

Dr. David Howard, Joshua - Ruth, Session 7, Joshua 3-4

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 7, Joshua 3-4, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Dr. David Howard's series on Joshua and Ruth **focuses on the biblical account of the Israelites crossing the Jordan River**. Dr. Howard **examines Joshua chapters 3 and 4 in detail, analyzing the preparations, the miraculous crossing itself, and the subsequent memorialization with stones**. He **interprets the events symbolically**, highlighting themes of obedience, holiness, God's power, and the impact of the miracle on both Israel and neighboring nations. The lecture also **includes a discussion of population numbers in Exodus and contrasts the Israelites' actions with the behavior of the Canaanites**.

**2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 7 – Double click icon to play
in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org
[BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old
Testament → Historical Books → Joshua-Ruth).**



**Howard_Josh_Ruth
_Session07.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 7, Joshua 3-4

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture on Joshua 3-4:

Briefing Document: Joshua 3-4 - The Jordan Crossing

Overall Theme: The lecture focuses on the theological significance of the Jordan River crossing, emphasizing God's power, the importance of obedience and reverence, and the fulfillment of his promises. It goes beyond a simple narrative of crossing a river, highlighting the miracle as a pivotal event designed to instill faith in Israel and demonstrate God's might to the nations.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Preparation and Consecration:**
- Joshua arises early to prepare for crossing, moving from Shittim to the Jordan (3:1).
- There's a debate on whether the three days mentioned in 3:2 is the same as 1:11, but Howard argues they are different sets of days, with an idea of 6-7 days of preparation.
- The people are instructed to keep a distance of 2,000 cubits (approx. 1,000 yards) from the Ark of the Covenant (3:4), emphasizing the holiness associated with God's presence. As Howard states: "the ark itself was a symbol of God's presence on earth... And so it's this idea that they were to stay away from the ark was to maintain that element of holiness".
- Joshua commands the people to "consecrate yourselves" (3:5), meaning to purify and make themselves holy in preparation for God's wonders the next day. He mentions: "It's not a word we use a whole lot in modern-day Western countries and English, but it's to consecrate means to make yourself holy, to make something holy."
- **Emphasis on Knowing and Confidence:**
- The word "know" (or forms of it) appears strategically three times (3:4, 3:7, 3:10).
- It symbolizes a literal understanding of the way to go (3:4) and the assurance of God's presence with Joshua, (3:7) and then that God is among them (3:10)

- Howard points out this use of "know" is tied to the concept of gaining confidence and certainty that God is acting.
- **The Ark of the Covenant:**
 - The Ark is central to the narrative, representing the covenant between God and Israel. It is the symbol of God's presence. As Howard notes: "Notice this is the ark of the covenant. One of the themes we've mentioned as part of the book is the covenant. And this is the ark representing the covenant God made with Moses and the people at Mount Sinai."
 - The priests carrying the Ark lead the way, their actions directly triggering the miraculous event.
- **Obedience:**
 - The text highlights the obedience of the people to Joshua's and God's commands. Dr. Howard states the author of the book is saying: "Here's what Joshua said. And then the author tells us, that they did exactly what he said."
 - Specifically the command to "take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people" is perfectly mirrored in the execution by stating "they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people."
- **God's Exaltation of Joshua:**
 - God promises to exalt Joshua (3:7), just as he was with Moses. This promise is later fulfilled in 4:14, creating a parallel with Moses and demonstrating the continuity of leadership. Howard summarizes: "So right within the confines of two chapters, we have a promise and then the fulfillment of the promise."
- **The Nations of Canaan:**
 - The text lists seven Canaanite nations (3:10), a number that may have symbolic significance.
 - Referring to Deuteronomy 7:1, these nations are described as "more numerous and mightier" than Israel. He also mentions the ongoing discussions on the size of Israel's population, and uses both the understanding of "eleph" meaning "1,000" and a more literal translation of a military platoon of 10.
 - Deuteronomy 9:4-5 states that God is driving out the Canaanites because of their wickedness, not because of Israel's righteousness. Howard says, "Part of the answer to the question of the difficult issue, is God's commanding Israel to

destroy all the Canaanites and drive them out. Part of the answer is their own wickedness."

- **The Miracle of the Jordan Crossing:**

- The core focus is on the miracle itself, not just the crossing. Howard notes, "the author of the book is writing this up in a way, these two chapters actually in a way, that is the author's interest and the author's excitement is not so much that they got from point A to point B... The author's excitement is that God did this amazing miracle."
- The text emphasizes that the Jordan was overflowing its banks during harvest, making the miracle more dramatic (3:15).
- The waters were stopped at Adam, far upstream, and the water was completely cut off (3:16).
- There are four Hebrew verbs that describe the action upon the water in verse 16: "stood up," "rose up," "cut off," and "stopped."
- The crossing occurs on "dry ground" (3:17), using the Hebrew word *yalasha*, which connects the event to the Red Sea crossing. This further emphasizes the miraculous nature of the event and links it to the exodus.

- **Memorial Stones and the Purpose of the Miracle:**

- Twelve stones are taken from the riverbed and set up in Gilgal as a memorial (4:2-7). These stones are to serve as a tangible reminder of God's power and the miracle for future generations. Howard states, "It doesn't say, this is the place where they cross from A to B. It says, you should tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the Ark of the Covenant."
- Joshua also places a second set of stones in the riverbed as a memorial.
- The miracle has two purposes (4:24):
- To demonstrate the power of God to all nations ("so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty").
- To instill reverence and fear of the Lord in the Israelites ("so that you may fear the Lord your God forever"). Howard emphasizes that the fear of the Lord is not just terror, but also a sense of awe and respect.

- **Connection to the Red Sea Crossing:**
- The crossing is explicitly compared to the parting of the Red Sea (4:23) demonstrating similar divine power. Howard also says that there are implicit connections through the use of the term “dry ground” found in both events.
- The reaction of the Canaanite kings (5:1) mirrors the fear experienced during the Exodus, fulfilling the purpose of the miracle as a witness to the nations (4:24a).

Conclusion:

The Jordan River crossing, as presented in Joshua 3-4, is not merely a logistical event but a profound demonstration of God's power and faithfulness. It's a moment that builds confidence in Joshua's leadership, instills obedience and reverence in Israel, demonstrates God's power to all nations and serves as a powerful parallel to the Red Sea crossing. The narrative emphasizes the theological and symbolic importance of the event over a simple recounting of historical facts.

4. Study Guide: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 7, Joshua 3-4

Joshua 3-4: The Jordan Crossing - Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 complete sentences each.

1. What is the significance of the three days mentioned in Joshua 3:2, and how does Dr. Howard interpret them in relation to the three days in Joshua 1:11?
2. Why were the Israelites instructed to keep a distance from the Ark of the Covenant before crossing the Jordan River?
3. What does Joshua instruct the people to do in Joshua 3:5, and what is the reason for this instruction?
4. Identify the three instances of the word "know" in Joshua 3, and describe their significance within the context of the chapter.
5. What does the Ark of the Covenant represent, and why is it so central to the events of the Jordan crossing?
6. What specific instruction does Joshua give to the priests in Joshua 3:8, and what role do the priests play in the crossing?
7. How does the author highlight the miracle of the Jordan crossing in Joshua 3:16, and what four verbs are used to describe the action on the waters?
8. What is significant about the "dry ground" (yalasha) mentioned in Joshua 3:17 and how does this relate to other events in the Old Testament?
9. What purpose do the twelve stones taken from the Jordan serve, and what is the significance of placing them both in the river and at Gilgal?
10. According to Joshua 4:24, what are the two reasons why God performed the miracle of the Jordan crossing?

Answer Key

1. In Joshua 3:2, the three days are when officers prepare the people for the crossing, while in Joshua 1:11 the three days are for preparing provisions. Dr. Howard argues that these are distinct sets of days, suggesting the latter was for supplies and the former for ritual preparation.

2. The Israelites were instructed to keep their distance from the Ark of the Covenant because it was a symbol of God's holy presence. This distance was meant to maintain an element of holiness and remind them of their own need for consecration.
3. In Joshua 3:5, Joshua instructs the people to consecrate themselves. This means purifying and making themselves holy in preparation for the wonderful things the Lord will do the next day, showing their worthiness to participate in God's miracles.
4. The word "know" appears in 3:4 to guide the path for crossing, 3:7 to validate Joshua's leadership, and 3:10 to assure the presence of God and driving out the inhabitants of Canaan. All of these examples underscore that having knowledge and assurance from God were essential in the crossing of the Jordan.
5. The Ark of the Covenant represents the covenant God made with Moses at Mount Sinai, embodying His presence and authority. It was central to the crossing, indicating that it was God's power and presence leading them to the promised land.
6. Joshua instructs the priests to stand still in the Jordan River at its brink and carrying the ark of the covenant. Their role in this process was to lead the way and set the stage for God's miraculous parting of the waters.
7. The author highlights the miracle through four verbs: "stood up," "rose up," "cut off," and "stopped" used to describe the water. The author shows that the stopping of the waters was not merely a pause in the river but a complete miraculous stop.
8. "Dry ground" (yalasha) is significant because it denotes the special, dry ground, emphasizing God's miraculous removal of the waters. It also draws parallels to the parting of the Red Sea, and showing that this same God was with them now.
9. The twelve stones serve as a memorial altar, not for sacrifice but as a sign. The ones in the river marked the location where the waters were cut off, while those at Gilgal served as a reminder of the miracle to future generations.
10. The two reasons for the miracle are so that all the peoples of the earth may know the power of the Lord, and so that the Israelites may fear the Lord their God, reflecting both an external witness to the nations and an internal strengthening of Israel's faith.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Write a well-developed essay responding to each of the following questions.

1. Analyze the theme of holiness as it is presented in Joshua 3-4, discussing the significance of the Israelites' consecration, the separation from the Ark, and the overall purpose of these actions in the context of the Jordan crossing.
2. Compare and contrast the events of the Jordan River crossing in Joshua 3-4 with the parting of the Red Sea, identifying the textual connections and discussing the theological significance of these parallels for the nation of Israel.
3. Explore the author's emphasis on the miraculous nature of the Jordan crossing in Joshua 3-4, examining the narrative techniques, the use of specific language (like *yalasha*), and the overall purpose of highlighting divine intervention over the natural event of crossing the river.
4. Discuss the role of obedience as a major theme in Joshua 3-4, analyzing the actions of both Joshua and the Israelites in carrying out God's commands. How does this theme relate to the overall narrative and theological message of the book?
5. Examine the external and internal purposes of the Jordan crossing miracle as described in Joshua 4:24. How do these dual purposes demonstrate God's relationship with Israel and His wider plan for the nations?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Ark of the Covenant:** A sacred chest containing the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, symbolizing God's presence and covenant with Israel.
- **Shittim:** A location east of the Jordan River, likely where the Israelites camped before the crossing.
- **Consecrate:** To make or declare something or someone holy; to set apart for a sacred purpose; to purify.
- **Niphaot:** A Hebrew word meaning "wonderful things," "marvels," or "miracles," referring to acts of God that inspire awe and wonder.
- **Cubits:** An ancient unit of measurement, roughly the length of a forearm (about 18 inches), used to determine the distance between the Ark and the people.
- **Mercy Seat:** The gold lid covering the Ark of the Covenant, seen as God's throne on earth within the Holy of Holies.
- **Holy of Holies:** The innermost sanctuary of the Tabernacle, considered the most sacred place and where the Ark of the Covenant was kept.
- **Gilgal:** The first Israelite camp after crossing the Jordan, where the memorial stones were set up.
- **Yalasha:** A Hebrew word meaning "dry ground," emphasizing the miraculous nature of the dry land that appeared after the waters were parted.
- **Covenant:** A binding agreement or promise, specifically the one made between God and Israel at Mount Sinai.

5. FAQs on Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 7, Joshua 3-4, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: The Crossing of the Jordan River (Joshua 3-4)

1. **What was the significance of the Ark of the Covenant in the crossing of the Jordan?**
2. The Ark of the Covenant was the central symbol of God's presence on Earth. It was considered God's throne on earth, housed within the Tabernacle, and represented the covenant He made with the Israelites. By keeping a respectful distance from the Ark during the crossing, the Israelites acknowledged God's holiness and maintained reverence. The movement of the Ark led the people, signifying God's direction and guidance in their journey to the Promised Land.
3. **Why were the Israelites instructed to consecrate themselves before crossing the Jordan, and what did it entail?**
4. The Israelites were instructed to consecrate themselves, or make themselves holy, as a preparation for the extraordinary and miraculous events that were to take place. This involved a spiritual cleansing to make themselves worthy to participate in or observe God's "wonderful things". It was also essential because they had not been observing practices such as Passover or circumcision during their time in the wilderness, therefore they were essentially unholy. This act of consecration enabled them to be receptive to God's presence and power.
5. **How did God demonstrate His support for Joshua as the new leader of Israel?**
6. God demonstrated His support for Joshua by exalting him in the sight of all Israel. This happened through the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River and by fulfilling the promise to be with Joshua just as He was with Moses. This act was to establish Joshua as a legitimate successor to Moses in the eyes of the people, assuring them that God's leadership continued through Joshua. The miracle at the Jordan was a sign they could be confident that Joshua was God's chosen leader, just as God had been with Moses.

7. **What specific details emphasize the miraculous nature of the Jordan River crossing?**
8. The text highlights the Jordan River crossing as a significant miracle through several details: the river was at its flood stage, overflowing its banks during harvest, meaning there was not a natural way for the Israelites to cross. Secondly, the waters were supernaturally cut off upstream at a distant location (Adam). Thirdly, the priests carrying the Ark stood on "dry ground" (a special term used to emphasize it was not muddy land), mirroring the parting of the Red Sea. And finally, the waters are described using four different verbs to demonstrate how dramatic the stopping of the water was, with the focus being the miraculous stopping of the waters not the crossing itself.
9. **What is the purpose behind the memorial stones set up after crossing the Jordan?**
10. The memorial stones taken from the Jordan and set up at Gilgal served as a constant reminder of God's miraculous intervention and provision. They were not just marking a physical crossing but a memorial, similar to a plaque, so that when their children asked about the stones, the parents would have an opportunity to tell them about how God cut off the waters of the Jordan when the Ark crossed. It was a tangible way for the Israelites to remember God's faithfulness and power, helping them transmit their faith to future generations.
11. **What was the primary focus of the narrative during the Jordan crossing, and how did it differ from a purely logistical account?**
12. While the crossing of the Jordan was a practical necessity for entering the Promised Land, the narrative's emphasis is on the miraculous intervention of God in this event. Rather than focusing solely on the logistical aspect of moving from one side of the river to the other, the narrative draws attention to the divine action that made the crossing possible. It highlights the power and glory of God by emphasizing the stopping of the waters and the miracle rather than the actual crossing.

13. What does the crossing of the Jordan teach us about God's interaction with other nations?

14. The crossing of the Jordan was not just for the benefit of the Israelites. As we see at the end of Chapter 4, God performed the miracle of stopping the waters, in part, to make His power known to the other nations. In Chapter 5 it is stated that the kings in the region have heard of this miracle and it caused their hearts to melt. The crossing of the Jordan then not only boosted the faith of the Israelites, but also served to create fear and awe of God among neighboring nations, fulfilling the first goal of the miraculous intervention.

15. How do the events at the Jordan River recall the parting of the Red Sea, and what is the significance of this connection?

16. The narrative explicitly draws a parallel between the Jordan crossing and the parting of the Red Sea, using the same term “dry ground” to describe the ground they walked on. This comparison highlights that God’s power and ability to miraculously save His people were consistent in both events. The Red Sea was the big event of the Exodus, now this Jordan crossing serves as a second significant miracle that demonstrates God's continued commitment to Israel, as well as His supremacy, establishing a foundational miracle for this new era under Joshua’s leadership.