

## **Dr. David Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 5**

### **Joshua 1:10ff**

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This is Dr. David Howard in his teaching on Joshua through Ruth. This is session 5, Joshua 1:10 and following.

We'll now look at the last part of chapter one, which is verses 10 to 18, and it includes three different segments.

Joshua's words to the officer of the people in verses 10 to 11, his instructions to the tribes that are going to settle east of the Jordan, the Transjordan tribes they're called, Reuben, Gad, half tribe of Manasseh, and then in verses 16 to 18, the people's response to Joshua. So, let's look at Joshua's charge to the officers. In verses 10 to 11, he tells them to pass through the camp and get ready.

And within three days, they're going to cross over the Jordan to take possession. It's another one of the words for inheritance of the land. Notice at the end of verse 11, it says, this is the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

There's that giving you to possess, to take possession. So, there's one of the words for inheritance. So even those themes that we talked about, the seven themes, are intertwined all the way through the warp and woof of the books down to the specific wording of verses.

So, imagine God has given the charge to Joshua. Joshua then turns to the leaders and says, here, get ready to go, turn your people. Three days from now, we're going to be crossing the Jordan.

Then he turns to another group of the people. And this is the group that wanted to settle east of the Jordan. And I'll put a map quickly up here for you.

When they were wandering in the wilderness and out here during those 40 years, two and a half of the tribes noticed that the land to the east was very fertile and they liked it. And they asked Moses if they could settle there. And the story of that is told in Numbers chapter 32.

So, I will invite you to turn to Numbers chapter 32. And we'll just highlight some things here. Pretty much the whole chapter is devoted to this request.

And you see in Numbers 32, verse one, it says, the people of Reuben and the people of Gad had a very great number of livestock. They saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead. And behold, the place was a place for livestock.

And so, they came to Moses and asked if they could settle there. And Moses' initial response in verses six and following is to be angry because he thinks that what they are doing is wanting to avoid the conflicts that are to come with the land of Canaan. They're trying to get out of their duties.

And so, he tells them, this is not a good thing. And that goes for quite a paragraph. And then verses 16 and following, the people respond, say, no, we are going to be faithful.

We will take up arms with everybody else. And our wives and little ones can stay here, but we will go there. And so, Moses in verse 20 says, if you will do this, if you will take up arms to go before the Lord for war and so on, then you shall return, verse 22, and be free of the obligation to the Lord and Israel and this land shall be your possession before the Lord.

And the rest of the chapter is kind of the aftermath of that. So that's the background to Joshua's words to these two and a half tribes that want to settle east of the Jordan. Moses reminds the people of that in Deuteronomy 3. And if you want to look at it sometime, verses 18 to 20, Deuteronomy 3 are almost word for word, anticipating the words in Joshua 1, verses 12 to 15.

Just to read you some of this here in Deuteronomy 3:18, Moses says, "I commanded you at that time," referring back to the Numbers 32 event, "saying, the Lord, your God has given you this land to possess. All of your men of valor are crossed over, armed before your brothers, the people of Israel. Only your wives, your little ones, your livestock will remain in the cities that I have given you till the Lord gives you rest. And then you can go back to your land."

Those are words that are echoing Numbers 32 and also prefiguring Joshua 1. So back to Joshua 1. So, in verse 12, it says, to the Reubenites, the Gadites, half tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, remember the word that Moses has referred to the Lord, because he commanded you to say. And then verses 13 to 15 are almost word for word from the passage in Deuteronomy 3. Now, I've mentioned that there are four blocks of speeches in chapter 1. Let me give you a visual representation of that.

So, I've laid it out here with these squares here are what we would call the narrative framework. There, when the author of the book is saying, here's who spoke and to whom this person spoke, we can think about it maybe as kind of the backbone of the chapter. But then these boxes here are the actual words, the words of God to Moses, the word of Moses, I'm sorry, the words of God to Joshua, the words of Joshua to the elders of the people, the words of Joshua to the Transjordan tribes, and then the response of the people to Joshua.

So that's the narrative framework. Now, many commentators see the logic of this and see that when Joshua speaks to the Transjordan tribes, the response is by the Transjordan tribes to Joshua's words here. But I would argue it's a different group responding.

The people speaking are identified by name in these three places. It's God speaking to Joshua, Joshua speaking to the elders, and Joshua speaking to the Transjordan tribes, but in verse 16 it says, and they answered. Joshua does not specify who the "they" is.

And at one level, of course, it makes sense that the "they" would be the Transjordan tribes. But the Hebrew syntax of the narrative framework, normally in Hebrew there's the some of you know, if you know Hebrew, you know that there's what's called the while a consecutive string of things where this happened and then that happened and then that happened and so on. And that's kind of the default mode.

That's the backbone of Hebrew narrative. If that pattern is broken, there's usually something going on there. And that pattern is broken right here.

The narrative or the verb form and the syntax there in verse 12 is of a disjunctive type. And I would argue what it's doing is telling us that these two blocks of speech go together. So, Joshua spoke to the office of the people and oh, by the way, he also spoke to the Transjordan tribes and who's responding, the "they" is everybody, not just two and a half tribes.

And so, the response to Joshua is by the leaders, representatives of all the tribes saying, yes, we will be faithful to what you've commanded us. It's not just a small portion of the tribes responding, but it's the entire nation. In that sense, in that way then, otherwise, we don't have any place in the book where the entire nation affirms Joshua as their leader.

But because of the grammatical pattern in verse 12, I would argue that the two speeches of Joshua in verse 11 and then 12 to 15, 13 to 15 are part and parcel of the same event. And they're conceived as in literally as sort of the same thing. And the response then is by everybody addressed in that speech.

So that's how I would see that. So, in verse 16, they answered Joshua, saying, everything you've commanded us we will do. Wherever you send us, we will go.

Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we obey you. Only may the Lord be with you. So, it's a wonderful affirmation of Joshua by the whole tribe, the whole nation.

I often chuckle when I read these verses because I think that their intent was good, but I think their words kind of undermine their intent a little bit because it says, just

as we obeyed Moses in all things. Imagine Joshua thinking, well, if that's the standard, that's a pretty low standard. They did not obey Moses very well.

I want more than that. But regardless, that's what their intent was. And they say, whoever rebels against you will be put to death in verse 18.

And then finally, only be strong and courageous. So, we have that strong and courageous theme throughout the chapter, three times in God's words. And then it's concluded by the people affirming Joshua himself as well.

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