
§1 Joshua: A New Leader Takes Over
(Josh. 1:1–9)

1:1 / The narrator sets the context of the events in the first verse. Joshua 1:1 states that a new era is beginning **after the death of Moses**. The narrator connects the book of Joshua with the final chapters of Deuteronomy (Deut. 32:48–52; 34:1–12) describing the death of Moses in Moab. Moses, a victim of his anger, will not lead the people into the promised land (Num. 20:6–12; Deut. 1:37; 3:26). Instead Joshua, Moses' assistant (lit. "minister," lieutenant, aide), faces the assignment of following the premier **servant of the LORD**. The rest of the book answers the question of whether Joshua will lead the tribes to their promised rest.

1:2–9 / God's point of view dominates these verses, in which the Lord, speaking directly to Joshua rather than through Moses' report (Deut. 31:7–8), addresses him about matters summarized in Deuteronomy 31:23. As if grieving the loss, the Lord states the obvious: **Moses my servant is dead**. Despite the grief, God moves on to discuss the future. God tells Joshua and the tribes to move to the challenge ahead: **Get ready to cross the Jordan River** (lit. "Now arise, pass over this Jordan!"). The period of grieving (Deut. 34:8) is over; the tribes must go forward. People find the past more comfortable, but God provides new leadership and pushes them toward the future. Moving the tribes toward the future in no way diminishes the memory of the earlier leader or the severity of the loss. Rather, God compliments Moses by directing the new leader and followers toward his goal of entering **the land**.

The land of opportunity will come as a gift from God's grace as **promised to Moses**, and that gift unifies fighting in Canaan (1–12) with dividing allotments (13–21) among tribes and clans. God promises a land stretching from the desert (wilderness) in the south to Lebanon in the north, from the Euphrates in the east to the Mediterranean (Great) Sea on the west (vv. 3–4). These limits

do not mark the actual borders of the emerging nation. Rather, God points Joshua and the tribes toward the potential gift, the Fertile Crescent, the part of the Middle East that reaches across the northern Syrian Desert and extends from the Nile Valley to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The tribes will need to wait until the reign of David to achieve anything near to those borders. God's promise of land becomes the challenge for subsequent generations.

This gift will be won on the field of conflict, for God directs Joshua to attack enemy forces and to expect victory through God's support. God promises: **No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life** (lit. stand before you). The divine warrior removes barriers to winning the prize. Victory will come because God promises to be present personally and powerfully. **I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.** That promise echoes the one given to Moses at his call (Exod. 3:12). As in the past, the divine warrior promises gifts by offering a personal and powerful relationship.

The promise of the divine warrior's presence encourages an insecure Joshua. **Be strong and courageous**, the Lord tells him (1:6). Strength and courage will enable the people to **inherit** the land that God promised through an oath to Israel's ancestors. The inheritance of the tribes becomes a key theme when the land is distributed. Claiming the promises of God and their inheritance demands strength and courage when the gift includes hostile opponents. The gift will be received when it is seized.

God challenges Joshua also to be strong and very courageous in keeping the law (torah). The teachings of Moses will show the tribes how to take the land. The law, or instruction, was what **Moses gave** to Joshua. The **Book of the Law** ensures success (1:8) when Joshua follows it, keeps it in his mouth for speaking, thinks about it day and night, and obeys it carefully. If Joshua obeys the law in this way, God promises him, **Then you will be prosperous and successful.** Joshua will achieve prosperity and success (regular victories against the enemies) by following the instructions of the divine warrior. The passage should not be interpreted as promising financial security. Instead, God connects obedience to Moses' gift, the law, to successfully receiving God's gift, the land. Faithfulness to both gifts demands courage and strength.

The final challenge to the new leader repeats God's encouragement. Joshua needs to remember earlier instructions: **Have I**

not commanded you? Be strong and courageous (1:9). Joshua need not be frozen with terror or disabled by discouragement, because **the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go**. The Hebrew reverses the word order to emphasize that God is near: “Because with you is the Lord your God.” God’s presence as the divine warrior ensures perseverance and ultimate victory under difficult circumstances. The presence of God is the greatest weapon of a chosen servant. God the warrior transforms an unknown wilderness into familiar territory. God’s presence is the ultimate contingency plan for believers. It is the final solution for fear and pressures. It ensures the success of God’s mission and servant.

Additional Note §1

1:1 / The term **servant of the LORD** is missing in the Gk. version in vv. 1 and 15. However, that term is used as a title frequently in Deut. It appears in God’s reported speech in vv. 2 and 13. It not only refers to slaves but also describes a person in a subordinate position. That person can be a strong leader such as Abraham, Moses, or David. Subjects to a king refer to themselves as servants of the king (the word “servant” often refers to an official; see Gen. 14:14; Exod. 32:13; Lev. 25:55; 1 Sam. 3:9; Ezra 9:11). The most significant leaders would be called “servant of the LORD.” Joshua is called “servant of the Lord” only twice (Josh. 24:29; Judg. 2:8).

“LORD” (*Adonai*) refers to how readers should pronounce the covenant name of the God (*Yhwh*) of Israel. During and after the exile in Babylon, the Israelites determined that they would not violate the holiness of God by saying the holy name of God. Rabbis substituted the vowels of *Adonai* (lit. LORD) to suggest that the divine name (*Yhwh*) be read as LORD. The personal name of God remains a mystery, which God revealed to Moses with the simple explanation: “I am who I am” (other translations can be “I create” or “I will be present”; Exod. 4:14). See the discussion in R. G. Boling and G. E. Wright, *Joshua* (AB 6; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982), pp. 118–20. The meaning of the name, however, remains unknown. See the discussion of the self-introduction formula in Exod. 6 and Ezek. 20 (W. Zimmerli, *I Am Yahweh* [ed. W. Brueggemann; trans. D. W. Stott; Atlanta: John Knox, 1982], pp. 1–16).

§2 Excursus: Joshua in the Canon

Joshua, Moses' "servant" or "minister" (Hb. *mesaret*; Exod. 24:13; Josh. 1:1), is called Hoshea in Numbers 13:16. In that passage, Moses renames him "Joshua" (Hb. *yehosua*), or "Yahweh is salvation." The Bible identifies Joshua as one who served Moses in the wilderness, led the tribes into the land of Canaan, and apportioned land to the tribes. Joshua's inheritance in the tribe of Ephraim (Josh. 19:49–50), his burial site (Josh. 24:30), and a genealogical note (1 Chron. 7:27) indicate that he belonged to the tribe of Ephraim.

Some scholars try to reconstruct the history of the Joshua traditions and question the historical reliability of stories about Joshua. G. W. Ramsey discusses this viewpoint ("Joshua," *ABD* 3:999), and R. D. Nelson also questions whether the materials confirm the historicity of Joshua by pointing out royal elements in the stories (Num. 27:15–23), especially parallels between Joshua and Josiah (Nelson, *The Double Redaction*, p. 125). However, a close reading of the canonical materials produces a clear picture of Moses' successor.

Numerous passages point out the close relationship between Joshua and Moses. Joshua first appears as a warrior who fights the Amalekites under Moses' command (Exod. 17:9–13). As an apprentice he accompanies Moses to Mount Sinai (Exod. 24:13; 32:15–18) to receive the law. He serves in the tent of meeting (Exod. 33:11; cf. Acts 7:44–45). He evaluates the land of Canaan as a spy and joins with Caleb to affirm that with God's help Israel can take the land (Num. 13–14). As Moses faces his death, he designates Joshua to be his successor (Num. 27:12–23; Deut. 3:23–28). Joshua helps the people to possess the land by following the commands of Moses.

Joshua begins to lead the people under the most difficult of circumstances. In chapter 1 God repeatedly encourages Joshua. Joshua grieves the loss of his friend, Moses, and then faces the difficult task of succeeding this great leader. He must lead a people to

take a land they refused to take under Moses. Joshua experiences achievements and disappointments but always rises to the occasion. At the end of his career, Joshua gathers tribal leaders to renew the covenant with the Lord (lit. *Yhwh*; Josh. 24). The narrator gives Joshua the title “servant of the LORD” upon his death, the label by which Moses is best known.

Though Joshua demonstrates courageous leadership, the Bible as a whole rates the leadership of Moses over that of Joshua (Num. 11:26–29; 27:20–21). Moses accomplishes more, especially signs and wonders (Exod. 7–11; 14:21–31; 15:22–25; 17:1–7; Num. 20:2–13). Moses intercedes regularly for the people (Exod. 32:11–14; Num. 11:2; 12:13; 14:13–19; 21:7) and speaks for God more often than does Joshua (Deut.). Even the book of Joshua makes it clear that Joshua and the people succeed when they follow the teachings of Moses (Josh. 1:7–8, 13; 4:10; 8:30–35; 11:12–15; 22:2; 23:6). As well, the NT mentions Moses more frequently than Joshua (eighty times compared with three).

The supremacy of Moses, however, diminishes in no way the accomplishments of Joshua. The book of Joshua pictures him as a prophet, speaking for God (Josh. 1:1; 3:7; 4:1, 15; 8:18; 20:1). Though he needs the mediation of a priest to do some tasks (Num. 27:15–23; Josh. 14:1; 19:51), he speaks for God using the formula “thus says the Lord” (Josh. 7:13; 24:2). Kings treats Joshua as a prophet in telling about a fulfillment of his words coming “in accordance with the word of the LORD spoken by Joshua son of Nun” (1 Kgs. 16:34). Joshua intercedes for the people as did Moses (Josh. 7:6–9). God calls him in language reminiscent of the call of Moses (Josh. 5:13–15), and Joshua leads the people to cross the Jordan as Moses led the people to cross the Reed Sea. Joshua also is filled with the “spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him” (Deut. 34:9; see G. Mitchell, *Together in the Land: A Reading of the Book of Joshua* [JSOTSup 134; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993], pp. 33–34). In these ways Joshua exemplifies the standards of a prophet like Moses whom God would send (Deut. 18:15–19).

The book of Joshua also describes other ways in which Joshua is a leader like Moses. As the Lord had been with Moses, so God will be with Joshua (1:5, 17; 3:7). As the people experienced awe for Moses, they will feel the same way about Joshua (4:14). The eastern tribes promise to obey Joshua as they followed Moses (1:16–18; 22:2). Joshua assigns property to nine and a half tribes in Canaan as Moses did to two and a half tribes settling east of the Jordan River (22:7). Finally, after renewing the covenant, he “drew

up for them decrees and laws. And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God" (24:25–26) as did Moses (Deut. 31:9, 24–26).

Joshua, the trained warrior, is the strongest candidate to lead the march into Canaan. By his death, Moses turns over the tribal leadership to one skilled in military campaigns. The book of Joshua shows that God places the right person in leadership for the challenges in Canaan.

§3 Preparation to Cross the River and a Threat to Joshua's Leadership (Josh. 1:10–18)

Crossing the Jordan River presents a number of challenges. To cross the river is to claim the territory on the other side, but the river also threatens to split the forces of Joshua between the east and the west. Thus the Jordan River could become a divisive boundary and a threat to the unity of the emerging people. Moses sought to resolve that issue by requiring the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, to fight with the western tribes to liberate Canaan as a condition for receiving their land east of the Jordan (Num. 21:21–35; 32:1–27).

The moment of truth has arrived. Will the two and a half tribes carry out their promise to Moses and cross the river to help the other tribes take the land of Canaan? Will they obey Joshua as they had promised Moses? Violation of that promise and resulting disunity could threaten the crossing of the river. Maintaining tribal unity would affirm the authority of the new leader.

1:10–11 / In these verses the narrator shifts the speech from God to Joshua. As a faithful subordinate, Joshua repeats the order of his commander in chief (God, 1:2). Joshua commands his subordinates (lit. officers; LXX, recorders) to have the people prepare to move the camp. Although no location for the camp is mentioned in this chapter, Shittim (2:1) is assumed, and that location is probably the same as the Shittim in Numbers (Num. 25:1). The staging area for crossing the Jordan had previously been the site of sexual immorality and worshiping the gods of the land (Num. 25:2–3).

Joshua orders the **officers of the people** to go through the camp and tell the people to **get their supplies ready**. With this order Joshua changed the wilderness habits of the tribes. While they were in the wilderness the tribes had depended on manna from heaven for their supplies. A successful military campaign at the river Jordan and in Canaan, however, would depend on

supplies and provisions of the people. This operations order heralded a new period in the life of the people.

An operations order like the one given by Joshua states the army's mission, lists tasks it must do, and gives a time period in which it must complete the assignments. Joshua gives the tribes **three days** to prepare to leave the camp. The reported mission is to **cross the Jordan River** and to **take possession of the land** God is giving the people (lit. you; 1:11). Joshua repeats the order directly in the second person reminding the people that the Lord is **your God**, the divine helper of the entire body. Though the mission seems impossible, the covenant God of Moses (and the true commander) assures tribal leaders the mission is attainable. The tribes have three days to complete preparations, to break camp, and to begin the mission.

1:12–18 / The audience changes from the officers to representatives of the eastern tribes, the **Reubenites**, the **Gadites** and the **half-tribe of Manasseh**. Joshua evokes the name and position of Moses to impress on the tribes that they must carry out their agreement with Moses to secure God's gift of **rest** (secure borders, land to possess, and a relatively peaceful life). Moses had conquered and distributed land to the eastern (transjordan) tribes, and Joshua reminds them, God **has granted you this land** (east of the Jordan; Num. 21). The eastern tribes owe a debt of gratitude to God for their land (Num. 32:6–32). Joshua tells them that their families can remain east of the Jordan, but the warriors must fight for the west bank until all the tribes have **rest**.

In his speech, Joshua echoes Moses' concern for unity (Num. 32). Human nature tends to look after itself and forget about community responsibilities, an attitude that is summarized in the contemporary saying "Not in My Back Yard" (NIMBY). The point of this saying is that citizens favor what they can gain from but oppose what does not benefit them directly. That attitude leads citizens to oppose building a public service building near or behind their houses because it lowers property values on the houses. If the eastern tribes follow human nature, they will not support fighting for land of their fellow tribes. The back yard of the eastern tribes is secure; why should they fight west of the Jordan? Joshua settles that issue by calling members of fellow tribes **brothers** (1:14). Community is built on helping **your brothers until the LORD gives them rest** (1:14–15). Assuming community respon-

sibility and providing assistance remains a vital task for people of God.

Leaders of the eastern tribes respond to Joshua with the same faithfulness they showed to Moses. They pledge, **Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.** At the end of this pledge they utter a blessing for Joshua, **the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses.** Then they threaten those who do not follow Joshua with a curse, **whoever rebels . . . and does not obey your words . . . will be put to death.** Encouraging Joshua, they seal this vow by saying, **Be strong and courageous!** (1:16–18).

Statements of loyalty to the new leader from leaders of the eastern tribes come as a surprise. Those loyal to Moses also accept the new leader, a circumstance that rarely happens in religious organizations. A pledge of faithfulness to the new leader out of obedience to the commands of Moses indicates that the eastern tribes are ready to help the western tribes possess the land. It is crucial that Joshua lead a united front as he prepares to possess the land of Canaan.

This passage shows us four things about God. God encourages leaders when they feel insecure and weak. God performs miracles by uniting divided forces for the task at hand; God is a force for unity and encouragement. When leaders faithfully prepare to do God's will, they discover that God has prepared the way for success. Courage and unity also are divine gifts for believers.

Additional Note §3

1:10 / Joshua ordered the officers of the people . . . camp: The tribes set up camp in the plains of Moab at Shittim, northeast of the Dead Sea, as they prepared to cross the Jordan River to enter Canaan. At Shittim, the location of the idolatrous and immoral worship of Baal-Peor, twenty-four thousand Israelites died because they took Moabite and Midianite wives and participated in the cult of Baal-Peor. There the tribes took a census of men twenty years and up to fill their military ranks and to determine the allotment of land to tribes (Num. 26). Also, Joshua was announced here as the successor to Moses (Num. 27:12–23). Third, Moses gave the eastern tribes their allotments of land (Num. 32) and delivered his farewell speech (Deut. 31). Fourth, the tribes defeated the Midianites from the camp at Shittim.

Shittim is probably the same as Abel-Shittim (Num. 33:49), even though there remains some confusion over the location of Abel-Shittim because the biblical name no longer remains in the area. What can be said with certainty is that Shittim was located in the once-forested hills of Moab (see J. C. Slayton, "Shittim," *ABD* 5:1222–23).

The forces of the camp were organized by officers (the Hb. word for officers in Josh. 1:10, *sotere*, is translated in Gk. [OG, LXX] as *grammateusin*, or recorders). These officers act as military leaders responsible for calling out the people or mustering the troops for movement or battle. As faithful subordinates they pass on their commander's orders. In the narrative, they are the lower level of command through which Joshua tells the people the commands of God.

§4 Spies and Rahab the Prostitute (Josh. 2:1–24)

Military history illustrates the importance of spies for gathering intelligence prior to battles, and army doctrine states that victory requires thorough reconnaissance. In the United States, General George Armstrong Custer shunned reconnaissance and lost his life and the lives of many troops at the battle of Little Big Horn.

The Bible gives a mixed picture of the importance of spies for warfare. In the wilderness of Sinai, Moses sent spies to gather intelligence on Canaan, but fearfulness spread when the majority brought back a negative recommendation (Num. 21:32, Jazer; Num. 13; Deut. 1:22–23). At other times skillful reconnaissance provided opportunities for surprise in warfare and ensured victory (Judg. 7:10–11; 1 Sam. 26:6–7). Faulty reconnaissance (Josh. 7:3; 8:1) cost Joshua and the people the element of surprise, and disobedience cost them a victory at Ai (Josh. 7:1, 2–5, 10–12). Ultimately the support of the Lord, not clever reconnaissance, enabled the people to possess the land of Canaan. In the book of Joshua, intelligence gathering was a dangerous enterprise that produced mixed results.

2:1–7 / Joshua's first act after securing his authority is to send out **secretly** two spies with instructions: **Go, look over the land, . . . especially Jericho** (lit. view the land and Jericho). From this time on the two spies are simply called the two men. Note how the narrator reports that God ordered Joshua to arise and cross the Jordan, but instead Joshua orders spies to go to Jericho and Canaan. By sending the spies, Joshua risked the success of the mission. To save their lives, the spies spared Rahab, a Canaanite in Jericho, and accepted a Canaanite into what was to be limited to the people of God (see Eslinger, *Into the Hands of the Living God*, pp. 34–38).

Ironically, the spies see only Jericho and go no farther than the house of Rahab the harlot. The narrator tantalizes readers by using words that have double meanings and sexual connotations. The two men enter (lit. go into) the house of Rahab and lie down there. The

narrator continues the humor by mentioning that Rahab and the king of Jericho speak of the two men who came into (lit. entered into) the house of the prostitute. To their credit, the soldiers go to the best place to get information on the physical and psychological state of Jericho, because a house of prostitution preserves anonymity and can be used as a refuge or an inn for strangers. Likewise, the narrative does not mention immoral acts that the spies might have done in Rahab's house.

The spies accomplish only part of their mission at Rahab's house. Even though they enter the city under the cover of darkness to **spy out the land**, citizens of Jericho quickly discover them, and they are in danger. The unnamed king of Jericho sends a message to Rahab asking her to **Bring out the men who came to** [lit. entered into] **you and entered your house**. The spies no longer have the element of surprise. Their mission and their lives seem lost. Success depends on the support of a prostitute. If she does not help, the spies will die and damage the opportunity to take the land.

Rahab's words dominate the rest of the chapter. The narrator explains how Rahab protects the spies, hiding them under flax on the roof and then helping them escape. In her own words, Rahab tells the men of the king a lie that sends them to look for spies on the road to the fords of the Jordan River. Some readers are shocked that she would lie and yet have the respect she achieved in the book of Joshua and in the NT. Deception in Rahab's case expresses her loyalty to the strangers who were her guests. Without the power to fight, Rahab lives by her wits. Rahab's deception is the way God rescues the blundering spies and ensures that the tribes will possess Canaan. Deception remains the weapon of the marginal and helpless.

2:8-14 / The spies learn about Jericho because Rahab comes to the roof where they are hiding and tells them about her city. Her speech expresses her faith. It begins with Israel's common statement of faith, **I know**. Personally she knows that the Lord has given the land to the people of the spies, confirmed by earlier victories and panic in Jericho. She also realizes that the God of the tribes is **God in heaven above and on the earth below**. The speech echoes the teachings of Deuteronomy. Rahab offers her allegiance to the God who possesses all power, so it is easy for the spies to **show kindness** (lit. show faithfulness) to Rahab and to spare her and the lives of her family when Jericho falls. Not realizing the implication of sparing inhabitants of Jericho, the spies sin-

cerely swear, **Our lives for your lives!** They promise to give their lives to preserve her life and the lives of her family. If she does not inform on them, Rahab and her family will survive **when the LORD gives us the land.**

On the one hand, the spies violate the requirements of total destruction of Jericho by pledging to spare Rahab. Sparing Rahab increases tension in the plot of the battle of Jericho and raises questions about the entire campaign. On the other hand, this incident tells readers that God accepts all types into the people of God. God can make even a prostitute from Jericho an example of faith for the rest of the people, including Christians (Heb. 11:31; Jas. 2:25).

2:15–24 / This account about the escape of the spies offers some information about the city wall structure. Rahab helps the men escape from the city by a rope that let down the men through her window. Her house is **part of the city wall** (lit. in the wall; perhaps a casemate wall [see Additional Notes]). As Rahab lowers the men over the wall, she instructs them to hide for three days. The spies then tell her how to save her life and the lives of her family. She must tie a **scarlet cord in the window** and bring her family members into her house when the tribes attack. The verse is ambiguous about whether “this cord” was the one she used to lower the spies or not. In any case, a scarlet cord hanging out a window in a house on the wall would mark visibly where Rahab lived (2:18, 21).

A scarlet cord would get the attention of the troops and save Rahab and her family. Details about the rope strengthen the art of the narrative and should not be considered theological points. Early church fathers used typology to associate the red cord with the red blood of Jesus. They taught that as the cord saved the lives of Rahab and her family, so does the blood of Christ. However, the original passage in Joshua did not place any particular prominence on the color of the cord. Red would be visible at a great distance. Even NT allusions to Rahab did not associate the color of the cord with the color of Jesus’ blood. Despite the similarity of the two types, modern interpreters need to use typology sparingly and carefully. It is enough to realize that God saved the lives of Rahab and her family through the red cord tied to the window.

Three days later, coinciding with the three days necessary for the tribes to collect supplies and to prepare for leaving, the spies return to the camp and tell Joshua about the events, their

oath, and the conclusion. Unlike the ten spies who gave an unfavorable report in the wilderness, they affirm that **the LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us.** The spies through Rahab strengthen the resolve of the people and reinforce the theological truth that the land is a gift from the Lord, ready to be possessed.

Additional Notes §4

2:2–3 / Jericho: OT Jericho, at 670 feet below sea level, is located at Tell es-Sultan, next to a spring on the western side of the Jordan River. A Neolithic settlement on the site dates to 8000 B.C.E.. The tell has been the center of archaeological controversy since the work of K. Kenyon in the 1950s (see K. M. Kenyon, *Digging up Jericho* [London: Ernest Benn, 1957] and Kenyon and T. A. Holland, *Excavations at Jericho V: The Pottery Phases of the Tell and Other Finds* [Jerusalem: British School of Archaeology, 1983]). Kenyon dated the destruction of the Middle Bronze Age city during the sixteenth century. A Late Bronze Age section of a house and tombs, she dated around the late fourteenth century B.C.E. Kenyon concluded that the tell generally remained vacant until the eleventh century. At best she found no evidence of a fortress conquered by Joshua during the thirteenth century. B. G. Wood, however, studied the common pottery found by Kenyon at Jericho and on this evidence proposed that Joshua destroyed the city in the Late Bronze Age, not the thirteenth century (B. G. Wood, “Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho? A New Look at the Archaeological Evidence,” *BAR* 16 [1990], pp. 44–59, and “Dating Jericho’s Destruction: Bienkowski Is Wrong on All Counts,” *BAR* 16 [1990], pp. 45–69). On the contrary, Bienkowski considered Kenyon’s evidence and supported Kenyon’s conclusion by reinforcing that Jericho was destroyed in the Middle Bronze Age, not the Late Bronze Age or 1300 B.C.E. (see P. Bienkowski, “Jericho Was Destroyed in the Middle Bronze Age, Not the Late Bronze Age,” *BAR* 16 [1990], pp. 45–69).

Jericho was an impressive fortress in the Middle Bronze and perhaps in the Late Bronze Age. Truly it was a gateway to southern Canaan. Limited evidence, however, makes it hard to reconstruct the history or life in Jericho during the sixteenth to the thirteenth centuries B.C.E. Egyptian records ignore Jericho, and the Amarna letters do not mention it (J. R. Bartlett, *Jericho* [CBW; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], p. 98). Consequently, Bible students can suspend judgment about the time, nature, and location of the Jericho of Joshua and still learn the lessons of Jericho in Joshua’s excellent narrative.

2:1, 4–7 / Rahab the prostitute: Rahab remains a controversial character in the Bible. A resident of Jericho, she is called a harlot (Hb. *zona*; Josh. 2:1). Her name comes from a root word meaning “to be broad”

or “wide.” Her occupation has sparked disagreement over whether she was a secular or sacred prostitute, or even an innkeeper as suggested in Josephus and the Targums. The word used for “harlot” is the one for a secular harlot, not a sacred one. M. Noth refutes the view that she was a sacred prostitute or priestess as held by H. Gressman (1914), G. Holscher, S. O. P. Mowinckel, and J. Heller (see discussion in J. A. Soggin, *Joshua* [trans. R. A. Wilson; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972], p. 39). Her house also may have functioned as an inn for travelers (Hess, *Joshua*, pp. 83–84 and D. M. Howard Jr., *Joshua* [NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998], pp. 98–99). Still, Rahab the harlot represents a profession with marginal social status. The story points out that marginal, non-Israelite outsiders entered the people of God by demonstrating faithfulness (Hb. *hesed*) in helping the tribes conquer Canaan. In R. Polzin’s work he presents another way to interpret the incident: the sparing of Rahab illustrates the wickedness and faithfulness of Israel (Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist*, pp. 888–91). He points out that the narrative reflects the point of view of dispossessed nations and people instead of that of the Deuteronomist. In this view, Rahab is a typological representative of people spared from destruction, and the spy mission represents a human attempt to conquer the land.

2:15 / Rahab is said to have lived in a house on the wall itself (2:15). Archaeological excavations indicate casemate walls of ancient fortresses commonly contained rooms inside them. Casemate walls are built with space in the middle, which builders frequently filled with earth for reinforcement. Houses also could be built on top of the wall and within the wall. Middle Bronze fortifications at Jericho had considerable space between the stone revetment wall (used to support an embankment), a mud brick parapet wall (a low, protective wall on a roof or balcony), and the upper wall. Evidence from the excavation of Jericho shows poorer houses built in that space. See the description of fortifications in the Levant (the area bordering the eastern Mediterranean) and at Jericho in Wood, “Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho?” p. 56, and Z. Herzog, “Fortifications,” *ABD* 2:844–52.