

## Joshua 23:1-16

We think of the Book of Joshua as a "historical" book, but it is counted by Jewish tradition to be among the books of prophecy.

The major divisions are the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. But the Prophets are also divided into the Former Prophets and the Latter Prophets. The 12 minor prophets are a subgroup under the Latter Prophets.

The name "Former Prophets" (*Nevi'im Rishonim*) derives from Jewish tradition and serves in the Hebrew Bible as the designation for the Books of Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, and 1–2 Kings. The designation is significant. It refers to the prophetic narratives in the Books of Kings and to others which fit the image of the prophets of Jewish tradition. Subsequently, the prophets are interpreters of the Torah who admonish the people to be obedient to the law. They also pronounce the word of judgment when the people refuse to repent. The prominent figures Joshua, Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha meet the features of this image.

The question as to the authors of these books also is explained in this sense. As the "Prophet Moses" (**Deuteronomy 18:15; 34:10**) has written the Torah, so, according to the Babylonian Talmud (Baba Batra 14b.15a), Joshua and Samuel wrote the books that bear their names. Accordingly, Samuel is also presented as the author of Judges and Ruth, while Jeremiah is said to have written the Book of Kings.

In the Hebrew Bible, the "Latter Prophets" (*Nevi'im Akharonim*) follow. The writing prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets are understood as belonging to this category. According to Jewish tradition, the oldest biblical sources of the history of Israel are entirely due to the spirit of prophecy.

The Talmud (Megillah 14a) states that only "48 prophets and 7 prophetesses prophesied to Israel," (i.e. who delivered prophecies relevant to the future and not just their own generation). The sages disagree as to whether Daniel is included in that list or not. Usually Daniel is considered part of the *Ketuvim*, the Writings.

See [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/1735365/jewish/Why-Isnt-the-Book-of-Daniel-Part-of-the-Prophets.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1735365/jewish/Why-Isnt-the-Book-of-Daniel-Part-of-the-Prophets.htm)

From our point of view, we understand how the book of Joshua is also prophecy because Joshua prefigured Jesus (Joshua) the Messiah in many ways. Especially in this chapter, Joshua gives a prophecy, as Moses did, concerning what was to happen to Israel in the future.

Joshua's reproofs and warnings are almost identical with those of Moses at the end of his life (**Deuteronomy 31**). This chapter is addressed to all the people, but specifically in person to the leaders of Israel he called for. (The next chapter is a similar address perhaps at a later time at Shechem).

## Entering the Rest

**Joshua 23:1** - "And it came to pass a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age."

The phrase "the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about" is used elsewhere in a significant way.

- **Exodus 33:14** - "And the LORD answered, 'My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'"

- **Joshua 1:13** - "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land."

- **Joshua 21:44** - "And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand."

Later, God speaks to David through Nathan, after stating "the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies":

- **2 Samuel 7:10-16** - "Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. ...And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."

As we've seen before, since Joshua was unable to bring the people into the rest, David speaks of another day - today! Joshua/Jesus/the Messiah called Son of David fulfilled this by providing for us a spiritual resting place.

- **Hebrews 4:8** - "For if Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he [David] not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

- Quoting David in **Psalm 95:7-8, 11** - "For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness... Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest."

## Exhortation

**Joshua 23:2** - "And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age: And ye have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the LORD your God is he that hath fought for you."

The gathering of leaders either took place at Shiloh where the Tabernacle was - perhaps during one of the pilgrimage feasts - or at Joshua's home in Timnathserah.

Although he speaks of courage later, here Joshua doesn't mention their own valor or strength in battle, or theirs. He gives all the credit and glory to God, who "fought for you."

### A Prophecy

**Joshua 23:4-5** - "Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward. And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God hath promised unto you."

Again, remember that in **Joshua 21:43-45** it says "there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand."

Yet here is another mention of Canaanites that remain unconquered. This is why Joshua is considered a book of prophecy. This points to fulfillment by the Messiah.

### A Warning

**Joshua 23:6-8** - "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left; That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them"

Courage has been a constant theme of Joshua.

- **Joshua 1:9** - "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Courage as a spiritual gift includes fortitude of mind, a fixed resolution and spiritual strength. For believers, this comes when we acknowledge our own fears, weaknesses and inability. It seems counter-intuitive, but that's how God works.

- **2 Corinthians 12:9-10** - "...My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me....For when I am weak, then I am strong"

- **Philippians 4:13-** "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

Courage was needed to follow God, turn away from the temptation to idolatry, and to root out any rebellion against God should it appear in Israel.

Maimonides says, "He that vows in the name of an idol, and swears by it, is to be beaten --he that swears by it himself, or causes a Gentile to swear by it; for it is forbidden to cause a Gentile to swear by his fear (or idol), and even to cause him to make mention of it, though not in the way of an oath, it is forbidden."

In other words, even to use a Gentile's belief in an idol against himself for your gain - as in getting him to swear or promise something by his god - is forbidden. That would be appearing to grant the false god some kind of status or power. Idols were always to be referred to with contempt, indignation or mockery.

**Joshua 23:8** - "But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day."

He said this previously in **Joshua 22:5-6**.

"cleave" = *dabaq* - cling to, be joined to, adhere to as with glue, cleave, attach, follow closely, stick to, pursue and catch, to be lovingly devoted to - as a husband and wife are to be.

**Joshua 23:9-10** - "For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day. One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you."

Promised in **Deuteronomy 11:25** - "There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you." (See also Deuteronomy 1:30, Leviticus 26:8, and Samson in Judges 15:15)

### **Examine Yourselves**

**Joshua 23:11** - "Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God."

"love" = *âhab* - to desire, to "breathe after" or long for, to delight in. The "breathing" is even reflected in pronouncing the syllables themselves.

It can be used of evil, too - **Hosea 12:8** - "he loveth to oppress."

So, what do we love, or long for, or "breathe after"?

To "take heed" means to "examine ourselves" to affirm that we love God alone.

- **2 Corinthians 13:5** - "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

"prove" = *dokimos* - an assaying term, to prove or approve something. Put it to the test to show that it is genuine. The acid dissolves impurities, revealing the gold. Unless you are a complete reprobate (*adikomai* - worthless, unapproved or counterfeit), the act of proving will reveal your true identity in Christ to you once again.

### Don't Be Entrapped

**Joshua 23:12-13** - "Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you."

"go back and cleave" = *shub dabaq* - repent, reverse course to cling to (i.e. to Canaanite culture and worship)

"scourges in your sides" - *shotet* - whip, scourge, from a root meaning "to pierce"

This, plus the reference to thorns in your eyes, points to Christ's scourging - His "stripes" - and the crown of thorns at the cross, taking these prophesied judgments on Himself.

Later, Israel's return to idolatry led to their exile from the land, first by Babylon and later by Rome. **Psalm 106:35** - "But [they] were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works."

Paul references this verse when talking about his "thorn in the flesh" sent to him by God, perhaps to deflate his pride in his abundance of revelation (**2 Corinthians 12:7**). He used the idea as a sort of general picture representing God's chastisement.

**Joshua 23:14** - "And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof."

This again is prophetic. Israel had to believe it and know it despite all appearances. We can say this now, too - all God's promises have come to pass. Because they are all fulfilled in Christ, and we are in Him, as He is in us.

- **2 Corinthians 1:20** - "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

We "see through" what our senses tell us, and affirm His promises by faith - despite appearances.

- **Hebrews 2:8-9** - "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him, But we see Jesus..."

### A Final Warning

**Joshua 23:16** - "Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you."

This is both a conditional warning and a prophecy of what will indeed take place, and did take place in history. It is also a current word to us, a warning not to leave the mercy seat to wander away from God.

For those who do stray, repentance and restoration is always offered as an option.