

# A Background to Religious Syncretism (Joshua 1:1ff)

The Israelites entered and occupied the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua to whom Moses had handed over his role before his death. They had wandered for forty years in the wilderness especially in the land of Moab.

However, Israel had to fight some hard battles before they could enter and occupy the Canaan land from its inhabitants.

God willed the conquest and settlement in Canaan. He had already promised to give this land to Israel through their ancestors. He instructed Joshua to be confident and organize the people of Israel and lead them in crossing River Jordan into the Canaan land.

Joshua was assisted by some judges to bring about the successful conquest of Canaan and its occupation. They played vital roles as military commanders.

The priests were concerned with religious duties. They carried the covenant box and led the procession in crossing into the Promised Land.

Joshua addressed the people of Israel before crossing into the Promised Land. They had to prepare themselves fully for their entry into Canaan.

In towns such as Jericho, Bethel, Gilgal, and Ai the people of Israel faced serious resistance from the inhabitants before they could settle down.

However, in places like Shechem, the Israelites were given a warm welcome. This was attributed to the influence of some of their relatives who had remained behind as others migrated to Egypt when famine had hit Jacob's family.

In some towns like Jericho the Israelites were assisted by some collaborators to weaken and defeat their enemies.

However, the conquest of Canaan remained incomplete for quite a long period of time till the reign of King David. King David completed the conquest by capturing Jerusalem from the Jebusites and established it as his city.

## **REASONS FOR THE SUCCESSFUL CONQUEST OF CANAAN**

God offered protection to the people of Israel. He had already promised them this protection through their leaders thus the people fought knowing that security was guaranteed (Joshua 1:5-7).

The Israelites were under a strong leadership of Joshua whom God had well guided on how to go about the conquest. He was determined, confident and obedient. This made him to organize the people into one fighting force.

The people of Israel had a strong spy network that helped to beat off the security trap of the enemies. These spies guided Israel's soldiers into attacking and defeating their enemies like at Jericho.

The Israelites used some collaborators in Canaan to defeat their enemies. A prostitute woman named Rahab protected the spies of Israel and gave some vital information that led to the capture of Jericho (Joshua 2: 1 ff).

The Israelites used surprise attacks on their enemies. On such occasions, the enemies were caught disorganized and unable to defend themselves.

The people of Israel got a helping hand from their relatives who had remained in Canaan as they migrated to Egypt. These people eased their work by giving them warm welcome.

The people were already battled hardened. They had fought several battles with different enemies including the Moabites. However, their enemies in Canaan had relatively been peaceful meaning that they could easily get frightened.

The enemies of Israel were disunited. They fought in smaller groups as compared to the one united force of Israel.

The Israelites were determined to settle down after wandering forty years in the wilderness.

The people of Israel were feared as being invincible since they were God's people. News of their earlier victories caused panic and fear among the inhabitants of Canaan thereby making some of the enemies to give up easily.

The people of Israel had a strong nationalistic feeling. This enabled them to defend each other whole heartedly.

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