

## Robert Vannoy, Exodus to Exile, Lecture 8A

### Joshua continued

#### Review

#### III. Joshua

##### C. The Conquest of Canaan – Joshua 5-12

Last week when we were looking at the book of Joshua, we got down through III. C., which is: “The conquest of Canaan, Joshua 5-12.” Then at the end of the hour we looked at the attack on Ai and Israel’s defeat. We concluded that the reason for that was because Achan had taken some of the devoted things. When Achan was found and judged in chapter 8, Israel went up to Ai again and they were victorious rather than defeated. That led into a fairly lengthy discussion on the archaeological findings related to the site known as Ai in the biblical records, and the problem of site identification. The traditional identification of Ai is Et-Tel. The traditional identification of Bethel was Beitin. Livingston and some others have argued that the archaeological problems relating to Et-Tel result from incorrect site identification. They have looked for another site, either Khirbet Nisir or Tel El-Makatir. The latter seems to hold the most promise presently. That also involves the re-identification of the site of Bethel, since Bethel and Ai were close together. They move Bethel to el-Bireh. I don’t want to get back into the details of that discussion, but that’s where we ended last week.

##### 3. The Renewal of the Covenant at Shechem – Joshua 8:30-35

So let’s go on to 3. under C., which is “The renewal of the covenant of Shechem: Joshua 8:30-35.” After that big victory at Ai, we read in verse 30 of chapter 8, “Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel...He built it according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses.” In doing this, Joshua followed the altar law which is found in Deuteronomy 27:5, making it “of uncut stones in which no iron tools have been used.” In other words, he did not build it like the Canaanite altars.

Now go down to 8:32: “There, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua copied on

stones the law of Moses, which he had written. All Israel, aliens and citizens alike, with their elders, officials and judges, were standing on both sides of the ark of the covenant of the LORD, facing those who carried it—the priests, who were Levites. Half of the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had formerly commanded.” Then you read in verse 34, “Afterward, Joshua read all the words of the law—the blessings and the curses—just as it is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the aliens who lived among them.”

What Joshua is doing there is following the instructions that Moses had given on the plains of Moab, and you find those instructions repeated twice in the book of Deuteronomy. The first is in 11:26-29, where Moses says, “When the LORD your God has brought you into the land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses.” Then at the beginning of Deuteronomy 27, Moses says in verse 2, “When you have crossed the Jordan into the land the LORD your God is giving you, set up some large stones and coat them with plaster. Write on them all the words of this law.” Then verse 4 says, “Set up these stones on mount Ebal.” Verse 5 says, “Build there an altar to the Lord your God.” So you see, Joshua is now carrying out those instructions. Immediately after taking Jericho and Ai, they go to Ebal and Gerizim and do what Moses had commanded.

So it seems to me that after those initial victories, Israel is recognizing the conditions under which they were to possess the land: obedience to the stipulations of the covenant and blessing if they obeyed, but curses if they disobeyed. Right at the beginning of their occupation of the land they were reminded of those things.

#### 4. The Southern Campaign—Joshua 9-10

##### a. Gibeonite Deception

Let’s go on to 4., which is “The southern campaign, Joshua 9-10.” You read in the first few verses of chapter 9 that the Israelites were deceived into making a treaty with

some inhabitants of the land, led by the inhabitants of Gibeon. In verse 3 you read, “When the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they resorted to a ruse: they went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn-out sacks and old wineskins, cracked and mended. The men put worn and patched sandals on their feet and wore old clothes. All the bread of their food supply was dry and moldy.” They went to Israel’s camp at Gilgal, which was their base camp, and they say at the end of verse 6, “We have come from a distant country, make a treaty with us.” The Israelites were initially skeptical and they object: “Perhaps you live near us. How could we make a treaty with you?” The Gibeonites respond in verse 9 that they had come from a very distant country. And if you go down to the last sentence of verse 11, they say, “And our elders and all those living in our country said to us, ‘Take provisions for your journey; go and meet them and say to them, “We are your servants; make a treaty with us.”’ This bread of ours was warm when we packed it at home on the day we left to come to you. But now see how dry and moldy it is.”

In 9:14 you read, “The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the LORD.” Verse 15 in the NIV tells us that they made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath. Now, the language here is the language of the treaty formulas. You’ll notice if you go back there to verse 7, these Gibeonites say, “Make a treaty with us”—that’s to cut a covenant. And you notice on verse 8 that they say, “we are your servants”; in essence that’s saying, “We are your vassal.” And then when we get down to verse 15, the NIV says that “Joshua made a treaty of peace with them.” That’s a paraphrase, because if you look at the Hebrew, it says, “Joshua cut a covenant with them”—*karat berit*. Then it says that he made peace with them. He cut a covenant—in the NIV it is translated “a covenant of peace.” But *shalom*, peace, was to exist between treaty partners. They were to be at peace with one another. Then there was the ratification by oath that was customary in the establishment of treaties and covenants. You swore by oath. We’ve talked about the biblical covenant—that Israel took the oath in the Sinai covenant, and God took the oath in the promissory covenant with Abraham.

But then 9:16 tells us that three days after they made the treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites discovered they were neighbors living among them. The Canaanites had fooled Israel into ratifying this treaty in the name of Yahweh. Notice the end of verse 18: “But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them by the LORD, the God of Israel.” They were not going to break the oath they had taken in the name of the Lord. It was not just Gibeon, because you read in verse 17, “So the Israelites set out and on the third day came to their cities: Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth and Kiriath Jearim.” They were all involved, but Gibeon was the major city—certainly the most important of all those cities.

That was the situation, so in verse 21 you read what Israel did then. They said, “Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for the entire community.” So the leaders’ promise to them was kept, and they did not attack the Gibeonites.

#### b. 5 Kings of the Southern Coalition

So when the other inhabitants of Canaan from the other nine cities learned about this arrangement, this treaty between the Gibeonites and Israelites, they decided to go and attack Gibeon. That’s Joshua 10. In the first verses you read of the alliances of five kings: “Now Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard that Joshua had taken Ai and totally destroyed it, doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king, and that the people of Gibeon had made a treaty of peace with Israel and were living near them.” Then it says in verse 2 that Gibeon was an important city. It was larger than Ai all its men were good fighters. “So Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem appealed to Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish and Debir king of Eglon.” They got these five kings and formed a coalition, and the king of Jerusalem said, “Come up and help me attack Gibeon, because it has made peace with Joshua and the Israelites.” So those five kings from verse 5 joined forces and at the end of 5 it says that they took up all their positions against Gibeon and attacked it.

Now that puts Joshua and the Israelites in a bind, because they had concluded a treaty with the Gibeonites and the Gibeonites did exactly what you would expect them to

do. Verse 6 says, “The Gibeonites then sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: ‘Do not abandon your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us! Help us, because all the Amorite kings from the hill country have joined forces against us.’” There was undoubtedly a protection clause in the treaty. So Joshua does what was undoubtedly required by the treaty agreement: they marched up from Gilgal with his army, including the best fighting men, and the Lord says “Don’t be afraid of them; I have given them into your hands, and not one of them will be able to withstand you.”

### c. Sun Standing Still

Now I want to read Joshua 10:9-15, because this is probably one of the more frequently discussed miracles in the Old Testament. In verse 9 you read, “After an all-night march from Gilgal, Joshua took them by surprise. The LORD threw them into confusion before Israel, who defeated them in a great victory at Gibeon. Israel pursued them along the road going up to Beth-Horon and cut them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah. As they fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, the LORD hurled large hailstones down on them from the sky, and more of them died from the hailstones than were killed by the swords of the Israelites. On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel [This is the miracle that has attracted so much attention]: “‘O sun stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.’ So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a man. Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel. [Here you have the divine warrior theme]. Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal.”

With respect to that, the description of the sun standing still has attracted a lot of discussion. I think there are three basic approaches which seek to interpret what is going on here. I’d like to go through them quickly.

## 1. Rationalistic Legend

The first interpretation is held by most mainstream biblical scholars, and you will find it in a large number of commentaries. They view this as a passage that is to be taken literally, but not something that is historically reliable. It must be legend, because things like that don't happen. That's largely the rationalistic kind of view that is held by a worldview that does not permit divine intervention of this sort into the natural order of things. So they would understand the description here to be literal, but would say it is just legend—non-historical.

## 2. Poetic Expression

The second approach would be a poetic or non-literal interpretation of the passage. I would include a *heilsgeschichte* view with that, a salvation-history view. Poetic or *heilsgeschichte*—salvation history. If you take it as poetical, which some do, then verses 12-13 are understood to be a statement much like the expressions that you find elsewhere in the Old Testament, which describe the hills and the mountains skipping or the trees clapping their hands. Or consider Judges 5:20, where you have a poetic description of the battle against Sisera in which it says the stars fought against Sisera. Even a commentator such as Kiel (of the Kiel and Delitzsch commentary series, which is generally a reliable conservative commentary) sees it as a figurative way of saying that Joshua's prayer to the Lord for help was answered with renewed vigor in his soldiers, who then fought so valiantly that they did a day's work in a half of a day. So it seemed to them that the day had been lengthened. You might call that a subjective lengthening. This approach says it is to be read kind of figuratively or poetically.

If you look at your citations on page 55, there's a paragraph from Keil where he says, "It must be born in mind that it is not stated that God lengthened that day for the request of Joshua almost an entire day, or that he made the sun stand still almost a whole day, but simply that God hearkened to the voice of Joshua. That is, he did not permit the sun to go down until Israel had avenged itself on its enemies. This distinction is not

without importance. For a miraculous prolongation of the day would take place not only [notice this] if the sun scorched or the sun setting was the way that several hours, by the infinite power of God, could extend to 12 to 18 hours, but also if the day seemed to Joshua and to all Israel to be miraculously prolonged. [Why?] Because the work accomplished was so great that it would require almost two days to accomplish it without supernatural aid.” See, that’s a non-literal subjective lengthening.

Skipping down, you’ll notice he says, “The Israelites didn’t have clocks, and during the confusion of the battle it is highly unlikely that Joshua or anyone else engaged in the conflict would watch the shadow of the sun and its changes to discover that the sun had actually stood still.” So he says under such circumstances it’s quite impossible for the Israelites to decide whether it was a reality or only in their own imagination that the day was longer than others. Then he makes a final statement: “To this must be added the poetical character in these verses before us.” Those two verses (12-13) are Hebrew poetry as far their literary form is concerned, and you can see the parallelism of the poetic form.

So that is the poetical view which I’m linking with the *heilsgeschichte* or salvation history view. This is common in a fair number of mainstream commentaries today who take these historical books to be more theology than history. Someone such as the German scholar named Sternegle says, “This is a story that is told from out of Israel’s religious convictions that God helped his people at the time of the conquest. Israel was convinced that Yahweh was helping them conquer the land and they expressed that conviction in stories of this sort.” So stories such as this and the crossing of the Jordan are important as a witness to Israel’s faith, but they are worthless as far as telling us about anything that really happened in actual history.

Now you may recognize that approach if any of you have had the course Foundation of Biblical History where I talked about the ideas of Gerhard von Rad, his *Theology of the Old Testament*, and his discussion of the character of the historical material of the Pentateuch and of these historical books. Von Rad says that these stories are an expression of Israel’s faith and that they are a creation of their faith. Israel confessed her faith by speaking of things that God did. He says that that sort of

confessional history has little or nothing to do with the *historie* in the sense of what actually happened. Now, this is an important issue; I can't take a lot of time to get into the details here, but if this story as well as other similar stories of divine intervention—miraculous events such as the exodus crossing, the Jordan crossing, or this battle—are just expressions of Israel's faith, it seems to me that you're saying that the relationship between faith and history is reversed. From a biblical standpoint, history is foundational to faith. Faith is a response to what God says and does in history. It is not the other way around. Faith does not create the history. Faith is rooted in and nourished by God's acts in history.

So ultimately I think that Israel's religious conviction of God's power and his activity in history is really no different than ours. It rests on what God has done by word and deed in history. If those words and deeds are simply an expression of Israel's faith or the faith of the early church (and we often come to a similar situation in the New Testament accounts of divine intervention), then the basis upon which Israel's faith and ours is grounded is destroyed. So I think that to simply reduce this to a *heilsgeschichte* sort of theological construct as an expression of Israel's faith, which has nothing to do with what actually happened, is a dangerous position to take.

Those are two views: one is a rationalistic legendary kind of explanation for these verses. The second is poetic or *heilsgeschichte* or salvation history view.

### 3. Literal Explanations [Light Refracting or Extended Darkness]

The third view would be a literal and historically reliable view, which holds that this is something that actually happened. But even there an interpretive question arises: what did Joshua ask for? Did Joshua ask for prolongation of light in order to attack and defeat this coalition of kings? Or, did he ask for prolongation of darkness? In other words, did he want more daylight to defeat the enemy, or did he want relief from the heat of the sun to defeat this coalition of forces under the cover of darkness? Generally, this has naturally been understood as a prolongation of light; it's a longer day, the sun stood still over Gibeon, and if it stood still it's not moving and it will make a longer day. If you



take that understanding and ask the question, “Well, how can something like that happen?” then there are two explanations I have come across. One way is to stop the rotation of the earth on its axis and the moon in its orbit. In other words, it’s not that the sun is not going around the earth. It is the earth spinning on its axis that gives that appearance, and of course the earth is spinning on its axis and rotating around the sun at the same time. But it would be a cessation of the rotation of the earth on its axis, and a cessation of the moon in its orbit. So the sun stood still and the moon was stayed as it says in the text. Well, how could that happen? Well, I don’t think you can’ say it couldn’t happen; divine power can certainly cause something like that.

But others explain it in a different way and say that the miracle involves some sort of miracle of refraction of light, so that it *appears* that the sun and the moon did not move in their normal courses; they may have continued to move, but there was a miracle of refraction of light. Astronomers say that every day when you watch the sun set you can really see the sun four seconds after it has gone below the horizon due to a refraction of light as it hits the atmosphere and bends those rays of light. I’m not sure you really can decide exactly what the mechanism was that the divine action caused, but it was a prolongation of light.

But there’s another view that says, “No, it wasn’t prolongation of light but prolongation of darkness.” In your citations on page 54 there’s a lengthy paragraph from H. B. Blair and his commentary on Joshua in the New Bible Commentary, revised version. I’m not going to read that paragraph, but I want to run through the basic ideas of Blair’s interpretation of these verses. He points out that Joshua’s prayer was made in the early morning hours after an all-night march from Gilgal. Joshua took them by surprise. So he’s moving his forces through the night. You read in Joshua 10:12 that “the sun stood over Gibeon and the moon over the valley of Aijalon.” If you look, you can see that Gibeon is here and the valley of Aijalon is over to the west. In verse 12 you read, “The sun stood still over Gibeon” next to the east, so the sun is rising. “The moon over Aijalon”—the moon is to the west. So it seems to be the early morning hours. Now with that in mind, Blair suggests that when you read in verse 12, “Sun, stand still over

Gibeon” and in verse 13 “so the sun stood still,” the Hebrew verb is *dom* in both cases. *Dom* has the basic meaning of “be silent” or “cease.” So, you could translate that: “Sun, cease over Gibeon,” and in verse 13, “So the sun ceased” instead of “stood still”; it ceased to shine, stopped shining.

In verse 13 where you read “the moon stayed” as well as the phrase “the sun stood still,” both those words are *amad* in Hebrew, which means “to stand.” However, if you look at all the usages of *amad*, it sometimes means “to cease.” Look at 2 Kings 4:6 and Jonah 1:15. Let’s get the background for 2 Kings 4:6: this is one of the wives of a member of a company of prophets. Her husband had died and a creditor was coming to take this woman’s two boys as slaves instead of payment. She calls on Elijah and says, “I don’t have anything, I can’t pay this, I have little oil,” Elijah says in verse 3, “Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don’t ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side.’ She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her son. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, ‘Bring me another one.’ But he replied, ‘There is not a jar left.’” Then you read the phrase, “Then the oil stopped flowing.” “Stopped flowing” is *amad*: the oil ceased. That is the same word, *amad*. It’s not the normal meaning of *amad*, but it may have that sense of “ceased.” In Jonah 1:15, when Jonah is tossed into the sea, you read, “They took Jonah, threw him overboard and the raging sea grew calm.” “Grew calm” is the NIV translation, but it says, “The sea stood”—*amad*—it ceased from its raging. So that’s a possible way to translate those phrases.

But then at the end of verse 13 you also have the phrase, “The sun hastened not to go down about a whole day”—to go down. If you look at the Hebrew for “to go down,” it’s *lebo’*. You recognize it as “to come or enter.” When used with the sun, it normally means to set or to go down. However, there’s a note there on the bottom: “Either the *yatsa* or *zarak* usually expresses the idea of the sunrise. However, in Isaiah 60:1, ‘Arise, shine, for your light has come,’ ‘Light has come’ is *bo’*; and ‘the glory of the Lord has risen,’ that *zarak* is parallel to *bo’*. It’s possible to argue that those can apply to the

coming of light and the rising of the sun. As for the other phrase in verse 13, “about a whole day,” that’s *keyom tammim*. *Keyom* is “like a day.” *Tammim* is the idea of complete or finished. So you could translate it, “about a whole day.” But Blair suggests translating that as “when the day is done.” So, you would say then, “The sun hastened not to rise as when the day is done,” or in other words, as when it is dark. “The sun ceased shining in the midst of the sky and did not hasten to come, so that it was as when the day is done.”

#### Vannoy’s Analysis

I think that you can make a reasonable case for saying that what Joshua prayed for was a cessation of light. Put that back into the context: you read about the all-night march in verse 9, and then in verse 11 you read, “The Lord hurled large hail stones, and more of this coalition force died from hail stones than from the sword of the Israelites.” So you would understand Joshua coming up there through the night, then a storm coming, prolonging darkness, killing a number of soldiers with hailstones, and you have a prolongation of darkness rather than a prolongation of light. It is still divine intervention, and the Lord gives the victory.

You read at the end of verse 13, “Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel.” I would say this later reading in some respects does more justice to the whole context of the night and the storm, as compared to prolongation of light. But on the other hand, this is an unusual way of reading a number of these words; it’s possible, but it is not the most apparent way to read it. I think no matter what way you read it, the important thing is that the Lord intervened to give Israel the victory.

#### d. Defeat of the 5 Kings

Alright, the victory we’re talking about here is under the heading of “The southern campaign: Joshua 9-10.” That victory inaugurated what you might call the “southern campaign.” You read in Joshua 10:16 that the five kings fled after the attack by Joshua and the Israelites, and they hid in a cave at Makkedah—that’s on the previous map, 48. In

any case, they hid in that cave, and when Joshua heard about it, he said in verse 17, “Roll large rocks up to the mouth of the cave, put some men there to guard it, but don’t stop pursuing your enemy.” So they pursued the army and then returned to that cave. In verse 22 Joshua had the five kings brought out, and then in verse 26 you read that Joshua struck and killed the kings and hung them on five trees.

So, you read in Joshua 10:26, “Joshua struck and killed the kings and hung them on five trees...at sunset they were taken down and over the mouth of the cave they placed large rocks which are there till this day.” There’s another memorial or monument, rocks that are there “to this day” as a reminder of the Lord giving victory over these five kings.

From Joshua 10:29 through the end of the chapter, you read about the cities that Joshua took in the southern part of the land of Canaan. You’ll notice in verse 32 that the Lord handed Lachish over to Israel, Joshua took it, and verse 33 says, “Meanwhile, Horam king of Gezer had come up to help Lachish, but Joshua defeated him and his army until no survivors were left.” In verse 34 they moved to Eglon, attacked it, and destroyed everyone in it just as they done in Lachish. In verse 36 they went from Eglon to Hebron, attacked it, and took the city. In verse 38 they attacked Debir, took the city along with its king, its citizens, and put them to the sword. They did to Debir and its kings as they had done to the other ones. So in that southern area of Canaan they took city after city, and you get a summary in verse 40 and following: “So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded.” Then in verse 41 there’s a description of the boundaries of the territory that Joshua took: “Joshua subdued them from Kadesh Barnea to Gaza and from the whole region of Goshen to Gibeon.” So you get four towns mentioned. I think that Kadesh Barnea is the southern boundary. Later, “Dan to Beersheba” was the northernmost to southernmost towns of the land of Israel. Kadesh Barnea is about 80 kilometers (about 50 miles) south of Beersheba. Gaza is on the west on the coast, that southern area where it still is today. The Philistines were there in the Old Testament period.

They had the south, they had the west. This Goshen shouldn't confuse you—it's not the Goshen of Egypt, but a Goshen in the hill country of Judah. Later in the book of Joshua the tribal borders are described, if you look in Joshua 11:16 and 15:51. Look at Joshua 15:51: "In the hill country a number of towns...Goshen, Holon and Giloh—eleven towns and their villages." That's under the inheritance of the tribe of Judah that begins in verse 20. The inheritance of Judah includes that Goshen. Most say that Goshen was in the hill country of Judah south of Jerusalem, probably in the eastern Negev. So it's probably an eastern point, and then the northern front would be Gibeon at verse 8. This traces a kind of circle of the territory that was taken by Joshua in that southern campaign.

#### 5. The Northern Campaign – Joshua 11:1-20 [on horses and chariots]

Let's go on to 5., which is "The northern campaign: Joshua 11:1-20." In chapter 11 there is another coalition of forces. You read, "When Jabin king of Hazor heard of this, he sent word to Jobab king of Madon, to the kings of Shimron and Acshaph, and to the northern kings who were in the mountains, in the Arabah south of Kinnereth [that is the Sea of Galilee area], in the western foothills and in Naphoth Dor on the west to the Canaanites in the east and west; to the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites and Jebusites in the hill country; and to the Hivites below Hermon in the region of Mizpah. [So you have all these people from the north.] They came out with all their troops and a large number of horses and chariots—a huge army, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. All these kings joined forces and made camp together at the Waters of Merom, to fight against Israel." So here in the north there's another strong coalition of forces, and what does the Lord say to Joshua? That's verse 6: "Do not be afraid of them [even though it's an army as numerous as the sands on the sea shore!], because by this time tomorrow I will hand all of them over to Israel."

Then we get this interesting additional statement: "You are to hamstring their horses and burn their chariots." Now why is that there? Often when you have a battle, the victor takes the weapons of the defeated enemy and uses them themselves. But the Lord says to Joshua, "Don't take their horses, but make them useless—hamstring them, and

burn their chariots.” I think what’s going on here is a principle that you find elsewhere in the Old Testament. If you look at Psalm 20 in verse 7, you read, “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They will go to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm.”

It is interesting that when you get to the time of David in 2 Samuel 8, where David lists his conquests, you find in 2 Samuel 8:4, “David captured a thousand of his chariots, seven thousand charioteers and twenty thousand foot soldiers.” Now notice the next statement: “He hamstrung all but a hundred of the chariot horses.” So he did basically the same thing that Joshua did, except he kept a hundred of them. When you get to 2 Samuel 15:1, when Absalom attempts to overthrow David, what does Absalom do? Absalom “provided himself with a chariot and horses and the fifty men to run ahead of him.” He had a different idea of the role of the king. In 1 Kings 4:26 you get to the time of Solomon, and what does Solomon do with chariots and horses? Solomon had four thousand stalls for chariot horses and twelve thousand horses. You see the progression from the time of Joshua, hamstringing all of the horses; then as the kingship gets established, David has a hundred, and Solomon has twelve thousand horses.

Then you get into the book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 2:7 he says of Israel, “Their land is full of silver and gold; there is no end to their treasures. Their land is full of horses; there is no end to their chariots. Their land is full of idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their fingers have made. So man will be brought low and mankind humbled—do not forgive them...The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled).” Go down to Isaiah 31:1: “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD.” There’s the issue, and that’s raised right here as Israel begins to take the land of Canaan.

I don't think there's anything wrong with the riches *per se*, but I think Solomon began to trust more in his military machinery, his weapons, and the size of his forces than he trusted in the Lord. Eventually his heart was turned from the Lord in 1 Kings 11. 1 Kings 11:4 says, "As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been." And verse 9 says, "The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD." It seems to me there's nothing wrong with riches in itself, and the Lord blessed Solomon with riches; but I think the issue was where Solomon was looking for security. Was he attempting to find security by being obedient to word of the Lord, to the demands of the covenant, or was he simply finding his security in his military might?

So you read in Joshua 11:8 that the Lord gave the victory. They defeated them, pursued them, and then you read in verse 9 that Joshua did what the Lord said. He hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots. He didn't keep any of them. Then it reads that he took all that territory in the north, and a summary begins in verse 16: "So Joshua took this entire land: the hill country, all the Negev, the whole region of Goshen, the western foothills, the Arabah and the mountains of Israel with their foothills...He captured all their kings and struck them down, putting them to death...Except for those living in Gibeon, not one city made a treaty of peace with the Israelites." Then you read in verse 20, "For it was the Lord himself who hardened their hearts to go against Israel, so they might destroy them totally, exterminating them without mercy, as the Lord had told Moses." Then you read in verse 23, "So Joshua took the entire land just as the Lord had directed Moses and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions."

#### 6. Theology of Joshua 1-6 by David Howard

There's quite a long commentary on Joshua by David Howard in the New American Commentary series. He makes some interesting statements in commenting on the theology of Joshua 6-12, the passages we have just been looking at. I just want to read

a paragraph. It's not in your citations, but this is on page 287 of David Howard's commentary on Joshua in the New American Commentary series. He makes the comment, "Israel could not take the land without God's presence among them and going before them. He repeatedly reminded Joshua and the people that he was with them and they should not fear, for he would fight for them. In every military encounter, God provided the victory for his people. In the major encounters at Jericho, Ai, Gibeon, and the borders of Merom, the text calls attention to the fact that God fought for Israel, and that he gave the enemies into Israel's hand. In the minor encounters in chapter 10 the same is stated for most cities conquered. Not once did the Israelites win a victory due to their superior military force. In most cases it was as if the Israelites merely had to stand back and observe God at work on their behalf." So he goes on to say, "God and God alone was the victor in these matters against the enemy."

## 7. Joshua's Conquest of the Land

In the very beginning of our discussion of Joshua, I emphasized that one of the themes was that the Lord had given the land of Canaan to his people. So you get that summary of the conquest in the end of chapter 11. We read verse 23, "Joshua took over the entire land just as the Lord had directed Moses."

But then you turn over to chapter 12 where you get a list of all the cities and kings that Joshua took. If you turn over to chapter 13, you read in verse 1, "When Joshua was old and well advanced in years the Lord said to him, 'You are very old, and there are still very large areas of land to be taken over. This is the land that remains...' And you have a list of places. How do you put Joshua 13:1, "There are still very large areas to be taken over," together with 11:23, "Joshua took the entire land, just as the Lord directed"? Some people see it as flat-out contradiction. I don't think that's the way it should be read. It seems to me, what happened in that southern campaign and that northern campaign is that Joshua first went south and took a number of the major cities and broke the Canaanite resistance. Then he did the same thing in the north, defeated that coalition of kings and broke the will to resist in the north. But after the tribal possessions had been described



and each tribe went in to actually settle and to occupy the territory given to them, they had to complete the conquest. When you get to Judges 1, you find that each tribe was to go into their territory and to complete the conquest, and some of them—in fact, most of them—didn't do that. That's where you get the aftermath described in the book of Judges.

Let's look at the recent situation of war in Iraq. You had that initial swift campaign that went up from the south all the way to Bagdad and defeated the Iraqi army. That was one of these swift campaigns. But in the aftermath, with major combat operations over now, they had to occupy and control all of the towns and villages, which took much longer. It seems to me that it's a similar situation in Israel's conquest and settlement of Canaan.

#### D. The Division of the Land – Joshua 13-22

D. on your outline is “The division of the land: Joshua 13-22.” I'm not going to read chapters 13-22. This is the kind of material you might have some difficulty reading and keeping an interest, because for the most part it's a list of cities or towns. Those towns are the in borders of each of the tribal territories. Now this section of Joshua is of enormous interest for people who are interested in historical geography, who seek to locate these sites and describe the borders with all these lists of places. Of course you get into site identification issues, and that means if you compare atlases you're going to see that the boundaries are a little bit different. That's pretty much what you have in chapters 13-22.

##### 1. Location of the Tabernacle at Shiloh

I do want to call your attention to one other thing that is mentioned in this section. There is one theme that is of great importance, and that's the location of the tabernacle. You read in Joshua 18:1 in the middle of the section, “The whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at Shiloh and set up the Tent of Meeting there. The country was brought under their control, but there were still seven Israelite tribes who had not yet

received their inheritance.” So the tabernacle was to be located at Shiloh and it remained at Shiloh through the period of the judges into the time of Samuel. You remember that the Philistines attacked and captured the ark and destroyed Shiloh in the time of Eli and Samuel. So initially the ark was placed at Shiloh, and then in chapter 22 you have the people from Transjordan (Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh) who had accompanied Israel on the conquest went back to settle in that territory. So I just wanted to make those two comments about the section on the division of the land in Joshua 13-22.

#### E. “Joshua’s Last Days – Joshua 23-24

That brings us to e., “Joshua’s last days: Joshua 23-24.” At the beginning of chapter 23 you read, “After a long time had passed and the LORD had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then old and well advanced in years, summoned all Israel—their elders, leaders, judges and officials—and said to them, ‘I am old and well advanced in years. You yourselves have seen everything the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake.’” What he is going to do is to exhort Israel to remain faithful to the Lord, to love God with all their heart, mind, and soul, and to obey his commandments; for if they do not obey, they can be assured that the Lord will judge them. Notice what he says in verse 12: “But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you, and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, then you may be sure that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the LORD your God has given you.” And then he says, “I’m about to go the way of all the earth”—in other words, he is about to die. Then he says, “You know that not one of those promises the Lord gave has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one is failed. But [here’s the other side] just as every good promise of the LORD your God has come true, so the LORD will bring on you all the evil he has threatened, until he has destroyed you from this good land he has given you. If you violate the covenant of the

LORD your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the LORD's anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you."

So those are Joshua's words of exhortation to the Israelites as he is old and about to die. Chapter 24 is very similar. It's difficult to know if chapters 23 and 24 are a speech to the same assembly, or chapter 24 is a different assembly. You'll notice that chapter 24 begins with a place designation: Joshua sent all the tribes of Israel to Shechem. Perhaps chapter 23 is the same place.

#### Joshua 24 – Covenant Renewal

But when you come to chapter 24 and read through it, I think you will find the elements of the covenant form reappear. We talked about the covenant form modeled after the Hittite treaty form. You have a preamble in 2a: "This is what Yahweh the God of Israel says." The preamble identifies the senior partner to the treaty.

You have a historical prologue equivalent in 2b through 13. Notice the summary of previous beneficent acts: "But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the River and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac, and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I assigned the hill country of Seir to Esau, but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt. Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and I brought you out. When I brought your fathers out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea. But they cried to the LORD for help, and he put darkness between you and the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to the Egyptians. Then you lived in the desert for a long time [wilderness period]. I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you, and you took possession of their land. When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you. But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered

you out of his hand. Then you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands. I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you—also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow. [There's that emphasis again.] So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant." That's a classic historical prologue, the listing of previous relationships and the beneficent acts of the great king toward his vassal.

Then you have the stipulations in Joshua 24:14, 15, and 25. There are both basic and detailed stipulations. In verse 14 you have the basic stipulation, the fundamental obligation of loyal devotion to the great king: "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve Yahweh." Then verse 25 has the detailed stipulations. "On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he drew up for them decrees and laws."

Then the oath is in 16, 21 and 24. In verse 16 the people answered, "Far be it from us to serve other gods." In verse 21 the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the Lord." They say in verse 24, "We will serve the Lord our God."

You have the witnesses in verses 22 and 27: "Joshua said, 'You are witnesses against your selves that you have chosen to serve the Lord.' 'Yes, we are witnesses,' they replied." And verse 27: "'See!' he said to all the people. 'This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the LORD has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God.'"

There is one more covenant structural element—the covenant document in verse 26: "And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD."

So you have those basic elements. It's not rigidly stereotyped, but the fundamental ideals of that Hittite treaty form reflected in the Sinai covenant reappeared here on this

ceremonial day in Shechem, at the point of transition from the leadership of Joshua to a new era. Remember the covenant renewal on the plains of Moab in the book of Deuteronomy, and the transition from Moses' leadership to Joshua's. Now we come to the end of Joshua's life, and we are going through a transition from Joshua, the appointed leader over God's people, to a time when Israel settles into the land and has the obligation to live as God's people without a national leader. God was their king, and their obligation was to follow the stipulations of the covenant. This was to be a theocracy. Yahweh was the king. In book of Judges you will find that they don't really do that, and things fall apart.

#### F. Theology of Joshua – Vannoy's Perspective

"The theology of Joshua" is an article I wrote for *The New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Most of that series contains word studies, but volume 4 has a lot of essays on the theology of each book in the Old Testament, along with and some additional essays. I would like to read some of this article, highlighting just a couple of things. Go over to page 813 in the article. Previous to that we had been talking about the structure of the book of Joshua, but from page 813 over to page 814 I think you can get an idea of the structure of the book. This is borrowed from a man named Koorevaar who wrote a dissertation on the structure of the book of Joshua. Notice the way he outlines the structure. I think it fits the content. He gives the title "crossed" to the section 1:1 to 5:12; 'abar in Hebrew means "to cross." He speaks of the initiatives of Moses as far as content of the structure of the book. So the first divine initiative is the crossing of the Jordan in Joshua 1:1-9. The first closing is the circumcision and the Passover at Gilgal. So in that first section, "Divine initiative and the closing," Joshua 1:1 to 5:12 is "crossed."

The second section, Joshua 5:13 to 12:24, is *laqah*, "to take or attack," and that is the conquest. This is God's second initiative, the capture of Jericho. And 11:16 to 12:24 is the second chronicle of the victory. The third section, Joshua 13-21, is "divide"; the Hebrew there is *halaq*. You notice that you go from *laqah* to *halaq*. It's the same letters,

just in inverted order. You have *'abar*, “crossed”; you have *laqah*, “to attack”; you have *halaq*, “to divide”—God’s third initiative in dividing Canaan to a closing of the inheritance of Joshua. God designates cities of refuge. The fourth section is “they serve”—that’s *abad* in Hebrew. You see a kind of parallel with “they crossed,” *abar*. They look alike; the only difference is the final letter, *daleth* [d] to a *resh* [r]. So, I think that gives you a pretty good schematic of what is going on in the book. You cross, you take, you divide and you serve the Lord. “Serve the Lord” is those final two chapters that we just looked at.

So Koorevaar argues that the structurally revealed theological purpose of the entire book of Joshua is found in the third main section. “Cross” plus “take” equals “divide.” The third section is the description of those tribal boundaries. Within that third section (that’s the divide section), he finds a concentric chiastic structure. Chiasms are an interesting study. You often wonder how much is brought into the text and how much is inherent in the text itself. You start looking at various chiastic structures done by different people, and very often there’s disagreement. It depends first on how you define the boundaries of units. That can be debatable in many cases. But in any case, Koorevaar sees this chiastic structure in that third section. Notice what is at the heart of it. E. 18:1-10 “Tent of Meeting taken to Shiloh.” See my comment there: “At the center of this structure is the erection of the Tent of Meeting at Shiloh. Koorevaar sees this as a fulfillment of the significant Pentateuchal promise, ‘I will put my dwelling place among you and I will not abandon you. I will walk among you and be your God and you will be my people.’ This was the last promise in the list of blessings given by Moses in Leviticus 26.” Now Israel comes into the land and in the heart of that section of the description of the tribal possessions you have the location of the tabernacle, where God comes to dwell in the midst of his people. So those are some comments on structure.

### G. Primary Theological Themes

Right in the next page, 815, is “Primary theological themes.” When you look at Koorevaar and other materials you can see the primary themes of divine initiative and

divine presence. The Lord is the one giving orders; he's taking the initiative. He leads Israel in his conquest, and he is in their midst. So, divine initiative and divine presence are major themes. Halfway down the page, the divine warrior theme is also quite prominent in Joshua.

Something we talked about over on the next page is the land as a gift for inheritance. See the last paragraph on page 816: "They say that the land was a gift or an inheritance, and to say that Yahweh was the divine warrior who would fight for Israel in their battles for conquest does not mean that Israel had no responsibility on this conquest. Israel was commanded to take possession of the land that Yahweh was giving. Human effort is not excluded by divine initiative. Rather, it is used by Yahweh to accomplish his purposes when it is exerted in the conformity with divine direction."

#### Comments on Herem and Anticipated Eschatology

Here I want to make some comments on this idea of *herem*. This is something that has troubled a lot of readers of the book of Joshua. When Israel was commanded to take possession of the land of Canaan, they were also commanded to exterminate its inhabitants. The practice of *herem*, devoting things to Yahweh by totally destroying them, has been viewed by some as sub-Christian. That's the word John Bright uses. The implication of this assessment is that Israel's use of *herem* is dubious in light of further biblical revelation, especially in the New Testament. For some it has even meant that the God concept of the Old Testament is inferior to the God concept of the New Testament.

It should be noted, however (I think this is enormously important when you look at this question), that Genesis 15:16 suggests that when the time of the conquest arrived, Israel would be God's instrument of divine judgment on the Canaanites for their sin. Genesis 15:16 is a description of the Lord's promise to Abraham that he was going to give his descendents the land of Canaan, but they were first going to Egypt for 400 years and would come out again. Genesis 15:16 explains why: "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." When the iniquity of the Amorites was full, God was going to bring judgment on those Amorites. The instrument of God's judgment on the Amorites and

Canaanites was Israel at the time of the conquest. The Canaanites had so defiled the land by their wicked practices that the land would vomit out its inhabitants. So Israel's destruction of the Canaanites is not an example of sub-Christian aggression against the innocent inhabitants of Canaan. Rather, it is to be seen as the administration of divine judgment on wicked people steeped in sin. Israel is the instrument of that divine judgment. It is the divine initiative in the conquest that lifts *herem* out of the realm of all other aggressive wars of natural self-interest. That's not what this was. It sets it in a unique position of demonstrating in advance the ultimate fate of all people who reject God, who is Lord of all the earth. This is what distinguishes Israel's destruction of the Canaanites from all other so called "holy wars."

Now the next paragraph says something about holy war. That term has come back into prominence today. Jihad is all around us in the news. Israel was not doing "holy war." "Holy war" is not a biblical term. If you notice "holy war" through that paragraph, I like the comment, "It should be known that the term 'holy war' is nowhere used in the Old Testament to describe the conquest. A more appropriate term is 'Yahweh war,' Numbers 21:14, 1 Samuel 18:70, 25:28, where that language is used." This was Yahweh's war. The reality of the divine revelation and divine judgment on sin is reflected in the narratives of Israel's conquest of Canaan, which was undertaken by divine initiative and carried out with divine presence. It's a theme that runs through the entire book. It's a theme that both the Old Testament and the New Testament envision ultimately climaxing in the eschatological Day of the Lord. Prophets have a lot to say about that. God will come and destroy his enemies and those who did not believe in him and walk in his ways.

This perspective indicates that the conquest of Canaan should not be viewed as an example of arrested evolution in the ethical sphere, but rather as an example of anticipated eschatology. Those words "arrested evolution in the ethical sphere" and "anticipated eschatology" are words that are very prime. I think that kind of sums it up. Don't look at this *herem* as something that ethically is on some kind of sub-horror level, with the true Scripture rising to a new level in the New Testament. Look at in the book



of Joshua with the Lord's destruction of the Canaanites as anticipated eschatology—that's the Day of the Lord in proleptic form. I just want you to realize that in a much fuller form, it has its completed sense in Christ. The New Testament talks about that, Jesus talks about it, and the book of Revelation talks about it. The New Testament is not void of these kinds of concepts. I think that behind it all is the idea that God has made the human race and the world occupied by human beings in way that reflects a moral order of the Universe. God will judge the evil. He takes evil very seriously. Ultimately there's no escape from judgment, and the Canaanites experienced that. Ultimately all those who oppose God will experience it.

In the present time, or in the time where God's people organize things differently politically but where God's judgment on this period came on Christ himself, now you have the longsuffering and grace of God reaching out for people to accept him. But the other side of that is that not everyone will experience the judgment that the Canaanites did.

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Rough edited by Ted Hildebrandt  
Final edit by Elizabeth Fisher  
Re-narrated by Ted Hildebrandt