

I M M E R S E

The Reading Bible™



KINGDOMS

*Almighty God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
grant, we pray,
that we might be grounded and settled
in your truth
by the coming of your Holy Spirit
into our hearts.*

*What we do not know,
reveal to us;
what is lacking within us,
make complete;
that which we do know,
confirm in us;
and keep us blameless in your service,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Amen.

I M M E R S E TM

— The Reading Bible —

KINGDOMS



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
Carol Stream, Illinois

CREATED IN ALLIANCE WITH



Visit Tyndale online at www.immerseBible.com, www.newlivingtranslation.com, and www.tyndale.com.

Visit the Institute for Bible Reading at www.instituteforbiblereading.org.

Features and Bible helps copyright © 2017 by the Institute for Bible Reading. All rights reserved.

Maps copyright © 2017 by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.

Cover design by Company Bell. Illustrations copyright © Rachael Van Dyke. All rights reserved.

Kingdoms, Immerse: The Reading Bible is an edition of the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation.

Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. All rights reserved.

The text of the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, may be quoted in any form (written, visual, electronic, or audio) up to and inclusive of five hundred (500) verses without express written permission of the publisher, provided that the verses quoted do not account for more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the work in which they are quoted, and provided that a complete book of the Bible is not quoted.

When the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, is quoted, one of the following credit lines must appear on the copyright page or title page of the work:

Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

When quotations from the NLT text are used in nonsalable media, such as church bulletins, orders of service, newsletters, transparencies, or similar media, a complete copyright notice is not required, but the initials *NLT* must appear at the end of each quotation.

Quotations in excess of five hundred (500) verses or twenty-five percent (25%) of the work, or other permission requests, must be approved in writing by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Send requests by e-mail to: permission@tyndale.com or call 630-668-8300, ext. 5023.

Publication of any commentary or other Bible reference work produced for commercial sale that uses the New Living Translation requires written permission for use of the NLT text.

TYNDALE, Tyndale's quill logo, *New Living Translation*, *NLT*, and the New Living Translation logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Immerse, Immerse: The Reading Bible, The Reading Bible, and Immerse: The Bible Reading Experience are trademarks of the Institute for Bible Reading.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com, or call 1-800-323-9400.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Title: Kingdoms.

Other titles: Bible. Former Prophets. English. New Living Translation. 2017.

| Bible. Ruth. English. New Living Translation. 2017.

Description: Carol Stream, Illinois : Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2017. |

Series: Immerse: the reading Bible

Identifiers: LCCN 2017020851 | ISBN 9781496424150 (sc)

Classification: LCC BS1286.5.A3 N495 2017 | DDC 222/.20520834—dc23 LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017020851>

Printed in the United States of America

23 22 21 20 19 18 17
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Tyndale House Publishers and Wycliffe Bible Translators share the vision for an understandable, accurate translation of the Bible for every person in the world. Each sale of the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, benefits Wycliffe Bible Translators. Wycliffe is working with partners around the world to accomplish Vision 2025—an initiative to start a Bible translation program in every language group that needs it by the year 2025.

CONTENTS

Welcome to Immerse: The Bible Reading Experience A7
Introduction to Kingdoms A9



These books tell Israel's story from the conquest of Canaan (Joshua) and the struggle to settle the land (Judges, Ruth) to the establishment of a kingdom under David's dynasty. It continues with Israel's division and deepening sin and concludes with Jerusalem's fall and the people's forced exile (Samuel–Kings).

Joshua 1 Ruth 81
Judges 41 Samuel–Kings 89

The Stories and the Story 273
Introducing *Immerse: The Reading Bible* 281
The Literary Forms of the Bible 285
NLT: A Note to Readers 289
Map: Twelve Tribes of Israel and the Conquest of Canaan 290
Map: United and Divided Kingdoms 291
The Immerse Bible Series 292

—— Welcome to ——

I M M E R S E

The Bible Reading Experience

The Bible is a great gift. The Creator of all things entered into our human story and spoke to us. He inspired people over many centuries to shape words into books that reveal his mind, bringing wisdom into our lives and light to our paths. But God's biggest intention for the Bible is to invite us into its Story. What God wants for us, more than anything else, is that we make the Bible's great drama of restoration and new life the story of our lives, too.

The appropriate way to receive a gift like this is to come to know the Bible deeply, to lose ourselves in it precisely so that we can find ourselves in it. In other words, we need to immerse ourselves in it—to read God's words at length and without distraction, to read with deeper historical and literary perspective, and to read through the Bible with friends in a regular three-year rhythm. *Immerse: The Bible Reading Experience* has been specially designed for this purpose.

Immerse: The Reading Bible presents each book of the Bible without the distractions of chapter and verse markers, subject headers, or footnotes—all later historical additions to the text. The *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, is presented in a single-column format with easy-to-read type. To provide meaningful perspective, book introductions give historical and literary context, and the books are often reordered chronologically or grouped with books that share similar ancient audiences. Every feature in this unique Bible enhances the opportunity for readers to engage with God's words in simple clarity.

A more complete explanation of this unique Bible presentation can be found in the articles that begin on page 273 at the back of this volume.

— Introduction to —

KINGDOMS

THE BIBLE'S OPENING BOOKS, Genesis to Samuel–Kings, together constitute Israel's primary history. This opening story covers the events from God's creation of the world and his intentions for humanity to the account of Israel's covenant failure and forced exile from the Promised Land. The first five books—*Beginnings*—take us to the point when God's people have been freed from slavery in Egypt and are about to enter the land promised to their ancestor Abraham.

The story continues in the next four books (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and Samuel–Kings) as Israel enters the land and is commissioned to be God's light to the nations. It is God's plan for his new people to inhabit a new place, the template for showing all people what it means to follow God and help the world to flourish. These books are written in narrative form and have a prophetic viewpoint, always calling Israel to be faithful to the LORD, their High King.

As these books begin, God's people are living under God's three earlier covenants made with Noah, Abraham, and Moses. The story moves ahead with a description of the events surrounding the fourth covenant. This covenant is with David, Israel's second king, and promises a lasting dynasty of kings descended from him.

Originally, the Israelites didn't have a human king because God himself was their King. Once Abraham's descendants grew into a nation, God sent Moses to be their liberator and leader, freeing them from slavery in Egypt and guiding them to the land of Canaan. But Moses was a prophet, not a king. A new leader named Joshua then leads Israel into the Promised Land. He defeats their enemies and divides the land among the twelve tribes. But Joshua wasn't a king either.

In the years that follow, as described in the book of Judges, God raises up a series of leaders called "judges" to rescue the Israelites

whenever their disobedience results in their falling under foreign control. The Israelites see themselves as a nation consisting of twelve tribes, and the tradition of tribal leadership is strong. But still, this period shows that while they have no king, “all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes,” leading to disastrous consequences for the whole nation.

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses foresees that the people will want a king. And when they do, the king will be required to make himself a copy of the law and “read it daily as long as he lives,” enabling him to lead the people into covenant faithfulness. As the period of the judges comes to a close, the time certainly seems right for a king like this to exert a central authority over Israel and restrain the rampant lawlessness.

So when Samuel, the last of the judges, is growing old, the Israelites ask him to appoint a king for them. God sees this as a rejection of himself as their King, but he relents and tells Samuel to anoint a man named Saul. Saul eventually proves stubborn, self-willed, and disobedient, so the LORD tells Samuel to anoint David to replace Saul as king.

After much intrigue and danger, David finally comes to the throne. He makes grave mistakes himself, but God still knows David as a man after his own heart because he deeply loves and respects God and his covenant.

David’s faithfulness to the LORD serves as the standard by which all of his successors are measured in the long book of Samuel–Kings, which begins with the stories of Samuel, Saul, and David and then traces the whole future course of the Israelite kingdom. However, because the kings turn away from the LORD and worship other gods, violence and oppression are introduced and the kingdom splits in two. Both kingdoms are later conquered by foreign empires, and the Israelites are forced into exile.

At this point, God’s plan appears to be deeply threatened. His chosen people have failed to fulfill their commitments in the covenant relationship and are therefore losing their Temple, their king, and their land. Just as Adam and Eve were exiled from the garden of God at the beginning of the Story, so now Israel is exiled from God’s new Eden, the Promised Land. The tension in the overall Story rises here to fever pitch. Abraham’s descendants are supposed to be the means by which God will bless and restore the world. But now, all seems lost.

Only one thread is left: God’s new covenant with King David promises that God will not abandon David’s family and kingdom. Whatever work God will yet do through Israel for the sake of the world, he will do through this royal line.

IMMERSED IN JOSHUA

THE STORY OF how the tribes of Israel became a kingdom begins with the conquest of the land of Canaan. God promised he would give this land to Abraham's descendants, and Moses brought them right to its border. But Moses' successor, Joshua, actually leads Israel into the land, defeating the city-kingdoms that rule there. The book of Joshua describes how he did this.

Throughout the land there are walled cities, each ruled by its own king. As long as these fortified "royal cities" remain in hostile hands, the Israelites will be under constant threat. The biggest threat of all looms immediately before them as they enter Canaan. Jericho is an imposing fortress that controls the fords of the Jordan River. If the Israelites manage to cross over but then can't defeat Jericho, the river will become a barrier, trapping them where their enemies can destroy them.

The task is daunting, but God promises Joshua, "I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you. Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them."

The book of Joshua has three major sections. Most of it is in the form of a narrative, but at various places there are important lists, including records of defeated cities and kings and of land allotments for Israel's tribes.

The book opens with a description of how God prepares Joshua and the people for entry into the land and then guides them across the Jordan River. It begins with God commissioning and encouraging Joshua in his task, while also urging Joshua and the people to continually meditate on the instructions God has given to Moses. Joshua sends spies into Canaan and then leads the people into the land, crossing the Jordan River on dry ground. In their new land they celebrate their freedom festival—Passover—and, for the first time, eat food from the Land of Promise.

Next Israel invades the central region of Canaan and then spreads out to both the northern and southern regions. Key to this section is the realization that God himself is fighting for Israel, thus keeping his promises to Israel's ancestors. The warfare Joshua conducts is brutal, but in

the context of the story, the nations are removed from Canaan because they had become utterly corrupt—just as Israel itself will be brutally removed in the future for its own detestable practices. These events must be read within the context of God’s ongoing Story of redemption, especially in light of God’s supreme revelation later in Israel’s Messiah.

Once the land has been conquered, the second section explains how Joshua divides it among the tribes. We may wonder why there is such a detailed description of the allocation of the land, but this gets at the heart of the covenant. God’s intention has always been for his people to thrive in the physical place he set apart for them. Israel’s conquest of the Promised Land reflects God’s overall objective to reclaim the entire creation as our good home and his glorious Temple.

The final section of the book focuses on Joshua’s leading the people in a covenant renewal ceremony. The leaders of the various tribes and clans gather at Shechem and are challenged to serve God alone, obey the Law of Moses, and fully claim their inheritance from the LORD.

“Choose today whom you will serve,” Joshua challenges them. “As for me and my family, we will serve the LORD.” The people, aware of their story and recognizing that they are to continue living it out, respond, “We would never abandon the LORD and serve other gods. . . . We, too, will serve the LORD, for he alone is our God.”

At the end of Joshua’s life, the people have received God’s gift of land as promised and are poised to fulfill their calling as agents in God’s mission to all nations. The LORD has kept his promises to Abraham and Moses. Now Abraham’s family must step up to become God’s covenant people for the sake of the world.

JOSHUA



After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant. He said, "Moses my servant is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead these people, the Israelites, across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them. I promise you what I promised Moses: 'Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you—from the Negev wilderness in the south to the Lebanon mountains in the north, from the Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, including all the land of the Hittites.' No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you.

"Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Joshua then commanded the officers of Israel, "Go through the camp and tell the people to get their provisions ready. In three days you will cross the Jordan River and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you."

Then Joshua called together the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. He told them, "Remember what Moses, the servant of the LORD, commanded you: 'The LORD your God is giving you a place of rest. He has given you this land.' Your wives, children, and livestock may remain here in the land Moses assigned to you on the east side of the Jordan River. But your strong warriors, fully armed, must lead the other tribes across the Jordan to help them conquer their territory. Stay with

them until the LORD gives them rest, as he has given you rest, and until they, too, possess the land the LORD your God is giving them. Only then may you return and settle here on the east side of the Jordan River in the land that Moses, the servant of the LORD, assigned to you.”

They answered Joshua, “We will do whatever you command us, and we will go wherever you send us. We will obey you just as we obeyed Moses. And may the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses. Anyone who rebels against your orders and does not obey your words and everything you command will be put to death. So be strong and courageous!”

+

Then Joshua secretly sent out two spies from the Israelite camp at Acacia Grove. He instructed them, “Scout out the land on the other side of the Jordan River, especially around Jericho.” So the two men set out and came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there that night.

But someone told the king of Jericho, “Some Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land.” So the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab: “Bring out the men who have come into your house, for they have come here to spy out the whole land.”

Rahab had hidden the two men, but she replied, “Yes, the men were here earlier, but I didn’t know where they were from. They left the town at dusk, as the gates were about to close. I don’t know where they went. If you hurry, you can probably catch up with them.” (Actually, she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them beneath bundles of flax she had laid out.) So the king’s men went looking for the spies along the road leading to the shallow crossings of the Jordan River. And as soon as the king’s men had left, the gate of Jericho was shut.

Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. “I know the LORD has given you this land,” she told them. “We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. For we have heard how the LORD made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed. No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the LORD your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.

“Now swear to me by the LORD that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families.”

“We offer our own lives as a guarantee for your safety,” the men agreed.

“If you don’t betray us, we will keep our promise and be kind to you when the LORD gives us the land.”

Then, since Rahab’s house was built into the town wall, she let them down by a rope through the window. “Escape to the hill country,” she told them. “Hide there for three days from the men searching for you. Then, when they have returned, you can go on your way.”

Before they left, the men told her, “We will be bound by the oath we have taken only if you follow these instructions. When we come into the land, you must leave this scarlet rope hanging from the window through which you let us down. And all your family members—your father, mother, brothers, and all your relatives—must be here inside the house. If they go out into the street and are killed, it will not be our fault. But if anyone lays a hand on people inside this house, we will accept the responsibility for their death. If you betray us, however, we are not bound by this oath in any way.”

“I accept your terms,” she replied. And she sent them on their way, leaving the scarlet rope hanging from the window.

The spies went up into the hill country and stayed there three days. The men who were chasing them searched everywhere along the road, but they finally returned without success.

Then the two spies came down from the hill country, crossed the Jordan River, and reported to Joshua all that had happened to them. “The LORD has given us the whole land,” they said, “for all the people in the land are terrified of us.”

Early the next morning Joshua and all the Israelites left Acacia Grove and arrived at the banks of the Jordan River, where they camped before crossing. Three days later the Israelite officers went through the camp, giving these instructions to the people: “When you see the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD your God, move out from your positions and follow them. Since you have never traveled this way before, they will guide you. Stay about half a mile behind them, keeping a clear distance between you and the Ark. Make sure you don’t come any closer.”

Then Joshua told the people, “Purify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do great wonders among you.”

In the morning Joshua said to the priests, “Lift up the Ark of the Covenant and lead the people across the river.” And so they started out and went ahead of the people.

The LORD told Joshua, “Today I will begin to make you a great leader in the eyes of all the Israelites. They will know that I am with you, just as I was with Moses. Give this command to the priests who carry the Ark of

the Covenant: ‘When you reach the banks of the Jordan River, take a few steps into the river and stop there.’”

So Joshua told the Israelites, “Come and listen to what the LORD your God says. Today you will know that the living God is among you. He will surely drive out the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites ahead of you. Look, the Ark of the Covenant, which belongs to the Lord of the whole earth, will lead you across the Jordan River! Now choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. The priests will carry the Ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth. As soon as their feet touch the water, the flow of water will be cut off upstream, and the river will stand up like a wall.”

So the people left their camp to cross the Jordan, and the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them. It was the harvest season, and the Jordan was overflowing its banks. But as soon as the feet of the priests who were carrying the Ark touched the water at the river’s edge, the water above that point began backing up a great distance away at a town called Adam, which is near Zarethan. And the water below that point flowed on to the Dead Sea until the riverbed was dry. Then all the people crossed over near the town of Jericho.

Meanwhile, the priests who were carrying the Ark of the LORD’s Covenant stood on dry ground in the middle of the riverbed as the people passed by. They waited there until the whole nation of Israel had crossed the Jordan on dry ground.

When all the people had crossed the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, “Now choose twelve men, one from each tribe. Tell them, ‘Take twelve stones from the very place where the priests are standing in the middle of the Jordan. Carry them out and pile them up at the place where you will camp tonight.’”

So Joshua called together the twelve men he had chosen—one from each of the tribes of Israel. He told them, “Go into the middle of the Jordan, in front of the Ark of the LORD your God. Each of you must pick up one stone and carry it out on your shoulder—twelve stones in all, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. We will use these stones to build a memorial. In the future your children will ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ Then you can tell them, ‘They remind us that the Jordan River stopped flowing when the Ark of the LORD’s Covenant went across.’ These stones will stand as a memorial among the people of Israel forever.”

So the men did as Joshua had commanded them. They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan River, one for each tribe, just as the LORD had told Joshua. They carried them to the place where they camped for the night and constructed the memorial there.

Joshua also set up another pile of twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, at the place where the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were standing. And they are there to this day.

The priests who were carrying the Ark stood in the middle of the river until all of the LORD's commands that Moses had given to Joshua were carried out. Meanwhile, the people hurried across the riverbed. And when everyone was safely on the other side, the priests crossed over with the Ark of the LORD as the people watched.

The armed warriors from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh led the Israelites across the Jordan, just as Moses had directed. These armed men—about 40,000 strong—were ready for battle, and the LORD was with them as they crossed over to the plains of Jericho.

That day the LORD made Joshua a great leader in the eyes of all the Israelites, and for the rest of his life they revered him as much as they had revered Moses.

The LORD had said to Joshua, "Command the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant to come up out of the riverbed." So Joshua gave the command. As soon as the priests carrying the Ark of the LORD's Covenant came up out of the riverbed and their feet were on high ground, the water of the Jordan returned and overflowed its banks as before.

The people crossed the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month. Then they camped at Gilgal, just east of Jericho. It was there at Gilgal that Joshua piled up the twelve stones taken from the Jordan River.

Then Joshua said to the Israelites, "In the future your children will ask, 'What do these stones mean?' Then you can tell them, 'This is where the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' For the LORD your God dried up the river right before your eyes, and he kept it dry until you were all across, just as he did at the Red Sea when he dried it up until we had all crossed over. He did this so all the nations of the earth might know that the LORD's hand is powerful, and so you might fear the LORD your God forever."

When all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings who lived along the Mediterranean coast heard how the LORD had dried up the Jordan River so the people of Israel could cross, they lost heart and were paralyzed with fear because of them.

At that time the LORD told Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise this second generation of Israelites." So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the entire male population of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth.

Joshua had to circumcise them because all the men who were old enough to fight in battle when they left Egypt had died in the wilderness. Those who left Egypt had all been circumcised, but none of those born

after the Exodus, during the years in the wilderness, had been circumcised. The Israelites had traveled in the wilderness for forty years until all the men who were old enough to fight in battle when they left Egypt had died. For they had disobeyed the LORD, and the LORD vowed he would not let them enter the land he had sworn to give us—a land flowing with milk and honey. So Joshua circumcised their sons—those who had grown up to take their fathers' places—for they had not been circumcised on the way to the Promised Land. After all the males had been circumcised, they rested in the camp until they were healed.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the shame of your slavery in Egypt." So that place has been called Gilgal to this day.

While the Israelites were camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, they celebrated Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month. The very next day they began to eat unleavened bread and roasted grain harvested from the land. No manna appeared on the day they first ate from the crops of the land, and it was never seen again. So from that time on the Israelites ate from the crops of Canaan.

When Joshua was near the town of Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with sword in hand. Joshua went up to him and demanded, "Are you friend or foe?"

"Neither one," he replied. "I am the commander of the LORD's army."

At this, Joshua fell with his face to the ground in reverence. "I am at your command," Joshua said. "What do you want your servant to do?"

The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did as he was told.

Now the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelites. No one was allowed to go out or in. But the LORD said to Joshua, "I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its strong warriors. You and your fighting men should march around the town once a day for six days. Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram's horn. On the seventh day you are to march around the town seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams' horns, have all the people shout as loud as they can. Then the walls of the town will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the town."

So Joshua called together the priests and said, "Take up the Ark of the LORD's Covenant, and assign seven priests to walk in front of it, each carrying a ram's horn." Then he gave orders to the people: "March around the town, and the armed men will lead the way in front of the Ark of the LORD."

After Joshua spoke to the people, the seven priests with the rams' horns

started marching in the presence of the LORD, blowing the horns as they marched. And the Ark of the LORD's Covenant followed behind them. Some of the armed men marched in front of the priests with the horns and some behind the Ark, with the priests continually blowing the horns. "Do not shout; do not even talk," Joshua commanded. "Not a single word from any of you until I tell you to shout. Then shout!" So the Ark of the LORD was carried around the town once that day, and then everyone returned to spend the night in the camp.

Joshua got up early the next morning, and the priests again carried the Ark of the LORD. The seven priests with the rams' horns marched in front of the Ark of the LORD, blowing their horns. Again the armed men marched both in front of the priests with the horns and behind the Ark of the LORD. All this time the priests were blowing their horns. On the second day they again marched around the town once and returned to the camp. They followed this pattern for six days.

On the seventh day the Israelites got up at dawn and marched around the town as they had done before. But this time they went around the town seven times. The seventh time around, as the priests sounded the long blast on their horns, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the town! Jericho and everything in it must be completely destroyed as an offering to the LORD. Only Rahab the prostitute and the others in her house will be spared, for she protected our spies.

"Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, and you will bring trouble on the camp of Israel. Everything made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is sacred to the LORD and must be brought into his treasury."

When the people heard the sound of the rams' horns, they shouted as loud as they could. Suddenly, the walls of Jericho collapsed, and the Israelites charged straight into the town and captured it. They completely destroyed everything in it with their swords—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep, goats, and donkeys.

Meanwhile, Joshua said to the two spies, "Keep your promise. Go to the prostitute's house and bring her out, along with all her family."

The men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, mother, brothers, and all the other relatives who were with her. They moved her whole family to a safe place near the camp of Israel.

Then the Israelites burned the town and everything in it. Only the things made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron were kept for the treasury of the LORD's house. So Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute and her relatives who were with her in the house, because she had hidden the spies Joshua sent to Jericho. And she lives among the Israelites to this day.

At that time Joshua invoked this curse:

“May the curse of the LORD fall on anyone
who tries to rebuild the town of Jericho.
At the cost of his firstborn son,
he will lay its foundation.
At the cost of his youngest son,
he will set up its gates.”

So the LORD was with Joshua, and his reputation spread throughout the land.

+

But Israel violated the instructions about the things set apart for the LORD. A man named Achan had stolen some of these dedicated things, so the LORD was very angry with the Israelites. Achan was the son of Carmi, a descendant of Zimri son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah.

Joshua sent some of his men from Jericho to spy out the town of Ai, east of Bethel, near Beth-aven. When they returned, they told Joshua, “There’s no need for all of us to go up there; it won’t take more than two or three thousand men to attack Ai. Since there are so few of them, don’t make all our people struggle to go up there.”

So approximately 3,000 warriors were sent, but they were soundly defeated. The men of Ai chased the Israelites from the town gate as far as the quarries, and they killed about thirty-six who were retreating down the slope. The Israelites were paralyzed with fear at this turn of events, and their courage melted away.

Joshua and the elders of Israel tore their clothing in dismay, threw dust on their heads, and bowed face down to the ground before the Ark of the LORD until evening. Then Joshua cried out, “Oh, Sovereign LORD, why did you bring us across the Jordan River if you are going to let the Amorites kill us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side! Lord, what can I say now that Israel has fled from its enemies? For when the Canaanites and all the other people living in the land hear about it, they will surround us and wipe our name off the face of the earth. And then what will happen to the honor of your great name?”

But the LORD said to Joshua, “Get up! Why are you lying on your face like this? Israel has sinned and broken my covenant! They have stolen some of the things that I commanded must be set apart for me. And they have not only stolen them but have lied about it and hidden the things among their own belongings. That is why the Israelites are running from their enemies in defeat. For now Israel itself has been set apart for destruction. I will not remain with you any longer unless you destroy the things among you that were set apart for destruction.

“Get up! Command the people to purify themselves in preparation for tomorrow. For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Hidden among you, O Israel, are things set apart for the LORD. You will never defeat your enemies until you remove these things from among you.

“In the morning you must present yourselves by tribes, and the LORD will point out the tribe to which the guilty man belongs. That tribe must come forward with its clans, and the LORD will point out the guilty clan. That clan will then come forward, and the LORD will point out the guilty family. Finally, each member of the guilty family must come forward one by one. The one who has stolen what was set apart for destruction will himself be burned with fire, along with everything he has, for he has broken the covenant of the LORD and has done a horrible thing in Israel.”

Early the next morning Joshua brought the tribes of Israel before the LORD, and the tribe of Judah was singled out. Then the clans of Judah came forward, and the clan of Zerah was singled out. Then the families of Zerah came forward, and the family of Zimri was singled out. Every member of Zimri’s family was brought forward person by person, and Achan was singled out.

Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, by telling the truth. Make your confession and tell me what you have done. Don’t hide it from me.”

Achan replied, “It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. Among the plunder I saw a beautiful robe from Babylon, 200 silver coins, and a bar of gold weighing more than a pound. I wanted them so much that I took them. They are hidden in the ground beneath my tent, with the silver buried deeper than the rest.”

So Joshua sent some men to make a search. They ran to the tent and found the stolen goods hidden there, just as Achan had said, with the silver buried beneath the rest. They took the things from the tent and brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites. Then they laid them on the ground in the presence of the LORD.

Then Joshua and all the Israelites took Achan, the silver, the robe, the bar of gold, his sons, daughters, cattle, donkeys, sheep, goats, tent, and everything he had, and they brought them to the valley of Achor. Then Joshua said to Achan, “Why have you brought trouble on us? The LORD will now bring trouble on you.” And all the Israelites stoned Achan and his family and burned their bodies. They piled a great heap of stones over Achan, which remains to this day. That is why the place has been called the Valley of Trouble ever since. So the LORD was no longer angry.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid or discouraged. Take all your fighting men and attack Ai, for I have given you the king of Ai, his people, his town, and his land. You will destroy them as you destroyed Jericho and its king. But this time you may keep the plunder and the livestock for yourselves. Set an ambush behind the town.”

So Joshua and all the fighting men set out to attack Ai. Joshua chose 30,000 of his best warriors and sent them out at night with these orders: “Hide in ambush close behind the town and be ready for action. When our main army attacks, the men of Ai will come out to fight as they did before, and we will run away from them. We will let them chase us until we have drawn them away from the town. For they will say, ‘The Israelites are running away from us as they did before.’ Then, while we are running from them, you will jump up from your ambush and take possession of the town, for the LORD your God will give it to you. Set the town on fire, as the LORD has commanded. You have your orders.”

So they left and went to the place of ambush between Bethel and the west side of Ai. But Joshua remained among the people in the camp that night. Early the next morning Joshua roused his men and started toward Ai, accompanied by the elders of Israel. All the fighting men who were with Joshua marched in front of the town and camped on the north side of Ai, with a valley between them and the town. That night Joshua sent about 5,000 men to lie in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the town. So they stationed the main army north of the town and the ambush west of the town. Joshua himself spent that night in the valley.

When the king of Ai saw the Israelites across the valley, he and all his army hurried out early in the morning and attacked the Israelites at a place overlooking the Jordan Valley. But he didn’t realize there was an ambush behind the town. Joshua and the Israelite army fled toward the wilderness as though they were badly beaten. Then all the men in the town were called out to chase after them. In this way, they were lured away from the town. There was not a man left in Ai or Bethel who did not chase after the Israelites, and the town was left wide open.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Point the spear in your hand toward Ai, for I will hand the town over to you.” Joshua did as he was commanded. As soon as Joshua gave this signal, all the men in ambush jumped up from their position and poured into the town. They quickly captured it and set it on fire.

When the men of Ai looked behind them, smoke from the town was filling the sky, and they had nowhere to go. For the Israelites who had fled in the direction of the wilderness now turned on their pursuers. When Joshua and all the other Israelites saw that the ambush had succeeded and that smoke was rising from the town, they turned and attacked the men

of Ai. Meanwhile, the Israelites who were inside the town came out and attacked the enemy from the rear. So the men of Ai were caught in the middle, with Israelite fighters on both sides. Israel attacked them, and not a single person survived or escaped. Only the king of Ai was taken alive and brought to Joshua.

When the Israelite army finished chasing and killing all the men of Ai in the open fields, they went back and finished off everyone inside. So the entire population of Ai, including men and women, was wiped out that day—12,000 in all. For Joshua kept holding out his spear until everyone who had lived in Ai was completely destroyed. Only the livestock and the treasures of the town were not destroyed, for the Israelites kept these as plunder for themselves, as the LORD had commanded Joshua. So Joshua burned the town of Ai, and it became a permanent mound of ruins, desolate to this very day.

Joshua impaled the king of Ai on a sharpened pole and left him there until evening. At sunset the Israelites took down the body, as Joshua commanded, and threw it in front of the town gate. They piled a great heap of stones over him that can still be seen today.

+

Then Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal. He followed the commands that Moses the LORD's servant had written in the Book of Instruction: "Make me an altar from stones that are uncut and have not been shaped with iron tools." Then on the altar they presented burnt offerings and peace offerings to the LORD. And as the Israelites watched, Joshua copied onto the stones of the altar the instructions Moses had given them.

Then all the Israelites—foreigners and native-born alike—along with the elders, officers, and judges, were divided into two groups. One group stood in front of Mount Gerizim, the other in front of Mount Ebal. Each group faced the other, and between them stood the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the LORD's Covenant. This was all done according to the commands that Moses, the servant of the LORD, had previously given for blessing the people of Israel.

Joshua then read to them all the blessings and curses Moses had written in the Book of Instruction. Every word of every command that Moses had ever given was read to the entire assembly of Israel, including the women and children and the foreigners who lived among them.

+

Now all the kings west of the Jordan River heard about what had happened. These were the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, who lived in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea as far north as the Lebanon mountains. These kings combined their armies to fight as one against Joshua and the Israelites.

But when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they resorted to deception to save themselves. They sent ambassadors to Joshua, loading their donkeys with weathered saddlebags and old, patched wineskins. They put on worn-out, patched sandals and ragged clothes. And the bread they took with them was dry and moldy. When they arrived at the camp of Israel at Gilgal, they told Joshua and the men of Israel, “We have come from a distant land to ask you to make a peace treaty with us.”

The Israelites replied to these Hivites, “How do we know you don’t live nearby? For if you do, we cannot make a treaty with you.”

They replied, “We are your servants.”

“But who are you?” Joshua demanded. “Where do you come from?”

They answered, “Your servants have come from a very distant country. We have heard of the might of the LORD your God and of all he did in Egypt. We have also heard what he did to the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River—King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan (who lived in Ashtaroth). So our elders and all our people instructed us, ‘Take supplies for a long journey. Go meet with the people of Israel and tell them, “We are your servants; please make a treaty with us.”’

“This bread was hot from the ovens when we left our homes. But now, as you can see, it is dry and moldy. These wineskins were new when we filled them, but now they are old and split open. And our clothing and sandals are worn out from our very long journey.”

So the Israelites examined their food, but they did not consult the LORD. Then Joshua made a peace treaty with them and guaranteed their safety, and the leaders of the community ratified their agreement with a binding oath.

Three days after making the treaty, they learned that these people actually lived nearby! The Israelites set out at once to investigate and reached their towns in three days. The names of these towns were Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim. But the Israelites did not attack the towns, for the Israelite leaders had made a vow to them in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel.

The people of Israel grumbled against their leaders because of the treaty. But the leaders replied, “Since we have sworn an oath in the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel, we cannot touch them. This is what we must do.