

Dr. David Howard, Joshua - Ruth, Session 9, Joshua 6-8 – Jericho and Ai 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 9, Joshua 6-8 – Jericho and Ai, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. David Howard's lecture analyzes Joshua chapters 6-8, focusing on the **battles of Jericho and Ai**. He examines the **military campaigns**, highlighting the **divine commands for the destruction of the Canaanites** and the **ethical implications**. The lecture also explores the **consequences of Achan's disobedience** and the subsequent **reconquest of Ai**. Finally, it discusses the **building of an altar** on Mount Ebal and the **significance of the "ger" (sojourner or proselyte)** in Israelite society. The archaeological evidence for Jericho's destruction is also considered.

2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 9 – 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
_Session09.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 9, Joshua 6-8 – Jericho and Ai

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. David Howard's lecture on Joshua 6-8:

Briefing Document: Joshua 6-8 – The Conquest and Covenant

Introduction:

This briefing summarizes Dr. David Howard's lecture on Joshua chapters 6-8, focusing on the events of the conquest of Jericho and Ai, and the related themes of obedience, disobedience, covenant, and God's plan for Israel. Dr. Howard emphasizes that this section, which he calls "Inheriting the land," is a crucial part of the book of Joshua, illustrating God's gift of the land and the complex relationship between God and Israel. He highlights the significant detail and ritualistic elements in these narratives.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. **Inheriting the Land (versus Conquest):** Dr. Howard prefers the term "inheriting" rather than "conquest" to emphasize the idea of the land as a gift from God. He views the battles as the means by which Israel receives this divine inheritance. He states: "I choose to call this section Inheriting the land, following my understanding of what's the major thrust of the book, God's gift and the inheritance."
2. **Divine Command and Destruction:** God commands the complete destruction of the Canaanites (Deuteronomy 20:16-18) to prevent Israel from being led astray by their idolatrous practices. This is a complex and difficult concept to reconcile. Dr. Howard acknowledges this, stating, "But we can't get around the fact that it is God who's commanding them, and Joshua's passing on the commands on the Lord's behalf. And so that's one of the things that gives us pause about the book." He sets aside a full discussion of the ethical implications for later, focusing instead on the narrative itself.
3. **Jericho: Ritual Victory and First Fruits:** The capture of Jericho is portrayed as a ritualistic event, akin to a religious offering, not simply a military victory. The detailed instructions, the seven days of marching, and the blowing of trumpets emphasize the sacred nature of the event. Dr. Howard notes, "It's almost as if it's presenting the destruction or the capture of Jericho in the same way as the celebration of the festival of the harvest or the festival of the other kinds of things"

with the days marked and the calendar marked." The city and its contents are to be devoted entirely to the Lord as "first fruits."

4. **The Walls Fall Down - Miracles & Emphasis:** Dr. Howard points out the contrast between how the miracle of the stopping of the Jordan river was described (long build up and repetition) compared to the miracle of the fall of Jericho's walls (short and to the point). This is interesting because it is the first and second miracle of the book. The Jericho miracle is quick, with little extra attention paid, making the point that the power is God's and not dependent on the action of the Israelites. He states: "Here, it's almost like, bang, God did it. And effortlessly, the wall falls down, and that's the end of it. There's no further, the narrative goes right on."
5. **Rahab's Inclusion:** Rahab, the prostitute, is spared and becomes part of Israel because she sheltered the Israelite spies. Her inclusion, alongside the later acceptance of the Gibeonites, demonstrates the possibility of incorporating those outside of Israel into God's people. "There's a silver lining there though because those are Canaanites who are spared and, in a sense, become part of Israel in the same way that Rahab in a more straightforward manner became part of Israel."
6. **Curse on Rebuilding Jericho:** Joshua pronounces a curse on anyone who rebuilds Jericho (Joshua 6:26). This curse is dramatically fulfilled in 1 Kings 16:34, when Hiel of Bethel loses his sons in the process of rebuilding the city during the reign of Ahab, hundreds of years later. This highlights the enduring power of God's word. "Really interesting, dramatic, tragic fulfillment, an echo of the passage here in Joshua 6. Tragically, someone did this, and he suffered because of it."
7. **Ai: Covenant Disobedience and Consequences:** Chapter 7 marks a turning point, with Israel's defeat at Ai caused by Achan's sin of taking devoted things. This disobedience is described as "breaking faith" with God, similar to adultery in marriage, illustrating a betrayal of the covenant. "And so, what is the Hebrew word there? The word is used in Numbers 5 to talk about the way a wife would act toward her husband by committing adultery. In other words, breaking the covenant of marriage, and acting unfaithfully. There, that's the same word used here."
8. **The Sin of One Affects the Whole:** Achan's sin has consequences for the entire nation, highlighting the communal responsibility of the covenant. Dr. Howard stresses that "the sins of one person affect the nation."

9. **God Withdraws Presence:** God's withdrawal of his presence is a severe consequence of Israel's sin. This lack of God's support results in the defeat at Ai. He states, "Here, God says, I'm not going to be with you. I will withdraw." The absence of God's presence is noted to be a devastating consequence.
10. **Purging Evil:** After Achan is dealt with, Israel is restored to a right relationship with God, which leads to the second victory at Ai. This highlights the need for purification and repentance. The author states, "...it's working out. That section ends, then, with a great heap of stones that, again, stands there to this day, whenever that happened to be. So, this section, 6, 7, and 8, tell us the story of the two or maybe three greatest earliest battles, the great victory at Jericho, the defeat at Ai, and then the victory at Ai, and they're told in exquisite detail to help us get that feeling."
11. **Re-Engagement with God and Victory:** In contrast to chapter 7, when the Israelites attacked Ai without guidance from God, chapter 8 emphasizes God's return, re-issuing promises made in chapter 1 and 6. "Get to chapter 8, and now God's back in the picture. In chapter 8, verse 1, the Lord said to Joshua, don't be afraid, don't be dismayed." The second battle of Ai results in victory because God is once again involved.
12. **Altar on Mount Ebal and Covenant Renewal:** After the victory at Ai, Joshua builds an altar on Mount Ebal, fulfilling the command in Deuteronomy 27. This covenant renewal ceremony includes blessings and curses, and the participation of all of Israel, including "sojourners" (ger).
13. **The Ger (Sojourner/Proselyte):** The inclusion of the "ger" (foreigner residing in Israel) in the covenant renewal highlights that God's covenant is not limited to those of Israelite descent. The "ger" is someone who has chosen to embrace the faith of Israel, becoming a "proselyte" and becoming an Israelite by faith, not by birth. Dr. Howard notes, "The ger was a foreigner, not born from the line of Abraham, but who had embraced the faith of Abraham. And so, the Ger was someone who essentially was an Israelite, not by birth, not by blood, but by faith." This also challenges the idea that the Old Testament was a faith of sacrifice versus a New Testament faith of grace, which Dr. Howard notes is broken by the inclusion of "Ger"

14. Faithfulness to the Law: The detailed account of the altar building and covenant renewal demonstrates the importance of obedience to God's law. The author states "So, we see Israel faithfully executing the commands from Deuteronomy 27." Israel is trying to faithfully execute God's commands.

Conclusion:

Dr. Howard's lecture on Joshua 6-8 presents a detailed analysis of the conquest of Jericho and Ai, emphasizing the theological significance of these events. He highlights the importance of obedience, the consequences of sin, the nature of God's covenant with Israel, and the inclusion of non-Israelites by faith. These themes are not just relevant to the historical context but provide lessons for understanding God's relationship with his people and the nature of covenant, blessing, and obedience. This sets the stage for later narratives in the book of Joshua and throughout the Old Testament.

4. Study Guide: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 9, Joshua 6-9 – Jericho and Ai

Joshua 6-8 Study Guide

Quiz

1. What is the main theme of Joshua 6-12 according to the source, and what is the significance of this perspective?
2. What were the specific instructions given to the Israelites regarding the treatment of the Canaanites?
3. How does the author describe the narrative pace of the story of Jericho's destruction compared to the crossing of the Jordan River?
4. What are some archaeological findings related to Jericho, and what do they suggest about the historical context of the book of Joshua?
5. What is the significance of the ritualistic approach taken in the battle of Jericho, and what does it signify?
6. How did Achan's actions affect the Israelites, and what does his story illustrate about the nature of sin?
7. What is the relationship between individual and collective sin according to the text, and how is it expressed?
8. How does the author interpret God's command for the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites ethically?
9. What does the term "ger" mean, and what does the use of this term reveal about the inclusion of foreigners in Israel?
10. What was the significance of the altar built on Mount Ebal, and how does it relate to the commands of Moses in Deuteronomy?

Answer Key

1. The main theme of Joshua 6-12 is "Inheriting the land," emphasizing God's gift rather than just the battles, which shifts the focus to God's provision and the fulfillment of promises. This is significant because it frames the conquests as part of God's plan for Israel's inheritance.

2. The Israelites were commanded to completely destroy all the Canaanites within the cities given to them, with no exceptions, due to the fear that they would lead the Israelites into sin by influencing them to worship other gods.
3. The narrative pace of the Jericho story is slow and detailed, emphasizing the ritualistic aspect and the lead-up to the final victory, while the crossing of the Jordan narrative is drawn out as a miracle, but the actual falling of the walls is fast and without much detail, showing a difference in focus.
4. Archaeological findings, debated, are about dating the destruction of Jericho's walls, with early finds attributing it to Joshua, disputed by later archaeologists but re-evaluated and supported by others, supporting a destruction that aligned with the Joshua account from around 1400 BC.
5. The ritualistic approach in the battle of Jericho, which involves marching around the city for six days, and then seven times on the seventh day, signifies that the battle was not just a military endeavor but a sacrifice and offering to God, emphasizing divine intervention.
6. Achan's actions led to the defeat of the Israelites at Ai and demonstrated how one person's sin could affect the whole community, highlighting the consequences of disobedience and the importance of communal accountability within a covenant relationship with God.
7. The text shows that an individual's sin can have consequences for the entire nation, as seen when the sin of Achan led to the defeat at Ai. It also shows how the whole nation was indicted, not just the one man who took spoil.
8. The author does not discuss the ethical implications of destroying the Canaanites in this session, but it is acknowledged as something the text commands and notes that he will discuss it in a future segment of study, but does make the point that the commands come from God.
9. The term "ger" refers to a foreigner who has taken up residence within Israel, often a convert, and shows that God's covenant included those who were not born into the Israelite community but who embraced their faith, emphasizing inclusivity based on faith, not lineage.
10. The altar built on Mount Ebal was a fulfillment of Moses' command in Deuteronomy 27. It served as a reminder of the covenant between God and Israel, and was a site for renewal through reading the blessings and curses of the law, as well as emphasizing the importance of following the law.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the role of ritual in the conquest narratives of Joshua 6-8, exploring how specific rituals function to emphasize divine agency and the covenant relationship between God and Israel.
2. Compare and contrast the events at Jericho and Ai, focusing on how the theological message of the book is communicated through both successes and failures.
3. Discuss the significance of the term "ger" in Joshua 8, and consider its implications for understanding the nature of Israelite identity and its relationship with foreigners and marginalized people.
4. How does the narrative structure of Joshua 6-8 contribute to the overall themes of the book of Joshua, and how does this structure emphasize the consequences of obedience and disobedience?
5. Critically examine the way the author handles the theme of God's presence in Joshua 6-8, and analyze how it is related to Israel's faithfulness or unfaithfulness.

Glossary

- **Achan:** An Israelite who disobeyed God's command by taking forbidden spoil from Jericho, leading to the defeat at Ai.
- **Ai:** A city near Jericho, the site of Israel's initial defeat due to Achan's sin.
- **Canaanites:** The indigenous people of Canaan, whom the Israelites were commanded to destroy, according to the text.
- **Ger:** A foreigner or sojourner who resided among the Israelites, often a convert to Judaism, and was to be treated well.
- **Jericho:** The first major city in Canaan conquered by the Israelites.
- **Mount Ebal:** The location where the Israelites built an altar and renewed their covenant with God, according to Deuteronomy.
- **Mount Gerizim:** One of the two mountains where half of the Israelites stood to receive blessings while the other half stood on Mount Ebal to hear the curses.
- **Septuagint:** The Greek translation of the Old Testament.
- **Spoils:** Booty, typically taken after military victory.

5. FAQs on Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 9, Joshua 6-9 – Jericho and Ai, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Joshua 6-8

- **What is the main focus of Joshua chapters 6-12, and how does it relate to the overall message of the book?** This section (6-12) of Joshua focuses on the Israelites inheriting the land of Canaan through a series of battles and encounters. While many view this as a "conquest" of the land, the speaker emphasizes it as "inheriting" the land as God's gift, aligning with the book's theme of God's promises being fulfilled through inheritance. These chapters detail the conflicts with the Canaanites, starting with the capture of Jericho and continuing through battles in the south and north, culminating in a summary of conquered kings. It showcases God's faithfulness in delivering the promised land to the Israelites.
- **Why is the battle of Jericho given such detailed attention in chapter 6?** The story of the fall of Jericho is told with great detail, similar to how the crossing of the Jordan River was described. The deliberate slowing of the narrative and the repetition of certain actions emphasize the importance of this first victory in Canaan. The author highlights the ritualistic nature of the battle, comparing it to a sacrifice or burnt offering to the Lord, with the city being devoted entirely to God. This meticulous description underscores that it was not a simple military victory, but a divinely orchestrated event where God fulfilled His promise to give the land to the Israelites.
- **How does the command to destroy the Canaanites relate to the actions in Joshua 6-8?** God commanded the Israelites to completely destroy the Canaanites as they entered the land, as detailed in Deuteronomy 20:16-18, and reiterated by Joshua in chapter 6. This was a measure to prevent the Israelites from being influenced by the Canaanites' detestable worship practices, and to remain faithful to God. The destruction of Jericho was part of this command, with the city being completely devoted to the Lord. However, Rahab and her family were spared due to her faith and actions, demonstrating an important point that obedience and faith were essential for the Israelites to fulfill the purpose set before them.

- What does the story of Achan in chapter 7 reveal about the covenant between God and Israel?** Achan's sin, stealing some of the devoted things from Jericho, represents a major breach of the covenant between God and Israel. This breach is not just an act of disobedience, but a betrayal of the trust between two parties. God's indictment against the nation also highlights the corporate nature of the covenant, where one individual's sin can impact the entire community. The defeat at Ai, the loss of God's presence and the subsequent consequences, serve as a potent reminder that faithfulness to the covenant was paramount, and not just the literal keeping of rules and rituals.
- How does the narrative style differ in describing the miracles at the Jordan River and at Jericho?** The crossing of the Jordan River is portrayed with a slow build-up, emphasizing every detail and savoring each step. The miracle of the walls of Jericho collapsing, however, is described much more abruptly. This contrast suggests that while both are God-orchestrated miracles, the author chose to portray them differently to highlight different aspects of God's actions, one as a deliberate act and the other as a swift and effortless manifestation of God's power.
- What was significant about the building of the altar on Mount Ebal, and how did it connect with previous commands?** The building of the altar on Mount Ebal was a direct fulfillment of the commands given by Moses in Deuteronomy 27. It was a covenant renewal ceremony where the Israelites built an altar of uncut stones, offered sacrifices, and wrote the words of the law on plastered stones. It showed a return to obedience after Achan's sin and the defeat at Ai. It also showed the intent of the Israelites to follow God's word and demonstrated the importance of observing and remembering their covenant with God.
- Who were the "ger" and why are they mentioned specifically in the altar-building ceremony?** The "ger," often translated as sojourners, strangers, or aliens, were foreigners who had chosen to live among the Israelites. They were not born into the Israelite lineage but were allowed to take up residence within their community and were to be treated well. Their inclusion in the covenant renewal ceremony was significant as it shows that God's covenant was not limited to just bloodline Israelites, but was also open to those who chose to embrace the faith of Abraham. The Greek translation of the Old Testament even uses "proselytes" to describe the "ger" showing that they were considered converts to the faith. This highlights the inclusive nature of God's covenant.

- **How does the speaker interpret the inclusion of Rahab and the "ger" in the Israelite community?** The inclusion of Rahab and the "ger" in the Israelite community is seen as an example of how Gentiles could become part of Israel not by blood or birth but by faith. Rahab's inclusion in the lineage of Jesus and the full participation of the "ger" in religious and community practices demonstrates that God's salvation extends to all who embrace His covenant. This directly challenges the notion that the Old Testament is focused on works and sacrifice while the New Testament on faith. The treatment of the "ger" shows a fundamental inclusion of those not initially of the line of Abraham when they accepted the God of Abraham and his way of life.