

## CHAPTER 4

# Joshua Fights for Freedom

STUDENT TEXT: PAGES 30–37

### Overview

God instructs Joshua to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, beginning with the city of Jericho. Joshua sends two spies into Jericho. A woman, Rahab, hides the spies from the king of Jericho. The spies promise Rahab that if she keeps their mission a secret they will spare her and her family when they conquer Jericho.

Joshua and his troops surround the city of Jericho for seven days. On the seventh day, the priests blow their horns, the people shout, and the walls of Jericho fall flat. The Israelites capture and destroy the city of Jericho.

God is with Joshua as Joshua and the Israelites conquer all of the Promised Land. Joshua reads from God's Teaching to all of Israel.

### Core Concept

Freedom brings with it both blessings (rewards) and responsibilities.

### Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Distinguish among Torah, Prophets, and Writings.
- Describe blessings the Israelites received when they gained their freedom.
- List new responsibilities for Joshua and the Israelites.

### Set Induction

Ask: Have you ever been told in class or at a sports practice, "You'll do fine and succeed as long as you do what I tell you"? How do you feel when you hear this? Is it always easy to do what teachers or coaches ask you to do? What happens if you don't do what they ask?

Explain that in this chapter students will read how God tells Joshua that he will prosper if he follows the Teaching that Moses handed down to him. Ask: Why do you think God tells this to Joshua as he is about to lead the Israelites into the land of Canaan?



### Worth a Thousand Words


Direct students to look at the illustration on pages 30–31. Have students work with a partner to write five questions about the illustration. Call on volunteers to share their questions. At the end of this chapter, have students answer the questions they composed at the beginning of the chapter.

Tell students that this illustration depicts some of the events that took place when Joshua and the Israelites entered Canaan and conquered the city of Jericho.

You may wish to explain that the calligraphy reads: *Vayari'u ha'am t'ru'ah g'dolah*, "The people shouted a mighty shout" (Joshua 6:20).

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 Write three headings on the board: Torah—Prophets—Writings. Give each student a notecard with the name of a biblical character, a phrase describing an event in the Bible, or a book in the Bible. (*Cards might include: Abraham; Joseph sold as a slave; Moses; David; the First Temple is built; Jonah; Esther; Psalms*) Call on volunteers to read their card aloud and help them identify the part of the Bible (Torah, Prophets, or Writings) in which their card is included. You may wish to distribute copies of the Bible (Tanach) to help students find the contents of their cards.

Inform students that the Book of Joshua is the first book in Prophets.


### JOSHUA 1:1–9

On a map of the ancient Middle East, have students locate Lebanon, the desert in the south (Negev), the Euphrates River, and the Mediterranean Sea. Compare these boundaries with those on a map of present-day Israel.

### JOSHUA 2:1

Have students distinguish between a scout and a spy. (*A scout goes out to obtain information; a spy also obtains information but does so by observing secretly.*) Remind students that when the Israelites were in the desert, Moses sent scouts to find out about the land. Those scouts were not being sent on a dangerous spying mission; rather, they were sent to see what the land was like. In this case, Joshua is sending spies. The men set out on a dangerous military spying mission and seek safety by hiding in Rahab's house.

Ask: Which part of this verse implies that a battle will soon take place? (*"I will deliver the city of Jericho into your hands."*) How do we know it was dangerous for the spies to be in Jericho? (*They hid on Rahab's roof.*)

 Show your students photographs of a walled city, such as Jerusalem. If possible, include an aerial photo or one that shows the city gates so that students understand that these walls are not only high, but are also wide.

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### JOSHUA 2:2–7

Ask: How do you think Rahab felt when the soldiers came to her house? Why do you think Rahab did not tell the soldiers that the spies were with her? What might have happened to Rahab if the soldiers found out she was lying? Can you think of an example from modern Jewish history when non-Jews took great personal risks to hide Jews from enemies? (*Righteous Gentiles who hid Jews from the Nazis*)

### JOSHUA 2:8–15

#### **Bring It to Life**

Review the events of Chapter 2 of the Book of Joshua by inviting volunteers to role-play the parts of Joshua, the two spies, the king of Jericho, Rahab, and two or more soldiers.

### JOSHUA 6:1–5

Ask: Why do you think God tells Joshua to have the troops march around Jericho for seven days? How do you think the residents of Jericho feel as the Israelites march around them? How do you think the Israelites feel as they march around Jericho? Why would the Israelites have the Ark of the Covenant with them? (*to have God with them to help them in battle*)

Students may ask if the Israelites were violating the laws of Shabbat by fighting on Shabbat. Explain that according to the Book of Joshua, the Israelites were following God's commandment to march around the city for seven days. Rambam considered it permissible to fight on Shabbat for self-protection as well as to conquer, enlarge, or defend the Land of Israel.

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### **Worth a Thousand Words**

Ask: What are some things these archaeologists might hope to discover? What can they learn from these discoveries?

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### **Midrash Maker**

Ask students to give examples of people who do good deeds with modesty. (*Examples may include: When a person donates to a charity anonymously; when a person works with a group and does not ask for personal recognition*)

Tally the number of students who selected each name for the spies. Call on volunteers to explain why they chose particular names.

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### **JOSHUA 6:8–24**

Focus students on the illustration on pages 30–31. Have students identify which parts of Joshua 6:8–24 are depicted in this illustration. (*priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant; priests blowing horns; people shouting; the walls falling down*)

Have students recount how the conquering of Jericho is a joint effort between God and the Israelites. Direct half the students to list God's part in the conquest and the other half to list the Israelites' part.

### **JOSHUA 8:1–35**

Ask: Why do you think the Bible keeps reminding us that God was with Joshua? Do you think Joshua is a good leader for the Israelites? Why or why not?



### **Bring It to Life**

Divide the class into four groups: Joshua; a priest; an Israelite soldier; Rahab. Invite each group to write an account retelling the events of this chapter from that person's point of view. Have a representative from each group tell its account to the class. Discuss how the same events are viewed differently depending on a person's perspective and role in the events.

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### **Wisdom Weavers**

After reading this section, call on volunteers to name two or three blessings or rewards they have that are related to their being older and having greater freedom. (*Responses might include: being able to stay up later; having my own cell phone; being able to go to the movies with a friend without adult supervision*) Then ask several students to name some responsibilities they now have that are also related to their being older and having greater freedom. (*Responses might include: having to babysit a younger sibling; having to wash dishes; having more homework*)

Ask students to work in pairs and to make a list of at least five new blessings and five new responsibilities they have received now that they are older and have greater freedom.

Have pairs form groups of six or eight students and share their lists with their groups.

### **Big Bob's Balancing Act**

Invite students to reflect on ways that they can take better care of themselves and others. Ask students to write down their thoughts on a sheet of paper. Have students fold the paper so that the contents are not visible, tape the folded paper closed, and write their names on the outside of the paper.

Save these reflections. Return the reflections to students later in the year. Have them assess whether or not they are taking better care of themselves and others.

### **Wrap-up**

Ask students to explain why the Israelites in the desert are often compared to young children, while the Israelites who enter the Promised Land are compared to adults. Remind students that once the Israelites enter Canaan they are mature enough to have freedom as well as the blessings and responsibilities that come with that freedom.

Ask: What are some of the blessings the Israelites have received along with their freedom? What are some of the responsibilities that have been given to the Israelites?

Inform students that in the next chapter they will learn about the prophet Deborah and how she helped the Israelites defeat their Canaanite enemy.

### **Putting the Text in Context**

The rabbis addressed the moral problem of Joshua and the Israelites entering Canaan and conquering the land and all its inhabitants. According to the rabbis, God had promised the land to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. While the Israelites were out of the land, the Canaanites were living there and taking care of the land until the Israelites would return. Joshua and the Israelites were fulfilling God's will when they went and conquered the Canaanite cities.

Students may question the morality of the Israelites entering the land and conquering its inhabitants. Inform students that this conquest seems to be based on God's command given in Chapter 7 of the Book of Deuteronomy, which states that when the Israelites enter the Promised Land they are to wipe out the Canaanites living there. While we do read of Jericho being conquered, based on archaeological finds we know that only a few Canaanite cities were actually destroyed by the Israelites. There is also biblical evidence (from Judges, Kings, and Joshua) that many Canaanites remained in the Promised Land and worked as forced laborers for the Israelites. Traditional rabbinic sources explained that these biblical verses should be interpreted that conquering does not mean killing all of the inhabitants; those being conquered can choose to surrender, thus saving themselves. The rabbis, like we do today, found the type of conquest that took place in Jericho at odds with other beliefs, such as the value of repentance and the prediction that idol worshippers would someday stop worshipping their gods.