

## **Crossing the Jordan River: Joshua Leads the Israelites into the Promised Land**

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Olympia, WA April 2007

*Excerpts from River Community Church Prairieville, Louisiana by Jamie Senyard,  
Michelle Slatton ,Amy Crane.*



### **TEACHERS' BACKGROUND NOTES**

Scripture: Joshua 1-6 and 23-24

### **BACKGROUND COMMENTS ON THE STORY:**

notes compiled by Amy Crane

- After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites finally reach the Promised Land (Canaan — approximately present-day Israel). The time in the wilderness is bookended by miraculous crossings of bodies of water on dry ground — out of Egypt across/through the Red Sea and into the Promised Land across/through the River Jordan. Leaving Egypt was preceded by a Passover Feast (the first) and the arrival in the Promised Land was followed by a celebration of the Passover Festival.
- Joshua and Caleb are the only two who left Egypt to enter the Promised Land. See Numbers 14: 26-38 for the explanation. (Moses did not get to the Promised Land, but God did allow him to see it. See Numbers 20:1-13 and Deuteronomy 34:1-5.)
- The story emphasizes that the Israelites' success in crossing the river and taking the city are entirely God's doing (signified by the Ark's presence). Military strategy is not important (but Joshua is a great general). Obedience is important. The land is a gift from God, as promised first to Abraham.
- Read Numbers 27: 12-23 for background on the selection of Joshua. See Numbers 13 for another spying expedition across the Jordan.
- The celebration of the Passover (5:10) as well as the memorial set up in Gilgal underline the importance of telling the children the stories of God's mighty acts (4: 21-24). (Part of the Passover tradition is the youngest child asking, "Why is this night special?") See also Deuteronomy 6:4-7.
- Note that God provided exactly as much manna as was needed. As soon as the Israelites began to eat the food grown in Canaan, the manna stopped (Joshua 5:11-12; see also Exodus 16: 15-18).

- An interesting and important fact: Rahab (who helped the spies and was saved when Jericho was destroyed) was an ancestor of Joseph, who married Mary, the mother of Jesus (Matthew 1).
- The Ark of the Covenant served as a physical reminder of God's presence with the people. You can find a description of it in Exodus 25. Priests carrying the Ark lead the way into the River Jordan, which was a reminder that God was leading them into the Promised Land and God was the one stopping the flow of the river.
- Why seven days and seven times around Jericho? The number seven is associated with divine perfection and completeness. For example, see Genesis 2:2; Exodus 20:8-10; and Revelation 1:12-13, 16.
- Archaeologists and historians have dated the events in the book of Joshua to the late thirteenth century, BC.

### **BOOKS FOR SHARING DURING SHEPHERD TIME:**

Chaikin, Miriam. Joshua in the Promised Land. New York: Clarion, 1982.

Also look for illustrated children's story Bibles that include this story, such as Hartman, Bob. The Lion Storyteller Bible. Colorado Springs, Colorado: Lion Publishing, 1995.

Turner, Philip. The Bible Story. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.

**OTHER RESOURCES FOR SHEPHERDS** (just in case you have some extra time to fill)

PUZZLES AND COLORING SHEET:

<http://www.calvarychapel.org/children/site/pdf/Old/Curr058.pdf>

<http://www.calvarychapel.org/children/site/pdf/Old/Curr055.pdf>

COLORING SHEETS:

<http://www.sfcentral.org/SabbathSchool/colorbook/Jericho.gif>

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*This message has been edited. Last edited by: [Amy Crane](#), August 28, 2004 10:53 PM*