

Joshua 24:1-33

Joshua's Final Farewell Address, Part 2

This address of Joshua just before he died is paired as a Haftarah reading with Moses' speech in **Deuteronomy 30** before his death. God through Moses had called on the people to "Choose life!" in **Deuteronomy 30**. Here Joshua challenges them to "choose you this day whom ye will serve"

This address was made some time after the one in **Chapter 23**. The gathering was at Shechem, which is 10 miles from Shiloh, where the Tabernacle was set up. Some rabbis said the Ark - symbol of the Divine Presence - and possibly the whole Tabernacle was moved briefly to Shechem for this address, and to take advantage of the significance of Shechem to Israel as Joshua reviews the nation's history.

(The Septuagint however has "Shiloh" instead of Shechem as the meeting point).

Joshua begins with a sketch of the history of Israel thus far. This is repeated several times in the Bible (**Psalms 106**) recalling "the mighty acts of the Lord."

"We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old." - (**Psalms 44:1**) It is edifying for us to regularly do the same and remind ourselves of what God has done for us and for his people.

Joshua 24:1 - "And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God."

The Importance of Shechem

Shechem was the place where the Lord first appeared to Abraham, when he brought him into the land of Canaan, and where he made a promise of giving the land to his seed, and where Abraham built an altar to him, **Genesis 12:6**; where also Jacob pitched his tent when he came from Padanaram, bought a parcel of a field, and erected an altar to the Lord, **Genesis 33:18**; and where Joshua also repeated the law to, and renewed the covenant with, the children of Israel, soon after their coming into the land of Canaan - Mt. Ebal and Gerizim were near Shechem, **Joshua 8:30**.

Joshua 24:2 - "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods."

"flood" = The River Euphrates (i.e. not referring to the Flood of Noah)

Joshua 24:3 - "And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac."

"Hebrew" is a word meaning the "other side" and conceivably referring to "Abraham the Hebrew" (**Genesis 14:13**), who crossed into the land of Canaan from the "other side" of the Euphrates.

Evil and impurity are often referred to in the Zohar as "the other side" [*sitra achra*], meaning the side distinct from, and opposed to, holiness.

We also have been brought from "the other side" by God, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" - (**Colossians 1:13**)

Abraham the Father of Faith

- **Hebrews 11:8** - "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Isaac was the "child of promise," a type of Christ

- **Hebrews 11:17** - "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

We also are "Hebrews" in the sense that we have been delivered from "the other side" into Christ's kingdom.

Joshua 24:4 - "And I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau Mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt."

- **Romans 9:13** - "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Recall how Jacob and Esau struggled in their mother's womb. How Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of pottage.

Those hearing Joshua's address, which just touches on the highlights, would no doubt have recalled the whole story flowing through history. Jacob's night at Bethel and his vision of the angels ascending and descending on a ladder reaching to heaven. The birth of his 12 sons. Their selling of Joseph into slavery in Egypt, etc.

Enslavement and Freedom

Joshua 24:5-7 - "I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them: and afterward I brought you out. And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and ye came unto the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with

chariots and horsemen unto the Red sea. And when they cried unto the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season."

Rashi - "and brought the sea upon him": i.e., upon each individual among them, for if one escaped entering into the sea, a wave of the sea would pursue him and overtake him.

Thus, baptism means you acknowledge your own individual death as well as that of all of the race of Adam at the cross..

The plagues on Egyptian gods and the miraculous splitting of the Red Sea are mentioned. Providing water and manna for the people are not mentioned. Neither is the giving of the Law at Sinai. But the oath the people swear to obey God's law and not serve idols recalls the covenant at Sinai:

- **Exodus 24:7-8** - "And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."

"your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt:" - Joshua had witnessed all this, whereas most of the people hearing him had not. They were of the new generation that replaced their parents who died in the wilderness. Those more than twenty years of age at their coming out from Egypt, and who were the murmurers in the wilderness, died.

'I Sent the Hornet'

Joshua 24:12 - "And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow."

Prophesied in **Exodus 23:28** and **Deuteronomy 7:20**. This could be real hornets. More probably it's a figurative expression for uncontrollable terror - "that kind of unreasonable fear and panic which seems, from a distance, to be displayed by persons attacked by these apparently insignificant insects." Even giants could be driven off by hornets. David Kimchi interprets these as real hornets, which so blinded the eyes of the enemy that they could not see to fight.

A Call to Renew the Covenant

Joshua 24:14 - "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."

"serve him in sincerity and in truth" -

- **1 Corinthians 5:8** - "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old bread, leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and of truth."

The Hebrew for sincerity is *tamiym* - meaning "perfectly, completely, without blemish." Paul's Greek phrase is *eilikrineia* – literally, "judged in the light of the sun"; i.e. with clear, transparent, pure inner motives, without hypocrisy.

"put away the gods which your fathers served" - This means that even at this point, some were continuing to secretly worship idols. And this continued through Israel's history:

In **Leviticus 17:7** we read, "they (the people) shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring."

Again in **Amos 5:25-26**, quoted by Stephen in his address before the Sanhedrim (**Acts 7:42-43**), "Have ye offered (= did ye offer) unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves."

- **Ezekiel 20:6-8** - "In the day that I lifted up my hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt ... then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt ... but they rebelled against Me, and would not hearken unto Me; they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt."

We can't serve God with sincerity and truth a still harbor secret idolatry.

'Choose You This Day'

Joshua 24:15 - "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

The People Respond

Joshua 24:18 - "And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; For the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed: And the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God."

Their intentions are good, but they need to realize that they can't trust themselves. Their confidence in themselves is misplaced. "Trust not in man!" And it is better to not swear

at all than to promise something you can't fulfill.

- **Ecclesiastes 5:5** - "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." (NET - It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it)

- **Psalm 118:8** - "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man"

Joshua's Prophecy

Joshua 24:19 - "And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins."

This is a prophecy. They will not be able to serve the Lord. And their vow to serve Him would be just one more transgression.

Joshua, perhaps by virtue of his being a type of Christ, understood that the law was too "holy, just, and good" for it to be possible that Israel should keep it. His statement - "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. - was itself a prophetic look toward Jesus, who did serve the Lord. If we are part of His "household" then we are serving too, in Him. We participate in His ministry, as His Body on earth.

Jesus "knew what was in man" (John 2:25). When some told Him "I will follow You wherever You go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head." Implied is that this man did not follow Jesus. (**Luke 9:57-58**)

Even Peter's resolve was shown to be lacking:

- **Luke 22:33-34** - "And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me."

For Paul, it required a miracle and three years' wrestling in Arabia, to understand that by the deeds of the law "shall no flesh be justified in God's sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (**Romans 3:20**).

The only appropriate response spiritually is to fall on our faces and cry out for mercy. Then we might receive the mark of the cross on our foreheads.

- **Ezekiel 9:4-5** - "And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:"

Joshua here echoes the prophets:

- **Isaiah 6:9-10** - "And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

Adam, natural man, cannot serve the Lord, do the Law or even repent from his own power. As long as idolatry persists, no spiritual understanding is possible. It takes the intervention of the Holy Spirit to bring us to repentance.

God is holy, and the best of men are impure and unholy before him. That's why all service in the Temple had to be touched by the blood of the altar, signifying not only the death of Christ, but our own death with Him.

As Joshua reveals, God doesn't want our efforts, He wants our surrender. The problem can only be solved by continually reckoning ourselves to be dead (**Romans 6:6**).