

# A Bible Adventure

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## Highway Through the River and a Most Unconventional War

*A retelling of Joshua 3, 4, 5, and 6*

Joshua, encouraged by his two faithful scouts' report on Jericho, decided that it was time to move. Early the next morning, the whole of Israel traveled the last stretch down to the banks of the Jordan River, where they pitched camp for the last time in the wilderness. The next stop was to be the Promised Land!

On the third day, Joshua sent his officers throughout the camp of more than a million Israelites, instructing them, "When you see the priests carrying the Ark of God, move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know the way to go, since you have

never been this way before. But keep a distance of one kilometer between you and the Ark. Do not go near it!

"Cleanse yourselves before God," Joshua then told the people, "for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you."

That night the people prayed for faith and strength from God. As of yet, they did not know how they would cross that huge swollen river into Canaan. It was harvest season, and every year at that time the Jordan overflowed until it was about a mile wide.

On the following day, Joshua told the priests to take up the Ark and go out in front of the people.

God encouraged Joshua, saying, "Today I will begin to honor you before all Israel so that they will know that just as I was with Moses, so will I be with you. Command the priests who carry the Ark to enter the River Jordan and to stand in its waters."

"Come, hear God's words to us!" Joshua cried out to

the people. "Through His promises, you will know that the living God is with us. He will not fail to drive out the people of Canaan who live in the land that you will inherit. The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. When the feet of the priests that bear the Ark touch the River Jordan, its downstream flow will be cut off and stand up in a wall of water."

See "A New Leader and His Undercover Agents"  
for the first part of Joshua's story.



In the distance, the people watched and waited expectantly as the priests approached the river. The swirling waters were rolling on without change, yet the priests marched on until they felt the waters rushing around their feet.

At that very moment, the waters began to reverse their direction and move upstream against the usual flow. A few miles up the river, the waters were rising higher and higher, as though being held back by an invisible dam! Meanwhile, below the point where the priests stood, the river flowed down toward the Dead Sea, emptying the riverbed. All this happened where the Jordan passed near the city of Jericho.

Joshua then commanded the priests to walk out to the middle of the dry riverbed

and stand firm. Then that multitude of men, women, and children, with their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, along with their wagons and beasts of burden that carried their tents and provisions, began to cross over the Jordan.

Except for the creaking of wagon wheels and the sounds of animals, one million people trooped silently across that dry riverbed in defiance of nature, yet feeling insignificant in their own strength and dwarfed by the power of their mighty God, who in a moment had stopped the force of a raging river in order to accomplish His purpose.

Many hours later, when all were safe on the other side, God commanded Joshua to send twelve men, one from

each tribe, to walk into the middle of the Jordan where the Ark and its bearers still stood. Each was to return with a stone from the river, with which they would build a monument at the river's edge.

"This will be for the future," Joshua proclaimed to the people. "So that when your children ask what it is for, you can tell them, 'It is to remind us that the Jordan stopped flowing when the Ark of the Lord went across.'"

And when all was finished, Joshua commanded the priests to leave the riverbed, and no sooner had they all set their feet on the opposite side of the river than the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and ran at flood level just as before.

Meanwhile, the atmosphere of Jericho was feverish with activity. From atop the walls of the city, inhabitants had been observing the Hebrews' movements ever since they miraculously crossed the River Jordan. The king of Jericho had heard of the valiant exploits of Joshua and the Hebrews while they were yet in the wilderness—how their God had parted the Red Sea when they came out of Egypt, and how they had overcome the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan River.

Therefore, the king, expecting an attack at any moment, ordered his men to lock the city gates. No one was allowed to go in or out. The watchmen on the walls were to report any movement around Israel's camp, and every able-bodied man was armed and ready for battle.



Early that morning, word was rushed to the king that the Hebrews were being mobilized. Soon the alarm was sounded in all quarters, and Jericho's men of war took up their positions along the city walls.

Back at the camp, Joshua gave the Lord's instructions to the priests. "Take up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, and seven of the priests shall carry trumpets in front of it," he said, and then commanded the people, saying, "Advance! March around the city. Let those who carry arms walk in front of the Ark, and a rearguard will follow it."

By this time, the walls of Jericho were full of people watching the most unusual

procession they had ever seen. This was not at all what the spectators had expected. The Hebrews were not attacking them but were merely marching silently around the city with their priests continually blowing on their trumpets. (Joshua had commanded the people to not shout or make any noise with their voice or say anything until the day he would tell them to shout. Then they were to shout with all their might.)

The people of Jericho had mixed emotions about this strange spectacle, which occurred not only that first day, but also once each day for the next six days. As they stared down from the walls, some mocked the antics of

their so-called conquerors, but others were uneasy.

On the seventh day, instead of dispersing after the first march around the city, the Hebrews continued circling, with the seven horns sounding along with the constant tromping of thousands of people. At the seventh time, when the seven priests blew one final long blast on their trumpets, Joshua gave the command, "Shout! For the Lord has given us the city!"

At that moment, the air was filled with every soldier in

the ranks giving a powerful shout. And with a mighty rumble, the walls of Jericho began crumbling until they had collapsed flat on the ground. Only Rahab's house was left standing.

As they had been instructed, Joshua's men rushed the city and spared no life except Rahab and her father's household, because she had hidden the messengers which Joshua had sent to spy out Jericho.

God was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land.

See "Heroes of the Bible: Joshua" for more on this fascinating Bible character.