

## Joshua

Have you ever tried to follow a superstar? My name is Joshua and I had to take over from the most amazing leader in the history of the world. Moses had been schooled in the palace of Egypt and given the authority to perform the amazing miracles of the Exodus. I was just an ordinary citizen.

I had served as Moses' assistant for over 40 years and thought that he would continue to lead the people of Israel into their legacy in the land promised to Abraham. Of course, he certainly was far past retirement age, but that was already true when he started. How different it would have been if the 10 spies and the rest of the people had trusted the Lord the first time we came to the border. Caleb and I were the only ones to stand for truth. So much for "everybody's doing it!"

When Moses laid hands on me and said that I was called by God to be the next leader, I was terrified. But God spoke to me. "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." And I knew it was true because the Spirit of God came upon me in unmistakable power! The LORD showed me the reason for ordering total destruction – these people had become completely evil. Their religion included ritual prostitution, bestiality and infant sacrifice!

The next confirmation came when I gave orders to the people to carry out the plan ordered by Moses and they all agreed! I had expected a lengthy debate with many complaints and excuses, but – amazingly -- the people said, "Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you." This was a very different people from their parents!

Then, a miracle occurred that was a parallel to the crossing of the Red Sea when the Jordan stopped flowing as soon as the priests carrying the Ark stepped into the current. And it continued until they stepped out on the other side. True, a river is not a sea, but I was not trying to break any records – I just wanted to know that the LORD was with me!

So, we crossed – on dry ground! We built an altar, circumcised all those born in the desert, celebrated the Passover and sent spies into the city of Jericho.

Then I saw a man with a drawn sword – he had to be an angel – but because he did not look like an Israelite, I asked him, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." That was unnerving! God might not actually be on our side? And we are his chosen people! But I knew that the Spirit of God was indeed within me because I suddenly realized that God himself was up to something even bigger than the battle I had in mind. And I was given the presence of mind to ask, "What message does my lord have for his servant?"

As the events unfolded, I realized at least part of the extent of that plan. The victory came in a way that demonstrated it to be completely the work of the LORD God Almighty! This terrified the other cities on the list for conquest. But we had to learn that lesson again by the failure at Ai and discover that it was sin that caused it – Achan's disobedience. We learned that hard lesson by defeat! I remember Moses telling me over and over, "These are a stiff-necked people."

But there was another aspect of God's plan that I did not learn in my lifetime but only on entering the eternal rest of which the Promised Land was only a foreshadowing. You know it, I am sure, because it was recorded

for you to read and wonder. Rahab, the prostitute who begged to be rescued from the doomed city, was to become part of the ancestry of the Messiah!

There was so much more to the story than even Moses understood, and I had a part to play. During those years I experienced both being terrified and being discouraged and the LORD kept reminding me of his promise.

There were a few nations that had not been conquered when my life came to an end and I felt that I was dying as a failure. I also learned from the Lord that it was part of his plan, as recorded by a prophet who came later, "The LORD had allowed those nations to remain; he did not drive them out at once by giving them into the hands of Joshua. These are the nations the LORD left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan."

God wanted them to have "combat experience!" What is the LORD God of Abraham doing in your day? Are you carrying out the part he has given you? Are you involved in the combat he has destined you to experience?

Deuteronomy 34, Joshua 1 – 24, Judges 3:1-2