

# Numbers 27 Commentary

PREVIOUS Numbers: Journey to God's Rest-Land by Irving Jensen- used by permission

NEXT

Source: Ryrie Study Bible

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS "Wilderness Wandering"								
WALKING Numbers 1-12			WANDERING Numbers 13-25			WAITING Numbers 26-36		
Counting & Camping Nu 1-4	Cleansing & Congregation Nu 5-8	Carping & Complaining Nu 9-12	12 Spies & Death in Desert Nu 13-16	<a href="#">Aaron</a> & Levites in Wilderness Nu 17-18	Serpent of Brass & Story of Balaam Nu 21-25	Second Census 7 Laws of Israel Nu 26-30	Last Days of Moses as Leader Nu 31-33	Sections, Sanctuaries & Settlements Nu 34-36
Law & Order			Rebellion & Disorder			New Laws for the New Order		
Old Generation			Tragic Transition			New Generation		
Preparation for the Journey: Moving Out			Participation in the Journey: Moving On			Prize at end of the Journey: Moving In		
At Sinai <a href="#">Mt Sinai</a>			To <a href="#">Moab</a> <a href="#">Mt Hor</a>			At <a href="#">Moab</a> <a href="#">Mt Nebo</a>		
En Route to <a href="#">Kadesh</a> (Mt Sinai)			En Route to Nowhere ( <a href="#">Wilderness</a> )			En Route to <a href="#">Canaan</a> (Plains of Moab)		
A Few Weeks to 2 Months			38 years, 3 months, 10 days			A Few Months		
Christ in Numbers = Our "Lifted-up One" (Nu 21:9, cp Jn 3:14-15)								
Author: <a href="#">Moses</a>								

**Numbers 27:1** Then the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph, came near; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah and Hoglah and Milcah and Tirzah.

- **Zelophehad:** Nu 26:33 36:1-12 Jos 17:3-6 1Ch 7:15 Ga 3:28

## Outline of Numbers 27

- Nu 27:1-11 CLAIMING THE LAND - Law of Inheritance for Daughters of Zelophehad
- Nu 27:12-17 SEEING THE LAND - Moses' View of the Promised Land
- Nu 27:18-23 CONQUERING THE LAND - Appointment of Joshua as the New Leader

## THE FAITH OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD

Numbers 27 begins with a new problem and ends with a new leader!

This the preceding chapter helps give us the context

**"Now Zelophehad the son of Hopher had no sons, but only daughters; and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah." (Nu 26:33+)**

**Then the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph, came near ([qarab](#)); and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah and Hoglah and Milcah and Tirzah** - It would be easy to read over this section and miss the faith expressed by these daughters. Keep the context in mind -- Israel was still on the eastern side of the Jordan River and had not conquered any land. These women showed a faith greater than their father and their predecessors who refused to believe God's promises in Numbers 14-15! And so these 5 sisters **believed the promise of God** to give Israel the promised land and were willing to confront their revered leader with their request that they should receive their share when that glorious day was consummated. Wenham quoting Calvin adds that "Because of their piety their action is recorded for posterity (cf. Mt 26:6–13)."

The issue addressed in this section is the fact that only male descendants were registered by patriarchal lineage in the census.

Note that this situation with the 5 daughters of Zelophehad is to be distinguished from the **levirate law** - "A levirate marriage is literally a "marriage with a brother-in-law." The word levirate, which has nothing to do with the tribe of Levi, comes from the Latin word levir, "a husband's brother." In ancient times, if a man died without a child, it was common for the man's unmarried brother to marry the widow in order to provide an heir for the deceased. A widow would marry a brother-in-law, and the first son produced in that union was considered the legal descendant of her dead husband." ([Click full discussion of Levirate Marriage at Gotquestions](#))

**Constable** points out that "Normally when a father died, his sons divided his property with the eldest receiving a double portion (Deut. 21:15–17).. Daughters did not receive an inheritance other than their dowry. The dowry was a substantial present their father gave them when they married. The term dowry also refers to a gift the groom gave to his father-in-law when he married his daughter."...This passage is interesting because it shows how case law developed in Israel. When a situation not covered by existing laws arose, like this one, the people involved would go to Moses and the high priest who would inquire of God. God would reveal what the people should do. This revelation then became precedent for similar cases that might arise later.

**Guzik** adds that "generally, the system was not completely unfair to women. A woman received a dowry from her father as a wedding present. Typically, the father required his potential son-in-law to provide much if not all of the dowry. A dowry might consist of clothes, jewelry, money, furniture or more, and it was thought that the dowry could help provide for the woman if her husband left her or unexpectedly died."

**Wenham** - this consisted of clothes, jewellery, money and furniture, but richer fathers gave their daughters slave-girls, land or even cities (Gen. 29:24, 29; Judg. 1:13–15; 1 Kgs 9:16). Having married off his daughter and given her a dowry, a father had no further financial responsibility for her. She became a member of her husband's family and her sons inherited his estate. By this patrilineal system land was kept within the family, a fundamental principle of biblical law, which also underlies the jubilee legislation in Leviticus 25 (cf. 1 Kgs 21:3). (TOTC-Nu)

**TSK** - In the orders for the division of the land, just given, no provision had been made for females, in case of failure of male issue. The five daughters of Zelophehad, therefore, considered themselves as destitute, having neither father nor brother, and being themselves entirely overlooked; and they agreed to refer the case to Moses and the rulers, whether it were not equitable that they should inherit their father's portion. This led to the enactment of an additional law to the civil code of Israel, which satisfactorily ascertained and amply secured the right of succession in cases of inheritance. This law, which is as reasonable as it is just, stands thus:--1. On the demise of the father, the estate descends to the sons. 2. If there be no son, the daughters succeed. 3. If there be no daughter, the brothers of the deceased inherit. 4. If there be no brethren, or paternal uncles, the estate goes to the grand uncles, or brothers of his father. 5. If there be no grand uncles, then the nearest of kin succeeds to the inheritance. Beyond this fifth degree the law does not extend, because there must always have been some among the Israelites who could be called kinsmen.

**Numbers 27:2 They stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest and before the leaders and all the congregation, at the doorway of the tent of meeting, saying,**

- Nu 15:33,34 Ex 18:13,14,19-26 De 17:8-10

## **THE COURAGE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD**

**They stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest and before the leaders and all the congregation, at the doorway of the [tent of meeting](#), saying** - Picture this scene for a moment. These were women who had the faith and courage to stand before all of the leaders of Israel and make their petition! This would have been like appearing before the president, and the congress of the United States! This was no small matter.

## Related Resource:

- [Who was Eleazar in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Numbers 27:3** "Our father died in the wilderness, yet he was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah; but he died in his own sin, and he had no sons.

- **died in the:** Nu 14:35 26:64,65
- **in the company:** Nu 16:1-3,19,32-35,49 26:9,10
- **died in his:** Eze 18:4 Joh 8:21,24 Ro 5:12,21 6:23

## THE ARGUMENT OF THE CASE OF THE DAUGHTERS

**Our father died in the wilderness, yet he was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah** - Why do they make the point that their father was not involved in the rebellion by Korah? It is likely that Korah's family lost their inheritance because of Korah's rebellion. (cf Nu 16:30 "and swallows them up with all that is theirs.")

**But he died in his own sin, and he had no sons** - Some think this means he simply died a natural death (unlike Korah, et al for example) but it was still a death of judgment because he was part of the nation that refused to enter the promised land.

**Wenham** - "For his own sin probably...refers to the sin of the whole nation in refusing to enter the promised land and therefore sentenced to die in the wilderness. Zelophehad is acknowledged as at least tacitly having supported the sceptical spies (Nu 13-14; cf. 26:64-65)." (TOTC-Nu)

**THOUGHT** - Boldness, courage, birthed out of the faith – no land had even been taken and they ask for their portion of the land! That is a beautiful illustration of the "definition" of faith in Hebrews 11:1+ which says "Now faith is the **assurance** of things hoped for (HOPE IN BIBLE GENERALLY IS ABSOLUTE ASSURANCE OF FUTURE GOOD - THESE DAUGHTERS HAD "HOPE!"), the **conviction** of things not seen."

**Ronald Allen** has an interesting note - When the women made their claim to Moses, they specified that their father, Zelophehad, had not died because of participation in the rebellion of Korah (see Num 16) but only because he was part of the entire doomed first generation (v.3). In this they show their understanding of the reality of God's judgment combined with a sense of his mercy. It appears from this verse that the rebels associated with Korah not only lost their lives in the judgment of God on them, but their survivors may have lost their inheritance as well. Here is a particular death notice from among the huge statistic of 26:64. There is something touching in this. But these women did not excuse their father either. These were pious women with a sound understanding of the nature of the desert experience and a just claim for their family. Further, they were women of faith. The people were not in the land yet, but these women knew that they would enter it soon. Their claim to Moses is anticipative of the Lord's deliverance of the people from the awful desert to the Land of Promise. (EBC)

**NET Note** "The word order is emphatic: "but in/on account of his own sins he died."

**Believer's Study Bible** - Up to this point Hebrew law only recognized the rights of sons to inherit property. These daughters of Zelophehad (whose faith evidently exceeded their father's) claimed their father's inheritance because there were no sons (Nu 36:2). Cf. Josh. 17:3-6,

## Related Resources:

- [Who was Korah in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What was the significance of the rebellion of Korah? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who were the sons of Korah in the Old Testament? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who was Dathan in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Numbers 27:4** "Why should the name of our father be withdrawn from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers."

- **Why:** Ex 32:11 Ps 109:13 Pr 13:9
- **Give:** Jos 17:4

**Related Passage:**

Joshua 17:3 However, **Zelophehad**, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, **only daughters**; and these are the names of his daughters: **Mahlah and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah**. 4 They came near before Eleazar the priest and before Joshua the son of Nun and before the leaders, saying, "**The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers.**" So according to the command of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among their father's brothers.

## **THE BOLD REQUEST OF THE DAUGHTERS**

**Why should the name of our father be withdrawn from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers** - Note that their motivation was not greed for land but a desire to perpetuate the name of their father. These were loyal daughters who clearly loved their deceased father and sought legal rights in order to honor him. I think their motives were pure. The **possession** of course refers to land. This specific situation had never been addressed in the Law.

**Wenham** - Zelophehad had no sons, and therefore under traditional law his inheritance would on his death be transferred to his nearest male relative. By that means the land would be kept within the family. The surviving male relatives are listed in order of closeness in verses 9–10, brothers, uncles, others. The same order is found in Leviticus 25:48–49. His daughters challenged this accepted practice pleading that it would lead to their father's name being forgotten (4). (Ibid)

**THOUGHT** - There is a word for sisters in Christ here. Though the woman is the weaker vessel and her position in the church of God is one of subjection, yet this should not mean that her enjoyment of the spiritual inheritance should in any way be lessened. Like her brothers in Christ the christian woman has the same blessings and the same great prospect of heavenly things. She may not be called upon like the men of Israel to engage in conflicts or fill the same role as the men, but she can and should be zealous as to the great things of God. A sister is certainly not a silent nonentity in a seat, but as a valuable part of the assembly she should not only be obedient to the Word of God, but should also have an interest in and an exercise about "that blessed hope" (Titus 2:13). All too often it tends to be otherwise, and sisters, perhaps because of their position, can easily lose out in the enjoyment of the precious truths of the inheritance believers have come into. How good it is to see, then, a sister really marked by faith knowing the need and going in for and not desiring to miss out in the enjoyment of God's blessings. It is sad to see any believer, brother or sister, being indifferent to the great things into which God has brought each of His children. It has to be said that many believers are not in the good of their inheritance. Such believers ought to be arrested by the noble faith of these daughters, and, like them, should delight to come before God with the plea, "Give unto us therefore a possession ..." (Nu 27:4). (What the Bible Says)

### **Numbers 27:5 And Moses brought their case before the LORD.**

- Nu 15:34 Ex 18:15-19 25:22 Lev 24:12,13 Job 23:4 Pr 3:5,6

## **MOSES THE SPIRITUAL LEADER TAKES IT TO THE LORD!**

**And Moses brought their case before the LORD** - Moses being the mature, godly leader he was did not seek the advice of Eleazar or the other leaders, but he sought the advice of the "divine legislative authority," Jehovah. This is not the first time Moses went to the Lord for an answer. We have seen him take a similar approach in Nu 9:6-14+ (Passover Problem) and Nu 15:32-36+ (Sabbath Problem) and in both cases God gave him clear guidance.

**THOUGHT** - One mark of a spiritual leader is that they first take the issue to the LORD! Does this describe your reflex response dear leader? Moses presents us with a good pattern when we are wrestling with an unusual circumstance and desire guidance on how to proceed. We need to first go to God of the Word in the the Word of God and with a prayerful approach. Only after that should seek the counsel of men, but even then

their counsel should never be allowed to override the counsel of the all wise God! We have all made some decisions in our life where we wish we had gone to God first.

Allen has an interesting technical note - In the MT of this verse, the term "their case" is written with an oversize, darkened nun (the so-called majuscule nun), indicating the suffixed pronoun "their" (fem. pl.). It seems that the scribe used this unusual letter to bring special attention to the fact that this was an appeal from women.

#### **Numbers 27:6 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,**

- Ps 68:5,6 Ga 3:28

**Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying** - Moses is in effect offering a prayer, a petition.

**Allen** comments that "This section is not only instructive in terms of the issues it presents; these verses also give an indication how case law might have operated in Israel. The general laws would be promulgated. Then legitimate exceptions or special considerations would come to the elders and perhaps be brought to Moses himself. He then would await a decision from the Lord. The language is specific in this regard; Moses did not decide by himself but waited for a decision from the Lord. Then after the decision for the specific case is rendered (see Nu 27:7), an application for other situations is also able to be rendered (see Nu 27:8–11). (EBC)

#### **Numbers 27:7 "The daughters of Zelophehad are right in their statements. You shall surely give them a hereditary possession among their father's brothers, and you shall transfer the inheritance of their father to them.**

- Nu 36:1,2 Ps 68:5 Jer 49:11 Ga 3:28

**Related Passage:** Fulfillment of Inheritance to Daughters:

Joshua 17:3-6 However, Zelophehad, the son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, only daughters; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. 4 They came near before Eleazar the priest and before Joshua the son of Nun and before the leaders, saying, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers." So according to the command of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among their father's brothers. 5 Thus there fell ten portions to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which is beyond the Jordan, 6 because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons. And the land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the sons of Manasseh.

### **A PRECEDENT SETTING DECISION**

**The daughters of Zelophehad are right in their statements. You shall surely give them a hereditary possession among their father's brothers, and you shall transfer the inheritance of their father to them.** - NET - "The daughters of Zelophehad have a valid claim. You must indeed give them possession of an inheritance among their father's relatives, and you must transfer the inheritance of their father to them." God clearly had regard for these women and their rights. God is NOT a male chauvinist! God's honoring of these women was different than the denigrating treatment the surrounding pagan nations gave to their women! Women's rights in this time in world history were remarkable and show that the heart of God does not play favorites.

This section of Scripture reminds me of Paul's words in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

A Father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows is God in His holy habitation.

-- Psalm 68:5+

**Spurgeon** (comment on Ps 68:5) - In the wilderness the people were like an orphan nation, but God was more than a father to them. As the generation which came out of Egypt gradually died away, **there were many widows and fatherless ones in the camp, but they suffered no want or wrong, for the righteous laws and the just administrators whom God had appointed, looked well to the interests of the needy.** The tabernacle was the Palace of Justice; the ark was the seat of the great King. This

was a great cause for joy to Israel, that they were ruled by the ONE who would not suffer the poor and needy to be oppressed. To this day and forever, God is, and will be, the peculiar guardian of the defenceless. He is the President of Orphanages, the Protector of Widows. He is so glorious that he rides on the heavens, but so compassionate that he remembers the poor of the earth. How zealously ought his church to cherish those who are here marked out as Jehovah's especial charge. Does he not here in effect say, "Feed my lambs"? Blessed duty, it shall be our privilege to make this one of our life's dearest objects. The reader is warned against misquoting this verse; it is generally altered into "*the husband* of the widow, "but Scripture had better be left as God gave it.

**Allen on a hereditary possession** - In this case the Lord gave a favorable decision to these women. In fact, the response of the Lord went beyond their request. In v.4 they requested an 'aḥuzzāh ("landed property"). The response of the Lord was for an 'aḥuzzaṭ naḥalāh ("a hereditary possession of landed property," v.7). The point seems to be that not only would they receive the property, they could transfer it to their heirs as well. Thus they share with the sons of other fathers who were deceased. It is as though their father had had sons! (EBC)

We see that the letter of the law was carried out by Joshua when Israel had entered the promised land...

Joshua 17:3-6 However, Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, only daughters; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. 4 They came near before Eleazar the priest and before Joshua the son of Nun and before the leaders, saying, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers." **So according to the command of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among their father's brothers. 5 Thus there fell ten portions to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which is beyond the Jordan, 6 because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons. And the land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the sons of Manasseh.**

This law regarding the inheritance of land by the daughters was amended in Numbers 36:1-12 to prevent land from being transferred from one tribe to another tribe. In other words if Zelophehad's daughters had married men from other tribes other than Manasseh, the land would in effect be transferred to the husband's tribe and taken away from Manasseh. As a result, the daughters all married within the tribe of Manasseh and the land remained with that tribe (Read Nu 36:9-12).

**HCSB Study Bible** has an interesting note that "The names of two of Manasseh's descendants through Zelophehad, Hoglah and Noah, were preserved as the names of districts or towns in the region of Samaria (within the territory of Manasseh) in the Samaria Ostraca (inscribed potsherds) of the eighth century B.C., at least 200 years before the exile of Judah. (ED: God in effect greatly honored the great faith of these daughters!)

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#### **C H McIntosh - The daughters of Zelophehad speak right.**

They always do so. Their words are words of faith, and, as such, are always right in the judgment of God. It is a terrible thing to limit "the Holy One of Israel." He delights to be trusted and used. It is utterly impossible for faith to overdraw its account in God's bank. God could no more disappoint faith than He could deny Himself. He can never say to faith, "You have miscalculated; you take too lofty,—too bold a stand; go lower down, and lessen your expectations." Ah! no; the only thing in all this world that truly delights and refreshes the heart of God is the faith that can simply trust Him; and we may rest assured of this, that the faith that can trust Him is also the faith that can love Him, and serve Him, and praise Him.

**Numbers 27:8 "Further, you shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If a man dies and has no son, then you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter.**

### **ALL DAUGHTERS DEEMED HEIRS OF SONLESS FATHERS**

**Further, you shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If a man dies and has no son, then you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter** - And thus the case brought by the 5 daughters is not expanded to all other daughters whose deceased father left no son as an heir.

**Numbers 27:9 'If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers.**

## INHERITANCE TO THE BROTHERS

**If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers** - Now the statute is extended so that the land would stay within the family line.

**Numbers 27:10 'If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers.'**

## INHERITANCE TO THE UNCLES

**'If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers** - Again the "daughter statute" expands to the next in line to inherit the land so that the land would remain the family.

**Numbers 27:11 'If his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his nearest relative in his own family, and he shall possess it; and it shall be a statutory ordinance to the sons of Israel, just as the LORD commanded Moses.'**

- kinsman: Lev 25:25,49 Ru 4:3-6 Jer 32:8
- a statute: Nu 35:29 1Sa 30:25

## A STATUTE OF DIVINE JUDGMENT

**If his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his nearest relative in his own family, and he shall possess it; and it shall be a statutory ordinance ([mishpat/mispat](#)) to the sons of Israel, just as the LORD commanded Moses** - Notice that it is Yahweh who is still speaking and He is the Source of the statute, not Moses. Finally the property would pass to the "nearest flesh," which would usually signify a blood relative or one of his own "flesh and blood."

**NET Note** - The expression is [טִשְׁפַּת מִשְׁפָּט](#) (*khuqqat mishpat*, "a statute of judgment"), which means it is a fixed enactment that determines justice. It is one which is established by God.

**Guzik** reiterates the point made earlier that "The remarkable thing about these laws is that they were all made in anticipation—in faith—of coming into the inheritance of land in the Canaan. This was a real issue—at this time—for the daughters of Zelophehad shows they were real women of faith, concerned about dividing up what they did not yet have in their hands, but knew they would possess by faith."

**Allen** sums up this statute - The first in line for inheritance of his father is the father's son. If the father has no son, then his daughter will inherit in his stead. If there is no daughter either, then the inheritance would pass to nearest relatives: brothers, uncles, or other kin. The intent in each case is to keep the inheritance as close as possible to the deceased man's family line. His name and his possession in the land are inseparable. (EBC)

**Relative** (blood relative) ([07607](#)) ([sheer](#)) in this context implies the idea of close (blood) relative or kindred (Lev. 18:6, 12, 13, 17; 20:19; 21:2; 25:49; Num. 27:11).

**Numbers 27:12 Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Go up to this mountain of Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the sons of Israel.'**

- mount: Nu 33:47,48 De 3:27 Dt 32:49 34:1-4

Moses Sees the Promised Land from Afar  
(watercolor c. 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

## GOD GRANTS MOSES A VISION OF THE LAND

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go up to this mountain of Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the sons of Israel - Do we not see the grace of God in this "divine concession" to allow Moses to see the land God had promised in the Abrahamic Covenant? Moses did not earn the right to see the land, but God in great kindness and grace allowed him to see the land. And of course years later at the transfiguration, Moses would actually stand in the promised land! (Mt 17:2-4, Mark 9:2-5+). The Lxx of I have given is in the present tense "I myself am giving." The Hebrew rendering (qal perfect) signifies a past completed action and sees it as a certainty, whereas the Lxx sees it as an ongoing action. Both are correct.

Abarim is linked to Mt Nebo in Deuteronomy 32:49 "Go up to this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, [Wikipedia](#) which is in the land of Moab opposite Jericho, and look at the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the sons of Israel for a possession.

**Abarim**, a mountain, or rather chain of mountains, which form or belong to the mountainous district east of the Dead Sea and the lower Jordan. It presents many distinct masses and elevations, commanding extensive views of the country west of the river. From one of the highest of these, called [Mount Nebo](#), Moses surveyed the Promised Land before he died. From the manner in which the names Abarim, [Nebo](#), and Pisgah are connected (Deuteronomy 32:49, 'Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto Mount Nebo;' and Deuteronomy 34:1, 'Unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of [Pisgah](#)'), it would seem that [Nebo](#) was a mountain of the Abarim chain, and that Pisgah was the highest and most commanding peak of that mountain. The loftiest mountain of the neighborhood is Mount Attarus, about ten miles north of the Arnon; and travelers have been disposed to identify it with Mount Nebo. It is represented as barren, its summit being marked by a wild pistachio-tree overshadowing a heap of stones. ([Kitto](#); See also [Fausset](#))

**HCSB Study Bible** adds that "The **Abarim range** extended from an area northeast of the Dead Sea and then southward along the western edge of the Moabite plateau in Transjordan. The opportunity for Moses to see the land of promise from Dan to Zoar took place at Mount Nebo in the heights of Pisgah (Dt 32:49; Dt 34:1). (ED: UNDOUBTEDLY YAHWEH GRACIOUSLY PROVIDED A DAY WITH PERFECT VISIBILITY!)

#### Mount Nebo

**NET Note** -says the mountain of Abarim (mountain of the Abarim range) is "The area is in the mountains of Moab; Deut 34:1 more precisely identifies it as Mount Nebo. The Greek version adds "which is Mount Nebo." This is a typical scribal change to harmonize two passages.

**Stubbs** - In this section (Nu 27:12-17), and in the final one in Nu 27:18-23, three persons are prominent. Each of them in their own sphere and work are types of Christ. Moses the law giver and leader of the people is a type of Christ as Mediator; Joshua is a type of Christ as acting towards the believer now in and through the Spirit; and Eleazar speaks of Christ in the exercise of His priesthood in the heavenly sanctuary. (What the Bible Teaches – Numbers)

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#### James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - SEEING BUT NOT POSSESSING Numbers 27:12-17

“As the sunshine in the clouds,  
As the foam-bells in the floods,  
As the fragrance in the flower,  
As the dew-mown grass’s dower;  
Thou dost, Lord, in love assuage  
Trouble’s sorest, keenest edge.”

The keen edge was taken off Moses' disappointment when God in love gave him a sight of the land into which he was hindered from entering because of the sin he committed in rebelling against the Word of the Lord. Moses, as representing the law, could not bring the people into the promised land. What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God hath accomplished in the sending of His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3). The law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. We shall take note of his—

1. Assuring vision. "The Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given" (v. 12). If Moses could not enter the land, he had his faith confirmed by sight that the good and pleasant land was there. It was—

1. A LAND OF BLESSING Often spoken of, but as yet unpossessed, and typical of the exceeding great and precious promises given us in Christ Jesus, of which many Christians have heard much, but how few have taken full possession.

2. A LAND BEYOND. Moses saw it from Mount Abarim. Abarim means regions beyond. He had a very clear



and greatly enlarged vision afterwards from the top of Pisgah (Deut. 34:1–3). O how great are the “regions beyond” of Christian possibilities in the present life. Truly the land is great, but God was the Giver. All are yours, and ye are Christ’s (1 Cor. 3:22, 23).

2. Melancholy failure. “When thou hast seen it thou shalt be gathered unto thy people, for ye rebelled against My commandment” (vs. 13, 14). He failed because of—

1. UNBELIEF. He rebelled against His word by smiting the rock instead of speaking to it (Num. 20:8–12). How often in spirit have we done this same thing? The Lord has said only believe, but we have imagined that something more was needed, some worldly wisdom or fleshly energy to give emphasis to His word. Our smiting instead of speaking only serves to reveal our unbelief. There are many blessings into which we cannot enter because of unbelief.

2. GOD-USURPING PRIDE. God charges him with refusing “to sanctify Me before their eyes” (v. 14). Moses said, “Shall we fetch water from the rock for you?” For the moment he stepped into the place of the Lord, and robbed Him of His honour before the eyes of the people. All pride and self-exaltation is an attempt to dethrone the Lord. Self-interest will always shut out the Lord from the enjoyments of the fuller Christian life. Ponder deeply the words of our Lord when He said, “Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matt. 11:25).

3. Magnanimous action. “Moses said, Let the Lord set a man over this congregation, which may lead them, and bring them in” (vs. 15–17). If he cannot enter into the land himself he is most anxious that the others should. He is intensely desirous that his successor should be more successful in this matter than himself. This prayer of his reveals—

1. AN ENTIRE SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD. No grumble escapes his lips. If the honour of leading the people into the possession offered them is not to be his, then “Good is the will of the Lord.” He did not fall into that other common sin of getting huffy, a plague that sometimes breaks out among Christian workers, affecting both preachers and people alike.

2. A DEEP INTEREST IN THE PEOPLE OF GOD. He would be thankful to know that others were to inherit more than himself, if the Lord was to be glorified in it. In the good land of promise, the unsearchable riches of Christ, freely given us in Him, there is enough to make a satisfying lot for every child of God. O that all Christian leaders were as anxious as Moses to see the people of God entering into their inheritance in the Lord. But, like Moses, we must first at least see the land for ourselves before we can be really concerned about the enriching of the children of God with the fulness that is in Christ for them. Yet blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

**Numbers 27:13 "When you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was;**

- **you too:** Nu 31:2 Ge 25:8,17
- **as Aaron:** Nu 20:24-28 33:38 De 10:6 32:50

#### **Related Passages:**

Deuteronomy 3:27 ‘Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan.

Deuteronomy 34:1 Now Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan,

### **MOSES SEES LAND THEN SEES END OF LIFE**

**When you have seen it, you too will be gathered** (Lxx = [prostithemi](#) = added) **to your people, as Aaron your brother was-** God reminds Moses of Nu 20:24 where He had decreed "Aaron will be **gathered to his people**; for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the sons of Israel, because you rebelled against My command at the waters of Meribah.

**Allen** - The mountain from which Moses is to see the land is not specified in Numbers 27; Deuteronomy 3:27 and Dt 34:1 describe it as Mount Nebo and the top of Pisgah (see on Deut 34:1). (EBC)

**THOUGHT** - Take a moment ponder what might have been going through the heart and mind of Moses as he realized he would soon ascend Mt Nebo and see the promised land but not get to enter it. To help you ponder, take a moment and listen to a song that almost brings me to tears every time I hear it because, even without a vocal accompaniment, it seems to pick up the pathos of this poignant scene in Moses' incredible life from a baby in a river to a prince in a palace to the humble leader of Israel. **Play Twila Paris' instrumental [Mount Nebo](#).**

**Gathered to your people** is a euphemistic way (a "poetic expression") to say he is going to die, but otherwise the meaning is uncertain. NLT says "The time has come for Aaron to join his ancestors in death." Aaron was 123 years old (Nu 33:38–39).

Phrase **gathered to his people** - 7x in 7v - Ge 25:8 = Abraham; Ge 25:17 = Ishmael; Ge 35:29 = Isaac; Ge 49:33 = Jacob; Nu 20:24; Num. 20:26; Deut. 32:50 = Moses

**NET Note on gathered to his people** - This is the standard poetic expression for death. The bones would be buried, often with the bones of relatives in the same tomb, giving rise to the expression.

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**Note on Gathered to his people** - **G A Lee** in ISBE (Revised) has this note on **gather** - Of the significant or unusual uses of the term, perhaps most interesting is its use in contexts of death. Most frequent in these contexts is the expression "**to be gathered** [Heb ne'ēsap, lit "to be added"] **to one's people.**" This expression is used of Abraham (Gen. 25:8), Ishmael (25:17), Isaac (35:29), Jacob (49:29, 33), Moses (Nu. 27:13; 31:2; Dt. 32:50), and Aaron (Nu. 20:24; Dt. 32:50); perhaps it was intentionally restricted to this select group. A similar expression, "to be gathered to one's fathers," occurs only in Jdgs. 2:10 and 2 Ki. 22:20 (par 2 Chr. 34:28); the former passage concerns all of Joshua's generation, who "served the Lord" (v 7), and the latter passage is about Josiah (note that this passage adds the phrase "be gathered to your grave in peace"; for the significance of this and other apparent references to burial see below). The qal of 'āsap is used in apparently abbreviated forms of these expressions (Jgs. 18:25; 1 S. 15:6; Job 34:14; Ps. 26:9; 104:29; cf. Nu. 20:26, where the niph'al of 'āsap occurs alone, with apparently the same meaning as the fuller expression; cf. also Isa. 57:1). **The meaning of these expressions is debated.** Archeologists have found family graves with evidence of secondary burial and have concluded that these expressions refer to such group interment (see Kenyon, p. 263). This idea finds biblical support in several passages that mention the "gathering" (Heb 'sp) of bodies or bones (Jer. 8:1f.; 25:33; Ezk. 29:5). Some, e.g., Meyers, add that the expression "to be gathered to one's people" reflects not only a family burial but also a belief in the afterlife—in SHEOL the whole family of Israel is assembled (see also BURIAL IV). Tromp (p. 168) holds that this sense of reunion in Sheol developed from the practice of family burials, and that this development occurred before the biblical texts were written. For Heidel and others the expression refers only to the afterlife; it cannot refer to burial because other terms for burial occur in the context (cf., e.g., Gen. 25:8f.; 2 K. 22:20) or the burial is clearly a later event (cf. Gen. 49:33 and Ge 50:3–13). That the expression is used of those who were not buried in an ancestral grave, e.g., Abraham, Moses, and Aaron, seems a telling point (on these points see Alfrink; but cf. J. Skinner, comm. on Genesis [ICC, 1910], p. 352) (Here is Skinner's note on Ge 25:8 = "gathered to his kindred (see on Ge 17:14]) Originally, this and similar phrases (Ge 15:15; 47:30; Dt. 31:16 etc.) denoted burial in the family sepulchre; but the popular conception of Sheōl as a vast aggregate of graves in the under world enabled the language to be applied to men who (like Abraham) were buried far from their ancestors.—Isaac and Ishmael]).

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**G Campbell Morgan - Num. 27:13 When thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people.—Num. 27 13.**

There is something inexpressibly solemn in the story of Moses. In the plan of God the time was come when it was necessary that the people should go in and possess the land from which they had been excluded so long. Moses was not permitted to enter with them. In a sad hour he had failed to represent God truthfully to the people (Num 20); and this was the punishment of that failure. There was no relaxing of this discipline even in the case of this man. Nevertheless there was great tenderness in God's dealings with him in these closing scenes, and the evidence of his greatness is marked by his perfect acquiescence in the will of God. When this command to ascend the mountain, and look upon the land he could not enter, was given to him, his one anxiety was for the flock of God, that it might have a shepherd. He knew, as no other man knew, their weakness, and the necessity for one to lead them according to the will of God. The request was granted, and to him was given the joy and satisfaction of knowing that the appointed man was one of God's own choosing. The account of his going is given at the end of Deuteronomy, but these words bring the facts before us in this book, which is the book revealing the Divine discipline of failing people; and it serves to keep before us the fact that the most faithful servants of God cannot escape the results of their failures in this life. The compensations of grace are found afterwards, and to this man it was given to stand with glory wrapt around On the hills he never trod, And speak of the strife which won our life, With the incarnate Son of God. (Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible)

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**Numbers 27:14 for in the [wilderness of Zin](#), during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to**

- **rebelled:** Nu 20:8-13 De 1:37 Dt 32:51,52 Ps 106:32,33
- **Meribah:** Nu 20:1,13,24 Ex 17:7

#### Related Passages:

Numbers 20:8-13 (commentary) "Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink." 9 So Moses took the rod from before the LORD, just as He had commanded him; 10 and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, "Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" 11 Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. 12 But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." 13 Those were the waters of Meribah, because the sons of Israel contended with the LORD, and He proved Himself holy among them.

Deuteronomy 1:37 "The LORD was angry with me also on your account, saying, 'Not even you shall enter there.

Deuteronomy 32:50-51 "Then die on the mountain where you ascend, and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people, 51 because you broke faith with Me in the midst of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, because you did not treat Me as holy in the midst of the sons of Israel.

Psalm 106:32-33 ([commentary](#)) They also provoked Him to wrath at the waters of Meribah, So that it went hard with Moses on their account; 33 Because they were rebellious against His Spirit, **He (MOSES) spoke rashly with his lips.**



Wilderness of Zin - click to enlarge

## THE REASON FOR MOSES' DISQUALIFICATION

**For** - Term of explanation. Explains why Moses and Aaron forfeited their trip to the Promised Land.

**In the wilderness of Zin** ([another map](#)), **during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled** ([marah](#)) **against My command to treat Me as holy before their eyes at the water** - Strife (noun meribah) means strife, contention, a state of quarreling or wrangling.

**ISBE** - The **Wilderness of Zin** is the tract deriving its name from the town (Numbers 34:3). It is identified with the wilderness of Kadesh in Numbers 33:36; while in other places Kadesh is said to be in the wilderness of Zin (Numbers 20:1; Numbers 27:14 Deuteronomy 32:51). We may take it that the two names refer to the same region. The spies, who set out from Kadesh-barnea, explored the land from the wilderness of Zin northward (Numbers 13:21; compare 32:8). It bordered with Judah "at the uttermost part of the south" (Joshua 15:1). In this wilderness Moses committed the offense which cost him his hope of entering the promised land (Numbers 27:14 Deuteronomy 32:51). It is identical with the uplands lying to the North and Northwest of the wilderness of Paran, now occupied by the `Azazimeh Arabs.

**NET NOTE** on **treat Me as holy** - Using the basic meaning of the word  $\text{qadash}$  ("to be separate, distinct, set apart"), we can understand better what Moses failed to do. He was supposed to have acted in a way that would have shown God to be distinct, different, holy. Instead, he gave the impression that God was capricious and hostile—very human. The leader has to be aware of

what image he is conveying to the people.

**These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin-** This is similar to Nu 20:13 (commentary) "Those were the waters of **Meribah**, because the sons of Israel contended with the LORD, and He proved Himself holy among them." Recall that there are two Meriabhs, first at Mt Sinai and second 38+ years later near Kadesh, this name being added to Meribah to indicate it is the event shortly prior to Israel entering the promised land. The Septuagint translates "waters of Meribah" (*hudor antilogias*) as waters of dispute, contradiction, hostility, rebellion (all conveyed by the Greek [antilogia](#)).

#### **Brian Bell - What did he do again that was so bad?**

1. He dishonored the Lord by deviating from His plan to provide water for the people at Meribah.
2. He had drawn attention to himself instead of to God.
3. He obscured God's holiness & glory.
4. He allowed his frustration with the people to momentarily weaken his faith.

**Bell** - Was this hard for Moses? Did he ever beg to be allowed to enter?

**I also pleaded with the LORD at that time**, saying, 24 'O Lord GOD, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours? 25 '**Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.**' 26 "But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the LORD said to me, 'Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter. 27 'Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. 28 'But charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he will give them as an inheritance the land which you will see (**MOSES REPRESENTS THE LAW - CAN NEVER GIVE US THE INHERITANCE. JOSHUA REPRESENTS JESUS WHO ALONE CAN GIVE US THE INHERITANCE.** 1 Peter 1:3-4+, Heb 9:15+) .' 29 "So we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor. (Deut.3:23-29).

**Bell** adds that Canaan doesn't represent heaven, but of the believers inheritance "He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

- A whole generation died & never saw the land.
- 10 of the spies saw the land for 40 days & then died in their unbelief.
- Moses saw the land but could not enter it.
- The new generation, along with Caleb & Joshua, entered the land & claimed their promised inheritance. (Warren Wiersbe; With The Word; pg.101.102)

**Henry Morris** - God's judgment against Moses here, in spite of his almost incredible spiritual and military leadership for forty years, indicates the seriousness of rebelling against God's Word. In one sense, however, it was appropriate for Moses, now 120 years old, to turn the responsibilities of leadership over to a younger man who was well prepared for the rigors of the Canaanite conquest looming ahead of them (Nu 20:7-13).

**Meribah** (04809)([meribah](#) from [riyb](#) = to strive, contend) means place of strife or quarreling. This name is used of **two places**, both sites of Moses' striking a rock, the first being at the beginning of the 40 years of wandering and at the foot of Mount Horeb (Sinai) (Ex 13:7, Nu 20:13, Nu 20:24) and the second (**Meribah-Kadesh** - [see notes](#) on Nu 20:1-13) in the [desert of Zin](#) near **Kadesh**, ([map](#)) near the end of the 40 years of wilderness wandering when Moses disobeyed God and instead of speaking to the rock (Nu 20:8), in anger struck the rock twice. Because of Moses' disobedience at **Meribah-Kadesh** God said he would not enter the promised land (Aaron was also included in this punishment - Nu 20:24). Meribah - 11x - Exod. 17:7; Num. 20:13; Num. 20:24; Num. 27:14; Deut. 32:51; Deut. 33:8; Ps. 81:7; Ps. 95:8; Ps. 106:32; Ezek. 47:19; Ezek. 48:28

**Numbers 27:15** Then Moses spoke to the LORD, saying,

**MOSES' RESPONSE TO  
HIS DISQUALIFICATION!**

Moses forgets what lies behind and presses on to what lies ahead. No self pity. No expression of grief. No voicing of regrets. He owned the consequences of his own sin. A good reminder to all of us for sin always has consequences. A spiritual leader has a short memory regarding disappointments and Moses refused to dwell on the past that he could not dwell in the land, but to move on toward the future for the sake of the sons of Israel.

**Then Moses spoke to the LORD, saying** - We can read this quickly and forget that this is at its very essence descriptive of prayer to God and do not miss that Moses does not begin by says "But God..." or by grumbling or complaining about his fate. By so doing he showed himself to be blameless and innocent (Php 2:15). His prayer is not ego-centric (focused on himself) but is others-centric (focused on the congregation of Israel for their good).

Moses reminds me of Paul's words in Philippians 2

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.  
(Phil 2:3-4+)

**Brian Bell** comments on in this seamless transfer of power Moses was "Selfless - As always Moses' greatest concern was the people & not himself.

1. He doesn't leave grudgingly.
2. He doesn't host a pity party.
3. His staff didn't need to be pried from his hand.
4. He accepted God's decision with obedience & humility.
5. He even let God select his successor.

**Stubb** - The law that Moses represented could bring Israel to the borders of the new land, but could not bring them in. This could only be accomplished by Joshua a type of the Saviour, though in Moses leading the people out of Egypt there are some similarities to Joshua bringing them into the land. The Lord Jesus as the Captain of salvation is bringing many sons to glory and will not fail to complete His great work for His people (Heb 2:10). What is especially to be noticed here in vv. 15-17 is the beautiful way in which Moses responded to this word from Jehovah. The incident in ch. 20 had taken place months or even a year before. At that time the land was still some distance away, but now it is much nearer and therefore it must have been all the harder for Moses to have God's announcement repeated to him. Then God had first announced to Moses that he was not to enter the land, and there is no indication of how he had received that message. In Deuteronomy 3:25, however, he tells Israel that he had privately appealed to the Lord to let him go over into the land. The Lord refused him, and without a complaint he submits. Here his immediate reaction is to pray to God. The true nobility and unselfishness of this great servant manifests itself. The lovely spirit he shows is all the more remarkable given the great disappointment he suffered. The people of God and their need are so much upon the heart of Moses that he accepts his own lot. In Moses' prayer notice how he addressed God, what he requests, and the way in which he describes the congregation. (What the Bible Teaches)

**Numbers 27:16 "May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation,**

- the God: Nu 16:22 Heb 12:9
- set a man: De 31:14 1Sa 12:13 1Ki 5:5 Jer 3:15 23:4,5 Eze 34:11-16,23 Eze 37:24 Mt 9:38 Joh 10:11 Ac 20:28 1Pe 5:2-4

#### **Related Passage:**

Numbers 16:22 But they fell on their faces and said, "O God, God of the spirits of all flesh, when one man sins, will You be angry with the entire congregation?"

## **A PRAYER OF A GODLY LEADER**

**May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation**- What a response from a man just reminded "No Entrance" into the Promised Land! "Here is the Moses of old!" (Allen) Moses used a similar description of God in Nu 16:22+ when he went before God in the face of the rebellion of Korah, which was another time when there was the potential for a "crisis in leadership," even as there was now that Moses would soon die. **God of the spirits of all flesh** surely speaks to His sovereignty over every person. "He is the master of the universe who can thwart even the ways of a pagan diviner like Balaam and

accomplish His desires for His people." (HCSB) **Allen** adds that "If God is sovereign of all, then surely God will wish to show his sovereignty over his people in their evident need for a shepherd to follow Moses." (EBC) It is interesting that Moses did not submit his "candidate of choice," but totally yielded to the good pleasure and wisdom of Yahweh.

The Hebrew verb for **appoint** is [pequddah/pāqadh/paqad](#) the same verb used 103x in Numbers most often for "numbering" the people. The Septuagint translates paqad with the verb [episkeptomai](#) (a command in [aorist imperative](#)) which pictures Joshua as diligently attending or watching over, even as used in the New Testament to describe the pastor-shepherd in 1 Peter 5:2+ who was to "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight ([episkeptomai](#) in present tense) not under compulsion, but voluntarily,

**Believer's Study Bible** - The expression "**the God of the spirits of all flesh**" reminds us of Korah (Nu 16:22), who tried to take for himself a position of leadership to which he had not been appointed by God. Moses' successor was appointed not by Moses but by God. Moses' involvement insured continuity of leadership. Joshua's qualification was the Spirit's power manifested in his life (Num. 27:18; cf. Acts 6:5).

**Merrill on God of the spirits of all flesh** - This unusual title of God (occurring only here and in Num. 16:22) refers to God's omniscient understanding of everyone, which guaranteed the wisdom of His choice. (BKC)

**Stubb on God of the spirits of all flesh** - The God of the spirits of all flesh had given breath to Moses and preserved him thus far, and now very soon He would take his breath away. Moses had no say in when he would die, nor really had he any say in who was to succeed him as leader. All was under the control of the God of the spirits of all flesh. The God who knew the hearts of every individual among the 600,000 of the nation who had been numbered in ch. 26, and whose spirits belonged to Him, could be relied on to make no mistake in choosing a fit and true leader for His people. Moses knew this, and that is one great reason why he addressed God in this way. There are no grounds to believe that God is no longer to be regarded as the God of the spirits of all flesh. It is still as true today as it was in Moses' day. God alone can meet a need in a crisis among His people. (What the Bible Teaches)

**Numbers 27:17 who will go out and come in before them, and who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the LORD will not be like sheep which have no shepherd."**

- **go out:** De 31:2 1Sa 8:20 18:13 2Sa 5:2 1Ki 3:7 2Ch 1:10 Joh 10:3,4,9
- **like sheep:** 1Ki 22:17 2Ch 18:16 Eze 34:5 Zec 10:2 Zech 13:7 Mt 9:36 10:6 Mt 15:24 Mk 6:34 1Pe 2:25

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 9:36+ Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.

### PROVISION OF A SHEPHERD FOR SENSELESS SHEEP!

**Who will go out and come in before them** - In short, one who will truly be a leader brave and courageous as described by Yahweh in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 3:27-28 'Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. **'But** (TERM OF CONTRAST = A CHANGE OF DIRECTION, IN THIS CASE LEADERSHIP!) charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for **he shall go across at the head of this people** and **he will give them as an inheritance the land** which you will see.'

**And who will lead them out and bring them in** - Out of the wilderness and into the promised land. They were like "sheep" and needed a strong, courageous leader (Josh 1:8-9+).

**Brian Bell** - 3 requirements of leadership:

**1. By Example** - A brief, simple, but expressive eulogy was pronounced by Martin Luther upon a pastor at Zwickau in 1522 named Nicholas Haussmann. "What we preach, he lived," said the great reformer. I would not give much for your religion unless it can be seen. Lamps do not talk, but they do shine.

**2. By Leading** - Matthew Henry went to London, met a young lady of the nobility, who was also wealthy, and

they fell in love. She went to ask her father if she could marry him and he said, "He's got no background, you don't know where he's come from." She said, "Yes, I know, but I know where he's going and I want to go with him."

### 3. By Shepherding –

4. **Joshua was: a son (of Nun); a slave** (Egypt); a soldier (we all remember Moses hands raised & Aaron/Hur holding arms up...who was fighting the battle?); a servant (to Moses); a spy (A good one); a savior(Moses represented the Law, brought the people to the border of the land, but it took Joshua to take them into the land); a statesman; a saint (He was filled w/the Spirit of God; He enjoyed the presence of God; He was indwelt by the word of God; He was ever obedient to the will of God)

**So that** - Purpose clause.

**The congregation of the LORD will not be like (term of comparison = simile) sheep which have no shepherd** - No shepherd = great danger! After manifold rebellions by this people, one is surprised by Moses is so kind in his description! Joshua is clearly a foreshadowing of the Good Shepherd, the Messiah, about Whom Micah 5:2-4+ prophesied ("He will arise and shepherd His flock In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth.") Jesus declared "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." (John 10:11)

**THOUGHT** - Is JESUS your Good/Great Shepherd or are you wandering around aimlessly, in constant danger of attack by the evil one? Like the little children's game "Follow the Leader!"

Hebrews 13:20-21+ Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead **the great Shepherd of the sheep** through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, 21 **EQUIP** you (GOD'S SOVEREIGN PROVISION) in every good thing to **DO** (OUR SPIRIT ENABLED RESPONSIBILITY) His will, working (present tense - cf Php 2:13NLT+) in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Mt 9:36+ Seeing the people, He (JESUS) felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.

**Shepherd** was an image widely used of royalty in the ancient Near East. It was used for David, Israel's shepherd-king and for the Lord himself (Ps 23:1-5), and it was quoted in Matt 9:36 and Mark 6:34+ (cf 1 Ki 22:17, Ezek 34:5-6), as well as echoed in John 10 (see above).

**HCSB Study Bible** - Moses desired that the newly appointed leader would be just as concerned as he had been for the welfare of the nation

**Stubb** - In the crisis then, as well as today, the people of God without a shepherd are like sheep, helpless, bewildered, losing all direction, and in danger of being scattered or devoured. In 1 Peter 5:2 the apostle views the assembly as a flock needing feeding and leading. Then in 1 Peter 5:8 he refers to the devil as a roaring lion. God's assembly is vulnerable to the attacks of the evil one. This is why there is all the more need for spiritual teaching as nourishment for the sheep. It is the responsibility of overseers to make such food available for the sheep and for themselves to be examples to the flock. There is a great lack in assemblies today of shepherds who will have a compassion for the flock and a desire to care for them. Each flock of God is in more danger today than ever it was and it is up to the shepherds to guide and guard them. (Ibid)

**Guzik** - In an additional sense, this (SHEPHERD) is also fulfilled by the New Testament office of pastor-teacher—because the Greek word for pastor is the word for shepherd (Acts 20:28+, 1 Peter 5:2+). As 1 Peter 5:4+ puts it, Jesus is the Chief Shepherd, and pastors are under-shepherds. The job of shepherds is simple: To feed (John 21:15–17), and to lead; to lead them out and bring them in, that is, to give guidance and direction for the sheep to follow. Jesus was also moved with compassion when He saw the people as sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:34); Moses is showing the nature of Jesus by his concern.

**Numbers 27:18** So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him;

- **Take:** Nu 11:28 Nu 13:8,16 Ex 17:9 De 3:28 31:7,8,23 34:9
- **a man in whom is the Spirit** Nu 11:17 Ge 41:38 Jdg 3:10 11:29 1Sa 16:13,14,18 Da 5:14 Joh 3:34 Ac 6:3 1Co 12:4-11
- **lay:** Nu 27:23 De 34:9 Ac 6:6 8:15-19 13:3 19:6 1Ti 4:14 5:22 Heb 6:2

## Related Passages:

Deut 34:9-12 Now Joshua the son of Nun was **filled with the spirit of wisdom**, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. 10 Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, 11 for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, 12 and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

## JOSHUA A MAN WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

**So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun-** Yahweh's choice is the choice Spirit empowered man Joshua. Joshua was "the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth." (Nu 11:28) Moses later records that "**Joshua the son of Nun** and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive out of those men who went to spy out the land.(Nu 14:38)

**Joshua** (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ yehôšûa, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ yehôšua) means "the Lord delivers." In Nu 13:8,16+ Moses changed his name from Hoshea ("deliverance," "salvation"). In Ex 24:13+ we see that "Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God." So Joshua was privileged to approach God closer than other Israelites. And in Ex 33:11 we see Joshua would remain by the tent when the LORD was speaking face to face with Moses (could he hear any of the conversation?). In Nu 11:28-29+ we see that Joshua had attended Moses from his youth and was zealous for his "mentor." Of the 12 spies only Caleb and Joshua believed God's promise to give them the land of Canaan, so God declared they would be allowed to enter the land while the 10 unbelieving spies were killed. (Nu 14:6-8, 30, 38+).

**Merrill** - This Spirit-filled man, who had already demonstrated his qualities and capabilities (Ex. 17:8–10; 24:13; 33:11; Num. 11:28–29; 14:30, 38), was an ideal successor to Moses. (BKC)

Moses shows there is no spirit of jealousy or bitterness in passing the baton to Joshua. And so in Deuteronomy 1:38 he addresses the people declaring that "Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter there; **encourage him**, for he will cause Israel to inherit it."

**A man in whom is the Spirit and lay your hand on him** - Both Hebrew & Greek support that indeed the Spirit was WITHIN Joshua. Joshua already had the inner endowment for leadership. He was empowered by the Holy Spirit. This inner endowment was to be recognized by an external ceremony. Moses publicly laid his hands upon Joshua. This act signified the transfer of Moses' leadership to Joshua. The laying on of hands can accompany a dedication to an office (see Nu. 8:10+ = "the sons of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites").

**Joshua** 223x in 204 v -Exod. 17:9; Exod. 17:10; Exod. 17:13; Exod. 17:14; Exod. 24:13; Exod. 32:17; Exod. 33:11; Num. 11:28; Num. 13:16; Num. 14:6; Num. 14:30; Num. 14:38; Num. 26:65; Num. 27:18; Num. 27:22; Num. 32:12; Num. 32:28; Num. 34:17; Deut. 1:38; Deut. 3:21; Deut. 3:28; Deut. 31:3; Deut. 31:7; Deut. 31:14; Deut. 31:23; Deut. 32:44; Deut. 34:9; Jos. 1:1; Jos. 1:10; Jos. 1:12; Jos. 1:16; Jos. 2:1; Jos. 2:23; Jos. 2:24; Jos. 3:1; Jos. 3:5; Jos. 3:6; Jos. 3:7; Jos. 3:9; Jos. 3:10; Jos. 4:1; Jos. 4:4; Jos. 4:5; Jos. 4:8; Jos. 4:9; Jos. 4:10; Jos. 4:14; Jos. 4:15; Jos. 4:17; Jos. 4:20; Jos. 5:2; Jos. 5:3; Jos. 5:4; Jos. 5:7; Jos. 5:9; Jos. 5:13; Jos. 5:14; Jos. 5:15; Jos. 6:2; Jos. 6:6; Jos. 6:8; Jos. 6:10; Jos. 6:12; Jos. 6:16; Jos. 6:22; Jos. 6:25; Jos. 6:26; Jos. 6:27; Jos. 7:2; Jos. 7:3; Jos. 7:6; Jos. 7:7; Jos. 7:10; Jos. 7:16; Jos. 7:19; Jos. 7:20; Jos. 7:22; Jos. 7:23; Jos. 7:24; Jos. 7:25; Jos. 8:1; Jos. 8:3; Jos. 8:9; Jos. 8:10; Jos. 8:13; Jos. 8:15; Jos. 8:16; Jos. 8:18; Jos. 8:21; Jos. 8:23; Jos. 8:26; Jos. 8:27; Jos. 8:28; Jos. 8:29; Jos. 8:30; Jos. 8:35; Jos. 9:2; Jos. 9:3; Jos. 9:6; Jos. 9:8; Jos. 9:15; Jos. 9:22; Jos. 9:24; Jos. 9:27; Jos. 10:1; Jos. 10:4; Jos. 10:6; Jos. 10:7; Jos. 10:8; Jos. 10:9; Jos. 10:12; Jos. 10:15; Jos. 10:17; Jos. 10:18; Jos. 10:20; Jos. 10:21; Jos. 10:22; Jos. 10:24; Jos. 10:25; Jos. 10:26; Jos. 10:27; Jos. 10:28; Jos. 10:29; Jos. 10:31; Jos. 10:33; Jos. 10:34; Jos. 10:36; Jos. 10:38; Jos. 10:40; Jos. 10:41; Jos. 10:42; Jos. 10:43; Jos. 11:6; Jos. 11:7; Jos. 11:9; Jos. 11:10; Jos. 11:12; Jos. 11:13; Jos. 11:15; Jos. 11:16; Jos. 11:18; Jos. 11:21; Jos. 11:23; Jos. 12:7; Jos. 13:1; Jos. 14:1; Jos. 14:6; Jos. 14:13; Jos. 15:13; Jos. 17:4; Jos. 17:14; Jos. 17:15; Jos. 17:17; Jos. 18:3; Jos. 18:8; Jos. 18:9; Jos. 18:10; Jos. 19:49; Jos. 19:51; Jos. 20:1; Jos. 21:1; Jos. 22:1; Jos. 22:6; Jos. 22:7; Jos. 23:1; Jos. 23:2; Jos. 24:1; Jos. 24:2; Jos. 24:19; Jos. 24:21; Jos. 24:22; Jos. 24:24; Jos. 24:25; Jos. 24:26; Jos. 24:27; Jos. 24:28; Jos. 24:29; Jos. 24:31; Jdg. 1:1; Jdg. 2:6; Jdg. 2:7; Jdg. 2:8; Jdg. 2:21; Jdg. 2:23; 1 Sam. 6:14; 1 Sam. 6:18; 1 Ki. 16:34; 2 Ki. 23:8; 1 Chr. 7:27; Neh. 8:17; Hag. 1:1; Hag. 1:12; Hag. 1:14; Hag. 2:2; Hag. 2:4; Zech. 3:1; Zech. 3:3; Zech. 3:6; Zech. 3:8; Zech. 3:9; Zech. 6:11; Lk. 3:29; Acts 7:45; Heb. 4:8

**Joshua the son of Nun** - 27x in 27v - Exod. 33:11; Num. 11:28; Num. 14:6; Num. 14:30; Num. 14:38; Num. 26:65; Num. 27:18; Num. 32:12; Num. 32:28; Num. 34:17; Deut. 1:38; Deut. 31:23; Deut. 32:44; Deut. 34:9; Jos. 1:1; Jos. 2:1; Jos. 2:23; Jos. 6:6; Jos. 14:1; Jos. 17:4; Jos. 19:49; Jos. 19:51; Jos. 21:1; Jos. 24:29; Jdg. 2:8; 1 Ki. 16:34; Neh. 8:17

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## Cross-References on Joshua -

Exodus 24:13 So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.

Exodus 33:11 Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

Numbers 11:28 Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, said, "Moses, my lord, restrain them."

Numbers 13:8, 16 from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun....16 These are the names of the men



whom Moses sent to spy out the land; but Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.

Numbers 14:6-8, 30, 38 Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; 7 and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. 8 "If the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us—a land which flows with milk and honey....14:30 'Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun....14:38 But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive out of those men who went to spy out the land.

Numbers 27:15-23

#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Joshua in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- Whyte's Bible Characters [Joshua](#)
- See [Hastings articles on Joshua In Greater Men and Women of the Bible](#)
- [Joshua and the Land of Promise](#) - F B Meyer

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#### James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEAVEN-SENT LEADER Numbers 27:18–23

"Workman after workman dies,  
This Thy Church, Lord, sorely tries,  
As in tears she stricken stands,  
Sadly missing "vanished hands,"  
Wills strenuous, and brave hearts  
Ever ready to take their parts.  
O God, wilt fresh trust us give?  
Workmen die, but Thou dost live;  
In deepest desolation  
Thou Thy work dost carry on."

Moses has just had intimation of his removal through death, and the Lord singles out Joshua as the one who was to take his place and fill up his part. God buries His workmen but carries on His work. There are some things mentioned here in connection with the call of Joshua that might help us to search our hearts as preachers or teachers of the Word of God, and to see whether we as the servants of the Lord are after this Divine order. He was—

**1. Called by the Lord.** The Lord said, "Take thee Joshua, and lay thine hand upon him" (v. 18). This position was not his own choosing until the mind of God was unmistakably plain. It is His to thrust out labourers into the field. Pray ye the Lord of the harvest.

**2. Filled with the Spirit.** He was doubtless one of the seventy who shared the Spirit of power that rested on Moses (Num. 11:17). But by the laying on of the hands of Moses he was filled with the spirit of wisdom (Deut. 34:9). All Christians have a measure of the Spirit, but all are not filled with the Spirit. In the times of the old dispensation all did not get the offer of this filling, but now God wishes none to be without it. "Be ye filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).

**3. Honoured by the Lord's representative.** "Thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him" (v. 20). The honour which God put upon Moses was shared by him. This honour have all the saints. Did not a greater than Moses say, "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them?" (John 17:22). The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. Endued with the power of the Holy Spirit is the token that we are in the true apostolic succession.

**4. Accepted by the Lord's people.** "That all the congregation may be obedient" (v. 20). They answered Joshua, saying, "According as we hearkened unto Moses, so will we hearken unto you" (Joshua 1:16, 17). The power of God by the Spirit means having authority, and such authority that the children of God will recognise as from above. When a man speaks in the power of the Holy Ghost others will be conscious that they are hearkening to the Divine voice. As they would listen to Jesus, so will they listen to such.

**5. Guided by Divine light.** "He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him, after the judgment of Urim before the Lord" (v. 21). The Urim signifies "lights," and denotes the wisdom that comes from above (1 Sam. 28:6). He was emphatically "taught of God." This is another mark of a Heaven-sent teacher; he does not depend on the wisdom of men. He is frequently found consulting the Urim of the Holy Scriptures. The strength of his yeas and nays comes from these. His difficulties and all perplexing problems are settled in the light of this Urim.

**6. Successful in his work.** "They shall come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him" (v. 21). He was called and

empowered to bring the people into the land of promise, and he brought them in without fail. His promise was fulfilled. "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee" (Joshua 3:7). His presence always secures success. If God is to work in us and through us that which is pleasing in His sight, then we must in spirit, soul, and body be perfectly yielded up to Him. The secret of true and lasting success lies in His will being done in us. There is no higher attainment than this, and it may be yours, and yours continuously.

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### **Daily Treasures from the Word of God. - Nicolas Vendritti**

Our lesson is from Numbers 27:18–19, "So the Lord said to Moses, 'Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight.' " (NASU)

LESSON A smooth transition of power from one leader to another or from one generation to another is a rarity. There are usually two barriers. The first is that the older leader does not know how or when to step down. The second is that the more mature leader may transition out too early leaving a successor who has not been well trained or is immature. Moses and Joshua are the exception to the rule. Let's examine three things that Moses did well.

First, Moses separated Joshua as the Lord commanded. The important thing here is that the Lord chose Joshua as Moses' successor. The Lord is the one who calls and empowers. We are His stewards. The authority comes from Him. Moses had asked the Lord to pick someone who would lead the people so they would not be like sheep without a shepherd. Joshua was God's choice.

In addition, our text states that Joshua had the Spirit of the Lord. Joshua was under the tutelage of Moses for 40 years. Moses mentored him and he was now ready to step into the position as God's leader over Israel. Joshua was a man of integrity.

Second, Moses laid hands on Joshua as the Lord commanded. This act publicly announced to all that Joshua was Moses' successor. Eleazar was present and so were the people of God. Eleazar was the High Priest who held the highest religious office. The laying on of hands, which is found in both in the Old and New Testament, was recognition of the person as being set aside for service to the Lord. It also demonstrated the transferring of power from one person to another. Joshua was without a doubt the person designated by God and Moses to continue on as the leader of Israel.

Third, Moses commissioned Joshua as the Lord commanded. This final step is so important because it lets Joshua and the people know what Joshua was to do. Good communication is essential in leadership transition.

In review, Moses separated Joshua as the Lord commanded. Moses laid hands on Joshua as the Lord commanded. And Moses commissioned Joshua as the Lord commanded.

Let's apply from our text the concept of training and making disciples. It is important for leaders to prepare, train and deploy the future generation. May we empower others so that Christ will be glorified and the kingdom of God advance. Let's be intentional in making disciples and developing leaders!

END

It has been a pleasure to share with you Daily Treasures from the Word of God. Tomorrow's Bible reading is Numbers 29 through 32. Let's not forget the words of the psalmist, "The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces." Until tomorrow and may God bless you in abundance as you study the Word of God.

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### **Francis Schaeffer - Joshua's Ordination (Num. 27:18–23)**

On the plain of Moab, when "there was not left a man of them, save Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, the son of Nun" (Num. 26:65), the time came for Joshua's ordination. This is what we read:

After all the years of preparation, Joshua was now marked, in the presence of God's people, as the man of God's choice. Thus he would have learned that leadership, if it is real, is not from men. It was not even from Moses, but only from God. Men can ordain, but leadership does not derive from them. Men, even Christian men, can generate leadership, but leadership generated only by men is only on the level of any human leadership and will bring no more true spiritual results than any human charisma.

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### **John Butler - Successor of Moses**

"The LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him." (Numbers 27:18)

MOSES was coming to the end of his life, and so he asked God for someone to replace him as the leader of Israel. God obliged by making Joshua the successor of Moses. In the verse for today is the designation, qualification, and installation of Joshua as the successor of Moses.

**Designation.** “Take thee Joshua the son of Nun.” Once again Scripture emphasizes the priority of Divine callings. God decided here who the successor of Moses would be. You do not take a calling upon yourself. God decides your work assignment for His vineyard. Often, as here, the assignment comes through human means. Our concern should be to learn what God wants us to do. Service is not telling God what we will do but God telling us what we are to do. Not many get appointed to high posts of leadership as did Joshua. Most of us have lowly tasks as we have noted in previous devotions. But whatever our task, when God calls, we must obey.

**Qualification.** “A man in whom is the spirit.” This was the main qualification. It spoke of a spiritual condition. The fact that the “spirit” was in him indicated he was given the enablement for his task. **And indeed the work of the Holy Spirit in our day is to enable us to fulfill our calling.** But all of this speaks primarily of a spiritual condition. Appointment to tasks in the Lord’s work should not be based primarily upon secular achievement but primarily upon spiritual condition. In the election of church officers, this is seldom followed; but it ought to be the primary guide in church elections.

**Installation.** “Lay thine hand upon him.” This speaks of a public installation of Joshua to his office as the successor of Moses. The verses following this verse add details to the public service. Such a service is important especially in the case of high office. In an official and proper way it informs the congregation of the appointment. The public installation service puts honor upon the office which the congregation needs also to do if they are going to do God’s work well.

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### **Question: [Who was Joshua in the Bible?](#)**

**Answer:** Joshua is best known as Moses’ second in command who takes over and leads the Israelites into the Promised Land after Moses’ death. Joshua is considered one of the Bible’s greatest military leaders for leading the seven-year conquest of the Promised Land, and is often held up as a model for leadership and a source of practical application on how to be an effective leader. Let’s look at his life from a biblical perspective.

As a military leader, Joshua would be considered one of the greatest generals in human history, but it would be a mistake to credit Israel’s victory solely to Joshua’s skill as a military general. The first time we see Joshua is in Exodus 17 in the battle against the Amalekites. Exodus 17:13 tells us that Joshua “overwhelmed Amalek and his people,” and so we’re tempted to conclude that Joshua’s military expertise saved the day. But in this passage we see something odd occurring. In verse 11 we read, “Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed.” Eventually, Moses’ arms grew so weary that a stone had to be brought for him to sit on and Aaron and Hur held his hands up. Hence, we see in this vignette that Joshua prevailed because God gave him the battle.

The same can be said of the military victories in the Promised Land. The Lord had promised sure victory and delivered it in convincing fashion. The only exception is in the battle of Ai (Joshua 7). There are several things to note about this incident. Israel broke faith with God regarding the “devoted things” (Joshua 7:1). God had commanded the Israelites to devote everything to destruction (Joshua 6:17), and Achan had kept some of the loot from the battle of Jericho for himself. Because of this, God judged them by not giving them the victory at Ai. Another thing to note is that there is no explicit command by God to go against Ai. The purpose of putting these two battle stories side by side is to show that when God sets the program and agenda, victory follows, but when man sets the program and agenda, failure ensues. Jericho was the Lord’s battle; Ai was not. God redeemed the situation and eventually gave them the victory, but not until after the object lesson was given.

Further evidence of Joshua’s leadership qualities can be seen in his rock-solid faith in God. When the Israelites were on the edge of the Promised Land in Numbers 13, God commanded Moses to send out twelve people to spy out the land, one from each of the tribes of Israel. Upon their return, ten reported that the land, while bounteous as the Lord had promised, was occupied by strong and fierce warriors dwelling in large, fortified cities. Furthermore, the Nephilim (giants from the Israelites’ perspective) were in the land. Joshua and Caleb were the only two who urged the people to take the land (Numbers 14:6-10). Here we see one thing that sets Joshua (and Caleb) apart from the rest of the Israelites—they believed in the promises of God. They were not intimidated by the size of the warriors or the strength of the cities. Rather, they knew their God and remembered how He had dealt with Egypt, the most powerful nation on the earth at that time. If God could take care of the mighty Egyptian army, He could certainly take care of the various Canaanite tribes. God rewarded Joshua’s and Caleb’s faith by exempting them from the entire generation of Israelites that would perish in the wilderness.

We see Joshua’s faithfulness in the act of obediently consecrating the people before the invasion of the Promised Land and again after the defeat at Ai. But no more clearly is Joshua’s faithfulness on display than at the end of the book that bears his name when he gathers the people together one last time and recounts the deeds of God on their behalf. After that speech, Joshua urges the people to forsake their idols and remain faithful to the covenant that God made with them at Sinai, saying, “And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).

So what can we learn from Joshua's life? Can we draw principles for leadership from his life? Sure. That God gave him the victory in taking the Promised Land does not take away from his military leadership. Furthermore, he was a more-than-capable leader for the Israelites, but his skill in leadership is not the primary lesson we should draw from Joshua's life. A better lesson would be Joshua's faithfulness, his stand against the ten spies who brought the disparaging report about the obstacles in taking over the Promised Land, and his zeal in ensuring the covenant faithfulness of the people. But even his faith wasn't perfect. There is the fact that Joshua sent spies into Jericho even though God had ensured victory, and then there is the overconfidence he exhibited in the battle of Ai.

The primary lesson to draw from Joshua's life is that God is faithful to His promises. God promised Abraham that his descendants would dwell in the land, and, under Joshua, God brought the people into the land that He had promised to give to them. This act completed the mission of redemption that God started with Moses in bringing Israel out of Egypt. It is also a type that points to the ultimate redemption that Jesus brings to the community of faith. Like Moses, Jesus delivered us from bondage and slavery to sin, and, like Joshua, Jesus will bring us into the eternal Promised Land and everlasting Sabbath rest (Hebrews 4:8-10). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**Numbers 27:19 and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight.**

- **commission him:** De 31:7 Lu 9:1-5 10:2-11 Ac 20:28-31 Col 4:17 1Ti 5:21 1Ti 6:13-17 2Ti 4:1-6

Moses Blesses Joshua Before the High Priest  
(watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

## JOSHUA'S HOLY COMMISSION

**and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight**- This was public so all Israel could see and understand that Joshua was the chosen leader.

**Brian Bell - Joshua's inauguration or commissioning service!** The next leader would need to be a military leader & warrior! - Joshua becomes God's general who would conquer the land & give the people their inheritance. By laying his hands on Joshua, Moses conferred his authority on him. Note in front of the priest & them all (Nu 27:22).

### Timeless Principles for Transferring Leadership:

#### 1. When God removes, He replaces!

1. God never runs out of potential servants.
2. We should be open & sensitive enough to recognize His replacement.

#### 2. When God appoints, He approves!

1. God wants to bless the work of His new leaders.
2. Shame on us when we won't give them a chance. (They're too young; to green; to whatever) Be careful!
3. We may struggle to adapt to a new leaders personality & methods.
4. We need to remain open-minded, flexible, & hardworking.
5. We should pray & work for the success of that person's ministry.

#### 3. When God sustains, He gives success!

1. As long as they submit to His Spirit, their work will bear fruit for Him.

Joshua is a type of Jesus Christ (Joshua = Jehovah is salvation) who conquered our enemies for us & opened the way for us to claim all the blessings God had for us.

**Numbers 27:20 "You shall put some of your authority on him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey him.**

- **put some:** Nu 11:17,28,29 1Sa 10:6,9 2Ki 2:9,10,15 1Ch 29:23,25
- **may be:** Jos 1:16-18

Moses Names Joshua To Succeed Him  
(woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld)

## TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY

**You shall put some of your authority on him**- Some but not all! "This action was to forestall any doubts as to the legitimacy of the transfer of power among the people. This investiture of power (see Deut 34:9, "because Moses had laid his hands on him") was to be done under the most solemn and public of circumstances. It was done before Eleazar and the whole congregation (v.19). Moreover, the transfer was to be put into operation on a gradual but immediate basis. Some of Moses' authority was to be given to Joshua that the people might begin to obey him (v.20). The transition from the leadership of Moses to any successor would be difficult. The change would be made smoother by a gradual shift of power while Moses was still alive." (Allen)

**in order that** - Purpose clause. Why purpose? It is straightforward in this case - authority would stimulate obedience by the sheep.

**All the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey him**- Note God does not add "obey him just like the obeyed you!" They were not always obedient to Moses. However now they would be in the land of milk and honey and not the stifling, arid, snake infested desert, so grumbling would be less likely to occur. And from the book of Joshua, for the most part the sons of Israel did obey Joshua. The problem arose when Joshua passed on. This is chronicled in the Book of Judges which spans almost 350 Years of Israel's History (~25% of history in OT) during which they backslid from Compromise to Confusion!

**Believer's Study Bible** - The sense may be that authority would henceforth be split between Joshua, the military leader, and Eleazar, the receiver of God's will (Nu 27:21). Alternately, it may refer to a gradual transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua, beginning before Moses' death.

**Numbers 27:21** "Moreover, he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his command they shall go out and at his command they shall come in, both he and the sons of Israel with him, even all the congregation."

- **he shall:** Jos 9:14 Jdg 1:1 20:18,23,26-28 1Sa 22:10 23:9 28:6 30:7
- **Urim:** Ex 28:30 Lev 8:8 De 33:8 1Sa 28:6 Ezr 2:63 Ne 7:65
- at his word: Nu 27:17 Jos 9:14 1Sa 22:10-15

### Related Passages:

Nu 12:6-8+ He (YAHWEH) said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. 7 "Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; 8 **With him I speak mouth to mouth, Even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the form of the LORD.** Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant, against Moses?"



Eleazar with Ephod with Urim

## JOSHUA INSTRUCTED BY ELEAZAR THE PRIEST

Moreover, he shall stand before [Eleazar the priest](#), who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the [Urim](#) before the LORD - This pattern marked a shift, because previously the LORD spoke directly to Moses when Moses had questions or issues. Now Joshua would go through a "mediator" the high priest [Eleazar](#) using the somewhat "mysterious" [Urim](#) to discern judgments. In short Eleazar would reveal the will of God to Joshua who would carry out the work of God! They were to work in synchrony, leading a

"divine symphony," as they marched into the promised land. So even Eleazar would not be privileged like Moses who able to speak to Yahweh "face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend." (Ex 33:11+, cf Nu 12:6-8+ above). This same passage (Ex 33:11+, cf Dt 5:4, Dt 34:10) adds that "When Moses returned to the camp, his servant **Joshua, the son of Nun**, a young man, would not depart from the tent."

**Wenham** on the "new administration" - God's will was made known directly through Moses, a prophetic mediator; later generations had to rely on the priests, the authoritative teachers of the law (Lev. 10:10–11). When guidance was required on political or military questions not covered by the law, the priests could use the Urim and Thummim as a sort of oracle.

**Urim** - 7x - Exod. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8; 1 Sam. 28:6; Ezr. 2:63; Neh. 7:65

**At his command they shall go out and at his command they shall come in, both he and the sons of Israel with him, even all the congregation**

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**Question:** [What were the Urim and Thummim?](#)

**Answer:** The Urim ("lights") and Thummim ("perfections") were gemstones that were carried by the high priest of Israel on the ephod / priestly garments. They were used by the high priest to determine God's will in some situations. Some propose that God would cause the Urim and Thummim to light up in varying patterns to reveal His decision. Others propose that the Urim and Thummim were kept in a pouch and were engraved with symbols identifying yes / no and true / false.

It is unclear whether the Urim and Thummim were on, by, or in the high priest's ephod. No one knows the precise nature of the Urim and Thummim or exactly how they were used. The Bible simply does not give us enough information. References to the Urim and Thummim are rare in the Bible. They are first mentioned in the description of the breastplate of judgment (Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8). When Joshua succeeded Moses as leader over Israel, he was to receive answers from God by means of the Urim through [Eleazar](#) the high priest (Numbers 27:21). The Urim and Thummim are next mentioned in Moses' dying blessing upon Levi (Deuteronomy 33:8). The following Scriptures likely also speak of the Urim and Thummim: Joshua 7:14-18; 1 Samuel 14:37-45; and 2 Samuel 21:1. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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**F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - Numbers 27:21** At his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in.

The emphasis is on the word his. Moses had asked God to indicate a successor to lead out and bring in the people. But Jehovah drew a distinction. Joshua was to receive the Divine direction from Eleazar, the priest, who should enquire of the Lord; and at his word, i.e., God's word through Eleazar, the people were to go out and come in.

Our goings-out should be determined by the Word of God. — We never waste time when we stand before the true Priest, who has the Urim of Divine direction, especially when we are considering some call to duty. Very often we have gone out at the instigation of pride, or emulation, or fussy activity; we have gone out because others have done so, and we were eager not to be left behind. Under these circumstances the out-goings of our mornings have not been made to rejoice; we have encountered disappointment and defeat. When we go forth at God's bidding, He becomes absolutely responsible; otherwise we pierce ourselves through with many sorrows, and bring discredit on the cause we would fain serve.

Our comings-in must be determined by the Word of God. — When we should come in to rest, to pray, to fill again our souls with his Spirit, to suffer in secret, or to die, must be left to the determination of his will. It is easier to go out than to come in. Activity is pleasanter than passivity; the stir and rush of the world preferable to lying still to suffer. But our times are in his hand, and as soon as we recognize the decisions of the Urim in the appointments of Divine Providence, the speedier shall we be at peace. If we are fully surrendered to God, both our going-out and our coming-in shall be ordered aright by his Spirit.

**Numbers 27:22** **Moses did just as the LORD commanded him; and he took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation.**

### **MOSES OBEYS TAKING JOSHUA BEFORE ELEAZAR**

**Moses did just as the LORD commanded him; and he took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation** - Obedience without hesitation again! Notice **before all the congregation**, so that there would be no more of this "Korah-like" quibbling and quarreling regarding who was Israel's leader.

**Wenham** - Joshua's appointment as Moses' successor was, as it were, publicly announced by the laying on of his hands. It was later confirmed by God himself appearing in the pillar of cloud in the court of the tabernacle (Deut. 31:14–15, 23). Further revelations to Joshua followed the death of Moses (Josh. 1:1–9; 5:13–15), but we are told that it was the crossing of the Jordan that really convinced the people that Joshua was God's chosen successor to Moses (Josh. 4:14). (TOTC-Nu)

#### **Related Passages:**

Deuteronomy 31:14-15 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, the time for you to die is near; call Joshua, and present yourselves at the tent of meeting, that **I may commission him** (NOTE HERE GOD DOES THE COMMISSIONING!)." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the tent of meeting. 15 The LORD appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood at the doorway of the tent. (THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN A DRAMATIC COMMISSIONING FOR THE CONGREGATION TO WITNESS)

Deuteronomy 31:23 Then He (YAHWEH) **commissioned** Joshua the son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you."

**Numbers 27:23 Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses.**

- Nu 27:19 De 3:28 31:7,8

### **MOSES OBEYS LAYING HANDS ON AND COMMISSIONING JOSHUA**

**Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses** - This symbolic act was also in the presence of all to witness. The congregation would be familiar with the priest laying his hands on the sacrificial animal as a means of conveying the truth that the animal was to serve as the person's substitute (the animal's life/lifeblood for the life of the offerer). (Lev 1:4+, et al). It is interesting that in Numbers 8 the sons of Israel were to lay their hands on the Levites (see notes on Numbers 8:10-12)

**Wenham** - Despite the difference in authority between Moses and Joshua, there was a real continuity between them expressed symbolically by the laying on of Moses' hands (18, 23). In this symbolic gesture Joshua was identified with Moses and made his representative for the future. Through the imposition of hands either blessings or sins were transferred, and the one on whom hands were laid became the substitute or representative of the other man. Thus Jacob placed his hands on his grandsons' heads to bless them (Gen. 48:14); the people placed their hands on the blasphemer's head to transfer their guilt incurred through hearing blasphemy to the blasphemer (Lev. 24:14); and all worshippers placed a hand on the head of the sacrificial animal to indicate it was taking their place in dying for their sin (Lev. 1:4, etc.). But the closest parallel to the imposition of hands on Joshua is the ordination of the Levites (8:10ff.), when the Israelites appointed them as their substitutes in place of their first-born children. Laying on of hands continued in New Testament times to ordain people to church offices (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Tim. 4:14; Heb. 6:2). (TOTC-Nu)

**Guzik** - This public presentation and laying of hands on Joshua was important. It let the whole nation know that Joshua was now the leader and the nation should expect to follow him.

**Stubb** - What is the meaning of this procedure? In Old Testament times hands were laid upon persons either to confer blessings (Gen 48:14), or upon a sacrificial animal to signify that it was dying for the person's sin (Lev 1:4). Here it is to be understood in the same sense as Numbers 8:10 where hands were laid upon the Levites to consecrate them to their work. It was Moses' way of publicly recognising Joshua as the new leader. (Ibid)

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**Question:** [Laying on of hands - what does the Bible say?](#)

**Answer:** "Laying on of hands" is a biblical action; however, there is no biblical mandate requiring the physical laying on of hands for a particular spiritual ministry. Jesus certainly laid His hands on many of those He healed; however, He also healed without laying His hands on people. In fact, there were times when He was nowhere in the vicinity of those He healed. Matthew 8:8 describes Jesus healing the servant of the centurion without going near the centurion's house.

Here are two instances to consider: in one case the Holy Spirit bestows the gift of speaking in tongues with the act of an apostle's laying on of hands, and in the other case He does so without the laying on of hands, but simply through the apostle's preaching.

"Paul said, 'John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after

him, that is, in Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied" (Acts 19:4-6).

"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God" (Acts 10:44-46).

1 Timothy 5:22 says, "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure." The thought here is not so much in cautioning the physical action of laying on of hands but to urge care in bestowing the responsibility of spiritual leadership (however it is done). It is not to be done "suddenly" or without due consideration.

Undoubtedly, the laying on of hands in the early church was a means of connecting the message with the messenger, or the spiritual gift with the gifted giver. It provided a "sign" authenticating him through whom the physical manifestation of a spiritual gift was bestowed. We need to understand very carefully that there are no magical biblical formulas for the ministry of the church. Laying on of hands has no power in itself. Laying on of hands is only used by God when it is done in agreement with God's Word. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

## JOSHUA JAMES HASTINGS

See also the related study - **Joshua - Portrait of the Man God Uses**

- [THE FAITHFUL SERVANT](#)
- [THE VICTORIOUS SOLDIER](#)
- [THE RESOLUTE REFORMER](#)

### THE FAITHFUL SERVANT

Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister.—Josh. 1:1.

1. THE Books of Genesis and Exodus contain the story of the deliverance of God's people; in Leviticus and Numbers we have the law of holiness expounded. In Deuteronomy and Joshua we have the account of how the house of Jacob obtained their possessions. The Book of Joshua, in character as well as in composition, is closely allied to the books which immediately precede it. By the Jews it was separated from the law and included among the "Former Prophets"; but neither by its contents nor by its literary structure does the book itself warrant this separation. We have been in the habit of speaking of the Pentateuch; it would be more correct to speak of the Hexateuch; for there is good ground for belief that the Book of Joshua forms part, along with the other five books, of one great historical work, which recounts the early history of Israel. As to the author of this book, absolutely nothing is known. Many conjectures have been made which are utterly valueless, and the attempt to ascribe the authorship of the book to Joshua himself finds no support in Scripture. In these matters it is well for us not to be wise above what is written.

¶ It is obvious from the conclusion that the Book of Joshua was written neither by Joshua, nor within his lifetime. But there are certain entirely independent considerations that suggest so much at least as this: the book was written long after the age of Joshua, and in Judah.

(1) The presentation of the Hebrew settlement in Canaan as the result of a rapid and complete conquest appears to be due to the idealizing of long past events; the Book of Joshua must on this account be judged much later than the age which gave birth to the account in the first chapter, and to the stories that form the substance, of the Book of Judges: for the account in Judges, in its broad features, accords, the representation that dominates Joshua is entirely at conflict, with what the conditions and historical movements prevailing about 1400 B.C., and revealed to us by the contemporary Tell el-Amarna tablets, would lead us to expect the nature of the Hebrew settlement, which took place somewhat later, actually to have been.

(2) In Josh. 15:63 we read: "But the Jebusite(s) the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Israel were unable to dispossess; and (so) the Jebusite has dwelt with the children of Judah in Jerusalem until this day." With the substitution of "Benjamin" for "Judah" these words recur in Jdg. 1:21. Probably in both books the words are cited from a common and ancient source; in any case there is no probability that Judges borrows from Joshua; and so in Joshua at least the words are a quotation. But these words throw back the (partial) conquest to a past age, which is tacitly contrasted with "the present day." In any case the book which cites the



passage must be later than the source it cites, and consequently the product of an age later certainly than Joshua, possibly also later than David.

(3) The reference to the Book of Jashar (10:13) certainly implies a date later than David, for that book contained, among others, poems of David (2 Sam. 1:18).

(4) Interest in South Palestine and specifically in Judah dominates the book. Both in the account of the Conquest and in that of the division of the land the South is dealt with much more fully, and the district of Judah is more minutely described than that of any other tribe. The conquest of Central Palestine, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, is entirely omitted, and it is only at the end of the book that this district comes into prominence; and then almost of necessity, for Joshua naturally goes to his own country to make his farewell and die.

2. There are in the Bible a few men who were so extraordinary in their moral stature that no higher tribute could be rendered to their unique personality and services than this, that they were "hard to follow." Such a man was Elijah the Tishbite, whose life was so full of heroic achievement and dramatic incident that Elisha, although clad in the mantle of his predecessor, found it no easy task to succeed him in the prophetic office. Such a man was Moses, the man of God, whose character was such a beautiful blend of strength and tenderness, and whose career was distinguished by such signal tokens of Heaven's favour, that the son of Nun trembled at the thought of taking his place as leader of the host of Israel. Elisha and Joshua were good and great men, and their virtues and merits would have been more distinctly recognized by us but for the surpassing and overshadowing brilliance of the men whom they succeeded. No Hebrew prophet or ruler equalled Moses in nobility of character, greatness of mind, and extent of personal influence. Joshua was a small man in comparison with his predecessor. He was no prophet or constructive genius; he was not capable of the heights of communion and revelation which the lofty spirit of Moses was able to mount. He was only a plain, fiery soldier, with energy, swift decision, promptitude, self-command, and all the military virtues in the highest degree.

¶ Joshua could claim neither the breadth of Moses nor the religious genius of Samuel; he reminds us rather of David by his military qualities, his unshakable faith in the help of Jehovah, and his lack of reliance on the loyalty of the tribes which he was leading on to victory. He set to work courageously, trusting to God more than man, and his chequered career shows us in the midst of perils a constancy of courage and faith which was the cause of his success.

3. There is something at once beautiful and significant in the relationship between Moses and Joshua. It is the contact of maturity and youth, of the master and the scholar, and it suggests to us that deep natural order which ensures that the young evermore step into the heritage of the aged, and carry on the progress of the world. Moses made a firm, solid-set man out of his follower. He succeeded because he worked patiently for many years; and he did his work quietly. He let Joshua's union with him grow out of circumstances. We can well fancy the reverence and love which an unimaginative, plain, unthoughtful, un-mystical, but fiery nature like Joshua's would have for a subtle, many-sided, spiritual, imaginative, but fiery nature like that of Moses. For in fire, and ardour, and courage, they were equal and at one. By that reverence and love, growing deeper year by year, Joshua won the power of understanding the ideas of Moses, and of rooting them into his character.

¶ The central thought of all the philosophy of Moses was that religion was the base of all thinking, that it was the spring of all right conduct, that it was the greatest thing in the world—the only great and worthy thing—and in these thoughts Joshua shared. He was a young man, with all a young man's heat of blood and thoughtlessness of impulse, but he learned this great lesson, and by learning it he fitted himself for a great life.

¶ The great leader attracts to himself men of kindred character, drawing them towards him as the loadstone draws iron. Thus, Sir John Moore early distinguished the three brothers Napier from the crowd of officers by whom he was surrounded, and they, on their part, repaid him by their passionate admiration. They were captivated by his courtesy, his bravery, and his lofty disinterestedness; and he became the model whom they resolved to imitate, and, if possible, to emulate. "Moore's influence," says the biographer of Sir William Napier, "had a signal effect in forming and maturing their characters; and it is no small glory to have been the hero of those three men, while his early discovery of their mental and moral qualities is a proof of Moore's own penetration and judgment of character."

¶ To be a true disciple is to think of the same things as our prophet, and to think of different things in the same order. To be of the same mind with another is to see all things in the same perspective; it is not to agree in a few indifferent matters near at hand and not much debated; it is to follow him in his farthest flights, to see the force of his hyperboles, to stand so exactly in the centre of his vision that whatever he may express, your eyes will light at once on the original, that whatever he may see to declare, your mind will at once accept.

## I. AMALEK

1. The first mention that we have of Joshua's name is when it is said, "Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek." We do not know much of his earlier life, we only know that he was born in Goshen, in the land of Egypt; was the son of Nun of the tribe of Ephraim; was of the twelfth generation from Joseph, and was about forty years of age when the Exodus took place. He is styled "the minister of Moses," and "the servant of Moses," and occupied about the same relation to him as a chief of staff does to his general. When the Israelites had been in the desert only about seven days, Joshua had an opportunity of distinguishing himself. Encamped at Rephidim, the children of Israel were attacked by a tribe of the Amalekites, and Moses gave Joshua the task of repelling the attack. On whatever grounds Joshua was appointed, the result amply vindicated the selection. On Joshua's part there is none of that hesitation in accepting his work which was shown even by Moses himself when he got his commission at the burning bush. He seems to have accepted the appointment with humble faith and spirited enthusiasm, and to have prepared at once for the perilous enterprise.

¶ Her idea of attacking the central stronghold of the world's fashion and pleasure [Paris] was a daring one for a woman, especially for a woman of the Maréchale's youthful years. About this time she read the Life of Napoleon, and found in his astonishing career many lessons for an evangelist. She was especially struck by his faith in his star, and his contempt for ce bête de mot, impossible. She knew that she had something better to trust to than a star, and stronger reason for holding that all things are possible.

2. Joshua was one of those men who, lacking initiative themselves, build splendidly to another's plan. He was attracted, inspired, moulded, ruled by the creative genius of Moses. Here we have him in the valley fighting Amalek, receiving and dealing hard blows; now advancing victoriously, now doubtfully retreating, finally winning a great victory. Any military report of the battle would credit him with the whole achievement. But the historian of God's ways introduces the silent, uplifted hand of Moses on the hill, holding, from and for heaven, the key of victory. Those in the valley are but the instruments of that intercessory hand on the hill-top. If that falls through weariness, the battle-flags will flutter and be lowered with it: while that remains pointing heavenward, the banners will triumphantly ride the wind of war. Hour after hour the battle raged, till the arm of Moses became too weary to hold up the rod. A stone had to be found for him to sit on, and his comrades, Aaron and Hur, had to hold up his hands. But even then, though the advantage was on the side of Joshua, it was sunset before Amalek was thoroughly defeated. Joshua returned in triumph, and then began his training. It was an hour of great danger for his future work; for no one can help seeing that his temptation would be to feel that which every Israelite was first taught not to feel—that it was his own arm that had won the fight, and his own genius that had secured it.

¶ Prayer can obtain everything; it can open the windows of heaven, and shut the gates of hell; it can put a holy constraint upon God, and detain an angel till he leave a blessing; it can open the treasures of rain, and soften the iron ribs of rocks, till they melt into tears and a flowing river: prayer can unclasp the girdles of the north, saying to a mountain of ice, Be thou removed thence, and cast into the bottom of the sea; it can arrest the sun in the midst of his course and send the swift-winged winds upon our errand; and all those strange things, and secret decrees, and unrevealed transactions which are above the clouds and far beyond the regions of the stars, shall combine in ministry and advantages for the praying man.

¶ We had a meeting at the Council Office on Friday to order a prayer "on account of the troubled state of certain parts of the United Kingdom"—great nonsense.

Darkly the battle fluctuates to and fro,  
While, on the mount, uplifted hands of prayer  
Diffuse a halo of calm radiance there,  
The "noise of war" resounding far below;  
As when on some high peak, with lingering glow,  
The sunset sits enthroned serene and fair,  
While rolling mists obscure the lower air,  
And darkling streams with voice of thunder flow.  
Lord, I would climb each day prayer's shining height,  
And draw with lifted hands Thy blessing down,  
My sword to prosper in the strenuous fight,  
My arm to strengthen for the victor's crown;  
In life's stern warfare sword and arm may fail,  
But backed by faith and prayer they must prevail.

## II MOUNT SINAI

1. It is not without reason that history makes Moses take Joshua up afterwards with him into the sacred mountain, into the awful presence of God's power. While he went himself into the central darkness, he left Joshua upon the outskirts, alone in those dreadful solitudes. That was enough to take out of a man the sense of his own greatness. Joshua learned his lesson for life. There is not one touch, from beginning to end of his course, of any self-exaltation to the exclusion of God. No man could more undividedly carry out the idea that all Israel's success and victories were due to God alone.

Joshua waited patiently for the return of his master in a hollow of the mountain's brow. He was allowed to go with him as far or as high as, nay even higher than, any other earthly companion. There are grades in the soul's ascent and privilege. It was enough for Joshua that day to have earned a place so near the cloud, the nearest neighbour of the man who was called within to be God's listener.

2. The next step in Joshua's training was to learn how to obey with love and reverence. Therefore, after he had been solemnized upon the mountain, he became the "servant," the daily attendant of Moses. He lived with him in the tabernacle, doing his work, running to and fro in attendance, learning the duties which should belong to him as leader by being the right hand of the leader; the greatest warrior of the camp in daily obedience to the lawgiver of the camp. He began life well and nobly; for it is said of him, "Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle." As Moses passes with shining face, a majestic presence, through the worshipping people, Joshua, a young man, remains behind in the tabernacle, praying for that vision of God which shall fit him to take up the work of his vanishing master.

Like One who after many ages came,  
Jehoshua—God-Saviour—was His name.

As to "His Father's house" His way He made,  
His type "within the Tabernacle" stayed.

Each by hard toil and lowly ministry  
Learned through obedience that which he should be.

And, when the time appointed was at hand,  
Each led his people to a Promised Land.

## III THE SEVENTY ELDERS

1. The next time that Joshua comes into notice is not so flattering to him. It is on that occasion when the Spirit descended on the seventy elders who had been appointed to assist Moses, and they prophesied round about the tabernacle. Two of the seventy were not with the rest, but nevertheless they received the Spirit and were prophesying in the camp. The military instinct of Joshua was hurt at the irregularity, and his concern for the honour of Moses was roused by their apparent indifference to their head. He hurried to inform Moses, not doubting that he would interfere to correct the irregularity. But the narrow spirit of youth met with a memorable rebuke from the larger and more noble spirit of the leader—"Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!"

2. The spirit which was exhibited by Joshua in this incident was that of the martinet, and, if it had not been checked, would have been the jealous and envious spirit in the commander of an army; and in Canaan both would have been fatal to his influence and success among the hot-tempered princes of Israel and the fierce people. But, whatever be the reason, Joshua had got rid of all this weak, jealous, and martinet temper when we find him in Canaan. No complaints, no cabals, such as those which were made against Moses, were made against him. What Moses said to him when he carried his jealous tale about the unauthorized prophets—"Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets!"—Joshua would have said to any one who reported to him an unauthorized deed of war by one of his companions as dangerous to his supremacy—"Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were chieftains in war!"

¶ Cardinal Manning, who regretted the alienation of Cardinal Vaughan (then Bishop of Salford) from other than Catholic workers, urged him to visit some of the Salvation Army Shelters. Vaughan did so, accompanied by Mr. Wilfrid Meynell, who gives the following account of the visit: "In one room sat a number of women, mostly old women, at various sorts of needlework. 'Are any of my people here?' asked the Bishop, addressing the assembly. And, dotted about the room, aged dames, in the dignity of Poverty, stood up for their faith. Then the Bishop turned on the Captain: 'And do these attend Protestant prayers?' 'They attend the praises of God every

evening.' 'And what do you preach?' 'We preach Christ and Him Crucified, and we shall be very pleased if you will stay and so preach Him this evening. We are quite unsectarian.' This was too much. 'Well, but if I told them that unless they were baptized they could not be saved?' 'I should tell them that it was not true,' said the Captain. 'And I should tell them that it was not true,' echoed Cardinal Manning when we told him the story an hour later; 'I should explain to them the Church's doctrine of the Baptism of Desire.' Manning's Thomas More-like love of rallying whatever seemed too grave and too formal—a fashion of mind and speech which increased with the passage of years—was much in evidence that evening. Herbert Vaughan's great gravity offered a tempting target for the darts and sallies of this Most Eminent Puck, who greeted his return with the hope that Herbert, who had always been so good a Catholic, would now, after his contact with the Army, be also a good Christian! But the Bishop insisted on a ban, not banter. He went straight to the point. 'You are quite mistaken, my Lord, in thinking that the work of the Army is undenominational,' and he told the test case about Baptism, with the result already named. The more sanguine the Cardinal about the good done by the 'other sheep,' the more sore became the Bishop. 'I know,' he said, 'you would labour and love out of mere humanitarian motives. They would be enough for you, but not for me. I could do it only as a duty, the duty of a Christian Bishop. The natural man in me has no love for the world.' 'God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son—but that is a detail.' "

#### IV THE REPORT OF THE SPIES

1. Joshua was one of the twelve spies who were sent into the land of Canaan to spy out the land and report as to the advisability of the children of Israel going over at once to take possession of it. Upon their return, ten of the spies gave an adverse report. Joshua was one of the two who alone had the courage to bring a true report of the Promised Land. The cowardly and false report of the other ten had filled the children of Israel with fear; they were on the point of revolt. "Let us make a captain, they said one to another, and let us return into Egypt." Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the assembly of the congregation. But Joshua with Caleb stood forth and testified to the children of Israel: "The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us." Here is the real lesson of Joshua's character; it is the example not merely of a soldier's courage, but of intrepidity built on faith; he was not afraid of those who were avowedly God's enemies; he overthrew the Amalekites and Canaanites. He was not afraid of the defection and threats of God's people, not intimidated to withhold his message because other messengers of God feared to tell the truth. For forty years his message had no proof. None of the unbelieving and faint-hearted children of Israel were allowed to enjoy the blessings they had refused to believe in. But when their punishment was accomplished, Joshua and Caleb, his brother in faith and courage, came again to the Promised Land, and God gave them the assurance of His support and presence.

¶ To be in a voluntary minority in great moral and spiritual issues takes heroism of no common sort. Such heroism is only born of a simple trust in God. Caleb and Joshua saw the giants just as the others did, and knew themselves too to be but as grasshoppers—but they saw God also! The ten saw God, if at all, only through the difficulties of the situation. These two men saw the difficulties through God. In the one case the difficulties minimized God. In the other God minimized the difficulties. All of which is an illustration of the way in which men of faith and men without faith look out upon life and determine their conduct! The men who do not allow their vision of God to be clouded by anything external and material are constantly saying with these two, "Let us go up at once and possess the land, for we are well able to overcome it." These are faith's heroes. For without doubt Caleb and Joshua stood alone, scorned and derided by a faithless people, always ready to follow the faithless leaders who recommended to them the ever popular "line of least resistance," and whose influence on the subsequent course of the nation's life is too well known to need pointing out. History always sets an unerring verdict upon such moral mistakes as were made at Kadesh-barnea, whether by men or nations. And the plainest man among us can always read it. Moral heroism which yields uncontested sovereignty to the claims of God has in itself the assurance of ultimate victory and prosperity. In that hour of such magnificent resolve, faith received a promise of reward to which Caleb and Joshua clung throughout all the weary years which elapsed before they were again on the borders of the Promised Land. Its accomplishment often seemed far off and remote. Yet during those years the testimony of one at least of them is that he "wholly followed the Lord." The original purpose of his life was undaunted and undiverted. All the way through the wilderness-wanderings he was true to the light and cherished the promise. The undivided allegiance of his heart was never withdrawn from God. Faith and patience were in invincible alliance.

2. This was the central point of Joshua's life in the wilderness on this side of Canaan. For with the sending of him into Palestine was linked his future work as conqueror of the land. Moses drew him apart from the rest and changed his name from Oshea, "the Saviour," to Jehoshua, "God the Saviour." The new name enshrined his destiny; it dedicated him to his work as captain of the Lord's host, as the winner of the land. It was a kind of baptism, a solemn consecration. Henceforth he knew what he was to do. A mighty,

ruling idea was added to his life, and, as events fell out, it guided, inspired, and developed him for many years before he could put it into action.

¶ What I admire in Columbus is not his having discovered a world, but his having gone to search for it on the faith of an opinion.

¶ There is one feature that is always prominent in those who are strong personalities, and that is a unity of purpose, a concentration of mind, a fixed determination which pursues its object steadily and without wavering. Whether it be a statesman, a general, a merchant, or a minister of God, they are all alike in this, that their motto is that of St. Paul, "One thing I do." And this unity of purpose is what religious people call consecration. It is the separation of one duty, one ambition, one resolve from all others, and giving it the prominent place in the life. It is the application to human life of that which is often done with buildings, vessels, and the like. The churches that are used for one object, the sacred vessels that are set apart for the Holy Communion, the Bible that is put into a place of its own, the military banner that is hung in some cathedral, all speak clearly of the meaning of consecration. And we feel that things so consecrated get a kind of virtue by reason of their consecration. They are different from other things of the kind, and have a certain halo of romance thrown about them. So, too, when consecration is applied to human life: the men and women who are known to be separate have a distinction of their own. It may be some dark purpose, a feeling of revenge which seeks to be satisfied; or some ambitious aim, a family estate to be won back, a name to be won; or it may be some philanthropic resolve, such as that which has animated a Wilberforce, a Shaftesbury, a Howard; or some religious undertaking, such as that which has inspired a Livingstone, a Carey, a Patteson; but, whatever it is you feel, it has a power of its own, and strongly determines personality. And the word "saint," so widely misunderstood, testifies to the distinction consecration gives to it, meaning one who is consecrated to the will of God. He may be very imperfect, very human; but, so far as he recognizes as a principle of his life that he would rather do the will of God than any one else's, he is a saint, a consecrated man.

## V LEADER OF ISRAEL

1. The time had now come for the children of Israel to take possession of their inheritance. Palestine was in sight, and Moses, knowing that his end was near, asked God with great solemnity to name his successor, "that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd."

2. To Moses it would have been a source of legitimate gratification if one of his two sons, Gershom or Eliezer, had been appointed to be his successor. His brother Aaron had the joy before he died of seeing his son Eleazar assume the high-priestly robes, and the sacerdotal office remained in the family until the time of Eli. But with Moses it was otherwise. However pleasing such an arrangement would have been to his fatherly pride, in this as in other matters he was supremely disinterested, and his wish was in perfect harmony with the Divine choice. Joshua, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, was marked out by God for the position, and solemnly invested with authority by Moses, who gave the ordination charge before his decease.

3. The scene has a deep significance. It is not merely the dramatic contact of old and young that interests us—the pathos of a great man nearing his end, and the fascination of a young man at the beginning of a great career—but we see that the bond between them is a common religious ideal. Moses is fresh from the vision of God; Joshua is seeking it. There is a deep pathos of clinging hands as the parting hour of the two draws nearer. How often was the charge repeated by the older leader to the younger, "Be strong, and of a good courage," till it became a kind of national refrain.

4. As we pass from Moses to Joshua we feel as if we were passing from poetry to prose. Practical though Moses was, his sphere was on the height. The mountain was his native element. It was on the mountain that he had to prepare for the plain. It was the soul of a poet that led him to glorify common things; his sober practice came from his ecstatic elevation. Joshua, on the other hand, had never stood on the height, had never required to occupy it. He had not possessed the genius to discover the Promised Land. Moses was moving towards the Land of Promise. Everything had been planned; everything had been arranged. All that was needed was a patient drudge to execute the orders—a man who would be content to take the servant's place. No prophetic vision was required, no foresight. The head and the heart of the enterprise were already there; all that remained was to seek a hand. Joshua could no more have wielded Moses' rod than Moses could have wielded Joshua's sword. The one did his work and was laid aside. But new circumstances required a new type of character—the smaller man was better fitted for the rougher work. Joshua was a man fit not only for battle but for tedious campaigning; full of resources, and able to keep up the heart of a whole people by his hopeful bearing. That he should have been able to fill the place vacated by so great a man as Moses gives us the highest idea of his calibre. That Moses was missed there can be little doubt; yet not Moses himself could have led the people more skilfully and successfully from victory to victory, or have in the full tide of conquest held them more thoroughly in hand, and settled them more quietly in the land.

¶ Traditions has not preserved any details which enable us to realize the individual character of Joshua. The present writer has said of Moses, "Moses' personality cannot be exactly defined. In the oldest tradition he stands in such isolated grandeur, is so constantly thought of as the ideal ruler and prophet, that the traits of human, individual life and character are lost. Even points that seem characteristic are soon seen to belong to the Israelite ideal of the saint and prophet ... his wife and sons vanish silently from the story, which cares nothing about his personal relations, and is interested only in the official successor to his leadership." (Article "Moses," in Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible.) In the same way Joshua is not so much an individual as a type, first of a devoted adherent to a divinely appointed leader, and then of a God-fearing ruler and general. As tradition is sifted and interpreted with a view to edification, the individual traits are dropped, and hortatory writers, like the editors of the Book of Joshua, only retain those ideal features which they desire their readers to admire and imitate. Our sympathetic interest in a historical character is derived from the blending of light and shade, of strength and weakness, of failure and success, and even of noble and of unworthy motives, which is found in real men and women. But when once a hero is set up as a shining example, there is a growing tendency to represent him as a combination of a favourite of fortune, an admirable Crichton, and a perfect saint. It is doubtful whether he becomes more edifying, but he certainly grows less interesting. These and other considerations have led some scholars to suppose that Joshua is merely the personification of his tribe, Joseph; or the eponymous ancestor devised for one of its clans. But if we had the ancient traditions in all their primitive fulness and frankness, we should probably find Joshua still there, as real and as human as Gideon, Saul, or David. As it is, the successor of Moses stands out as a noble ideal of a national leader in war and peace.

5. Joshua had need of great strength and courage, for it was one of the most difficult of tasks that was entrusted to him. He was to lead the people through a series of the most brilliant and exciting military successes, and then to turn them to the most peaceful pursuits. He was to teach them to shed blood pitilessly, to harden them to such sights as the sacking of towns, and then to enforce laws which in many points were singularly humane. It has been said of the Romans that they conquered like savages and ruled like philosophic statesmen. The same transition had to be accomplished by Israel, and into the strong hand of Joshua was this delicate task committed.

¶ A keen observer, who is also one of the most vivid of contemporary writers, recently said in conversation that the greatest fighters he had known were by temperament and disposition the most peaceful of men. He named more than one famous English soldier, whose name is a synonym for daring audacity, who exhausts all the arts of diplomacy before resorting to arms, who hates war, and yet who fights with Titanic energy and apparent recklessness when the battle is on. These are men of true courage, because they face the issues of life and death, not with the stolidity of ignorance or the blind pluck of brute force, but with clear intelligence of all that war involves. The bravery of the Greek is more admirable than that of the Turk, because the Greek is intensely alert and sensitive, while the Turk is stolid and indifferent. It is said that no troops are so quiet under fire as the Turkish troops. Nothing disturbs or excites them. Under the play of murderous guns they move as calmly as if they were deploying on a parade-ground. In some cases this courage is the fruit of a fanatical religious faith; in most cases it is due to lack of physical and mental sensitiveness. The root of the noblest courage is faith in God.

Made of unpurchasable stuff,  
They went the way when ways were rough,  
They, when the traitors had deceived,  
Held the long purpose, and believed;

They, when the face of God grew dim,  
Held thro' the dark and trusted Him—  
Brave souls that fought the mortal way  
And felt that faith could not betray.

Give thanks for heroes that have stirred  
Earth with the wonder of a word,  
But all thanksgiving for the breed  
Who have bent destiny with deed—  
Souls of the high, heroic birth,  
Souls sent to poise the shaken earth,  
And then called back to God again  
To make heaven possible for men.

# THE VICTORIOUS SOLDIER

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## THE VICTORIOUS SOLDIER

Be strong and of a good courage ... and I will be with thee.—Deut. 31:23.

JOSHUA is represented in Scripture as a warrior, one might almost say as nothing else; other soldiers have strongly marked characters of their own, as David, as the Centurion in the Gospels, and Cornelius in the Acts. But in Joshua the character of the man is lost in the soldier. It is remarkable how repeatedly it is said to him, "Be strong and of a good courage"; "Only be thou strong and very courageous; be not afraid." He was called upon for this courage; it was fulfilled in all his life; and at his death he gave the like injunction, saying to Israel, "Be ye therefore very courageous." But this in Joshua was a sacred courage, not that of the world, but of God; it was founded on faith. He was called upon to execute the purposes of God, and the call was ever accompanied by the promise, "I will be with thee"; and in that promise he trusted. All through the arduous campaign that followed, nothing could daunt Joshua's courage whilst that assurance was ever ringing its silver tones in the belfry of his memory. "I will be with thee."

¶ There is the power of being mastered by and possessed with an idea. How rare it is! I do not say how few men are so mastered and possessed: I say how few men have the power so to be. The fine and simple capacity for it which belongs to youth being once lost, how few men ever attain the culture by which it is renewed. But without it there can be no courage. Without some end set clear before you, what chance is there

that you can shoot your arrow strong and straight? It does not need that you should be blind to all the difficulties that lie between. Recklessness is no part of courage. When Cromwell and his men gave the sublime picture of heroic courage which illuminates English history, it was not that they undervalued the enormous strength of what they fought against; it was that they saw righteousness and freedom shining out beyond, and moved toward their fascinating presence irresistibly. Courage, like every other good thing, must be positive, not negative.

## I JORDAN

Moses is dead but the work goes on: divinely-gifted leaders are never wanting. "After the death of Moses ... the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan.... Be strong and of a good courage ... for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Time and again, in his instruction of Joshua, the Lord seemed to impress upon him the great necessity of being of a good courage. He knew that Joshua would have opportunities of exercising his faith, and that trials would be heaped upon him to such an extent that it would require the utmost courage to go through victoriously. However, with all the instruction given to Joshua, and the admonitions to be true to the Lord and courageous, there was always this precious promise: "The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

1. The first command given to Joshua was a trial of his faith. The whole land of Canaan was Israel's by deed of gift. But though this was so, each square mile of it had to be claimed from the hand of the peoples that possessed it. When Israel reached its banks, the Jordan was in flood, and overflowing the low-lying lands on either side of its bed. Across the river stood Jericho, embosomed in palms and tamarisks, in a very paradise of exquisite vegetation, its aromatic shrubs and gardens scenting the air. But as the people beheld it, all their cherished hopes of taking it by their own energy or courage must have been utterly dissipated. To cross a stream in the face of the enemy is a difficult operation, even for modern armies; what must it have been for Joshua and his horde? Not a hint is given him as to the means by which the crossing is to be made possible. He has Jehovah's command to do it, and Jehovah's promise to be with him, and that is to be enough.

¶ The narrative of the crossing of the Jordan has recently received a remarkable illustration from a passage discovered in an MS. Arabic history. This states that in A.D. 1266 a great landslip at Damieh dammed the Jordan at a time when it was in full flood; and below Damieh the river ceased to flow from midnight till about 10 a.m. This Damieh is often identified with the Adam of the Book of Joshua, and is a point about seventeen miles north of Jericho, where the valley of the river contracts to a narrow gorge, which might easily be blocked by a landslip. Thus the Jordan could be crossed by the Israelites at many separate points. We must not, therefore, think of them as marching in one long, continuous procession. A traveller who lived for many years among the Bedouin, describing the great pilgrim caravan from Damascus to Medina and Mecca, writes:

"There go commonly three or four camels abreast and seldom five: the length of the slow-footed multitude of men and cattle is near two miles, and the width some hundred yards in the open plains. The Hajjaj [pilgrims] were this year by their account (which may be above the truth) 6000 persons; of these more than half are serving-men on foot; and 10,000 of all kinds of cattle, the most camels, then mules, hackneys, asses, and a few dromedaries of Arabians returning in security of the great convoy to their own district." (C. M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, i. 7.)

The Israelites were not ordinary travellers but tribes migrating with their families and all their belongings, so that the proportion of cattle and beasts of burden would be larger than in the Mecca caravan. At the lowest estimate this gathering of nomad clans would include a formidable multitude of men and animals, and we may imagine them on the morning of the crossing encamped for miles along the river, each kindred by itself. At dawn the tents were struck, and the scanty belongings of the nomads were packed; and later, perhaps at some concerted signal, the loads were lifted on to the backs of the beasts of burden, and the clans crossed the river to take up new camping grounds in the plains on the west of the Jordan. Again we may compare the account given of the starting of the Damascus caravan for Mecca:

"The day risen, the tents were dismantled, the camels led in ready to their companies, and halted beside their loads. We waited to hear the cannon shot which would open that year's pilgrimage. It was near ten o'clock when we heard the signal gun fired, and then, without any disorder, litters were suddenly heaved and braced upon the bearing beasts, their charges laid upon the kneeling camels, and the thousands of riders, all born in the caravan countries, mounted in silence."

2. Following the narrative, we are informed that three days were allowed, if not for physical, certainly for moral and spiritual preparation for the crossing of the river. Joshua moved his camp to the very brink of the river. Then after appropriate religious



ceremonies, he placed the priests with the ark of God in front. The waters as they approached moved to left and right, and this vast multitude, with all their cattle and bearing their belongings, walked over on the dry bed of the river, several hours being consumed in the passage. When the last one of this mighty and consecrated host had set his feet upon the sacred soil, the waters rolled back, and shut them out for ever from their wanderings and bondage; shut them in to a land which was full of trials yet to come, but whose mountains were crested with beauty and whose valleys laughed with abundance.

From Josh. 3:7 and 10 we learn that the purpose of this miracle was twofold. It was intended to stamp the seal of God's approbation on Joshua, and to hearten the people by the assurance of God's fighting for them. The leader was thereby put on the level of Moses, the people on that of the generation before whom the Red Sea had been divided.

¶ If I had to single out any one chapter in the Bible which I am conscious of having influenced me most, I should say the first of Joshua, with its oft-repeated exhortation to be strong and to be very courageous; and if I had to single out any particular verses it would be those which were taught me when a boy and which I long afterwards saw on the wall in General Gordon's room in Southampton: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

3. Intelligence of this marvellous event reached the ears not only of the Amorite mountain-chiefs, but also of the Canaanite lowlanders on the sea-coast, and filled them with the utmost alarm; "their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more." No attack, therefore, was made upon the Israelites, who were left in quiet possession of their advanced post on the western side of Jordan. Here the rite of circumcision, so long neglected during their desert wanderings, was performed, and in memory of this removal of the reproach of their uncircumcised state, the rising ground of their encampment was called Gilgal. They were now also in a condition to keep the passover, which was duly celebrated on the fourteenth day of the month at even on the plains of Jericho, and the unleavened cakes prescribed for this festival were made of the old corn of the land, and not of the manna, which on the next day entirely ceased, and thus proved that their desert life was really over.

¶ While the manna continued to descend, it was the staple article of food; but when the manna was withdrawn, the old corn and other fruits of the country took its place. In other words, the miracle was not continued when it ceased to be necessary. The manna had been a provision for the wilderness, where ordinary food in sufficient quantity could not be obtained; but now that they were in a land of fields and orchards and vineyards the manna was withdrawn. No sanction is given in the Bible to the idea of a lavish and needless expenditure of supernatural power. A law of economy, we might almost say parsimony, prevails side by side with the exercise of unbounded liberality. Jesus multiplies the loaves and fishes to feed the multitude, but He will not let one fragment be lost that remains after the feast. A similar law guides the economy of prayer. We have no right to ask that mercies may come to us through extraordinary channels, when it is in our power to get them by ordinary means. If it is in our power to procure bread by our labour, we dare not ask it to be sent direct. We are only too prone to make prayer at the eleventh hour an excuse for want of diligence or want of courage in what bears on the prosperity of the spiritual life. It may be that of His great generosity, God sometimes blesses us, even though we have made a very inadequate use of the ordinary means. But on that we have no right to presume. We are fond of short and easy methods where the natural method would be long and laborious. But here certainly we find the working of natural law in the spiritual world. We cannot look for God's blessing without diligent use of God's appointed means.

4. Gilgal, the first encampment, seems to have been the resting-place of the ark and probably of the non-combatants, during the conquest, and to have derived thence a sacredness which long clung to it, and finally led, singularly enough, to its becoming a centre of idolatrous worship. The rude circle of unhewn stones without inscription was, no doubt, exactly like the many prehistoric monuments found all over the world, which forgotten races have raised to keep in everlasting remembrance forgotten fights and heroes. These grey stones preached at once the duty of remembering, and the danger of forgetting, the past mercies of God.

¶ A few months before the death of Robert Louis Stevenson, certain Samoan chiefs whom he had befriended while they were under imprisonment for political causes, and whose release he had been instrumental in effecting, testified their gratitude by building an important piece of road leading to Mr. Stevenson's Samoan country house, Vailima. At a corner of the road there was erected a notice, prepared by the chiefs and bearing their names, which reads:

"The Road of the Loving Heart.

'Remembering the great love of his highness, Tusitala, and his loving care when we were in prison and sore distressed, we have prepared him an enduring present, this road which we have dug to last for ever.' "

## II JERICHO

Israel passed over Jordan, but there were more dangers in front; they escaped from one difficulty only to meet another. There stood Jericho, a strong city, walled up to heaven. But the command was still—Go forward, Jericho must be taken. It was the key of the country, and before they could open the country to take possession of the heritage their God had given them they had to take that key. They had to take it, or fail utterly; to take it or perish at the very threshold of their enterprise.

¶ Of the many fortresses in Palestine, Jericho appears to have been the most nearly impregnable. The Israelites had no siege engines; neither battering-ram, nor catapult, nor moving tower. Their only weapons were slings, arrows, spears. Against the walls of Jericho these were as straws and thistle-down. There were two other passes by which Joshua might have entered the Promised Land. Neither of them was guarded. It is significant that God conducted him across the Jordan at the point where the strongest fortification in the country stood directly in his way; the point where the sole alternatives before him were victory that seemed impossible or defeat that would be ruin. Once before, the Israelites had entered Palestine. Then they approached from the south, crossed the border unopposed, and fled back before they were attacked. But in conquering Jericho they virtually subdued the Promised Land. No good or permanently pleasant possession is ever gained in this world except by overcoming obstacles. Jericho always bars the entrance to the Promised Land. We see some object of desire. We see the difficulties in the way. We wish they were removed. We attack them, if we dare, for the sake of what we see behind them. But in conquering our Jericho we always find something more precious than we see or seek. Is it wealth one longs for? It must be earned by toil, frugality, self-denial. Indolence must be overcome. Unless these difficulties have been mastered, wealth is no blessing. There are no beatitudes save such as are approached by steep and narrow ways.

1. Joshua was a brave military leader; but he needed Divine guidance in beginning the great campaign, and also Divine heartening and encouragement. It must have been a time of great suspense for him. In anxious mood he went forward alone to reconnoitre the place. While he was there, thinking and thinking, all at once there glimmered in the twilight over against him the figure of “a man with his sword drawn in his hand.” What was it? Dream of the night, or spirit of the dead, solid form or unsubstantial vapour, man or angel, friend or foe,—Joshua knew not, but he was ready for the encounter. Simple as a child, fearless as “one of the immortals,” he looked the Mystery in the face, and challenged the unknown warrior with the question, “Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” Joshua knew of no neutrality in the warfare of God. The stranger must be friend or enemy. But there is something amiss with the question, for it is rebuked. “Nay,” says the vision, not for you, nor yet for your adversaries, am I come, but “as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.”

¶ Surely we are not told in Scripture about the Angels for nothing, but for practical purposes; nor can I conceive a use of our knowledge more practical than to make it connect the sight of this world with the thought of another. Nor one more consolatory; for surely it is a great comfort to reflect that, wherever we go, we have those about us who are ministering to all the heirs of salvation, though we see them not. Nor one more easily to be understood and felt by all men; for we know at one time the doctrine of Angels was received even too readily. And if any one would argue hence against it as dangerous, let him recollect the great principle of our Church, that the abuse of a thing does not supersede the use of it.

2. It seemed to Joshua that there were two sides, his own and the enemy's, between which the battle was to be fought out; he had to learn that it was not for him or for Israel to gain the victory, but for the Lord their God. Up to that time Joshua thought he was captain, but he was mistaken, and he saw it. In deep reverence he fell on his face, and was bidden, like Moses at the burning bush, to loose his shoes from off his feet, for the place whereon he stood was holy ground. Then the captain of the Lord's host gave His orders, told of His plan—not at all like the plans of Joshua—how Jericho was to be taken, not by might or strength of armed men, but by the blast of the Spirit of God toppling down the stupendous walls in which the heathen Canaanites put their trust. The Israelites were not to take Jericho by their own strength, or to lift sword or spear against it. Jericho was to be taken in God's way. The priests were to carry the ark round Jericho for seven days, bearing with them trumpets of rams' horns. On the seventh day, when they blew a blast, the walls would fall down.

Israel wondered but obeyed. Doubtless the men of Jericho laughed behind their strong walls, and thought that a few priests bearing trumpets could not hurt them. For six days the ark was carried round Jericho, but the walls stood as strong as ever. On the seventh day, whilst the people laughed, the priests went seven times round Jericho, and the trumpets sounded, and the people shouted, and the walls of Jericho fell down flat. By no human power had these walls fallen before the Israelites. The voice of God was the cannon that made the breach. One moment they had stood impregnable. The next they had fallen in ruins. The Israelites had only to reap the victory. It was God who had won it.

¶ Jericho is a city surrounded by resources. Yet in war she has always been easily taken. That her walls fell down at the sound of Joshua's trumpets is no exaggeration, but the soberest summary of all her history. Judæa could never keep her. She fell to Northern Israel till Northern Israel perished. She fell to Bacchides and

the Syrians. She fell to Aristobulus when he advanced on his brother Hyrcanus and Judæa. She fell without a blow to Pompey, and at the approach of Herod and again of Vespasian her people deserted her. It is also interesting to note that three invaders of Judæa—Bacchides, Pompey, and Vespasian—took Jericho before they attempted Jerusalem, although she did not lie upon their way to the latter, and that they fortified her, not, it is to be supposed, as a base of operations so much as a source of supplies. This weakness of Jericho was due to two causes. An open pass came down on her from Northern Israel, and from this both part of her water supply could be cut off and the hills behind her could be occupied. But besides this, her people never seem to have been distinguished for bravery; and, indeed, in that climate, how could they? Enervated by the great heat, which degrades all the inhabitants of the Ghôr, and unable to endure on their bodies aught but linen, it was impossible they could be warriors, or anything but irrigators, paddlers in water and soft earth. We forget how near neighbours they had been to Sodom and Gomorrah. No great man was born in Jericho: no heroic deed was ever done in her. She has been called “the key” and “the guardhouse” of Judæa; she was only the pantry. She never stood a siege, and her inhabitants were always running away.

3. The host advanced straight into Jericho and captured it. Rahab, who had sheltered the two spies sent by Joshua to reconnoitre the town and helped them to escape in safety, had gathered her father and mother and other relatives together; and they were now led forth to a place of safety outside the camp of Israel. The rest of the inhabitants, without exception, were slain with the edge of the sword; the city was burned, and everything was consumed except the vessels of gold and silver, of brass and iron. And not only was the proud “City of Palmtrees” thus utterly destroyed, but Joshua pronounced a solemn curse on any one who attempted to rebuild it: he should lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son should he set up the gates of it (Josh. 6:26). There was no reason in itself why the city should not be rebuilt. Taking its fine position into account, there was every reason why it should. But by perpetuating the destruction, Joshua was perpetuating the faith that destroyed it.

¶ The capture of Jericho is the most popular of all Joshua’s exploits. And yet it is the one about which we should be most cautious; for the narrative is composed of two accounts, one very ancient, which knows nothing beyond Joshua and the people, a silent invasion and a sudden storming and capture of the town, and another which introduces into the story the sacred procession, the priests, the Ark of the Covenant, and the portentous crumbling of the walls at the sound of the trumpets. What were the real facts of this bold stroke? Whether there really was a religious demonstration around the walls to divert attention from the siege operations, or whether Jehovah in this first stage of the forward march intervened with miraculous aid, we are no longer in a position to say. All those, therefore, who are anxious to teach nothing but what is certain will be well advised not to lay stress on the details of this campaign. One thing only we can be sure of, that it remained indelibly impressed on the memory of Israel as the type of the wars in which Jehovah Zebaoth worked with His people and the victory was won by a display of faith.

By Jericho’s doom’d towers who stands on high,  
With helmet, spear, and glittering panoply?  
“The Christian soldier, like a gleaming star,  
Trained in the wilderness to iron war.”  
Take off thy shoes, thy promis’d land is found,  
The place thou standest on is holy ground.  
“Take Thou the shield and buckler, stop the way  
Against mine enemies! be Thou my stay!”  
I am thy rock, thy castle: I am He  
Whose feet have dried up the Egyptian sea:  
Fear not, for I am with thee; put on might;  
’Gainst thrones and powers of darkness is the fight.  
“I go, if Thou go with me; ope the skies,  
And lend me Heaven-attemper’d armories.”  
Gird Truth about thee for thy mailed dress,  
And for thy breastplate put on Righteousness;  
For sandals, beautiful Peace; and for thy sword  
The two-edg’d might of God’s unfailing word;  
Make golden Hope thy helmet; on, and strive:—  
He that o’ercometh in those courts shall live,  
Whose crystal floor by heavenly shapes is trod,  
“A pillar in the temple of my God.”

### III AI

With one of those dramatic contrasts which are so characteristic of the prophetic narrative, the success at Jericho is followed by the tragedy at Ai—a tragedy deeper than at first they knew; for it was not merely the failure of an attack and the loss of men, but the breach of a great moral law, with the loss of stability and power which such a breach always entails.

1. Fresh from the success at Jericho, the Israelites turned their attention to the city of Ai. Acting upon advice given by spies Joshua sent an attacking force of only three thousand men, while the population of Ai numbered more than twelve thousand, defended by a powerful and well-trained army. The Israelites were repulsed with considerable slaughter, and thrown into the deepest humiliation.

They had expected an easy victory; and now, at the close of the day, we see Joshua and the leaders of Israel prone upon the earth, with dust upon their heads and their clothes rent. Israel had turned their backs upon their enemies, Israel had been defeated; and it seemed to them, as they lay thus in utter distress upon their faces, that God had forsaken them, that destruction lay before them, that they were lost. The leader's courage seemed to have forsaken him. The defeat was so unlooked for, so strange, so unaccountable that it blotted out the victory at Jericho, dimmed the Divine help at Jordan, and clouded the whole horizon of his hopes. He raised up his voice in prayer, and said, "Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!" It is now easily seen why Moses and the Lord particularly charged Joshua to be strong and courageous.

Simple but searching was the answer to his prayer: sin there was somewhere, exposing the people to the wrath of their God; and until the sinful thing was put away, the wrath and defeat would remain. By the divinely-guided lot, the offender was discovered. Urged by Joshua to acknowledge Jehovah as a just and all-seeing God, Achan confessed his sin—the sin of covetousness. He had taken of the precious things already devoted to Jehovah, and so had involved himself and all his people in the doom of things devoted. The "troubler" of Israel was stoned; his family and possessions were burned; and communion between Jehovah and His people was restored.

¶ "A lover of silver," this latter word being the common and proper word for covetous, in the Gospels and Epistles; as of the Pharisees in Luke 16:14; and associated with the other characters of men in perilous times, 2 Tim. 3:2, and its relative noun φιλαργυρία given in sum for the root of all evil in 1 Tim. 6:10, while even the authority of Liddell and Scott in the interpretation of πλεονεξία itself as only the desire of getting more than our share, may perhaps be bettered by the authority of the teacher, who, declining the appeal made to him as an equitable μεριστής (Luke 12:14–46), tells his disciples to beware of covetousness, simply as the desire of getting more than we have got. "For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth."

¶ One act of disobedience led to Adam's expulsion from Paradise. It was one sin which brought darkness and death into our world at first. And even now great mischief, sometimes death, will follow one wrong act. One bar of iron pushed in among the wheels of the most delicate machine will smash and destroy it. One defect in the axle of the locomotive engine is enough to smash it, wreck the train, and hurl death and destruction all round. One leak in the ship is enough to start it on the way to wreckage.

2. The sin of Achan punished, God now roused Joshua from the dejection into which he had fallen by telling him to go forth, and Ai should be given into his hands. Joshua practised a remarkable stratagem upon his foes, reserving his main force in ambush, while a small detachment attacked the city and drew the defenders out, slaying them to a man, the king himself being slain by Joshua's own hand. At the close of this victorious expedition, Joshua held a service of thanksgiving on Mount Ebal. The altar was in accordance with the Mosaic tradition; no tool was lifted on it. The victorious chief built the altar, the Levites appearing as bearers of the ark, and, as such, being called priests. Joshua, though an Ephraimite, was the principal celebrant. He read the Law. And as he solemnly read, whether the blessing or the curse, each several item was responded to by the Amens that thundered forth from thousands of throats, and rolled in reverberating echoes through the hills.

¶ The following account of the signing of the Scottish Covenant, on Feb. 28th, 1638, in Greyfriars Church and churchyard, is given in Cunningham's Church History of Scotland: "All were invited to come forward and sign. The aged Earl of Sutherland was the first to append his name. He was followed by Sir Andrew Murray, the minister of Abdy, in Fife. Then high-born and low-born together crowded forward to add their signatures. When all in the church had signed the solemn document, it was taken out to the church-yard, and laid upon a flat grave-stone. The enthusiasm of the crowd rose to its greatest height. Men and women were alike ambitious to subscribe their names. Some wrote after their signatures, 'till death'; others could not restrain their feelings, and wept. This went on for hours, till every part of the parchment was covered, and the subscribers had only room to write their initials; and dark night alone put an end to the scene. Henderson afterwards described it as

‘the day of the Lord’s power, wherein they had seen His people most willingly offer themselves in multitudes, like the dew of the morning.’ ‘It may well be said of this day,’ says another old writer, ‘Great was the day of Jezreel.’ It was a day wherein the arm of the Lord was revealed—a day wherein the princes of the people were assembled to swear fealty and allegiance to that great King whose name is the Lord of Hosts.”

## IV THE GIBEONITES

1. The successes and terrible reprisals of the Israelites shook the Canaanitish populations of the south which had not been touched and decided them to take concerted action. The coalition aimed ostensibly at punishing the Gibeonites, who, moved to fear by the recent successes of Israel and by the fame of Israel’s God, sought to save themselves from their probable doom by making league with the conquerors. The clever cunning with which they posed as travellers from a very far country, eager to make a league with the now famous people of Jehovah, threw the Israelites completely off their guard. Their old shoes and old bottles and old bread, and their wily speeches and other fine fetches completely circumvented Joshua, till he made a covenant of peace with a cruel and corrupt people that he had been commanded to sweep off the face of the earth.

Up to this moment the initiative had always been taken by the Lord. Now for the first time it is taken by Joshua and the people. They “asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.” And for this, and for other like mistakes of ignorance, and simplicity, and over-leniency, both Joshua and all Israel suffered long and bitterly. When the guile of the Gibeonites was discovered, the furious people were for slaying them. Joshua, however, would not permit this; but, with a solemn curse, he condemned them, for their guile, to be slaves of the sanctuary of Israel’s God.

¶ The essence of lying is in deception, not in words: a lie may be told by silence, by equivocation, by the accent on a syllable, by a glance of the eye attaching a peculiar significance to a sentence; and all these kinds of lies are worse and baser by many degrees than a lie plainly worded; so that no form of blinded conscience is so far sunk as that which comforts itself for having deceived, because the deception was by gesture or silence, instead of utterance; and, finally, according to Tennyson’s deep and trenchant line, “A lie which is half a truth is ever the worst of lies.”

2. Then five southern kings, headed by the king of Jerusalem, conspired to take revenge upon Gibeon for weakening the confederacy by its alliance with Israel. In terror, the Gibeonites appealed to Joshua, who, with the Divine assurance of success, at once responded. His confidence was justified; for Jehovah granted him a signal victory. The Canaanites were panicstricken, and gave but little resistance to the Israelites, who slew them right and left; and those who could get away fled through the defiles westward, over roads broken by ascent and descent which led to Beth-horon, five miles distant. In making the descent to the town, down a precipitous and rocky defile, the refugees were arrested by a hail-storm, which slew many of them. Standing on the summit of Upper Beth-horon, Joshua watched the foe flying in helpless confusion towards the western lowlands. The Lord had already delivered them into his hands, and only time was needed to render the rout complete and enable his forces to avenge themselves on their enemies. But the day was far advanced, and he feared the Canaanites might yet make good their escape.

At this point our narrative quotes some lines from an ancient collection of poems called the Book of Jashar. The lines quoted here are given as a prayer uttered by Joshua to Jehovah in the presence of Israel: they run as follows:—

“Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon;  
And thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.  
And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed,  
Until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.”

These lines were originally a poetic figure, similar to those in the Song of Deborah, which tells us that:—

“They fought from heaven,  
The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.”

Apparently Joshua with the main battle of Israel was then to the west of Gibeon, so that the sun appeared in the eastern sky over the city. The valley of Ajalon stretches S.W. from Bethhoron, and over it could be discerned the setting moon. The rout of the enemy was complete, and the prayer of Israel was for time for effective pursuit, for a fair opportunity of reaping all the fruits of a great victory. And the prayer was granted; in that chase of many miles, there was a great slaughter of wretched fugitives, blinded and battered by the storm. With the ready hyperbole of Oriental rhetoric, the poets of Israel sang that this had been no common day, the very sun and moon had stood still in heaven to ensure the triumph of the chosen people.

¶ Moon and sun are continually found associated in the Old Testament as two great lights, destined, the one to rule the day, the other the night, intended to fix days, months, and years, and also to serve for the miraculous manifestations portending remarkable events to come. Although their duty of regulating time requires a certain regularity of movements and periods, it is not considered impossible that their course should be arrested or even turned back at the command of Joshua and other men loved by Yahwe. An ancient Jewish poet, singing of Joshua's victory over the Amorites, attributes to that commander the boast of having arrested the sun and moon; and certainly one could not conceive a more effective flight of fancy, or one more fitted for the heights of an heroic and lyrical composition. But, as has happened in other ancient nations, so among the Jews also the material of heroic songs passed not infrequently into history, and as history this episode in the wars of Israel is even now regarded by many. According to the narrative in the historical portion of the book bearing the name of Isaiah, that prophet is said not only to have stopped the sun, but to have turned it back. So, too, of Elimelech, husband of Naomi, an obscure tradition relates that he stopped the sun; and according to the Vulgate of 1 Chron. 4:22, a descendant of Judah, son of Jacob, is said to have accomplished a like feat.

3. On his return to Makkedah, Joshua brought forth the five kings out of the cave to which they had fled for shelter, and slew them with his own hand. Their bodies were then buried in the cave. The victory of Beth-horon did not stand alone. In like manner throughout the whole of the southern campaign Jehovah fought for Israel and subdued the country before Joshua.

¶ In an army, if once the confidence of the soldiers in their officers is destroyed, the whole organization is relaxed, discipline gives way, military courage rapidly sinks, and troops who under other circumstances would have been full of fire, enthusiasm, and steady valour, degenerate into a dispirited and vacillating mob. With nations it is not very different. Few things contribute so much to the strength and steadiness of a national character as the consciousness among the people that in every great struggle or difficulty they will find their natural leaders at their head—men in whom they have perfect confidence, whose interests are thoroughly identified with their own, who are placed by their position above most sordid temptations, to whom they are already attached by ties of property, tradition, and association. A nation must have attained no mean political development before it can choose with intelligence its own leaders, and it is happy if in the earlier stages of its career the structure of society saves it from the necessity, by placing honest and efficient men naturally at its head.

## V LAKE MEROM

1. The decisive victory over the Amorites at Gibeon exposed the states which had fancied themselves secure behind the mountainous regions of Palestine. At the instigation of Jabin, king of Hazor, a coalition was formed which appealed to all those who wished to make a supreme effort to thrust back the invader. But the rapidity of Joshua's marches once more foiled the enemy's enterprise.

The distance he had to go was about seventy miles, and Josephus says the march was made in five days. When Joshua was within a few miles of the enemy God spoke to him saying, "Be not afraid because of them; for to-morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire." Suddenly, while the Canaanites supposed him to be far away, Joshua swooped down upon them, or, as the original has it, fell upon them like a thunderbolt. Thrown into confusion, their numbers impeding their progress, they were put to the sword. Then ensued a panic rivalling the one at Gibeon. Having pursued them for a time, Joshua returned and invested Hazor, burning it, and destroying the inhabitants, including the great King Jabin himself. So he treated all the cities that had gone with the confederation, but spared the buildings. Nearly the whole of Palestine was now subject to Joshua. It is true that the whole of the people were not subdued; but, so far as was necessary for the great purpose Joshua had in view, Palestine was conquered. Thus, after these fierce but prosperous wars in which two kings on the east of the Jordan were defeated and dispossessed and thirty kings on the west, the weary land had rest.

¶ The Jewish scholars who edited the Book of Joshua during the exile held a theory that Joshua completed the conquest of Canaan; they expressed their views in numerous paragraphs, enumerating among the places conquered by him all the districts of Palestine, and most of its important cities. This view is directly contradicted by Judg. 1, 18, which state, as they now stand, that the process went on after the death of Joshua, and that even then the Israelites did not succeed in occupying the whole land.... When the combined action of Israel had secured a basis of operations in the valley of the Jordan and the central highlands, separate tribes and clans broke off on new ventures of their own. They found their opportunities in the weakness of isolated cities; in the need of some Canaanite prince for allies; or in the willingness of townsmen to hire out their pasture lands for tribute to the nomad herdsmen. Thus by degrees the Israelites spread

themselves over the country, here and there establishing settlements that were practically small independent states, interspersed among the towns and territories of the Canaanites; elsewhere mingling with the natives, sometimes absorbing them, sometimes being absorbed by them. The Books of Judges and Samuel tell us how after some centuries this process issued in the formation of a single united Israelite state. It may be interesting to compare this invasion with the Saxon and Norman invasions of England. Israel, and many of the inhabitants of Canaan, like the Normans and Saxons, were closely allied in race; and Canaan, like England at the Conquest, included a heterogeneous mixture of peoples. But, unlike England, Canaan was not organized as a single state, and its civilization was higher than that of its invaders. There is a somewhat greater resemblance between the Israelite and the Saxon Conquest. It is true that the differences of race, manners, customs and religion between the Saxons and the Romanized Britons were greater than those between Israel and Canaan. But Roman Britain like Canaan was far more civilized than its invaders; the Saxon Conquest was gradual; it sometimes found its opportunity in an alliance with a native prince; it resulted in the foundation of separate states, which eventually united in a single kingdom.

2. These wars of Joshua leave the last word yet to be said. The moral difficulty, let it be frankly confessed, is enormous: we should not have known how enormous, were it not for the New Testament. It is as the mystic tender light from the Gospels falls upon these ancient battle-fields that we shudder. Joshua had with his faith the terrible intolerance of the true believer. There is nothing more exterminating than the idea of the one God when it is not modified by the doctrine of the cross. And Joshua was ruthless, but with the ruthlessness there was also determined thoughtfulness towards his end. He slew, not because he delighted in cruelty, but because he was resolute to get the land for Israel, to satisfy the long desire of Moses, to fulfil what he believed to be the will of God. He slew, not because he loved blood, but because he was fixed in his resolution to overthrow idolatry, and the only way men could think of doing that then was by fire and sword. The world had not seen the more excellent way of Christ. And Joshua won his day.

Foremost captain of his time,  
Rich in saving common-sense,  
And, as the greatest only are,  
In his simplicity sublime.

¶ Hake, the biographer of General Gordon, says: "The work he had begun and was bent on finishing was fraught with peculiar perils. It demanded a tact, an energy, and a force of will almost superhuman. He had to deal not only with worthless and often mutinous governors of provinces, but with wild and desperate tribesmen as well; he had to disband 6000 Bashi-Bazouks, who were used as frontier guards, but who winked at slave-hunting and robbed the tribes on their own account; he had to subdue and bring to order and rule the vast province of the Bahr Gazelle, but now beneath the sway of the great slaver Sebehr. It was a stupendous task: to give peace to a country quick with war; to suppress slavery among a people to whom the trade in human flesh was life and honour and fortune; to make an army out of perhaps the worst material ever seen; to grow a flourishing trade and a fair revenue in the wildest anarchy in the world. The immensity of the undertaking; the infinity of details involved in a single step towards the end; the countless odds to be faced; the many pests—the deadly climate, the horrible vermin, the ghastly itch, the nightly and daily alternation of overpowering heat and bitter cold—to be endured and overcome; the environment of bestial savagery and ruthless fanaticism—all these combine to make the achievement unique in human history. Like the adventurer in Browning's magnificent allegory, my hero was face to face with a vast and mighty wrong; he had everything against him, and he was utterly alone; but he stood for God and the right, and he would not blench. There stood the Tower of Evil—the grim ruined land, the awful presences, the hopeless task, the anarchy of wickedness and despair and wrath. He knew, he felt, he recognized it all; and yet—

And yet

Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,  
And blew.—"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came."

## JOSHUA III THE RESOLUTE REFORMER

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## THE RESOLUTE REFORMER

And the land had rest from war.—Josh. 11:23.

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.—Josh. 24:15.

## I DISTRIBUTION OF THE LAND

JOSHUA was probably about ninety years of age when the conquest of Canaan was complete. But a very important part of his work had yet to be performed. It would not have been enough for him to assert the supremacy of Israel over the Canaanites, unless he had taken measures to follow up his victories by settling the people in their stead. The work of destruction must be succeeded by that of construction. The warrior must give place to the administrator and statesman.

1. The aged chief of Jehovah's armies had earned his rest, but he was oppressed no less with anxiety than with fatigue. He had a real danger to contend with in the supineness of the Israelites who were not yet possessed of their territory. Weary of the war, distrustful of the support of Ephraim and Judah, whose whole strength was diverted to their political organization, and finding themselves in the midst of Canaanites who were often of the same race and language as themselves, they indolently slipped into treaties with the natives and gradually lost their individuality and religion through reciprocal encroachments and alliances in which Baal had more to gain than Jehovah.

¶ We need higher qualities to bear with good fortune than with bad.

¶ This Nebuchadnezzar curse, that sends men to grass like oxen, seems to follow but too closely on the excess or continuance of national power and peace. In the perplexities of nations, in their struggles for existence, in their infancy, their impotence, or even their disorganization, they have higher hopes and nobler passions. Out of the suffering comes the serious mind; out of the salvation, the grateful heart; out of endurance, fortitude; out of deliverance, faith: but when they have learned to live under providence of laws and with decency and justice of regard for each other, and when they have done away with violent and external sources of suffering, worse evils seem to arise out of their rest; evils that vex less and mortify more, that suck the blood though they do not shed it, and ossify the heart though they do not torture it. And deep though the causes of thankfulness must be to every people at peace with others and at unity in itself, there are causes of fear, also, a fear greater than of sword and sedition: that dependence on God may be forgotten, because the bread is given and the water sure; that gratitude to Him may cease, because His constancy of protection has taken the semblance of a natural law; that heavenly hope may grow faint amidst the full fruition of the world; that selfishness may take place of undemanded devotion, compassion be lost in vainglory, and love in dissimulation, that enervation may succeed to strength, apathy to patience, and the noise of jesting words and foulness of dark thoughts to the earnest purity of the girded loins and the burning lamp. About the river of human life there is a wintry wind, though a heavenly sunshine; the iris colours its agitation, the frost fixes upon its repose. Let us beware that our rest become not the rest of stones, which, so long as they are torrent-tossed and thunder-stricken, maintain their majesty, but when the stream is silent, and the storm passed, suffer the grass to cover them and the lichen to feed on them, and are ploughed down into dust.

2. Joshua, vexed at their listlessness in a cause which was Jehovah's, urged them to send representatives from each tribe throughout the land and bring back a plan of the cities in the various districts thereof, to be solemnly apportioned to the tribes by lot. On their return, Joshua collected all the information and cast lots, and the apportionment was made at Shiloh, before the tent of



meeting. What exactly was each one's portion we cannot know for certain. The division was never so definite as the later calculations of the Priestly survey would imply. When Joshua had settled all the tribes, he obtained for himself a modest inheritance among the hills of his own tribe of Ephraim. It was a rugged spot in his native district at Timnath-serah ("the portion that remains"), the name being probably then applied to the spot as it was the last allotment. It is suggestive of the unselfishness and simplicity of Joshua's character that he should have selected a home for himself among the deep valleys and rugged hills of Timnath-serah. "First in service, last in reward." He had done a great work, yet received no exceptional recompense.

¶ The "wages" of every noble Work do yet lie in Heaven or else Nowhere. Not in Bank-of-England bills, in Owen's Labourbank, or any the most improved establishment of banking and money-changing, needest thou, heroic soul, present thy account of earnings. Human banks and labour-banks know thee not; or know thee after generations and centuries have passed away, and thou art clean gone from "rewarding,"—all manner of bank-drafts, shop-tills, and Downing-street Exchequers lying very invisible, so far from thee! Nay, at bottom, dost thou need any reward? Was it thy aim and life purpose to be filled with good things for thy heroism; to have a life of pomp and ease, and be what men call "happy," in this world, or in any other world? I answer for thee deliberately, No!

## II JOSHUA'S FAREWELL AND DEATH

The years of rest became years of wisdom. Joshua felt more and more how much of his task was left unfinished. It was one thing to remove evil roots, and cleanse the land; another thing to keep his own nation clean in it. The twenty-fourth chapter of Joshua is a pathetic close to a book of battles. It is the confession of all true warriors that it is easier to win a battle than to fight against sin day by day; it is easier to capture the impregnable fort, than to keep the heart pure to God.

1. Joshua hears that more or less everywhere local sanctuaries are corrupting the disloyal conquerors and Jehovah is no longer the uncontested King of Israel. So the old soldier returns to fight one more battle—harder than all the rest. He convenes the great Israelite assembly at Shechem, and there, in a speech which recalls that of Moses in the plains of Moab or that of St. Paul taking leave of the Ephesian elders, Joshua rehearses the whole plan of God. He expresses the strongest solicitude for what he knows the public happiness to depend on—the preservation of true religion, and consequently of virtue, in opposition to the superstitious follies and shocking vices of the nations round them. He recapitulates Jehovah's blessings and Israel's crimes and duties, and gathers all his failing strength to remind the chosen people that all their future and salvation depend on their loyalty to the head of the theocracy, Jehovah, their King.

No one can read this farewell speech without being moved. There is first the brief recapitulation of the mighty acts of the Lord, and then the trumpet call to decision: "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Here is a statement of perfect liberty, but of courageous warning; he puts the truth of their position plainly before them. They were to choose whom they would serve; he taught them this important moral truth that, if men will not choose to serve God, they will still be servants, that is, they will be enslaved by Satan.

These words were the last utterance of a man whose days on earth were run, and who spoke from that commanding eminence which looks at once upon the clearness of the earthly past and the dimness of the heavenly future, with the wisdom of aged experience and the awe of coming death. He stood amongst them, a monumental relic of the times pushed back, by a stirring century of change, into remote history; one who had toiled in Egyptian quarries, had crossed the sand of the Red Sea, had shrunk from the thunders of Sinai. He knew more than they thought of their secret idolatrous inclinations; he would have no half-hearted renunciation. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." He would bind the nation so, with cords, "even unto the horns of the altar." He made the very stone, which "had heard all the words of the Lord," be a witness to them, lest they should deny their God.

¶ The "great stone," like Jacob's stone at Bethel, was one of those sacred monoliths which were among the apparatus of early Israelite, as of other primitive religions. They were known in Israel as maççēbas or "pillars." Having set up this maççēba, "Joshua said to all the people, This stone shall bear witness against us; it has heard all the words of Jehovah which he spoke with us, and it shall bear witness against you, lest ye deny your God." In the existing narrative there is no record that Jehovah had spoken; possibly Joshua's words are regarded as Jehovah's; or else the tradition has been mutilated. Perhaps in its original form it told how Joshua set up in the sanctuary at Shechem the tables of stone received by Moses from Jehovah at Sinai, and carried by the Israelites throughout their wanderings. The idea of a stone bearing witness is still found among the nomad Arabs. Doughty tells us (*Arabia Deserta*, ii. 538) that he was informed concerning a great bank of

stones on the pilgrim road to Mecca, that “Every pilgrim who casts a stone thereon has left a witness for himself, for his stone shall testify in the resurrection that he fulfilled the pilgrimage.”

2. The simple but impressive ceremony which ratified the covenant thus renewed consisted of two parts—the writing of the account of the transaction in “the book of the law,” and the erection of a great stone, whose grey strength stood beneath the green oak, a silent witness that the Israelites, of their own choice, after full knowledge of what the vow meant, had reiterated their vow to be the Lord’s. Thus on the spot made sacred by so many ancient memories, the people ended their wandering and homeless life, and passed into the possession of the inheritance, through the portal of this fresh acceptance of the covenant, proclaiming thereby that they held the land on condition of serving God, and writing their own sentence in case of unfaithfulness. It was the last act of the assembled people, and the crown and close of Joshua’s career.

¶ There is a solemn choice in life. Life and death, light and darkness, truth and lies are set before us. At every instant the cry comes for us to choose one or the other, and the choice of one involves the putting away of the other. And we must choose. That is one of the certainties of life. There is no such thing as offering one hand to God and another to evil; one hand to the self-sacrifice of Christ and the other to the covetousness of the world. You cannot serve God and Mammon. You cannot follow Jesus at home, and your own pleasure in your outward life. Your life, whether you like it or not, becomes of one piece.

¶ On the morning of his wedding-day, James Taylor, the father of Hudson Taylor, was haunted by the words “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,” probably heard at some of the Methodist services, and unheeded, until, as he threshed out wheat in preparation for his bride, the responsibility of the step he was taking was borne in upon him. The words would not leave him. “Hour after hour went by. The sun rose high over the hills, lighting the white-roofed village where the bride was waiting. Taylor was due there long before noon, and had yet to don wedding apparel. But all, all was forgotten in this first, great realization of eternal things. Alone upon his knees among the straw the young stone-mason was face to face with God. ‘As for me’ had taken on new meaning. The fact of personal responsibility to a living though unseen Being—Love infinite and eternal, or Justice as a consuming fire—had become real and momentous as never before. It was the hour of the Spirit’s striving with this soul, the solemn hour when to yield is salvation. And there alone with God James Taylor yielded. The love of Christ conquered and possessed him, and soon the new life from above found expression in the new determination: ‘Yes, we will serve the Lord.’ ”

3. It was at Shechem also, in full assembly of Israel, that Joshua celebrated the fulfilment of the promise by laying the bones of Joseph at last to rest. They had remained, waiting for deliverance, in Egypt for many, many years. “God will surely visit you,” said Joseph, dying, “and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.” They had been taken from Egypt that terrible night, and crossed the sea with the escaping host. They had rested at Sinai, gone through the wilderness, accompanied the conquest—their Palladium, the immortal witness of what Israel had done in Egypt, and was to be in Canaan—and, on this solemn day, of all that Israel had attained. And now, after so many restless years, they were put to sleep at last, in the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

His task ended, Joshua retired to his inheritance; but the influence of his character and life was felt as long as he lived, and afterwards. At last he died, one hundred and ten years old, “and they buried him.”

Hast thou chosen, O my people, on whose party thou shalt stand,  
Ere the Doom from its worn sandals shakes the dust against our land?  
Though the cause of Evil prosper, yet 'tis Truth alone is strong.  
And, albeit she wander outcast now, I see around her throng  
Troops of beautiful, tall angels, to enshield her from all wrong.

Backward look across the ages and the beacon-moments see,  
That, like peaks of some sunk continent, jut through Oblivion’s sea;  
Not an ear in court or market for the low foreboding cry  
Of those Crises, God’s stern winnowers, from whose feet earth’s chaff must fly;  
Never shows the choice momentous till the judgment hath passed by.

Careless seems the great Avenger; history’s pages but record  
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the Word;  
Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,—  
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own.

### III JOSHUA'S CHARACTER

There is no character that is brought before us with such detail in Holy Scripture, and about which we have so few blemishes recorded, as the character of Joshua, the son of Nun.

1. Joshua stands out from the Bible pages as the type of a great soldier, to whom great causes were committed, and by whom great things were done. His work was the conquest and distribution of the Promised Land. In this he showed not only the valour of a warrior, but the justice, gentleness, forbearance, humility, disinterestedness of an exemplary ruler, leading his people to victory, giving to each his inheritance. It was his utter indifference to all selfish considerations and to human opinion, and his complete and constant submission to the revealed will of God, that enabled him triumphantly to accomplish his God-appointed task.

¶ There have been soldiers who were religious in spite of their being soldiers—some of them in their secret hearts regretting the distressing fortune that made the sword their weapon; but there have also been men whose energy in religion and in fighting has supported and strengthened each other. Such men, however, are usually found in times of great moral and spiritual struggle, when the brute force of the world has been mustered in overwhelming mass to crush some religious movement. They have an intense conviction that the movement is of God, and as to the use of the sword, they cannot help themselves; they have no choice, for the instinct of self-defence compels them to draw it. Such were the Ziskas and Procopes of the Bohemian reformation; the Gustavus Adolphuses of the Thirty Years' War; the Cromwells of the Commonwealth, and the General Leslies of the Covenant. Ruled supremely by the fear of God, and convinced of a Divine call to their work, they have communed about it with Him as closely and as truly as the missionary about his preaching or his translating, or the philanthropist about his homes or his rescue agencies. To God's great goodness it has ever been their habit to ascribe their successes; and when an enterprise has failed, the causes of failure have been sought for in the Divine displeasure.

2. Joshua was the first of an order that seems to many a moral paradox—an enthusiastic fighter, yet a devoted servant of God. His mind ran naturally in the groove of military work. To plan expeditions, to devise methods of attacking, scattering, or annihilating opponents, came naturally to him. Yet along with this the fear of God continually controlled and guided him. He would do nothing deliberately unless he was convinced that it was the will of God. In all his work of slaughter, he believed himself to be fulfilling the righteous purposes of Jehovah. He regarded his enemies as God's enemies, and believed their destruction necessary to keep Israel pure and a distinct race. His life was habitually guided by regard to the unseen. He had no ambition but to serve his God and to serve his country. He believed that God was behind him, and the belief made him fearless. His career of almost unbroken success justified his faith.

¶ Cromwell's habit of prayer is a notable feature of him. All his great enterprises were commenced with prayer. In dark inextricable-looking difficulties, his Officers and he used to assemble, and pray alternately, for hours, for days, till some definite resolution rose among them, some "door of hope," as they would name it, disclosed itself. Consider that. In tears, in fervent prayers, and cries to the great God to have pity on them, to make His light shine before them. They, armed Soldiers of Christ, as they felt themselves to be; a little band of Christian Brothers, who had drawn the sword against a great black devouring world not Christian, but Mammonish, Devilish,—they cried to God in their straits, in their extreme need, not to forsake the Cause that was His. The light which now rose upon them,—how could a human soul, by any means at all, get better light? Was not the purpose so formed like to be precisely the best, wisest, the one to be followed without hesitation any more? To them it was as the shining of Heaven's own Splendour in the waste-howling darkness; the Pillar of Fire by night, that was to guide them on their desolate perilous way. Was it not such? Can a man's soul, to this hour, get guidance by any other method than intrinsically by that same,—devout prostration of the earnest struggling soul before the Highest, the Giver of all Light; be such prayer a spoken, articulate, or be it a voiceless, inarticulate one? There is no other method. "Hypocrisy"? One begins to be weary of all that. They who call it so, have no right to speak on such matters. They never formed a purpose, what one can call a purpose. They went about balancing expedencies, plausibilities; gathering votes, advices; they never were alone with the truth of a thing at all.

3. He met with his reward, the highest that life can yield: he turned many to righteousness. All through his reign we hear of no idolatry, no alliance with the heathen, no counterfeit and private priesthoods, no worship in high places; none of these transgressions which so often challenged God's vengeance in the later history of the race. His personal example and authority had held the traditions of Sinai unbroken, had kept worship and religion pure.

¶ Joshua was strong and wise and true to the great trust committed to his care by the people and by God; and amid the stars that shine in the firmament of heaven, not the least bright and clear is the lustre of Joshua, the

son of Nun, who was the antetype of the risen and ascended Saviour, and whose worthiest epitaph, as written by a subsequent hand, is—

JOSHUA,  
The Son of Nun,  
The Servant of  
Jehovah.

Servant of God, well done!  
Rest from thy loved employ;  
The battle fought, the victory won,  
Enter thy Master's joy.

At midnight came the cry,  
"To meet thy God prepare!"  
He woke,—and caught his Captain's eye;  
Then, strong in faith and prayer,

His spirit, with a bound,  
Left its encumbering clay;  
His tent, at sunrise, on the ground,  
A darkened ruin lay.

The pains of death are past,  
Labour and sorrow cease;  
And life's long warfare closed at last,  
His soul is found in peace