

Dr. David Howard, Joshua - Ruth, Session 8, Joshua 5

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 5, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. David Howard's lecture analyzes Joshua chapter 5, focusing on the Israelites' preparations before conquering Canaan. **He identifies three key events:** the second circumcision, the Passover celebration, and Joshua's encounter with the commander of the Lord's army. **These events symbolize the Israelites' spiritual cleansing and readiness for battle**, mirroring the idea of prioritizing God's kingdom. **Howard connects these events to Moses's story** to highlight the importance of obedience and holiness, even for leaders. **He also uses archaeological evidence** to support his interpretation of the timeframe and extent of the Israelite conquest.

**2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 8 – 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
_Session08.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 8, Joshua 5

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. David Howard's lecture on Joshua chapter 5:

Briefing Document: Dr. David Howard on Joshua 5 – Preparing to Inherit the Land

Overview:

This session focuses on Joshua chapter 5, which Dr. Howard argues concludes the "preparations for inheriting the land" (chapters 1-5) before the actual battles begin in chapter 6. He identifies three key episodes within the chapter, all falling under the theme of ritual preparation and sanctification before engaging in conflict: circumcision, Passover, and an encounter with the commander of the Lord's army. The central idea is the need for the Israelites to be right with God before seeking victory in Canaan. He draws parallels to Jesus' teaching to "seek first the kingdom of God."

Key Themes and Ideas:

- **Chapter 5 as a Culmination of Preparations:** Dr. Howard argues that chapter 5 acts as a conclusion to the first section of Joshua (chapters 1-5), focusing on spiritual preparation, rather than just being an introduction to the battles. He emphasizes that these rituals serve to "get themselves right with the Lord" before engaging in warfare.
- **Three Ritual Preparations:** Dr. Howard identifies three distinct episodes within chapter 5, which he interprets as ritualistic preparations:
- **Circumcision (verses 2-9):** The Israelites, specifically the males born during the 40 years in the wilderness, are circumcised again. The place where this occurs is named "Gibeot Haarot" (Hill of Foreskins) after the event. Dr. Howard emphasizes that this was done because the men born in the desert had not been circumcised. This is not a literal second circumcision of the same people, but the circumcision of a new generation.
- **Passover Celebration (verses 10-12):** The Israelites celebrate the Passover for the first time in the Promised Land at Gilgal. This celebration marks a significant transition, with the manna ceasing and the Israelites beginning to eat the produce of the land.

- **Encounter with the Commander of the Lord's Army (verses 13-15):** Joshua meets a divine figure, "the commander of the army of the Lord," before the battle of Jericho, who is more concerned with his identity than his function, indicating that Israel's focus should be on God and his ways. Dr. Howard argues this episode is also about emphasizing the holiness of the land and the need for the Israelites to sanctify themselves before taking the land.
- **Significance of Circumcision:** The re-circumcision is more than just a physical act; it represents a renewal of the covenant and obedience to God's commands. Dr. Howard connects this back to Moses' failure to circumcise his son in Exodus 4, highlighting the point that even leaders are not exempt from following God's word: *"God is saying to Moses and to Israel and to the readers, that even the leader is not exempt from the requirements of keeping God's word and obeying God's word."* He also notes the parallel of the flint knives in both Joshua and Exodus. He also discusses the name Gilgal, tying it to the phrase that the "reproach of Egypt has been rolled away" – indicating not the guilt of the Israelites, but the shame that had been put on them by the Egyptians.
- **Significance of the Passover:** The celebration of the Passover in the Promised Land marks a transition from dependence on God's miraculous provision in the wilderness (manna) to reliance on the bounty of the land itself. Dr. Howard highlights this transition as being a very symbolic one, connecting the past in the wilderness to the new beginnings in the land of Canaan.
- **Encounter with the Commander:** The encounter with the commander emphasizes that the Israelites' focus should not solely be on military strategy or on the perceived utility of divine aid. The commander's identity, as the "commander of the army of the Lord," should inspire confidence that victory is assured if they follow God's leadership and the commands that had been given to them. This emphasizes the importance of putting God first and seeking first the Kingdom. Joshua's initial question, "Are you for us or our adversaries?" highlights this. The commander's response, "No... I am the commander of the army of the Lord," is not a rejection of Israel, but a correction of their focus. He also points out that the word "Lord" (adon) that Joshua uses to address the commander is lowercase, suggesting that Joshua may initially view him as a human, until the commander's reference to holy ground.

- **The Importance of Holiness:** Dr. Howard connects the encounter with the commander to the holiness of the land itself, echoing the scene at the burning bush with Moses, when God commands Moses to take off his shoes because the ground was holy. It further shows God's holiness.
- **Archaeological Context:** Dr. Howard touches on the archaeological evidence of destruction around 1200 BC and contrasts this with the Deuteronomic description of Israel inheriting cities they did not destroy. This leads him to argue for an earlier date of the Exodus (around 1400 BC) and that the chaos around 1200 BC may reflect the period of the Judges. The point here is that because the Israelites were inheriting the cities, not destroying them (with a few exceptions), that there wouldn't necessarily be the wide-spread archeological destruction that would come from an army destroying cities. He notes *"if we take the Deuteronomy passage seriously, we should not really expect to see traces of Israel's destruction of Canaan because, in most places, it did not destroy the cities. It just drove out the people."*
- **Deuteronomy 6:10-11:** He references Deuteronomy 6:10-11, where Moses says God would bring them into the land with cities and resources they did not build or plant. This highlights the provision of God in Canaan, which is what the Israelites are beginning to experience in Joshua 5.

Key Quotes:

- *"I think in all three of these cases, it's the idea of getting themselves right with the Lord before they engage in the battles."*
- *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then all these other things will be added to you."*
- *"God is saying to Moses and to Israel and to the readers, that even the leader is not exempt from the requirements of keeping God's word and obeying God's word."*
- *"What's the important thing to know is my identity, not my function. Not what I'm going to do for you, but who I am."*
- *"if we take the Deuteronomy passage seriously, we should not really expect to see traces of Israel's destruction of Canaan because, in most places, it did not destroy the cities. It just drove out the people."*

Conclusion:

Dr. Howard presents Joshua chapter 5 as a crucial turning point, marking the end of the preparation phase and emphasizing the necessity of spiritual purity and obedience before engaging in physical conquest. The three ritual preparations of circumcision, Passover, and the encounter with the commander all emphasize this need for sanctification and right relationship with God. He also provides an alternative view on the archeological evidence of the destruction of Canaan, indicating a difference between the period of Joshua and the period of the Judges.

4. Study Guide: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 8, Joshua 5

Joshua 5 Study Guide: Preparing to Inherit the Land

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. What is the main argument Dr. Howard makes about Joshua chapter 5 in relation to the rest of the book of Joshua?
2. What are the three episodes of "ritual preparation" that Dr. Howard identifies in Joshua 5?
3. Why does Dr. Howard state that the males in the Israelite community had to be circumcised a second time in Joshua 5?
4. How does the story of Moses' near-death encounter in Exodus 4 relate to the events of Joshua 5?
5. What does Dr. Howard believe is the significance of the name Gilgal in the context of Joshua 5?
6. What does Dr. Howard mean by the "reproach of Egypt" and why does it end at Gilgal?
7. What significant event marks the beginning of Israel eating the produce of the land of Canaan?
8. How does the cessation of manna in Joshua 5 symbolize a transition in the Israelites' relationship with God and the land?
9. Why does Dr. Howard relate the concept of the neutron bomb to Israel's conquest of Canaan?
10. How does Dr. Howard explain Joshua's encounter with the commander of the Lord's army in relation to the other "ritual preparations" in the chapter?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Dr. Howard argues that Joshua chapter 5 concludes the "preparations for inheriting the land," spanning chapters 1-5, rather than being an introduction to the battles, though he acknowledges not all scholars agree. He sees it as a cohesive unit focused on ritual preparation before battle.

2. The three episodes of ritual preparation in Joshua 5 are: the circumcision of the people (verses 2-9), the celebration of Passover (verses 10-12), and Joshua's encounter with the commander of the Lord's army (verses 13-15). These acts prepare Israel spiritually and ritually to receive the land.
3. Dr. Howard explains that the second circumcision occurred because the Israelites born in the wilderness during the 40 years of wandering had not been circumcised, though those who left Egypt had been. It was a necessary step to fulfill the covenant made with Abraham.
4. Moses' near-death encounter in Exodus 4, which was provoked because his son had not been circumcised, shows that even a great leader like Moses had failed to be obedient in this area. This highlights the importance of obedience to God's commands and also provides a parallel to the ritual of circumcision as emphasized in Joshua 5.
5. Dr. Howard believes the name Gilgal is significant because it relates to the Hebrew word "galal" which means "to roll away" and refers to the phrase, "the reproach of Egypt" that the Lord has rolled away from the Israelites, both physically and psychologically. It symbolizes the removal of their past bondage.
6. Dr. Howard states that the "reproach of Egypt" refers to the negative perception that Egypt had of the Israelites as slaves who were not free. The end of this reproach at Gilgal symbolizes their full freedom from slavery and their psychological liberation from their past.
7. The beginning of Israel eating the produce of the land of Canaan was on the day after they observed the Passover. They had entered the land a week or more before, but they didn't eat any of the produce until that time.
8. The cessation of manna symbolizes a transition from the Israelites' reliance on God's direct provision in the desert to their sustenance through the land He promised to them. This signifies their movement from dependence to a level of self-sufficiency in their new home.
9. Dr. Howard relates the concept of the neutron bomb to Israel's conquest of Canaan by saying they primarily displaced the people but left the existing infrastructure and buildings intact. He notes that unlike the neutron bomb that kills people but leaves the buildings intact, Israel mostly only destroyed the people while retaining the cities and structures.

10. Dr. Howard interprets Joshua's encounter with the commander of the Lord's army as not a separate episode, but as part of the overall emphasis on holiness and preparation in the chapter. Like the circumcision and Passover rituals, the focus is on their relationship with the Lord as the first priority, which will bring success in their conquest.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the significance of the ritual of circumcision in Joshua 5. How does this ritual connect to the previous history of Israel and what does it symbolize for their future in Canaan?
2. Compare and contrast the roles of Moses and Joshua in the book of Joshua, using the events and arguments made in Joshua 5, as well as their prior actions, as examples.
3. Discuss the symbolic transition that is illustrated in the shift from eating manna to eating the produce of Canaan. What does this signify about the Israelites' changing identity and their relationship with God?
4. Using examples from Joshua 5, explain why Dr. Howard argues for an earlier date for the Israelite conquest of Canaan, and how that informs his understanding of archaeology.
5. Explore the different ways in which Dr. Howard connects Joshua 5 to previous passages and concepts in the Pentateuch. What purpose do these connections serve in his interpretation of the chapter?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Circumcision:** A religious rite, commanded by God to Abraham and his descendants, involving the removal of the foreskin of the penis. It acts as a sign of the covenant between God and the Israelites.
- **Gilgal:** The place where the Israelites camped and were circumcised in Joshua 5. Its name is linked to the Hebrew word meaning "to roll away," referring to the removal of the "reproach of Egypt."
- **Gibeot Haarot:** The Hebrew name for the "Hill of Foreskins" where the circumcision in Joshua 5 takes place.
- **Manna:** A bread-like substance that God miraculously provided for the Israelites to eat during their 40 years in the wilderness.
- **Passover:** An annual feast commemorating God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, including the night where the angel of death "passed over" their homes.
- **Reproach of Egypt:** The shame, psychological hold, and negative reputation that Egypt had over Israel because of their time as slaves. Dr. Howard says this is rolled away at Gilgal.
- **Ritual Preparations:** The religious acts (circumcision and Passover) and encounter with the commander of the Lord's army that the Israelites performed to prepare themselves for entering the land.
- **Shema:** A Jewish prayer based on Deuteronomy 6:4-9, which begins with the words, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one."
- **Commander of the Lord's Army:** The figure with a sword who Joshua encounters outside of Jericho. This figure is not God but a powerful, divinely appointed emissary of God, also seen elsewhere in the Old Testament.
- **Adon:** A Hebrew word, lower-case l, meaning "lord" or "master" used as a form of address to humans, different from the term for God (YHWH) which is the capitalized "Lord."

5. FAQs on Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 8, Joshua 5, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Joshua Chapter 5 - Preparing to Inherit the Land

1. **What is the overarching theme of Joshua chapter 5?** Chapter 5 serves as a conclusion to the preparations for inheriting the land. It focuses on the idea of getting right with the Lord through ritual acts before engaging in battle. It's a moment of spiritual preparation and sanctification for the Israelites as they transition into the promised land. This includes the idea that by prioritizing the Kingdom of God, things will work out in their favor.
2. **What are the three key ritual preparations described in Joshua 5?** The chapter outlines three ritual preparations: the circumcision of the people (verses 2-9), the celebration of Passover (verses 10-12), and Joshua's encounter with the commander of the Lord's army (verses 13-15) in reference to the Holy ground. Each emphasizes the importance of obedience and holiness before entering the battles for Canaan.
3. **Why was a second circumcision necessary in Joshua 5?** The text explains that while those who came out of Egypt had been circumcised, the generation born during the 40 years in the wilderness had not. This "second circumcision" was to bring the entire nation into covenant with God before taking possession of the promised land. The place where it happened is even referred to as the hill of foreskins because of the event.
4. **What is the significance of the story of Moses' near-death experience in Exodus 4 in relation to the events in Joshua 5?** The episode in Exodus 4, where God seeks to kill Moses and his wife circumcises their son to save him, highlights that even leaders must adhere to God's commands. Moses failed to practice circumcision with his own son, and subsequently neglected to have the Israelite males circumcised during the 40 years in the wilderness. The second circumcision in Joshua 5 is a correction of this failure and sets the stage for a successful campaign.

5. **What is the "reproach of Egypt" that is rolled away?** The "reproach of Egypt" is not just about guilt for their sins, but the psychological bondage and the stigma they carried as former slaves in Egypt. By performing circumcision on their second generation in the wilderness, God symbolically frees them from the identity of being former slaves of Egypt, marking a complete break with the past.
6. **Why is the cessation of manna significant?** The cessation of manna and the eating of the land's produce symbolizes the transition of the Israelites from being dependent on God for daily sustenance in the wilderness to becoming inhabitants of the promised land, reliant on its bounty. This also marked their transition from a wandering people to a settled one.
7. **How should the encounter with the commander of the Lord's army be interpreted?** The commander's appearance isn't primarily about military aid. His identity as the commander of the Lord's army is more significant. Joshua's initial question, 'Are you for us or against us?' is rebuked, emphasizing that the important thing is acknowledging who God is and that Joshua follows him and his will. The commander's command to remove his sandals, similar to God's command to Moses at the burning bush, underscores the holiness of the ground and the need for complete obedience.
8. **Why are ritualistic preparations, particularly in Joshua chapter 5, emphasized before battle?** The emphasis on ritual preparations signifies that Israel's success in conquering the promised land is not based on military might alone, but on their obedience to God and their sanctification. By prioritizing the kingdom of God, they are in the right posture to receive the land God had promised them. The battles are not meant to be understood primarily as a military campaign but as God's will being worked out on earth.