

an essay:

JOSHUA THE SUCCESSOR OF MOSES

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I. MEET JOSHUA THE SERVANT AND MINISTER TO MOSES

Moses in The Torah is the central figure, The man of GOD and servant of JEHOVAH. Joshua is the obedient servant, lieutenant and understudy of Moses. We first encounter Joshua in EXODUS 17 when Moses commands him in verse 9 to “Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek...”¹ Verse 10 records, “So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek...”² Here we see the principle of GOD’s Kingdom that, for a man to be a leader of GOD’s people, he must be a servant. Further, the election of Joshua as Moses’ successor was a matter set by The LORD and not by Moses the man. After Joshua had led the Israelites to victory over the Amalekites, we read in EXODUS 17:14, “And The LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua...”³

In EXODUS 24 we find The LORD calling Moses to come up again into the mountain, saying to him in verse 12, “...and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.”⁴ Here we again meet Joshua as the minister of Moses, where verse 13 records, “And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua and Moses went up into the mount of GOD.”⁵ Only Moses actually went “...into the midst of the cloud” of GOD’s Presence, but Joshua was not far off.⁶ So here we see The Almighty preparing Joshua to be His leader of Israel after Moses by placing Joshua at Moses’ right hand. For it is the hand of GOD which anoints The LORD’s prophets, priests and kings and not that of men.

And in EXODUS 32 we see Joshua as the steadfast servant of Moses even in the most difficult of times. After The LORD had thought to judge the entire people for their sins of idolatry and debauchery while Moses was in the mount receiving The Ten Commandments, and after Moses had intervened to successfully beseech GOD’s mercy upon Israel, there is still Joshua waiting to attend to Moses. As Moses descends with the

¹ KJV, EXODUS 17:9.

² KJV, EXODUS 17:10.

³ KJV, EXODUS 17:14.

⁴ KJV, EXODUS 24:12.

⁵ KJV, EXODUS 24:13.

⁶ KJV, EXODUS 24:18.

tablets of The Law in his arms written by the very finger of GOD, there still is Joshua, for verse 17 records, “And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp!”⁷ Joshua no doubt feared the wrath of the people, but he stayed true to his vows of service to The LORD and to Moses! When the chips were down, and the shoulders of Moses were called again to bear a heavy burden before The Most High, there still is Joshua! He who would be a servant leader of GOD’s saints must be steadfast and faithful in both good times and bad!

II. JOSHUA RECEIVES THE MANTLE OF LEADERSHIP FROM MOSES BY GOD

Moses in his elder years presents Joshua before the people in DEUTERONOMY 31, telling them that The LORD had said to him that he should not enter The Promised Land, but that they shall enter in and possess it under the hand of GOD and leadership of Joshua. So Moses commissions Joshua to lead in his place in verse 7-8, “And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the LORD, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed!”⁸

When the time for Moses to die came near, The LORD commanded him to go to the door of The Tabernacle with Joshua, that Joshua might be anointed before Israel in Moses’ place. So DEUTERONOMY 31:14 records, “And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation.”⁹ There The Skekina Glory of JEHOVAH came to the door of the tabernacle where Moses stood, and The LORD spoke to Moses! And there was faithful Joshua ever by the side of Moses. The leader of GOD’s saints is to be publicly called and anointed before GOD and His people.

⁷ KJV, EXODUS 32:17.

⁸ KJV, DEUTERONOMY 31:7-8.

⁹ KJV, DEUTERONOMY 31:14.

III. JOSHUA NOW THE MAN OF GOD IN MOSES' PLACE TO LEAD GOD'S PEOPLE

The Torah closes in DEUTERONOMY 34 in recording that Joshua, though not knowing The LORD “face to face” as did Moses, was none the less to carry on the work which Moses was too old and not commissioned to do – to fulfill the promises made by GOD to the people in The Torah to actually take possession of The Promised Land and dwell therein!¹⁰ So verse 9 states, “And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.”¹¹ Note that Joshua was anointed in ceremony by the laying on of hands by his elder Moses, was filled with godly wisdom by The Holy Spirit, and did all in faithful obedience as The LORD had commanded Moses.

Like Moses, GOD also spoke to Joshua, though the means thereof were not as direct, as we have noted. JOSHUA 1:1 states, “Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua...”¹² And like Moses, Joshua was obedient to GOD's commands, for we read in verse 2 that GOD spoke and he obeyed: “[GOD said,] Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.”¹³ Joshua's response was immediate: he commanded the people and their officers to prepare to begin to take hold of the great thing which was ever before Moses' eyes, but denied to him by The LORD's design – to actually enter into the peace and rest of The Promised Land.

IV. FAITHFUL JOSHUA CARRIES OUT THE WILL OF GOD AND DESIRE OF MOSES

Joshua as leader of Israel did not do anything novel according to his own will or imagination, but as a faithful steward of The Promise of GOD for Israel to take The Promised Land, he led the people where Moses desired to go but could not. So before this mission was embarked on, Joshua testified to Israel to remember, not his words, but as JOSHUA 1:13 says, “...the word which Moses the servant of The LORD commanded

¹⁰ KJV, DEUTERONOMY 34:10.

¹¹ KJV, DEUTERONOMY 34:9.

¹² KJV, JOSHUA 1:1.

¹³ KJV, JOSHUA 1:2.

you, saying, The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land.”¹⁴ Joshua calls Israel to be strong and courageous, because as Moses had promised them, The LORD would be with them to give them victory. But that victory Joshua tells them is contingent upon the nation keeping The Book of The Law of GOD, meditating upon it and living it day and night, doing all which Moses had commanded them by the authority of GOD, and keeping Covenantal faithfulness to The LORD.

So just as Israel did under Moses, the people renew their Covenantal oath under Joshua. JOSHUA 1:17 records the response of Israel to Joshua’s call, “According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only The LORD Thy GOD be with thee, as He was with Moses.”¹⁵ Just as Moses had called their fathers to reaffirm The Covenant with JEHOVAH at Mount Sinai, so now Joshua called Israel to do so again. But note how the people vowed to obey and follow Joshua only if and as long as “GOD be with thee, as he was with Moses!”¹⁶ Recalling how much resistance, rebellion and trouble the people had given to Moses as recorded in The Torah, it is no wonder that GOD picked Joshua – this ever faithful and unwavering servant leader – to follow in Moses’ steps!

And though the physical battles which Israel was to face under Joshua differed from those they faced under Moses, GOD still went before them. The victories and deliverances were no less miraculous and no less astounding in the face of seemingly impossible enemies and obstacles! The LORD is indeed with Joshua as He was with Moses. Some of the miracles performed by The Almighty are similar – the parting of the waters of the Red Sea versus that of the Jordan River – while others are of a different sort – the plagues upon the Egyptians versus that of the falling down of the walls of Jericho. Like under Moses, there are times of Covenant breaking and unbelief by the people under Joshua. And certainly Joshua had his moments of doubt and fear as did Moses.

¹⁴ KJV, JOSHUA 1:13.

¹⁵ KJV, JOSHUA 1:17.

¹⁶ KJV, JOSHUA 1:17.

V. JOSHUA AS ISRAEL'S FIRST JUDGE

Sometimes as GOD's people our afflictions are at the hands of our enemies. But often our afflictions are the direct result of sin – ours and those around us. Now as the battles for the conquest of Canaan came to an incomplete end, Joshua was at the same time called upon to fight other battles for Israel as her Judge. Like Moses, he was called upon to settle disputes and judge over the nation. But unlike Moses, who was GOD's Lawgiver, Joshua was called to see that The Book of The Law of GOD was lived faithfully by the people and the nation. Such a test came when Israel suffered a defeat at the hands of the men of Ai in JOSHUA 7. When Joshua mourned the seemingly possible failure of Israel in taking Canaan, The LORD called to Joshua to be His Judge. So we read in verse 10-11, “And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed My Covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing...!”¹⁷

GOD had commanded Israel through Joshua to not take anything of the people of Canaan for themselves, for these people were so idolatrous and bent that anything from their hands would defile Israel and tempt the people into apostasy. So The LORD directed Joshua in JOSHUA 7:15, “And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the Covenant of The LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.”¹⁸ Being a Judge over GOD's saints, whether in ancient Israel or now in The Church, is not an easy thing. Sins of idolatry corrupt the body of believers and lead men away from the worship of The Almighty. The purging of such evil may well require drastic action. So when Achan confessed his sin of pillaging that which belonged to the paganists of Ai, it was necessary to put away the defilement of Israel by the taking of his life. For a people can not call upon The Name of The LORD for deliverance and victory in life's battles when they also call upon the false idols of this world which they set up in their hearts!

¹⁷ KJV, JOSHUA 7:10-11.

VI. IN CONCLUSION

Like Moses, Joshua reminds us that the battle belongs to The LORD. Covenantal obedience and living a true and active faith by GOD's people are the grounds for hoping in the deliverance of GOD in the battles of life. So JOSHUA 24:14 records Joshua's last charge to Israel, "Now therefore fear The LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye The LORD!"¹⁹ And therefore Saint John declares in I JOHN 5:4-5, "For whatsoever is born of GOD overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that JESUS [The CHRIST] is The Son of GOD!"²⁰ Do we desire victory in life's battles by The LORD's hand? Do we love GOD? Then let us keep His Commandments! Moses knew this and lived it, as did Joshua! For as The Messiah declares in JOHN 14:15, "If ye love Me, keep My Commandments!"²¹ In The Name of GOD The Father, and The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN!

¹⁸ KJV, JOSHUA 7:15.

¹⁹ KJV, JOSHUA 24:14.

²⁰ KJV, I JOHN 5:4-5.

²¹ KJV, JOHN 14:15.

VII. REFERENCES

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