

BOOK OF JOSHUA

Approximate date: 1390 B.C.E. (Right); 1200s B.C.E. (some conservative-moderate); before 586 B.C.E. (some conservative-moderate, some Left); mid-to-late 500s B.C.E. (some Left)

Time period: Israel subduing the Promised Land

Author: Joshua exclusively (Right); Joshua, Eleazar, and later editors (some conservative-moderate); Eleazar or Phinehas (some conservative-moderate); Israel's court historians or an unknown exile from the Southern Kingdom (Left)

Location of author: Israel in the process of subduing the Promised Land (Right, conservative-moderate); Jerusalem, Babylon, and/or Land of Israel (Left)

Target audience and their location: people of Israel entering and conquering the Promised Land (Right, conservative-moderate); Jewish religious leaders during the reign of King Josiah and/or Jewish exiles living in Babylon or returning from Babylon (Left)

People:

Joshua (son of Nun), Reubenites, Gadites, Rahab, Levites, Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Gergashites, Amorites, Jebusites, Achan, Adoni-Zedek, Hoham, Piram, Japhia, Debir, Jabin, Jobab, Anakites, defeated kings (ch. 12), Avvites, Eleazar, Kohathites, descendants of Gershon, descendants of Merari, Phinehas

People mentioned:

Moses, Sihon, Og, Sidonians, Gebalites, Rephaites, Terah, Abraham, Nahor, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, Aaron, Balak, Baalam

Places:

Jordan River, Shittim, Jericho, Adam (vicinity of Zarethan), Sea of Arabah (Salt Sea), Gibeath Haaraloth, Gilgal, Ai, Beth Aven, Mount Ebal, Mount Gerizim, Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth, Kiriath Jearim, Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, Beth Horon, Azekah, Makkedah, Valley of Aijalon, Libnah, Gezer, Negev, Kadesh Barnea, Hazor, Madon, Shimron, Acshaph, Kinnereth, Mizpah, Waters of Merom, Greater Sidon, Misrephoth Maim, Valley of Mizpah, Goshen, Mount Halak, Baal Gad, Gaza, Gath, Ashdod, Shihor River, Ekron, Ashkelon, Arah, Aphek, Lebo Hamath, Shiloh, Temnath Serah, cities of refuge (Kedesh, Shechem, Kiriath Arba), Canaan, Mount Gaash

Placed mentioned:

Lebanon, Euphrates, Hittite country, Great Sea, Egypt, Red Sea, Bethel, Babylonia (Shinar), Arabah, Heshbon, Bashan, Ashtaroth, borders of half-of-Manasseh, Reuben, Gad (13:9-31), Moab, borders of Judah (15:1-63), borders of Ephraim and Manasseh (16:1-17:17), borders of Benjamin (18:11-27), borders of Simeon (19:1-9), borders of Zebulun (19:10-16), borders of Issachar (19:17-23), borders of Asher (19:24-31), borders of Naphtali (19:32-39), borders of Dan (19:40-48), cities of the Levites (21:9-42)

Key Themes and Events:

the Lord reaffirms His promise of land to Israel, to Joshua / Joshua readies to lead Israel into the Promised Land / Rahab protects the Israelite spies in Jericho / Rahab and her family are promised that their lives will be spared / the two spies bring back a good report to Joshua / the Jordan River stops flowing while the Ark of the Covenant and the Israelites cross into the Promised Land / twelve stones from the Jordan River are set up to memorialize the crossing over at Gilgal / the Israelite males are circumcised / the Israelites celebrate the Passover, and stop eating manna / Joshua encounters an angel (messenger) of the Lord on his way to Jericho / Jericho falls at the sound of the trumpet and loud shout, after seven days of

marching around the city / every living thing in Jericho is killed, although precious metals (gold, silver, bronze, iron) are to go into the Lord's treasury / Rahab and her family are spared / Achan takes some of the appropriations for himself / a small force is sent to take Ai, and it is routed / Achan is brought before Joshua, and confesses to where his loot is stashed / Achan and his family are stoned and burned / Joshua sets an ambush, and Ai falls / Israel arrives at Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, and Joshua reads God's Instruction to them / the Gibeonites try to deceive the leaders of Israel, making them think they come from a far off country / Joshua makes a peace treaty with the Gibeonites, with them later becoming woodcutters and water carriers within Israel / Joshua and the Israelites defeat the five kings of the Amorites, with the sun setting still in the sky for a full day / the five kings themselves are killed by Joshua, having fled to a cave / Joshua conquers the southern cities of Canaan / Joshua defeats the northern kings of Canaan, taking a great deal of plundered livestock / Joshua is able to subdue the Promised Land, exterminating everyone except the Gibeonites / some Anakites survive / a list of the defeated kings is tallied / as Joshua ages, the Lord tells him all that is left to be conquered are the regions of the Philistines and Geshurites / Joshua divides the land east of the Jordan for half-of-Manasseh, Reuben, and Gad / Joshua divides the land west of the Jordan for the remaining tribes of Israel / cities of refuge are established / the Levites are given towns/ the Reubenites and Gadites are allowed to return to their home in the east, and are given a warning not to rebel against the Lord / Joshua warns the Israelites not to associate with the religion of their neighbors / Joshua admonishes Israel to keep Moses' Teaching / Joshua recalls the life story of the Patriarchs, God's deliverance, and for Israel to stay away from other gods / Joshua dies and is buried at Timnah Serah / Joseph's remains are buried in Shechem / Eleazar dies and is buried at Gibeath

Key Scriptures: Joshua 1:6-9; 2:8-13, 24; 4:23-24; 8:30-33; 11:16-20, 22; 21:43-45; 23:6-7, 15-16; 24:14-18, 19-23 / **Entering the Promised Land** (1:1-5:12); **Conquering the Promised Land** (5:13-12:24); **Dividing the Promised Land** (13:1-24:33)

Theological Summary: The Book of Joshua picks up the story of Israel's history as the people finally enter the Promised Land after forty years of wandering in the desert. This account derives its name from its principal character, the man Joshua, who was anointed by Moses to be his successor and lead the Israelites into Canaan. God commands the people to move west and cross the Jordan River similar to how He led them through the Red Sea during the Exodus. Joshua, as the leader of the next generation of Israelites, moves us beyond the Exodus¹ and into the prosperous future that God has planned for His people.

The major theme of Joshua, that will resonate throughout other books of the Bible, is the establishment of God's people in the land that He has chosen for them. This is commonly depicted as a place of "rest" (1:13, 15; 21:44; 22:4, 23:1). We see the God of Israel set against the gods of Canaan, as the Israelites move into the Promised Land and directly clash with its inhabitants. The Book of Joshua uniquely places the history of Israel into the larger history of the Canaanite world and its many city-states, and is debated for its accuracy among conservative and liberal Bible scholars.

The figure of Joshua was originally named Hoshea (Numbers 13:8, 16), a derivative name meaning "salvation," but was renamed to Joshua or "the Lord saves." It was through Joshua that "the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it" (21:43). More than a few theologians have noted parallels between the life of Joshua and the mission of Yeshua the Messiah.² The Hebrew name of this book is *Yehoshua* (יהושוע), and notably the Greek Septuagint calls it *lēsous* (Ἰησοῦς),³ the Greek name used to transliterate the later form *Yeshua* (ישוע), also used in the Greek Apostolic Scriptures for the name of the Messiah.⁴ (The transliteration *lēsous* is notably of Jewish origin, and is strong definitive

¹ Dillard and Longman, 107.

² Hugh J. Blair, "Joshua," in *NBCR*, 234.

³ E.M. Good, "Joshua, Book of," in *IDB*, 2:988; Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 665; B.K. Waltke, "Joshua, Book of," in *ISBE*, 2:1134.

⁴ Donald H. Madvig, "Joshua," in *EXP*, 3:243.

evidence against the claim that the English name “Jesus” derives from paganism, as some Messianics falsely believe.)⁵

The Jewish division of the Hebrew canon places the Book of Joshua as the first of the Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. While these texts are commonly considered the Historical Books in Christian tradition, they do record more than Israel’s history. Jewish theology regards them as having key prophetic themes,⁶ and much of today’s Christian scholarship has begun to integrate this point of view into its studies of Joshua. “The author’s intention was not to preserve history for its own sake, not even a prophetically interpreted history. He presented a careful selection of historical and traditional materials in order to preach” (*EXP*).⁷ The message of God’s faithfulness and concern for His people was something that needed to be emphasized for later generations of Israel after the Conquest, particularly those of the Judges, and the Jews who lived immediately prior to and during the Babylonian exile.

The text of Joshua may be divided into four major sections. (1) It begins with Israel’s preparations for entering into the Promised Land (ch. 1). Continuing, (2) we see the narratives of the invasion and conquest of Canaan (chs. 2-12), and (3) Joshua as an old man parsing out territory to individual tribes (chs. 13-21). (4) The Book of Joshua ends with Joshua’s death and the reburial of Joseph’s remains brought from Egypt (chs. 22-24).

Jewish tradition in the Talmud accepts Joshua as the author of this book, with the exception of his death written by Eleazar the priest (*b.Bava Batra* 14b; 15a), even though the text of Joshua itself is strictly anonymous.⁸ There are records in Joshua of reports of writing by Joshua himself, or at least at his command to scribes:

“Then the men arose and went, and Joshua commanded those who went to describe the land, saying, ‘Go and walk through the land and describe it, and return to me; then I will cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh’” (18:8).

“So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem” (24:25).

Other accounts in the book list Joshua as a participant in the events as either “we” or “us” (5:1, 6).

Many conservative theologians believe in principal authorship of Joshua by Joshua himself, or at least authorship in “a major source in the book” (Harrison).⁹ They note that Joshua would have been familiar with the geography of Canaan, having been one of the twelve spies, just like the author of Joshua demonstrates himself to be. There are some conservatives, however, who believe that Joshua is not the author, but instead would be someone in his close inner circle such as the priests Eleazar or Phinehas, as either one of them would have had access to Joshua.¹⁰

The timing of Joshua’s composition is obviously connected to the timing of the Exodus, which conservatives are not agreed upon, with some favoring the Fifteenth Century B.C.E., and others favoring the Thirteenth Century B.C.E. (see **Exodus** entry for a summarization of the conservative debates over the timing of the Exodus). As a result, some believe that Joshua’s events occurred in the mid-Fifteenth Century, and there are many others who believe that they occurred in the mid-to-late Thirteenth Century¹¹ based on extant archaeological evidence.¹² While many believe that Joshua’s events were written down as they occurred, there are conservatives who have argued for a composition date after the death of Joshua, sometime during the period of the Judges or slightly later.¹³

⁵ Cf. Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979), 1:354-405; Leonard J. Greenspoon, “Iesous,” in Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp 174-194.

⁶ J. Barton Payne, “Joshua, Book of,” in *NIDB*, 548.

⁷ Madvig, *EXP*, 3:244.

⁸ Payne, “Joshua, Book of,” in *NIDB*, 548; Madvig, in *EXP*, 3:242; Dillard and Longman, 108.

⁹ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 666.

¹⁰ Payne, “Joshua, Book of,” in *NIDB*, 548; Madvig, in *EXP*, 3:242.

¹¹ Blair, in *NBCR*, 232; Madvig, in *EXP*, 3:240-241.

¹² Dillard and Longman, pp 110-111.

¹³ Waltke, “Joshua, Book of,” in *ISBE*, 2:1138; Madvig, in *EXP*, 3:244.

All liberal scholars deny that Joshua had anything to do with the composition of the book that bears his name,¹⁴ but they are divided on the time of its composition. Many liberal theologians have sought to include the Book of Joshua along with the Torah as a part of Wellhausen's JEDP hypothesis (see **Genesis** entry for a summarization of the JEDP documentary hypothesis), including it as part of a so-called Hexateuch.¹⁵ It is notable, however, that this approach has been in the process of being steadily abandoned,¹⁶ and is not widely adhered to any more.

Today, most liberal theologians believe that Joshua was written in the Seventh Century B.C.E., as many as 600-800 years after the events that it records, and was compiled as a part of the reforms during the reign of King Josiah spearheaded by the discovery of a scroll of Deuteronomy. Hence, Joshua is frequently referred to as being part of a "Deuteronomist history." Many assert that the themes of Deuteronomy are present in Joshua, including the writing style of Moses interacting with the people, compared to Joshua interacting with them.¹⁷ In the mid-Twentieth Century, German liberal scholar Martin Noth proposed that Deuteronomy must be separated from the Torah, and actually be connected to Joshua. Some liberals have agreed to this proposition and consider the Hebrew Bible to be divided between a so-called Tetrateuch of Genesis-Numbers,¹⁸ with Deuteronomy and Joshua starting another section.

While not fully agreed among themselves, many liberals advocate that the Book of Joshua was composed as part of a larger work during the Babylonian exile to show the refugees what happens when one betrays God. "His [the supposed author's] dream, set down during the dark days of Babylonian overlordship, is the full possession of the whole land, and he expresses Israel's claim to the land by his ordering of the materials regarding Joshua's conquest" (*IDB*).¹⁹ Many other liberals think that Joshua was written after the Babylonian exile as the Jewish exiles formulated their canon.²⁰ Ironically, while often arguing for a fragmented Torah of various sources, liberals today will frequently argue for the literary unity of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings as a single work, the so-called "Deuteronomist history."²¹

Most notably, liberals maintain that the integrity of Joshua can be legitimately questioned and doubted by modern scrutiny,²² with many of them denying any kind of historicity to the events. **This is true of both Jewish and Christian liberal teachers.** They will frequently claim that archaeology today has yet to reveal any "pattern of destruction that can be correlated, in their chronology or location, with the period of early Israel" (*Jewish Study Bible*),²³ that would be detailed in Joshua. No better example can be considered than the common liberal conclusion that the destruction of Jericho was really just the sacking of an uninhabited, or scarcely populated town, and at best was a "ritual conquest" (*ABD*).²⁴ Many other liberals will simply claim that the Book of Joshua overexaggerated events that occurred long before the text was written.²⁵

Conservative scholarship has often had a great deal to counter regarding the Book of Joshua. Conservatives do recognize that some redaction has taken place with Joshua, and acknowledge that "the problems associated with the source material underlying the extant book are quite complicated" (Harrison).²⁶ A quotation exists in Joshua from a so-called book of Jashar (10:13), no longer extant (which modern Jewish tradition regards as the Torah). The phrase "to this day" (15:63; 16:10) appears numerous times, indicating that

¹⁴ E.M. Good, "Joshua, Book of," in *IDB*, 2:989.

¹⁵ Good, "Joshua, Book of," in *IDB*, 2:989-990; Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 666-668; Waltke, "Joshua, Book of," in *ISBE*, 2:1136-1137.

¹⁶ J.M. Miller, "Joshua, Book of," in *IDBSup*, 493.

¹⁷ Carol Meyers, "Joshua," in *Jewish Study Bible*, 462.

¹⁸ Robert G. Boling, "Joshua, Book of," in *ABD*, 3:1007.

¹⁹ Good, "Joshua, Book of," in *IDB*, 2:992.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:991-992.

²¹ Miller, "Joshua, Book of," in *IDBSup*, 493; Madvig, in *EXP*, 3:240; Meyers, in *Jewish Study Bible*, 462.

²² Bowling, "Joshua, Book of," in *ABD*, 3:1007.

²³ Meyers, in *Jewish Study Bible*, 463.

²⁴ Bowling, "Joshua, Book of," in *ABD*, 3:1009.

²⁵ Good, "Joshua, Book of," in *IDB*, 2:993-994; Blair, in *NBCR*, pp 233-234.

²⁶ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 669.

the text may have been written after Joshua,²⁷ but certainly that some revision has occurred. Adding information, particularly among the city-lists and lists of tribes, likely also took place after Joshua,²⁸ but no later than the reigns of David or Solomon.²⁹ References to events after Joshua's death, such as the conquest of Hebron by Caleb (15:13-14; cf. Judges 1:10, 20), were certainly added at a later date.

The final composition of Joshua likely occurred after his death, as the authorized source document of "Joshua" would have remained among the royal annals of the Southern Kingdom. Some conservatives will concede that it was edited later into its final form. "[T]here is considerable support for the view that the sources from which it is derived were contemporary with the events described, and that the book took its form at an early date" (Payne, *NBCR*).³⁰ The Prophet Samuel is sometimes suggested as a possible editor. While liberals frequently counter these claims by saying that the composition of Joshua in its final form had to be considerably later, good literary reasons explain for what appear to be contradictions in the events:

"What some have attributed to a hodge-podge of contradictory sources has more recently been explained as a characteristic of Hebrew narrative style. Thematic concerns rather than chronology control the arrangement" (*EXP*).³¹

The valid point that liberals do make regarding the composition of Joshua is that the message of Deuteronomy is present in these texts.³² Is it valid to wonder if Joshua was "edited from a Deuteronomistic perspective" (*IDBSup*)?³³ Even for some conservatives, this is an easy way to reconcile the traditions of Joshua's authorship to some redaction that may have occurred in the text. "Even if a seventh-century style has been imposed in the process of editing, the material itself is much earlier. Deuteronomy is forward looking" (*EXP*).³⁴ This is possible when we consider that the Book of Joshua would have been regarded as primarily an historical record and not necessarily a sacred text like the Torah. Later Jewish tradition ascribes its status to that of the Former Prophets.

Most significantly, conservative scholars do present strong archaeological evidence against the liberal claim that there is *no archaeological evidence* to support Joshua's claims of conquest.³⁵ Much of the evidence that could be uncovered in Israel today is impossible to dig per the current political climate, in addition to other parts of the region that are equally unstable. Also to consider is the fact of site-shifting where a city or town will actually move to a different location in ancient times. This causes problems for the archaeologist who thinks that he has found a Biblical city, when in fact he may have not. K.A. Kitchen notes this problem concerning the Jericho of Joshua, informing us,

"Old Testament Jericho (now Tell es-Sultan) was abandoned from Hellenistic times, and settlement moved to near the springs of Ain-Sultan, onto the site which became modern Jericho (Er-Riha). But in Hellenistic/Roman times, palaces and residential villas were built at a third site nearby (Tulul Abu el-Alaiq). So, today, there are three 'Jerichos.'"³⁶

The Hebrew text of Joshua that is used to translate most Bibles today has been well-preserved since 1008 C.E. in the Leningrad codex.³⁷ The Greek Septuagint version of Joshua does add some information, including a few inquiries by figures such as Solomon,³⁸ "The LXX version indicates attempts to expand the Hebrew through the addition of words and phrases" (Harrison).³⁹

²⁷ Dillard and Longman, 108.

²⁸ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 671.

²⁹ Blair, in *NBCR*, 231; Payne, "Joshua, Book of," in *NIDB*, 548.

³⁰ Payne, "Joshua, Book of," in *NBCR*, 232.

³¹ Madvig, in *EXP*, 3:242.

³² Miller, "Joshua, Book of," in *IDBSup*, 493; Bowling, "Joshua, Book of," in *ABD*, 3:1007.

³³ Miller, "Joshua, Book of," in *IDBSup*, 493.

³⁴ Madvig, in *EXP*, 3:240.

³⁵ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 674-678; Blair, in *NBCR*, 232; Madvig, in *EXP*, 3:247-248.

³⁶ K.A. Kitchen, *The Bible In Its World: The Bible & Archaeology Today* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977), 13.

³⁷ Madvig, in *EXP*, 3:246.

³⁸ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 670.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 678.

The most significant part regarding the composition of the Book of Joshua concerns how we properly interpret and apply the text. The three major players in Joshua are very simply God, Joshua, and the people of Israel. It includes a major call to Israel to be faithful to God (1:1-9; 3:7-10; 22:1-6; 23:1-16; 24:1-15, 19-20, 22-23), and the people swear obedience to God (1:16-18; 24:16-18, 21-22, 24). The faithlessness of Israel turns into defeat (ch. 7),⁴⁰ whereas miraculous occurrences take place because of their obedience. These include the parting of the Jordan River (chs. 3-4), the destruction of Jericho's walls (ch. 6), hailstones and the sun standing still (10:11-13), and the hardening of the hearts of Israel's enemies (11:20). Furthermore, the enemies of Israel demonstrate a strong fear for them (2:24; 4:24; 10:2).

There are theological difficulties that some have with Joshua, particularly with what can be perceived as "commanded genocide" on God's behalf, as He frequently commands Israel to go into a city and kill all of its inhabitants.⁴¹ Finding this very offensive is what has caused liberals to think that Joshua's claims are exaggerated. There have been some conservatives in response who have suggested that Israel was on the defensive, dispossessing the Canaanites.⁴² Likewise, many have also thought that Israel was used as God's tool of Divine vengeance on the sin of the Canaanites, comparing the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah to Israel's destruction of Jericho,⁴³ noting that some cities were given a chance to repent.

When confronted with violent realities presented in the Book of Joshua, we need to consider that "God was careful to point out that he was not arbitrarily destroying the Canaanites just to give the land to Israel. The wickedness of the inhabitants of Canaan was the reason why God was removing them; and if Israel proved unfaithful, she too would be removed from the land" (*EXP*).⁴⁴ Furthermore, it is important for us to note that only part of the Promised Land was taken by Israel in the Book of Joshua. "The writer probably understood the taking of the land to mean the gaining of control without eliminating all opposition" (Waltke, *ISBE*).⁴⁵

Messianic Believers today should take heart of the example of Joshua as leader of Israel,⁴⁶ and the notable parallels that we see in both Yeshua the Messiah and His Apostles. Joshua was a bold man (Numbers 27:18). He endured the slavery of Egypt, saw the plagues of God, experienced the Exodus, and led Israel to victory over the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-13). Joshua accompanied Moses to the mountain to receive the Law (Exodus 24:13-14), and witnessed the establishment of the Tabernacle (Exodus 33:11). He is one of only two spies to deliver a positive report of the Promised Land (Numbers 14:26-34). Most importantly, Joshua was the servant chosen to succeed Moses (Deuteronomy 31:23) and mimic him.⁴⁷ The author of Hebrews notably mentions Joshua as a type of person foreshadowing the Messiah (Hebrews 4:1, 6-8).

Today's Messianic movement often fails to examine the Book of Joshua because it is widely preoccupied with its Tanach study *only* in the Torah. Perhaps the term "Hextateuch" could be used in some Messianic contexts to emphasize that the history of God's people does not end at Deuteronomy. While the Book of Joshua is not considered in Jewish theology to be as authoritative as the Torah, it is certainly not ignored. Our frequent, casual dismissal of Joshua is unfortunate, because "The Book of Joshua deals with one very important stage in the fulfillment of God's great plan to provide salvation for the whole world" (*EXP*).⁴⁸ While rejecting liberal theories surrounding Joshua's composition, do we as Messianics nevertheless understand Deuteronomy as a bridge between the wilderness travels of Israel and their conquest of the Promised Land?⁴⁹ Do we see its themes present in Joshua?

⁴⁰ Waltke, "Joshua, Book of," in *ISBE*, 2:1136.

⁴¹ Good, "Joshua, Book of," in *IDB*, 2:995; Madvig, *EXP*, 3:246-247.

⁴² Waltke, "Joshua, Book of," in *ISBE*, 2:1135.

⁴³ Blair, in *NBCR*, 234; Waltke, "Joshua, Book of," in *ISBE*, 2:1135.

⁴⁴ Madvig, in *EXP*, 3:247.

⁴⁵ Waltke, "Joshua, Book of," in *ISBE*, 2:1135.

⁴⁶ Blair, in *NBCR*, 230.

⁴⁷ Madvig, in *EXP*, 3:239; Meyers, in *Jewish Study Bible*, 464.

⁴⁸ Madvig, in *EXP*, 3:239.

⁴⁹ Miller, "Joshua, Book of," in *IDBSup*, 493; Madvig, in *EXP*, 3:239-240.

A fresh Messianic examination of Joshua would be very helpful for us to understand the historical setting of the Ancient Near East in the Fifteenth-Thirteenth Centuries B.C.E. There was a power vacuum among the city-states of Canaan that Israel was going to quickly fill. Hebrew, while being the language of Israel, was one of the many Semitic languages of the region and was not unique. Archaeological finds in Israel today continually show us new things about the Late Bronze, Early Iron Age, pointing to a mid-Thirteenth Century invasion of Canaan. Most significantly for us, the Book of Joshua demonstrates how Israel's religion directly clashed with the locals, and the uniqueness of Israel's God when compared to the regional deities. Israel's God was concerned with the welfare for other human beings, whereas the gods of Canaan treated humans as only property or slaves.

Most significant for us to consider when reading Joshua is that it takes us beyond Moses and we get to see how the next generation of Israelites handles the struggles that they face. Did they learn from the mistakes of their predecessors? Many Christians use Joshua as a text for Believers to be encouraged to go evangelize the world, realizing that it is through people hearing the gospel and growing in the Lord that our faith perpetuates itself another generation.

When we look at today's Messianic movement, are we raising up a generation to go after us? Will they be people filled with the Spirit of God? Will they be people who do not cower in the face of adversity? Will they be people who have true discernment and know the right actions? The Book of Joshua is a physical depiction of the realities of the spiritual war that we are constantly engaged with (Ephesians 6:10-18).⁵⁰ If we intend to understand the Lord's call upon us, then Joshua is certainly a text that we need not overlook any more.

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⁵⁰ Cf. Madvig, in *EXP*, 3:247.