



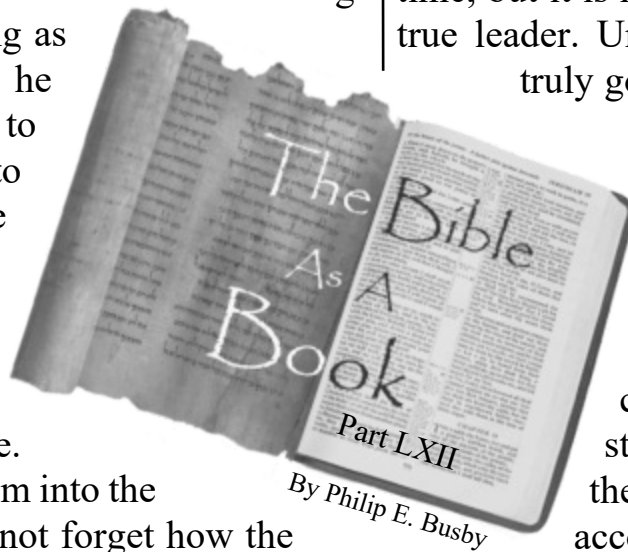
# Shaqah

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”  
Colossians 2:8*

In our last segment, we pretty well covered the necessary lead-in and facts about the Book of Joshua. Of course, in our introduction to Joshua I have emphasized how much he really is a prophet. Thus, while the book is not considered a prophecy book, it is the story about a man leading God's nation. As long as Moses did this job, he did it to get them to where they needed to go both in having the law and becoming a true nation, as well as physically to the area they would call home. Joshua now leads them into the land, but we should not forget how the nation only needed Joshua because they had not followed the path God wanted them to take 40 years earlier. Now the nation was solidified and needed a man, much as any prophet ever was, to lead them through the specific steps of getting on track and being everything God wanted them to be. In a nutshell, that's what the Book of Joshua is all about, and as we begin our overview of the verse by verse of this book I hope we can see it from that perspective, for it is from that

perspective the book is seen in its fullness.

Verse 1 of Joshua chapter 1 specifies that it was after the death of Moses that God came to Joshua. This by no means is to say God had not spoken to Joshua before this time, but it is here that Joshua becomes the true leader. Until the moment Moses was truly gone, Joshua, in spite of being anointed as the new leader, was still “under,” Moses. Now Moses was out of the picture and it was time for the full weight of his job to rest on Joshua. God would come directly to Joshua to get started, and God tells Joshua the specific job he was to accomplish. That job was taking the nation to the west side of Jordan. They had already claimed much land on the east side, and that was all land God would one day have instructed the nation to take, but the real focus was always to be on the land west of Jordan. In verse 3 we are given the fact God intended to give the nation all the land they set foot on. This is an interesting point in that it means Joshua's job would be to lead the nation only in the places God wanted to give them.



What this emphasizes is that the days of the nation wandering for any reason was over! From here until the task was complete, the focus would be on obtaining the land God wanted them to have and living on it. This would mark quite a change for the nation from the way they had lived.

God would also lay out the true boundaries of what that land was. The first part mentioned is an area the nation hardly ever really owned in full, if ever. This in no way means God did not intend for it to be so, the nation just never served God well enough to expand all the way to the boundaries that were to be theirs. The first part of this verse describes the far northern and eastern area they were to claim. Lebanon is along the coast to the north before the land begins to turn and head west along the Mediterranean coast. Israel's land was to go more to the east at that point and head toward Mesopotamia. This is actually to say they were to own the route Abraham and his father originally took from Mesopotamia to get to the promised land in the beginning. This was an important trade route and continued to be so for centuries. Even empires longed to control this area of land, so if Israel could have one day claimed it, that would have been quite an asset! The middle of the land is not so much specified, but there is no need to because it's been very obvious that area of the promised land between the Jordan and the Mediterranean would be the core of the land. So it is only said they would have land to the setting of the sun on the coastline to the Dead Sea. This means just how far south they would go down into territory they had traveled across on their way to where they now were, was something open to them and for them.

Next, God confirms to Joshua that He will be with him in the same way He was Moses. As Israel goes into battle, none of the people standing in their way from taking this land would be able to stop them. By making the comparison to Moses, God is also showing Joshua a truth he should already be so aware of. That truth was that when the people refuse to follow God and His instructions that will cause trouble, but as long as God's words were followed, they will simply sweep aside all those who would resist them. Thus, God encourages the nation to be of good courage and trust in His ability to bring them into and give them this land He promised their fathers. He also specifically warns them to remember the one stipulation to receiving this blessing was/is to heed the Law as it was laid out by Moses. This means the Law would not be a living, changing thing but a consistent Law to be followed year after year, generation after generation. If the nation would do this, God would always be with them in all the things they did and in all the places they went. Joshua is therefore reminded to meditate upon the Law, because it is one thing to follow some tradition or ritual you feel you know but another to actually know the Law for one's self. The Law tells one how to do things right and why. That is what God wants Joshua to be reminded of from the very beginning. God then asks the question, was it not true it was He Who had told the nation to be strong? The fact God would bring about what needed to be done was not an interpretation of a prophecy which made people think this is what they were to do. The nation had been given a direct commandment to do all these things and God would prosper them in doing so!

So we are told Joshua wastes no time, but goes directly to the officers to tell them to prepare the supplies they need to go over the Jordan. He would give them three days and then they would set out to do what God had commanded. Joshua also reminds the three tribes who had desired to own land on this side of Jordan, that they had promised they would send their men with the nation to fight alongside their brothers in taking the land on the west side of Jordan. They could leave their animals, wives, and children, but the men would go over and fight until the land God was to give the nation had been claimed for the use of the tribes who had not been given land. After that they could return to live normal lives on the east side. Their response to Joshua was they were with him and would follow him just as they had followed Moses. The promises made to Moses would be fulfilled by them now in following Joshua, and anyone among them who refused would be put to death. This was not a threat or command of Joshua, but a promise the people made to him which they would take care of. Thus, the people themselves encourage Joshua to be strong and courageous as he leads the nation onward in what God had asked them to do. We see in this a very sharp contrast to the attitude of the generation before, which had come out of Egypt and doubted God as well as Moses. This new generation in Israel was ready and willing to go into the land and face the people living on the other side of Jordan.

Next, we see Joshua sending out spies to view the land directly on the other side where the nation would cross over, and

more specifically to Jericho, which was the first major city the nation would face. These spies would make it to Jericho and end up staying in the house of a woman who was known to be a harlot. The king of Jericho would hear of this and send men to find these spies, but she would tell the men the spies had left to return home. In truth, she had taken the spies to the roof where she hid them in the thatching. The king's men would head out to pursue the spies whom they thought were going back toward the Jordan, and the gates of the city would be closed so no one else could get in or out. The woman would wait until bedtime to go up to the roof and tell these spies the most amazing thing they could have found out while surveying the land. She would tell them of how the people in the land were very afraid of Israel, and even point to the fact they were aware Israel was the nation for whom God had dried up the Red Sea to allow them to cross. They were also very aware of how Israel had easily defeated and totally destroyed the kings on the east side of Jordan. Here, after four long decades of travel, the stories of what God had done for Israel had not died but came to be widely known. This brought true fear to the people, and a knowledge that anything the God of Israel wanted to give unto the nation would be given!

This woman knew Israel's taking of the land was inevitable, so she asks that they show kindness to her and her family. She had helped them, and she asked only mercy in return. They would swear to her that what she asked would be done, and they would spare the lives of her immediate family.

After this she let them down by a scarlet cord from the window of her house, which was on the wall of the city, and told them where to go in order to hide until the king's men returned from looking for them. They would instruct her that when the armies of Israel returned, she was to put that same scarlet cord out of her window as a sign of where she was so as not to be killed in the battle. They made it very clear her family was to stay in the house. Israel would not be accountable for any one of them who left the door of her house, but if they stayed they'd be spared as long as they kept all they knew without warning anyone Israel was coming. Of course, the woman would promise and remember to put the cord from her window. So the men went out to hide until the king's men had given up looking for them, and then they would return to Joshua to report what they had found.

As the men return, we see a scene being replayed from the early days of Moses leading the nation out of Egypt, as a group of twelve spies, which had included Joshua, give their report to Moses. The difference this time is not just in the number of spies but also in the report itself. Out of the original spies only Joshua and Caleb believed God could bring the nation into the land. This time the spies told Joshua what had happened to them and added that they believed God was truly able to bring the nation into the land, for even now the people were faint in heart due to Israel. Again, Joshua would waste no time. He would rise up early in the morning and move the camp to the east bank of the Jordan river. There they would stay for three days, and surely the people of the land had to know Israel was ready to attack by

seeing this. The officers would go through the camp and inform the people that when the Ark of the Covenant began to go forth then they too were to follow. They were not to stay totally up behind it, but stay back just far enough so they could see where the Levites took it and follow that path. Joshua told the people to sanctify themselves for truly The Lord was coming among them to show His great power. Then he would tell the Levites to take up the ark and head out in front of the people to lead them. God would tell Joshua that this was the day He would show Israel He was with Joshua just as He had been with Moses.

The Levites were to bring the ark to the brink of the river and wait for all the people to get settled in behind them in order to see the great thing God was going to do! Joshua informed the people they were about to witness how God would be with them in all this. Other than those maybe just old enough to remember it happening, by and large this generation had not seen or remembered the crossing of the Red Sea. Of course, the Jordan was not as formidable a barrier as the Red Sea had been, but it was overflowing its banks as it did every year at this time. This flooding caused there to be a much wider area to cross which would have truly been nothing but mud bogs. Had the nation attempted to take their animals, wagons, and all their people over this, they surely would have found themselves mostly stuck and lost much in the attempt, no matter their ultimate success or failure in actually getting everyone across. Also, in light of the people in the land looking for any opportunity to do some damage to Israel, having to traditionally cross with all the nation owned, the Jordan might as well

# Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment, we stayed in verse 5 of Genesis chapter 22, and specifically on the fact Abraham had told his servants to stay where they were while he and Isaac went off to worship God. More specifically, we talk about the fact he tells them that he would return to them, but considering what he thought he was going to do, that would mean he was coming back without Isaac. This we used to discuss the point of how much we must be determined to do what God wants us to do without allowing our own thoughts to get in the way. In our thinking today it is so true we would think it unimaginable that God would ask us to sacrifice a child to Him, but that is exactly what Abraham was asked to do. That makes this story about more than just the question of would we give something so precious to God, but also about, would we follow God in those times He asks us to do something that goes against what we think is right to do? With that, we are ready to move on to Genesis chapter 22 verse 6.

As we move into verse 6, the first thing we are told is that Abraham places the wood on Isaac to carry. This would mean it was Isaac's responsibility to carry this wood all the way up the hill where they were going. As we have talked about over and over, this story is meant to foreshadow what The Messiah would one day do. In the end Abraham would not have to give his son's life in exchange for his soul, but God would one day give His Son to save us all! (Micah 6:6-9) Thus, the Gospels record for us that

after all Jesus had suffered, the very cross He was to die on was placed upon him to carry. This is foreshadowed in Abraham giving Isaac the wood to carry. The wood Isaac was to be placed on to be sacrificed and his body burned was something his father asked him to carry to that place where they were to go. This was done while servants who normally would have been slated with such work were told to remain with the animals. God The Father would ask His Son Jesus to carry the very instrument of his death as well, and Jesus would do so until he physically could not do it any longer. (Matt. 27:27-33)

We are also told in this verse that Abraham takes fire with him. Because there were no matches or things meant to start a fire, Abraham would bring fire, likely on a torch of some kind. However, in spite of no matches and the like, surely Abraham knew how to start a fire well enough to do it once they were there. If he was worried there would not be the right kindling to do so, he could have taken that with them as well. However, Abraham shows in taking fire with him that he is not going to waste any time in getting the task done. When he is ready to start the fire on the altar he wants to be able to do it. There is also the other aspect to this, which is that it's almost as if Abraham wanted to make it that much more obvious to Isaac they were going to perform a sacrifice. This fire is actually one of the elements Isaac would note as being the evidence he knew what they were going to do when he asks his father about it. This has some echoes to the

fact Jesus knew what He was sent to this earth to do. In the garden, the night of His trial, it is obvious Jesus knows what lies ahead. This was not just in that He would give His life on the cross, but the sheer agony of the entire process. The stage had been set, the time had come, the fire was already in hand, and the physical and mental torment He would go through was really on Jesus' mind.

The other element Abraham would carry is, of course, the knife. Now it would seem a knife in that day and age would have been fairly standard equipment for any man out in the field, much less just on a journey through open country, but again, it is specifically told to us that Abraham takes a knife. Part of this is due to the fact, again, we and Isaac need to be aware Abraham came prepared to do what he had been asked to do. It was not left to our imagination in any way that Abraham has the instrument needed to kill his son. However, the second part of this is that it is doubtful a man like Abraham simply performed his sacrifices to God using a common, everyday knife he used for just anything. It is logical to believe Abraham had a knife he specifically kept for the purpose of performing sacrifices to God, and this would have been the knife we are told Abraham takes in hand. This too would have been a very obvious sign to Isaac that they were going to perform a sacrifice, and its obvious relationship to foreshadowing what God The Father would do is in the fact Abraham actually carries the instrument that would take Isaac's life. While we might physically look at Jesus' death as Him being killed by the Roman cross and nails that held Him there, the truth we are told is that Jesus gave up the ghost. (Mark 15:37) Jesus did not wait for the cross to kill Him but gave

His life for us. This is a point we focus on many times, but what I think we often forget to put directly with this is the fact Jesus did this because it is what The Father asked Him to do!

Verse 7 is where we hit those words that lead to the answer of Abraham which I so often can not teach without pointing to. It is here we find the question Isaac asks which leads to the profound statement that in my mind is most of the point God was setting Abraham up to make, because it shows us so deeply how well Abraham understood the plan of God long before the Law, the prophets, or the coming of The Messiah of Whom he spoke. It would seem Abraham and Isaac had been quiet as they walked on to this point, and in truth this is the first thing we have recorded as Abraham and Isaac saying to each other! Isaac would break the silence by simply doing what anyone in deep thought might do. He only says, "My Father." Just looking at it that way instead of reading right past it quickly, we should be struck by, again, the fact Jesus came speaking of His Father over and over. Jesus would speak these very same words over and over in relationship to His obedience to His Father as well as what we need from The Father. (Matt. 7:21, 10:32-33, 12:50, 16:17, 18:19, 20:23, 26:39-42)

Then just as we know God The Father always was with Jesus, so Abraham simply replies, "Here am I, my son." Jesus was never outside the presence of His Father. This was true until just at the moment it was all left up to Jesus to take that last step. Just before Jesus dies He cries out to ask why The Father had forsaken Him. (Mark 15:34) Nonetheless, before Jesus actually gives His life He shows us He still put total trust in

The Father and His will by saying, "...Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:..." Luke 23:46 With Abraham acknowledging him, Isaac would ask the real question that was on his mind, but which in truth he must have already knew the answer to. Isaac would point to those obvious things they brought with them to perform a sacrifice. Abraham had left nothing to chance. They had brought wood instead of hoping there would be enough to gather on the way or once there. Abraham had even brought fire with them so they did not have to start one once they were there, but, of course, Isaac wanted to know where the sacrifice itself was.

I've considered this many times over the years. The first thing Isaac's question shows us is that Isaac was, in fact, clear on what they were going to do. Whether that comes from Abraham talking some about going to sacrifice or just because Isaac was not ignorant considering all the elements they had taken with them on this journey, is not clear. However, I don't think that fact really matters. At this point and time Isaac knew at least the moment to perform the sacrifice was almost at hand, yet he and his father had left the servants with the only animals they had brought with them. Thus, the only question left for Isaac to ask was what they would sacrifice. That said, did Isaac ask this question with any thought he'd actually get the answer from his father confirming he was to be the sacrifice? If Isaac was already all but sure that was true, was he hoping his father would give him more details as to why? This point is why I used so much time in our last segment talking about how Abraham knew human

sacrifice was not something The One True God wanted. In spite of that, he simply goes forward with it because God asked him to. As puzzling and hard as this had to be for Abraham, one can only imagine how Isaac must have felt. Even if he just thought he might be the sacrifice, it must have been unimaginable. Just as we consider Jesus' agony before He even begins the trial that would lead to his death, in this story one should be able to see Isaac's side of all this just as clearly as Abraham's.

Abraham had done all these things to indicate what was going on and yet said nothing to Isaac about it. The question Isaac asks his father had to be a question even the servants would have liked to ask if they had felt it was their place. Yet the story shows us Isaac patiently goes along with this entire plan without so much as a word until now. The point I'm getting at is this, Isaac had nothing but his trust that his father knew what he was doing. As we have talked about before in this study, Isaac is no small boy when this happens. It's very likely Isaac was around 20 or older at this point. This means he was well able to keep his father from just laying him on some altar and offering him. If Isaac resisted it is impossible to believe Abraham could have gone through with this. However, what we see is Isaac trusting that God had made a covenant with his father. Isaac was well aware of the fact his older half-brother Ishmael had been sent out of the house because Isaac was the only son that covenant of God was going to pass on to and through. Just as we mentioned with Abraham, so to must have been the case with Isaac that the idea the son of promise for that covenant with God would be killed, had to

be very confusing. Yet in spite of it all Isaac trusts his father knew what he was doing.

This is all so foreshadowing of what Jesus would one day come and show us. Jesus did not talk about His will, He talked about His Father's will. Of course, Jesus being God knew what The Father had planned, but yet He shows us over and over that He seeks communication with The Father, yielded a will that was clearly His own to The Father, and even asks The Father in the end to forgive those who had crucified Him for they knew not what they did. (Luke 23:33-34) All this Jesus did to symbolize to us how much we must all yield to The Father's will. Jesus is the One Who offers us forgiveness and a chance at access to The Father in spite of all the wrong we have done; the mistakes we have made; and imperfections that are in us. However, what He offers us forgiveness to gain is a life lived with The Father. We need to be clear that those imperfections of ours will not simply go away the moment we are granted a new life with God in heaven. I don't think any of us fully understand just how much being free from the lust of the flesh that doth so easily beset us will not make us perfect beings, just as being created in innocence did not make us perfect. (Heb. 12:1) Even in heaven we will all be a work in progress. From this we clearly see how much it all boils down first to God's willingness to forgive us, and from there it comes down to our desire to strive and work for what God wants us to be. If that's not what we want, then life eternal is not what we want. Jesus offers salvation to us all, but will only grant it to those who want to follow His Father's will as He demonstrated to us through His life and walk on this earth!

Verse 8, of course, brings us to Abraham's answer to Isaac, which is about the most profound statement in all the Word of God. It is profound not just in what Abraham said but in that he understood the plan of God enough to say it. Some would be tempted to say Abraham's answer is nothing more than a prophet speaking words, but I think that's a misunderstanding of how the dynamics work. You see, God uses many men to prophesy and preach; to expound on His Word and teach. However, we often do this work with nothing more than a willingness to yield to the will of God and say what He tells us to say. It is another reason we cannot be right in the ministry if we think we can or should bend what we are told to say in order to fit the culture of the day or make things more palatable for those we speak to. As ministers we often do not fully grasp what it is God is really wanting us to say until He tells us or until we say it, sometimes even then others may grasp it better. That is to point out, God is revealing things to us in much the same way He is revealing things to those He desires for us to speak to. At times it is even true, especially with prophets, that we are told to speak God's Word to certain people or at certain times with no idea what is really being gotten at in the situation and/or lives of others. To some degree that is so true of almost all the words a minister speaks, writes, etc. We simply do the work of planting and watering but God gives the increase. (I Cor. 3:1-7) God does work in people's lives on many levels, which we as ministers will never know in full. That is why it is so important we speak what God tells us to speak and only what He tells us to speak without modification based on our own thoughts!



# What About God's Chosen People?

## Part XXXVI

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

*"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."*

In our last segment, we talked more specifically about the Kitos War, which is the second in three major conflicts that make up the Roman-Jewish Wars. We talked about how politically skewed the history of this war is in that Rome wanted someone other than their own mismanagement to be blamed for why it even happened. We ended that segment with what is probably the most important fact to remember about the Kitos War. The Kitos War was not simply an uprising of angry Jews which Rome had to put down; it was a war between people within individual communities.

This is important to remember because it not only speaks to how this war was not about Jews just going out to kill their neighbors while taking advantage of an absence by the Romans, it speaks to how much this was not really even so much a war at first. In a way, it was an attempt at enforcing some laws or boundaries the Romans would not enforce. While history can give us some rundown of what cities the major fighting came about in and roughly when, it certainly can not fill in the details of how this actually started. That start most likely came as individual Jews were done wrong by certain individuals or groups of individuals and decided they were not going to take it anymore. As they acted against their neighbors, those people obviously fought

back. This all became a much bigger conflict, and eventually the Romans had to get directly involved.

Now, another factor that is almost always the case when dealing with rebellions or uprisings of any sort is that people wanting to gain power show up. When we look back on the case of what happened in the events of Hanukkah, we see it was a brave man and his sons who really took the first steps to fight the Greeks. This man and his family did not do this for power or glory, they did it purely out of a desire to defend the ways of God. This family would end up being the leaders in Israel for a good long time afterward. However, as we look at these later conflicts nothing so noble seems to happen. In the first uprising there were two brothers who organized a lot of the fighting, but there was nothing about them that seemed to be looking for greater power, and that was good. However, in the first war with the Romans we see people like Simon bar Giora who was just brutal in his tactics. We also see a lot of back stabbing and other events caused by those who were trying to use the circumstances to gain power for themselves.

In the case of the Kitos War, the man's name was Lukuas, also referred to by the Greek name Andreas by some historians. According to accounts of the war this man went so far as to call himself a king. Of course, that would make him the king of the Jews, and from things like this we see another example of how those who were willing to be

more the conquering heros were not a good thing. Jewish doctrine had taught that The Messiah would be such a figure, and as we talked about in this study, at the time of Jesus there was a wonderful opportunity to obtain a great deal while under the Romans' rule. However, the religious leadership was very disapproving of Jesus as The Messiah, not because He did not match the description in the Word of God, but because he was not what religious theology taught The Messiah should be. Now, the Jews stood at a time when working on improving the things which God wanted the nation to follow and represent was near impossible, and they were out of favor with the Romans. However, here is the time a man comes along claiming himself to be the king of the Jews, and that ends up being nothing but a lot of trouble. In this, we should see how much man's thoughts are not God's thoughts! (Isa. 55:8-9)

Lukuas would lead the beginnings of this war that took place in Cyrenaica, which is in Libya. To be clear on what happened, let's remember what we covered as one of the greatest antagonizing things the non-Jews did to the Jews; that was to perform religious ceremonies in front of synagogues. This was done by Greeks for the most part, and while many attacks on Jews happened on a very personal level, almost all of it had its foundation in the fact Jews follow the religion they did/do. That makes the Kitos War as much a religious war as anything. With the antagonizing of Jews being done by violating their ability to maintain religious purity, it makes perfect sense the Jews targeted the religious places of the non-Jews. History tells us the Jews attacked and destroyed several temples to false gods during this incident. To many this seems like just more violence for the sake of violence,

but in truth it had significant meaning to the Jews. What is unclear is whether some of this attacking temples came first or as more of an end result. If it took place during the start of the war, that also makes perfect sense. The Jews felt their places of worship had been targeted, so retaliating by attacking the places of worship important to those who oppressed them would be a logical start. Of course, the people of Cyrenaica were not going to just sit back and watch this happen. Thus, much of the bloodshed came from the fighting that would result.

The army, if you will, led by Lukuas would also attack and destroy many civic structures belonging to the Romans. This was likely not as much an attack on Rome's power, as in the Jews trying to gain their freedom, as much as it was the same thing as attacking the temples. The Roman government had failed the Jews as citizens of the empire, and some of the places the Jews are said to have destroyed are no different than temples, in that while being civic structures paid for by the government they were also temples in their own right. For example, the Jews destroyed the Caesareum, which really was nothing more than a temple to the emperors of Rome. Like the Pharaohs of Egypt and so many kings or leaders of the past, emperors were said to be gods. This might not have been held to by the time of the Romans to the extent it was in other places in the past, but it was common practice for Rome to build a Caesareum in most of the major cities throughout their empire, as a way to promote the government and loyalty to the leadership, which in their minds should have been praised for their greatness. The Jews certainly wanted the Romans to know they did not look at them as gods and they did not appreciate their "leadership." Thus, the Jews

took down things like the Basilica, which would have been a civic meeting hall built by the Romans. They also destroyed the public baths which were important places in Roman culture. All these things showed the Jews' great frustration, disappointment, and flat rejection of the Romans and all they stood for.

After the major damage was done in Cyrenaica, Lukuas would lead his fighting force to Egypt, and in what should come as no surprise he marched to Alexandria. This city had played a major part in angering the Jews on more than one occasion. The non-Jews in Alexandria had been some of the main instigators of trouble and accusers of the Jews, not just locally but to the Roman government itself. If there was a people the Jews were more upset with than those in Alexandria it would be hard to name who that might be, and again we are talking mostly about Greek citizens here. The Roman governor of Alexandria probably understood this very well, and that's why he abandon the city as Lukuas' troops were known to be on their way. He knew he simply did not have the manpower to stop what was coming. Lukuas would arrive and set fire to the city, and in another direct act of letting the Romans know their displeasure, they destroyed many Egyptian temples as well as the tomb of Pompey who, if you remember, was one of Rome's greatly revered leaders.

Another major city in Egypt that was fought at was Hermopolis. Not a lot about this battle is known, but it is referred to in a writing that was discovered. The Jews were resisted here but prevailed in battle. The Jews had great success in Egypt, which is quite

surprising considering what a major place it had been in the past and was under the Romans. The Jewish victories in Egypt really stands to show just how badly Trajan had drained Rome's resources in his pursuit of more territory in the East. To leave Egypt so vulnerable was to open up the empire to attacks from anywhere in the African continent, and who knows from where else. However, Trajan had strained the empire's army so badly even he was running low on manpower as he moved deeper and deeper into Mesopotamia. Another problem for Trajan in 116/117 A.D. was that even some of what he had put under his thumb in Mesopotamia saw this lack of manpower and rose up in revolt.

Another major place the Jews successfully rose up was on the island of Cyprus. I say successfully because a fact one should keep in mind when it comes to the Kitos War is we have no idea in just how many places the Jews did rise up. In some of the places they may not have been successful to any great degree or maybe did not rise up to do more than destroy their very worst antagonists, and that settled it for the most part. In other places, any rising by the Jews might have been so quickly put down, the event never really got recorded. Just keep in mind while there were leaders on the Jewish side of the Kitos War, this war was in no way organized or orchestrated by any specific person(s) or command structure. In some ways it's fortunate, or maybe not considering how it was done, that we have any record of this war at all, and there definitely are not the detailed records of each place where Jews acted. Only those places playing into the hands of the Romans' ability to put a black

mark on the Jews were recorded for history.

Cyprus might serve as about the best example of what we've discussed, in that this was a war of communities. However, the Jews on Cyprus were said to be led by a man named Artemion, and they would attack and end up killing Greeks living in Cyprus by the thousands. Again, the Greeks had been known to be about the biggest antagonists of the Jews, especially in matters of religion. Much of that fact likely stems back to the very same things that happened at the time of Hanukkah's events; many Jews simply refused to be Hellenized. I'm also sure the fact the Jews directly drove back the Greeks at the time of Hanukkah in order to free themselves continued to be a thorn in the Greek memory. If nothing else, it shows us the direct rejection of Greek religion that had remained in the minds of the Jews. In any case, between the direct actions during the Kitos War and another revolt, the population of Cyprus was so greatly wiped out, a law was eventually passed banning Jews from ever living on the island again.

Of course, with the revolt Trajan had to deal with in Mesopotamia, he was forced to end his bid for further conquest and return to areas he had already dealt with. At the time Trajan was still determined to return to his expansionist plans. However, he would not have the health left to do such a thing, and even before turning his attention to the Kitos War he was forced to leave the leadership of the battles in the field to his generals. In some ways it would seem the general rebellion that took place in Mesopotamia and which brought Trajan back from the Persian Gulf was a bit of a separate affair from that of the Jews' actions, which were considered part of the Kitos War. This means the rebellion of

Jews in Northern Mesopotamia, while grouped in with the Kitos War, was likely nothing more than just a part of the general revolt against Roman occupation which rose up among more than one specific group in Northern Mesopotamia. Attempting to portray the events of Mesopotamia as part of the same war being waged by Jews in the western part of the empire, again shows us how much history was really grasping at straws to blame the entire events caused mainly by Trajan's ambitions on the Jews.

In spite of what the details may or may not have been, Trajan had come to rely on one of his main generals, a man named Lusius Quietus. Quietus would ransack the rebelling cities as a way to defeat this general rebellion on all fronts. This ransacking would include many places with heavy Jewish populations. Quietus' success in putting down the general rebellion and specifically that involving Jews, along with his many accomplishments before this time, eventually led to him being named governor of Judea in early 117 A.D. Because Quietus had been such a major part of securing Roman interests from the missteps of Trajan spreading his forces too thin, the entire war would be named after him. Kitos is simply a linguistic corruption of Quietus, and that is where we get the name Kitos War. However, probably the main reason the war was named after this man has to do with the fact it really came to be blamed on the Jews. Again, this was easy to do because the Jews rising up in Cyrenaica, Egypt, and Cyprus all took place about the same time as the rebellions in Mesopotamia. Not only was Quietus a major part of what put down the rebellion in Mesopotamia, he was named the governor of Judea. Being named the governor of Judea made him the perfect choice for who to give

credit to for putting down the Jewish rebellion.

Of course, there's nothing the Romans liked better than giving credit. This is why so many places that were touched by the Roman Empire have monuments built to proclaim the glory of various Roman leaders. Greco-Roman architecture is still used in our modern day to style buildings meant to be places of government power, learning, civic meeting halls, and many other things. However, as much credit might historically go to Quietus, there was another man who played what might have been a more major part in actually putting down the rebellion. In fact, he put down the part which threatened Rome directly. The success of the Jews in Egypt had effected the Romans in more ways than just the potential loss of territory. It directly threatened the grain exports from Egypt which Rome itself depended on. This certainly could not stand, and in what might have been the first true counter action by the Romans against the Jews, Trajan ordered one of his top naval commanders, named Marcus Turbo, to take his fleet back to the Mediterranean and secure the grain shipments by putting down the rebellion in Egypt.

This was a task Turbo took seriously, and when he made it to Egypt he immediately used the great military power at his command to drive the rebellion out and take back Egypt. Being the navy man he was he would next turn his attention to Cyprus. Eventually he would put down the rebellion there as well. Lukias, who was the leader of the Jews in Egypt, fled to Judea. Now another fact about this war, which is unclear and even debated over, is just how much of the rebellion going on among the Jews of other

places actually took place in Judea as well. Some sources make it seem the Jews there did revolt, but in truth, when one considers what the Kitos War was really about for the Jews there was not much reason for them to. The Jews in Judea, while not living in a great situation, were in a better circumstance than those Jews living in other parts of the empire. One of the things the first of the three wars Jews had with Rome accomplished was establishing Judea as a place Greeks were not so welcome. While there was no law against Greeks living there, when one considers how much the Jews and Greeks disliked each other, what reason would Greeks have to live so close and among so great a Jewish population. Why would any Greeks move there after so many had been driven out and their places of worship destroyed during the first war? If they had, would they push it in acting against the Jews and their religious place as they did in other parts of the empire?

When looked at in this light one can see the history is most likely unclear, because if this second war was truly what the propaganda states it was about, it seems odd that the Jews in Judea would not rise up and take the opportunity to at least drive out the Romans from Judea! In most conflicts with the Jews, if the trouble did not begin in Judea it would end up centered there. However, there is certainly no hard evidence that the Jews attempted anything large in Judea. No, what brought the war to Judea was really the fact that as the war began to go badly for the Jews many of its leaders and major players fled to Judea for safety. Specific examples were that of the brothers Julian and Pappus. Lukias would also flee to Judea, but Turbo would not simply allow any of them to get away. Turbo would specifically pursue Lukias to Judea, due to the fact Lukias had

been the man who marched in and brought the war to Egypt. Thus, Lukuas would have been the main leader in Egypt, claiming himself to be a king, as Turbo arrived to put the rebellion down. Lukuas and many of the leaders along with what was left of the Jewish side of this war would end up in Judea, and specifically in the city of Lydda (Lod) where Julian and Pappus had come to be in charge.

Turbo had sentenced the brothers to death for their actions, and, of course, nothing but a death sentence would seem appropriate for the future of Lukuas if the Romans had their way. As the leaders of the Jews and those left of the fighting force gathered at Lydda, it became their last stand, so to speak. With Quietus by then in charge of Judea, he would be the one to take measures against the Jews for their actions in this war. It would be at this time, much as it was during the events of Hanukkah, that the Torah would, once again, be outlawed. This was a terrible setback for the Jews, and mark what would turn out to be the beginning of the end for Jews on their homeland for a very long time. That aside, the time of the Kitos War was very dark and became very hard for the Jews living there, on all levels. This was more than just the ideas of losing a war or having yet another uprising put down. This became the reason for the Romans to put a heavy hand on Jews and everything they were/are.

One specific in all this that should be mentioned is that Hanukkah is a time of celebration. It's a time to celebrate a point when the Jews were greatly oppressed yet freed, not just the temple, but gained their

right to teach and study the Torah once again. It marks a time when not just a battle was won for the day, but an overall statement was settled that to be a Jew was really to be Jewish. If individual Jews were going to Hellenize, they were not just forsaking their traditions, they were forsaking their people and blood. This makes the feast of Hanukkah more than just the remembrance of an event. It's not just about the retaking and rededicating the temple. Hanukkah represents a celebration of Jews saying, "We will be Jewish!" In some ways it could be said that the events of Hanukkah are why we still have Jews today as a culture and an ethnicity. Of course, we know it's really all about God sustaining them, and that very fact is in one of the blessings recited during Hanukkah, but from a totally human perspective, Hanukkah was when Jews almost remade their covenant with God that they would serve the Torah.

All that is why Hanukkah is a celebration. In all the feasts there is either an aspect of celebration or of solemnity. The Feast of Trumpets is a time of celebration, but the very next Biblical feast to take place is Yom Kippur, which is about the most solemn time of all when we're to take a serious look at how we've lived our lives. That is because The Feast of Trumpets prophesies about the Second Coming of Christ which will be a great victory and glorious occasion, while Yom Kippur is what prophesies about Judgment Day when all those who have ever lived will stand before God for judgment. Hanukkah is not a Biblically commanded feast, but it is one of great importance for the reasons we have covered, and for very obvious reasons, it is a celebration. Through good times and bad

Jews celebrate on Hanukkah because what it stands for is bigger than any moment in time when hardship is present. All this is why it was really a shock to some that a leading Rabbi who was held up in Lydda along with the rebels declared a fast and determined it would be observed even during Hanukkah! While many at the time, and certainly many today, would judge his order as incorrect, this fact of the Kitos War really emphasizes just how bad the Jews felt times had become due to this war!

The Rabbi would die there in Lydda without seeing the end of the war, and Lydda would fall to the Romans. What had started as an uprising of Jews almost entirely outside Judea, would end in Judea. In the last war the Jews had suffered the loss of the temple, and while there can be little to nothing which can compare to that loss, the Jews in this war lost something big as well. As much as there had been a Roman government who would no longer protect their rights, they now stood at a time the Romans were outlawing what it meant to be Jews; seeing it as a danger to the empire. It would not just be a hard time in Judea during this conflict, it would continue to be hard even to the point eventually Jews were no longer welcome in their own land. This would be a trend, if it had not already started it certainly started now, that Rome would systematically try to begin erasing even the evidence that Judea was the Jewish homeland!

The fall of Lydda resulted in a mass slaughter of most all in the city. While it's true so many were those who had and wanted to fight the war, there were a lot of civilians as well. As much as the Jews are looked at in this war as caring nothing for civilians, one should not lose sight of the fact the Romans

rarely cared for who they killed. It was common in the day, and certainly the Romans made no effort to change the practice, that when they attacked a town, city or the like, they simply killed most anyone they felt was in their way. Only civilians who were able to stay out of the way until the army felt they had securely taken the place, lived to tell about it. Not only was this the case in attacking Lydda, but it is also true the Romans were done with Jews by this point. They saw the simple fact anyone at Lydda was even there, much less a Jew, as meaning they were an enemy of the empire. In fact, the slaughter of people at Lydda was so bad the "slain of Lydda" are spoke of often in the Talmud in recognition of what this event was and signaled.

The death toll of the war was indisputably high all the way around. The numbers as history records them say the casualties are all civilians, which is just not the case. It just looks that way because a lot of non-military people were involved in this war. In any case, the numbers are shocking. In Cyrenaica and Cyprus alone the death toll is marked at over 460,000 people. On the Jewish side, 200,000 were killed. The numbers are not really known for Egypt or for the rest of the Mediterranean that was effected by this, but some areas were devastated. In the end, the Jewish communities of many places were totally lost! For others their Jewish population was expelled and forced to move to other places, causing many to migrate to Judea which was still open for Jews to move to at the time. The island of Cyprus was said to have been so depopulated of everyone, that later there would be non-Jewish people specifically moved there for the sake of repopulating it. Again, loss of life was massive, and in many

ways due to the fact this was not a traditional war of military forces.

The brothers Julian and Pappus were specifically executed by the Romans. However, it is not completely clear what happened to Lukuas, but after proclaiming himself to be the king of the Jews I have little doubt he came to a bitter end. Other events that round out the facts of this war are that Trajan had turned over much of the fighting, and yes the Kitos War itself, to his top men, but he remained in Mesopotamia. Having over taxed himself with war in places known for their heat, Trajan would suffer a heatstroke. After this, he began his journey back to Rome with the hope of recovering. However, Trajan would not make it back to Rome, and the trouble was that he did not have an heir to his throne. It was known he favored the promotion of a man named Hadrian, and he, in fact, would succeed Trajan late in 117 A.D. Hadrian was from a Spanish family, their connection to the throne being that his father was a first cousin to Trajan himself. At what apparently was the behest of Trajan's wife, Hadrian would also marry Trajan's grand-niece in the years before Trajan became emperor.

Now, the concern with succession was that if one died without naming someone there could be trouble and infighting as to who the next emperor should be. At the same time, if one named a successor too early there was threat of assassination or some kind of coup. In the cases where there is a clear eldest son to take charge this can be made a bit easier, but in Trajan's case where there was no such person, naming someone was necessary, especially during the unstable time he had led the empire into. It is said that

Trajan officially adopted Hadrian on his death bed for the purpose of being his heir to the throne. This could be done if there were witnesses there to hear it, but this one came with some suspicion. When an official adoption certificate was produced for Hadrian, it was not signed by Trajan but by his wife. It was also dated the day after Trajan died, and in another anomaly Roman law required the person being adopted to be present when the declaration was made. Hadrian was still in Syria at the time, so none of this lines up with what would be right.

In spite of all that, Hadrian would take the throne in Rome, and while he would promote Turbo as a close friend and confidant, the great hero of the Kitos War did not fair as well. Quietus would be murdered the next year in 118 A.D. Some records show he was executed on trumped up charges of conspiracy, which makes sense considering. The problem seemed to be that Quietus was a close friend and confidant of Trajan. With his great success in the campaigns and wars along with him being governor of Judea, which lay very central in the empire's territory, Hadrian most likely saw him as a threat. If not in the short-term of displacing Hadrian himself, certainly in the long-term of Hadrian being able to name his own successor. In either case it is again interesting, to say the least, that a disastrous time and specific war for Rome was blamed on the Jews, and the war named for a man who was shortly there after murdered.

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute,  
answered by Philip E. Busby.***



FBS continued from pg. 8

All that said, if Abraham had been speaking these words as a man who was simply struck as a prophet to say them unto Isaac, for that moment and time and for us to read so many centuries later, it would mean even Abraham did not really understand what he was saying, and certainly Isaac would not have. For all the words I can type here I'm not sure I can convey this totally and in the correct light, but I wish to simply help us understand, Abraham did not speak these words as a man who was just given the words to speak, but out of an understanding he had. Maybe a good example is that of Daniel. Daniel sought to see what lay ahead in the future. Eventually God gave Daniel an extensive vision filled with images that no doubt meant things to Daniel but which clearly did not fill in all the detail nor answer all the questions. It is quite clear as God wraps up the vision He is willing to show Daniel that Daniel is still very much filled with questions. In some ways Daniel might have been filled with more questions after seeing what he did than before! (Dan 12:7-10) The point is that as a prophet or a man able to prophesy, interpret writings and dreams, Daniel still could not grasp all God had shown him. He simply wrote them down as he was suppose to, and the vision is preserved for us to read about even today.

The Book of Revelation is much the same experience with John. Unlike Daniel, John had not sought so specifically to see the vision or the information God gave him, but John was certainly a willing vessel. Thus, God comes to John on the Island of Patmos and tells him to pay attention and to write what he saw! (Rev. 1:9-11) This John does, and just as with Daniel's vision we can

read what John wrote to this day. All these things show us how much both these men did not fully understand what they were being shown. They were/are the unfolding events of mankind's path, a path man is choosing of his own accord to take through the individual choices of each individual on a daily basis. We also see along the entire road, God's plan unfolding to give each of us the best chance at salvation we can have, and how God acts at certain points due to those who serve Him on this earth as well as ways He must act according to His righteousness. In the end we see God's righteousness will cause Him to end this entire universe and the life in it. Ever since these prophecies/visions have been shown, the question as to exactly what all they mean and say has been a matter of debate. Why? Because to this day their meaning is not fully clear to many people.

The point here is, none of this was the case with Abraham. He did not specifically seek the information as to why God wanted to do what He wanted to do in order to get this answer to give to Isaac. Abraham is not speaking to his son as a man just given words for the moment. Abraham is speaking according to the understanding his faith had already given him as to what God's plan of salvation was/is! This is a very important point to keep in mind as we read what he says in verse 8. Abraham says, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering:.." In this statement we find the key we talked so long about in our last segment. How is there any way Abraham could do what God asked him to do? How could he follow God's request that he do something so beyond what would seem right? The answer lies in this statement by Abraham. Abraham already understood something that

is something we all grasp in some way, but which Abraham grasped in a way so much deeper and more profoundly effecting to his life than any of us have. Abraham understood all things were in God's hands!

Abraham did not have to answer the question of how could God ask him to do something God would tell men was an abomination to do. He didn't have to answer all the questions about how God could possibly carry on with the covenant He had made if the son of promise which Abraham had waited so long to have was to die! Abraham would die not even seeing a fraction of the covenant accomplished from a human's point of view, yet Abraham trusted God; put his faith in God; believed in God. Why? Because Abraham understood how much, no matter what things, or how much anything God asked or did, didn't seem to make sense to him, especially in the moment, God was working His plan and only God could bring it about in the end of it all! Abraham also understood something many, especially in our modern time, just don't get at all. Abraham understood God was going to carry out that plan with or without our cooperation. Now this is something I have hit at and came at from so many different angles through all the writings I have done, because it is so important we get this point and get it fully. Do we affect the plan of God and how it unfolds? Yes, and that means we can intentionally affect it!

Intentionally affecting it is what ministers and Christians over all do when we make mistakes, but so much more so when we think we should try to soften what

God has said or asked of us in order to make it more acceptable to those of our time or that we are around at the moment. However, affecting something is not changing its ultimate course. I talk about it so often because I can't help but see it as the ultimate example that Noah was laughed at when he build a big floating box and said there would be a flood to kill every living thing. No one really believed him, yet when the time came the rain fell! People could hinder Noah's work in many ways. Maybe even to the point God would have to step in at times and perform miracles for Noah to finish the ark, but no matter, if not for God, Noah could never have taken all the necessary animals with him on the ark anyway. So we see in this it was all dependent on God one way or the other. The only question was, who was going to take part in helping it and who was going to resist it in some form or the other? This is still the question for us today, and it was the question on that day Abraham and Isaac walked that path together to Mount Moriah!

Abraham could do what God had asked him to do and be a part of what God had in His perfect will or he could ignore it, fight it, try to change it, resist it in some way, but the only thing it would change is that Abraham would not be the righteous man we see him as today. So too Isaac had this choice. He could walk on with his father and accomplish this thing God had asked them to do, or he could resist or refuse. We need to get that point, because like it or not there were two people needed to make this happen. Abraham and Isaac were in this together, but the plan of God would still take place just the same in the end no matter what

they each chose to do. What Abraham shows in this statement are so many things there is no way for me to write about them all in one segment or maybe ever. That's why I point back to this statement over and over in my teaching. However, at its base what Abraham shows us is an understanding of things he knew and an understanding there were things he knew he did not know!

For some that sounds like about the oddest thing I could say, but it's so true and so important we see it. There is a profoundness in the fact Abraham understood there was a plan of God that only God could accomplish. God had created man and given us a free will. We had fallen from the innocence God created us to live in and suffered the punishment of death. What lay beyond that is something even a master in Israel named Nicodemus showed he did not understand, yet it would seem long before the Law and prophets and The Messiah giving His life, Abraham understood it! (John 3:1-13) From this, we need to understand that faith is not just a key - it is the key! Without anything but his faith, Abraham understood God's ultimate plan enough to say these words to Isaac. Faith and faith alone had led Abraham to a truth many without being told the direct stories in the Bible would never have gotten in a lifetime of study and seeking. Again, even those in Israel who were considered masters of the Law did not grasp what Jesus came to do. So too they did not grasp the other point Abraham knew, which was knowing there are things we don't know.

So, of course, as we talk about faith I mean that relationship we have with God, not a blind belief. Today we have God's Word and it will never contradict or grow

old in comparison to what God shows us directly. The more God reveals to our world and personal lives the more we will understand His Word. The more we understand His Word the easier it is for God to reveal the truth to us in its entirety. It is a hand in hand relationship, not one that leaves the old behind as the "new" is shown. That is the reason Abraham could go through with this sacrifice of his son; the reason Isaac could walk this hill with his father in total trust. They both understood there was things God accomplishes in ways we can never really grasp, but it's up to us to do what God tells us in order to be a part of those things God wants. They could both do this because what their faith caused them to know is that in the end God did not just have a plan, but a plan that would go ahead in spite of their actions or the actions of those in the future. That assured them of one simple fact, to live is Christ and to die is gain! (Phili. 1:21)

To live for God and do as He asks us to, to seek to know what He really wants us to do with our lives and do it, furthers God's purposes in some form no matter what it seems to cost us and no matter what it seems to accomplish or hurt as we see it. By being a part of God's plan we are living as Christ lived, and great is our reward, not on this earth, but in heaven. (Matt. 5:11-12) Not following God's plan or caring what He would want us to do with our lives, how He would desire us to live our lives, we are intentionally putting ourselves outside being a part of God's plan. When we do that it does not matter to what degree we do it. Only from the standpoint of what kind of misery we cause or don't cause for others is really much of the effect. For us personally we need to understand, the "good person" who

simply will not follow God in their daily lives because they have ways of going about things that God's plan just doesn't fit well into will be lost to eternity, just the same as the worst person who has ever lived. If we die in a state of not caring about God's will and trying to live it, we will be lost, but if we die following God, no matter what brings that death, we gain the reward of being freed from this flesh and the sin that besets us in order to live a life without the threat of sin's damage ever again. Now that is a gain!

So, Abraham understood that God and only God could bring about what was truly needed for salvation. He and Isaac only needed to follow God's words in the here and now. What I think we see on the most human level of this entire moment of Abraham's answer is that Abraham was giving Isaac credit for knowing the physical answer to the question he had asked. Abraham knew Isaac was looking for more details, an explanation of some sort that he thought by chance his father might have as to how Isaac's death could further the plan of God! In giving Isaac that credit, Abraham has no need to make any statement of specifically saying he didn't know or that God had not given him details. He didn't have to say something along the lines of what we might say today as in, "Son, you know as much as I do!" There was no doubt or hesitation in what Abraham said. He was giving no indication to Isaac that he feared the future or questioned what was to come next. Abraham was being clear that he was not doing this with blind belief, he was doing it because he knew in ways many of us do not grasp even today, what they were about to do accomplished some step along

the way of God accomplishing what only God could do that one day would open the true door of salvation!

We owe so much to men of great faith like Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, and so many more we read about in the Word. The earlier in the Word of God their stories come the more true it is that these people did what they did without the benefits of seeing the lives of others who had followed God in profound ways. They are people who did what they did in pure faith. I'm even reminded again of the non-Jewish woman who came to Jesus and asked for a miracle. Jesus asks her if it is right that the food meant for the children should be thrown to the dogs, and He asks this for one basic reason, Jesus wanted those that were with Him at that moment as well as those of us living today to benefit from her faith! He wanted us to read what she said, and I never can write about this without tears in my eyes. This woman, who lived outside the chosen nation, was certainly part of the chosen people of God, for we are told, "And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Matthew 15:27 This is the same attitude Abraham and Isaac approach this situation. They are both simply children of God who have made themselves part of God's chosen people by choosing to do what God had asked them to do. What it gained in full, only God could fully know, and so verse 8 ends by telling us, Abraham and Isaac simply walked on together to accomplish what God's will was for their lives!

Until next time, Shalom!

have been miles and miles wide!

So with the people ready, the priests would take the ark to the edge of the water, and as they began to step forward with the ark, the water on the upstream side began to back up on itself allowing what was on the other side of the priests to flow away and dry up. The water that was held back did not simply flood even farther and wider to take up this excess, instead it heaped up creating a pile of water that would only grow in size and back up even further the longer the water was held back. So those upstream of where Israel would cross saw something incredible taking place with no idea how it was possible. All those downstream would find, even in a season of flooding, the water would simply go dry and be gone. With the time it must have taken to get all of Israel over the Jordan, one can only imagine how pronounced this effect must have become. So, while the Red Sea crossing might have been grander in some ways, this act of God to allow Israel over the Jordan would certainly effect far more people and be obvious that a great wonder had taken place!

The priests with the ark would stand in the middle of the Jordan while all of Israel passed safely to the other side. This would include about 40,000 fighting men from the three tribes who already owned land on the east side. Now, before the nation had come over, Joshua told them to pick one man from each tribe for something special. Once over, Joshua was commanded of The Lord to instruct each of the twelve men to go where the priests stood with the ark, and each of them were to collect a stone. These

twelve stones would be taken into the camp of Israel that night, and Joshua would set them up as a memorial so each generation of children in Israel could ask what they meant. The children would be told how God brought the nation over the Jordan river on dry ground, and how these stones were taken from the place where the priest stood in the middle of Jordan to hold back the waters!

This miracle God did to magnify Joshua, and now the people would not only respect him but fear him as they had feared Moses, for they saw in this how God was in Joshua just as He had been in Moses. The priests, carrying the ark, being the first to walk in would be the last to walk out. Joshua would command them to come up to the ground that had been dry before they stopped the water. We are told that as their feet stepped onto this normally dry ground the water was allowed to settle back to its normal flow. This the water would do, not in a tremendous damaging flood, but simply return to the way it had been as if nothing had happened. As much of a miracle as it was for the water to be held back, this resettling of the water to its normal seasonal state is just as much of a miracle! In truth, we are told this entire event was witnessed and/or told by witnesses to every king on the west side of the Jordan, and it made their hearts melt within them. The crossing of the Jordan was turned from one of the most vulnerable things Israel would have to do in entering the land, to a miracle that would not only get them across safely but add to their ability to easily take the land.

So Israel would camp there in the east boarder of Jericho in what is known as

Gilgal. This would be on the tenth day of the first month on Israel's calendar. This day coincides with the day Israel was to bring the lamb in to live with the family during the first Passover as God set Israel free from Egypt. (Ex. 12:3) This would put the event only four days prior to Passover that year, and so the children of Israel would observe a full year calendar of the feasts God had commanded them to observe for the first time in the true heart of the promised land. It is emphasized again how Joshua set up those stones the twelve men had taken out of Jordan in that place to memorialize the event. Joshua would instruct the people to tell their children where these stones came from and what they meant. He would directly tie this to the fact Israel had come out of Egypt, and God had parted the Red Sea for them to cross. I don't think people often take the time to consider how Israel was to enter the land at its south end, meaning if they had obeyed God in the beginning they would not have needed to cross over Jordan. When we connect the two events, we should be reminded of how this crossing of the Jordan was only necessary due to Israel's unbelief, even after witnessing the parting of the Red Sea. This shows us the grace and mercy of our Mighty God that He was willing to continue working with the nation, and even come to this day when, once again, great waters would be parted to allow them to cross into the land of promise! (II Pet. 3:9)

We are told the next event to happen was that of assuring all Israel's males were circumcised. This is interesting, to say the least, because we think about how the nation

had been told originally to circumcise their males, and then in the Law they were told it was to be done to every male child at eight days old. (Gen. 17:10-12, Lev. 12:1-3) However, the truth of Israel's journey was that the original generation that came out of Egypt was circumcised as they had been told, but as they traveled, there were those children born before the stipulations of the Law were laid down. By the time the tabernacle was built and anointed for its first time use, there had been even more children born. Then there is apparently the simple fact that over the course of the nation traveling, many were not vigilant in getting their male children circumcised. This had been allowed to slip by to the point there were many in the age group of fighting men who had not been circumcised at this point. Thus, God instructs Joshua to get the nation ready to circumcise every male in Israel that had not by then had it done. This is also interesting in that as much as attempting to cross Jordan's mud would have made the nation vulnerable to attack, certainly having a great majority of its men down while healing from a circumcision would have. Yet God specifically waits until the nation was on the west side of Jordan to have the people take care of this.

After this was done, God tells Joshua this would truly shake off any last connection the nation might have to Egypt. They were now a nation, on the land God had promised them, and all their males bore the symbol the Law required. This event would also be the reason why this place was named Gilgal and Israel would remain quietly here until the men had healed. Of

course, this would not just get the nation purified before The Lord for moving forward in general, but more specifically for the holding of Passover, which we are told the nation did on the fourteenth day of the month just as they were suppose to. This is when another major transition would take place for Israel, as they would eat the Passover on the fourteenth, and on the fifteenth they would eat the corn of the land! This would truly mark the nation being reliant on the land to sustain them, being yet another symbol their days of wandering were over. The people would rise up the morning of the sixteenth, which is the Feast of Firstfruits, to find for the first time, in all but the oldest of the people's lifetime, there would be no manna waiting for them on the ground! Never again would the nation have manna, for they would now eat from the bounty the promised land would provide. That year the Feast of Firstfruits would mark the children of Israel truly being ready to observe all the Laws God had given them for all the reasons and in all the symbolism they contained.

It would be here that Joshua would have his own burning bush experience as well. There was, of course, no need for Joshua to be convinced he was to lead the nation, for he had already taken up that job. However, this too puts a cap of sorts on the journey Israel had taken. This all began when one day Moses was out tending flocks in the field and saw a bush burning that was not being consumed. Moses would go to that bush and be instructed of God to take off his shoes for he stood on holy ground. (Ex. 3:1-6) That would take place somewhere in the Sinai Peninsula. It is even possible it was very close to the place where Israel camped

as Moses was preparing to take the nation into the promised land. As we know that south end did not become the entrance of Israel to the promised land, this place next to Jericho would receive that honor. As Joshua was there in this place, he would see a man standing by Jordan with his sword drawn in his hand. It seems obvious Joshua was aware this was no ordinary man, and he goes to the man asking if he is for Israel or against it? To this the man responds, that's not the point of his being there for he is the captain of the host of God. Joshua would fall down on his face to worship this man, and one should note that unlike other times men fell to worship angels and were rebuked because only God is to be worshiped, Joshua is told no such thing! This, because Joshua, just like Moses at the burning bush, did not stand in the presence of an angel, but in the presence of Jesus Himself. Joshua would be instructed to take off his shoes, and he would do so, for he truly stood on holy ground!

God would now point to Jericho and the fact the city was so afraid they had not opened their gates to let anyone in or out since Israel had come over. From this, Joshua could see that God had already given the city to Israel. Thus, Joshua is not told to attack the city in any traditional way. He is also not instructed to try and take the city in a diplomatic way as in talking them into surrender. Surrender was not what God wanted to use the nation to gain in Canaan. God had told Abraham the time would come the corruption of the people in the land would need to be dealt with, and that time had definitely come as Israel finally crossed over some 40 years after the time they would have entered the land. (Gen. 15:16)

Thus, destruction of the people is what God would use the nation for, and that would begin here at Jericho. Joshua was to use the priests with the ark to lead the people around the city once each day with seven priests before the ark blowing shofars, which are trumpets made of rams' horns. This they would do for six days, and on the seventh day they would march around the city seven times. Once that was complete the priests with the trumpets would sound a long, loud blast and the people were to give a mighty shout. At this, the walls would fall down flat, and Israel could charge in from all sides of the city to take it.

Joshua would go and instruct the priests to take up the ark with seven priests in front of them blowing the trumpets, and head for the city. He would instruct the armed men of the nation to go out in front of the ark to compass the city, and the rest of the nation would follow behind the ark to do the same. Joshua also told the people not to make a sound as they marched. Until Joshua gave the order to shout, they were to be totally silent and allow only the sound of the trumpets and of their feet to be heard. Thus, the nation would go out the first day, and the ark would make one full trip around the city before returning to the camp along with all the people. Joshua would rise early the next morning, and in the same exact formation send the nation out to repeat this one trip around the city for the second day. For six straight days they would march around the city once and simply return to their normal daily activity in the camp. How frightful this must have been for the people of the city. They had no idea what Israel was doing or what purpose it served, but that can drive the

most fear of all!

On the seventh day the nation would rise early as the day dawned to set out once again in this same formation to compass the city. Just as God had instructed, this day they would not stop after one circle but continue to march around and around the city until they had gone around it seven times. By this day the people of the city had to be very aware this daily event would surely happen, but how surprised must they have been when they watched the nation complete its first trip around the city and instead of filing off to return to their camp they just kept going! After the third and fourth times the entire city had to be very aware this was not like any other day they had witnessed this. All they could do was watch and wait to see what would happen, because Israel truly had the city surrounded. By this seventh day we also see how scared of Israel all the other kings of the land must have been, for surely news of this happening had reached other places, yet no reinforcements or ally armies showed up to do anything. Israel would complete their seventh trip around the city and stop. The priests would blow their trumpets long and loud and Joshua would give the order for the people to shout. This would not be a shout with the intent of causing fear, their marching had already caused that. This shout by Israel would be a shout of victory, for God had already given them the city!

Let's stay in God's Word!