

## ***Lessons of Faith from Joshua***

### ***Choose This Day!***

Lesson #13 for December 27, 2025

Scriptures: Joshua 24; Genesis 12:7; Deuteronomy 5:6; 17:19; 1 Kings 11:2,4,9; 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

1. This is the final lesson on the book of Joshua. It is based on the last chapter of Joshua.

### **Covenant Renewal at Shechem**

[From the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=BSG:] The final chapter of Joshua is set in the context of a **covenant renewal ceremony**, but this time conducted by the aged leader of Israel. Although not a covenant itself but rather a **report of a covenant renewal ceremony**, the chapter has the **elements of ancient Near Eastern suzerainty** [i.e., the position of control by a sovereign or a state over another] **treaties**: (1) a preamble in which the suzerain, the initiator of the treaty, is identified; (2) the historical prologue, which describes the relationship between the overlord and the vassal; (3) the covenant stipulations asking the vassal to manifest total allegiance to the suzerain based on, and motivated by, gratitude; (4) blessings for obedience and curses for breaking the covenant; (5) witnesses to the pledge of the vassal; (6) deposition of the document for future reading; and (7) ratification of the covenant.—BSG\* for Sabbath Afternoon.<sup>†‡</sup>

[BSG:] Joshua is close to the end of his life; no replacement is on the horizon. The covenant renewal is a reminder to the Israelites that **their king is Yahweh** [sic] Himself and that, if they remain loyal to Him, they will enjoy His protection. Israel does not need a human king. As a theocratic nation, they have to ever keep in mind that their only king is the Lord.—BSG\* for Sabbath Afternoon, December 20.<sup>†‡</sup>

[From the *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=T-BSG:] In Mosaic fashion, the book of Joshua concludes with a speech in which Joshua urges the people to take a stand. After a long and intense life, Joshua is ready to complete his mission. In the first part of the address, Joshua's words are Yahweh's [sic], recounting what God has done for Israel since Abraham's call (*Josh. 24:1–13*). **By using 19 verbs in the first person [the word I], God reinforces the passive role of Israel in this enterprise, in contrast with the repeated use of the second person "you/your" to describe Israel.**—T-BSG\* 171.<sup>†‡§</sup>

**Joshua 24:1-3:** <sup>1</sup>Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel together at Shechem....

<sup>2</sup>Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, has to say: '**Long ago your ancestors lived on the other side of the Euphrates River** and worshiped other gods. One of those ancestors was Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor. <sup>3</sup>Then **I** took Abraham, your ancestor, from the land **across the Euphrates** and led him through the whole land of Canaan.'"—American Bible Society. (©1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*®\* [GNT] (*Today's English Version*) [TEV], Second Edition, Joshua 24:1-3). Philadelphia: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible-TEV*\* or *GNB-TEV*\*].<sup>†‡</sup>

2. It is interesting to note that Joshua said that Abram came from “the other side” of the Euphrates River, suggesting that Abram was from the east or north side of the Euphrates (between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers). That contradicts what many believe about the city of Ur. Many believe “Abram’s Ur” was located in what is southern Iraq today. It is not on the “other side” of the Euphrates; it is on the western and southern side of the Euphrates. That is why I agree with other less well-known scholars who are certain that the Ur that was Abram’s birthplace was the city that is now known as Sanliurfa, Turkey. It is very close to Haran (now known as Harran). See the map with the following Internet link. Notice that Harran is almost directly south and a little east from Sanliurfa (Ancient Ur).

[https://www.google.com/search?q=sanliurfa+turkey&oq=google+maps+-+Sanliurfa&gs\\_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqCggGEAAyGAAQYogQyBggAEEUYOTIICAQABgWGB4yCAgCEAA YFhgeMggIAxAGBYHjIKCAQQABiABBiiBDIKCAUQABiABBiiBDIKCAYQABiABBiiBDIKCAcQABiABBiiBDIKCAgQABiABBiiBDIGCAkQRRhA0gEKMjEzNjRqMGoxNagCCLACaFEFgpeNA\\_Cz57g&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=sanliurfa+turkey&oq=google+maps+-+Sanliurfa&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqCggGEAAyGAAQYogQyBggAEEUYOTIICAQABgWGB4yCAgCEAA YFhgeMggIAxAGBYHjIKCAQQABiABBiiBDIKCAUQABiABBiiBDIKCAYQABiABBiiBDIKCAcQABiABBiiBDIKCAgQABiABBiiBDIGCAkQRRhA0gEKMjEzNjRqMGoxNagCCLACaFEFgpeNA_Cz57g&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)

[BSG:] **Shechem was the place where Abraham had built an altar upon his arrival in the land and where God first gave him the promise of the land ([Gen. 12:6, 7](#)).** Now, when the promises given to Abraham have been fulfilled, Israel renews the covenant with God at the very place where the first promise had been given. The appeal of Joshua recalls the words of Jacob to “‘put away the foreign gods which are among you’” ([Josh. 24:23, NKJV](#); compare with [Gen. 35:2–4](#)).—BSG\* for Sunday.<sup>†§</sup>

**Joshua 24:3b-13:** <sup>3b</sup> “ ‘I gave him [Abram/Abraham] many descendants. I gave him Isaac, <sup>4</sup>and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I gave Esau the hill country of Edom as his possession, but your ancestor Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. <sup>5</sup>Later I sent Moses and Aaron, and I brought great trouble on Egypt. But I led you out; <sup>6</sup>I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and cavalry. But when your ancestors got to the Red Sea <sup>7</sup>they cried out to me for help, and I put darkness between them and the Egyptians. I made the sea come rolling over the Egyptians and drown them. You know what I did to Egypt.

“ ‘You lived in the desert a long time. <sup>8</sup>Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the east side of the Jordan. They fought you, but I gave you victory over them. You took their land, and I destroyed them as you advanced. <sup>9</sup>Then the king of Moab, Balak son of Zippor, fought against you. He sent word to Balaam son of Beor and asked him to put a curse on you. <sup>10</sup>But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you, and in this way I rescued you from Balak. <sup>11</sup>You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The men of Jericho fought against you, as did the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Gergashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I gave you victory over them all. <sup>12</sup>As you advanced, **I threw them into panic** in order to drive out the two Amorite kings. **Your swords and bows had nothing to do with it.** [The Israelites wanted to boast!] <sup>13</sup>I gave you a land that you had never worked and cities that you had not built. Now you are living there and eating grapes from vines that you did not plant, and olives from trees that you did not plant.’ ”—*Good News Bible-TEV*.<sup>\*††</sup>

3. Once again, notice that God specified clearly in Joshua 24:8-12 that He was the One who destroyed the Canaanites; it was not the Israelites who had won the battles!

[BSG:] **God is the main subject of the reviewed past: “I took,” “I gave,” “I sent,” “I plagued,” “I did,” “I brought you out,” “I delivered you,” and so on. Israel is not the main protagonist of the narrative but rather its object.** It is God who created Israel. Had not God intervened in the life of Abraham, they would have been serving the same idols. Israel’s existence as a nation is not the merit of any of its ancestors but the exclusive work of God’s grace. **The fact that the Israelites are settled in the land is not a ground for boasting but the very reason why they should serve God.**—BSG\* for Sunday, December 21.<sup>†‡</sup>

[T-BSG:] The second part of the speech begins with the adverb “now” (*atta*), introducing Joshua’s last call for a present response, an appeal to the people to exercise their freedom of choice. **A covenant renewal ceremony follows**, during which two witnesses are set up: the people themselves and **another stony memorial**. Still echoing the end of Deuteronomy, the dialogue between Joshua and the people sets a tension between two trajectories: one toward conformity, stability, and unity, and another toward disloyalty, uncertainty, and disintegration. At this crossroads, each individual decision rests. **Joshua makes his choice clear** in the center of the chapter: **“ ‘As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD’ ” (Josh. 24:15).**—T-BSG\* 171.<sup>†‡§</sup>

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] .... “If it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah,” he said, “choose you this day whom ye will serve.” Joshua desired to lead them to serve God, not by compulsion, but willingly. **Love to God is the very foundation of religion. To engage in His service merely from hope of reward or fear of punishment would avail nothing. Open apostasy would not be more offensive to God than hypocrisy and mere formal worship.**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 523.1.<sup>†‡</sup>  
[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p84.2425&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p84.2425&index=0)<sup>†</sup>

[BSG:] The Lord’s speech contains a shift that occurs five times between “you” and “they” (the fathers). The fathers and this generation at Shechem are treated as one. Joshua is seeking to show what Moses affirmed already in [Deuteronomy 5:3](#), that the Lord did not make the covenant only with the fathers but with all those present at the moment of Joshua’s speech. The vast majority there now had not experienced the Exodus. Not “all” of them were at Horeb. Yet, Joshua says that all of them were there. **In short, the lessons of the past must be appropriated by each new generation. The God who worked for the ancestors in the past is ready to act on behalf of the present generation.**—BSG\* for Sunday, December 21.<sup>†‡</sup>

[EGW:] This solemn covenant was recorded in the book of the law, to be sacredly preserved. Joshua then **set up a great stone** under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. “And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.” Here Joshua plainly declares that his instructions

and warnings to the people were not his own words, but the words of God. This great stone would stand to testify to succeeding generations of the event which it was set up to commemorate, and would be a witness against the people, should they ever again degenerate into idolatry.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, \* May 26, 1881, par. 5.<sup>†‡</sup>  
[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p820.3423&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p820.3423&index=0)<sup>‡</sup>

## I or We?

[T-BSG:] One of the worldview differences between modern Western society and the society in the biblical world is the relationship between individual and corporate personalities. In temporal terms, individual choices were always seen in connection with the whole community. This notion is evident in Joshua 24:6, in which God says, “ ‘ “Then I brought *your fathers* out of Egypt, and you came to the sea” ’ ” (NKJV, emphasis added), even though many in the audience were not born yet when the Exodus took place.—*T-BSG*\* 172.<sup>‡§</sup>

[T-BSG:] Wheeler Robinson was the first scholar to apply the concept of “corporate personality” to the biblical text. The concept, which comes from English law, refers to “the fact that a group or body can be regarded legally as an individual, possessing the rights and duties of an individual.”—J. W. Rogerson, “Corporate Personality,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 1156. Robinson uses the term in two senses: **corporate responsibility and corporate representation.... “The act of the individual is not merely an individual act, for it affects the community and vice versa. The individual is often representative of the community and vice versa.”**—G. K. Beale, *The Right Doctrine From [sic] the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), p. 37.—*T-BSG*\* 172-173.<sup>†‡§</sup>

[T-BSG:] Corporate solidarity is not only an undeniable reality behind the biblical text—and still alive within many societies that emphasize interdependence, conformity, and strong family identity today—but also a basic presupposition of biblical typology. In fact, it is at the center of the gospel.

On the negative side, although we are not responsible for Adam’s sin, his failure opened the door to evil, whose influence no one except Christ was able to contain in a comprehensible way. As Paul says, “Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (*Rom. 5:12, NKJV*). On the positive side, Christ’s victory as the new Adam, the representative of the new humanity, brings the influence of good and the possibility of victory to all: “One died for all, then all died” (*2 Cor. 5:14, NKJV*). Paul complements this notion by saying: “Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life” (*Rom. 5:18, NKJV*).—*T-BSG*\* 173.<sup>‡§</sup> [What does it mean to say: “One died for all, then all died”?]<sup>‡</sup>

### 4. Review **Joshua 24:14-15**.

[BSG:] Joshua's appeal clearly expresses the fact that the Israelites have to decide whether, through loyalty to their Creator, to keep their uniqueness and live in the land or to fade back into being one among many idolatrous peoples, with no clear identity, purpose, or mission. The choice is theirs.

Joshua's appeal is twofold: Israel should fear the Lord and serve Him "in sincerity and in truth." **To fear the Lord does not mean a life of perpetual trembling and emotional insecurity. It rather refers to the reverence and awe that stem from the recognition of the unfathomable greatness, holiness, and infinity of God on the one hand and our smallness, sinfulness, and finitude on the other.** To fear God is a constant awareness of the magnitude of His demands, a recognition that He is not only our heavenly Father but also our Divine King. Such awareness will lead to a life of obedience to God ([Lev. 19:14](#), [Lev. 25:17](#), [Deut. 17:19](#), [2 Kings 17:34](#)). While "fear" describes the inner attitude that must characterize an Israelite, **the practical outcome of reverence to God is service.**—BSG\* for Monday, December 22.<sup>†§</sup>

[EGW:] Among the multitudes that came up out of Egypt were many who had been worshipers of idols; and such is the power of habit that the practice was secretly continued, to some extent, even after the settlement in Canaan [40 years later!]. Joshua was sensible of this evil among the Israelites, and he clearly perceived the dangers that would result. He earnestly desired to see a thorough reformation among the Hebrew host. He knew that unless the people took a decided stand to serve the Lord with all their hearts, they would continue to separate themselves farther and farther from him. Then would the Lord remove his protecting care, and suffer them to be driven out and scattered, by the very people whom he had commanded them to destroy.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*,\* May 19, 1881, par. 14.<sup>‡</sup> [\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p820.3401&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p820.3401&index=0)<sup>‡</sup>

[BSG:] The service that is required of Israel is characterized by two Hebrew terms: "in sincerity" and "in truth."...

A faithful person is somebody who is dependable and trustworthy. **Basically, Joshua is asking Israel to demonstrate the same loyalty to God that God has displayed toward His people in the course of their history.** It is not merely outward compliance to His requirements but what springs from an undivided inner consistency of the heart. Their lives should reflect gratefulness to God for what He has done for them. Basically, it is how we today should relate to Jesus, as well.—BSG\* for Monday.<sup>†‡</sup>

5. ***There are three things that God is asking us to do to prepare for the second coming and eternal life: (1) Bible Study; (2) Prayer; and (3) Witnessing to the truth for the whole world to hear. How are we individually doing at these three tasks?***
6. ***The life and death of Jesus give us a choice: We can choose to follow the example of Jesus's life as far as possible with the help of the Holy Spirit and the heavenly angels and live forever; or, we can choose to follow our own ways, as Satan does, and die the death that Jesus did, separated from His Father, the only Source of life.***

[BSG:] As a true and faithful leader, Joshua respects the free will of his

people and wishes that Israel would serve the Lord out of free choice rather than compulsion. That was exactly the point made by the deliberate use of the verb “chosen” (see [Josh. 24:22](#)). In other passages *bahar*, “to choose,” describes Yahweh’s [sic] election of Israel ([Deut. 7:6, 7](#); [Deut. 10:15](#); [Deut. 14:2](#)). Israel is free to say “no” to Yahweh [sic] after their divine election, but that would be nonsensical and absurd. **Israel can say “yes” to God and continue to live, or they can turn their backs on Him and cease to exist.**—BSG\* for Tuesday, December 23.<sup>†‡§</sup> [To not choose God is foolish!]<sup>‡</sup>

7. How did the people respond to Joshua’s challenge? How did he respond to their answer?

[Joshua 24:16-21](#): <sup>16</sup> The people replied, “We would never leave the LORD to serve other gods!... <sup>18</sup>As we advanced into this land, the LORD drove out all the Amorites who lived here. So we also will serve the LORD; he is our God.” [What did they mean by saying that God “drove out” the Amorites?]

<sup>19</sup> Joshua said to the people, “But you may not be able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God and will not forgive your sins. **He will tolerate no rivals,** <sup>20</sup>and if you leave him to serve foreign gods, he will turn against you and punish you. He will destroy you, even though he was good to you before.”

<sup>21</sup> The people said to Joshua, “No! We will serve the LORD.”—GNB-TEV.\*<sup>†‡</sup> [Was that the response of every Israelite? Or, just the leaders?]<sup>‡</sup>

[BSG:] In their categorically positive answer, the Israelites recognize that the God of the patriarchs and of their fathers is now also “our God” ([Josh. 24:17, 18](#), NKJV), whom they are willing to serve with undivided allegiance. After such an unquestionable affirmation of their loyalty, we would expect words of affirmation and encouragement from Joshua. However, this is not the case. The dialogue between Joshua and the people takes a radical turn in which Joshua seems to play the role of the devil’s [sic] advocate. He shifts from speaking about God’s gracious providence in the past to threatening the Israelites with a picture of a God who is not easy to serve.

**Joshua knows the instability of the first generation, who promised to obey God in similar terms ([Exod. 19:8](#), [Exod. 24:3, 7](#), [Deut. 5:27](#)) yet who forgot their promises [around the golden calf] while the words were still on their lips (*Exodus* 32).**—BSG\* for Tuesday, December 23.<sup>†‡§</sup>

[Exodus 19:8](#): Then all the people answered together, “We will do everything that the LORD has said,” and Moses reported this to the LORD.—GNB-TEV.\*

[BSG:] Thus, Joshua, by means of rhetoric, wants to make the Israelites aware of several things. **First**, the decision to serve God is a serious one. It will have to shape the entire nation according to God’s revelation. The blessings of pursuing that goal are evident, but the consequences of disobedience must also be fully understood. Forgiveness of sins is not an unalienable right of humanity but a miracle of God’s grace.—BSG\* for Tuesday, December 23.<sup>†‡§</sup> [How do you understand *forgiveness* as described in **Jeremiah 31:31-34**? Is forgiveness free for everyone?]<sup>‡</sup>

[BSG:] **Second**, the decision of the Israelites to serve God must be their own decision, not something imposed by a leader, even Joshua.

**Third**, Israel must realize that humans cannot serve God in their own



strength. Serving God is not achieved by a mechanical adherence to the stipulations of the covenant but by a personal relationship with the saving Lord (*compare with [Exod. 20:1, 2](#); [Deut. 5:6, 7](#)*).—BSG\* for Tuesday.<sup>†§</sup>

8. ***How can we know that we have the kind of relationship with God that He wants?***

[BSG:] The threat of idolatry is not a theoretical one. Earlier, on the plains of Moab [at Baal-Peor], in a similar context, Moses asked for the same decision ([Deut. 30:19, 20](#)).—BSG\* for Wednesday, December 24.<sup>§</sup>

[BSG:] The gods that are in view now are not the ones of Egypt or those beyond the river, but they are found “among them.” Therefore, Joshua pleads with his people to incline their hearts to the Lord.... **The sinful human heart does not have the natural tendency to bend and listen to God’s voice. It takes conscious decisions on our part to incline it toward fulfilling God’s will.**—BSG\* for Wednesday.<sup>††</sup>

[BSG:] The Israelites’ answer literally reads: “We will listen to His voice.” This expression emphasizes the relational aspect of obedience. Israel is not asked to routinely follow lifeless rules. The covenant is about a living relationship with the Lord, which cannot be fully expressed by mere regulations. **Israel’s religion was never intended to be legalistic; rather, it was to be a constant conversation in faith and love with a holy and merciful Savior.** [How many times had they “buried the idols”?]

Even after the people’s threefold promise to serve the Lord, which implies, as Joshua commanded, the removal of foreign gods from among them, there is no report that it **actually happened**. Throughout the entire book, it became customary to report on the fulfillment of Joshua’s commands (or those of Moses) as examples of obedience. The lack of it now at the end of the book leaves the plea of Joshua open-ended.—BSG\* for Wednesday.<sup>††</sup>

9. Remember the story of Solomon. (1 Kings 11:2-10) And remember his descendants.

**2 Chronicles 33:9: Manasseh led the people of Judah to commit even greater sins than those committed by the nations whom the LORD had driven out of the land as his people advanced.**—*Good News Bible-TEV*.<sup>\*†</sup>

[T-BSG:] Consider the following definition of an idol proposed by Martin Luther in his comment on the first commandment in his *Large Catechism*: **“Confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. . . . Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God.”**—Luther, *Luther’s Large Catechism*; trans. by John Nicholas Lenker (Minneapolis, MN: Luther Press, 1908), p. 44.—T-BSG\* 175.<sup>†§</sup>

[EGW:] .... **Multitudes have a wrong conception of God and His attributes, and are as truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal.**—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*\* 177.1.<sup>††</sup> [What about us?]<sup>†</sup>  
[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p88.768&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p88.768&index=0)<sup>†</sup>

10. One does not have to read the Old Testament very long or very carefully to realize that idolatry was a threat almost from Day 1 and certainly to the end of the Old Testament.

11. ***Do we ever promise God that we will obey Him faithfully, and yet, not do it?***

12. ***How would the church do today with a “Joshua” as leader?***

13. ***Has God made a covenant with the Christian church, even with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as He did with the Israelites at Shechem?***
14. ***Jesus will not come again until everyone has made up his/her mind—either actively or passively—for or against God. The 144,000 must first be sealed; and if that does not happen, the end will not come.***

[BSG:] Ex-archbishop of Canterbury Lord George Caryl, in a keynote speech delivered at Holy Trinity Church in Shrewsbury, declared that the Anglican Church was “one generation away from extinction.”

**In fact, the church is always one generation away from extinction, and so it was with the Old Testament people of God. A great chapter in the history of Israel comes to an end.** Its future depends on what kind of answers it will give to the many questions that concern the future. Will Israel be loyal to the Lord? Will they be able to continue the unfinished task of possessing the whole land? Will they be able to cling to Yahweh [*sic*] and not get entangled in idol worship?... **Each successive generation of God’s people, reading the book of Joshua, must face these same questions. Their success depends on the nature of the answers they provide in their everyday lives and how they relate to the truths they have inherited.**—BSG\* for Thursday, December 25.<sup>†‡</sup>

## Individual Freedom

[T-BSG:] In the context of the temporal blessings and curses of the covenant, God never dealt with His people individually. The New Testament image of the church as the body of Christ is rooted in this social understanding. In the Old Testament, the sum of individual decisions always affected the people as a whole. This concept is evident in **Daniel’s prayer**, in which he seeks forgiveness for sins he had not personally committed (*Daniel 9*).—T-BSG\* 173.<sup>†‡§</sup> [See **Deuteronomy 29:19**.]<sup>†</sup>

[T-BSG:] However, Scripture clearly affirms the value of individual freedom. According to Ezekiel, “ ‘the soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself’ ” (*Ezek. 18:20, NKJV; compare with Deut. 24:16*). From an eternal point of view, God will deal individually with each of us.—T-BSG\* 173.<sup>‡§</sup>

**Deuteronomy 24:16:** “Parents are not to be put to death for crimes committed by their children, and children are not to be put to death for crimes committed by their parents; people are to be put to death only for crimes they themselves have committed.”—*Good News Bible-TEV*. \*

[T-BSG:] **We can face the consequences of the sins of others but not their guilt.**

Joshua’s final speech presents this tension between collective and individual identity. While in a collective sense he mentions God’s acts of redemption in the past and alludes to God’s acts of judgment in the future, his appeal is individual. This individual freedom should be understood within



the confines of the covenant. In fact, freedom without form is a vacuum. People can decide whether to marry, but once they agree to marry, they are bound within the limits of the marriage covenant. In practical terms, unchecked freedom turns into bondage.—*T-BSG*\* 173.†‡

[T-BSG:] In biblical language, it's important to note that being freed from slavery is referred to as redemption, not freedom. When Israel left Egypt, it wasn't just about being able to choose whether or not to serve but rather about having the freedom to choose whom they would serve. In fact, **“Joshua's challenge cements the case that those who become Israel are those who are chosen and rescued by Yahweh [sic]. Those who remain Israel are those who choose and serve Yahweh [sic].”**—Mark Ziese, *Joshua* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2008), p. 83. In this sense, **“freedom is the state that emerges after God has acted to remove all hindrances—social, spiritual (sin and death), economic, and institutional—that block our creational purpose. This purpose is to know, love, worship, and enjoy God forever.”**—Esau McCaulley, “Freedom,” in Douglas Mangum, ed., *The Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Logos Edition (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014).—*T-BSG*\* 174.†‡§

[T-BSG:] Freedom is the most powerful gift God gives to His creatures. However, as human history shows, it is also the most dangerous one because it can be misused with dire consequences. God is, essentially, love, and there is no love without freedom. Therefore, the point is not whether we have freedom but how we will use this amazing gift. This question is addressed at the end of the book of Joshua.—*T-BSG*\* 174.†

## The Challenge of Freedom

[T-BSG:] It's not easy to be free. This idea is demonstrated in the history of Israel, whom God led into the wilderness to learn the essence of freedom. Although this period was prolonged, the desert school was not meant to last more than a year and a half—roughly the time between the Exodus and the arrival in Kadesh Barnea (*Exod. 19:1, Num. 10:11, Deut. 1:2*).—*T-BSG*\* 174.†§ [That allows for spending one year at the foot of Mount Sinai.]†

**Exodus 19:1-2:** <sup>1-2</sup> The people of Israel left Rephidim, and on the first day of the third month after they had left Egypt they came to the desert of Sinai. There they set up camp at the foot of Mount Sinai.—*Good News Bible-TEV*. \*

**Numbers 10:11:** On the twentieth day of the second month in the second year after the people left Egypt, the cloud over the Tent of the LORD's presence lifted [as a sign for the people to move].—*Good News Bible-TEV*. † [About 1 ½ years after leaving Egypt!]‡

**Deuteronomy 1:2:** (It takes eleven days to travel from Mount Sinai to Kadesh Barnea by way of the hill country of Edom.)—*Good News Bible-TEV*. \*

15. Why do we need to learn how to use freedom? Love is absolutely essential to Christianity!
16. ***It is very important to recognize how God views freedom. Do we recognize how we should and should not use freedom?*** See the handout on “Love” on [www.Theox.org](http://www.Theox.org): [https://www.theox.org/images/uploads/bbk/KHart\\_BTGG\\_PDF\\_Gnrl\\_Love\\_16.pdf](https://www.theox.org/images/uploads/bbk/KHart_BTGG_PDF_Gnrl_Love_16.pdf)

## The Death of Joshua

### 17. How does the book of Joshua end?

**Joshua 24:29-31:** <sup>29</sup> After that, the LORD's servant Joshua son of Nun died at the age of a hundred and ten. <sup>30</sup> They buried him on his own land at Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim north of Mount Gaash.

<sup>31</sup> **As long as Joshua lived, the people of Israel served the LORD, and after his death they continued to do so as long as those leaders were alive who had seen for themselves everything that the LORD had done for Israel.**—*Good News Bible-TEV*. \*†

[BSG:] In the epilogue reporting on the deaths of Joshua and Eleazar, the high priest brings the book of Joshua to a sobering end. By recounting together the burial of Joshua, the burial of Eleazar, and the burial of Joseph's bones, the author creates a contrast between the life outside the land and the beginning of life in the land.... The patriarchs buried their relatives in a cave ([Gen. 23:13](#), [19](#); [Gen. 25:9](#), [10](#)), on a plot purchased at Shechem ([Gen. 33:19](#)). Now the nation buries its leaders in the territory of their own inheritance, thus having a sense of permanence. The promises given to the patriarchs have been fulfilled. Yahweh's [*sic*] faithfulness constitutes the historical thread that links Israel's posterity to its present and future.—BSG\* For Thursday, December 25. †§

[T-BSG:] Like Deuteronomy, the book of Joshua ends with a reference to burial places. It seems odd to conclude a book that is predominantly about victories with this kind of detail.

- Why do you think the book concludes in this manner? [It gives an ending to the story of Joshua and the beginning of a new era for Israel.]
- What message is God conveying about the nature of leadership and His continuous control over history?
- How might this message affect your perspective on leadership and the divine oversight of the church?—T-BSG\* 175. ‡

[T-BSG:] If you are a parent, consider how you may teach your kids to use their free will. Discuss your ideas. How can difficult circumstances boost our learning?—T-BSG\* 174-175. ‡

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