

# Joshua 05 - Circumcision of Israel, Passover; Manna Ceases; Commander of Lord's Army Appears

I. Israel's conquest of Canaan (Joshua 1:1—12:24)

(2) Israel crosses the Jordan (3:1—5:12)

(C) Circumcision and celebration of Passover at Gilgal (5:1-12)

(a) Circumcision at Gilbeath-haaraloth (5:1-9)

(b) Celebration of the Passover on the plains of Jericho (5:10-12)

(3) Israel conquers Canaan (Joshua 5:13—12:24)

(A) Central campaign (Joshua 5:13—9:27)

(a) Theophanic appearance (5:13-15)

## Joshua 5

(C) Circumcision and celebration of Passover at Gilgal (5:1-12)

(a) Circumcision at Gilbeath-haaraloth (5:1-9)

1 Now it came about when all the kings of the **Amorites** who *were* beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the **Canaanites** who *were* by the sea, heard how the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel.

1 Now it came about when all the kings of the Amorites who *were* beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who *were* by the sea, heard how the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel.

1 All the Amorite kings who lived across the Jordan River to the west and all the Canaanite kings by the Mediterranean Sea became discouraged as soon as they heard that the LORD had dried up the water of the Jordan River for the people of Israel until they had crossed it. They no longer had a will to fight because of the people of Israel.

1 And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we

were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.

- It would appear (to human wisdom) that now was the time to strike: fear had gripped the enemy. But in spiritual warfare—and that's what we are dealing with, always—proper preparation is essential.

— This verse explains why the Israelites were able to take several days to perform the circumcision, and the requisite healing period, that rendered them vulnerable to their enemies militarily

— Since their enemies lost all courage ("their heart melted"), they did not attack

- "...Amorites...Canaanites" - groups all the native tribes together

— The Amorites mainly lived in the south and mountainous areas; many also lived in the Trans-Jordan

— They were the mightiest of the warriors among the pagan tribes

— The Canaanites lived in the north, in the lowlands by the Mediterranean, and the Valley of Jezreel

— They were traders rather than warriors

#### **Four Tokens From God**

(1) The Token of Circumcision - restoration to covenant favor (v2-9)

(2) The Token of Blood - anticipation of deliverance (v10)

(3) The Token of Fruit - appropriation of the blessing (v11-12)

(4) The Token of a Sword - revelation of a holy war (v13-15)

**2** At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make for yourself **flintknives** and circumcise again the sons of Israel the **secondtime**."

**2** At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make for yourself flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time."

**2** At that time the LORD told Joshua, "Make for yourselves some flint knives and circumcise the Israelis who haven't been circumcised yet."

**2** At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.

- A continued dialogue between the divine and human commanders...

- God had guaranteed Joshua's success only to the extent that he kept the Mosaic Law (1:7)

— Thus, it was necessary that all males born in the wilderness, who had not been circumcised, should do so

— Circumcision brought each male into the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant, and was a prerequisite for partaking in the Passover, which God required of all Israelites annually (Ex 12)

- Circumcision was the sign of the covenant between YHWH and His people (Gen 17:9-14)
- God's sign to Noah (rainbow, Gen 9) was in the sky. Why? It was a covenant not only with Noah but with all of nature. Abraham received circumcision as a personal seal of the righteousness of the faith he had (Rom 4:11). It could be nullified by disobedience (Rom 2:25).
- "...flint knives" - sharp flint rocks (obsidian)
- "...second time" - the first mass circumcision of the Israelites evidently took place in Egypt before the first Passover and Exodus

Why did God wait to command the circumcision of the new generation until *now*, rather than on the plains of Moab? Perhaps He did so because He wanted to bring the people into the Land before enforcing this aspect of the Law. This is consistent with God's dealings with humankind. He first gives and then asks (Cf. Rom. 12:1).

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3 And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.

- This might seem surprising for a military commander: they were in enemy territory and, thus, especially vulnerable (Cf. Gen 34!). But God was in charge.

- A leader is often called upon to take risks...in this case, moving 2 million people into a hostile Land, then promptly disabling all of your military men, so they could not even stand up in their own defense.

— Barabas and Paul "hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 15:26); Paul would say of Epaphroditus that he risked his life (Phil 2:30); etc.

— Christian warriors are spoken of as risking their lives

4 This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way after they came out of Egypt.

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4 Joshua circumcised them because all of the males among the people who came out of Egypt—that is, all the warriors—had died during their journey through the wilderness

following their departure from Egypt.

4 And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt.

5 For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised.

5 For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised.

5 Although everyone who had left Egypt had been circumcised, nevertheless all the people born during the journey after their departure from Egypt had not been circumcised.

5 Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised.

- Even Moses apparently goofed: he didn't follow directions (Cf. Ex 4:24-26). His sins also appear to be "blotted out."

6 For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, *that is*, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished because they did not listen to the voice of the LORD, to whom the LORD had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.

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6 The Israelis traveled 40 years in the wilderness until the entire nation—that is, the warriors who had departed from Egypt—had perished because they hadn't listened to the voice of the LORD. The LORD had promised them that he would not let them see the land that he had sworn to give us, a land that flows with milk and honey.

6 For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD sware that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

7 So their children whom He raised up in their place, Joshua circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them along the way.

7 Their children whom He raised up in their place, Joshua circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them along the way.

7 As a result, it was their descendants, whom he raised up to take their place, that Joshua circumcised. They had remained uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised during their journey.

7 And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way.

- Amazing! Remember, even after 40 years, they were not circumcised; this means that they had not observed Passover.

8 Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they recovered.

8 Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed.

8 When the circumcision of the entire nation was complete, they remained in their places within the camp until they were healed.

8 And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole.

9 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the **shame of Egypt** from you." So the name of that place is called **Gilgal** to this day.

9 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.

9 Then the LORD told Joshua, "Today I have rolled the disgrace of Egypt away from you." That's why that place is called "Gilgal" to this day.

9 And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.

- "...shame of Egypt" - refers to the shame that the Israelites had not circumcised their sons during the latter years of Egyptian bondage and during the wilderness wanderings  
— When the Israelites obeyed God by circumcising their young men, the Lord's deliverance of them reached its climax

- "...Gilgal" - means rolling away, or circle

— Gilgal became Joshua's center of operations (9:6; 10:6,15,43; 14:6)

— Saul, the first king, was crowned here (1 Sam 11)

— David was welcomed back after Absalom's rebellion was subdued (2 Sam 19)

— Samuel included it on his circuit (1 Sam 7:16)

— Included a "school of the prophets" in days of Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2:1-2; 4:38)

— It was a dwelling place of prophets in northern Israel, about four miles (7 km) from Shiloh and Bethel

— It became a shrine where false worship was involved. Hosea condemned the people for worshipping at Gilgal instead of Jerusalem (Hosea 4:15; 9:15; 12:11). Amos echoed his warnings (Amos 4:4; 5:5).

(b) Celebration of the Passover on the plains of Jericho (5:10-12)

**10** While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal they celebrated the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho.

**10** While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho.

**10** While the Israelis remained encamped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, they observed the Passover during the evening of the fourteenth day of the month.

**10** And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.

- The Law prescribed that only members of the covenant community could eat the Passover. It was a memorial to God's redemption of Israel out of Egyptian slavery in the Exodus. It symbolized God's deliverance of His people from the tyranny of sin (Cf. Ex 12:43-51).

- This is "preparing a table before them in the presence of their enemies!" (Ps 23:5)

— Celebrating Passover right near their enemies. They had not kept the Passover for 38 years! This is the second celebration of Passover (1st at Sinai, Num 9:5).

**11** Then on the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and roasted *grain*.

**11** On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched *grain*.

**11** On the day following Passover—on that exact day—they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain.

**11** And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day.

- On the Feast of Unleavened Bread that followed the Passover, the people were able to use the "old corn of the land" to make bread

— God now provided their daily needs from the produce of the land rather than manna from heaven (Cf. Ex 16:35)

We are prone to look upon our common mercies as *matters of course*, and God sometimes withdraws them to teach us our dependence more effectually.

12 And the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year.

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12 The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land. Since the Israelis no longer received manna, they ate crops from the land of Canaan that year.

12 And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

- Its cessation was as miraculous as its initiation (Cf. John 6:33,49,50,58; 12:24)

- Passover reminded them of their redemption from Egypt; manna probably reminded them of their desire to go back to Egypt (Ex 16:3)

God fed His people the bread of heaven, the food of angels (Ps 78:23-25), yet they still lusted for the food of Egypt (Num 11:4-9). It took only a few days to get Israel out of Egypt, but it took 38 years to get Egypt out of Israel!

Jesus gave His life for us; He gives His life to us (1 Cor 5:7-8). "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col 3:1-2).

(3) Israel conquers Canaan (Joshua 5:13—12:24)

(A) Central campaign (Joshua 5:13—9:27)

(a) Theophanic appearance (5:13-15)

**13** Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, he **raised his eyes** and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

**13** Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?"

**13** Now it happened that while Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and much to his amazement, he saw a man standing in front of him, holding a drawn sword in his hand!

Joshua approached him and asked him, "Are you one of us, or are you with our enemies?"

**13** And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?

- As Joshua contemplated attacking Jericho, he must have been overwhelmed at his lack of military might versus the large walls of the heavily fortified city
- It was at this time that the Angel of the LORD appeared to him and assured him of victory
- Jericho was just west of the Jordan River, deep in the Jordan Valley, almost 850 feet below sea level
- It's one of the earth's oldest inhabited cities, and has been destroyed and rebuilt as many as two dozens times over the centuries
- "...raised his eyes" - a phrase used every time as a prelude to a major milestone. Like a brave sentry, Joshua issues the challenge.

Despite Joshua's long military experience he had never led an attack on a fortified city that was prepared for a long siege. In fact, of all the walled cities in Palestine, Jericho was probably the most invincible. There was also the question of armaments. Israel's army had no siege engines, no battering rams, no catapults, and no moving towers. Their only weapons were slings, arrows, and spears—which were like straws against the walls of Jericho.

14 He said, "No; rather I have come now as captain of the army of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the ground, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?"

14 He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?"

14 "Neither," he answered. "I have come as commander of the LORD's Army."

Joshua immediately fell on his face to the earth and worshipped, saying to him, "Lord, what do you have for your servant by way of command?"

**14** And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?

- The reply told Joshua that he asked the wrong question

— The battle was God's, and Joshua was commanded to be on *His* team; God doesn't join *our* team, we join *His*

— God is fully committed to His people, but He is never our servant; in that sense, He takes no sides

- "...captain of the host of the LORD" - commander of God's angelic army (Cf. 1 Kings 22:19; 2 Kings 6:8-17; Ps 148:2; Matt 26:53; Heb 1:14)

— It is obvious that Joshua perceived this Man as a mighty warrior. As soon as the Stranger identified Himself, Joshua bowed before Him acknowledging His superiority.  
— Angels do not allow worshiped; John tries twice in Revelation, but the angel does not allow it

15 And the captain of the LORD'S army said to Joshua, "**Remove your sandals** from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

15 The captain of the LORD's host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

15 The commander of the LORD's Army replied to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, because the place where you're standing is holy." So Joshua did so.

**15** And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

- The Stranger's response put everything in perspective: God is sovereign. It is never a question whether God is on our side but whether we are on God's side.

— The purpose of this encounter was not to impart commands, but to inspire Joshua with humility and instill in him the confidence that God was with him and in control

— The Lord did not come to help Joshua execute his plans...He came to take over!

- This "Angel" permits (commands) worship (Cf. Rev 19:10; 22:8-9)

— No "Angel" has God's power, performs God's work, or receives God's worship (Gen 16:7-13; 22:15-16; 31:11; Ex 3:2,6; Judges 6:22; 13:21-22; 2 Sam 24:16)

— We no longer see the Angel of the Lord in the NT because God the Son is now incarnate—fully God and fully man forever

- "...Remove your sandals" - this command would have convinced Joshua that this "Angel" was the same Person, God Himself, who appeared to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:5) 40 years earlier

— The dirt, grass and stones Joshua was standing on were holy because the holy God was present there

To Abraham the pilgrim, the Lord came as a traveler to share in a friendly meal (Gen 18:1-8); to Jacob the schemer, He came as a wrestler to bring him to the place of submission (Gen 32:24-32); to the three Hebrew young men, he joined them in the fiery furnace (Dan 3:25); Our Lord always comes to us when we need Him and in the way we need Him.

God not only instructed Joshua concerning what he should do in the battle ahead, but this Theophany assured Joshua that *Yahweh* would also personally lead His people in battle.

We need not conclude, however, that this divine Leader continued to be visible after this.

There is no reference to Him in the record of the battle that follows. His appearance on this occasion simply impressed Joshua with the fact that God would be leading Israel.

The conquest of Canaan is too often treated as an enterprise of the Israelites, carried out with great cruelties, for which they claimed divine sanction. The OT presents the matter in an entirely different light. The war is a Divine enterprise, in which human instruments are employed, but so as to be entirely subordinate to the Divine will.

We are engaged in a warfare. The key lesson of Joshua 5: we must be spiritually prepared if we are to be successful for His name. Humble worship (Eph 3:14), holy walk (Eph 4:1,17; 5:2,8,15), *then* heavenly warfare (Eph 6:10ff). Like Joshua, we have already been given our inheritance (Eph 1-2), yet we must overcome the enemy in order to claim it for ourselves and enjoy it.