
Joshua 24

Joshua 24:1–33

A Eulogy for Joshua¹

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Introduction: Although I have mentioned this in the previous chapter, we should go into the reasons why the bulk of this chapter did not take place at the end of Joshua's life. (1) You will notice an entirely different energy between the words of Joshua in the previous chapter and the words and dialogue of Joshua in this chapter. There is a spirited exchange between Joshua and the leaders and representatives of the people in this chapter. In the previous chapter, the only one who speaks is Joshua. (2) In the previous chapter, although Joshua is speaking to a crowd, it is almost as though he is talking to a small collection of people surrounding his death bed. (3) In both chapters, Joshua gathers to the leaders to a particular area. In Joshua 23, it simply says that Joshua gathered these men. Since no place is mentioned specifically, this would be a gathering where Joshua himself lives, which would only be apropos for a man during his last day on this earth (Joshua 23:14). In Joshua 24, Joshua gathers these leaders and representatives to Shechem. Although this is not a long trip, it would be unusual for a man near death to haul everyone to there. (4) It is illogical for Joshua to imply that he is on his death bed (Joshua 23:14), and then, two weeks later, gather all these representatives up again to meet in Shechem to give them a very similar message. (5) It is illogical for Joshua to gather these men to some unnamed place (which is very out-of-character for the book of Joshua) and then suddenly say, after saying that he was close to death, "Hey, let's all go to Shechem!" (6) The only reason that commentators place chapters 23 and 24 in the same time frame, with chapter 23 occurring first, is that this is the order in which these chapters are found in Scripture. Other than that, there is no other reason to assume that these chapters occurred even within a decade of one another.

The second item of importance is that, although Joshua certainly wrote the final two speeches, very likely Phinehas was the one who recorded it, or edited it for Scripture, inserting the proper details. I would just about bet my theological license that Phinehas wrote Joshua 22:10–34, as well as the end of Joshua 24. In Joshua 23, the only portion which is narrative is the first two verses, which match Joshua 24:1 close enough to hypothesize that they were written by the same person. We have discussed several times the difference of the vocabulary and sentence structure. This would give Phinehas some creative license in arranging those final chapters. The last words of Joshua were certainly important; however, the message which stirred Phinehas was the one in this chapter. Any sensible editor would have done the same thing.

I have been struggling with the chapter, trying to determine when I should present it. The speech of Joshua precedes the final events of this chapter by perhaps a decade and maybe even more. Chronologically, it belongs after the final distribution of land. However, Phinehas placed this chapter here because it fit with the final days

¹ Keil and Delitzsch subtitle this chapter: *Renewal of the Covenant of the National Assembly in Shechem* in Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 165.

of Joshua and what he believed. Therefore, I am wont to stay with the same order. After all, I have been inserting in psalms now and again which would fit only because of subject matter (and so that when we tackle the psalms, we will not have to examine all 150 of them in a row).

I have alluded to the fact that the first portion of this book occurred long before the death of Joshua and prior to Joshua 23. If this book was going to be taught chronologically, it would go:

A Chronological Approach to the book of Joshua	
Scripture	Synopsis
Joshua 1–21	Entering into Canaan, the conquering of Canaan, and the distribution of the land of Canaan.
Joshua 22	Joshua thanks and admonishes the 2½ tribes; they build a second altar during which time, Joshua has retired to his property, so Phinehas deals with the situation.
Joshua 24:26a	Joshua records the book of Joshua.
Joshua 24:1–25	After finishing his book, Joshua calls for the people in Shechem and they have a rather lively sermon and interchange.
Joshua 24:26b–28	Joshua sets up a stone as a monument and a witness against the people and then he dismisses them to their land.
Joshua 23	Joshua calls the elders of Israel so that he can speak to them on his last day.
Joshua 24:29–33	Joshua's death.

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Now, in beginning this book, if you have read it before with some concentration, some questions should have occurred to you: Shiloh is where the tent of God has been set up and it appears as though it remains there for some time, since it is so mentioned in Judges 18:31 | Sam. 1:3, 24 | 14:3. In Joshua 24:25, we are in Shechem (see vv. 1 and 25); however, in v. 26, Joshua is setting up a large stone underneath an oak next to the sanctuary of Jehovah. Now either, we have a *sanctuary* in Shechem, or between vv. 25 and 26, Joshua goes to Shiloh with the Book of the Law. Since we have no evidence that the sanctuary was moved to Shechem nor that it was ever in Shechem, this would lead us to believe that Joshua went from Shechem to Shiloh (they are relatively close to one another). Why he called a convocation in Shechem and not Shiloh? Why he didn't just simply go to Shiloh in the first place, we don't know. Why there is no mention of his traveling from Shechem to Shiloh, we don't know. In other words, we have some blanks to fill in which occur to you, the reader, but did not occur to the writer. Now, once and awhile, we can fill in these blank portions easily; e.g., where did Joshua 23 take place? We are not told, but the circumstances and the very lack of mention of where it took place all point to that occurring in Joshua's inheritance.

You may wonder why Joshua 24, if it occurred perhaps a decade prior to Joshua 23, why the order is switched. What Joshua had to say in this final chapter are a great testimony to his life and his dedication to Jehovah, God of Israel. They make a fitting eulogy to his life. It is rousing, it is confrontational, the people are stirred up; and Joshua makes his great statement, "...but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." (Joshua 24:15b). As I have mentioned, Phinehas likely completed and compiled the writings of Joshua, recorded his visit with the 2½ tribes concerning the second altar, and then recorded the death of Joshua. It just seemed right to his literary sensibilities to place this along side the death of Joshua. Because he and those with him attended both speeches of Joshua, and because they were perhaps a decade apart, it never occurred to him to point out the time frame. It was obvious to Phinehas. And that this speech fits here, as a marvelous tribute to Joshua, will also be apropos in our eyes.

We will also find in this book several verses which are considerably longer in the Greek Septuagint. The Septuagint was the first translation of the Bible from Hebrew into another language and this translation took place roughly 100 years prior to the birth of our Lord. Therefore, they worked with better manuscripts than we have (our manuscripts date, at best, to around 1000 A.D.). Unfortunately, the translators, at times, took great liberties with the Hebrew text and its Greek rendering, calling the translation into question at times. Therefore, although there are verses and passages which are found in the Septuagint and not in the Massoretic text which should be there, it is difficult to determine what belongs and what is simply embellishment and artistic license. There are at least four instances of additional text in this chapter which is found in the Septuagint.

On a personal note, this will be the first book that I have ever finished with the side-by-side translation and probably the first book whose commentary I am moderately satisfied with (I have done the Pentateuch and a third of the book of Job so far, and I am less than thrilled with what I have done, particularly Genesis through most of Deuteronomy). However, I have already decided at the end of this book that I will expand my translations to three with the next book (which, right now, appears as though it will be the book of Judges). That may seem like overkill, but one of the very best translations available is the NASB, which is somewhat a happy medium between my very literal and my less-than-literal renderings.

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Joshua Gathers the People to Shechem and Reviews Their History

Literally:

And so gathered Joshua all tribes of Israel Shechem and so he summoned for elders of Israel and for their heads and for their judges and for their officers; and so they stationed themselves before faces of the God.

Joshua
24:1

Smoother English rendering:

And Joshua had gathered all the tribes of Israel in Shechem, having summoned for the elders of Israel: their leaders, judges and military officers; and these came and stood before God.

Let's look at a grammatical issue here. I have mentioned the wâw consecutive and the wâw conjunction. Here, we have a clear contrast in how they work together. The wâw consecutive moves the action along while the wâw conjunction strings groups of things together. We find the wâw consecutive here three times, and in each of these times, it moves the action along—Joshua gathers the representatives of the tribes of Israel; he had summoned them and they presented themselves. The people who actually showed up are strung together with wâw conjunctions. Now, a wâw conjunction can move the action along, but this verse is an excellent example of how they are used *together*.

You may notice that this verse is almost the same as v. 2 of the previous chapter. If we were dealing with the same time frame, then this verse would be out of place. However, since these are two entirely different incidents, this verse fits right in.

Some of the Septuagint manuscripts read Shiloh here rather than Shechem, but Shechem is the correct city. We should examine where Shechem is. Shechem was located in Ephraim², as we saw in Joshua 20:7 and apparently quite close to Mount Gerizim, as Jotham speaks to the men of Shechem from the top of Mount Gerizim (Judges 9:7). It appears to be about ten miles north of Shiloh (Joshua's home in Timnath-serah is east or southeast of Shiloh). You may wonder, why are they meeting in Shechem and why not Shiloh? There is a great spiritual side to the city of Shechem. Shechem was the place where Jehovah appeared to Abraham and promised to give his descendants the land that they were in. Abraham built an altar to God here after receiving the first promise of the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:6–7). Jacob buried the Mesopotamian idols here, thus purifying his family from idolatry, which will be thematic for Joshua's speech (Gen. 32:2–5), and probably the reason Joshua chose this place from which to give this speech. Joseph's bones will be buried here (Joshua 24:32). Therefore, there

² Several maps (the NIV Study Bible and the Study Edition of the NASB) place Shechem in Manasseh, for who knows what reason.

is a spiritual significance which should be attached to Shechem as well. However, the real reason is as follows: Shechem, due to its proximity to Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, is the place where Joshua took all of Israel to read the cursings and the blessings. Joshua is about to again set before the people a choice between life and death, between cursing and blessing. He therefore chooses Shechem for a fitting place to deliver such a message.³

The very last verb is the Hithpael imperfect of *yâtsa*^{bv} (יָצָא) [pronounced *yaw-TSAHB^v*] means *to set oneself or to station oneself, to take a stand*. In Job 1:6, the verb is found in the Hithpael infinitive construct, which is the reflexive of the Piel. #3320 BDB #426. The fact that they placed themselves before the face of God does not mean that the ark or any other piece of the tabernacle was there that day. Although the ark and the holy of holies were given as places where the Lord dwelt, the people of Israel realized that God was not confined to one place at one time, nor was He trapped within one symbol, e.g., the ark. We studied this back in the **Doctrine of the Character and Essence of God as Taught in the Pentateuch** back in Deut. 34:12.

And so said Joshua unto all the people, “Thus said Y^ehowah, God of Israel, ‘Beyond the River lived your fathers from old—Terah, father of Abraham and father of Nahor; and so they served other gods.

Joshua
24:2

And then Joshua said to all of the people, “So spoke Jehovah, the God of Israel: ‘Beyond the River lived your fathers from olden times—Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor; and they served other Gods.

We have studied the *list* of the fathers of Israel in Gen. 11:7–32. Abraham is the father of the Jewish people. His uncle, Nahor, missed salvation. Abraham was a Jew and Nahor was not, even though they were from the same family. The phrase *the river* refers to the Euphrates River; when living near the Euphrates River, Abraham was lost to idolatry. I should expand on that. Jewish tradition has it that Abraham was persecuted on the other side of the Euphrates for his abhorrence of idolatry. However, we don’t know that for a fact; what we do know from Scripture is that Abraham had to be removed from his family because of their idolatry. Whether he at one time practiced it or not is not really an issue. However, an interesting sideline: this is the first place where we hear that Abraham was separated from his family **because** of their idolatry. We have read in previous passages that his family was involved in idolatry (if you will recall the household idols carried by Rachel, Jacob’s wife, mentioned in Gen. 31).

As you know, I will use any excuse to give an extended quote from J. Vernon McGee, as he always takes even the most difficult portions of Scripture and lays them out with great clarity: *This raised the question: Why did God choose Abraham and make a nation from him? Let’s consider the background. After the Tower of Babel, man totally departed from the Lord. No one served God—not even Terah the father of Abraham. When God confused the language, the people scattered in every direction, and they took with them a knowledge of the true and living God, which is the reason even pagan tribes today have a knowledge of the true God, although they do not worship Him. There was total apostasy after Babel.*

Now what will God do that will be consistent with His person, His attributes, and His character? He could judge the human family and remove it from the earth. He could make the earth as bleak as the moon if He wanted to. But He didn’t. He will recover mankind. He will begin with one man. That man was Abraham, who must have had a desire in his heart to know the living and true God. When God called him, He told him to leave Ur and all his family. Now we know why. Terah was an idolater. God called him away from all that in order to deal with him and make of him a nation through which the Messiah would come into the world.⁴

³ Of the commentaries that I draw from, none of them pointed out this connection between what God had required Joshua to do several years previous and Joshua’s choice to deliver a similar message a decade or so later. Shechem was just the most apropos place for such a message.

⁴ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 104.

Terah actually had three sons—Abram, Nahor⁵ and Haran. However, *only Abraham and Nahor are mentioned because they were direct ancestors of Israel. Nahor was the grandfather of Rebekah, Isaac's wife (Gen. 22:20–23) and the great-grandfather of Rachel and Leah, who were Jacob's wives (Gen. 29:10, 16).*⁶

The NIV Study Bible points out an important fact: *Only a divinely appointed mediator would dare to speak for God with direct discourse, as in vv. 2–13.*⁷ Joshua, although not near as brilliant or as verbose as Moses, learned from Moses. When Moses spoke to the people to persuade them to continue in their following of God, he would tie it into their history and relationship with God. He recounts the history of Israel in Deut. 1–4, pausing at Deut. 5 to repeat the Law. He then brings this to a crescendo with “Hear, O Israel, Jehovah is our God; Jehovah is One! You will love Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all you might. And these words which I am commanding you today, they will be on your heart, and you will teach them diligently to your sons.” (Gen. 6:4–7a). Throughout the book of Deuteronomy, Moses does this again and again (e.g., Deut. 8–11, 29, 32); when Joshua does this, he is paying great respect to his teacher. Various psalmists, in order to make a point, do that as well. In fact, that was the case with every psalm which we studied following the books of Moses.

“ ‘And so I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and so I led him in all a land of Canaan and so I multiplied his seed and so I gave to him Isaac.

Joshua
24:3

“ ‘And then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the Euphrates and I led him throughout the land of Canaan; I also multiplied his seed and I gave Isaac to him.

The second verb is Qal imperfect of the very common verb *hâlak*^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced *haw-LAHK^e*], which means *to go, to come, to depart, to walk*. It's tough to give a consistent rendering here; Young goes with *caused him to go*; Owen, the NIV, Rotherham and the NASB have *led him*. Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229.

Abraham was actually given two children: Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael was not a child of the promise. Because Sarah was concerned that she would not bear children, she convinced Abraham to have relations with Hagar, her handmaid, and Hagar bore him Ishmael. God later blessed Abram with the child Isaac through Sarah. Here we have two brothers, both sons of Abraham—one was the Son of Promise and the other was not (Gen. 17–18, 21).

I mentioned that Joshua learned from Moses to start with history and then to work into doctrine. This was done in the New Testament as well: **And Stephen said, “Hear me, brothers and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and He said to him, ‘Depart from your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.’ Then he departed from the land of the Chaldeans, and he settled in Haran. And from there, after his father died, God removed him into this country in which you are now living. And He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground; and, even when he had no child, He promised that He would give it to him as a possession, and to his offspring after him.”** (Acts 7:2–5 Gen. 12:1, 7 17:8). It was found that the most effective way to deal with the Jewish people was to hold their history before them. For the Jew who is open-minded, he will have to agree that what happened then is much different than what is happening now. He either has to rationalize the relationship between God and his ancestors away or admit that whatever they had, he does not.

I doubt that Joshua is capable to delivering lines which are tongue-in-cheek or ironic, but God the Holy Spirit is. There is a great deal of humor in God multiplying the seed of Abraham—God gives him one son. This is after the promise: **And God took Abraham outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then He said to him, “So will your descendants be.”** (Gen. 15:5). And then God gave Abraham one son. God multiplied Abraham's seed by one. The name *Isaac* means laughter; when God told Abraham that Sarah would bear them a child when they were both a century old, Sarah was listening from the other side of the tent flap and began laughing to herself. God heard and told them both that she would have laughter in her stomach again when she bore Isaac. When I see this promise of descendants that God gave to

⁵ Abram had at least two Nahor's in his immediate family—his grandfather (Gen. 11:25 I Chron. 1:26–27) and his brother (Gen. 11:27).

⁶ *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; pp. 636–637.

⁷ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 319.

Abraham, and then He gives him one son, we have another reason for Abraham's son to be named *laughter*. It's as though God has promised you that you would be a millionaire, and then blesses you with a job which pays \$4.25 an hour.

“ ‘And so I gave to Isaac, Jacob and Esau; I gave to Esau a hill country of Seir for a possession of him; and Jacob and his sons went down [into] Egypt. Joshua 24:4

“ ‘Then I gave Jacob and Esau to Isaac. Finally, to Esau, I have the hill country of Seir, but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.

The last verb is the Qal perfect of *yârad* (יָרַד) [pronounced *yaw-RAHD*], which means *to descend, to go down*. Strong's #3381 BDB #432. As you will recall, Isaac had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Since Esau was born first, he naturally owned the birthright of Isaac. He also appeared to be Jacob's favorite. The changing of the birthright over to Jacob had been the result of several acts of deception, all of which we studied back in Genesis. Esau was given by God the land of Seir. Israel was not to encroach upon this possession of Esau's. **“You will pass through the territory of your brothers, the sons of Esau, who live in Seir, and they will be afraid of you, so be very carefully. Do not provoke them, for I will not give to you any of their land—not even a square foot, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as an inheritance.”** (Deut. 2:4b–5). Jacob had been promised, just as his father and his father before him, that the Land of Promise would be given to their descendants. In the meantime, God removed the entire family of Jacob to Egypt.

The Septuagint, at this point, adds a great deal of explanation to v. 4: *And there became there a great and populous and mighty people, and the Egyptians afflicted them*. This is one of those times when it is very difficult to determine the worthiness of this statement—was it really a part of God's Word, or was is a gloss, something added later, in order to clarify the meaning? Fortunately, it is not something upon which any great doctrine rests. Had the Septuagint held to a strictly literal rendering of the Hebrew, then textual critics would give more credence to the additional verses found in the Septuagint. In this verse, the additional statement is a true one, one which Joshua may or may not have actually said.

From this verse, Joshua will jump ahead to the time of Moses and Aaron in Egypt, bypassing the life and children of Jacob and their lives in both Canaan and Egypt. One possibility is that not the entire speech of Joshua was recorded. Perhaps Joshua wrote and said more, but whoever (probably Phinehas) wrote the speech down did not catch all of it. Personally, I think that Joshua is far too methodical for that. He was not a public speaker, he was not a brilliant man, he was not verbose, nor was he a speech writer. He had a few points to make and he made them. My thinking is that he wrote this speech down prior to giving it (1) because he learned that from Moses; and (2) giving a long, point-by-point speech as Moses did was not a natural thing for Joshua. Whereas, it is possible that we are getting an edited version of what Joshua taught, I doubt that there was much more to what he had to say than this. Personally, I cannot imagine him calling all the elders to Shechem and talking from the top of his head. I see no reason to perceive speech-making as anything less than a very formal affair, with full speaker notes, later made available to Phinehas for insertion into Scripture. If our president, who has given hundreds of speeches, still speaks while reading a prompter with every word of his speech written down, then I don't think that it is far-fetched for Joshua to have this all written down aforetime. We have to keep in mind that a presentation like this was not given every day. Joshua did not meet with all of Israel every Saturday and give them the skinny on their spiritual heritage. Therefore, we cannot assume that he took this chore lightly, figuring that if he didn't get it right that week, that he could make up for it the next. One more thing—Joshua is not herein giving the entire history of Israel. What he is doing is dealing with idolatry—that is his major topic—and most of what he has to say speaks to that topic.

“ ‘And so I sent Moses and Aaron and so I plagued Egypt as that I did in a midst of him. And afterwards I brought you [all] out. Joshua 24:5

“ So then I sent Moses and Aaron and then sent plagues upon Egypt, which I did in the midst of Egypt. Afterwards, I brought all of you out of Egypt.

Joshua does as has been done by Moses and as has been done by many psalmists since; he traces out the history of Israel through to Moses and Aaron, who both went before the pharaoh and demanded the release of the Israelite people. The details are found in our study of the early portion of Exodus. These plagues revealed the power of God over the deities of Egypt.

“ ‘And so I brought out your fathers out from Egypt and so you came [to] the sea; and so pursued [the] Egyptians after your fathers with chariots and with horsemen [to] a sea of reeds.

Joshua
24:6

“ ‘Then I led your fathers out from Egypt to the sea. The Egyptians pursued them to the sea of reeds with horsemen and chariots.

Joshua continues speaking for God or as God. Israel is still in Egypt and pharaoh has pursued them with chariots right up to the sea of reeds. The dramatic events touched upon in this verse are given in greater detail in Ex. 14.

“ ‘And so they cried out unto Yahweh and so He placed darkness between you and the Egyptians. And so came down upon them the sea and so he covered them and so saw your eyes what I did in Egypt. And so you remained in the wilderness days many.

Joshua
24:7

“ ‘Then they cried out to Jehovah and then He placed a thick darkness between you and the Egyptians. Then He caused to sea to come down upon them and it covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to Egypt. Then you lived in the wilderness for a long time.

The second verb is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *sîym* (סִיַם) [pronounced *seem*] which means *to put, to place, to set*. Strong's #7760 BDB #962. What God placed upon the Egyptians (and you will note the change to 3rd person, although we will be back to the 1st person in this verse) is the masculine singular noun *ma`āp̄heh* (מַאֲפֵה) [pronounced *mah-uh-FEH*], which means *darkness*. Although this word is only found here, there is strong cognate evidence for its meaning. Strong's #3990 BDB #66. In this verse we have the preposition *bayin* (בֵּינָם) [pronounced *bah-YIN*] or *bêyn* (בֵּינֵי) [pronounced *bane*]. When it is found twice, it corresponds most closely to our word *between*. Strong's #996 BDB #107.

At this point, it appeared as though the Israelites were trapped. In front of them was the sea of reeds and behind them were the Egyptians, who were closing in fast. Suddenly, God brought a thick darkness between them. The details are given in Ex. 14:20: **So the cloud came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel, and there was a cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. So, one camp did not come near the other all night.** The next thing the Israelites saw, after crossing through the sea of reeds, in the midst of the sea, was God cover their pursuers with the sea.

Since Joshua's speech is primarily a list of the times that God has been faithful to Israel, we do not go into any detail when it comes to Israel's shortcomings which resulted in discipline. In fact, Joshua covers this is the last sentence of this verb. Then they had to live in the desert for a long time because they did not go into the land immediately and conquer it. The verb is the Qal imperfect of *yâsha^bv* (יָשַׁב) [pronounced *yaw-SHAH^bV*] and it means *to remain, sit, dwell*. Strong's #3427 BDB #442. Although they did a lot of marching from Egypt to the southern portion of the Land of Promise; and then along a circuitous route to the east of the land, between those long marches, it is my opinion that they lived south of southern Canaan, at the foot of their defeat. Joshua does not contradict that, although I would not base that idea upon this verse alone.

“ ‘And so I brought you unto a land of the Amorite the living beyond the Jordan. And so they fought with you and so I gave them into your hand and so you possessed their land and so I destroyed them from before you faces.

Joshua
24:8

“ ‘And then I brought you into the Amorite who lived beyond the Jordan. They fought with you and I gave them into your hand. You possessed their land and I destroyed them before your very eyes.

After the proper noun *Amorite*, we have the definite article and the Qal active participle of *yâsha*^{bv}, again, which means *to remain, sit, dwell*. Strong's #3427 BDB #442. This is rendered as follows: Rotherham: *into the land of the Amorites, who were dwelling over the Jordan*; Young: *unto the land of the Amorite who is dwelling beyond the Jordan*; NASB: *into the land of the Amorites who lived yond the Jordan*.

Joshua is dealing with God's faithfulness and he is dealing with the successes of Israel. Therefore, he skips over the many failings of the fathers of those listening to him. We are still east of the Jordan and Joshua describes their victories on that side of the river. This is where Israel fought and defeated Sihon, a king of the Amorites, as well as the king of Bashan (Num. 21:21–35), something we studied aeons ago.

“ ‘And so arose Balak ben Zippor, king of Moab and so he fought against Israel and so he sent and so he summoned Balaam ben Beor to curse you [all] Joshua 24:9

“ ‘Also, Balak the son of Zippor, the king of Moab, had arisen and he fought against Israel. He had sent for and requested the presence of Balaam the son of Beor to curse you.

The verb here is the Piel infinitive construct of *qâlal* (קָלַל) [pronounced *kaw-LAL*], which means *to curse, to despise*, in the Piel (Lev. 20:9 Deut. 23:4). Rotherham offers us the additional meanings *to belittle, to revile*. Strong's #7043 BDB #886.

Moab had observed this huge population of Israel and he found a man who really did have some sort of a relationship with God—Balaam ben Beor, who apparently was a true prophet. Balaam liked to live on the edge. He knew enough to realize that he could not curse Israel, but still went along with Balak, being tempted by the possible financial gain. We studied this back in Num. 22–24. Joshua's talk to the Israelites indicates that (1) the general events alluded to are probably chronological; and/or (2) that Joshua is basing this upon his study of God's Word as well. What he is saying is a chronological walk through the books of Exodus and Numbers. And, again you will note that the emphasis is primarily upon the spiritual battle; Balak's attack on Israel through Balaam was not a physical attack with army, but Balak wanted Balaam to curse Israel. Throughout this chapter we see the omniscience of God protecting Israel in all circumstances.

“ ‘And I did not listen to Balaam and so he blessed a blessing [upon] you and so I delivered you from his hand. Joshua 24:10

“ ‘However, I did not listen to Balaam, so he therefore kept blessing you; and I delivered you from out of his clutches.

In Balaam's heart was the desire to curse Israel and to take the money. However, God did not listen to him and the result was that Balaam blessed Israel several times and God delivered Israel from the intended cursing of Balaam. You will note the translation *so he therefore kept blessing you*; This apparently is the proper way to render an infinitive which follows a finite verb.⁸

If you did not study Balaam with us, a precursory glance may cause you to wonder why Balaam is continually ragged on in the Bible (see Deut. 23:4–5 II Peter 2:15 Jude 11 Rev. 2:14). We have studied the long answer in Num. 22–24; the short answer is that God told him not to go, and then, in His permissive will, allowed Balaam to go to Balak (Num. 22:22–35). The intention was for Balaam to curse Israel. God turns his cursing into blessing, something which God has done for Israel for millenniums. *His hand* in this verse refers to the *hand of Balak*.

“ ‘And so you [all] went over the Jordan and you [all] came unto Jericho and so fought against you landowners of Jericho—the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite—and so I gave them into your hand. Joshua 24:11

“ ‘And so you all crossed over the Jordan and you then came to Jericho; and then you fought against the citizens of Jericho—the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite—and I gave them into your hand.

⁸ Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 257.

After *fought against you* we have the masculine plural construct of baʿal (בַּעַל) [pronounced BAH-ahl or BAH-gahl], and it means *owner, lord, husband*. Apart from idolatry, it is a good word. Strong's #1167 BDB #127. Strong's treats this as a separate word, which completely removes it from its idolatrous leanings. In the plural, this can be rendered *leaders, aristocracy, citizens, landowners*. Strong's #1181 BDB #127. This seems to indicate that there was somewhat of an international population which lived in Jericho, as we invade the rest of the land in the next verse. The alpha manuscript of the Septuagint does not list by name the various heathen which occupied the Land of Promise, but only names *Jericho*.

The crossing of the Jordan is recorded in Joshua 3 and the wars against the indigenous population in Joshua 6–10, as God had promised in Ex. 23:31: “And I will fix your boundary from the sea of Reeds to the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the River [Euphrates]; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out before you.” He made a similar promise to Abraham back in Gen. 15:18–21: On that day, Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates; [and I have given you] the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim.” Prior to crossing the Jordan, Moses reiterates that promise in Deut. 7:1–2.

“ ‘And so I sent before your faces the hornet and so she drove them out before your faces two kings of the Amorite—not by your sword and not by your bow;

Joshua
24:12

“ ‘Then I sent in your presence the hornet which drove the people out before you—the two kings of the Amorites; and all of this apart from your military might.

The *hornets* were promised by God in Ex. 23:28: “And I will send hornets ahead of you, that they may drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites before you.” Moses confirmed this in Deut. 7:20: “Moreover, Jehovah your God will send the hornet against them, until those who are left hide themselves from you until they perish.” Although there is some question as to whether this means *hornet* as we know it, ZPEB suggests that these are conspicuously banded Hymenopterous insects which live in colonies.⁹ Although they are small, compared to man, they are still about 1.5 inches long and their sting can apparently deliver a great deal of venom. The NIV offers: *Egypt had long used the hornet as a national symbol, so Egypt's military campaigns in Canaan may have been in mind. But “the hornet” may also refer to the reports about Israel that spread panic among the Canaanites (2:11; 5:1; 9:24).*¹⁰ I personally take this as metaphoric, that God will provide for Israel a number of small things which they might not even notice, which will assist them in driving out the Amorites. That the coming of Israel instilled panic in some groups is also a likely interpretation of this. *For by their own sword, they did not possess the land, and their own arm did not save them, but Your right hand and Your arm and the light of Your presence delivered them, for You gave them grace* (Psalm 44:3).

Now, I was at first uncertain as to who these two particular kings are of the Amorites. NIV, by its footnoted Scripture reference (Psalm 135:11), suggests Og of Bashan and Sihon, king of the Amorites (Psalm 134:11); however, v. 11 seems to place us now west of the Jordan River. The second problem is what Jacob told Joseph while on his deathbed, which prompts me to put this together as a chart:

Here's the problem. It is clear in this passage that God sent the hornet forth and it drove out the Amorites and their two kings, and therefore, Israel did not conquer these kings by their military might. However, it is also clear in Gen. 48 that Jacob (Israel) took this extra portion of land with his military might (although he was speaking prophetically).

⁹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 203. BDB goes so far as to suggest actual hornet attacks which could occur during a battle to turn the tide of the battle, but I think that is a bit much. Garstang suggests that the hornet is symbolic of Egypt and that Egypt's recent campaigns in the Land of Canaan softened them up for the attack of Israel (*Joshua-Judges*; 1931, pp. 112ff, 258ff). In any case, the simplest explanation is that God would use various and sundry methods to drive the Canaanite population out of the land.

¹⁰ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 320.

Interpreting Joshua 24:12

Gen. 48:21–22

Joshua 24:12

Then Israel said to Joseph, "Listen, I am about to die, but God will be with you and He will bring you back to the land of your fathers. And I give to you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

"'And so I sent before your faces the hornet and so it drove them out before you two kings of the Amorite—not by your sword and not by your bow.'"

Points on possible interpretations:

1. When Jacob was speaking, we might think that he was just some old man talking and we should have simply let him have his say, not attach much meaning to it and move on with our lives. The problem with this approach is that this is recorded in Scripture, he is called by his God-given name of *Israel*, and, even if every speech which is quoted in Scripture is not necessarily truth, there is no reason to assume what he said was not the truth.
2. If what Jacob said is true, then we cannot be speaking of the same two Amorite kings. In the case of the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan, it is clear that Israel overpowered them with their military. Now, it is not that God was not watching over them and giving them the victory, but they worked hand-in-hand. The Amorites had no reason to fear Israel and, for that reason, were particularly surly when Israel asked for safe passage through their country.
3. Once Israel defeated the kings on the east side, and they had escaped out of Egypt, and when they had crossed over the Jordan River, then their notoriety grew. This was God sending a hornet in before them. *Now it was when all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard how Jehovah had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel* (Joshua 5:1). Through this, they experienced two victories over two Amorite kings without a battle. Our problem now is to determine of whom are we speaking.
4. The kings which come immediately to mind are the kings of Jericho and of Gibeon. So let's think about this. In Jericho, we should expect no archeological evidence of what group of people occupied that city when Israel invaded, as Israel burned it to the ground. There is nothing stated in the Bible which tells us of the nationality of the men of Jericho. Determining that they were Amorites would be speculation, based upon Joshua 24:12 alone. The second group is the Gibeonites, who actually occupied several cities, and made a treaty with Israel under false pretenses. They became Israel's slaves. However, they are called Hivites in Joshua 9:7–11:19. My only explanation here is that this was a group of Hivites and Amorites; although the Bible does not support this. The only other thing which would suggest this would be that there are five Amorite kings who rise up against Gibeon because of their alliance with Israel. A better explanation would be that Joshua is using the term *Amorite* in the general sense, to include all the diverse groups in the land (we find this general use in such passages as Gen. 15:15–16). This appears to be the most likely explanation, as Joshua appears to use *Amorite* in the generic sense in Joshua 24:15 when speaking of the gods of the Amorites. However, we know that the men who lived in Gibeon were actually a remnant of the Amorites by II Sam. 21:2, which recounts their treaty with Joshua. The fact that the Amorites were famous for moving into various cultures and becoming a part of that culture would cause us to reasonably suppose that the Gibeonites were a mixture of Amorites and Hivites.¹¹
5. An interpretation very similar to the one above is that there were several cities represented by the Gibeonites (and there were) and two of them were occupied by Amorites. Again, this is conjecture.

¹¹ I should also point out that we have some difficulties in determining just exactly who the Hivites were. Some suggest that they are equivalent to the Orites. But that is for another doctrine.

Interpreting Joshua 24:12

6. Another possible interpretation of Joshua 24:12 is that there were one or two Amorite kings who simply surrendered to Israel or deserted their cities when Israel came near. Nothing like this is recorded in Scripture, whereas, an unusual occurrence like this we would have expected to have been recorded. It is important to note, however, that not every major event in the history of Israel is recorded in Scripture. A primary example of this is Shiloh, where the Tent of God was kept. At some point in time, the Philistines (probably) came in and burned Shiloh to the ground, although the Tent of God was safely removed. However, we have no record of this actually occurring, although a couple authors look back upon this event (without providing any details).
7. Another interpretation, which appears to be more in keeping with the Hebrew of the verse, is that God removed two kings and/or military leaders by other means prior to Israel's trek through Western Palestine. This seems to be too specific to warrant a reference to two of the many kings which Israel removed from the land. Again, the problem with this interpretation is that we would have expected it to have been recorded in Scripture.
8. In any case, we must realize that what Joshua is saying is accurate and that there were two Amorite kings who gave in to Israel without the strength of Israel's bow and sword (and, again, *Amorite* might be used here in its generic sense).

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“ ‘And so I gave to you a land which you had not labored in her and cities which you had not built, and so you dwelt in them; vineyards and olive yards which you did not plant, you keep eating.’

Joshua
24:13

“And I gave to you a land in which you had not labored; cities to live in which you had not built; and vineyards and olive yards, from which you eat, but did not plant.’

This verse is true for both sides of the Jordan River. 2½ tribes will live east of the river in houses that they did not build, and 9½ tribes will live west of the river, in houses that they did not build. The Israelites spent four hundred years in Egypt, many of those in slavery to Egypt. Not only did they leave with suitable wages for all of those years, but they came into a land which God gave them which had cities, vineyards and olive yards which they had not labored, yet they were able to enjoy. This was just as Moses had promised them: **“Then it will come to pass when Jehovah your god brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you great and splendid cities, which you did not build; and houses full of all good things which you did not fill; and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plan, and you will eat and be satisfied.”**

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The Great Message of Joshua

“And now revere Y^ehowah and serve Him in completion and in truth [*and stability*]; and put away gods which served your fathers beyond the River and in Egypt and serve Y^ehowah.

Joshua
24:14

“Now therefore, give to Jehovah the proper respect and devotion and serve Him completely [or, wholly] in truth and stability; furthermore, discard entirely other gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt; serve Jehovah.

Now, even though this is Joshua speaking for God (as did Moses in the book of Deuteronomy), he will still employ his own vocabulary. He knows enough to speak the truth, and yet in this, his personality and vocabulary are not lost. This verse begins with the wâw conjunction and the adverb ʿattâh (הַתָּעַתְּ) [pronounced *ḡaht-TAWH*], which is an adverb of time meaning *now*. When this adverb is used with the imperative, it means the time has come for this exhortation or advice to be followed. Strong's #6258 BDB #773. The word *fear* in the KJV, is better rendered *revere*; it implies trust, reverence, service and worship.

We find the same verb used three times in this verse, very common in Joshua's vocabulary. It is ʿâḇvad (אָבַד) [pronounced *ḡaw^b-VAHD*], which means *to work, to serve, to labor*. Strong's #5647 BDB #712. God is to be served in tâmîym (תָּמִים) [pronounced *taw-MEEM*], which means *complete, whole, entire*. Strong's #8549 BDB #1071. This word is given several different renderings by other translators: The NASB, Owen and Rotherham use *sincerity*; Young *perfection*; REB *loyalty*; and NAB *completely*. You will notice that most of these translators render the preposition and the adjective as an adverb in the English. Often, when defining *manner*, an adjective in the Hebrew can act like an adverb in the English.¹²

The second adjective found here is actually the feminine singular noun ʿēmeth (אֱמֶת) [pronounced *EH-meth*], which means *firmness, faithfulness, truth, certainty, stability, perpetuity, fidelity, reliable, stable, dependable*. The idea is that one is consistent and fulfills their obligations or their promises. Strong's #571 BDB #54. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians: **For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, now in fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially towards you.**" (II Cor. 1:12). **"And now, Israel, what does Jehovah your God require from you, but to fear Jehovah your God and to walk in all His ways and to love Him and to serve Jehovah your God will all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep Jehovah's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good."** (Deut. 10:12–13). **"Only revere Jehovah and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you."** (I Sam. 12:24).

The River does not refer to the Jordan but to the Euphrates. It has been well-documented in the Bible that the family of Abraham were idolaters and God required Abraham to remove himself from his family in order to serve God. What is interesting is the mention of the serving of false gods in Egypt. This is not alluded to all the often (in fact, off the top of my head, this is the only time I can recall this being said). This tells us that the Israelites were not perfect, Jehovah-serving people while in slavery, but that many of them were idolaters while in slavery to Egypt, and we observed this in the golden calf incident when Aaron was left in charge at Mount Sinai. The NIV Study Bible suggests that the golden calf is likely patterned after Apis, the sacred bull of Egypt; and also remark that the father of Abraham, Terah, would have been exposed to the worship of the moon-god, Nanna(r) or Sin, if not worshipers of this god.¹³

In looking back, God spoke these words to Ezekiel: **"I said to their children in the wilderness, do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, or keep their ordinances, or defile yourselves with their idols. Cast away, each one of you, the detestable things of his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; for I am Jehovah your God. Walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and observe them."** (Ezek. 20:18b, 7b, 19b). There is an inference that there was some idolatry to be found among the people. The leaders listening to Joshua kept idolatry from their own homes and did not tolerate it (see v. 31), but there was some apparent idolatry of which they were unawares. When we enter into the book of Judges, the evil of Israel will be devastating. This sort of thing does not happen overnight. There had to be some festering evil in Israel which eventually took hold—as the Bible says, a little leaven leavens the whole lump. **"But they rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to Me; they did not cast away the detestable things of their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt."** (Ezek. 20:8). Idolatry begins in the heart and in the thinking of the individual. **"Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to Jehovah, and He will have compassion on him. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."** (Isa. 55:7).

¹² J.C.L. Gibson, *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar~Syntax*; 4th Edition, © T&T Clark Ltd., 1994, p. 144.

¹³ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 320. There is a further discussion of Jeroboam and his golden calves, which we will take up in I Kings 12:28–29.

“And if displeasing in your eyes to serve Y^ehowah, choose for yourselves the day Whom you will serve, if gods which served your fathers which [were] beyond the River and if gods of the Amorite whose you dwell in land; and me and my house—we will serve Y^ehowah.”

Joshua
24:15

“And if it is displeasing in your estimation to serve Jehovah, then choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served beyond the river or the gods of the Amorite in whose land you now live. However, for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.”

I went with a very literal, word-by-word translation, which loses a great deal of the impact of this verse. Therefore, not necessarily for clarity, but for emphasis, let me give you a few other renderings:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	But if it be a vexation in your eyes to serve Yahweh choose ye for yourselves today, whom ye will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye are dwelling,—but I and my house will serve Yahweh.
NASB	“And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”
NRSV	“Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”
REB	‘But if it does not please you to serve the LORD, choose here and now whom you will serve; the gods whom your forefathers served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living. But I and my family, we shall serve the LORD.’
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	“...and if wrong in your eyes to serve Jehovah—choose for you to-day whom ye do serve;—whether the gods whom your fathers served, which <i>are</i> beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorite in whose land ye are dwelling; and I and my house—we serve Jehovah.’

The first verb is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *rāʿa* (רָעָה) [pronounced *raw-GAHĜ*], which means *to be evil, to be bad, displeasing, injurious*. Originally, this word meant *to make a loud noise* and various roots refers to *crushing or breaking*. It came to mean *to be evil* from the idea of raging and tumultuous, which is the result of having a bad disposition. Strong's #7489 BDB #949.

We just dealt with the preceding by the hornet a few verses ago. Ex. 23:23–24 reads: “For My angel will go before you and bring you in to a land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them. You will not worship their gods, nor will you serve them, nor do according to their deeds; but you will utterly overthrow them and break their sacred pillars into pieces...and you will make no covenant with them or with their gods.” Joshua gives them two choices—either the gods that their ancestors worshiped across the Euphrates or the gods of the surrounding Amorites. We have a mention of the gods which Laban, the father of Leah and Rachel, worshipped in Gen. 31:19, 30, 34–35. These are no doubt similar to what his and Abraham's ancestors worshipped and the reason that Abraham was required by God to leave his family on the other side of the Euphrates. We have studied the heathen gods of Canaan in Joshua 23:7 and Psalm 95:3. We will find the gods of the Canaanites mentioned in more detail in Judges 10:6.

Joshua has used the word *Amorite* in several different ways throughout this chapter, and it would be remiss of me not to point these out.

How is the Term <i>Amorite</i> Used in Scripture?	
Scripture	Usage
Gen. 10:15–6 Joshua 12:8 24:11	The most common usage of the term <i>Amorite</i> is of a specific genealogical group of Canaanites whose presence and influence is felt throughout the ancient mid-eastern world.
Num. 21:26 Joshua 12:2 24:8	The Amorites were a specific civilization occupying the trans-Jordanian area during the time that the Israelites moved northward along the King’s Highway, east of the Dead Sea. They had to go to war with the Amorites, as the Amorites would not allow them safe passageway through their territory (which then became Israel’s territory).
Gen. 15:16 Joshua 24:12, 15, 18	Like the term <i>Canaanite</i> , the word <i>Amorite</i> is occasionally applied to the various diverse groups of peoples in the land of Canaan, as the Amorites themselves tended to be a diverse and independent lot of people.
For more information on the Amorites, see the Doctrine of the Amorites , presented back in Gen. 10:16	

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Joshua clearly will follow Jesus Christ. You will recall that this is very similar to one of the last messages of Moses: “Observe, today I have set before you life and good, or death and evil, in that I command you today to love Jehovah your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that Jehovah your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you disobey Him, and are drawn away to worship other gods and to serve them, then I declare to you on this day that you will certainly perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and to possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, both you and your descendants, by loving Jehovah your God and by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which Jehovah swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give to them.” (Deut. 30:15–20).¹⁴ This also calls to mind the tremendous words of Elijah: “How long will you limp between two opinions? If Jehovah is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.” (I Kings 18:21b).

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Affirmations of Faith Between Joshua and the People

And so answered the people and said, “A profanity to us from a forsaking of Y^ehowah to serve other gods.

Joshua
24:16

“Then the people answered, saying, “It would be abhorrent to us to forsake Jehovah to serve other gods.

The first word they said was the substantive *châliylâh* (חַלִּילָהּ) [pronounced *khaw-LEE-law*], which means *far be it [from me or you]*. Literally, this means *to profane [something]*. *Châlitlâh* is simply an exclamation of abhorrence. This is followed by the *lâmed* preposition and the 1st person plural suffix; it should be rendered a *profanity to us*. Strong’s #2486 BDB #321. The people sound very sincere in their devotion to God.

¹⁴ You might also notice the difference between the eloquence and vocabulary of the two men. They both said the same thing, for all intents and purposes; Moses was just a great deal more articulate.

“For Y^ehowah our God He [was] the one bringing us and our fathers [up] out from a land of Egypt out from a house of slaves and Who did before our faces the signs the great the those and so He preserved us in all the way which we went in her and in all the peoples whom we passed in them.

Joshua
24:17

“For Jehovah our God is the One Who brought us and our fathers up out from the land of Egypt out from bondage. He performed those great signs before us and He preserved us in the land in the midst of all the various peoples that we passed through.

In the Septuagint, this reads: *The Lord our God, He is God; He brought up, us and our fathers, from Egypt...* Like many passages in the Septuagint, we do not know which is most reliable—this or the Massoretic text. However, again, there is no serious problems with its inclusion or exclusion.

The first verb is the Hiphil participle of *ʿâlah* (אָלָה) [pronounced *gaw-LAWH*], which means *to go up, to ascend, to rise*. In the Hiphil, it means *to cause to go up, to lead up, to take up, to bring up*. In the participle, this often can refer to the act of a person, or a person who is identified by his actions. Therefore, this could be rendered, *the one bringing, the one taking, the sone leading up*. Strong's #5927 BDB #748. I added in the *up* as this is the implication of the verb. A prophet comes to Israel during the time of the judges and confronts them with almost this same statement: **“Thus proclaims Jehovah, the God of Israel, ‘It was I Who brought you up from Egypt, and Who brought you out from the house of slavery. And I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors, and dispossessed them before you and gave to you their land. And I said to you, I am Jehovah your God; you will not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed me.’ ”** (Judges 6:8b–10).

After *house*, we have the masculine plural noun *ʿebved* (עֲבָדִים) [pronounced *G^E-ved*], which means *slave, servant*. Strong's #5650 BDB #713.

One of the things which God is said to have done for the people is the Qal imperfect of *shamar* (שָׁמַר) [pronounced *shaw-MAR*] and it means *keep, guard, watch, preserve*. Strong's #8104 BDB #1036. The phrase *in her* refers to *in the land*.

Knowing what is coming up in the book of Judges, I tend to be hyper-critical of the people of Israel. However, what they are doing is they are reciting all of the reasons how God has been faithful to them. This is a good exercise, as there are times when the slightest few things can go wrong and suddenly, we find ourselves being upset with God and His lack of care for us.

“And so cast out Y^ehowah all the peoples and the Amorite inhabiting the land before our faces; furthermore, we will serve Y^ehowah and He [is] our God.”

Joshua
24:18

“Furthermore, before our very eyes, Jehovah cast out all of the peoples, including the Amorites, who lived in this land; therefore, we will serve Jehovah and He will be our God.”

The first verb is the Piel imperfect of *gâra* (גָּרַשׁ) [pronounced *gaw-RASH*] and it means *to cast out, to throw out, to drive out, to expel*. This verb is primarily found in the Piel during the first seven books of the Bible and the meanings given are primarily Piel meanings (BDB and Gesenius do not really distinguish between the Qal and the Piel). It's occurrences in the Qal primarily refer to *divorce* (e.g., Lev. 21:7 Num. 30:9). Strong's #1644 BDB #176. Allow me to quote from Ex. 23:31: **“And I will fix your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River Euphrates; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out before you.”** And Deut. 33:27: **The eternal God is our refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms. Furthermore, He drove out the enemy from before you and He said, “Destroy!”** Some people are quite confused in their relationship to God and who does what. God made it clear that He would drive the people from the land. He also made it clear that Israel had to drive the people from the land. Israel had to act in concert with our Lord in faith. Thieme's illustration: when you need a job, you don't sit on a park bench praying waiting for one to fall into your lap.

Also in this verse we have the Qal active participle of a word we have looked at twice already in this chapter: *yâsha*^{bv} (יָשָׁב) [pronounced *yaw-SHAH^{bv}*] and it means *to remain, sit, dwell*. In the Qal participle, it should be rendered *inhabiting, dwelling in*. Strong's #3427 BDB #442.

There is an adverb found in this verse after the word *faces*; it is the word *gam* (גַּם) [pronounced *gahm*] which means *also, in addition to, moreover, furthermore*. Strong's #1571 BDB #168. They say with the psalmist: **O Jehovah, certainly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid. You have loosened my bonds** (Psalm 116:16).

Now and again, we need to stop and try to determine exactly what is happening. My guess is that this is not a refrain, as some churches do (i.e., the pastor reads something and the congregation reads something back to him); but that Joshua said what he had to say and various leaders would voice their opinion. The previous few verses is a culmination of the various statements made by several people standing before Joshua.

And so Joshua said unto the people, “You will not have the ability to serve Y^ehowah for a God holy He [is], a God jealous He [is]. He will not bear for your insubordination or for your sins.

Joshua
24:19

Then Joshua said to the people, “You will lack the ability to serve Jehovah, for He is a Holy God and He is a jealous God; He will not tolerate your insubordination or your sins.

The first verb that Joshua used is the Qal imperfect of *yâkôl* (יָכֹל) [pronounced *yaw-COAL*], which means *to be able, to have the ability, to have the power to*. Strong's #3201 BDB #407. This is followed by *to serve*. Then an explanation is given, which is rather verbose for Joshua. He uses the explanatory conjunction and uses the plural designation for God that we know as Elohim. This verse looks forward and backward. It looks back to v. 14—you cannot serve Jehovah unless you put away your idols—and it looks forward to v. 20—you serve Jehovah and serve foreign gods. This is called an ellipsis, where key words are left out of this verse, because they are understood in context.

Our Lord said something similar to this in His sermon on the mount: **“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”** (Matt. 6:24). Then he describes God with the masculine plural of the adjective *qâdôwsh* (קָדוֹשׁ) [pronounced *kaw-DOWSH*], which means *sacred, holy, set apart*. Strong's #6918 BDB #872. When this verse is put together with the next verse, we will have that they cannot serve God and at the same time turn away from Him and serve other gods. Many times, God has said, **“You will be holy because I am holy.”** (Lev. 11:45b; also Lev. 19:2b, 20:7b, 26a).

Then we have the 3rd person masculine singular pronoun. Throughout the Old Testament, we have the plural noun Elohim referring to God, but it will take a singular verb. Here, Elohim is placed side-by-side with the singular pronoun *he*, which is usually thrown in for great emphasis. This is followed by the singular noun for *God*, and the masculine singular adjective *qannôw'* (קַנְיָן) [pronounced *kan-NOH*], which means *jealous*, and is only used twice in Scripture (Nahum 1:2 is the other instance), although it is quite similar to a more common adjective, the difference only being the vowel points and one letter. Strong's #7072 BDB #888. This is followed by the personal pronoun again. That God is jealous is an anthropomorphism, which is ascribing human emotions or actions to God. This was emphasized in the Ten Commandments: **“You will have no other gods before Me. You will not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You will not worship them nor serve them, for I, Jehovah your God, am a jealous God, punishing the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me.”** (Ex. 20:3–5; see also Ex. 34:14).

The last sentence is difficult to give a completely word-for-word rendering. We have the negative particle and then the Qal imperfect of *nâsâ'* (נָסָא) [pronounced *naw-SAW*], which means *to lift, to take, to bear, to carry*. It is followed by the lamed preposition (*to, for*), which is the part difficult to translate. BDB indicates that *nâsâ'* generally means *to take, to take away* when followed by a lamed. Strong's #5375 (and Strong's #4984) BDB #669. What God will not bear is the masculine singular noun *pesha'* (פְּשָׁע) [pronounced *PEH-shah* or *PEH-shahg*] and it is pretty uniformly rendered *transgression* throughout the KJV, with a few exceptions of *trespass* and

rebellion. More modern renderings might be *insubordination, disobedience, violation, rebellion, infraction*. Strong's #6588 BDB #833. This is followed by the wâw conjunction, lâmed again, and the masculine feminine plural of *chattâ`th* (חַטָּאת) [pronounced *khat-TAWTH*] and this is the word for *sin* or *sin-offering*. Strong's #2403 BDB #308. This gives us: **He will not bear for your insubordination or for your sins. Or: He will not take away your insubordination or your sins.** Ex. 23:20–21: “Listen, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Be on your guard before Him and obey His voice. Do not be rebellious toward Him, for He will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in Him.” God will not leave the guilty unpunished (Ex. 34:14).

Obviously, this thought is not completed, as one thing that God does on our behalf is He forgives us. It is the next verse which completes this thought.

“When you [all] forsake Y^ehowah and you [all] will serve gods foreign and He will turn and He will cause harm to you [all] and He will finish you [all] [off] after which He had done good to you [all].”

Joshua
24:20

“For when you forsake Jehovah and serve foreign gods, He will then turn from you and cause you harm and He will consume you—and this after all of the good that He has done on your behalf.”

Joshua, although not one with an ability to express himself well, throws six verbs at us in this one verse, which is really a continuation of the thinking of the previous verse, and the proliferation of verbs here indicates great emphasis upon what he is saying. To help with this, let's view a couple of other translations:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	When ye forsake Yahweh, and serve the gods of a stranger then will he turn, and inflict on you calamity, and consume you, after that he hath dealt well with you.
NASB	“If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you.”
NIV	“If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.”
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	‘When ye forsake Jehovah, and have served Gods of a stranger, then He hath turned back and done evil to you, and consumed you, after that He hath done good to you.’

At first, I placed vv. 19 and 20 together as one sentence; how, no other translation did this, and this verse does work on its own, although it carries with it the reasoning of the previous verse. We begin with the conjunction *kîy* (כִּי) [pronounced *kee*], which means *when, that, for, because*. Strong's #3588 BDB #471. I mention this, as several very good translations begin with *if*. What Joshua warns the people that they will do is the Qal imperfect of *‘âza^bv* (אָזַב) [pronounced *aw-ZA^BV*], which means *to leave, to forsake*. Strong's #5800 BDB #736. I Chron. 28:9 reads: “As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a complete heart and with a willing ind, for Jehovah searches all hearts and He understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever.”

One of the things that God will do to Israel is the Hiphil perfect of *râ`a`* (רָעָה) [pronounced *raw-GAHG*], which means *to be evil, to be bad, displeasing, injurious*. In the Hiphil, this means *to cause to do ill to anyone, to bring calamities upon someone, to do injury, to do hurt, to cause harm*. Strong's #7489 BDB #949. The next thing God will do is the Piel perfect of *kâlâh* (כָּלָה) [pronounced *kaw-LAWH*], which means *to complete, to bring an end to, to finish* (Piel meanings). Strong's #3615 BDB #477. Ezra 8:22b: “The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him.” Isa. 63:10: But they rebelled and they grieved His Holy Spirit. Therefore, He turned Himself to become their enemy and He fought against them. Isa. 65:11–15: “But you who forsake Jehovah, who forget My holy mountain and who set a table for fortune and who fill cups with mixed wine for Destiny [the goddess of fortune]; I will destine you for the sword and all of you will bow down to the slaughter, because I called, but you did not answer. I spoke and you did not hear. And you did evil in My sight, and chose that in which I did not delight.” Therefore, says Jehovah God, “Listen, My servants will eat, but you will go hungry. Listen, My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty. Listen, My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. Listen, My servants will shout joyfully with a glad heart, but

you will cry out with a heavy heart and you will wail with a broken spirit. And you will leave your name for a curse to My chosen ones, and Jehovah God will slay you, and My servants will be called by another name.”

The tragic irony is that prior to such action by God, He has done marvelous things for the Israelites. The final verb is the Hiphil perfect of *yâṭa*^{bv} (יָטָא) [pronounced *yaw-TA^BV*], which means *to be good, well, to be pleasing, to do good, to deal well, to make glad, to make a thing good*. Strong's #3190 BDB #405. In the long run, the Israelites would turn away from God many times. Ezek; 20:39: “As for you, O house of Israel,” thus speaks Jehovah God, “Go and serve each one of you his idols; but later you will surely listen to Me and My holy name you will profane no longer with your gifts and with your idols.”

One of the things which I take for granted when I teach something like this is the fact that idolatry is more than the worship of some religious idol made with hands. *The Amplified Bible* footnotes this verse with: *Anything which we keep in our hearts in the place which God ought to have is an idol, whether it be an image of wood or stone or gold, or whether it be money, or desire for fame, or love of pleasure, or some secret sin which we will not give up. If God does not really occupy the highest place in our hearts, controlling all, something else does, and that something else in as idol.*¹⁵

When you turn away from God; when you turn against your Savior Who bore your sins, don't think you might just get a spanking now and again. God discipline here on earth can be fearsome at times. When Israel turned her back on God, God allowed throughout history a number of great evils to be perpetrated against the Jews: the Spanish Inquisition, the Holocaust, and anti-Semitism in general. As an unbeliever, I never thought much about anti-Semitism, other than I didn't understand it. I could understand racism, because racism is directed at a fairly well-defined group of people who are different from the person who is racist. However, although there are exceptions, Jewish people often blend right in. I am certain that some have done so intentionally because of anti-Semitism. Satan inspires anti-Semitism because the Jews are God's people and God has never retracted that. However, when they as a people, moved away from Him, their life in many cases has been beyond our conception of misery. “Moreover,” Jehovah said, “Because the daughters of Zion are proud and walk with heads held high and seductive eyes, and go along with sexy walk, with the tinkling of bangles on their feet. Therefore, Jehovah will afflict the scalp of the daughters of Zion with scabs, and Jehovah will make their foreheads bare. In that day, Jehovah will take away the beauty of their anklets, headbands, crescent ornaments, dangling earrings, bracelets, veils, headdresses, ankle chains, sashes, perfume boxes, amulets, finger rings, nose rings, festive robes, outer coats, cloaks, money purses, hand mirrors, undergarments, turbans, and veils. Now it will come to pass that instead of sweet perfume, there will be putrefaction; instead of a belt, a rope; instead of carefully coiffed hair, a plucked-out scalp; instead of fine clothes, a wearing of sackcloth; and a branding instead of beauty. Your men will fall by the sword and your mighty ones in battle. And her gates will lament and mourn; and, deserted, she will sit upon the ground.” (Isa. 3:16–26). **For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them** (II Peter 2:21).

Now, Christians are confused on several points. One is that God never takes back salvation. Once we have eternal life, then God never removed that eternal life. It was given to us free, apart from any merit on our part, and it was based upon what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, so it is foolish to speak of God removing something from us which was not any of our work or our doing in the first place. However, regardless of what great Christian lives we have led, there are times and circumstances where, at least on this earth, God will crush us and cause us great personal misery. This is what Joshua is speaking of. The Jews will always have a place in God's plan. However, they are sitting on the shelf right now, as they have been for roughly 2000 years, until God calls them back into action. It does not matter what great things you did for God yesterday. If you fall out of fellowship and turn from Him, God can and will make your life miserable. He might choose to do that in specific areas. You might be the perfect believer, except that you gossip and malign other people; you might find your personal and professional life devastated by the gossip of others. You might be just the perfect believer, except that you refuse to keep the marriage bed undefiled—God may personally see to it that you will never be happy or fulfilled in sex, love or in marriage—He may see to it that these things bring you great pain and misery. Sometimes we have to bear pain in order to be put on the right track. This is what Joshua warns the Israelites

¹⁵ *The Amplified Bible*, The Lockman Foundation; ©1965 by Zondervan Publishing House; p. 287. They quoted from J.R. Miller from *Devotional Hours with the Bible*.

right here. If they turn from God, He will cause them great harm and great calamity, despite all the good that He has done on their behalf.

And so said all the people unto Joshua, “No, for Y^ehowah we will serve.”

Joshua
24:21

And then the people responded to Joshua with, “You are wrong, for we will continue to serve Jehovah.”

Those before Joshua cannot imagine doing anything but serving Jehovah. Joshua spent forty years in the desert cooling his heels because the majority of Israel chose against God after seeing spectacular signs and wonders. Joshua, therefore, has the more realistic take on this.

This is one of the things which I personally fear. I made some serious mistakes during the first 20 or so years of my Christian life. I feel as though I am on track, but I realize that the greatest of believers have fallen, or have gone backwards. Men with great ministries have fallen by the wayside to become a shadow of what they once were. As a believer this concerns me, if for no other reason than avoidance of pain and discipline (which I have definitely been on the receiving end of). **So my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, continue to accomplish your own deliverance with fear and trembling** (Philip. 2:12). You cannot take your life for granted or what God has done on your behalf for granted. We do not *keep* ourselves saved, but we do have a life to lead, which is related directly to having been saved in the first place.

And so said Joshua unto the people, “Witnesses you [all] against yourselves that you [all] have chosen for yourselves Y^ehowah, to serve Him.” And then they said, “Witnesses.”

Joshua
24:22

Then Joshua said to the people, “You all stand as witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen Jehovah and you have chosen to serve Him.” And they said, “We stand as witnesses to that.”

You miss this in the English, but there is very little reason in the Hebrew to include personal pronouns apart from emphasis. Joshua uses the 2nd person plural pronoun in this verse twice and tacks on the 2nd person plural suffix to a preposition and to a verb. Joshua emphasizes that this is up to them as to what their future will be. This group answers in the affirmative—that they stand as witnesses to their own testimony. When a treaty is affirmed or a covenant made, then there must be witnesses to that event. That is what we have here. **Let Your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen Your precepts; I have chosen the faithful way and I have placed Your ordinances before me** (Psalm 119:173, 30). By saying, “**You are witnesses against yourselves**”, Joshua is telling these people that they will hereby condemn themselves with their own testimony if they turn and serve other gods.¹⁶

“And now remove gods the foreign which [are] in your midst and incline your heart unto Y^ehowah, God of Israel.”

Joshua
24:23

“Therefore, remove the foreign gods which are among you and turn your heart toward Jehovah, the God of Israel.”

After the wâw conjunction, there is the adverb ʿattâh (הַתָּה) [pronounced *gah-t-TAWH*], which is an adverb of time meaning *now*. When this adverb is used with the imperative, it implies that the time has come for this exhortation or advice to be followed. Strong’s #6258 BDB #773. The verb which follows is the 2nd person masculine plural, Hiphil imperative of ʿûwr (וּר) [pronounced *soor*] generally means *to turn aside*, however, in the Hiphil, it means *to cause to depart, to remove, to take away*. Strong’s #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693.

The second imperative verb is the Hiphil imperative of nâṭâh (נָטָה) [pronounced *naw-TAWH*], which means *to stretch out, to spread out, to extend*. In the Hiphil, it means *to extend, to stretch out, to expand, to incline, to turn,*

¹⁶ Paraphrased thought from Keil & Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 169.

to turn away, to turn (to one side). Strong's #5186 BDB #639. Since Owen, Rotherham and Young all go with *incline*, who am I to disagree? II Cor. 7:16–18: **Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God, just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate."** says the Lord, "And do not touch what is unclean. And I will embrace you and I will be a father to you and you will be sons and daughters to Me." says the Lord Almighty (Ex. 29:45 Isa. 52:11 Isa. 43:6 Hosea 1:10).

There is a strong implication in this verse that some idolatry was occurring. We have evidence, surprisingly as late as the book of Amos, that there was idolatry during the forty years in the wilderness, even apart from the golden calf incident. "Did you present Me with sacrifices and gain offerings in the wilderness for forty years, O house of Israel? You also carried along Sikkuth [possibly, Saturn] your king and Kiyyun, your images, your star gods, which you made for yourselves." (Amos 5:25–26).

And so said the people unto Joshua, "Y^ehowah our God we will continue serving and at His voice we will continue listening [and obeying]."

Joshua
24:24

Then the people said to Joshua, "We will continue to serve Jehovah our God, and we will continue to listen to His voice."

Both of these verbs were in the imperfect tense, so I translated them as continuous action. The people protest Joshua's words, claiming faithfulness toward God. Prior to *voice*, we have the *bêyth* preposition, which generally means *in, into, at, by, or with*. Generally the key to *bêyth* is proximity and Young renders this *to* and Rotherham renders is *unto*. Throughout Scripture, there are many times when the people affirmed their allegiance to God: **And all the people answered together and said, "All that Jehovah has spoken, we will do!"** (Ex. 19:8a). **Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of Jehovah and all the ordinances and all the people answered with one voice, and they said, "All the words which Jehovah has spoken, we will do."** Then Moses took the book of the covenant and he read it in the hearing of the people, and they said, "all that Jehovah has spoken, we will do, and we will be obedient!" (Ex. 24:3, 7).

And so Joshua cut a covenant with reference to the people to the day the that and so he made for them statutes and ordinances at Shechem.

Joshua
24:25

"So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and wrote for them statutes and ordinances at Shechem.

When I first typed out this verse, I put *And so Joshua cut a covenant*, as that is the phrase usually found in Scripture. However, Owen and Young both used forms of *make* and Rotherham used the word *solemised*. Apparently, my instincts were correct. The first verb is the Qal imperfect of *kârath* (כָּרַת) [pronounced *kaw-RAHTH*], which means *to cut off, to cut down*. The same word is used *to make* a covenant (Gen. 15:18 21:27 Ex.24:8 Deut. 4:23 9:9) and it is only found in that sense in the Qal stem. Strong's #3772 BDB #503. Although Young and Rotherham render the next preposition *with*, it is actually *lâmed*, which should be rendered *for* or *with reference to*.

The next verb is the Qal imperfect of *sîym* (סִיַּם) [pronounced *seem*] which means *to put, to place, to set, to lay*. However, we have a problem here. We don't have something which can be *placed* or *laid*, and the verb is followed by the *lâmed* preposition. So it makes little sense to translate this *he placed [or, laid] for them statutes...* An additional meaning of this word is *to make, to render*, particularly when followed by *lâmed* (used for a genitive) or *kaph* (used for an accusative). It can be rendered *to make [for] or to prepare [for]* when followed by dative (often indicated by the *lâmed* preposition). Strong's #7760 BDB #962.

Now, Joshua is not writing new laws and statutes for them, but he will copy the Law and that will stand as their covenant. My thinking is the occasion of this spirited interchange is the completion of the book of Joshua (apart from the ends of Joshua 22 and 24 and all of Joshua 23. Joshua called the people together because he had recorded all of this information, and it was time to post it. He also recorded their agreement to what he said, recording both what he said and how they responded. Moses had done the same before him: **These are the words**

of the covenant which Jehovah commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb (Deut. 29:1). Barnes explains it: *[Joshua] solemnly ratified and renewed the Covenant of Sinai, as Moses had done before him...as no new or different Covenant was made, no sacrifices were necessary.*¹⁷

And so wrote Joshua the words the these in a book of a law of God. And so he took a stone great and so he set it up there under the oak which [is] in a sanctuary of Y^ehowah. Joshua 24:26

Then Joshua wrote these words in the book of the Law of God. Afterward, he took a large stone and set it under the oak, which is a sacred place of Jehovah.

Because this all is written in the last chapter of the book of Joshua, I am thinking that Joshua is not necessarily the author of the narrative but that Phinehas recorded this incident, added the filler narrative, and then attached this to the end of the book of Joshua as a fitting end to Joshua's life. It is more of a eulogy than anything else. The reason that I mention this is, when we no longer deal with what Joshua or the people say, the language becomes more complex. We would expect this genetic predisposition by Phinehas, who is related to Moses as his nephew. To catch some nuances in this verse, we should look at what other translators did:

The Emphasized Bible And Joshua wrote these words in the scroll of the law of God,—and took a great stone, and set it up there, under the oak that was by the sanctuary [or, in the holy place] of Yahweh.

REB ...and recorded its terms in the book of the law of God. He took a great stone and set it up there under the terebinth in the sanctuary of the LORD.

Young's Lit. Translation And Joshua writeth these words in the Book of the Law of God, and taketh a great stone, and raiseth it up there under the oak which *is* in the sanctuary of Jehovah.

We don't have books during the time of Joshua as we think of books. We have a collection of scrolls and Joshua recorded on this collection of scrolls what he said to these people. It appears as though they either had (or Joshua had) a copy of the scroll of the Law and that this was appended to it. And there is no oral tradition which was finally written down hundreds of years later. We find that throughout the Law, that things were written down (Ex. 24:7 Deut. 17:18 28:61 31:9, 24). Besides what were written on scrolls, we have the writing of the Law on stone (Deut. 27:3 Joshua 24:26).

Our next problem is the masculine singular construct of *mîq^eddâsh* (מִקְדָּשׁ) [pronounced *mik-DAWSH*], which means *sanctuary, sacred place*. Immediately, I would think of the tabernacle of God. In fact, this word is used for both the temple and its precincts (I Chron. 22:19 Psalm 74:7 Isa. 63:18) and for the tabernacle and its precincts (Ex. 25:8 Lev. 16:33). Our concern is *has the tabernacle been moved from Shiloh to Shechem; who did that and then who moved it back?* That is, in this book of Joshua, it is clear that the tabernacle is in Shiloh (Joshua 18:1) and that the tabernacle is still there in the near future from the time of Joshua (Judges 21:19 I Sam. 1:3). The key to understanding this word is that it is used *primarily* to refer to the temple or to the tabernacle, but not exclusively. This word can also mean (or, imply) *asylum* (Isa. 8:14 Ezek. 11:16), as *temples amongst the Hebrews, as amongst the Greeks, had the right of asylum... (compare 1 Ki. 1:50; 2:28)*.¹⁸ Personally, I would feel better if I could find an early use of this word which did not refer directly to the temple or to the tabernacle, which we find in Num. 18:29, where we refer to a thing which is holy or set apart. Strong's #4720 BDB #874. Shechem was an asylum city and a city of the Levites; and therefore, would have been a sacred place. This further explains the oak which is found in the sanctuary of Jehovah. We don't recall such an oak being inside the tabernacle; however, it would make sense that in the midst of Shechem for there to be a large, imposing oak under which a stone could be placed to mark this time when Joshua spoke to these heads of state. This same oak will be mentioned in Judges 9:6. There is a possibility that this is the oak named in Gen. 35:4. Barnes points out that this is the same spot where Abraham and Jacob had sacrificed and worshipped, and it is even possible that their altar still stood at that time.¹⁹ Finally, the history of Shechem, being where God first promised Abraham

¹⁷ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 409.

¹⁸ H.W.F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*; ©1979 by Baker Books; p. 503.

¹⁹ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 409.

that He would give to his children the land, and being the place where Jacob removed the idols from his families life. This is between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, from which the cursings and the blessings were read. This is the place where the stones where the Word of God was on display for the public. It is this history which makes Shechem a sacred place. Now, on the other hand, there is no requirement that this placement be in Shechem. Joshua gathers the people at Shechem (v. 1) and in this chapter, the bones of Joseph are buried in Shechem (v. 32). However, that does not mean that these words which Joshua recorded were written down and stored at Shechem. In fact, there is actually nothing in this verse about this scroll being stored anywhere in particular. There is nothing which prevents the scroll from being transported to Shiloh for storage, nor is there anything here which indicates that copies were not made and stored in more than one location. What we do have is that Joshua initially wrote these things down and that a stone was set up under the oak near the sanctuary of God, probably to indicate God's presence in Israel.

The Seven Memorials to God

This stone will be the seventh memorial which was set up in the land, seven being the number of completion. The sixth memorial was the altar set up by the 2½ tribes who lived on the other side of the Jordan, which symbolized their loyalty to Israel as a nation (Joshua 22:27). When the five Amorite kings were captured, there were stones placed by the mouth of the cave, which stood for a long time as a memorial to the capture of southern Canaan (Joshua 10:27). The fourth memorial was the writing of the Law on stones between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (Joshua 8:32). The third memorial was the large pile of stones raised over Ai (Joshua 8:29). The second memorial was a pile of stones put over Achan, who had stolen from that which belonged to God (Joshua 7:26). The first memorial was actually a double memorial placed in the Jordan River and on the banks of the Jordan River, to signify the crossing of Israel into the Land of Promise (Joshua 4:1–9, 20). It is these memorials which are the true oral tradition. Believers for years could ask their parents what these memorials stood for, and their fathers would explain to them the history behind each memorial (see Joshua 22:27–29).

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Quite obviously, it was the stone which was set out before God by the oak as a memorial.

And so said Joshua unto all the people, “Behold the stone that this is against us for a witness for she [i.e., the stone] has heard all words of Y^howah which He spoke to us and she is against you [all] for a witness lest you lie against your God.”

Joshua
24:27

So Joshua said to all of the people, “Observe this stone stands against us as a witness, as it has heard all of the words that Jehovah spoke to us, and this stone is a witness so that you do not deny your God.”

Throughout the book of Joshua, uncut, un-sculpted stones have been used for monuments and as witnesses. This stone would be there long after that generation died out. It was there when Joshua and these people spoke these words and affirmed their allegiance to God. This stone would be there for the next generation and the next. For several generations, people would pass on what occurred right here where this stone is and in that way, the oath taken by these men would live on. We have their same oaths preserved for us in God's Word, which was not available to the general population for almost a millennium.

The final verb is the Piel imperfect of *kâchash* (כַּחַשׁ) [pronounced *kaw-KHAHSH*], which means *to lie, to deceive, to commit fraud, to defraud*. In the Piel, this means *to deny, to disavow*. Strong's #3584 BDB #471. These men vowed their allegiance and their faithfulness to God; Joshua held them to this, calling the stone a witness of these vows.

And so sent away Joshua the people a man to his inheritance. Joshua 24:28 **Finally, Joshua dismissed the people—each man to his own inheritance.**

The verb is the Piel imperfect of *shâlach* (שָׁלַח) [pronounced *shaw-LAHKH*], which means *to send, to send forth, to send away, to dismiss, to deploy*. Strong's #7971 BDB #1018. Because of this verse, this portion of the Joshua 24 sounds so much like it occurred immediately after the distribution of the land. It is as though vv. 1–27 occurred immediately after the distribution of property; then Joshua called in the 2½ tribes who would be moving to the other side of the Jordan and spoke to them in Joshua 22:1–8. Then he dismisses all the people to their inheritance (Joshua 22:9 and 24:28). I know that it seems moderately complex, but it isn't. The only problem with this interpretation is not its supposed complexity, but the location. Joshua 22:1–9 takes place in Shiloh (v. 9) and Joshua 24:1–28 takes place in Shechem (v. 1). Now, although this could have occurred in the order which I have given, but after dismissing the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, Joshua then reconvened the rest of Israel in nearby Shechem. Logistically, this makes some sense, which I will explain later, but I would hold to this as my second choice of the order of events.²⁰

What I believed happened is that, after Joshua 22:9, Joshua went to his own land and finished writing his portion of God's Word. He had time to rest, relax, work his land, and write the Word of God. However, as he studied and wrote, he felt as though he had to speak to Israel once more, somewhat as Moses did near the end of his life. Joshua was not at the end of his life, but he had finished writing his portion of God's Word. He convened the people at Shechem because it was at the foot of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, where God's Word had been written on the rocks in that area. His speech to the people had been prepared and added to God's Word, the last few verses added before he left Shechem. These chapters would have been added to the stones and then the scrolls taken to Phinehas in Shiloh (or by Phinehas to Shiloh). The content of Joshua 23 would have taken place on Joshua's last day on this earth, the events being recorded carefully by Phinehas, who is careful in all things not to steal the thunder of Joshua in his writing. Vv. 29–33 form a fitting epilogue for the book of Joshua, just as Joshua had quietly appended the book of Deuteronomy.

Now, there will be some overlap between this book and the book of the Judges. We read in Judges 2:6–7: **When Joshua had dismissed the people, the sons of Israel went each to his inheritance to possess the land. Then the people serve Jehovah all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all of the great works of Jehovah, which He had done for Israel.**

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Joshua's Death and Burial; an Epilogue to the Book of Joshua

Some authors refer to this as the *three burials*, as we will see the burial of Joshua, Joseph and Eleazar.

And so he was after the words the these and so died Joshua ben Nun, a servant of Y^ehowah, a son of a hundred and ten years. Joshua 24:29 **And it came to pass after these things that Joshua ben Nun, the servant of God, died, being 110 years old.**

The absolute status quo verb *to be* has a masculine singular subject prefix, meaning that *these things* (or, *these words*) cannot be the subject. Joshua, the only other masculine singular subject in the vicinity is not the subject, as it just would not make sense.

Literally, we have *after these words*, referring back to what has been written. We would be most comfortable rendering this as *after these things*. My thinking here is that, it is obvious that Joshua's death occurs after he speaks these words and after the events of the previous chapters. It would be goofy for the order to be

²⁰ Furthermore, just because we have Joshua dismissing the people to their inheritance, doesn't mean this has to occur at the end of the distribution of the land. We have similar phrasings in Judges 2:6 21:24.

backwards. If Joshua's death occurred immediately afterwards, then the author would have used something which is a bit more immediate—perhaps even a simple *And then*. My thinking is that this means *and time passes*.

Although we are quite clear on the age of Caleb, Joshua's contemporary, throughout the book of Joshua, we are not clear on Joshua's age. If he was the same age as Caleb (my guess is that he was within 15 years of Caleb's age), then he would have been about 86 once all of the land was distributed and he would have lived in semi-retirement for another 24 years enjoying his inheritance. I personally don't see him as Caleb's age, but perhaps a tad bit older, maybe 90 or 95 at this time, giving him another 15–20 years of retirement. One of the reasons I see Joshua as being older than Caleb is the difference in their personal vigor. Moses, at 80, is hauling Israel out of Egypt and kicking butt at the incident of the golden calf. Caleb testifies to his own personal strength at age 85 in Joshua 14:10–11. Joshua is described as old and advanced in years in Joshua 23:1, which is what we would expect for his last day on earth. We also find a similar statement in Joshua 13:1, which either means that this is recorded out of order time-wise, or that Joshua was older and weaker than Caleb at the conclusion of the conquering of Canaan.

McGee seems to have put less thought into the age of Joshua, breaking his life up somewhat like Moses. He was 40 when he left Egypt, 80 when he stood with Moses on the east shore of the Jordan River (making him about 87 when Canaan had been conquered) and 110 at his death.²¹ This gave Joshua a little over 20 years of semi-retirement.

During this period of retirement, a portion of the book of Judges took place, as well as the second portion of Joshua 22. We also read in Judges 2:8: **Then Joshua ben Nun, a servant of Jehovah, died at the age of 110, and they buried him in the territory of his inheritance of Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.**

I have spoken of Joshua being in semi-retirement over the past decade or two, but that is somewhat misleading. Once the land was taken, Joshua was, for all intents and purposes, out of a job. He took forced retirement. He did not assume a position of political power because that was not called for. Furthermore, we do not find here is the handing off of Joshua's position to another man. God had not designated anyone to take Joshua's place, because the land had been conquered. The leadership of Joshua and Moses was different than the leadership which Israel would require over the next several hundred years. Each individual tribe was to clear out their particular region of hostile occupants, and that would require several individuals, none of whom had the same authority as Joshua or Moses. All of Israel needed to be led through the desert to the Land of Promise and all of Israel needed a strong general to lead them as a whole into battle to take this land. Therefore, Israel required leaders like Moses and Joshua. However, Israel's national leader now was Phinehas, who was their spiritual leader. They would have individuals who would lead them, and that is the book of the Judges. But there is no hand-off and, more importantly, no silly, meaningless election like the Apostles held in the first chapter of Acts.

And so they buried him in a border of his inheritance, Timnath-serah, which [is] in a hill country of Ephraim from north to mountains of Gaash.

Joshua
24:30

Finally, they buried him at the border of his inheritance, Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, northward from the mountains of Gaash.

The first verb is the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of qâbar (קָבַר) [pronounced *kaw-BAHR*], which means *to bury*. Its noun cognate means *gravel, sepulcher*. Strong's #6912 BDB #868. The fact that men in the Old Testament were buried signified two things: (1) man came from the ground and they were returned to the ground; and, (2) man would be raised up in the resurrection where he was buried. The Jews were a very demonstrative people and Christianity, then, was a very demonstrative religion. They did not have easy access to the Word of God as we do. Therefore, many of the things which they did were charged with meaning. This does not mean that burial is required nor is there any indication that if we are not buried that we will somehow get a second-rate resurrection body. **You fool! [I am quoting Scripture] That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat**

²¹ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 7.

or of something else. But god gives it a body, just as He wished, and to each of the seeds, a body of its own...it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body (I Cor. 15:36–38, 44).

When describing where Joshua was buried, we have the preposition *mîn* (*from, out of*) and the feminine singular noun *tsâphôwn* (צפון) [pronounced *tsaw-FOHN*], which mean *north*. When preceded by *mîn* and followed by a *lâmed*, it means *northward* of any place. Strong's #6828 BDB #860.

ZBEP places Gaash as being about 20 miles southwest of Shechem, a name identified both with a mountain where Joshua was buried and with a wadi from whence came one of David's soldiers, Hiddai (or, Hurai) (II Sam. 23:30 I Chron. 11:32). Joshua's inheritance is also mentioned in Joshua 19:50 and Judges 2:9.

The Septuagint adds to this verse: *And they placed with him, in the grave that they buried, the knives of flints with which he circumcised the sons of Israel in Gilgal, when he brought them forth out of Egypt, as the Lord commanded them; and [they remain there] until this day.*

And so served Israel Y^ehowah all of [the] days of Joshua and all of [the] days of the elders who prolonged days beyond Joshua and who knew all of [the] work of Y^ehowah which He did for Israel.

Joshua
24:31

And Israel served Jehovah all of the days of Joshua's life and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and who knew about all the work which Y^ehowah had done on behalf of Israel.

When speaking of the elders, we have the Hiphil perfect of *ʾârak*^e (אַרַךְ) [pronounced *aw-RAHK*], which means *to be long*. In the Hiphil, it means *to postpone anger, to live long, to prolong, to be patient, to continue long, to tarry long*. Strong's #748 BDB #73. You have to keep in mind that the men who were the elders during the time of Joshua were from the generation after him and were at least twenty years younger. Moses, Joshua, Caleb and Eleazar were the only ones who were of the older generation (actually generations) who survived the desert wanderings. All the contemporaries of Joshua and Caleb had been wiped out in Kadesh barnea and beyond until the oldest person to cross over the Jordan, besides Eleazar, Caleb and Joshua, was around 60 years old.

Now, what is marvelous, is that Israel remained faithful to God for the time during which Joshua and the elders herein mentioned were alive. Zodhiates points out that Moses trained his successor, Joshua, but that we have no mention of Joshua training a successor to himself, blaming Joshua and the elders of Israel in the regard.²² Actually, the successor to Joshua was Phinehas, and it was Phinehas who either dropped the ball, or had sons who did not follow God fully. You have to understand that even children have volition and that there are some children that, no matter what you do, will not listen to you. Personally, I am not so quick as to blame Joshua or Phinehas. For instance, Joshua, although a leader of men (he was chosen to spy out the land with eleven other representatives of Israel), he and Caleb, by their report, separated themselves from the other spies in their trust in God. After that incident, it was not a difficult choice for Moses as to who would succeed him. Furthermore, God directed Moses to choose Joshua as his successor (Num. 27:18). My point is that Moses had someone great to succeed him and Joshua had someone near great (who knows? possibly great) to succeed him. We don't have this, however, for Phinehas. It is not that Phinehas was unwilling to train a successor—there was no one in all the entire population of Israel to train. The point that Zodiates makes, and it is well-taken, is: *God's people are always just one generation away from apostasy. Therefore, young people must be trained to walk in the feat of the Lord today so that they become the proper, godly leaders of tomorrow.*²³ If there was a successor to Phinehas (or, one to Joshua), then God would have directed Joshua to formally introduce this successor and to recognize him as such before the people. It is strictly human viewpoint that Joshua failed in this regard (or, that Phinehas failed). In fact, what we have is another bit of success in the story of Joshua. He did not assume a position of national leadership, although he could; and he did not pass such a leadership position to someone who would favor him and his family, although he could have done so. Joshua was a man of grace and he took upon himself the orders which God gave him and did not misinterpret these orders, nor did he embellish upon them. It is our human viewpoint, as we read in commentary after commentary, which fault Joshua for not *doing something* after

²² *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 640.

²³ *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 640.

the distribution of the land. It is a testimony to his enduring greatness that he did nothing except go into political retirement in the midst of Joshua 22.

What we often fail to grasp (and I am including Zodhiates in this), is that God did not require Israel to have a national leader at this time. It is possible there were a hundred good candidates for the position and possibly there were none. That is not the issue. The issue is that Israel was a nation under God and therefore her ruler was Jehovah God. When the time comes for Israel to choose a king, we will see that a national ruler is not all that much improvement over no national ruler. Although we have had one man, Moses, who stood in the gap between Israel's life and Israel's destruction, the greatness of Israel would be dependent upon that generation. Our nation is the same way. We have had some sorry leadership over the years. In most every election, we choose the lesser of two evils (generally incorrectly) but none of these men ever stood in the gap preserving us. Our nation, just like any other, is but one generation away from destruction. It is our spiritual growth as a nation, and not any particular leader, which will be our deliverance.

On the negative side, it appears as though Israel had to be reminded continually of the great things which God had done and to be witness of same. "And know this day that I am not speaking with your sons who have not known and who have not seen the discipline of Jehovah, your God—His greatness, His mighty hand, and His outstretched arm." (Deut. 11:2). And the people served Jehovah all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of Jehovah which He had done for Israel (Judges 2:7). We will see that in the history of Israel, they generally responded well to signs and wonders, but that had no staying power. **For indeed, Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom** (I Cor. 1:22). Once a generation passes and there is no longer anyone living who recalls the great signs and wonders of God, the Jews will desert their God. Judges 2:10–11: **And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers, and there arose another generation after them who did not know Jehovah nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of Jehovah and they served other gods.** The value of great signs and wonders is fleeting. One of the quotes of the great ancient historian Will Durant reveals this: *The discoveries here summarized have restored considerable credit to those chapters of Genesis that record the early traditions of the Jews. In its outlines, and **barring supernatural incidents** [emphasis mine], the story of the Jews as unfolded in the Old Testament has stood the test of criticism and archeology; every year adds corroboration from documents, monuments, or excavations.*²⁴ My point here, in quoting a secular author, is that the history of God's people in God's Word has more credence to later generations than do the miracles. There are even many believers who illogically discount the historicity of miracles. In fact, you may even feel that I too discount these miracles because I believe that some things which occurred in the previous books of Scripture were the result of the great works of God, but were not, strictly speaking, miracles. Although I need to disabuse you of that notion, still, what holds up after the test of time is God's wisdom and not His miracles. Walk into any holy roller church which, ostensibly, sees miracles every single church service. These people are spiritual train wrecks. Not only have they not observed miracles, but their own deluded thinking that they have gives them no spiritual stability.

And bones of Joseph which brought up sons of Israel out from Egypt, they buried in Shechem in a portion of the field which purchased Jacob from sons of Hamor, father of Shechem with a hundred qesitah; and they are to sons of Joseph to an inheritance.

Joshua
24:32

And the bones of Joseph which the sons of Israel brought up out of Egypt were buried in Shechem in the portion of the field which Jacob purchased from the sons of Hamor (who was the father of Shechem) with 100 qesitah's; and these plots belonged to the sons of Joseph as their inheritance.

Where these bones were buried is called a *portion of* and then we have the masculine singular noun *sâdeh* (שדה) [pronounced *saw-DEH*], which means *field, land, open field, open country*. Strong's #7704 BDB #961. Joshua was one of the sons of Jacob, the greatest of his sons. His brothers were jealous of him and sold him into slavery. Joseph ended up in Egypt as an Egyptian slave and rose to power, becoming the second most powerful man in Egypt. He brought his family to Egypt. However, Joseph was always cognizant that God had given him and his family the Land of Promise and that someday, in the not too distant future, the Israelites would leave Egypt and

²⁴ *The Story of Civilization; Volume I Our Oriental Heritage; Will Durant; MJF Books; ©1963; p. 300.*

take the Land of Promise. He was also aware that God would resurrect him and since he had never lived in Canaan as an owner of land, he asked that his bones not be buried in Egypt, but taken to the Land of Promise and buried there. That wish is culminated in this verse (see Gen. 37, 39–50 Ex. 13:19 Heb. 11:22 Acts 7:6–16). Why Shechem? Shechem was pretty much right between Ephraim and West Manasseh, who were the sons of Joseph. Therefore, such a burial place was apropos.

The purchase price begins with the bêyth preposition, which can mean *in, among, into, against, with, at, through, by*. No Strong's # BDB #88. This is followed by the feminine singular noun *mê'âh* (מֵאָה) [pronounced *may-AW*], which means *one hundred*. Strong's #3967 BDB #547. This is followed by the feminine singular noun *q^esîyṭâh* (קֵסִיטָה) [pronounced *q^e-see-TAW*], which refers to some unknown measure of money, probably a measure by weight. It is found only in Gen. 33:19 Joshua 24:32 Job 42:11. These two nouns together are translated variously as *a hundred pieces of money* (NASB footnote—actually, *qesitah*, Owen and Rotherham), *a hundred kesitah* (NASB and Young) I should mention that those who translated the REB suggested that this word meant *sheep*. Since there already is a word for *sheep* in the Hebrew language which is used on a regular basis, the idea that this word means *sheep* is highly unlikely. Strong's #7192 BDB #903. This is recorded in Gen. 33:18–20: **Now Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, which he came from Paddan-aram, and camped before the city. And he bought the piece of land where he had pitched his tent from the hand of the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for 100 qesitah's. Then he erected there an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel (God, God of Israel).** This location is mentioned in John 4:5: **So He [Jesus] came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.**

The final verb is the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of *hâyâh* (הָיָה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*] simply means *to be*. Strong's #1961 BDB #224. Since *sons of Joseph* is preceded by the lamed preposition, we have to look for our subject elsewhere. I would have thought this referred back to *the bones of Joseph*, but they are in the feminine plural. My only reasonable guess here is the various burial plots.

Interestingly enough, there was a tomb in Shechem which had been revered as the tomb of Joseph. Apparently, several decades ago, that tomb was opened and it contained a mummified body, not unlike those mummified in Egypt, and found in the tomb was a sword customarily worn by Egyptian officials.²⁵

Joseph's bones, for a long time, were the only Bible that the Israelites had. He refused to be buried in the land of Egypt, as he wanted to rise up on the land given to him and his descendants by God. You may wonder why Joseph required that his bones be buried in the Land of Promise—some day, God will raise Joseph up, and he will be raised up on the land which God promised to his fathers and to his sons. In the day of his resurrection, Joseph wanted to be resurrected on the land given to him by God.

And Eleazar ben Aaron died and so they buried him in Gibeah [or, a hill] of Phinehas his son which was given to him in a hill country of Ephraim. Joshua 24:33

Also, Eleazar, Aaron's son, died and they buried him in a hill which belonged to Phinehas his son which was given to him in the hill country of Ephraim.

Eleazar took up a rather quiet place in the Bible. We know very little about him, despite the fact that he is mentioned over 70 times in the Bible. We covered his life back in Num. 20:28. Briefly, though, he was the third son of Aaron (the first two died because they took their post as priests lightly). He served under Joshua much the way Aaron served under Moses. Near the end of his life and the end of Joshua's military career, Eleazar's son, Phinehas, began to take over the spiritual reigns of the priesthood of Israel.

There are several Gibeah's in Scripture, since the name means *hill*. The most famous of these called Gibeah of Benjamin (I Sam. 13:15) and later referred to as Gibeah of Saul (I Sam. 11:4). However, this particular Gibeah is mentioned only here. Outside of this verse, we know nothing else of this site in the Bible. However, Josephus was aware of it (Josephus' *Antiquities* V. i. 29). We do not know where this city/location is located exactly,

²⁵ I, unfortunately, only have one source here: Josh McDowell, *A Ready Defense*; Here's Life Publishers; ©1990; p. 102; his source was John elder's *Prophets, Idols and Diggers*; New York; Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1960; p. 54.

although it is mostly likely near Shiloh.²⁶ Since the word for *Gibeah* and for *hill* are identical in the Hebrew, it is more likely that this is not a specific city, but a plot of ground which Phinehas owned, and probably specifically for the burial of the family of High Priests.

McGee brings up a question at this point, one which I had not considered: *The thing that interests me in this verse, however, is the fact that they buried Eleazar in the hill that pertained to Phinehas, his son, which was given him in Mount Ephraim. The question is, "Where did Phinehas get this land?" The priests were given no land and yet this man had acquired a nice little piece of real estate. Here is a beginning of departure from the living and true God, which will become obvious in the book of Judges.*²⁷ Keil and Delitzsch are a bit less judgmental in this regard, as they write: *the name Gibeah of Phinehas might be explained on the ground that this place had become the hereditary property of Phinehas, which would be perfectly reconcilable with its selection as one of the priests' cities. As the priests, for example, were not the sole possessors of the towns ceded to them in the possessions of the different tribes, the Israelites might have presented Phinehas with that portion of the city which was not occupied by the priests, and also with the field, as a reward for the services he had rendered to the congregation...just as Caleb and Joshua had be specially considered.*²⁸ Personally, I see this as falling further and further into the questionable area. The priests were specifically not given a plot of ground. Had one been given to Phinehas, it should have been deeded back to the original tribe. However, if this is simply a plot of ground given over to Phinehas for the purpose of burying his father or for burying the High Priests, then we have fewer ethical problems to struggle with. The ownership of this land is not unlike the altar built by the 2½ tribes—it is a close call and barely falls outside the boundaries given by God. In and of itself, not necessarily a cause for concern. However, these things along with others will escalate, which will be the story and theme of the next book of the Judges, where we will see Israel move further and further from God.

The book of Joshua is book-ended by death. This book began with the death of Moses and ends with the death of Joshua and Eleazar. It was the end of the leadership in Israel as well: *A said note appears at this point. Joshua willingly served in Moses' shadow. At Joshua's death, the nation stepped out of that shadow. No one came forward to serve in the shadow of Joshua, must less in the shadow of Moses.*²⁹ Now this statement sounds very pious and well-thought out, but it is crap. It's a misleading statement. Granted that it is possible that there was not a leader to lead all of Israel, but Israel did not require a leader to lead all of Israel. God would give Israel judges who would rule over her. They apparently had no problem recognizing the spiritual leadership or electing local leadership, as Joshua 22 indicates. In fact, a lot of the problem is in our heads. Israel was led by Moses for forty years, and then Joshua led Israel into the land and into battle, and now there really is no need for a national leader. God did not require one, and, when examining the national leaders Israel had during the monarchy and the divided kingdom, Israel was not better off with a national ruler. There are at least two commentators (Butler and Zodhiates) who blame Joshua, in part, for not training up a new leader to follow in his footsteps. This is human viewpoint, which the people did adopt later (I Sam. 8:5–6). The people had a leader—God; they just chose not to follow Him. They had instructions as to how their nation should be run and what they should do with regards to spiritual matters—that was the Law and the book of Joshua. They rebelled against their leader and they rebelled against His Word.

Just as Joshua's name is found in the last chapter of Deuteronomy, so is the name of Phinehas found in this last chapter of Joshua. There is occasionally folderol found in commentaries mentioning how Joshua and Moses could have written their own obituaries prophetically. I ask you, to what purpose? What in heaven's name would these few verses have to be written by Joshua? And why would the last few verses of Deuteronomy have to be written by Moses? Sometimes we become so anal in our defense of the authorship of these books by Moses and Joshua that we totally lose sight of the fact that an obituary or an addendum written by someone else does not in any way take from the divinely inspired authorship of these two great men. As we saw in our study of Genesis, there seemed to be this steady stream of different authors who, in general, were fairly easy to determine, and whose

²⁶ From *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 321 and *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 2, pp. 712–713.

²⁷ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; pp. 107–108.

²⁸ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, pp. 171–172.

²⁹ Trent Butler, *Understanding the Basic Themes of Joshua*, Word Publishing, ©1991, p. 27.

portions stood out from all the rest. We see the writings as written by the same person who spoke with sort of an old English accent, but the writings were quite different, just as the writing of Moses, Joshua and Phinehas were quite different. What I think helps us here, in terms of identifying the respective authors, is that the person who appends the previous book more than likely wrote the following book (or, at least began the following book).

Septuagint Addendum: Now, whereas the additional verses and portions of verses which we have found so far in the Septuagint did not offer much, the book of Joshua ends with a long addendum in the Greek. Whether the information here is inspired by God or whether it is the result of tradition, we do not know. It reads:

In the day, the sons of Israel took the ark of God and carried it about among them; and Phinees [that is, Phinehas] ministered as priest in the room of Eleazar his father till he died, and he was buried in Gabaar, his own. But the sons of Israel departed everyone to their place, and to their own city; and the sons of Israel worshiped Astarte, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of the nations round about them; and the Lord delivered them into the hands of Eglom king of Moab, and he ruled over them eighteen years.

In this verse are several things that we must deal with: (1) That Phinehas ruled over the Israelites is likely, and that he died and was buried is even more likely.³⁰ (2) It is possible that they carried the ark among them, but that strikes me as being a possible problem with this passage. God worked great miracles among the Israelites and did not allow anyone apart from the high priest once a year to enter into the holy of holies wherein was the ark. So, I don't know that God would have allowed for them to move the ark about from city to city, even if the entire tabernacle went with it (which would have likely been the case). However, the ark is mentioned but one time in the book of the Judges, and it is said to have been in Bethel in those days (compare Judges 20:18, 26–27). This does not mean in the days of the entire book of Judges, but during that particular time period during the civil war of Benjamin. By the time of Samuel, the ark is back in Shiloh (I Sam. 3:1–3, 21 4:3); and that God allowed it to be moved by the people of Israel, we find in I Sam. 4:3–6. Also, since Israel was defeated here, we find that God allowed the ark to be taken by heathen (I Sam. 4:11). Therefore, the idea is that the ark was moved about throughout Israel is a distinct possibility that we cannot rule out. (3) Thirdly, you may wonder about Eglom, the king of Moab, ruling over Israel. Judges 3:12–14 confirms this.

Your next concern is how could a verse be missing from the Bible? As we have seen in the book of Joshua, when it came to the list of cities, we found one place where some very important cities were missing from the Hebrew, but found in the Greek. That we have additions and deletions in Scripture is a fact of Biblical criticism. Certain incidents, like Jesus and the adulterous woman (at the beginning of John 8) is probably an addition to Scripture. The end of the book of Mark where believers are said to be carrying snakes and drinking poison is a definite addition by some ancient holy roller. We have examined these kinds of things in our Study of Inspiration.

I should also cover the primary con against this being in the Bible. The books of Moses were drawn to a fine, literary conclusion with the death of Moses. We had his entire life, along with his death, all preserved in one primary document. It would seem just as apropos to have the book of Joshua tied up as neatly as well. Although we don't know much about Phinehas, what he has done so far gives no reason to suspect him of having bad judgment, so for him to put the apropos ending to this book would seem reasonable. That a lesser man than he would come along later and write a further addendum is very possible; but that it is the Word of God is less so.

My personal conclusion, although this is not something I would fight to the death over doctrinally, is that the events found in the Septuagint ending are accurate and of some historical import (i.e., the moving around of the ark); they are unnecessary with regards to our understanding of Scripture. The ending as we find in Joshua, in the Hebrew, is an apropos ending to the book of Joshua. Adding in the fact that a small portion of Israel was under the control of another king quite a number of years later may have seemed important to the person who recorded this

³⁰ We will read of the death of a Phinehas in I Sam. 4:11, but that Phinehas is going to be a different Phinehas (because of the time which has passed between the book of Joshua and the book of Samuel). Also, I Sam. 4:15–17 indicates that this was a different Phinehas.

information, but in retrospect, does not seem to really have a place here contextually, nor is the additional information found here compelling enough to require its inclusion.

Let me see if I can put together an analogy. For awhile, there was some goofy theory about taking computer generated patterns of letters out of the Bible and revealing that these had important links to our history. One which I recall is the assassination of President Kennedy. Like all those of my generation, we all know exactly where we were when he heard this the first time and for some of us, it was even a defining moment of our youth. However, in the scale of human events over history, it was essentially a trivial event and that the Bible would mysteriously point ahead toward this event is foolish. The spiritual impact is nil and the *why* that such an essentially trivial event would be hidden in computer patterns of the letters found in the Bible is unanswered.

My point is that what is found in the last couple of verses in the Septuagint is probably accurate, but not a part of Scripture. It mentions two events which are out of place in the book of Joshua and the unknown author placed an ending on a book which has already been properly ended. My guess is that some person who fell under those 18 years of subjugation to another ruler found this to be significant and appended this information himself.

Another question might come to you. Let's assume that all of the information added to the end of this book is accurate, but that it was not a part of God's Word—why would Satan even care to append this book with information which is true? What would be his purpose in that? It is simple—to divert our attention at the end of this book away from the greatness of Joshua. Joshua was like a “D” or a “C” student in school who always tries. He had little natural ability; he was raised as a slave doing menial tasks probably from the earliest age. Next to Moses with his phenomenal intelligence and fantastic upbringing, Joshua was but a shadow of the man, hardly even revered by believers or Jews. However, he was a great man. He clung to the Word of God. He realized much earlier in life than even Moses that he was recording Scripture and the fact that the Bible, as it existed then, was kept in tact during the wars, is due to Joshua and his understanding of the importance of God's Word. Joshua was able to take being second in command without being jealous or petty. He understood God's place for him in this world and was not concerned about when his day would come, or when he would come into his own, or when he would get the recognition, fame and power that should be his. He was a man who began with limited resources and through his phenomenal trust in God and his great humility and grace-orientation, rose to be the greatest man in all Israel, and, during the end of his generation, the greatest man on this earth. He will stand as a figurehead to believers for all time as the representative of Jesus Christ, just as Moses represented the Law. Moses, as a man of the Law, could take the Israelites no further than the Jordan River. He could lead them right up to the Land of Promise, but he could not take them any further, just as the Law can reveal to us our guilt before God, but can take us no further. As we saw in the beginning, the name *Joshua* means savior, and it was he who led the Israelites successfully into the Land of Promised and guided them in their conquering of same. What greater legacy than to be identified with Jesus Christ in shadow form? What greater legacy to come with few human resources and rise to become the greatest man on the earth during his time? If you feel as though you are just average, or even below average, with few prospects and little or no advantages in life—look at Joshua, a great man of faith and humility up until the day of his death. You have every advantage that he has.

McGee's take on Joshua: *the more I know about Joshua, the better I like him. Through the years he has stood in the shadow of Moses so that we think he is a sort of miniature Moses. But Joshua is a man of great stature. God made no mistake in choosing this man. Although Joshua is an average man, this book reveals that an average man dedicated to God can be mightily used. He says to the nation, “Do you want to go back to the gods of your fathers, those pagan god which they served? Or do you want to serve the gods of the Amorites? You can choose. But as for me and my house, we have made our choice; we are going to serve the Lord!” Friends, this was a tremendous challenge to all the tribes of Israel to consider their covenant with God.*³¹

Although I did not get a lot out of Trent Butler's commentary on the book of Joshua, let me end with a few comments and questions for you, inspired, in part, from his book.³²

³¹ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 105.

³² Trent Butler, *Understanding the Basic Themes of Joshua*, Word Publishing, ©1991, pp. 112–115.

The people of Israel made the greatest decision that they could ever make: they believed in Jesus Christ as they knew Him, as Jehovah God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They placed their reliance and trust in him. **And when Israel saw the great power which Jehovah had used against the Egyptians, the people revered Jehovah and they believed in Jehovah and in His servant Moses** (Ex. 14:31). I can't imagine you plowing through this entire commentary, or even this chapter, for that matter, without having a faith in Jesus Christ, but, have you believed in Jesus Christ, the God of Israel? Have you placed your reliance and trust in Him? **They said therefore to Him, "What can we do that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."** (John 6:28–29). **"I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but he will have the Light of Life."** (John 8:12b).

Once you have believed in Him, you are eternally saved, eternally delivered from hell fire. No matter what you do after placing your trust in Jesus Christ, you cannot lose this salvation, because it is based upon what He did for you. However, there is a catch, and listen carefully to that catch: when you believe in Jesus Christ, God becomes your Father, and you become subject to His discipline, given to you for your guidance. **Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, and as in the day of Massah in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me. They tried Me, though they had seen My work. For forty years, I loathed that generation and said they are a people who err in their heart, and they do not know My ways. Therefore, I solemnly promised, "Truly, they will not enter into My rest."** (Psalm 95:5–11). **Have you forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons? My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives** (Heb. 12:5–6 Prov. 3:11–12). After salvation, you have a number of choices, and they involve either trusting what God has said, or not believing what God has said. They involve obeying Him or not obeying Him. This does not affect your salvation one way or the other, but it certainly affects your life, and it has some effect upon your eternity in terms of reward. After salvation, you have the opportunity to learn the easy way or to learn the hard way. Speaking as a person who has learned a lot of lessons the hard way, and learned a few the easy way, let me recommend to you the latter method.

After the people had believed in Jehovah God of Israel, they then made their commitment to Him. **And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve Jehovah our God and we will listen and obey His voice."** (Joshua 24:24). After salvation, apart from salvation, have you made a commitment to Him? Have you committed to His covenant? **"Come to Me, all of you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and You will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light."** (Matt. 11:28–30). **Moreover, become doers of the word and not simply hearers who delude themselves** (James 1:22). Salvation is absolutely free and is obtained by simply believing in Him, but you will live on this earth a year, five years or maybe fifty years after salvation. You can commit to His way or you can rebel. Gen X rebelled against God and God killed them in the desert; the generation of promise not only believed in Him, but they committed to Him. It's your choice. Whether you commit to him or not, once you believe, you have salvation; however, do you then want to spend a life in discipline resulting in the sin unto death (disciplinary action resulting in your death) or do you want a life which is full and abundant? **"I, Jehovah, have spoken; certainly this I will do to this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness, they will be destroyed, and there they will die."** (Num. 14:35). Do you want to be like the generation of promise that was led into the land and given the land? **"And I gave to you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you eat from vineyards and olive yards which you did not plant. Now, therefore, revere Jehovah and serve Him in sincerity and in truth. Put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve Jehovah."** (Joshua 24:13–14). **For I have received everything in full, and I have an abundance. I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus** (Philip. 4:18–19).

Do you know why you commit to Jesus Christ apart having to endure less discipline? **"I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst; and afterward, I brought you out. And I brought your fathers out of Egypt and you came to the sea, and Egypt pursued your fathers with chariots and with horsemen to the Sea of Reeds. But when they cried out to Jehovah, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians and He brought the sea down upon them and covered them, and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the**

wilderness a long time. Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan, and they fought with you and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land when I destroyed them before you.” (Joshua 24:5–8). God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things, through Whom also He made the ages. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and He upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they (Heb. 1:1–4).

Do you know what God’s demands are of you? Do you know what it means to follow Him? “Be resolute, then, to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left...cling to Jehovah your God, as you have done to this day.” (Joshua 23:6, 8). Your Word I have treasured in my heart that I may not sin against You (Psalm 119:11). All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (II Tim. 3:16–17). For the Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of the soul and the spirit, of both joints and the marrow, and is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb. 4:12). Study to show yourself approved by God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of truth (II Tim. 2:15).

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