

# JOSUE-"VALIANT IN WAR"

By

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## INTRODUCTION.

After the death of Moses his place as leader of the Hebrew nation was filled by Josue, of the tribe of Ephraim. He was well suited for the leadership. He was eighty-five years old—the oldest man among them. For long he had been closely associated with Moses, and he is called "the minister of Moses" (Josue 1, 1); he knew the great legislator's mind, and that he had imbibed no small share of the spirit of Moses is clear from his respect for the law. Moses had placed him at the head of the fighting men of Israel from the time of their first encounter with the Amalecites in Raphidim (Exodus 17, 9). Josue represented his tribe among the spies who went to Hebron to view the country (Numbers 13, 9), and acquitted himself well on that occasion. He was a great leader of men; strong and courageous, straight and fair-minded, cool and far-seeing. To these soldierly qualities he united great gentleness and tolerance and a deep sincere piety. He is one of the great names of the Old Testament; "Josue is one of the rare personages to whom the sacred books have no reproach to address. " He left a strong and a lasting impress for good on his people: "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Josue, and of the ancients that lived a long time after Josue . . ." (Josue 24, 31).

## THE MISSION OF JOSUE.

The task which fell to Josue was a different task indeed. It was twofold—first to conquer the Promised Land from the inhabitants; and then to portion it out among the tribes of Israel. Both as a military leader and as an administrator Josue was entirely successful. When all this was accomplished and Josue was now an old man he was inspired to leave a written record of his exploits: "Josue, therefore, on that day made a covenant, . . . and he wrote all these things in the volume of the law of the Lord" (Josue 24, 26). Ben Sirach (in Ecclesiasticus 46, 1) speaks of him as the "successor of Moses among the prophets" (in the original Greek: 'in the prophecies,' i.e., in the inspired books). Jewish tradition always accepted it that Josue under divine inspiration wrote the book which bears his name (the fifth book of the Bible), and the Fathers of the Christian Church adopted this tradition. Thus Josue completed the work of Moses by establishing the Hebrews in firm possession of the Promised Land, and added another book to the written revelation.

## THE BOOK OF JOSUE.

The Book of Josue is a most valuable document because it is the vivid account of a contemporary (for the most part of an eye-witness) of the events recorded. And what events they were ! Among them there are many miracles, and among these again the most astounding and spectacular miracles in the history of mankind.

Josue was leader of the Hebrews for twenty-five years, and the book gives an outline of sacred history during this period (1409-1384 B.C. probably).(1) It is only an outline, however, because the book was written for a religious purpose, not for the sake of history as such. The book is intended to point out how God fulfilled all His promises to the Patriarchs, and how in accord with these promises the people of Israel were miraculously settled in the Promised Land: "you shall know with all your mind that of all the words which the Lord promised to perform for you, not one hath failed" ( Josue 23, 14). From this it goes on to point the lesson that as God has been faithful in His promises of reward, so likewise He will not fail to execute His threats of punishment on those that do not keep His law: "when you shall have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which he bath made with you, and shall have served strange gods, and adored them: then shall the indignation of the Lord rise up quickly and speedily against you, and you shall be taken away from this excellent land, which he bath delivered to you" (Josue 23, 16).

The narrative is divided into the preparation for the invasion (chapters 1-5); the conquest (chapters 6-12); the division of the country (chapters 13-22); the last years of Josue and his death and burial (chapters 23-24).(2) The researches of archaeologists and historians afford much help to the understanding of the historical background of this very interesting period of sacred history and to the filling in of the narrative, while at the same time confirming at every turn the perfect accuracy of Holy Scripture.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE PROMISED LAND.

Just as the Chosen People are known by various names at various periods of their history—Hebrews, Israelites, and (after the Captivity) Jews; so too the Promised Land has several names. The most ancient designation seems to be "the land of the Amorrite" ( Josue 24, 8). It is found in the form Amurru or Amurri in Babylonian and Egyptian inscriptions as remote as 3700 B.C., and in the Tell elAmarna letters of the fifteenth century B.C. Another name for the country which occurs twelve times in the Tel el-Amarna letters is Chanaan; it occurs frequently in the Old Testament also, e.g., Exodus 15, 15; Judges 3, 1. After the Captivity the country was called "the Holy Land" (Zacharias 2, 12- "the sanctified land" in our version; Wisdom 12, 3; 2 Machabees 1, 7). From the second century of our era this title became common among Christians for the country which was the earthly scene of the Mystery of the Incarnation, and of the Life, Death and Resurrection of the Son of God made Man. (1) The most current of all its names, however, and its official name still, is Palestine, which it takes from the Philistines, a fierce warlike people of the Aegean iron-age civilisation who will appear in the later history of the Hebrews (in the period of the Judges).

Geographically Palestine is part of Syria. The boundaries of the Promised Land were defined in Numbers 34, 3-12: on the west—"the great sea," i.e., the Mediterranean; on the east—"the most salt sea," i.e., the Dead Sea; the Jordan river; "the sea of Cenereth," i.e., the Lake of Genesareth; on the south a semi-circle from the Dead Sea

The whole country is seldom named in the New Testament; generally reference is made to one or other of its political divisions at the time: Galilee, Samaria, Judea, to "the torrent of Egypt" on the Mediterranean, which would include Cadesbarne; on the north—Mount Hor, (in our version "the most high mountain") which is probably Libanus (modern Lebanon) to Emath at the foot of Mount Hermon. These boundaries were later described in the shorter popular formula "from Dan to Bersabee" (Judges 20, 1). Thus its length would be roughly a hundred and forty miles; the average breadth fifty miles. In area Palestine is about as large as Belgium or Wales or the Irish province of Munster. This area is exclusive of the territory east of the Jordan, already before the death of Moses occupied by the tribes of Ruben, Gad and half of Manasses. At first this was bounded by the rivers Amon on the south and Jaboc on the north (Judges 11, 22); but in time it was extended as far north as Dan and the borders of Damascus, and formed an area three quarters the size of Palestine proper.

The position of Palestine is worth noticing. It is the gateway between Asia and Africa. It is joined to Egypt, Syria and Arabia; and within easy reach of Asia Minor, Damascus, Assyria and Babylonia. In Palestine all the old civilisations met and clashed. It was the battle-ground of the ancient world. The commercial routes of the world were through Palestine in the period we are studying, so that it was at the centre of civilisation and a key position in peace and war alike. And yet it was isolated by strong natural frontiers and easily defended.

Palestine is a very favoured country too, presenting every variety of landscape: mountains to the north and through the centre; rich plains like Asdrelon and Saron; the alluvial Jordan valley with its luxuriant vegetation; patches of desert waste. The climate is equally varied. In general it is sub-tropical; but in the Jordanic depression it is tropical, on the coast medium; while on the mountains there are snow and frost. It is also a fertile country: "Isaac sowed in that land, and he found in that same year a hundredfold" (Genesis 26, 12). This was so because the Patriarch had the special protection of God. And herein precisely Palestine was specially suited to be the Promised Land. The fertility of the soil depends entirely on the rainfall. There are only two seasons properly so called—the rainy season (November to April), and the dry season (May to October). Granted sufficient rain at the proper time prosperity was assured; on the other hand drought meant certain famine. The country, therefore, was peculiarly dependent on divine providence. When providence smiled on the Chosen People then they were happy indeed with their splendid social legislation which made for wide distribution of property: "And every man sat under his vine, and under his fig-tree: and there was none to make them afraid" (1 Machabees 14, 12). But Palestine could be a barren and a stricken land when, as happened in the time of Elias the Prophet, "it rained not for three years and six months" (St. James 5, 17).

### THE CHANAANITES.

At the time of Josue Chanaan (as Palestine was then called) was in possession of seven different nations or tribes (Deuteronomy 7,1; Josue 3, 10). The Chanaanites—the most powerful and numerous of these—gave their name to the

whole country. They were strongly entrenched from Hazor near Lake Huleh in the north, through the Jordan valley and west to the Plain of Asdrelon and Mount Carmel. The Amorrrhites were in Bethel and Hai. The Hethites held the country about Hebron. The Hevites were a small group in and about Gabaon. The Pherezites held the highlands about Sichem (later Samaria) in the centre of the country. The Jebusites were in Jerusalem, which later became the capital; the Gergesites in Jericho, on the south-eastern frontier.

#### THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONQUEST.

The conquest of Chanaan was prepared in the distant past. We have a glimpse of the divine plans in the promises made to Abraham. God told that Patriarch that his descendants would possess Chanaan, but not for several generations yet—"for as yet the iniquities of the Amorrrhites are not at the full . . ." (Genesis 15, 16). These nations brought about their downfall by their crimes of sorcery, idolatry, human sacrifices, superstition (Wisdom 12, 3-6) . Later, the Hebrews were commanded by God to "destroy these nations utterly"; to "make no league with them, nor shew mercy to them" (Deuteronomy 7, 2).

There is also a text in Josue 24, 12 which bears on this subject of the preparation for the conquest: "And I sent before you hornets: and I drove them out from their places, the two kings of the Amorrrhites, not with thy sword nor with thy bow." Clearly, therefore, God had intervened beforehand to make victory easy for the Hebrews. The matter is introduced here only in a passing way, and there has been much discussion as to the meaning of hornets (or wasps—for the word in the original is obscure). St. Augustine suggested that "perhaps it is to be understood symbolically of fear" and many since have looked for a symbolic meaning in the hornets. The traditional explanation, however, is that there is question of a plague of hornets (or some such poisonous insect) which preceded the attack of Josue, and disorganised and weakened the Amorrrhites. It seems to be the only meaning of the inspired commentary on the passage: "Yet even those (the Amorrrhites) thou sparedst as men; and didst send wasps, forerunners of thy host, to destroy them by little and little. Not that thou wast unable to bring the wicked under the just by war, or by cruel beasts, or with one rough word to destroy them at once; but executing thy judgments by degrees thou gavest them place of repentance . . ." (Wisdom 12, 8-10).

At the frontier of the doomed land of Chanaan Josue and his army were now encamped, awaiting the divine command to go forward.

#### RAHAB AND THE SPIES.

The special providence which the Hebrews enjoyed did not dispense them from using their natural powers and their ordinary ingenuity. Indeed, God "Who wishes all beings to exercise fully their own activity" gives extraordinary powers only to those who use well and with prudence their ordinary, natural endowments. Accordingly, Josue began by sending as spies to Jericho two men who would report to him on the state of the country; and especially on the size, position and defences of the city which was his first objective, namely Jericho—the most important position in Chanaan from a strategic point of view. Spies sent by Moses on a former occasion for a similar purpose had on their return stirred up discontent among the people; so this time Josue was careful to send them secretly. The spies went to Jericho, and they were housed by a woman named Rahab.

The people of Jericho had already heard of the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea and of the defeat by the Hebrews of the kings of Basan and Hesebon. The two strangers were seen entering the city, and quickly identified as Hebrews. The motive of their coming was easily surmised, and word was brought to the king of Jericho. At once an official search for the spies was begun, but Rahab cleverly concealed them in her house and sent their pursuers on a false trail. Her house abutted on the wall of the city, and that night when the city gate was closed they escaped from Jericho by means of a rope let through a window of Rahab's house.

Rahab is commended for her faith (Hebrews 11, 31); and for her good work in saving Josue's spies (St. James 2, 25) . She believed that the God of the Hebrews is the One True God: "For the Lord your God he is God in heaven above and in the earth beneath" (her own words in Josue 2, 11).

For saving the spies she demanded that they would promise on oath to save her, her parents, brothers and sisters with all their property when the city would be taken, and (in the manner of the time) the inhabitants slaughtered.

Incidentally she made it known that the inhabitants of Jericho were completely unnerved through fear of the Hebrews: "the dread of you is fallen upon us, and all the inhabitants of the land have lost all strength" ( Josue 2, 9). The spies returned safely to Josue, who was much heartened by their report.

#### THE CROSSING OF THE JORDAN.

Josue commanded the people to prepare a day's provisions for the journey to Chanaan. The day before the Hebrews left Setim was given up to public prayer and religious ceremonies, and early next morning the march towards the Jordan and Jericho began. The priests went in front carrying in procession the Ark of the Covenant, the people following at a distance. The Jordan was in flood "it being harvest time" (Josue 3, 15). But as soon as the priests carrying the Ark entered the water a miracle occurred. Above them the river ceased to flow and the water rose up like a mountain, while below them it continued its course to the Dead Sea until the bed of the river became dry. The priests with the Ark stood while the Hebrew host marched across into Chanaan. When all had crossed safely Josue commanded the priests to come also, and when the Ark was carried across the Jordan the river resumed its course as before.

The Hebrews then marched to Galgal, more than two miles to the south-east of Jericho, and there they encamped and made their headquarters for the whole campaign of the conquest. Four days later they celebrated with great solemnity the Feast of the Pasch, eating (according to the ritual revealed to Moses) only unleavened bread. The bread was made from the wheat of Chanaan. They were now at length in the Promised Land. It was exactly forty years since they had set out from Egypt.

### CHAPTER II.

#### THE CONQUEST OF CHANAAN.

"Now Jericho was close shut up and fenced, for fear of the children of Israel, and no man durst go out or come in" (Josue 6, 1). In ancient times every city was surrounded by a wall to protect it from attack. Entrance to the city was through one gate in this wall, and the gate was carefully guarded. For several reasons Jericho was strongly walled: it was near the frontier; it was on the line of the principal commercial routes; it was an isolated city—for Jericho is an oasis surrounded by desert, and finally it was a vital point in the defence of the country as a whole. But Josue gained possession of this important fortress through a miracle.

By command of God the Ark of the Covenant was carried at the head of Josue's army. The procession went from Galgal towards Jericho, made a complete circuit of the beleaguered city, and then returned to the camp. This was done each day for six consecutive days. On the seventh day seven priests with the trumpets for announcing the jubilee year went in front. After them came the fighting men; then the Ark; lastly the people. The procession went around the city seven times. This done, the priests sounded the trumpets and all the multitude shouted in response. Suddenly the walls of Jericho collapsed, and Josue's host entered the city. The astounded inhabitants offered little resistance. They were slaughtered "man and woman, young and old" ( Josue 6, 21); only Rahab and her family escaped the massacre. The gold and silver, brass and iron were set apart for the use of the Sanctuary. Then the city was burned to the ground, and Josue forbade it to be rebuilt; if anyone would attempt to do so he would be left childless: "In his firstborn may he lay the foundation thereof, and in the last of his children set up its gates" (Josue 6, 26).

Striking confirmation of the biblical narrative here comes from excavations made on the site of these events. These excavations were begun in 1907, and they have been continued (with interruptions) ever since. The site of ancient Jericho has been located with certainty at Tell es-Sultan, more than a mile north of Eriha (modern Jericho). Remains found show that it was occupied in the neolithic age (3500-2500 B.C.) by a people (probably not Semites) using stone implements of agriculture and stone weapons of war. They were completely ignorant of art, but the city was fortified by a wall. From the next period (2500-1600 B.C.) comes evidence of a very different culture belonging to a Semitic people using metal (mostly bronze) implements and arms, and pottery—the latter sometimes ornamented. But the outstanding feature of the remains of this period is the excellent architecture of the walls surrounding the city. There are two walls dating from different periods of this (bronze) age, the outer of which would be perhaps five centuries later than the inner. The inner wall was about ten feet thick, and thirty feet high; built of brick on a stone foundation. It

was destroyed by human force, probably at the invasion of Chodorlahomor and his allies. The second wall (dating from between 2000 and 1800 B.C.) was built about a hundred feet outside the ruins of the old. For the time it was an astounding feat of engineering. It was designed with the greatest genius: the foundations of mortar and pebbles go down to the solid rock; on these was raised a sloping wall of stone about twenty feet high skilfully buttressed; on this again a brick wall, six feet thick, which is considered to have been originally twenty-five feet high. The hill on which the city was built is thirty feet above the level of the plain; hence the top of the city wall was about eighty feet above an enemy attacking. To capture Jericho surrounded by this wall (a mile and a half in extent) was simply impossible in the warfare of the period. This wall was destroyed by a sudden cataclysm, and it is acknowledged to be the wall which fell at the conquest of Josue. There is evidence, therefore, of the necessity for the miracle, and of the occurrence of the miracle; there is evidence even of the stern prohibition under curse given by Josue against rebuilding Jericho: ". . . the city itself was not rebuilt nor its fortifications restored until the ninth century B.C."

#### THE CAPTURE OF HAI.

Josue next sent men to view Hai, a town seven miles north-east of Jericho. They reported that Hai was but poorly defended, and a detachment of three thousand was sent to storm it. The three thousand, however, were repulsed, and fled ignominiously leaving thirty-six dead. This unexpected reverse plunged the Hebrews into despondency: "the heart of the people was struck with fear, and melted like water" ( Josue 7, 5).

Josue "rent his garments," and he and the ancients (i.e., the men who formed his advisory council) "put dust upon their heads"—two ritual actions to express sorrow and repentance. Then prostrate before the Ark Josue prayed for light and help. It was revealed to him that the recent defeat occurred because God had withheld from the Israelites His special protection, and this again on account of the sacrilege of one of their number who had appropriated part of the spoils of Jericho contrary to the divine command. On the morrow Josue summoned the people, and the delinquent was discovered—one Achan, son of Charmi, of the tribe of Juda. He had stolen and buried beneath his tent a scarlet garment, two hundred shekels of silver and fifty shekels of gold. These were found and destroyed, and Achan was condemned to be stoned to death. God then commanded Josue to advance on Hai, and assured him that this time he would be successful.

Josue brought to the attack his whole army. He placed a large number of his best soldiers in ambush to the west of Hai. Then he led the remainder to the north of the city; provoked the soldiers of Hai to make a sally against his; and when they did, Josue and his army turned in pretended flight. The defenders of Hai who were reinforced by men from the neighbouring city of Bethel, were over confident from their former victory. They all left the city to pursue Josue and his army. The latter retreated a good distance to draw off their foes from the city. Meantime the men who were waiting in ambush entered the open and defenceless city and set it on fire. Josue now turned his men to face the enemy, but the soldiers of Hai became totally bewildered when they saw their city suddenly go up in flames behind them. Then before they could recover from their dismay the soldiers of Josue rushed on them through the gate of the burning city. They were surrounded and defeated, and their king was taken prisoner and hanged.

#### THE COVENANT RENEWED.

Having obtained a foothold in the country Josue now gave his attention to the command prescribing that the Covenant be renewed (Deuteronomy 27). Doubtless the recent sacrilege of Achan had pointed to the necessity for it. He, therefore, built an altar of large stones on Mount Hebal and offered sacrifices. Then he caused to be engraved on stone columns the principal heads of the law of Moses. He assembled the twelve tribes and ranged them six on Mount Hebal (namely Ruben, Gad, Aser, Zabulon, Dan, Nephtali) and six on Mount Garizim opposite (namely Simeon, Levi, Juda, Issachar, Joseph, Benjamin). The priests carried the Ark into the valley between these hills, and stood with it in full view of all the people. The ancients, priests and judges stood near the Ark. Josue himself from the valley read the law to the multitude; the Levites read the curses for its violation and the blessings for its observance—the people answering Amen to each, as prescribed in Deuteronomy 27-28: "Cursed be he that abideth not in the words of this law, and fulfilleth them not in work" (Deuteronomy 27, 26); "Now if thou wilt hear the voice of the Lord thy God, to do and keep all his commandments . . . Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed in the field . . . Blessed shalt thou be coming in and going out" (Deuteronomy 28, 1-6).

## THE GABAONITES.

Josue and the people returned to Galgal to rest and prepare for a fresh campaign. The news of the capture of Jericho and Hai spread through the whole country, and the Chanaanites were roused into forming an alliance in order to oppose the Hebrews. One little group, the Gabaonites, did not join this confederation but used a more subtle tactic, which they carried through in a very original manner,

Gabaon, a city-state twelve miles east of Jericho, was the political head of a racial unity which included also the cities of Caphira, Beroth and Cariathiarim. An embassy of these set out for Galgal to sue for peace with the Hebrews. They came wearing old garments and patched shoes; they brought old wine bottles that were "rent and sewed up again" ( Josue 9, 4), and bread which was broken into fragments from age. They represented themselves to Josue as having travelled a long distance, and they asked for terms of peace with the Hebrews. Josue replied that if they were from Chanaan there could be no question of an alliance with them, they must be exterminated. They protested that they had come from beyond Chanaan, and in proof of this they brazenly affirmed that they had begun their journey with new clothing and shoes, new wine-skins and fresh bread. Josue was deceived by the ruse, and he and his council made an alliance with them, promising on oath to spare their lives. Three days later when Josue resumed his march to complete the conquest of the country the whole truth of the matter was discovered. But the oath was taken and it must be kept. The Gabaonites, therefore, were spared but condemned to be forever slaves: "in the service of all the people, and of the altar of the Lord, hewing wood and carrying water . . ." (Josue 9, 27).

## A NEW CONFEDERACY.

The action of the Gabaonite cities in going over to Josue caused much annoyance to Adonisedec, the king of the Jebusites in Jerusalem—all the more so since they were renowned for their valour in war. Adonisedec, therefore, sent embassies to the four Amorrhite kings who were in his neighbourhood in the city-states of Hebron, Jerimoth, Lachis and Eglon, proposing that they should join him in an alliance to attack Gabaon. They all agreed to do so, and the five kings brought their united forces to besiege Gabaon. An urgent appeal for help was sent to Josue. He made a forced march to the relief of Gabaon; came upon the Amorrhite allies unexpectedly, and routed them completely. A miraculous shower of hail rained on the fleeing armies and killed even more of them than did Josue's soldiers. This was the occasion on which Josue under divine inspiration commanded the sun to stand still: "Move not, O sun, toward Gabaon, nor thou, O moon, toward the valley of Ajalon. And the sun and the moon stood still, till the people revenged themselves of their enemies" ( Josue 10, 12-13). The day was prolonged to twice its ordinary length by a miracle unique in the history of the world.

The five kings, who had taken refuge in a cave near Maceda, were discovered and brought to the Hebrew camp.

They were made to lie prone on the ground while Josue's leaders placed their feet on the neck of each in turn—an ancient symbol of victory. The cities of Maceda, Lebna, Lachis, Eglon, Hebron, Dabir fell one by one before Josue, and at the end of this campaign he had conquered the southern portion of the country, i.e., from Gabaon to Cadesbarne.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE CONQUEST OF NORTHERN CHANAAN.

Jabin, king of Asor, now headed an alliance of the northern kingdoms. When these mustered all their forces they were a formidable enemy both because of their numbers, and because they had horses and chariots which gave them a great advantage over the Hebrews. Josue went to meet them; made a surprise attack on their united armies at "the waters of Merom" and routed them with terrible slaughter. Jabin was killed, and his city was captured and burned. This victory put the whole country in Josue's power except for a few strongholds in the mountains. These soon fell, with the exception of Gaza, Geth and Azotus in the southeast. Thirty-one kings had been slain. The conquest was complete, "and the land rested from wars" (Josue 11, 23).

### THE DIVISION OF CHANAAN AMONG THE TRIBES.

Chanaan was conquered, and the principal strongholds of the old population were destroyed. It remained now for

the victors to divide the conquered territory among them. Ruben, Gad and half of Manasses were already provided with land in Trans-Jordan. Levi, the priestly tribe, was to have no special territory: "The Lord the God of Israel himself is their possession" (Josue 13, 33). They would receive certain cities and their suburbs from all the other tribes. This would ensure that members of the priestly tribe should be scattered through the whole country. Chanaan, therefore, was to be divided into ten parts, these to be distributed by lot to the several tribes. The task of division and distribution had been committed to Eleazar, the High Priest; Josue; and ten princes—one from each tribe concerned (Numbers 34, 17-29). It is clear that the tribe of Juda promptly received their territory (from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean, i.e., the southern portion of the country as far as the city of Jerusalem); because five years after the capture of Jericho Caleb of the tribe of Juda came to Josue to urge his special claim. Of the twelve spies sent by Moses from Cadesbarne only Caleb and Josue had been loyal to God and confident of the divine protection, and for this Caleb had been promised for his own possession Hebron and the territory about it—the place explored on that occasion. Josue granted the claim, and Caleb took possession of historic Hebron ( Josue 14, 6-15). Moreover, he extended his possessions, for with the help of his son-in-law and nephew, Othoniel (the future Judge), he captured the city of Cariathsepher.

#### THE SONS OF JOSEPH.

The second portion of Chanaan fell to "the sons of Joseph" ( Josue 16, 1); i.e., to the tribe of Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasses. It was to the north of Juda and extended from the Jordan to the sea.

After this there was a long period of delay. The division was not completed; moreover the occupation of the divided territory was only partially carried out. It would seem that the Israelites were slow to separate and take possession of "the land flowing with milk and honey" (Josue 5, 8). This appears strange at first sight, but it is not difficult to find reasons for it. Firstly, it must be remembered that those who entered Chanaan had lived for nearly forty years a nomad life in the desert of Pharan. It would not be an easy matter for them to accommodate themselves now to a life of farming and pastoral pursuits, and to a fixed mode of life in villages and towns. They would prefer the tents and the camp; the carefree and casual life of the desert. Secondly, although the Chanaanites were routed from their principal strongholds, they were by no means destroyed. Each tribe would now be required to do battle independently against the remnants of the native races in order to occupy and hold the territory assigned to it. Thirdly, it seems that the Hebrews had lost their zest for war after the first valiant battles of the conquest. The bulk of the people, then, remained in the camp at Galgal; only a few more adventurous spirits (like Caleb and Othoniel) had the initiative to take possession of the Promised Land. Even of those who did take their allotted territory some returned to Josue and complained of the difficulty of ousting the Chanaanites. Josue sent them back and ordered them to drive out the old population (Josue 17, 14-18).

#### THE TABERNACLE AT SILO.

When the descendants of Joseph moved into their territory they buried the mummified body of that Patriarch in Sichem ( Josue 24, 32), near the dividing line between the tribes of Ephraim and Manasses. It was a fitting resting-place for the last of the Patriarchs—at the centre of the possessions of his own tribes; fitting also in that it was the land which Jacob (the father of Joseph) had once purchased from the Sichemites (Genesis 33, 149).

The Tabernacle was now moved from Galgal, and Josue and the people changed their camp with it to Silo in the Ephraimite territory. But again the people were slow to proceed with the division and occupation. It was a wrong policy for them, for the conquered Chanaanites began to come forth in ever greater numbers from their hiding places, and steadily to regain their hold. At length, when matters had drifted along in this fashion for many years the divine voice called Josue to complete his work: "Thou art grown old, and advanced in age, and there is a very large country left which is not yet divided by lot" (Josue 13, 1). At once Josue assembled the people and rebuked them for their indolence in carrying out the divine will. He ordered that three competent men be chosen from each of the seven tribes which were not yet settled in Chanaan. These men were to survey all the country north of Manasses, and to divide it off into seven portions. The boundaries of these portions were to be put clearly in writing. Then they were to return to Silo, and Josue would draw lots for the possession of each tribe of the seven in turn. This was done and so Josue proceeded to complete his mission—the establishing of the Chosen People in settled possession of the Promised Land.

### THE SEVEN TRIBES PLACED.

In this new distribution of the country the first lot fell to the tribe of Benjamin. It was a small wedge of territory between Juda and Ephraim, and it included Jerusalem and Jericho. Josue's envoys had found that the portion assigned originally to Juda was too large proportionately (Josue 19, 9); hence it was decided that another tribe should share the southern part of the country with Juda. The second lot was drawn for this, and it fell to the tribe of Simeon. They were given place in Negeb to the south of Juda. This country (Negeb) is now little better than a desert; but the ruins of cities show that it was once a fertile land, thickly inhabited. It included Bersabee and Siceleg. The tribe of Zabulon received territory to the west of Lake Cenereth (later called Genesareth). The tribe of Issachar was placed south of Zabulon. To the west of both of the latter the tribe of Aser was located; they received Mount Carmel and the country north of it as far as the Phoenician border. The tribe of Nephtali received a thin strip of the country along the Jordan to the north of the Lake of Genesareth. It included Cenereth, the city from which the lake derived its name.

The seventh, the last and the least desirable portion, fell to the tribe of Dan. This also was taken from the extensive region which originally belonged to Juda and Ephraim. It contained eighteen cities—some of them (Gezer, Lydda, Joppe) famous in sacred history. But the old Amorrhite population held possession of the rich plains, and the Danites were unable to expel them. Cooped up in a narrow area in the mountains the Danites were in a sorry plight. Six hundred families of them migrated to the extreme north of Chanaan; attacked and captured the city of Lesem (or Lais) at the sources of the Jordan; exterminated the inhabitants and formed a colony there—re-naming the city Lesem Dan (afterwards Dan Lais; modern Tell el-Kadi). Those who remained behind were still harassed by the Amorrhites until finally the neighbouring tribe of Ephraim came to their relief. The Ephraimites conquered these enemies of the Danites and forced them to pay tribute ( Josue 19, 47; Judges 34-36). Already we may notice the prominence beyond the others of the tribes of Juda and Ephraim. The rivalry which arose between them later caused a division in the kingdom after the death of Solomon.

### THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

In the laws which Moses gave for the government of the Hebrew people provision was made that six cities should be appointed in the Promised Land "for the refuge of fugitives, who have shed blood against their will" (Numbers 35, 11). It was a very wise law; for at this period and for long after (until Christianity came) the 'law of retaliation' was everywhere in force. This meant equal retribution for an injury; stern justice with no tempering mercy: ". . . life for life. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth . . ." (Exodus 21, 24). Moses accepted this principle of justice; but he took care to prevent the abuses to which it gave rise. The next of kin of a murdered man was the avenger in the legal codes of the time Justice was meted out summarily. Often vengeance was taken on an innocent man; his nearest relative then executed vengeance in turn, and so a blood feud was begun which went on indefinitely. The cities of refuge forestalled this evil. One who had committed manslaughter could flee to the nearest of these cities. At the gate of the city he furnished summary evidence to the ancients that his act had not been premeditated. He was then admitted and given shelter, and protected from pursuers, until in due course a formal trial could be held, 'witnesses brought, and the case fully and publicly investigated. If his innocence were established at this trial he remained in the city of refuge until the death of the High Priest. After that he was free to return home without fear of vengeance.

### THE LEVITICAL CITIES.

Each tribe was now required to give certain cities to the priests and levites.. The six cities of refuge with forty-two others were assigned. Caleb thus surrendered Hebron and its suburbs, but retained the villages and land around it. This done, the division of Chanaan was at last completed (Josue 21) .

### THE TELL EL-AMARNA LETTERS.

When the Tell el-Amarna tablets were discovered in 1887 hopes ran high that new light was going to be shed on the occupation of Chanaan under Josue, and that also the date of the Exodus would be decided. These tablets were official international correspondence from the subject kings and governors of Syria and Palestine to Amenhotep III and Akhenaton—Pharaohs of Egypt (1414-1362 B.C.). These letters appeal repeatedly for help from Egypt against

invaders, and among these invaders is a race called Habiru. Scholars, however, are by no means agreed that these Habiru are our Hebrews. Beirut and Byblos in Syria were attacked by the Habiru or their allies, and of this there is no trace in Josue. Again, the invasion seems to have been from the north, not from the east. It is very unlikely then that the Tell el-Amarna correspondence had reference to the occupation of Chanaan under Josue, especially when it is remembered that Chanaan was always a centre of political unrest in the ancient world.

#### A CIVIL WAR AVERTED.

Josue now summoned to him the soldiers of the trans-Jordanic tribes and addressed them for the last time. In simple and eloquent language he commended them for having shared with their brethren the toil of the conquest, and thus fulfilled the divine command. He exhorted them to love God, and to keep in mind the truths and observe the commandments which God had revealed for their benefit. He also reminded them that they were bringing rich booty from the conquest: "silver and gold, brass and iron and variety of raiment" ( Josue 22, 8); this he ordered them to share with their kindred beyond the Jordan on their return. Then he blessed them and sent them away.

They set out for their own country, and when they crossed the Jordan they erected an immense stone altar near the bank of the river on their own (eastern) side. It was easily visible to the other tribes on the opposite bank. This caused great indignation among the tribes in Chanaan—all through a misunderstanding of the purpose of the altar. Word spread quickly; the Hebrews in Chanaan gathered to Silo where the Sanctuary was; and it was proposed to make war on Ruben, Gad and Manasses for having (as was supposed) abandoned the worship of God and turned to idolatry. Calmer counsels prevailed, however, and a deputation was first sent to seek an explanation. Phinees, the High Priest, and ten princes—one from each tribe in Chanaan—formed the deputation. The explanation was soon given: the altar was built—not for sacrifices, which the Hebrews could offer only in the Tabernacle at Silo; but for a lasting reminder to the trans-Jordanic tribes and to their children after them that, although separated from the other tribes of Israel by the natural barrier of the river, they were still one people with the ten tribes beyond, and equally with them the Chosen People of God—worshippers of Jahwe, and custodians of His revealed truths. This explanation removed the whole difficulty. The deputation returned to Silo, and announced the result of their enquiry. The people dispersed, glad and grateful that their fears of a religious revolt in Israel had been groundless.

#### DEATH OF JOSUE.

Josue assembled the people and their princes and magistrates to Sichem to speak to them his last instructions. He warned them against idolatry, and against marriage alliances with the heathen races in their midst and about them. If they remained faithful to the One True God they would have His protection and blessing; they would prosper in peace and prevail over their enemies in war. If they abandoned God He would also abandon them. He recalled the numerous divine favours which they had received as a nation—from the revelations given to Abraham to the possession of Chanaan; God's magnificent promises and His fidelity in fulfilling them: "Behold this day I am going into the way of all the earth, and you shall know with all your mind that of all the words which the Lord promised to perform for you, not one hath failed" (Josue 23, 14). He asked and received from the assembly a public profession of their faith in God, and a solemn avowal of their determination to keep the divine commandments. Having thus renewed the Covenant Josue dismissed the people, and he himself returned to Thamnathsare.

Soon after he died peaceably at the age of a hundred and ten years. They buried him in his own possession at Thamnathsare in his own tribe of Ephraim. It is a great tribute to his leadership in a difficult time that "Israel served the Lord all the days of Josue, and of the ancients that lived a long time after Josue" (Josue 14; 31).

#### CONCLUSION.

1. Objection has been raised against the authority of Holy Scripture on the ground that the biblical narrative of the conquest of Chanaan portrays it as unjust in principle and cruelly carried out. This objection overlooks the very elementary truth that God is supreme arbiter in His own creation. He can dispose of human property and human life as He wills. The same Lord Who commanded the extermination of the Chanaanites permits the death of thousands of persons (often innocent persons) by plague or famine. No one would question the divine right in this latter case; there

is no court of appeal. In the case of the conquest of Chanaan, moreover, there was question of chastisement for the crimes of generations (Wisdom 12 3-7). It was not unjust in principle, therefore.

Secondly, the cruel mode of securing and establishing possession of the country was only in keeping with the standards in vogue at the time.

The complete destruction of the Chanaanite population was part of the Messianic plan. In order that the nation of Israel should fulfil its mission it was necessary that it should be kept isolated from other nations. Otherwise the Israelites would be led into idolatry and led to lose their faith in God and the Redeemer to come.

2. The Epistle of St. James 2, 25 speaks of Rahab as "justified." Thus her faith in the One True God not alone saved her from death when Jericho fell, but also led her to repentance and justification. In this early period of history, therefore, we find that Hebrew theology speaks clearly of God as One and Universal; of the vocation to faith as given to Gentiles; of faith as a free gift of God—given in this instance to a woman who had formerly been a harlot.

3. The name Josue comes from a Hebrew word meaning 'salvation.' The Septuagint translators, indeed, call it 'Jesus'—the same name which was given to Our Divine Lord by the Archangel at the Annunciation (St. Luke 1, 31). The irreproachable Josue—the valiant leader of the Chosen People against their enemies, conquering the Promised Land, zealous for religion, is a figure or type of the Divine Redeemer. The Promised Land is a figure of the Kingdom of Heaven begun on earth in the soul by sanctifying grace and completed in Heaven in the Beatific Vision. And the reluctance of the Israelites to take possession of Palestine and to expel their enemies is typical of the lack among mankind of appreciation of the Kingdom of Heaven—the mystical Palestine.

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