

Joshua

Lesson 5

Chapter 5

Have you ever come off of the greatest day of your life and then realized that the next day, you had to deal with some sort of fallout – whether good or bad? Mountain tops for one person often leads to valleys for another. Quite often the mountain tops put you in a particular position where you must catch up with your new situation. Often the mountain tops encroach on the regular duties of daily life and the duties cannot be ignored. Such is the case with the nation of Israel after its great blessing of reaching the Promised Land.

F. The Particulars After the Crossing of the Jordan River (5:1-15)

1. The Dread of the Amorites and Canaanites (5:1)

Consider as you may, the particulars after the crossing of the Jordan River among Israel's new pagan neighbors. The first is the dread of the Amorites and Canaanites. Chapter 5, verse 1. *“Now it came about when all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard how the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel.”* (5:1)

We have heard of this same fear before in this book of Joshua. Rahab said the same back in chapter 2:8-11. With the camp of Israel in sight of the people of Jericho, it is no wonder the hearts of Rahab's people melted and their spirits departed. It was a Canaanite city. The name “Jericho” is Hebrew but the Canaanite name is *Reah*. It means *fragrant*. However, with the addition of the letters *Ya* we have *Yareah*. It changes the name to mean *moon*. It is the name of the lunar deity *Yarikh* of which the city was the center of worship in the area. When we change the *Y* to a *J*, we have the name *Jarikh*, which we would pronounce as *Jericho*. The Canaanites were all the descendants of Canaan. Canaan was the grandson of Noah. When the LORD confounded the languages at the Tower of Babel, all the family groups left the settlement of Babel and spread across the world. Canaan took the land known today as Israel. Prior to it becoming Israel, it was known as Canaan Land. Canaan had children and grandchild. Some of the descendants formed tribes by the names of those descendants. Canaan Land then began to be sectioned off and named after these new tribal names such as the Amorites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashite, and of course the original Canaanite tribe. But they were all of Canaanite heritage.

We notice that the writer mentions the *“kings of the Amorites ... and all the kings of the Canaanites.”* No one man was the king of the Amorites or the king of the Canaanites. Each Amorite or Canaanite city or village had a king. These kings were more like mayors.

The point in this passage is that the news of the entry of the Israelites into Canaan Land did not take long to spread through the whole land. The parting of the waters flatly brought fear to the pagans of Canaan Land.

2. The Circumcision of the Uncircumcised (5:2-7)

Another particular detail had to be handled. Joshua needed to address the circumcision of the uncircumcised. Verse 2. *“At that time the LORD said to Joshua, “Make for yourself flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time.”*³ *So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth.”* (5:2-3)

Before we delve into this verse, we need to address the timing of this most particular subject. The nation of Israel crossed the Jordan River on the 10th of Nisan where they settled to lodge for the night. At 6:00 PM that day, the 11th of Nisan started. There will be day light hours for the 11th, 12th, and 13th days of Nisan and then the Passover meal will be celebrated during the daylight hours on the 14th of Nisan. Here is where the nation ran into a problem. The instructions for the participants in the celebration of the Passover were given in Exodus 12:43-48. We need to read that passage for a clear understanding.

“The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner is to eat of it; ⁴⁴ but every man’s slave purchased with money, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat of it. ⁴⁵ A sojourner or a hired servant shall not eat of it. ⁴⁶ It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it. ⁴⁷ All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this. ⁴⁸ But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it.” (Exodus 12:43-48)

With that as the background, you still might ask “what is the problem?” The writer explains the problem in the following passage. We will pick back up to explain this verse after we discover the problem.

a) Those Born in Egypt Need Not Be Circumcised (5:4-6)

In verse 4, the passage discusses those born in Egypt who need not be circumcised. Verse 4. *“This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way after they came out of Egypt. ⁵ For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised. ⁶ For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, that is, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished because they did not listen to the voice of the LORD, to whom the LORD had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.” (5:4-6)*

While living in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years, Jacob’s descendants practiced the instruction given to Abraham for every male to be circumcised. With new born boys, the circumcision would occur on the eighth day of life. For foreigners, the circumcision would occur upon conversation to the faith. All the men and boys who left Egypt with Moses were circumcised as part of the covenant of the faith. But all the children born in the wilderness during the forty years had not been circumcised. Passover was coming in three days and those men who were not circumcised could not participate. Think of it this way, only Joshua and Caleb and all the boys who were under twenty years of age forty years before upon leaving Egypt could partake of the Passover meal. Let us look at this from the census records. At the beginning of the Exodus, the census in Numbers 2 tells us that there were 603,550 men twenty years of age and upward. All of these men were circumcised. All of these men died in the wilderness and did not cross the Jordan River. The number did not include all the boys nineteen years of age and downward who were circumcised. Neither did it include the Levites. Forty years later, the census in Numbers 26 tells us that there were 601,730 men twenty years of age and upward. Only a part of these men, who were under twenty year of age forty years before were circumcised. The rest were not. And all the boys born in the last forty years were uncircumcised. Neither did it include the Levites. May we just round the number to about 500,000 men and boys needed to be circumcised before the Passover. It was a massive project.

b) Those Born in the Wilderness Needed to Be Circumcised (5:7)

And so, those born in the wilderness needed to be circumcised. Verse 7. *“Their children whom He raised up in their place, Joshua circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them along the way.”* (5:7)

Now let us circle back to Verse 2. *“At that time the LORD said to Joshua, “Make for yourself flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time.”³ So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth.”* (5:2-3)

“Make for yourself flint knives” was the original instruction to Abraham. Flint was used for knives, arrow heads and spears since before the flood. Yet, copper and bronze knives were available, but they would not do. The LORD wanted flint knives, knives of stone.

“... and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time” does not mean that a man or boy can be circumcised twice, they cannot. It means to start the practice ordered by the LORD again because it had been stopped during the Exodus and the wilderness journey for forty years.

“... and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth” means the roughly 500,000 men and boys who needed to be circumcised did not occur in the camp at Gilgal, for that would have made the camp unclean according to the law. The procedure occurred at Gibeath-haaraloth. Here is where our lack of Hebrew knowledge fails us. The Hebrew name *“Gibeath-haaraloth”* means *hill of the foreskins*. It was the place where the half a million foreskins were thrown in a heap outside the camp. The procedure must have been completed on the 11th of Nisan to give the men and boys time to heal, even just a little, by Passover.

3. The Name of Gilgal (5:8-9)

As the men and boys returned to the camp with their families, the name was given to the campsite. Verse 8. *“Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.”* (5:8-9)

Remember, we have already talked about the name Gilgal meaning *rolling* as in the rolling hills. It was and still is in the rolling hills. But the name means much more than that. It is named Gilgal because in that camp, with all the men and boys circumcised and there to heal, the LORD says, *“Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.”* That is the true meaning of the name Gilgal. We have mentioned the name many times before in our studies in Joshua, and you also heard the name in our studies in Deuteronomy, but the name was given to the campsite on either the 11th, 12th or 13th of Nisan right after the crossing of the Jordan River and the circumcision of the men and boys.

4. The Passover in the Promised Land (5:10)

The writer gives us the particulars of the Passover in the Promised Land. Verse 10. *“While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho.”* (5:10)

The *“evening of the fourteenth day of the month”* does not mean the night, it means the afternoon. The Jewish day begins with the night about 6:00 PM. Night follows until about 6:00 AM when morning begins. Morning will last until high noon, when the sun reaches its peak in the sky and begins to descend. At the moment of the start of the sun’s descent, evening begins. Evening will end about 6:00 PM with the setting of the sun and then a new day begins with the dark of the night.

This verse tells us that the nation celebrated the Passover on the same day as it did in Egypt; however, the LORD had changed the date of the Passover in the Book of Deuteronomy. There, the LORD changed the date of the slaying of the lamb for the Passover and pushed it to the 15th of Nisan when the LORD says, *“... you shall sacrifice the Passover in the evening at sunset, at the time that you came out of Egypt.”* (Deuteronomy 16:6). The nation of Israel left Egypt as the sun was setting on the 15th of Nisan. You cannot eat a Passover meal on the 14th of Nisan when the lamb will not be slain

until the setting of the sun on the 15th of Nisan. For whatever reason, in Gilgal, the nation celebrated the Passover just as it had for thirty-nine years in the Wilderness. In Gilgal, the fortieth Passover matched the precious thirty-nine Passovers. However, the next year, for the forty-first Passover, the 15th of Nisan will become the day of Passover as it is to this day. It is because of this confusion that many misinterpret the timing of the LORD's crucifixion as the day after the Passover. We dealt with that in our studies of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

5. The Food in the Promised Land (5:11-12)

a) The Food for the Day After the Passover (5:11)

From the 10th of Nisan until the 14th of Nisan, all was the same as it was for the last forty years, the LORD provided all the food for the people. However, the food for the day after the Passover was different. Verse 11. *"On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain."* (5:11)

Just as the LORD had promised, in the Promised Land, the food would be bountiful. The day after the Passover, the people gathered manna as they had for forty years, but they also gathered food from the land to supplement their meals.

b) Manna Stops Two Days After the Passover (5:12)

Because food was plentiful for the nation of Israel in the Promised Land, the manna stops two days after the Passover for the first time in forty years. Verse 12. *"The manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year."* (5:12)

The Canaanites of all the tribal names had planted the crops that year from which the Israelites were eating. It fulfilled the prophecy spoken by Moses in Deuteronomy.

"Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build,¹¹ and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and benn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied...." (Deuteronomy 6:10-11).

6. Joshua Meets the Captain of the LORD of Host (5:13-15)

a) Joshua Sees the Man (5:13a)

After the manna stopped on the 16th of Nisan, Joshua meets the captain of the LORD of hosts for the first time. Joshua sees the man in verse 13a. *"Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him...."* (5:13a)

Joshua had served as an attendant with Moses since the Exodus. He was a mere youth at the time of the Exodus. Moses knew this man describe in this passage. So did Balaam because his donkey pointed the man out to him. But had Joshua ever seen this man before? We do not know. Evidently not. But it was time for Joshua to meet Him. The drawn sword is the tale-tell sign.

b) Joshua Questions the Man (5:13b)

Joshua sees the man and now Joshua questions the man. Verse 13b. *"... and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?"* (5:13b)

With the drawn sword, the man appeared to Joshua to be in a war-like posture. Bravely, Joshua question whether the man is on the side of the Canaanites or the Israelites.

c) Joshua Meets the Man (5:14a)

Joshua meets the man. Verse 14a. *"He said, 'No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD.'"* (5:14a)

Remember, the LORD promised the nation of Israel through Moses and Joshua that He would fight the battles in the conquest of the Promised Land. With His sword drawn, this captain, the LORD of the heavenly host was ready to make war against all the Canaanite tribes.

d) [Joshua Bows to the Man \(5:14b\)](#)

And so, Joshua did what every man should do in the presence of the LORD. Joshua bows to the Man. Verse 14b. *“And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, “What has my lord to say to his servant?”* (5:14b)

e) [Joshua Hears the Man \(5:15\)](#)

Joshua hears the man. Verse 15. *“The captain of the LORD’S host said to Joshua, “Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.”* (5:15)

The LORD said the same thing to Moses at the burning bush. Sinai was holy ground. Now, the LORD says the words in the Promised Land, it is holy ground – all of it. If you met the LORD, would you jump and shout in all forms of revelry like some approach the LORD in weekly worship today, or would you fall with your face to the earth and bow down. Would you remove your shoes for the place where you are standing in the presence of the LORD is holy ground? Would you take the time from your busy schedule of worship to even notice the presence of the LORD with a sword drawn opposite you? I think you should. It is what the LORD expects and He never changes.