

JOSHUA

Introduction

The book of Joshua tells us about the conquest of Canaan. It is a very theologized history: the events that really happened are presented wrapped in an interpretation full of miracles, showing the astonishing protection of Yahweh.

To enter the Land they have to go through the Jordan River (they are coming from the Western steppes). This passing through the River is presented as a second passing through the Sea, as fantastic as the famous epic.

The conquest of Jericho is also a ritual narration: a sacred procession along the city murals, as a symbolism of the power of God that gives them the Land.

Finally, at the great Assembly of Shechem, Joshua obtains the unity of all tribes. They all renew the Covenant; they all become protagonists of the great adventure of Exodus: the People of God in its entirety is finally rooted in The Promised Land, the Promise has been fulfilled.

3 ¹⁴When the people set out from their camp to cross the Jordan, the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant went before them. ¹⁵There was much water in the Jordan, for it was overflowing its banks at this time of the barley harvest. Nevertheless, when those who carried the Ark went down to the river and their feet touched the edge of the water, the water from upstream stopped flowing. ¹⁶The water stood still, forming something like a dam very far from that place, near Adam, the neighboring city of Zarethan. The water flowing down to the Dead Sea was completely cut off, and so the people could cross opposite Jericho.

¹⁷The priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant remained in the middle of the river which dried up, until all the Israelites had crossed the Jordan.

The conquest of Jericho

6 ¹The inhabitants of Jericho had closed the city and had fastened their bolts so that the Israelites could not enter. No one came in and no one went out.

²But Yahweh said to Joshua:

—I will give you the city, its king and all its men of war. ³For this, you shall have to go around the city once every day for six days. ⁴Seven priests shall go before the Ark bearing the seven trumpets used in the time of the Jubilee. On the seventh day, they shall march around the city seven times, ⁵and when they blow the horn, all the people shall come up to attack, shouting their battle cry. At that moment, the walls of the city will fall and everyone shall enter straight ahead of him.

⁶Joshua, son of Nun, called the priests and said to them:

—You shall carry the Ark of the Covenant; seven priests shall go ahead with the trumpets they use for the Jubilee.

⁷Then Joshua said to the people:

—You shall march around the city and the vanguard of the army shall go before the Ark of Yahweh.

¹⁰Joshua had given this order:

—Do not shout or utter anything, nor let even a single word be heard, until the day comes when I say: Shout and cry out!

¹¹That day he had the Ark of Yahweh carried around the city once, then all returned to the camp where they spent the night. ¹²On the following day, Joshua rose early in the morning, ¹³and the priests took the Ark. ¹⁵On the seventh day, the Israelites rose early at dawn and marched around Jericho in the same way as on the previous days. But on that day, they did it seven times. ¹⁶At the seventh time, as the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua ordered the people:

—Shout your battle cry for Yahweh has given you the city.

¹⁷The city and all that is in it shall be given in anathema to Yahweh.

²⁰The people shouted and the trumpets blew. At this precise moment, the walls of the city fell. Then everyone went straight into the city to the place before him.

²⁷So Yahweh was with Joshua and made him famous in all the land.

11 ²³Joshua seized the whole land as Yahweh had directed Moses and gave it as an inheritance to the Israelites to be distributed among their tribes. With this, the land rested from war.

Renewal of the covenant

24¹Joshua summoned all the tribes of Israel in Shechem, and assembled the elders, leaders, judges and secretaries. And together they presented themselves before God.

²Addressing the people, Joshua said to them:

—Yahweh, the God of Israel, commands me to say to you: “Your ancestors lived beyond the Euphrates River—Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor—serving other gods. ³But I brought Abraham your father from beyond the Euphrates and led him through the whole land of Canaan. Then I gave him a son Isaac, that he might have numerous descendants. ⁴And to Isaac, I gave two sons: Esau and Jacob. Esau received the mountains of Seir as his inheritance, while Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.

⁵“Then I sent Moses and Aaron to punish Egypt in the way that you know, that you might leave. ¹³I gave you lands which you have not tilled, cities which you did not build but in which you now live. I gave you vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant but from which you now eat.

¹⁴“So fear Yahweh, and be sincere and faithful in serving him. Set aside those gods your ancestors worshiped in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Serve only Yahweh. ¹⁵But if you do not want to serve Yahweh, make known this very day whom you shall serve—whether they be the gods your ancestors served in Mesopotamia or the gods of the Amorites who formerly occupied the land in which you now live. As for me, I and my household will serve Yahweh.”

¹⁶The people answered:

—May God not permit that we ever abandon Yahweh to serve other gods! ¹⁷For it was he who brought us and our ancestors out of Egypt, the house of slavery. It was he who did those great wonders that we have seen; he protected us on the way and through all the land where we passed.

²⁴The people answered:

—We will serve Yahweh, our God, and obey his commands.

²⁵On that day at Shechem, Joshua made a covenant with the people and fixed laws and ordinances. ²⁶He also wrote down everything expressed in the book of the Law of God; he chose a great stone and put it under the oak tree in the sacred place of Yahweh. ²⁷Then Joshua said to the people:

—This stone shall be a witness to all that Yahweh said to us, for it heard all these words. It shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with Yahweh.

²⁸Joshua immediately sent the people away and everyone returned to his land.