

# Expansions on the Book of Joshua

## Introduction

The document at hand follows in the footsteps of a number of texts already posted on this home page, that is, expansions on books of the Bible. More precisely, the approach common to all is one not so much of commenting upon a given biblical book but expanding upon it. This involves paying attention to the original Hebrew and Greek (the former as in the case at hand) and how it can be enlarged from within, if you will, while at the same time staying within the confines of the text. Therefore a certain liberty is taken and freely acknowledged which parallels the way you'd develop a story. That means certain elements, sometimes overlooked, are honed in upon and amplified within the biblical context.

As with all documents on this site, this one is geared in accord with the practice of *lectio divina*, that slow, meditative reading of scripture with a view towards union with God through contemplative prayer. Other than that, this text has no value. This point cannot be stressed enough. Information about the Book of Joshua can be obtained anywhere else.

Please note the following which comprise the format of this document, basically the same for all other “expansion” texts thus far posted:

-Each chapter of the Book of Joshua is presented after which comes the expansion of the text.

-References to the same word are kept as much as possible within the Book of Joshua. If this is not possible, then other biblical references are made. This will enable a quick search both forward and backward for verses containing the same word. The verbal root system is very important in Hebrew. That means one verb can have multiple meanings as well as being the source for nouns. Staying within a given form (piel, for example) will be done as much as possible though this isn't always the case. For example, take 4.10: ‘For the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished,’ *tamam*. This verb appears in 4.1 also as “finished” but is a different form, hence it is not referred to; instead, 5.6 is referred to. The same applies to staying within or in the vicinity of the primary verse's context. The first instance of this is in the opening verse concerning

the verb *sharath* as noted concerning Ex 24.

-Since Joshua contains accounts of battles and lists of territories, those parts will be expanded upon more concisely.

-The translation is the **New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (RSV)**, Oxford, 1973. Another biblical translation consulted is the **Zondervan NIV Study Bible** (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2002).

## Chapter One

1. After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, 2. "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land which I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. 3. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. 4. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. 5. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. 6. Be strong and of good courage; for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left that you may have good success wherever you go. 8. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success. 9. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." 10. Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, 11. "Pass through the camp and command the people, 'Prepare your provisions; for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land which the Lord your God gives you to possess.'" 12. And to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh Joshua said, 13. "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, 'The Lord your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land.' 14. Your wives, your little ones and your cattle shall remain

in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan; but all the men of valor among you shall pass over armed before your brethren and shall help them, 15. until the Lord gives rest to your brethren as well as to you, and they also take possession of the land which the Lord your God is giving them; then you shall return to the land of your possession and shall possess it, the land which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise." 16. And they answered Joshua, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 17. Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses! 18. Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage."

The opening verse of the Book of Joshua continues into the next, the two forming one sentence. It begins not just a new chapter but the entire book and has as its very first word the conjunctive *v-* normally translated as "and." It occurs with regular frequency, showing the connection not only between verses but more importantly, between events. For a book to begin with *v-* implies close connection with what goes before it which in this instance is the Book of Deuteronomy. The last verse there (also it begins with *v-* and is part of a large sentence beginning with *vs.* 10) reads as follows: "and for all the mighty power and all the great and terrible deeds which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel." In other words, verse one of chapter one of the Book of Joshua carries over a seamless legacy of Moses to his successor, Joshua. Hence, the continuity between the two books is not so much distinguished but made evident.

Moses was forbidden by the Lord to enter the land because he "did not revere me as holy in the midst of the people of Israel" [Dt 32.51], words echoed back in 2.37 not so much against Moses but against Israel. Because Moses was that nation's representative, he bore the brunt of responsibility for their actions. Surely Joshua had an uncomfortable awareness of this since as a youth he had been associated with Israel's greatest leader. Now he found himself in the same position of governing the Israelites at one of the most critical junctures in their history after the people had wandered for forty years in the Sinai wilderness. Surely thoughts of suffering the same fate as Moses must have passed through Joshua's mind despite divine reassurances that are forthcoming. Joshua makes his first appearance in Ex 17.9 when chosen to fight against Amalek and just as tellingly or if not more so in Ex 33.11: "Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his

friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tent.” And so Joshua combines the same two strengths as Moses, a legislator and a warrior plus what we’d call today a contemplative bent. It seems Joshua remained within the tent of witness in order that the Lord speak with him alone, even away from Moses. That is to say, the Lord told him of his future role of Moses’ successor and didn’t want to let on to Moses lest he be discouraged, even jealous, and prevent any possible premature usurpation of authority. There’d be no problem among the two close associates; instead, rival factions supporting each would cause all the trouble.

At the very beginning Joshua is put in his proper place, if you will, as being called Moses’ “minister” or *meshareth*, this participial form being not unlike the sound of *Mosheh* or Moses (the two together run as *meshareth Mosheh*). The noun derives from the verb *sharath* meaning to wait up, to serve as well as to worship when applied to the Lord. “Moses rose with his minister, Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God” [Ex 24.13].

Moses is called *heved YHVH* or “servant of the Lord” only after his death, not while alive, the previous reference to this being Dt 34.5: “So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord.” To be so called right from the start of his *sharath* is an honor not even bestowed upon Moses during his lifetime but frequently referred to in the Book of Joshua. It seems that this esteemed title isn’t conferred until after death, the same as with Joshua: “After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a hundred and ten years old” [24.29].

The Lord speaks with Joshua, the common verb *amar* being used. The words “the Lord said” or “thus says the Lord” are so frequent throughout the Old Testament that barely are they given a thought. Often they can be taken as divine voice from above to someone below who receives it. That’s true the way virtually all come across, but the manner of communication is mostly interior. It’s interesting to note that this manner of speaking isn’t used throughout the Book of Genesis but begins only with Exodus and continues in subsequent books. It reaches its height, if you will, among the prophets. Those persons in Genesis are much closer to the Garden of Eden, if you will, and despite all the subsequent calamities, even a worldwide flood, haven’t strayed as far from God as later on.

In the verse at hand the Lord wastes no time in speaking to Joshua because the situation is critical. He does so for three reasons: to show that he is in charge just as he had been in the Book of Exodus, to encourage Joshua in the same role as Moses and for the people of Israel. Joshua can't help but recall his intimate conversation with the Lord, albeit unrecorded, in the tent of meeting noted above. And so any interchange with the Lord and Joshua can't help but harken back to that first encounter. It enabled him to recall those conversations Moses had with the Lord as he was privileged to behold in various circumstances. What could be better training here on the threshold of leaving the Sinai desert for Canaan?

In vs. 2 the Lord wastes not time in getting down to business, speaking as he does through vs. 9. He addresses Joshua for the first time in Dt 31.23 shortly before the death of Moses: "And the Lord commissioned Joshua, the son of Nun, and said, 'Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore to give them: I will be with you.'" The context of one of commissioning, *tsavah* being the verb which carries over to the words at hand.

Apparently Joshua didn't know that Moses had died although he senses that his end was fast approaching. The last communication between the two—rather interaction, though no words are recorded—is Dt 34.9: "the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him." The Lord doesn't reveal to Joshua any details about his death, for "he (the Lord) buried him in the valley in the land of Moab" [Dt 34.6], that is, no human being was present, not even Joshua, which shows how highly the Lord had regarded Moses.

The words of vs. 2 are straight forward and matter-of-fact, the Lord telling Joshua to get a move on and prepare to leave the Sinai wilderness for the land of Canaan. Everyone sensed something big was about to happen but were somewhat unsure because they were without their trusted leader, Moses. That made the responsibility upon Joshua's shoulders all the more burdensome and fraught with dangers, real and imagined. Although the people had Joshua's victory over Amalek in mind (cf. Ex 17.9) where he fought bravely and thus proved himself, it was Moses with his outstretched arms that brought victory.

The conjunctive *v-* translated as "therefore" has special force here insofar as it is a break between the past which consists of Moses dealing with Israel in Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea and wandering in the Sinai wilderness. Now begins a new

and unpredictable phase in Israel's history though the Lord is quite clear about being with Joshua as he had been with his predecessor. *Qum* or "arise" signifies this and is followed by the command to cross the Jordan River or more precisely "this Jordan." The phrase can be taken as a kind of minimizing, not belittling the crossing. If the Lord could part the Red Sea several generations earlier, surely he can do the same with "this Jordan." Although Joshua wasn't alive at the time, he was fully aware of accounts of how Moses led the people through it, the two having a certain parallel even though the task before him lacks the drama of that decisive liberation from Egypt. As for the Canaanites, reports have been filtering about the Red Sea crossing long before Israel had reached the Jordan, hence the words "all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away" [Ex 15.15]. So much for the Jordan River being a natural barrier against the Israelites.

Actually the "place" or *maqom* in vs. 3 hearkens back to the promise made to Abram in Gn 12.1 though it is not specified there, attention more on the Lord who does the calling. As for Moses, the Lord mentions *maqom* first in Ex 3.8 (along with 'erets or 'land' twice) in the context of the "misery of my people" [vs. 7] which includes not just the Canaanites but five other tribes, a formidable array of peoples facing Israel. Abram (later called Abraham) did enter Canaan and wandered throughout it. After some time, the Israelite tribes abandoned it in favor of living in Egypt at the request of Joseph. Even though four hundred plus years had passed, memory of Abraham and his ultimately failed attempt to settle in Canaan sank deep into the folklore of that land. Never, said the Canaanites among themselves, would we allow Abraham's descendants retake what they felt naturally belonged to them. That's why the report of Israel's crossing of the Red Sea and wandering throughout the Sinai peninsula several generations earlier had sunk deep into their minds by telling and re-telling accounts of it. Hidden beneath all this bravado were some descendants of the twelve tribes who remained in Canaan, pretty much faithful to their traditions, albeit secretly, and welcomed the impending invasion led by Joshua. Rahab the prostitute who figures significantly in Chapter Two sheltered spies sent to reconnoiter the land, and she may have been one such person.

Every "place" or *maqom* is singled out as the territory Joshua and the Israelites is about to enter which, of course, includes the entire land of Canaan, and "sole of your foot" is a way of connoting subjection through warfare. That's why the verb *darak* or "tread" is used which connotes bending as in Ps 11.2: "For lo, the wicked bend the bow." As for this *darak*, Joshua clearly had in mind the wanderings of

Abraham within Canaan many years ago which resulted in a failure to put down roots. Not only does it apply to him but the other patriarchs. Now is the time to make up what he and his descendants were forced to abandon.

The dimensions of the land delineated in vs. 4 which is to be Israel's "territory" or are that nation's furthest expansion under Kings David and Solomon. This noun fundamentally means a border and figures prominently in the Book of Joshua, the next reference being 12.2: "The river Jabbok, the boundary of the Ammonites."

The Lord breaks down the *maqom* or "place" of the previous verse into five territories beginning in the south to the north, over to the east and then the west. It's meant to impress as well as encourage Joshua, far more impressive than the smaller territory of Canaan in which the patriarchs had dwelt. In other words, "the sole of your foot" will do a lot of walking as well as subjecting. Joshua wasn't quite sure how to break this news to the people. On one hand they might be thrilled at the prospect of getting so much land and on the other, view this enterprise as beyond their control. Having dealt with troublesome tribes in the Sinai wilderness was challenging enough. Perhaps Joshua thought of waiting until the people had crossed the Jordan River. That would put the Sinai experience firmly behind them with no other alternative but to move on, a make-or-break situation.

The five territories or *gevul*...boundaries...are listed as follows:

1) Chances are the "wilderness" or *midbar* refers to the both the place from which the Israelites had just emerged as well as the Arabian peninsula. "All who came out of Egypt, all the men of war had died on the way in the wilderness after they had come out of Egypt" [5.4]. The verbal root for this noun is *davar* which means to speak, so the wilderness may be called "a place of speaking." Indeed this had been true, given the impartation of the Torah on Sinai to Moses.

2) Note that the Lord simply doesn't mention Lebanon but "this Lebanon," not unlike "this Jordan" of vs. 2, something like throwing in a kind of bonus by reason of that country's cedars.

3) The Euphrates river to which Lebanon extends ('as far as').

4) The land of the Hittites or much of modern Turkey.

5) The Great Sea or the Mediterranean often referred to the where the sun sets.

*Yatsav* is the verb for “stand” in vs. 5 which more properly translates as to take a firm stand, to set oneself. “And they (tribes of Israel) presented themselves before God” [24.1]. In other words, any Canaanite or other tribes in the five “borders” (*gevul*) or territories mentioned in the last verse won’t be able to resist Joshua’s treading by the sole of his foot (cf. vs. 3). This won’t be temporary but for his entire life which means Joshua must use his time well. The only personal military experience he had to go by was his success against Amalek, but that was with the help of Moses’ outstretched arms (cf. Ex 17.8+). If Joshua “mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of his sword” [vs. 13], hopefully he could muster the same strength for much larger conflicts.

The key word here is *ka’asher* or “as” which literally reads “as which,” *k-* prefaced to the relative pronoun. In light of the potential enemies in the five territorial regions which is much larger than Canaan proper, just as important to Joshua as the task before him is appointing his successor. That means he’ll have to keep an eye out for someone to succeed him early on as Moses had done with him. Already he must have some candidates in mind but hopefully that will become more evident once the Israelites actually cross the Jordan River. Right now Joshua is concentrating on having the sole of his foot step on Canaanite soil, this being the first of countless steps he will take in a new territory as well as the other four lands. And so that apparently small relative pronoun *ka’asher* which connects Joshua with Moses is foremost in his mind.

*Raphah* and *hazav* are the verbs for “fail and forsake,” thereby ratifying that just mentioned relative pronoun or connection between Moses and Joshua. The former means to be slack or weaken, thereby implying its opposite which is to maintain in a state of tension or concentration. “Do not relax your hand from your servants” [10.6]. The latter implies being destitute: “and they left the city open” [8.17].

The first two verbs in vs. 6 are *chazaq* and *‘amats*: the former implies a tying fast or binding and the latter is not unlike it but connotes a prevailing over obstacles. Both are found just a few verses latter and certainly are needed by Joshua as he listens to the Lord interiorly while gazing across the Jordan River into Canaan. For him it was a question of aligning the two, what he hears and what he sees. Chances are that natives of the land were on the other side, praying to their gods for the same *chazaq* and *‘amats*. Words of the Philistines uttered in 1Sam 4.9 are not unlike the situation at hand though ultimately they were doomed: “Take courage and acquit

yourselves like men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; acquit yourselves like men and fight.”

“Cause to inherit,” not “inherit,” a big difference with regard to the verb *nachal* which here is in the hiphil or causative. So after being encouraged by the Lord, how does Joshua *cause* the Israelites to inherit the five territories stretching before him? To do so seems adopting the role of a mediator, of being passive to some force or energy passing through him and then on to the people. All Joshua has to do some small though significant action or gesture which sets this force in motion. Thus he has to consider his nation’s history to date with the Lord providing the clue in the verse at hand. That is to say, the Lord had sworn an oath centuries ago to give this land to Israel, the first occasion being Gn 15.7 to Abram: “I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.” That memory had sunken deep into Israel’s consciousness and was kept alive during four centuries of being exiled from it in Egypt. Joshua’s task now consisted of reminding the people of this heritage which certainly they knew but needed special impetus at this critical juncture. Once that memory was inserted or rather, brought to the fore, Joshua could go ahead with confidence and cross the Jordan. At the heart of this impetus are three instances of the preposition *l-* (to) found in the Hebrew and prefaced to three words: *to* their fathers, *to* give and *to* them. Nothing could be clearer to everyone involved.

As for the verb *nachal* or to inherit, it is found next in 4.1: “And these are the inheritances which the people of Israel received in the land of Canaan.”

As for the verb *shavah* or “swore” (the number seven is derived from it), cf. 5.6: “to them the Lord swore that he would not let them see the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give us.”

*Raq* or “only” which begins vs. 7 has a somewhat casual air deliberately inserted for Joshua’s sake, that is, it continues the exhortation “be strong and of good courage” from the previous verse into the next (*chazaq* and *‘amats*). While the Lord wants Joshua to perform his duty, important as it is, reliance upon him primary. That’s why he speaks of the “law” or *Torah* (found in the next verse), making sure that observing it is foremost, the conquest or re-settlement of Canaan being secondary. If, for example, Joshua was unwilling, he and Israel go back to wandering in the Sinai desert. Better to *shamar* the Torah there than in Canaan, the physical place

being secondary. *Shamar* is the verb for “being careful” and often is applied to the Torah as throughout the lengthy Psalm 119. “Roll great stones against the mouth of the cave and set met by it to guard them” [10.18].

Back in Dt 8.1 Moses addresses not so much Joshua but Israel: “Be careful to follow (*shamar*) every command I am giving you today so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that the Lord promised on oath to your forefathers.” So while Moses put this forth in Sinai, he hoped the people would use their wandering as a novitiate of sorts in preparation for Canaan. By not turning either to the right or left—certainly they did plenty of this for forty years of wandering—the Lord has in mind no hesitation about crossing the Jordan River as well as entering the five territories in vs. 4. *Sur* is the verb for “turn” and the exact opposite of *shamar*. If this *sur* is not done, Israel will “have good success” or *sakal* (mentioned in the next verse), a verb which means to look at or behold as well as to be prudent.

In vs. 8 the Torah is called a “book” or *sepher*, more properly a scroll, which could be both rolled up and unrolled conveniently when needed for consultation. In other words, a *sepher* is ideal for a people on the move as Israel had been for so long. “As it is written in the book of the law of Moses, ‘an altar of unhewn stones upon which no man has lifted an iron tool’” [8.31]. The verse at hand with the image of Torah as something rolled up is inserted into the mouth of Joshua. Joshua isn’t to digest this *sepher* but allow it to become part of his mouth, he being a walking Torah from which it won’t “depart” or *mush*. Something similar happened not so much to Moses but to Aaron, his mouthpiece: “And you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you what you shall do” [Ex 4.15]. This happens in Egypt, certainly before Joshua was born, but he must have been aware of this double speaking, if you will, first by Moses and then by Aaron. Now the connection between speaking and Torah has passed on to him.

*Hagah* is the verb for “meditate” which fundamentally means to make a murmuring or growling sound, in other words, a soft and barely audible sound coming from one’s mouth. It is as though something else were present within the person doing it. Such is the case where the Torah has become part of Joshua’s mouth. Furthermore, it’s permanent which is why he can’t help but *hagah* on it “day and night.” “I will meditate on all your work and muse on your mighty deeds” [Ps 77.12]. This

continuous *hagah* enables Joshua not to require sleep but to be in a continuous state of watchfulness or *shamar* as intimated in vs. 7, it being a slow chewing of the Torah. That's why *lemahan* or "that" (also as 'in order that') is an important connective, if you will, between the day-into-night and night-into-day *hagah* just noted.

From *hagah* springs *shamar* from which in turn springs a doing (the common verb *hasah*) with regard to what is written not just in the Torah but the *sepher* of the Torah, that is, the scroll. Doing will be easy for Joshua now that Torah is fixed permanently in his mouth, the two as indistinguishable. He has no choice but to effect...*hasah*...*hagah* and *shamar*, the latter two being responsible for the first. So with Torah in his mouth, Joshua's doing will be automatic or in accord with Torah. Here *lemahan* or "that" leads to 'az or two instances of "then" which involves *tsalach* or making prosperous his *derek* or "way." This verb, intensified by the first 'az, involves success and flourishing as in Ps 1.3: "Whatever he does shall prosper." As for the *derek* (often applied to way of life, etc.; cf. 2.7), it hasn't yet been trodden by the sole of Joshua's foot (cf. vs. 3) but is about to, first through the Jordan River and onto Canaan. The second 'az leads to "good success" or *sakal* noted in the last verse.

Vs. 9 is the conclusion of the Lord's words begun in vs. 2. The first sentence is a rhetorical question of sorts as it hearkens back to vs. 7, "being careful to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you," the verb in both instances being *tsavah*.

Here we have the third occurrence in a short time of the Lord encouraging Joshua, perhaps overwhelming him with such favor. If the Lord is going to such pains, it could be a clue that the task up ahead might be more formidable than anything Moses had to face, including his struggles with Pharaoh. However, Joshua was sandwiched in between, that is, the desert behind him and the Jordan River in front, not counting the fearful and restless nation of Israel with whom he had to deal and so so quickly.

In addition to the now "be strong and of good courage" or *chazaq* and 'amats, both being found together in vs. 7, we have another pair, *harats* and *chatat*, "frightened and dismayed." The former connotes trembling and the latter a breaking. Moses uses both verbs in pretty much the same context with respect to the Canaanites: "Be

strong and of good courage, do not fear or be in dread of them” [Dt 31.6]. In the next verse he says the same to Joshua, “Be strong and of good courage.” Moses speaks like this with the knowledge that he won’t be allowed to accompany Israel into Canaan (cf. vs. 2). He was at peace about this because he knew his role had been accomplished leading Israel from Egypt and receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai. Events conspired to show it was time for a new generation to assume command.

Compare the further words of Moses to Joshua in Dt 31.8 (‘It is the Lord who goes before you; he will be with you’) with “the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” As for the verse at hand, it reads literally, “in all which you go” and that involves the soles of his feet as noted in vs. 3.

The shortness of vs. 10 forms part of the next verse which begins with the conjunctive *v-*, alternately as “and.” The conjunctive suggests a determination on Joshua’s part after having heard the encouraging divine words begun in vs. 2. He wastes no time, really, and “commanded” (*tsavah*, cf. vs. 9) his “officers” pretty much as he himself had been commanded. *Shatar* is a participle for the English noun and applies to a magistrate as well as a military leader. “At the end of three days the officers went through the camp” [3.2]. By this *tsavah* Joshua is communicating the same *tsavah* which had come from the Lord in vs. 9. As the people drew near to Canaan, Joshua knew he had to appoint military commanders for the struggles ahead, so by now they were in place to fulfill their duty.

Vs. 11 speaks of the *machaneh* (cf. 3.2) or “camp,” indicative of the means by which the Israelites had lived for forty years in the Sinai wilderness, moving from place to place. Now they were on the verge of adopting a more permanent life style, but that depended on how successful they’d be capturing cities in Canaan, etc. Thoughts of abandoning a nomadic life style must have been appealing for some as they faced the Jordan River while others had enjoyed moving from place to place. The Israelites remained there several days, Joshua giving them an opportunity to assess their experience and talk it over among themselves. It also gave pause to Joshua in order to hear the Lord speaking as in vss. 2-9. This is most helpful, of course, because now they are about to embark on a wholly different type of wandering, one with a clear goal in mind, settling down permanently after having conquered Canaan. In the meantime the people listened carefully to their commanders who knew full well that they weren’t quite an army but nevertheless adept at moving about while traveling

lightly.

The original *tsavah* or commanding from the Lord to Joshua and then to the officers now moves a step further down the ladder, that is, as transferred to the people as a whole and forming a unity in the chain of command. These men are to pass *beqerev* the camp, literally as “in the midst of” the camp...right down the center where everyone could see them. Most likely the camp was set up in a grid-type fashion as now because the people had been at the Jordan River longer than one or two days camp.

The first *tsavah* is for everyone to “prepare” or *kun* (alternately as to establish, constitute) what was in their possession. “But hold yourselves in readiness” [8.4]. Their “provisions” or *tseydah* applies more to food than for other belongings. “Take provision in your hand for the journey” [9.11]. This may have sounded a bit odd to the people because they were used to a rather spare diet and were expecting to find abundance in Canaan compared to the desert. It didn’t sound promising, and some may have doubted as to where they were going and what they were about to do, let alone facing the specter of defeat. Everyone hastened about their business, having three full days to get ready as well as to break camp. At least the people had the reassurance that they are to “take possession” of Canaan, *yarash* also meaning to inherit. “And there remains yet very much land to be possessed” [13.1].

Because vs. 12 is so short and part of the next verse, both are treated as one and form an address to three tribes continuing through vs. 15. Reference to the three tribes is found in Chapter Thirty-Two of Numbers who are to assist the other tribes. “But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out” [vs., 23].

All three tribes are to remember the “word” or *davar* (cf. vs. 18) given to them by Moses which doesn’t seem to be found in any specific place except within the context of the chapter of Numbers cited above. This command to “remember” (*zakar*; from it derives the noun ‘male’ as the physical means of remembrance) is noteworthy as being the only one in the entire Book of Joshua. The reason for this command is not to forget helping the other tribes of Israel in the conquest of Canaan; they had large possessions of cattle, etc., and hoped not to engage in battle but simply move in and take over what the other tribes had won.

*Nuach* is the verb pertinent to rest and connotes being quiet as well as to set down. “And when the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan” [3.13]. In the verse at hand, such *nuach* is the “land” or *‘erets*: “the land which I am giving them” [vs. 2]. The other tribes of Israel must have felt reassured that Joshua was speaking to the three tribes so as to give a unified front of attack when they all cross the Jordan River. If not, the Canaanites and other inhabitants of the territories mentioned in vs. 4 would have a good chance of defeating the impending invasion.

The words of vs. 14 came as a relief to the Reubenites, Gadites and Manasseh, namely, that the women, children and chief means of livelihood (cattle) given by Moses will be safe. Nevertheless, the risk was high. The clincher here is the conjunctive *v-* translated as “but.” That is to say, the men are not exempt from joining Israel as many wished would be the case. However, given the imminent invasion, there was no choice, for the rest of the Israelites were fully aware of Joshua’s words. This *v-* pertains to the “men of valor,” the latter being *chayl* which applies to those who are strong as well as endowed with a certain integrity. “See, I have given into your hand Jericho with its king and mighty men of valor” [6.2]. In the verse at hand, this phrase has the adjective *chamushym* which translates as “armed” and means something like five to a rank. There are three other biblical references, one of which found in 4.12: “The half tribe of Manasseh passed over armed before the people of Israel as Moses had bidden them.” Joshua orders this display of strength to encourage “your brethren” or the rest of the Israelites.

As for these men of valor, already Moses had chosen them shortly after having left Egypt. While most have died, a second generation was trained by them, many of whom comprised the ranks at hand. “Take a census...from twenty years old and upward, all in Israel who are able to go forth to war” [Num 1.2-3].

In vs. 15 *had* or “until” applies to Joshua’s command in vs. 14, the three tribes helping their brethren or fellow Israelites. Although the promise has been made for rest or *nuach*, it’s conditioned upon this. In other words, rest is bound up with possession of Canaan, *yarash* being the verb as in vs. 11 and is active or ongoing: as in vs. 2, it is the Lord who is in the act of giving (the common verb *natan*) it.

The divine promise of returning (*shuv*; cf. 2.22) is very important because it hearkens back to the above mentioned possession promised to Abram in Gn 12.1.

Again, the time gap is somewhere in the vicinity of over four hundred years. Memory of this land has been handed down many generations while the Israelites were in Egypt and later in the Sinai desert. In the verse at hand the divine promise to Abram is put on the same level as to Moses which closes this gap of four centuries.

Note the words “toward the sunrise” or the east. It can fit in with the “east of the garden of Eden” [Gn 3.24] where the Lord stationed cherubim to guard the entrance to the garden. Now in place of these cherubim are the Canaanites and other inhabitants standing in the way.

The conjunctive *v-* of vs. 16 shows immediacy and continuity of action, this time after the the Reubenites, Gadites and Manasseh had listened to Joshua for the past few verses. Commanded = will do and send = will go. Actually they had no choice in the matter or more accurately, if they declined, they would be left behind while the other tribes moved across the Jordan. The Canaanites would have loved to happen but were out of luck.

In vs. 17 the three tribes Joshua had singled out respond automatically and willingly, perhaps with mixed feelings. They were put on the spot to give their consent yet some must have had misgivings as to what they were compelled to utter. At least they acknowledge Joshua as the rightful successor to Moses indicated by *k-* and *ken*, “just as and so.” What links the two leaders is the verb *shamah* for “obeyed” commonly translated as to listen. Thus the listening given to Moses is exactly the same listening as given to Joshua.

Note that the three tribes call God “your God” as distinct from Moses...perhaps not a big deal but it could be indicative of some hesitation concerning Joshua’s as yet to be proved leadership.

The strong tone and wholehearted allegiance (at least verbally) continues in vs. 18 with regard to Joshua’s “commandment and words” or *peh* and *dever*. The former fundamentally means mouth and the latter (verbal root is *davar*) is not unlike *logos* or word as expression. Hence *dever* comes from Joshua’s *peh*; failure to comply is rebellion and disobedience, the two verbs being *marah* and *shamah* (to hear with the negative; cf. vs. 17). The former is the only occurrence in the Book of Joshua, a similar reference being 1Sam 12.14: “If you fear the Lord and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands.”

This verse contains the seventh use of the verb *tsavah* or “command” which indicates the necessity to follow the Lord and Joshua as Israel is about to cross the Jordan River into Canaan. Here it’s emphasized in stark terms of stoning a person should he or she not *tsavah* Joshua.

Chapter One concludes with a short exhortation to “be strong and of good courage” or *chazaq* and ‘*amats* (cf. vs. 9).

## Chapter Two

1. And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." And they went, and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab and lodged there. 2. And it was told the king of Jericho, "Behold, certain men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." 3. Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring forth the men that have come to you, who entered your house; for they have come to search out all the land." 4. But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them; and she said, "True, men came to me, but I did not know where they came from; 5. and when the gate was to be closed at dark, the men went out; where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." 6. But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof. 7. So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords; and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut. 8. Before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, 9. and said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. 10. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites that were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. 11. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in any man because of you; for the Lord your God is he who is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. 12. Now then, swear to me by the Lord that as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house and give me a sure sign 13. and save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters and all who belong to them and deliver our lives from death." 14. And the men said to her, "Our life for yours! If you do not tell this business of

ours, then we will deal kindly and faithfully with you when the Lord gives us the land." 15. Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was built into the city wall so that she dwelt in the wall. 16, And she said to them, "Go into the hills, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days until the pursuers have returned; then afterward you may go your way." 17. The men said to her, "We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours which you have made us swear. 18. Behold, when we come into the land, you shall bind this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down; and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers and all your father's household. 19. If any one goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we shall be guiltless; but if a hand is laid upon any one who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head. 20. But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath which you have made us swear." 21. And she said, "According to your words, so be it." Then she sent them away, and they departed; and she bound the scarlet cord in the window. 22. They departed, and went into the hills and remained there three days until the pursuers returned; for the pursuers had made search all along the way and found nothing. 23. Then the two men came down again from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun; and they told him all that had befallen them. 24. And they said to Joshua, "Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands; and moreover all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of us."

This new chapter begins as the opening one with the full name of Joshua, "Joshua the son of Nun," a way early on to help establish his power and credibility among the Israelites. Even before they drew closer to Canaan, reports about the importance of Jericho reached their ears, for it was relatively close to the Jordan River. Certainly the Canaanites had sent out their own spies and some may even managed to infiltrate Israel; we don't have their reports but obviously concern was heightened as Israel drew closer to the Jordan River. The word for "spies" is a verb, *ragal* which means to tread. "And Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land" [6.22]. These two spies are to carry out the divine promise of 1.3, "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you." In other words, they will bring back knowledge about Canaan to Joshua and compare it with what he had on hand already.

The spies are to go "secretly" or *cheresh*, a noun with three other biblical references, one of which is Is 3.3, that is, the word "magician:" "the counselor and

the skillful magician.” The place of departure (Shittim) isn't far from Jericho, only a few miles from the Jordan. Therefore the spies had a short distance to travel but had to be very careful since the Canaanites were watching Israel like a hawk. Actually it was easy to detect infiltrators since they had to cross the Jordan River, a natural barrier. Later the Lord splits the Jordan to allow Israel safe passage. He didn't have to do this for the two *cheresh* since being magicians in accord with the Isaiah quote, they were endowed with the ability to walk across. Obviously this struck fear into the Canaanite observers. If two men could do this, what would happen later when Israel attempted to make the crossing?

The only mission Joshua imparted to the two spies was to view the land (the common verb *ra'ah* is used) with attention focused upon the major city in the area, Jericho. They went about Canaan unhindered and invisible, pretty much retracing the footsteps of Abraham and the patriarchs, all the while thinking that this place once had belonged to them. After they got a good grasp of the land (the other areas mentioned in 1.4 were too far afield), they headed toward Jericho, the real prize ('especially' is lacking in the Hebrew text). Also the spies wanted to see if ancient reports by the patriarchs concurred with current information about Canaan. Most likely some crucial updating was in order.

The conjunctive *v-* as “and” with the words “they went” implies that the spies had done their duty by spying out Canaan but in quick fashion with their main focus upon Jericho. They, evoking their magician powers, simply walked through the city gates without attracting notice and headed straight for the house of Rahab the harlot. The spies had general information in advance where any descendants of the patriarchs might live prior to the twelve tribes moving to Egypt at Joseph's invitation. Jericho was a major city, so it was a logical place to start. Part of their mission was to locate such people and once they did, knew that Rahab was of their number by reason of her willingness to take them in. Since people like Rahab were considered not fully Canaanites the time of the patriarchs, they suffered marginalization from society, hence her occupation as a harlot. Now it offered the perfect disguise for the two spies because she was known to have received all sorts of visitors, native and foreign alike. Rahab also saw personal vindication in the impending invasion, that the stigma of her being a prostitute would be lifted shortly.

“By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had given friendly welcome to the spies” [Heb 11.31]. And so Rahab is

numbered among the “cloud of witnesses” [Heb 12.1] by reason of not being associated with the inhabitants of Jericho (and by implication, all Canaan) who were “disobedient,” *apeitheo* meaning to refuse compliance. Perhaps if the native inhabitants had recognized the Israelites’ claim on their land things would have worked out differently. In light of future developments, Rahab and her family (cf. 2.13) rightly are singled out by the author of Hebrews as noteworthy because they remained loyal as best as possible to the faith of the patriarchs. Although the Israelites had done the same for four hundred years in Egypt, it was easier for them because they formed a cohesive society. Remaining faithful for the same amount of time was by far harder for Rahab and her ancestors in what became an essentially alien land.

The words “and it was told” of vs. 2 have an anonymous air about them suggesting that the king of Jericho had spies everywhere who quickly compromised the identity of the two Israelites. Perhaps the Canaanites already had their own spies infiltrate the Israelite camp or had watchmen stationed on their side of the Jordan River. Obviously they were on heightened alert and under orders to report suspicious movement to the king whose name isn’t given. Actually this is a deliberate act, a way of de-humanizing both him and his subjects who are to be eradicated.

Apparently the watchful Canaanites brought word about “certain men” as in vs. 1 who came to Jericho at night. The word “certain” obviously refers to the two spies but can include more since the Canaanites were unsure as to how many entered Jericho under the cover of darkness. The king informed his spies to waken him, for their presence signals that an invasion is soon to come; the Canaanites had no direct evidence that these men were spies but presumed and rightly so. *Chaphar* is the verb for “search out” whose fundamental meaning is to dig. “He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole which he has made” [Ps 7.15]. And so the king ordered some of his men to follow the two spies at a distance after they had entered the house of Rahab. She had been under suspicion for some time, including her family. If indeed it turned out that the Israelites were spies, Rahab would be executed publicly as a traitor.

While it was still night (vs. 3), the king wasted no time in singling out Rahab who was aware of being under suspicion (compare ‘tonight’ of vs. 2 with ‘at dark’ of vs. 5). Actually she was prepared for this and was composed when soldier came knocking on her door. Though clearly suspect, the king didn’t want to make a commotion in

the dead of night and arouse unnecessary attention. Already the population was aware of the threat from the Israelites, and he needed them to be ready to repel any invasion. Who knows...Rahab may have had members of her family involved with harboring the Israelites, and the king was ready to extend his search to other houses, hoping to resolve the matter quickly and quietly before sunrise.

The two Israelites knew beforehand about Rahab, following intelligence garnered earlier that she was a descendant of the patriarchs or among the few people who remained in Canaan when the twelve tribes emigrated to Egypt generations ago. The brief but tense conversation between Rahab and the king's agents in the dead of night didn't last long after which Rahab whisked the two spies out of sight. She was fully aware of being suspect for a long time, afraid not so much for herself but for getting her family involved. Being a prostitute, Rahab was accustomed to deal with all sorts of men, so her ability to talk herself out of a tense situation helped out greatly thereby preventing serious harm both to herself and her entire family. Actually this wasn't the first encounter with the authorities. Rahab had been a prime suspect all along by reason of not being a true-blue Canaanite because her ancestry was uncertain. And so almost non-nonchalantly Rahab acknowledged that two men had visited her and left quickly without telling her. The authorities heard this story a number of times and remained suspicious though they had no hard evidence to take her in.

Vs. 5 has Rahab saying that the city gate is closed "at dark" or *choshek*, a term which also means misery or adversity. "Shall your wonders be known in the dark" [Ps 88.12]? Compare *choshek* with *layl* ('tonight'). Most likely Rahab was trying to throw off the men sent by the king, hence the use of *choshek*. Not only did she take this risk but went further by telling them to get a move on, to "pursue" them at once, *radaph* also meaning to persecute. "When Israel had finished slaughtering all the inhabitants of Ai in the open wilderness where they pursued them...all Israel returned to Ai" [8.24]. Apparently this ploy worked, and the men set off at once hoping, as Rahab said, to "overtake" the two Israelites, the verb being *nasag* which isn't unlike *radaph*. "Let the enemy pursue me and overtake me" [Ps 7.5]. However, Rahab didn't give the king's men any directions, and fortunately for her, they didn't press her on the matter which, if they had done so, may have revealed her deception.

Vs 6 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated here as "but" (usually as 'and') which

shows that as soon as Rahab shakes off the king's men, she shuts the door and brings the two Israelite spies to the roof, hiding them under stalks of flax. The verse says that Rahab had "laid (the flax) in order" meaning that she had the flax already prepared in anticipation of such an eventuality. The men pretty much remained hidden under the flax during the day but towards evening while it was still light, came out and peered over the wall. Rahab's house being built into the city wall (cf. vs. 15) is an ideal spot enabling the Israelites to get a clear view both in and outside the city as well as the main gate where people came and went. And so they could continue their spying mission unimpeded, garnering more information about the size and structure of Jericho's walls as well as other defenses.

The Canaanites knew the two spies had come from the Israelite camp west of the Jordan River so naturally they headed in that direction, gathering more for their troop to aide in their search. A logical place to search out is the fords mentioned in vs. 7 where the water was shallow enough to cross. As soon as the king's men exited Jericho the gates were shut fast behind them because amid the latent tension everyone feared a surprise invasion. Actually rumor spread throughout Jericho that the two Israelite spies had been the immediate vanguard of an invasion force which would have taken advantage of the confusion, night time being ideal for a small band of soldiers to steal into the city undetected.

After the commotion going on below died down, the men decided it was time to get some rest. However, Rahab wanted to express to them what had been on her mind long before their arrival. She had rehearsed it many times, namely, the realization that already the Lord had given the land of Canaan into Israel's hands (cf. vs. 9). It was in their possession even though the Canaanites hadn't realized it or just as likely, they knew they were living on borrowed time, that their fate was already sealed. If Jericho fell, not only Canaan would follow but the lands noted in 1.4. Rahab's knowledge of this came, as stated above, by reason of being a descendant of the Israelites going back over four centuries when the patriarchs attempted unsuccessfully to settle permanently in Canaan. Just as Israel had kept alive their traditions in Egypt, so Rahab's ancestors did the same in Canaan. It was only a matter of time when the two traditions would meet, if you will.

Rahab gives the two spies inside knowledge, namely, that the Canaanites realize that in addition that the Lord had handed over their land to Israel, "fear" of you has fallen upon everyone, *'eymah* also meaning terror. "Terror and dread fall upon

them; because of the greatness of your arm, they are as still as a stone” [Ex 15.16]. Such ‘*eymah* is all the more forceful by the verb *naphal*, to fall. In other words, this ‘*eymah* was an oppressive weight which no one could remove. The king of Jericho and his advisers knew this, of course, but couldn’t admit it lest they dishearten their subjects even further. Once so weighed down, the Canaanites proceed to “melt away,” *mug* which also means to flow down as well as to dissolve (compare with *masas* in vs. 11). “And moreover all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of us” [vs. 24].

Rahab continues to speak in vs. 10 what sounded like music to the two spies, namely, that the Canaanites had heard of the Israelites having crossed the Red Sea and the fate they meted out to tribes in the Sinai desert. These reports filtered in to Canaan approximately forty years ago, so terrifying that they quickly they became legends which struck fear east of Sinai and further afield. As for Sihon and Og, kings of the Amorites, refer to Chapter Twenty-One of Numbers which is summed up in Ps 135.10-11: “Who smote many nations and slew mighty kings, Sihon, king of the Amorites and Og, king of Bashan and all the kingdoms of Canaan.” Rahab recounts how the Israelites had “utterly destroyed” them, *charam* being the verb which also means consecrating to the Lord that which is to be destroyed. “For Joshua did not draw back his hand...until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai” [8.26].

In vs. 11 Rahab speaks of these past events as though they were present, something that enlivened the two spies listening intently to her as she mirrored the collective dread of the Canaanites. This is intimated by her words “As soon as we hear it” in reference to the events she mentions in the previous verse. The real cause of fear for the Canaanites was that remarkable way the Israelites had managed to shake off the yoke of Egypt, the most powerful nation in the region to which in comparison Sihon and Og were insignificant.

Rahab speaks again of how the Canaanites had “melted” or *masas* which, like *mug* in vs. 9, connotes a flowing down or wasting away. In the verse at hand, *masas* is associated with the collective “our hearts” (*levav*) and is similar to 5.1: “All the kings of the Canaanites...heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan...their heart melted.” As of a result of this national draining, if you will, everyone lacked “courage” which is the noun *ruach*, more fundamentally as wind or breath. “And there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of

Israel.” This verse from 5.1 just quoted uses both *levav* and *ruach*. In the verse at hand, *levav* has the verb *qum* which fundamentally means to rise and can read literally “and did not rise again spirit.” This concurs with the *naphal* or falling of fear noted in 9 which deflates any *ruach* or breath in the Canaanites leaving them ripe for the Israelites to walk in and take over.

*Ky* or “because of you” is a small but key word in vs. 11 and applies directly to the “the Lord your God.” The Lord is “in” heaven as well as “on” earth, *b-* and *hal-*, the two being different yet essentially one and the same.

The conjunctive *v-* in vs. 12 translates as “then” (literally it reads as ‘and now’) and shows the quick transition Rahab makes from her confession, if you will, to her petition for mercy when the Israelites storm Jericho. She is quite bold, asking the two spies to “swear” by the Lord or literally “in (*b-*) the Lord,” the verb being *shavah* (cf. 1.6), the same Lord *b-* heaven and *hal-* earth. Rahab engages in some bargaining introduced by *ky* or “as:” that is, she had dealt “kindly” or *chesed*. It reads literally “I have made with you *chesed*,” a word difficult to translate combining into one the notion of love, zeal and ardor. “Show us the way into the city, and we will deal kindly with you” [Jdg 1.24]. This bargaining intimated by *ky* is followed by another use of the conjunctive *v-*: “you also will make *chesed*.” Rahab is quick to extend this *chesed* to the house of her father after which she adds with boldness tinged with some desperation, “give me a sure sign” or “a sign of faithfulness.” *Oth* is the noun for the former and found next in 4.6: “that this may be a sign among you.” *Emeth* is the latter and connotes trustworthiness found in vs. 14.

Rahab continues her bargaining with a further demonstration of boldness in vs. 13 asking...almost demanding...that the two spies relay to the Israelites that they spare not only her immediate family but “all who belong to them” (literally, ‘all which is to them’) and “deliver” them from death, the verb being *natsal* which connotes a pulling or drawing away. “Now you have saved the people of Israel from the hand of the Lord” [22.31]. “Our lives” has the noun *nephesh* or the vital principle of life or soul found in the next verse. This is quite a bargain Rahab is striking which includes a sizable amount of Jericho’s population. Then again, they belonged to the ancestry traceable all the way back to the time of the patriarchs in Canaan and were worthy of divine protection.

Without hesitation the two spies responded to Rahab's bold gesture of bargaining and blurt out vs. 14 "our life *nephesh* or life for yours!" The seal for this bargain is that Rahab keep quiet the spies' "business" or *davar* which is word in the sense of expression (cf. 1.18). In other words, Rahab is not to *davar* their *davar*. The result of this silence is repaying Rahab with *chesed* and 'emeth as found in vs. 12. This will happen once the Lord hands over to Israel the "land" or 'erets (cf. 1.2) of Canaan which essentially he has done already.

In vs. 15 Rahab assists the two spies in their escape, using a "rope" or *chevel* which also means a measuring line or portion. "Thus there fell to Manasseh ten portions." This *chevel* allowed a quick escape because her house was built into the city wall and had the advantage of keep an eye out both within and without the city and well as any guard patrolling on the wall itself. Just before lowering the men down Rahab bids them to hide in the hills (cf. vs. 16) instead of making their way directly to the Jordan River where most likely the king's men were looking for them. They are to remain there for three whole days which may have caused some anxiety for Joshua who had expected his spies to return to the camp rather quickly because Jericho was only four miles from the river. The Israelites felt some alarm when they saw the Canaanites rushing up to the west side of the Jordan anxiously scouting the area for the spies. They had no choice but to remain where there were lest they arouse further suspicion.

As a final warning to Rahab that she keep the oath enjoined upon them the spies speak at some length about the gravity of the situation through vs. 21. They claimed that they would be "guiltless" or innocent of any repercussions should she violate the oath both parties had just made. *Naqy* is the adjective and is found next in vs. 19. "He sits in ambush in the villages; in hiding places he murders the innocent" [Ps 10.8]. So with this warning in mind the spies continued with instructions as what Rahab is to do once the invasion has begun and Israel surrounds Jericho. The two men gave her a "scarlet cord" or *chut* which is . A *chut* is smaller than the *chevel* or rope in vs. 15 with which Rahab is about to lower the spies out her window, and the other six biblical references call it a thread. "Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely" [Sg 4.3]. Because of its thinness, the men take out this *chut* which is already colored *shany* (also cf. Sg 4.3), something they brought along for some such purpose as this. Some Church Fathers have drawn the parallel between this red cord and the Passover lamb's blood smeared on the door with reference to Ex 12.13: "and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no

plague shall fall upon you to destroy you when I smite the land of Egypt.” The spies may have had this association in mind, for that first Passover was just one generation ago and still fresh in the collective heritage of Israel. The same could be true for Rahab though she doesn’t comment on this. Yet she, like those Israelites in Egypt, followed the spies’ advice to gather both her immediate and no so immediate family in her house and remain shut up there. That means shortly after the two rush off into the night Rahab will have to notify all these people to prepare themselves and make their way to her house. However, she instructed them to come discreetly so as not to rouse rousing attention among the city’s inhabitants.

Rahab concurs with what the two spies conveyed to her, that is, “according to your words” or *davar* (cf. vs.21). Once they had remained in the hill country for three days in accord with Rahab’s advice, they crossed the Jordan and consulted with Joshua who was waiting anxiously for their report. Right away they informed him as to Rahab’s trustworthiness, for she advised them to hide out for three days which meant she knew that the king had sent the soldiers to scour out territory in and by the road leading to the Jordan River.

The first words out of the spies’ mouths echo those of Rahab in vs. 9, namely, that the Lord had given Canaan into Israel’s hands. Also they are “fainthearted” or *mug* as noted, again, with Rahab, in vs. 11. There’s no word about the spies informing Joshua about Rahab but most likely they had done so. Still, they wanted to make sure word got out to the more local commander and soldiers under him to spare her and her extended family.

### Chapter Three

1. Early in the morning Joshua rose and set out from Shittim with all the people of Israel; and they came to the Jordan and lodged there before they passed over. 2. At the end of three days the officers went through the camp 3. and commanded the people, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it, 4, that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, a distance of about two thousand cubits; do not come near it." 5. And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." 6. And Joshua said to the priests,

"Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people." And they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people. 7. And the Lord said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. 8. And you shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, `When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.'" 9. And Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Come hither, and hear the words of the Lord your God." 10. And Joshua said, "Hereby you shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Gergashites, the Amorites and the Jebusites. 11. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is to pass over before you into the Jordan. 12. Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. 13. And when the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be stopped from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap." 14. So, when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, 15. and when those who bore the ark had come to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), 16. the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap far off, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were wholly cut off; and the people passed over opposite Jericho. 17. And while all Israel were passing over on dry ground, the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

Although the **RSV** doesn't have it, this new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* to show the immediate connection between Rahab and the two spies as well as the crossing of the Jordan River. More specifically, Joshua had mustered Israel for the passage; even if the spies had brought less than desirable news, there was no option but to forge ahead. If they didn't, would they spend the rest of their years wandering in the Sinai desert until everyone died out? *Shakam* is the verb for "early in the morning they rose" found next in 6.12 when Israel surrounded Jericho. Chances are it was a sleepless night for Joshua and many of the Israelites, for the day before he sent word that the entire nation would be crossing the Jordan. They left Shittim and arrived at the river itself, having "lodged" there before

making the actual transit, the verb being *lun*. “And lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight” [4.3]. Of course, some anxiety had passed throughout the extended line of people as to how they were to make the crossing. An added and unwanted complication was that they could catch glimpses of the Canaanites on the other side keeping a close eye on them. Would they attempt some kind of blockade or allow the people to cross and trap them in unfamiliar territory? Chances are some of these Canaanites hurled threatening taunts at the Israelites who for the most part were ordered to maintain silence. After a while this must have unnerved the Canaanites, knowing that something was up.

*Shatar* is a participle for “officers” noted last in 3.10 whom Joshua bids to go throughout the Israelites encamped at the point where the people are to cross the Jordan River. However, he decided upon three days of rest before doing this; any further delay would have unsettled the people and exposed them to the taunts from the Canaanites. As soon as the Israelites saw the officers passing through, they knew that very soon they would be leaving a way of life which had been familiar to them for forty years, one which for most had been the only one they knew. Now they were on the threshold of something new and unfamiliar, many of them recounting stories of how Moses had led their fathers across the Red Sea with perhaps a few survivors from that era. The big question, of course, was Joshua up to the task? Reassuring the people must have been an important part of what the officers had to do.

For the first time in the Book of Joshua vs. 3 mentions the “ark” of the Lord, *‘aron* (alternately a chest or coffin) found last in Dt 31.26 in conjunction with the Levites whose task was to bear it as in the case at hand. The officers tell the people to keep an eye out for this ark which normally is kept in a tent as it had been since Mount Sinai. Most likely a trumpet would sound to alert everyone. As for the exact time, nothing is given. That doesn’t matter because all the people were on edge, ready to move at a moment’s notice. Note that the officers use the word “covenant” as applied to the ark, *beryth* (cf. vs. 6) which is a way of reminding them of the days when Moses had made a covenant on Sinai. The same applies to using the first person plural, “your God.” They didn’t say where this ark would go, presuming that everyone knew it was to traverse the Jordan River. What other option was there? The two spies who had reconnoitered Jericho crossed at the fords (cf. 2.7), most likely the easiest place to cross. However, nothing is said about that which must have made the people somewhat nervous. Easy for just two to cross the river, but an entire nation?

The people are to muster in formation behind the ark after which the officers will show them the “way” or *derek* (cf. 2.7) to go, a *derek* which is not familiar to them. In reality, this *derek* is the ark itself as it had been since Sinai and will be throughout the conquest of Canaan. Soon everyone will find out if the Lord's promise to Joshua will be fulfilled, Israel's greatest gamble since the Red Sea. So the formation at hand will consist of a “space” of two thousand cubits or some three thousand feet between the people and the ark, the adjective *rachog* being used which means to be afar off. “From a far country your servants have come” [9.6]. This is quite a distance, deliberately so, that anyone daring to get close may not perish, a fate worse than being slain by the Canaanites. And so the officers bid the people not to “come near” the ark, *qarav* being the verb as in 7.14: “In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes.”

Once the officers had informed the people, in vs. 5 Joshua has them all line up behind the ark in order to “sanctify” themselves, *qadash* meaning to be pure or clean, the idea being fundamentally to set apart for that which is devoted to the Lord. The next time this will happen is before attacking the town of Ai: “Up, sanctify the people and say, ‘Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow.’” Both instances involve (though not stated outrightly) washing of garments and their bodies as well as abstaining from sexual intercourse, this following the prescription laid down before the theophany at Mount Sinai in Ex 19.10-15. Most likely the people used the nearby Jordan River for this washing, again with the Canaanites looking on nervously. It must have been a sight: the ark some distance off by itself with the people strung out in an apparently endless line, more as a battle formation. In actuality the only thing Joshua added to the officers was that on the next day the Lord himself will “do wonders” among them, *pala'* which fundamentally means to be distinguished, to make separate and in some ways is not that different from *qadash*. However, *qadash* must come first. *Pala'* is the only instance in Joshua and not unlike Ex 34.10: “Before all your people I will do marvels such as have not been wrought in all the earth.”

Shortly after his brief exhortation to the people, Joshua walks some two thousand yards ahead to the priests minding the ark of the Lord, perhaps the longest walk in his life. Apparently his words to take up the ark of the Lord occurred on the morrow which is mentioned in vs. 5. So when Joshua bids the priests to pass by the people, they must have done this at the designated distance.

Vs. 7 begins with the Lord speaking after Joshua had addressed the people and priests in the previous two verses, all three instances beginning with the conjunctive *v-* or “and.” The verse at hand is significant by reason of *hayom hazeh*, “this day,” definitely a *kairos* event applied to a special occasion, this term being associated with the New Testament. The Lord doesn’t just “exult” (*gadal*) Joshua but *begins* to exult him. To date Joshua had successfully led Israel to the threshold of the promised land and as noted earlier, had proved himself in battle against Amalek. Nevertheless, quite a few people sorely missed Moses and were uncertain about his successor. Joshua need reassurance from the Lord, for if the Lord now *begins* to exult him, he will continue to do so as they enter Canaan. As for reference similar to *gadal* in vs. 7, cf. 4.14: “On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel.” The best part of this verse is the second part, “and they stood in awe of him as they had stood in awe of Moses all the days of his life.” Now with the Lord’s promise to be with Joshua as he had been with Moses, Joshua can proceed with confidence.

The Lord doesn’t waste any time with Joshua, for vs. 8 begins with the conjunctive *v-* or “and” with respect to commanding the priests with the ark of the covenant not simply to approach the edge of the Jordan River but to “stand still” in it. In other words, they are to walk right into the river without giving a thought and remain motionless. The verb at hand is *hamad* meaning to stand in the sense of taking up a position. “And the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap” [3.13]. We have no response from the priests; although they are bearers of the ark and thus very close to the Lord’s presence, they must have had their doubts. Nevertheless they perceived a new-found confidence in Joshua, knowing for certain that the Lord in the ark of the covenant was speaking through him.

Vs. 9 begins with the conjunctive *v-* or “and” whose frequent use shows the rapid flow of events and their importance. Now Joshua addresses the people, that is, after the priests, meaning again he has to walk those two thousand cubits separating the two groups. The people knew they were on the verge of crossing the Jordan River as they saw Joshua gradually approaching them, that new-found confidence on his face clear to all as it had been to the priests. Now Joshua bids the people first to approach him and then hear the “words” or *davar* of the Lord (cf. 2.21) which continues through vs. 13. Obviously the priests standing afar off saw the people gather round Joshua knowing that he was about to tell them what he had done with

them. Most importantly, not just God but the “living” (*chay*) God is “among” the people, *qerev* also meaning within. Joshua said something similar in vs. 5: “tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.” This *qerev* both spiritually and physically (i.e., the ark) will enable the Israelites to “drive out” or *yarash* seven tribes waiting for them on the other side of the Jordan River. This verb is noted in 1.15 as “possess,” so it involves the twofold action first of expelling followed by occupation. The first part is easy but the second part much less so as future events will reveal. In the verse at hand, *yarash* is used twice reading literally “driving, he will drive out.” This is reassuring for the people; not only will the Lord *yarash* the seven tribes but will continue to do so until they have vacated totally their respective territories.

Vs. 11 begins with “behold” or *hineh* which is more forceful than the number of conjunctives mentioned. That is to say, *hineh* interrupts the rapid flow of events by drawing attention to what’s most important than everything, the ark of the covenant. So when Joshua says *hineh*, he’s making a gesture towards this ark over half a mile distant. Most likely when the ark enters the water the people are to draw closer than two thousand cubits. Joshua next (vs. 12) bids the people to chose twelve men from each of the twelve tribes, totaling one hundred and forty-four representatives. He doesn’t say anything about their qualifications; everyone knew the urgency of the situation and quickly could pick out reputable men. It isn’t clear what these men are to do next or more accurately, nothing is said about them. Are they different from the twelve Joshua chooses once the Israelites have crossed the river (cf. 4.2)?

Once done, the “soles of the feet” of the priests which in a way represent the promise made early on to Joshua in 1.3 (“the sole of your foot”) shall “rest” in the Jordan. The verb is *nuach* which connotes a certain permanence compared with *hamad* in vs. 8. Such *nuach* causes the water to flow and stand in a “heap” or *ned* which has five other biblical references, the next being in vs. 16. *Ned* is the same noun in Moses’ song about Israel’s crossing of the Red Sea: “At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up, the floods stood up in a head; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.” The *ned* of Joshua is less dramatic than that of Exodus. Whereas in the latter Moses used his staff to part the water, in the former the ark is the agent doing the same thing. It’s as though the water wanted to stand back two thousand cubits as did the people from the ark.

Vs. 14 begins with the people setting out from their tents implying that while in the process of conquering Canaan and neighboring territories they still used tents, however, those days are numbered. As the Israelites take over city after city, there's less need for this form of temporary dwelling. Actually it will take some time for the Israelites to get accustomed to permanent dwellings.

The sensitivity of the Jordan's waters to the divine presence is revealed by the fact of the priests' feet being "dipped" in the water, *taval* meaning to immerse. "So he (Naaman) went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan according to the word of the man of God" [2Kg 5.14]. This *taval* began the immediate withdrawal of the Jordan River. The two places mentioned in vs. 16, Adam and the Salt Sea, are a considerable distance—more so than the two thousand cubits between the ark and the people—showing the great respect this river has for the divine presence. This respect will be demonstrated later on albeit in similar form but in an equally dramatic way when John baptizes Jesus in the same waters. Instead of the waters parting, "the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove" [Mt 3.16]. As for the situation at hand, any Canaanite watching on their side of the Jordan must have been terrified. With such a stretch of the river being dried up, their land now was open to a full scale invasion.

The priests bearing the ark must have become weary and needed relief. Chances are that Joshua, recalling how Moses' outstretched arms had to be supported in order to make him prevail against Amalek, set up a rotation of sorts in order that the ark might keep the water in two heaps. And so the people were able to cross the dry riverbed in ease, all the while recalling the Red Sea event and some even perhaps singing the song of Moses in Exodus Fifteen.

## Chapter Four

1. When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, 2. "Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man 3. and command them, `Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests' feet stood and carry them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.'" 4. Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe; 5. and Joshua said to them, "Pass on before the ark of the Lord your God into the

midst of the Jordan and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel 6. that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, `What do those stones mean to you?' 7. Then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial for ever." 8. And the men of Israel did as Joshua commanded and took up twelve stones out of the midst of the Jordan according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel as the Lord told Joshua; and they carried them over with them to the place where they lodged and laid them down there. 9. And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had stood; and they are there to this day. 10. For the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the Lord commanded Joshua to tell the people according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. The people passed over in haste; 11. and when all the people had finished passing over, the ark of the Lord and the priests passed over before the people. 12. The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh passed over armed before the people of Israel as Moses had bidden them; 13. about forty thousand ready armed for war passed over before the Lord for battle to the plains of Jericho. 14. On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they stood in awe of him as they had stood in awe of Moses all the days of his life. 15. And the Lord said to Joshua, 16. "Command the priests who bear the ark of the testimony to come up out of the Jordan." 17. Joshua therefore commanded the priests, "Come up out of the Jordan." 18. And when the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord came up from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up on dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks as before. 19. The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. 20. And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal. 21. And he said to the people of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, `What do these stones mean?' 22. then you shall let your children know, `Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.' 23. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea which he dried up for us until we passed over 24. so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty; that you may fear the Lord your God for ever."

This new chapter begins with the now familiar conjunctive *v-* which shows the connection between the Israelites crossing the Jordan River and the completion of this transit. Compared with the Red Sea, the one at hand lacks the sense of urgency, for no hostile force was pursuing the people. The danger lay ahead compared to behind. In other words, the Israelites were on the threshold of entering Canaan and stealing themselves against most likely stiff resistance to their presence. Joshua was among the first to have crossed through the Jordan after which he took up a position on the eastern bank watching all the people pass by in silence. Keeping a careful eye over all this was the Lord who must have been reminiscing about his earlier intervention with Moses as his agent at the Red Sea. Indeed, Joshua seems to be proving himself a worthy successor. No doubt, some Canaanites who had been in the vicinity withdrew further away but kept a close eye on this miracle, having heard about the Red Sea crossing (cf. 2.10) and fearing a fate not unlike the Egyptians. More than a struggle between peoples is involved; ultimately it comes down to one between Israel's God and Canaan's gods.

Once the last Israelite had climbed from the riverbed onto the eastern bank in vs. 2 the Lord told Joshua to pick out twelve men from the twelve tribes of Israel. He had anticipated this before the crossing in vs. 12 though at that time the Lord didn't let on to Joshua his reason. Given the simple task described in the next verse, it would be easy to choose twelve men; there was no special qualification for the task at hand. So once the people had gotten across the Jordan, the priests hadn't moved, quite anxious at how long they would have to remain in place. They looked longingly as the last Israelite had passed them, fighting off panic, to be sure. After all, they were in a deep pit with the water to their left and right not knowing what Joshua would do next.

Once chosen, the twelve men representing each of Israel's tribes rushed back into the riverbed toward the priests who were relieved to see them but not exchanging any words out of fear that the walls of water come crashing down. And so they descended to the "midst" of the Jordan, *qerev* (cf. 3.10) or right in the middle. Added to this *qerev* are the words "from here" (*mizeh*) which means that the stones to be taken aren't from the land but from the heart of the river. And so both the *qerev* and *mizeh* represent the exact "place" or *matsav* where the priests are standing. *Matsav* (cf. vs. 9) primarily means a garrison or place where soldiers are stationed and occurs frequently in First Samuel. For example, 13.23: "And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash."

The twelve stones which the twelve men from the twelve tribes of Israel are to carry involve a delicate process of removal from under the feet of the priests who were bearing the weight of the ark of the Lord. So once the stones were taken away, their footing was less stable meaning they had to step aside quickly without losing their balance. With some trepidation of unbalancing the ark, Joshua uttered a command from the bank above to the priests, that they should move...slowly, ever so slowly...from their position. Having performed this delicate maneuver, the twelve men brought out the twelve stones and set them down in the place of lodging that night. Their size isn't given but at least must have been smooth from being in the water. The noun *malon* for this lodging is derived from the verb *lan* (cf. 3.1) which was close by, only some four miles distant from Jericho. Note that in vs. 9 the stones are set up in the Jordan River, not on dry ground. It seems their temporary removal onto dry ground is a way of sanctifying this first night of encampment within the land of Canaan.

In vs. 5 Joshua bids the twelve men representing the twelve tribes of Israel to pass on before the ark, with great reverence, before bending down and removing the stones. Apparently the twelve stones are quite large, for each man must take only one upon his shoulder. They didn't have to dig deeply into the muck but simply lift them out; after all, these stones have been waiting there for just this occasion. Each of the twelve went about their business in complete silence, knowing their task was special, especially in the presence of the ark of the Lord. At the same time they were glad to get out of the riverbed; the same for the priests who followed. Nevertheless, they will have plenty to tell their children and encourage them to pass down this story to future generations.

In vs. 6 Joshua continues by saying that the stones will be a "sign" or *'oth* (cf. 2.12), that is, when later descendants will inquire as to their origin because their smoothness is unlike any stones found on land. In fact, this *'oth* is to be a "memorial" or *zikaron*, the noun being derived from the verbal root *zakar* meaning to remember. *Zikaron* is found in Ex 12.14 as the Passover which, despite its lack of physicality, is more enduring than the memorial at the Jordan River: "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord." In fact, Joshua doesn't tell the people the twelve stones will remain on land temporarily but will be returned to the very spot from which they were taken and serve as a monument. Because these stones are flat and smooth, the memorial must have been

enhanced with some kind of platform to make it more visible as well as to protect it against any vandalism from the Canaanites.

Vs. 9 has Joshua setting up twelve stones “in the midst” of the Jordan or *betok* which suggests being in the middle compared with *qerev* of vs. 2 which refers to the interior of something. That means once the people had spent some time on the east bank of the Jordan River in Canaan proper, Joshua alone returned to the spot in the river where the priests took up their position with the ark of the Lord, still at their post. In other words, the water had been walled up for some time so that Joshua could do this alone and unaided. Vs. 5 has him bidding each of the twelve men to remove the stones on their shoulders where he had to make twelve separate trips into the Jordan unaided. The priests who remained stationary and by themselves in the riverbed must have been told beforehand about this as they bore the weight of the ark on what essentially is muck and not on the twelve stones which had been removed. They knew, of course, that the Lord would help them...but for such a long period of time? So Joshua returned to the priests, twelve trips in all, until with great care he slipped the last stone under the priests’ feet. And so the priests remained stationary “until everything was finished” or every *davar* (cf. 3.9 as ‘words’) was *tamam*. For another sense of this verb (the same form, that is), cf. 5.6: “For the people of Israel...that came forth out of Egypt perished.”

So once this unusual monument had been erected and the priests finally could leave their precarious position, the Lord commanded Moses to recount (the verb *davar*) “all that Moses had commanded” him. This occurred in the temporary camp before moving out; everyone presumed an assault on Jericho was next since it was so close, and the people knew they were being spied upon by men from that city. There’s no precise information as to what Moses had commanded except a verse here and there showing the close relationship between him and Joshua. For example, cf. Dt 34.9 towards the end of Moses’ life: “And Joshua, the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him.” The people had been familiar with this close relationship going all the way back to when Moses ascended Mount Sinai with Joshua and especially when Joshua came into his own as a result of the victory over Amalek. The Lord wanted everyone to know that the succession of Joshua was valid so that they could present a unified front when battling the Canaanites. No question, the people were anxious as to what awaited them just as the previous generation was after having crossed the Red Sea.

Vs. 10 continues with “the people passed over in haste” which can stand alone, if you will, and seems to conflict with the sequence of events thus far in Chapter Four whose opening verse reads “When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan.” While this may be true, the main point is aligning the current passage through the Jordan River with that through the Red Sea some forty years earlier. The verb *mahar* translates as “in haste” as in 8.14: “And when the king of Ai saw this, he and all his people, the men of the city, made haste and went out early.” So once this hasty crossing had been accomplished—it was quite short, really, in comparison with the broader Red Sea—Joshua had the priests bearing the ark of the Lord pass before the people, a wise strategy, in order to reassure them of the divine presence among them. As for the actual crossing, Joshua had the Transjordanian tribes (Reuben, Gad and Manasseh) go first (cf. 1.12). Apparently they were “armed” or *chamushym* as in 1.14 and thus presented a show of force. The verse at hand reads “as Moses had bidden them” whereas 1.13 has “Remember the word which Moses, the servant of the Lord, commands you.” All this reference to Moses was very important both to Joshua and especially to the people. By invoking his name, what they were about to embark upon hopefully would bring them the same success as they had experienced in the Sinai wilderness despite the trials experienced there.

Vs. 13 puts the number of *chamushym* at approximately forty-thousand who are “armed” or *chalats* which alternately means to withdraw or depart and here implies being ready or prepared. “And let the armed men pass on before the ark of the Lord” [6.7]. These three Transjordanian tribes...or least their ancestors...had been familiar with the land of Canaan and thus felt more secure there. Putting on a show on the plains of Jericho was, of course, deliberate, for those in the city of Jericho could see it for themselves. At this juncture the battle line was clear: there would be no quarter given and no quarter asked, total war.

Vs. 14 begins with “on that day” (literally, ‘in or *b-* that day’) which could, in a real sense, mark the first day of a new year as the nation of Israel leaves behind the crossing of the Red Sea and Jordan River with some forty years of wandering and the giving of Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai sandwiched in between. “In that day” is thus a whole new beginning with a show of confidence by the people in Joshua. Despite its importance, this day or any other which Israel may incorporate later into her history remains secondary to the night of the first Passover. *Gadal* is the verb for “exalted” and used here much as in 3.7 before crossing the Jordan River. Now

that it is done, the *gadal* at hand follows a display of military might by the three Transjordanian tribes. This *gadal* doesn't last for the moment but extends to "all the days of his life" implying that "on that day" has the ability to extend itself indefinitely.

All the people joined in standing in awe of Joshua, *yare'* being the common verb which means to fear just as they had done with Moses, the reference being the Red Sea though not mentioned. Despite the adulation, Joshua was fully aware of what had happened immediately afterward in the Sinai wilderness. The people complained of no food and water, wishing that never have they left Egypt. The situation, however, was a bit different. The people had their fill of manna and quail and could use that as an incentive so as not to return to such a boring diet.

In vs. 15 the Lord again commands Joshua to have the priests—much to their relief—come up from the midst of the Jordan River (cf. in conjunction with vs. 10) and vs. 16 has Joshua actually communicating this. Thus far in the Book of Joshua the verb "command" or *tsavah* had been used with some frequency, chiefly from the Lord to Joshua and then on to the people as is the case at hand. Vss. 15 and 16 show the closest associated between the two uses of *tsavah*, of how it originates from the Lord, pass through Joshua and resides in the people, all three being accomplished with speed and efficiency.

Vs. 18 pays close attention to the "soles of the feet" of the priests (cf. 3.13; those of Joshua in 1.3) which exit the Jordan's riverbed and come on dry ground, the very soles from under which the twelve men from the twelve tribes had removed the twelve stones. Now the Jordan returned to its normal flow though lacking the drama associated with the drowning of Pharaoh's army. These waters returned slowly and without force because the Lord didn't want them to topple the monument Joshua had erected in the midst of the Jordan. Obviously this was a clear signal that the forty years of wandering in the Sinai Desert are over. Some must have felt a certain nostalgia as the waters returned to their normal flow, that desert way of life, hard as it had been, represented a golden age of sorts after the Lord revealed himself on Mount Sinai.

Vs. 19 dates the return of the Jordan's flow of water as the tenth day of the first month, the day the Passover lamb was to be selected as in Ex 12.3: "Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb

for his family, one for each household.” At Gilgal (only some two miles north of Jericho itself) they take up camp which seems to differ from “the place where they lodged” of vs. 8 or right on the eastern bank of the Jordan River.

Vs. 20 speaks of the twelve stones removed from the Jordan River; compare with the monument set up there by Joshua in vs.9, the same stones which just earlier he had set up in “the place where they lodged” [vs. 8]. So if we take all this literally, the stones were moved around quite a bit and occupy two places at the same time. Given the nature of these stones directly under the priests' feet bearing the ark, this is no problem. Part of the divine power residing within the ark transferred itself through the priests down into the Jordan's bed and then into the stones after which the stones could travel anywhere, even bi-locate. Nothing mysterious about this, just a manifestation of divine power.

With this in mind, Joshua now sets up the twelve stones in Gilgal or within sight of Jericho so everyone passing by could see what is about to happen to that city as well as Canaan. The stones are to remain as a perpetual monument just as in the midst of the Jordan River (cf. vs. 7) with the result that Israel now has two monuments. Now future generations could look at both monuments and say that it was the same Lord who dried up both the Jordan River and the Red Sea, the two here being essentially one with, of course, the forty years of formation in the Sinai wilderness.