

LORD first promised the land to the descendants Abram (Genesis 12:6-7). Abram built an altar there. Joshua led the Israelites in blessings and cursings and built an altar there (Joshua 8:30-35).

[2] And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus sa[ys] the LORD God of Israel,

The LORD then gives a summary of historical events that brought the Israelites to this point.

*Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time,
even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor:
and they served other gods.*

This is the only place in the Bible where we learn that Terah, Abraham's father, worshiped false gods.

[3] And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood,

As we learned earlier in this study, *the other side of the flood* refers to the east side of the river Jordan which floods once each year.

*and led him throughout **all** the land of Canaan,*

that is, the Promised Land or the land of Israel

and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

[4] And I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; (Deuteronomy 2:5)

Recall Mount Seir lies just south of the Dead Sea.

but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.

Notice here the LORD now skips the account of 400 years of slavery.

[5] I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them: and afterward I brought you out.

[6] And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and y[ou] came []to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red sea.

[7] And when they cried []to the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and y[ou] dwelt in the wilderness a long season.

Of course, that *long season* was 40 years – one year for each day they spent spying out the land of Canaan.

[8] And I [then] brought you into the land of the Amorites, wh[o] dwelt on the other side [of] Jordan;

Referring to the east side of the Jordan river – outside the Promised Land.

and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that y[ou] might possess their land; and I destroyed them from before you.

[9] Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you:

[10] But I would not hearken unto Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand.

You may recall two times back Balaam was a prophet of the LORD who used his gift of prophesy for personal gain. He understood that the Israelites could never be defeated as long as the LORD was on their side. Therefore, he advised King Balak to turn the Israelites from worshiping the LORD to worshiping the false gods of his land and committing both physical and spiritual adultery.

[11] And y[ou] went over Jordan, and came []to Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I delivered them into your hand.

[12] And I sent the hornet before you, which dr[o]ve them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with [your] sword, nor with [your] bow.

[13] And I have given you

a land for which y[ou] did not labo[ur], and

*cities which y[ou] built not,
and y[ou] dwell in them;
of the vineyards and oliveyards which y[ou] planted not ... y[ou] eat.*

In other words, the LORD gave them the victory and gave them the Promised Land along with this complete infrastructure.

Here Joshua makes a transition to exhort them: based on the LORD's **faithfulness** and **power**, saying that the Israelites should **serve** the LORD.

[14] *Now therefore*

*fear the LORD, and
serve him*

in sincerity and

in truth: and

put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood,

referring to people who were the ancestors of Abram far to the east of the Jordan River in the Ur of the Chaldees along the Euphrates River in a region known as the cradle of civilization. .

and in Egypt; and

Notice they were surrounded by idolaters – to the east, to the west, as well as within the Promised Land itself.

serve ... the LORD.

[15] *And if it seem evil []to you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom y[ou] will serve; whether*

the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or

the gods of the Amorites, in whose land y[ou] dwell:

but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

You likely have seen or heard a snippet from this verse as the most quoted and

memorized words from the entire book of Joshua. Actually, the verse before it contains the central message Joshua determined to leave with his brethren.

Joshua knew he was presently about to depart from this earth (23:14). The *me* part of his covenant simply stated his unwavering service to the LORD. He then charged his family to have that same commitment.

[16] And the people answered and said,

God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods;

[17] For the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us [wherever] we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:

[18] And the LORD dr[o]ve out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land:

therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God.

This hearkens back the time the Israelites made a covenant to follow the Law of the LORD in Exodus 19:8. And as the Israelites soon broke that covenant – remember the golden calf – they too will break this one. As we learned last time, Joshua knew this would happen because he was there when the LORD said it would happen.

[19] And Joshua said []to the people,

Y[ou] cannot serve the LORD: for

he is a[] holy God;

he is a jealous God;

he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

[20] If y[ou]

forsake the LORD, and

serve strange gods,

then he will

turn and

do you hurt, and

consume you,

The most recent graphic example of this is the death camps of Nazi Germany.

after ... he ha[s] done you good.

*[21] And the people said []to Joshua, Nay; but **we will serve the LORD.***

*[22] And Joshua said []to the people, Y[ou] are witnesses against yourselves that y[ou] have chosen ... the LORD, to serve him. And they said, **We are witnesses.***

Joshua knew they would break this covenant too.

Joshua replied:

[23] Now therefore

*put away ... the strange gods which are among you, and
incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel.*

[24] And the people said []to Joshua,

The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

Joshua then seals a covenant between the Israelites and the LORD:

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

[26] And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God,

Here we have a strong link to the authorship of the book of Joshua.

and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.

[27] And Joshua said []to all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it ha[s] heard all the words [which [the LORD] sp[o]ke unto us] : [therefore] it shall be a witness []to you, lest y[ou] deny your God.

Notice Joshua's last words are:

y[ou] deny your God

[28] So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

[29] And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being a[] hundred and ten years old.

Was it just a coincidence that Joshua lived three score and ten years (Psalm 90:10) plus forty years (wasted years of wilderness wandering)?

[30] And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.

[31] And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that o[ut]lived Joshua, and which had known all the works ... , that [the LORD] had done for Israel.

[32] And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought [from] the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a[] hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.

Recall that Joseph made this request as an act of faith when he was back in Egypt.

And finally, verse 33:

[33] And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given [to] him in mount Ephraim.

Application

So ends the book of Joshua. Can anyone identify the mystery keyword that was repeated sixteen times? That word is *serve*. It indicates Joshua's passion at the end of his life: to plead with his brethren to turn from serving idols and serve the LORD who demonstrated his faithfulness and gave them rest in the Promised Land: the land *flowing with milk and honey*.

But there's another great lesson we don't want to miss here. As the book of Joshua begins with the **death** of Moses, it ends talking about **death** – the **death** of Joshua, the **death** of Eleazar, and the **dead** body of Joseph.

Joshua 1

*[1] Now after the **death** of Moses...*

Joshua 24

[28] So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

*[29] And it came to pass after these things, that **Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died**, being an hundred and ten years old.*

*[30] **And they buried him** in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.*

[31] And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel.

*[32] **And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, [they] buried in Shechem**, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.*

*[33] **And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him** in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given him in mount Ephraim.*

Now **death** and especially **our death** is **not** something we like to think about. When I young, death was a distant and very strange thing to consider. I remember attending my grandfather's funerals. I remember seeing the body of my dad's father lying lifeless in a casket. It was a shocking and fearsome thing for my young eyes to see.

When we're young, death is far from us. I liken it to layers of an onion. We're protected by generations of relatives in our family. Then we see them start to peel off – one by one.

After all these years of seeing loved ones go, **my** death moves relentlessly ever closer. When I turned seventy, the reality of the coming end of **my** life really hit home. During my engineering days, we spent a lot of time calculating the end of life of individual components to determine the composite life of our product. The LORD, our designer, has given our bodies an end of life limit too.

The past few weeks we learned Diane Feinstein died at age ninety. Jimmy Carter celebrated his 99th birthday in hospice care two Sundays ago. But those are even outliers. The scripture that Betsy read (Psalm 90:10) gives the basic human lifespan as 70 to 80 years.

Do you remember Wile E. Coyote falling over the cliff as he chased Roadrunner? While Mr. Coyote seemingly plunged to his death, somehow he always returned. After all, it was just a cartoon. Other stories describe a herd of sheep leading each other over a cliff to their death. But in our case, we really shouldn't think about death that way. Instead, death is more like taking flight into the heavens and to

our final home in glory. That same verse that gives us the span of human life ends with the image of *flying away*. So let's keep that thought in mind as we consider our personal end of the road.

Benediction

*The LORD bless thee, and **keep** thee:*

*The LORD make his face **shine** upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:*

The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)

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