

# CHAPTER 5

## INTRODUCTION TO JOSHUA 5

The Canaanites being dispirited on the passage of the children of Israel through Jordan, (<sup><REF></sup>Joshua 5:1); Joshua is ordered to circumcise such of the people of Israel that were uncircumcised, (<sup><REF></sup>Joshua 5:2-9); in order to their eating of the passover, which was now to be kept, (<sup><REF></sup>Joshua 5:10); and they being now provided with corn sufficient, the manna ceased, (<sup><REF></sup>Joshua 5:11,12); and there appeared to Joshua a divine Person, in an human form, to encourage and direct him what to do in the conquest of the land, and particularly Jericho, (<sup><REF></sup>Joshua 5:13-15).

**Ver. 1.** *And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which [were] on the side of Jordan westward,* etc.] On the side the Israelites were now on; and this is observed, to distinguish them from the other kings of the Amorites beyond Jordan, on the eastern side, who were already conquered by the Israelites, Sihon and Og, who seem to be a colony that went over from the Amorites in Canaan, and possessed themselves of that part of the land of Moab. These seem to be put for several others of the nations of the land not mentioned, who doubtless were as much dispirited as they; and they are the rather mentioned, because they were a principal nation, and a very powerful and warlike one, (see <sup><REF></sup>Amos 2:9).

*and all the kings of the Canaanites which [were] by the sea;* the Mediterranean sea; the Septuagint version calls them the kings of Phoenicia; and that which was strictly and property so lay on that coast, in which were the cities of Tyre and Sidon, though the whole land of Canaan was sometimes so called; unless this is to be understood, either of the dead sea, or of the sea of Galilee; of which Canaanites, (see <sup><REF></sup>Numbers 13:29); however, be they the one or the other, or both, as most likely, when they

*heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel;* they lost all their courage, and never recovered it any more; concluding it was all over with them, since such wonderful things were

done for them by the Lord: the word “we” shows that the writer of this history was one that passed over Jordan, and who can be supposed but Joshua himself? this circumstance, I think, strongly corroborates that opinion.

**Ver. 2.** *At that time the Lord said unto Joshua*, etc.] When the people had passed over Jordan, and had pitched in Gilgal, and Joshua had set up the stones there; and particularly when the dread of them had seized the inhabitants of Canaan, and deprived them of all their courage; and so was a fit time for the execution of what is next ordered, and seems designed in the providence of God among other things particularly for that:

*make them sharp knives*; not that Joshua was to make them himself, but to order them to be made; for a considerable number would be wanted for the use to be made of them: the Targum calls them sharp razors; and Ben Gersom says they were made of brass, more likely of iron or steel, which perhaps he means; but the Hebrew text is, “knives of rocks”, “flints” or “stones”; and so Maimonides<sup>f61</sup> interprets the words, and as they are rendered in various versions<sup>f62</sup>; with such an instrument Zipporah circumcised her son; and like them were the “samia testa”<sup>f63</sup>, with which the priests of the mother of the gods were castrated; and the “saxum acutum” of Ovid<sup>f64</sup>; and such the Americans used in slaying beasts, and the Egyptians<sup>f65</sup> in the dissecting of their dead bodies; and which the Talmudists allow of as lawful; and in the east the Jews to this day use knives of stone in circumcision<sup>f66</sup>; (see Gill on “~~TIME~~ Exodus 4:25”).

*and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time*; not that circumcision was to be repeated on them that had been circumcised already, who had found out ways and means to draw over the foreskin again, as some in later times did; or who had been imperfectly circumcised according to the rite enjoined by Abraham, which some Jewish writers say was not perfect; neither of which was the case. Kimchi, and so Ben Melech, interpret the word, “oftentimes”, frequently, one time after another; as if the sense was, Joshua was to circumcise them, or take care they were circumcised, some at one time, and some at another, until the whole was finished; but this is not what is meant, it refers to a former general circumcision; not to the circumcision, as first administered in Abraham’s time, for there had been a multitude of instances of it since that time; but to the circumcision of the Israelites at, about, or quickly after their coming out of Egypt; either before their eating of their first passover,

the night they went out of Egypt, as Jarchi <sup>f67</sup>; or rather some time in the three days' darkness of the Egyptians, as Dr. Lightfoot <sup>f68</sup> thinks; or else when they were about Sinai, just before the celebration of the passover there, (<sup>0101</sup>Numbers 9:1,2); from which time it had been neglected; not cause unnecessary, while they were in the wilderness, to distinguish them from others, which was not the principal, at least not the only use of it; nor because forbidden the Israelites for their disobedience, murmurings, and rebellion, it not being probable that God should prohibit the observance of a command of his on that account; nor so much through criminal neglect, at least contempt of it, as because of their frequent journeying, and the inconvenience of performing it, being always uncertain, when they had pitched their tents, how long they should stay, and when they should remove, since this depended upon the taking up of the cloud; wherefore, unless they could have been sure of a continuance for a proper time, it was not safe to administer it; and now it was enjoined, partly because they were about to celebrate the passover, which required circumcision in all that partook of it, (<sup>0123</sup>Exodus 12:43,44); and partly because they had now entered into the land of Canaan, which was given them in the covenant of circumcision, (<sup>0178</sup>Genesis 17:8-10); wherefore it became them now to observe it, and as typical of spiritual circumcision, necessary to the heavenly Canaan, as well as to distinguish them from the uncircumcised Canaanites they were coming among; and they did not think themselves under obligation to observe it till they came to settle in that land, as some think, who hereby account for their long neglect of it.

**Ver. 3.** *And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel*, etc.] Not that Joshua circumcised them himself, any more than he made the knives himself, but he ordered both to be done, and took care that they were done. And as any that had skill might make the knives, so might any circumcise; circumcision was not restrained to any order of men, not to the priests and Levites, but any might perform it; so that though the number to be circumcised was great, it might soon be finished: and this was done

*at the hill of the foreskins*; as the place was afterward called from hence; these being heaped up one upon another, made a hill of them, as the Jews say <sup>f69</sup>, being covered with dust. This circumcision performed by Joshua, or his orders, was typical of the spiritual circumcision without hands, which those that believe in Jesus, the antitype of Joshua, partake of.

**Ver. 4.** *And this [is] the cause why Joshua did circumcise,* etc.] Or the reason of the command given him to circumcise the children of Israel at this time, namely, what follows:

*all the people that came out of Egypt [that were] males, [even] all the men of war;* meaning such that were twenty years old, and upwards:

*died in the wilderness, by the way, after they came out of Egypt;* not directly, but in a course of forty years, as they journeyed through the wilderness; this is to be understood with an exception of Joshua, Caleb, Eleazar, etc. but then there was a large number who were under twenty years of age, that came out of Egypt, and were now living.

**Ver. 5.** *Now all the people that came out were circumcised,* etc.] All that came out of Egypt, and males, were circumcised, whether under or above twenty years of age; for though it is possible all were circumcised before they came out of Egypt, which favours the opinion of Dr. Lightfoot, that they might be circumcised during the three nights' darkness of the Egyptians, when they could take no advantage of it, as Levi and Simeon did of the Shechemites; and which seems more probable than that it should be on the night they came out of Egypt, when many must have been unfit for travelling, and seems preferable to that of their being circumcised at Mount Sinai, which was a year after their coming out of Egypt:

*but all the people [that were] born in the wilderness by the way, as they came forth out of Egypt, [them] they had not circumcised;* the reasons of which neglect; (see Gill on "<sup>170</sup>Joshua 5:2"). The phrase, "by the way", seems to point at the true reason of it, at least to countenance the reason there given, which was on account of their journey; that is, their stay at any place being uncertain and precarious; so the Jews say<sup>170</sup>, because of the affliction or trouble of journeying, the Israelites did not circumcise their children. This is to be understood of all males only born in the wilderness, they only being the subjects of circumcision.

**Ver. 6.** *For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness,* etc.] Wanting a few days, the round number is given: not forty two, as the Septuagint version:

*till all the people [that were] men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed;* all that were above twenty years of age, excepting Joshua and Caleb:

*because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord*; but murmured against him, and against his servants, and particularly against Aaron, being the high priest; and chiefly because of the report of the spies, and their murmurs then, which so incensed the Lord against them, that he threatened them with an entire consumption of their carcasses, and which accordingly was fulfilled, to which the following clause refers:

*unto whom the Lord sware, that he would not show them the land which the Lord sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey*; (see <sup><0442></sup>Numbers 14:23,24).

**Ver. 7.** *And the children [whom] he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised*, etc.] Who were born to them in the wilderness, and succeeded them, some of which might be near forty years of age; as for those that were born before, of which there might be many now living, they had been circumcised already, but others, were not:

*for they were circumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way*; or while journeying the forty years in the wilderness; which, as before observed, seems to be the true reason of the omission of circumcision.

**Ver. 8.** *And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people*, etc.] Which seems as if it was done in one day, even on the same day they passed over Jordan, and came to Gilgal; though Bishop Usher <sup>f71</sup> thinks it was the day following; and so the Jews <sup>f72</sup> say it was on the eleventh of Nisan:

*that they abode in their places in the camp till they were whole*: till the wound made by circumcision was healed; now as it was on the tenth day they passed over Jordan, and came to Gilgal, where they were circumcised, there were three entire days between that and the fourteenth, when they kept the passover; during which time they kept within their tents in the camp, being unfit to move from thence, for on the third day of circumcision they were usually sore, (<sup><0325></sup>Genesis 34:25); but being well on the fourth, were able to attend the passover. As the providence of God greatly appeared in favour of Israel, by causing a dread to fall on their enemies, that they durst not sally out of the city and attack them; so it showed great faith in Joshua, and the Israelites, to administer circumcision at this time, just as they were landed in an enemy's country; and when the waters of Jordan were returned, and there was no going back, and if they could, as they were not in a condition to fight, so not to flee.

**Ver. 9.** *And the Lord said unto Joshua*, etc.] Out of the tabernacle:

*this day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you*; either the reproach of being reckoned office same religion with the Egyptians, they now having observed the command of the Lord, and thereby declared themselves to be his servants and worshippers, which sense Ben Gersom mentions; or else the reproach with which the Egyptians reproached them, that they were brought out from them into the wilderness for evil, to be destroyed there, they now being safely arrived in the land of Canaan; which sense he seems to approve of, and so Abarbinel: or rather by it is meant the reproach of being bondmen, and slaves, as they were in Egypt, having now entered upon their inheritance, they as free men, the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were heirs unto; and perhaps it was this sense of the phrase led Josephus<sup>f73</sup> to give a wrong interpretation of the word “Gilgal”, which he says signifies “liberty”: and adds,

“for, having passed the river, they knew they were free from the Egyptians, and from troubles in the wilderness;”

though the more commonly received sense is, that this reproach is to be understood of uncircumcision, which was the reproach of the Egyptians, they at this time not using circumcision they afterwards did, when some of the nations thereabout used it, who descended, from Abraham, as the Midianites, Ishmaelites, Arabians, and Edomites:

*wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day*; which signifies “rolling”<sup>f74</sup>; so that when it is met with before, it is so called by anticipation.

**Ver. 10.** *And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal*, etc.] Not after their circumcision, but before, and where they continued encamped during that, and until the passover had been kept by them; this was little more than a mile from Jericho, (see Gill on “<sup>(1049)</sup>Joshua 4:19”);

*and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even*; exactly as it was ordered to be observed, and was observed when first kept, (<sup>(1016)</sup>Exodus 12:6);

*in the plains of Jericho*: a proper place both for their encampment, and the celebration of the passover, and where very likely they met with lambs enough for their purpose, which belonged to the inhabitants of Jericho; or however being now got into the good land, they needed not, and were

under no temptation of sparing their own: historians agree, as Strabo <sup>f75</sup>, Josephus <sup>f76</sup>, and others, that Jericho was seated in a plain.

**Ver. 11.** *And they did eat the old corn of the land*, etc.] That of the last year, as some versions <sup>f77</sup>, which agree with ours; in which they seem to follow the Jewish writers, who, as particularly Kimchi, Gersom, and Ben Melech, interpret it of the old corn, for this reason, because they might not eat of the new until the wave sheaf was offered up, (~~OR230~~ Leviticus 23:10,11,14); of which old corn they suppose the unleavened cakes were made, and was also parched corn, though that word the Septuagint version translates “new”; and indeed were it not for the above law, there does not seem to be any reason for rendering it old corn, only corn of the land, as the Septuagint does; and there is some difficulty how they should get at the old corn, which it may be supposed was laid up in the granaries, when Jericho was close shut up, and none went in or out; unless they met with it in some of the villages near at hand, or it was brought them by the traders in corn, of whom they bought it, or found it in some houses and barns without the city:

*on the morrow after the passover*; which Kimchi and Ben Gersom say was on the fifteenth of Nisan, the passover being on the fourteenth; but if the morrow after the passover is the same with the morrow after the Sabbath, (~~OR231~~ Leviticus 23:11); that was the sixteenth of Nisan; and so Jarchi here says, this is the day of waving the sheaf, which was always done on the sixteenth: it is difficult to say which day is meant; if it was the sixteenth, then it may refer to what they ate on that day, after the sheaf was offered <sup>f78</sup>; if it was the fifteenth, it seems necessary to understand it of the old corn; and such they must have to make their unleavened cakes of, both for the passover on the fourteenth, and the Chagigah, or feast of unleavened bread, which began the fifteenth, as it follows:

*unleavened bread, and parched [corn] in the selfsame day*; unleavened bread, for the uses before mentioned, they were obliged to, and parched corn for their pleasure; but new corn, as the Septuagint render it, was expressly forbidden before the waving of the sheaf, (~~OR234~~ Leviticus 23:14); and therefore old corn seems to be meant; this was just forty years to a day from their coming out of Egypt.

**Ver. 12.** *And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land*, etc.] There being now no further need of it; miracles are not wrought or continued when unnecessary; for the ceasing of the

manna shows, that it was not a common but an extraordinary provision. The ceasing of the manna, which was a type of Christ, may signify the cessation of Gospel ordinances, in which Christ is held forth as food for his people. These are to continue till all the spiritual Israel of God have passed over the river Jordan, or death, even until the end of the world, and then to cease, (<sup>4186</sup>Matthew 28:19,20) (<sup>46125</sup>1 Corinthians 11:26 <sup>46122</sup>Revelation 21:22,23); the eating of the old corn may signify the glories of the future state, the joys and happiness of the heavenly Canaan, prepared for those that love the Lord from the foundation of the world; it may denote those ancient things the saints will feed and live upon to all eternity; the eternal love of the three divine Persons, electing grace, the ancient settlements of grace, the everlasting covenant of grace, and the blessings of it; the glorious Mediator of it, that was set up from everlasting, and the grace given to them in him before the world began:

*neither had the children of Israel manna any more*; having no more need of it, as the saints in heaven will stand in no more need of Gospel ordinances:

*but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year*; the increase of the land, not only of the fields, but of the vineyards and oliveyards, which they had neither sown nor planted, (see <sup>4860</sup>Deuteronomy 6:10,11); which may denote the plenty and variety of the joys of heaven, and glories of the future state; the various fruits which grow on Christ, the tree of life, brought forth every month, or continually; all which will be enjoyed through the free grace of God, without the works or merits of men.

Ver. 13. *And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho*, etc.] Or “in Jericho”<sup>179</sup>; not in the city itself, but in the border of it, as Kimchi and Ben Melech; or on the side of it, as Jarchi; on one side of which he was reconnoitring by himself, very probably seeking for a proper place where to make his first attack; or if he could find out some avenue to the city, whereby he could enter more easily; or it may be he was meditating a scheme how to subdue the city; and it is very likely praying to God that he would direct him, and succeed him. Ben Gersom interprets it, his thoughts were in Jericho; and both he, and Abarbinel, suppose, that what follows was in a vision of prophecy, that it seemed to him that he was in Jericho, and saw a person, as after described, and was only a dream or night vision; but, no doubt, whether this was in the day or in the night, which is not



certain, it was a real sight that Joshua had, or one really appeared to him as a man, as after related:

*that he lifted up his eyes, and looked;* his eyes before looked downwards, as the eyes of a person in deep study and meditation usually do:

*and, behold, there stood a man over against him;* not a mere man, nor a created angel in an human form, but a divine Person in such a form, even the Son of God, who frequently appeared in this manner to the patriarchs; as is clear from the worship paid unto him by Joshua, by his calling him Lord, and owning himself to be his servant; and by the ground on which he stood, being holy through his presence, as well as by his title, the Captain of the Lord's host. Jarchi says, this is Michael, which, if understood of Michael the uncreated angel, the head of all principality and power, is right, who is always meant by Michael, whenever he is spoken of in Scripture; and so this is interpreted by the ancient Jews<sup>f80</sup> of the Angel the Redeemer:

*with his sword drawn in his hand;* who sometimes is said to have a twoedged one come out of his mouth, and sometimes one girt on his thigh, and here with one drawn out of the scabbard, to justify the war with the Canaanites, and to encourage Joshua to proceed in it. His sword has been drawn against his enemies, and those of his people from the beginning, ever since the fall of man, when enmity commenced between him and the seed of the serpent; it appeared drawn when here on earth combating with all our spiritual enemies, and will never be put up until all enemies are put under his feet:

*and Joshua went unto him;* which showed great courage, presence of mind, and magnanimity:

*and said unto him, [art] thou for us, or for our adversaries?* by his appearing in this warlike posture, he concluded it was to take on one side or the other, either on the side of Israel, or of the Canaanites; and he seemed to suspect that it was on the side of the latter, and that he was one that was come to defy the armies of Israel, as Goliath afterwards did, (~~1~~ Samuel 17:8); and to engage in a single combat with Joshua their general, and so decide the war; in which, had this been the case, Joshua was ready to fight with him.

**Ver. 14.** *And he said, nay,* etc.] Not for or on the side of their adversaries was he come, as Joshua suspected at the first sight of him; the Septuagint version is, “he said unto him”, taking **al** for **wl** , as it sometimes is:

*but [as] Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come;* of the host of the Lord both in heaven and in earth, angels and men, and particularly of the people of Israel, called the armies and host of the Lord, (<sup>(1004)</sup>Exodus 7:4 12:41); so that though Joshua was general, Christ was Generalissimo; and so Joshua understood him, and therefore showed a readiness to do whatsoever he should command him; the spiritual Israel of God, the church, is in a militant state, and has many enemies to combat with, sin, Satan, the world, and false teachers; Christ is their Leader and Commander, the Captain of their salvation, and has all necessary qualifications or wisdom, courage, and might, for such an office; (see <sup>(2504)</sup>Isaiah 55:4 11:2,3 <sup>(820)</sup>Hebrews 2:10 <sup>(691)</sup>Revelation 19:11,14);

*and Joshua fell on his face to the earth;* in reverence of this divine and illustrious Person, whom he perceived to be what he was:

*and did worship;* gave him religious worship and adoration, which had he been a created angel he would not have given to him, nor would such an one have received it, (<sup>(690)</sup>Revelation 19:10 22:8,9);

*and said unto him, what saith my Lord unto his servant?* that is, what commands had he to lay upon him, and he was ready to execute them? he was heartily willing to be subject to him as the chief general of the Israelitish forces, and to consider himself, and behave, as an officer under him, and to obey all orders that should be given.

**Ver. 15.** *And the Captain of the Lord’s host said unto Joshua,* etc.] As a trial and proof of his obedience to him:

*loose thy shoe from off thy foot;* which is to be understood literally, as when the like was commanded Moses at Horeb, (<sup>(1005)</sup>Exodus 3:5); though some interpret it figuratively; as Abarbanel,

“remove from thee such thoughts that thou shall take this city by strength:”

*for the place whereon thou standest [is] holy;* because of the presence of this Person, and as long as he was there, though afterwards was as another place; the Jewish commentator, last mentioned, thinks this intimates that

the city, and all in it (and all round about it), should be “cherem”, devoted, and so be holy to the Lord:

*and Joshua did so*; loosed his shoe from his foot, in obedience to the Captain of the Lord’s host, thereby giving proof of his readiness, willingness, and alacrity to serve under him.