure, if you will,

for not having destroyed every single Canaanite as the Lord had commanded. The picture that emerges is the Israelites inhabited most cities and other pockets of settlements. To dwell in cities was a unique, even alien experience, for the Israelites had been wandering throughout the Sinai peninsula for forty years. Suddenly they were thrust into these cities which meant, of course, the presence of temples to native gods. Joshua realized this great temptation, hence his order neither to swear, serve nor bow to them in vs. 7.

To counter the temptation to worship the native gods, Joshua tells his fellow Israelites in vs. 8 that they are to “cleave” to the Lord, *davaq* (cf. 22.5), this verb coupled with the preposition *b-*, literally as “cleave in the Lord.” In the same breath Joshua reminds them that they have been doing this all along, i.e., “to this day,” implying albeit vaguely that the Israelites are about to take up residence in cities and forsake their previous way of life as nomads moving from place to place. Although in Egypt they herded cattle in Goshen (cf. Gn 47.6), later they were forced to construct store-cities (cf. Ex 1.11), hence their innate dislike for dwelling in cities.

Joshua reminds the people of the strength they have which comes from the Lord, that is, “no man has been able to withstand you to this day” [vs. 9]. This reads literally as “no man stands in your faces unto this day.” So the cleaving or *davaq* in vs. 8 translates over into this ability to prevail against continuing threats by the Canaanites which, as pointed above, is in jeopardy by reason of exposure to gods and their shrines which the Israelites find in the cities and villages throughout the land. This indirect threat which bothered Joshua comes across by him saying “take good heed to yourselves” [vs. 11], the verb being *shamar* with *me'od* as in 22.5 with regard to *nephesh* commonly as “soul” also in 22.5.

The *shamar* enjoined upon the people applies to this all important matter of alien gods. The Canaanites knew that the best way to subvert Israel is to have them intermarry, that is, the Canaanite wives would seduce their Israelite husbands to worship of these gods which, in turn, would pervade the family. So in the span of just one generation the Israelites would be converted, if you can put it that way. Because of this Joshua warns in vs. 13 that the “nations” or *goy* (cf. vs. 12), that is, the remainder of Canaanite tribes, will become both a “snare and trap” or *pach* and *moqesh*, alternately as net and noose. Both are found in Ps 69.22: “Let their own table before them become a snare; let their sacrificial feasts be a trap.” If this weren't enough, the nations will also be a scourge and thorn, traceable to

intermarriage. All these affliction will continue until Israel perishes from the good land the Lord has given it (cf. vs. 13).

So with these words Joshua concludes his admonition to the Israelites in vs. 14 including words about his impending death. Despite it, he is more concerned about Israel's future relationship with the Lord in newly conquered Canaan. Joshua says that not one thing has “failed” them, *naphal* being the verb meaning to fall (cf. 11.7), using this verb twice in the same breath as a final encouragement.

Immediately following is vs. 15 introduced with the appropriate conjunctive *v-* as “but” related to three uses of the word *davar*. Two are nouns or as “things” both good and evil and one as the verb to speak with respect to the Lord translated as “promised.” And so the people are to beware of this constant choice before them which means no intermarriage, almost impossible to resist.

This next-to-last chapter concludes with yet another reminder not to trespass the Lord's covenant, chiefly not to serve other gods. Should the people opt for this, divine “anger” (*'aph*) will be “kindled” (*charah*) against them. The last time both are found is 7.26, the incident of Achor who stole from the devoted things of Jericho's ruins and precipitated Israel's defeat at Ai. The people had bitter memories of that incident where the stoning of Achor and his entire family was more traumatic than their humiliating defeat. A similar fate awaits Israel as a whole should they forget this example which means that the more immediate leaders after Joshua's death made an obligatory pilgrimage to the stone covering Achor and his clan, the one that “remains to this day” [7.26] to remind succeeding generations.

Chapter Twenty-Four

1. Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. 2. And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, `Your fathers lived of old beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and 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 made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac; 4. and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Ser to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. 5. And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did

in the midst of it; and afterward I brought you out. 6. Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. 7. And when they cried to the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did to Egypt; and you lived in the wilderness a long time. 8. Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived on the other side of the Jordan; they fought with you, and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you. 9. Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel; and he sent and invited Balaam the son of Beor to curse you, 10. but I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he blessed you; so I delivered you out of his hand. 11. And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, and the men of Jericho fought against you and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I gave them into your hand. 12. And I sent the hornet before you which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow. 13. I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities which you had not built, and you dwell therein; you eat the fruit of vineyards and olive yards which you did not plant.' 14. "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt and serve the Lord. 15. And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." 16. Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; 17. for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the peoples through whom we passed; 18. and the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land; therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God." 19. But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the Lord; for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions 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 having done you good." 21. And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the Lord." 22. Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." 23. He said, "Then put away the foreign gods which are among you and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel." 24. And the people said to

Joshua, "The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey." 25. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem. 26. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a great stone and set it up there under the oak in the sanctuary of the Lord. 27. And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us; for it has heard all the words of the Lord which he spoke to us; therefore it shall be a witness against you lest you deal falsely with your God." 28. So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance. 29. After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a hundred and ten years old. 30. And they buried him in his own inheritance at Timnath-serah which is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. 31. And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work which the Lord did for Israel. 32. The bones of Joseph which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt were buried at Shechem in the portion of ground which Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money; it became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph. 33. And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him at Gibe-ah, the town of Phinehas his son, which had been given him in the hill country of Ephraim.

Again, the conjunctive *v-* shows a close connection between events, the admonition Joshua gives to Israel and the covenant at Shechem mentioned last in 21.21, "the city of refuge for the slayer." Earlier Joshua summons "all Israel" [vs. 2] just as he does here meaning that between the end of that chapter and the one at hand there may have been an interval or change of venue because the former lacks mention of a specific place. Abraham had built an altar at Shechem, the first one in Israel (cf. Gn 12.7). Although it was long-gone by now, that is, some four hundred and fifty years ago, memory of it persisted down the years while the Israel had been sojourning in Egypt. So at this hallowed spot the people "presented" themselves or *yatsav* which means a standing as in 1.5; nothing is said of the ark though that is implied.

Once the people had taken their position before the Lord at Shechem, Joshua began an account of Israel's history. Vs. 2 has both Joshua and the Lord speaking as one, for it reads "Joshua said to all the people" and "Thus says the Lord." Virtually everyone was familiar with their history from Abraham down and to the present. However, Joshua recounting some of the highlights is important in that each and every Israelite is listening to him. Between vs. 2 and vs. 13 we have a rapid-fire

succession of the conjunctive *v-* which means Joshua passed from one major incident to another with them all forming a single unit.

The conjunctive which begins vs. 14 serves to connect the summation of history with another exhortation similar to that found in the previous chapter, that is, to fear the Lord and to serve him in “sincerity and faithfulness,” *tamym* and *'emeth*. The former connotes lack of blemish and completeness whereas the latter, faith. “He who walks blamelessly and does what is right” [Ps 15.2]. “And give me a sure sign” [2.12] which runs literally, “sign of faithfulness.”

In vs. 14 Joshua also bids the people to “put away” or *sur* (cf. vs. 23) the gods which their fathers had served both in the present land as well as in Egypt. That means despite divine intervention beginning with Moses in Egypt as well as later, the people clung to these gods and will do so chiefly through intermarriage with the Canaanites. Implied is that the women of the land who marry the Israelites are behind this worship of alien gods. The fathers of this present generation—and that extends all the way back to Mesopotamia and later in Egypt—had been a persistent threat to worship of the true God of Israel, something that can't be stressed enough both now and later. Joshua puts the matter right out there: “choose this day whom you will serve” [vs. 15]. Since every Israel was on the spot, naturally they chose the Lord, but many did so reluctantly out of fear. At least those who made a commitment to the Lord would be sufficient in number, grow and eventually displace the alien gods. Joshua concludes vs. 15 saying that both he and his household will serve the Lord even though he was at the very end of his life.

The people's fear and compulsion is mixed with good intent when they say in vs. 16 “far be it” from us, *chalylah* meaning something like “God forbid.” “Far be it from us that we should rebel against the Lord” [22.29]. The Israelites continue through vs. 18 as one voice saying that the Lord brought them from Egypt, through the desert to the land of Canaan in which they are now.

Joshua retorts in vs. 19—and this must have been extremely difficult for him so close to death—saying that the Israelites “cannot serve the Lord.” In other words, from his days at Moses' side he had witnessed a persistent rebellious streak which he managed to control and direct while conquering Canaan but was fearful it couldn't last after his death. Joshua reminds the people that the Lord is both “holy and jealous,” *qadosh* (cf. 5.15 but with *qodesh*) and *qano'*. The former intimates

separation, being apart, and the latter is the only use of this adjective in the Book of Joshua and derives from the verbal root *qana'* which connotes envy. So with these two characteristics belonging to the Lord—and there had been plenty of evidence of it throughout Joshua—it was natural for the people to feel some revulsion. It was too overwhelming an experience for the nation as a whole to adopt, let alone maintain, and hence made it easier to slip into worship of the alien gods through intermarriage. Such divine holiness and jealousy spills over to not forgiving transgression, etc., the verb being *nasa'* which means to raise up. In other words, the Lord will allow the weight of Israel's sins both collectively and individually to weigh them down.

Vs. 20 calls the gods of Canaan “foreign” or *nekar* (cf. vs. 23) which derives from a verbal root meaning to estrange or to alienate. Israel was exposed to similar gods in Egypt; not only that, she managed to survive as a nation for four hundred years. However, being in Canaan is different because the people are free and have a somewhat less cohesive identity than during those four centuries. “There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god” [Ps 81.9]. With regard to these gods (idols, actually), Joshua has made a mistake. He bids the people to put them away (*sur* as in vs. 14). It would have been better if he were most strict, asking them to destroy these gods.

As for *sur* in vs. 23, there follows the opposite, namely “incline” or *natah* (cf. 8.26) which is a bit stronger, more as to stretch forward here with regard to the people's “heart” or *lev* (cf. 22.5) concerning the Lord.

With this admonition out of the way, Joshua must have wondered about the long term impact of his words. Perhaps he felt that they would be remembered more readily now on the threshold of death. But before that, Joshua makes a covenant (cf. vs. 25) at Shechem mindful, of course, of the above mentioned altar Abraham had erected there. Note mention of a “great stone” in vs. 26 which Joshua set up under the oak, the same oak mentioned in Gn 12.7. Apparently this oak or what was left of it is situated within the “sanctuary” of the Lord [vs. 26] or *miqdash*, the only use of this noun in the Book of Joshua and related to *qadosh* in vs. 19. And so we have two such sanctuaries, Shechem and Shiloh though *qadosh* doesn't apply directly to the latter.

Thus the stone-oak-sanctuary bridges the time gap between Abraham's first altar in

Canaan and the second one built in that country by an Israelite. Such is why this threefold item is to be a “witness” or *hedah* (cf. vs. 27), the word alternately meaning congregation as in 22.12. The stone-oak-sanctuary is alive, that is, it has heard the Lord's words addressed to the people through Joshua. It involves that covenant made and noted in vs. 25 where Joshua's words as to serving the Lord (vss. 9-24) and the people's apparent willingness are written in the book of the Torah of God. With all this said and done, Joshua dismisses the people, each tribe to their respective inheritance (cf. vs. 28), this word deliberately inserted to remind everyone of the connection between the patriarchs and Israel as not living in the land they had once claimed as their own.

Finally Joshua died and was buried in his own inheritance first noted in 19.49-50. Vs. 31 notes that Israel was faithful in serving the Lord during Joshua's lifetime and the elders who succeeded him, they being acquainted with what the Lord had done for both him and Israel. Once Joshua was buried, the people interred the bones of Joseph who had wandered throughout Sinai and Canaan along with the ark, if you will, without having a permanent place of rest. “God will visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here” [Gn 50.25].

As a kind of postscript to the Book of Joshua, the very last verse speaks of the death and burial of Eleazar, Aaron's son, first mentioned in 14.1. His death, along with that of Joshua, brings to an end the phase of Israel's wandering in the desert. Surely there were plenty of people alive now present in Canaan, but they had been born after Israel had left Egypt. It is up to this new generation to preserve the memory of both four hundred years dwelling in Egypt as well as the newly established connection between Abraham's altar at Shechem and the stone of witness in this same place.

+ The End +