

## **Joshua and Judges – Session One**

### **Introduction to Joshua – Judges**



*Joshua and the Battle of Jericho*

by Julius Schnoor von Carolsfeld (1794 – 1872)

#### ***Course Outline***

***Joshua – An Introduction***  
***A Primer on Old Testament Sources***  
***Two Flood Stories Intertwined***

#### ***Course Outline***

Session 1: Introduction to Joshua / Judges, Background; The Torah; Multiple Sources

Session 2: Moses and the Deuteronomist; Deuteronomy; Joshua 1 – 2 (The Commission; The Invasion – Part One)

Session 3: Joshua 3 – 7 (The Invasion - Part 2); Alternative Commentary that looks at Joshua/Judges as historical.

Session 4: Joshua 8 – 12 (The Invasion - Part 3); Joshua and the Deuteronomist

Session 5: Joshua 13 – 19 (Redistribution of the Lands)

Session Six: Joshua 20 – 24 (Judicial and Religious Centers; Ethnic Identity)

Session 7: Judges Introduction; Judges and the Historian; Reading Judges in Literature; Judges 1

Session 8: Judges 2 – 3; The Short Story; Poetry and Prose in Judges 4 – 5

Session 9: Gideon: Judges 6 – 13; Judges and the Deuteronomist

Session 10: The Samson Cycle: Judges 14 – 17

Session 11: Judges 18 – 21: Winding Down the Concubine of Gibeah

Session 12: A Conclusion that Became an Introduction; Conclusion:  
The Center Does Cohere

### ***Joshua – An Introduction***

The book of Joshua, sandwiched in between the grand oratory of Deuteronomy and the vivid accounts of guerilla warfare and civil war in Judges, is a text that many modern readers may find off-putting. Its early chapters do include two memorable episodes – the expedition of the two spies to Jericho and the miraculous destruction of the walls of Jericho that enable its conquest. The prevailing sense, however, of the first half of the book is ruthlessness, and the general effect of the second half is tedium. Nowhere in the Bible is there a more palpable discrepancy between the values and expectations of the ancient Near Eastern era in which the book was written and those of the twenty-first century readers.

Joshua is really two books, symmetrically divided into twelve chapters each. The first of these we may call the Book of Conquests. It appears to be predominately the work of the school of Deuteronomy, though it is not altogether uniform, and there is evidence that other sources have been drawn on, some of them probably older than Deuteronomy. The second half of Joshua can be given the rubric the Book of Apportionments. Its provenance is largely Priestly, though it ends with an emphatic Deuteronomistic flourish. There is some narrative material in the last three chapters, but the bulk of it is devoted to mapping out the sundry tribal territories in elaborate detail.

This book as a whole is offered as a historical account of the conquest of the land and the division of its territories, but the connection with history of both its large components is tenuous. Archeologists in the earlier twentieth century were often bent on confirming the biblical record through their discoveries, but that project had not stood the test of time. What the last decades of archeological investigation have established is that there was no sweeping conquest of Canaan by invaders from the east in the late thirteenth century BCE – which would have been the time of Joshua – and that many of the towns listed as objects of Israelite conquest were either uninhabited at this time or did not come under Israelite rule till considerably later. Jericho, the gateway town in the Jordan Valley and the one whose conquest

has become etched in collective memory, was an important fortified city in the Middle Bronze Age (two or three centuries before the putative time of Joshua), but in the late thirteenth century it was an abandoned site or at most not much more than a large village without walls. Lachish, another important town said to have been taken by Joshua's forces, fell under Israelite domination only during the period of the monarchy.

The fact that this narrative does not correspond to what we can reconstruct of the actual history of Canaan offers one great consolation: the blood-curdling report of the massacre of the entire population of Canaanite towns – men, women, children, and in some cases, livestock as well – never happened. Some reflection on why these imagined mass murders are included in the book may provide a sense of the aim of the pseudo-historiographical project of the Book of Joshua. The *herem*, the practice of total destruction that scholars call “the ban” (a usage adopted in the present translation), was not unique to ancient Israel, and there is some evidence that it was occasionally carried out in warfare by other peoples of the region. The question is why the Hebrew writers, largely under the theological influence of Deuteronomy, felt impelled to invent a narrative of the conquest of the land in which genocidal onslaught on its indigenous population is repeatedly stressed.

– Robert Alter (from the introduction to the translation/commentary on the Book of Joshua from *The Hebrew Bible – Translation and Commentary*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, London, 2018)

### ***A Primer on Old Testament Sources***

Early (biblical scholars) accepted the tradition that Moses wrote the Five Books, but they suggested that a few lines were added here or there. In the eleventh century, Isaac ibn Yashush, a Jewish court physician of a ruler in Muslim Spain, pointed out that a list of Edomite kings that appears in Genesis 36 named kings who lived long after Moses was dead. In the fifteenth century, Tostatus, bishop of Avila, also stated that certain passages, notably the account of Moses' death, could not have been written by Moses. There was an old tradition that Moses' successor Joshua wrote this account. But in the sixteenth century, Carlstadt, a contemporary of Luther, commented that the account of Moses' death is written in the same style as texts that precede it. This makes it difficult to claim that Joshua or anyone else merely added a few lines to an otherwise Mosaic manuscript. It also raises further questions about what exactly was Mosaic and what was added by someone else.

In the sixteenth century, Andreas van Mae suggested that a later editor inserted phrases or changed the name of a place to its more current name so that readers would understand it better. Later investigators concluded outright that Moses did not write the majority of the Pentateuch. The first to say it was the British philosopher Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century. Hobbes collected numerous

cases of facts and statements through the course of the Five Books that were inconsistent with Mosaic authorship. For example, the text sometimes states that something is the case “to this day.” “To this day” is not the phrase of someone describing a contemporary situation. It is rather the phrase of a later writer who is describing something that has endured.

About the same time, in Holland, the philosopher Spinoza published a unified critical analysis, likewise demonstrating that the problematic passages were not a few isolated cases that could be explained away one by one. Rather, they were pervasive through the entire Five Books of Moses. There were the third-person accounts of Moses, the statements that Moses was unlikely to have made (e.g., “humblest man on earth”), the report of Moses death, the expression “to this day,” the references to geographical locales by names that they acquired after Moses’ lifetime, the treatment of matters that were subsequent to Moses, and various contradictions and problems in the text of the sort that earlier investigators had observed.

A short time later, in France, Richard Simon, wrote a work that he intended to be critical of Spinoza. He said that the core of the Pentateuch was Mosaic but that there were some additions. The additions, he said, were written by scribes who collected, arranged, and elaborated upon the old texts. These scribes, according to Simon, were prophets, guided by the divine spirit.

The hypothesis that the Five Books of Moses were the result of combining several sources prepared the way to deal with a new item of evidence that was developed by three investigators in the following century: **the doublet**. A doublet is a case of the same story being told twice. Even in translation it is easy to observe that biblical stories often appear with variation of detail in two different places in the Bible. There are two different stories of the creation of the world. There are two stories of the covenant between God and the patriarch Abraham, two stories of the naming of Abraham’s son Isaac, two stories of Moses getting water from a rock at Meribah, etc.

Investigators found that in most cases one of the two versions of a doublet story would refer to the deity by the divine name, Yahweh (formerly mispronounced Jehovah), and the other version of the story would refer to the deity simply as “God.” They also found various other terms and characteristics that regularly appeared in one or the other group of stories. This tended to support the hypothesis that someone had taken two different old source documents, cut them up, and woven them together to form the continuous story in the Five Books of Moses. In the eighteenth century, H.B. Witter, Jean Astruc, and J.C. Eichhorn, independently arrived at the conclusion that both of the two sources had to be from writers who lived after Moses.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the two-source hypothesis was expanded. Scholars found evidence that there were not two major sources documents in the Pentateuch after all – there were four! There were not only doublets, but a number of triplets of stories. A young German scholar, W.M.L De

Wette, observed in his doctoral dissertation that the fifth of the Five Books of Moses, the Book of Deuteronomy, was strikingly different in its language from the four books that preceded it. None of the three old source documents appeared to continue into this book. De Wette hypothesized that Deuteronomy was a separate, fourth source.

There was also the work of the editor, the person who had cut up and combined the source documents into a single story. For working purposes, the four documents were identified by alphabetic symbols. The document that was associated with the divine name Yahweh/Jehovah was called **J**. The document that was identified as referring to the deity as God (in Hebrew, Elohim) was called **E**. The third document, by far the largest, included most of the legal sections and concentrated a great deal on matters having to do with priests, and so it was called **P**. And the source that was found only in Deuteronomy was called **D**. (The editor is commonly referred to as the **redactor**.)

- Adapted from *Who Wrote the Bible*, by Richard Elliott Friedman, HarperSanFrancisco (HarperCollins Publishers), New York, 1987, 1997

### ***Two Flood Stories Intertwined***

*The Book of Genesis includes multiple examples of what appear to be two or more sources for the same story. Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a is a story of the creation that appears to have been written by a different author than the creation story beginning in Genesis 2:4b. In the story of Noah and the flood, two stories from different authors (sources) seem to be intertwined.*

#### ***Two Sources – One Story – Noah and the Flood\****

##### **P (Priestly Source)**

God ('Elohim)  
2 of every kind of animal  
  
Animals, "male and female"  
The flood is 370 days  
Noah sends out a raven  
Cares about ages and dates  
and measurements;

##### **J (Yahweh Source)**

YHWH or LORD God  
Seven pairs of clean animals  
and one pair of unclean  
Animals, "man and woman"  
40 days and 40 nights.  
Noah sends out a dove  
Doesn't care

But J also describes a God who regrets things he has done. God is grieved and personally closes the ark. The God in P is more of a transcendent controller of the universe.

\*The differences occur in the Masoretic Hebrew. Normally, but not always, English translations carry over the differences.

### *The Two Versions of the Flood Story – Genesis 6:5 – 8:22*

There are two versions of the Flood story intertwined in this passage from Genesis, but they may be read separately using the following guide:

Priestly source (P) in boldface capitals (red)

The YHWH source (J) is in regular type.

Genesis 6:

- 5 And Yahweh saw that the evil of humans was great in the earth, and all the inclination of the thoughts of their heart was only evil all the day.
- 6 And Yahweh regretted that he had made humans in the earth, and he grieved to his heart.
- 7 And Yahweh said, "I shall wipe out the humans which I have created from the face of the earth, from human to beast to creeping thing to bird of the heavens, for I regret that I made them."
- 8 But Noah found favor in Yahweh's eyes.
- 9 **THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF NOAH: NOAH WAS A RIGHTEOUS MAN, PERFECT IN HIS GENERATIONS. NOAH WALKED WITH GOD.**
- 10 **AND NOAH SIRED THREE SONS: SHEM, HAM, AND JAPHETH.**
- 11 **AND THE EARTH WAS CORRUPTED BEFORE GOD, AND THE EARTH WAS FILLED WITH VIOLENCE.**
- 12 **AND GOD SAW THE EARTH, AND HERE IT WAS CORRUPTED, FOR ALL FLESH AND CORRUPTED ITS WAY ON THE EARTH.**
- 13 **AND GOD SAID TO NOAH, "THE END OF ALL FLESH HAS COME BEFORE ME, FOR THE EARTH IS FILLED WITH VIOLENCE BECAUSE OF THEM, AND HERE I AM GOING TO DESTROY THEM WITH THE EARTH.**
- 14 **MAKE YOURSELF AN ARK OF GOPHER WOOD, MAKE ROOMS WITH THE ARK, AND PITCH IT OUTSIDE AND INSIDE WITH PITCH.**
- 15 **AND THIS IS HOW YOU SHALL MAKE IT: THREE HUNDRED CUBITS THE LENGTH OF THE ARK, FIFTY CUBITS ITS WIDTH, AND THIRTY CUBITS ITS HEIGHT.**
- 16 **YOU SHALL MAKE A WINDOW FOR THE ARK, AND YOU SHALL FINISH IT FROM A CUBIT FROM THE TOP, AND YOU SHALL MAKE AN ENTRANCE TO THE ARK IN ITS SIDE. YOU SHALL MAKE LOWER SECOND AND THIRD STORIES FOR IT.**
- 17 **AND HERE I AM BRINGING THE FLOOD, WATER OVER THE EARTH, TO DESTROY ALL FLESH IN WHICH THE BREATH OF LIFE FROM UNDER THE HEAVENS. EVERYTHING WHICH IS ON THE LAND WILL DIE.**

- 18 **AND I SHALL ESTABLISH MY COVENANT WITH YOU. AND YOU SHALL COME TO THE ARK, YOU AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR WIFE AND YOUR SONS' WIVES WITH YOU.**
- 19 **AND OF ALL THE LIVING, OF ALL FLESH, YOU SHALL BRING TWO TO THE ARK TO KEEP ALIVE WITH YOU; THEY SHALL BE MALE AND FEMALE.**
- 20 **OF THE BIRDS ACCORDING TO THEIR KIND, AND OF THE BEASTS ACCORDING TO THEIR KIND, AND OF ALL THE CREEPING THINGS OF THE EARTH ACCORDING TO THEIR KIND, TWO OF EACH WILL COME TO YOU TO KEEP ALIVE.**
- 21 **AND YOU, TAKE FOR YOURSELF OF ALL FOOD WHICH WILL BE EATEN AND GATHER IT TO YOU, AND IT WILL BE FOR YOU AND FOR THEM FOR FOOD."**
- 22 **AND NOAH DID ACCORDING TO ALL THAT GOD COMMANDED HIM - SO HE DID.**

Genesis 7:

1. And Yahweh said to Noah, "Come, you and all your household to the ark, for I have seen you as righteous before me in this generation.
2. Of all the clean beasts, take yourself seven pairs, man and his woman; and of the beasts which are not clean, two, man and his woman.
3. Also of the birds of the heavens, seven pairs, male and female, to keep alive seed on the face of the earth.
4. For in seven more days, I shall rain on the earth, forty days and forty nights, and I shall wipe out all the substance that I have made from upon the face of the earth."
5. And Noah did according to all that Yahweh had commanded him.
6. **AND NOAH WAS SIX HUNDRED YEARS OLD, AND THE FLOOD WAS ON THE EARTH.**
7. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him came to the ark from before the waters of the flood.
8. **OF THE CLEAN BEASTS AND OF THE BEASTS WHICH WERE NOT CLEAN, AND OF THE BIRDS AND OF ALL THOSE WHICH CREEP UPON THE EARTH.**
9. **TWO OF EACH CAME TO NOAH TO THE ARK, MALE AND FEMALE AS GOD HAD COMMANDED NOAH.**
10. And seven days later the waters of the flood were on the earth.
11. **IN THE SIX HUNDREDTH YEAR OF NOAH'S LIFE, IN THE SECOND MONTH, IN THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF THE MONTH, ON THE DAY ALL THE FOUNTAINS OF THE GREAT DEEP WERE BROKEN UP, AND THE WINDOWS OF THE HEAVENS WERE OPENED.**
12. And there was rain on the earth, forty days and forty nights.
13. **IN THIS VERY DAY, NOAH AND SHEM, HAM, AND JAPHETH, THE SONS OF NOAH, AND NOAH'S WIFE AND HIS SONS THREE WIVES CAME WITH THEM TO THE ARK,**

14. **THEY AND ALL THE LIVING THINGS ACCORDING TO THEIR KIND, AND ALL THE BEASTS ACCORDING TO THEIR KIND, AND ALL THE CREEPING THINGS THAT CREEP ON THE EARTH ACCORDING TO THEIR KIND, AND ALL THE BIRDS ACCORDING TO THEIR KIND, AND EVERY WINGED BIRD.**
15. **AND THEY CAME TO NOAH TO THE ARK, TWO OF EACH OF ALL FLESH IN WHICH IS THE BREATH OF LIFE.**
16. **AND THOSE WHICH CAME WERE MALE AND FEMALE , SOME OF ALL FLESH CAME, AS GOD HAD COMMANDED HIM.** And Yahweh closed it for him.
17. And the flood was on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and the waters multiplied and raised the ark, and it was lifted from the earth.
18. And the waters grew strong and multiplied greatly on the earth, and the ark went on the surface of the waters.
19. And the waters grew very strong on the earth, and they covered all the high mountains that are under the heavens.
20. Fifteen cubits above, the waters grew stronger, and they covered the mountains.
21. **AND ALL THE FLESH, THOSE THAT CREEP ON THE EARTH, THE BIRDS, THE BEASTS, AND THE WILD ANIMALS, AND ALL THE SWARMING THINGS THAT SWARM ON THE EARTH, AND ALL THE HUMANS EXPIRED.**
22. Everything that had the breathing spirit of life in its nostrils, everything that was on the dry ground, died.
23. And he wiped out all the substance that was on the face of the earth, from human to beast, to creeping thing, and to bird of the heavens, and they were wiped out from the earth, and only Noah and those who were with him in the ark were left.
24. **AND THE WATERS GREW STRONG ON THE EARTH A HUNDRED FIFTY DAYS.**

Genesis 8:

1. **AND GOD REMEMBERED NOAH AND ALL THE LIVING, AND ALL THE BEASTS THAT WERE WITH HIM IN THE ARK, AND GOD PASSED A WIND OVER THE EARTH, AND THE WATERS WERE DECREASED.**
2. **AND THE FOUNTAINS OF THE DEEP AND THE WINDOWS OF THE HEAVENS WERE SHUT**, and the rain was restrained from the heavens.
3. And the waters receded from the earth continually, **AND THE WATERS WERE ABATED AT THE END OF A HUNDRED AND FIFTY DAYS.**
4. **AND THE ARK RESTED IN THE SEVENTH MONTH, IN THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF THE MONTH, ON THE MOUNTAINS OF ARARAT.**
5. **AND THE WATERS CONTINUED RECEDING UNTIL THE TENTH MONTH; IN THE TENTH MONTH, ON THE FIRST OF THE MONTH, THE TOPS OF THE MOUNTAIN APPEARED.**
6. And it was at the end of forty days, and Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made.



7. **AND HE SENT OUT A RAVEN, AND IT WENT BACK AND FORTH UNTIL THE WATER DRIED UP FROM THE EARTH.**
8. And he sent out a dove from him to see whether the waters had eased from the face of the earth.
9. And the dove did not find a resting place for its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for waters were on the face of the earth, and he put out his hand and took it and brought it to him to the ark.
10. And he waited seven more days and again he sent out a dove from the ark.
11. And the dove came to him at evening time, and here was an olive leaf torn off in its mouth, and Noah knew that the waters had eased from the earth.
12. And he waited seven more days, and he sent out a dove, and it did not return to him ever again.
13. **AND IT WAS IN THE SIX HUNDRED AND FIRST YEAR, IN THE FIRST MONTH, ON THE FIRST OF THE MONTH, THE WATERS DRIED FROM THE EARTH.** And Noah turned back the covering of the ark and looked, and here the face of the earth had dried.
14. **, AND IN THE SECOND MONTH, ON THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF THE MONTH, THE EARTH HAD DRIED UP.**
15. **AND GOD SPOKE TO NOAH, SAYING,**
16. **“GO OUT FROM THE ARK, YOU AND YOUR WIFE AND YOUR SONS’ WIVES WITH YOU.**
17. **ALL THE LIVING THINGS THAT ARE WITH YOU, OF ALL FLESH, OF THE BIRDS, AND OF THE BEASTS, AND OF ALL THE CREEPING THINGS THAT CREEP ON THE EARTH, THAT GO OUT WITH YOU, SHALL SWARM IN THE EARTH AND BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY IN THE EARTH.”**
18. **AND NOAH AND HIS WIFE AND HIS SONS AND HIS SONS WIVES WENT OUT.**
19. **ALL THE LIVING THINGS, ALL THE CREEPING THINGS AND ALL THE BIRDS, ALL THAT CREEP ON THE EARTH BY THEIR FAMILIES THEY WENT OUT OF THE ARK.**
20. And Noah built an altar to Yahweh, and he took some of each of the clean beasts and of each of the clean birds and he offered sacrifices on the altar.
21. And Yahweh smelled the pleasant smell, and Yahweh said to his heart, “I shall not again curse the ground on man’s account, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from their youth, and I shall not again strike all the living as I have done.
22. All the rest of the days of the earth, seed and harvest, and cold and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

*Source: Who Wrote the Bible, by Richard Elliott Friedman, HarperSanFrancisco (HarperCollins Publishers), New York, 1987, 1997*

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