

# JOSHUA—WEEK 10

## RESPONSIBILITY



F. Michael Slay

*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*Joshua, Week 10 — Responsibility*  
*The Cover Picture is by Jean Fouquet (1420–1477)*  
*On display in Paris at the Bibliotheque nationale de France.*

The LORD tells Joshua that he's too old to make war, so He'll handle it from now on. Since Joshua didn't want to grow old for 40 years before going in, this is sad. But Caleb is still rarin' to go and so gets a generous inheritance. The Levites get no land, but a special role everywhere as priests. Judah gets the inheritance of preeminence due to his older brothers' sins.

This all raises a complex issue related to individual vs. collective responsibility.

---

We're pleased to provide *the DEEP* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity in the Lord.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. To subscribe to the daily DEEP email, visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) and click the sign-up button at the bottom.

There, you will also discover many other resources, including many email newsletters, such as our worldview study *ReVision*, our devotional newsletter *Crosfigell*, and *the DEEP*.

We are a spiritual fellowship patterned after the Celtic Revival. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

T. M. Moore, Principal  
[tmmoore@ailbe.org](mailto:tmmoore@ailbe.org)

Thank you.

All the individual weekly study guides are available for download here:

<https://www.ailbe.org/resources/itemlist/category/91-deep-studies>

Joshua, Week 10 — Responsibility  
Copyright 2022 F. Michael Slay  
The Fellowship of Ailbe  
[www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org)

*Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ESV stands for the English Standard Version. © Copyright 2001 by Crossway. Used by permission. All rights reserved. NIV stands for The Holy Bible, New International Version®. © Copyright 1973 by International Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved. KJV stands for the King James Version.*

1 Joshua 13:1–7 (ESV)

*Now Joshua was old and advanced in years, and the LORD said to him, “You are old and advanced in years, and there remains yet very much land to possess. This is the land that yet remains: all the regions of the Philistines, and all those of the Geshurites (from the Shihor, which is east of Egypt, northward to the boundary of Ekron, it is counted as Canaanite; there are five rulers of the Philistines, those of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron), and those of the Avvim, in the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians, to Aphek, to the boundary of the Amorites, and the land of the Gebalites, and all Lebanon, toward the sunrise, from Baal-gad below Mount Hermon to Lebo-hamath, all the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon to Misrephoth-maim, even all the Sidonians. I myself will drive them out from before the people of Israel. Only allot the land to Israel for an inheritance, as I have commanded you. Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh.”*

Remember Joshua 11:23b? *“Then the land rested from war.”* Now, after giving a long list of peoples inhabiting Canaan, the LORD says, *“I myself will drive them out from before the people of Israel.”*

The LORD lifts this burden from Joshua. Why?

Joshua is too *advanced in years*, that’s why. What’s curious about this is that Joshua is old because the Israelites spent forty years wandering around the desert to kill off a generation of unbelievers.

But Joshua was perfectly innocent of that unbelief. He and Caleb were all in for conquering Canaan. Joshua lives long enough to see the promised land and start its conquest, but he’s still old—too old to finish the job. He burned through most of his adult life in the desert.

This raises a super-deep issue. What’s up with Joshua being penalized for the sins of others? Why does the Bible seem to view responsibility for sin collectively?

*“I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.”* — Deuteronomy 5:9b (ESV)

*“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”* — Acts 16:31b (ESV)

This is tough for us westerners to get our minds around. We view reward and punishment as individual. People should only be responsible for the things they do.

But the Bible takes another view. We’re not as individual as we think.

---

But something else takes the same view as the Bible—nature. In reality, we pay for others’ mistakes all the time. Drunk drivers kill innocent people. We reap unearned benefits too (such as modern medicine).

Understanding this collective responsibility concept may be more than a western mind can grasp.

But at least we can see that the God of the Bible and the author of nature are clearly the same guy.

2 Joshua 13:8–14

*With the other half-tribe the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance, which Moses had given them, beyond the Jordan eastward, as Moses the servant of the LORD had given them: from Aroer which is on the bank of the River Arnon, and the town that is in the midst of the ravine, and all the plain of Medeba as far as Dibon; all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, as far as the border of the children of Ammon; Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites and Maachathites, all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan as far as Salcah; all the kingdom of Og in Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and Edrei, who remained of the remnant of the giants; for Moses had defeated and cast out these.*

*Nevertheless the children of Israel did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maachathites, but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day.*

*Only to the tribe of Levi he had given no inheritance; the sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance, as He said to them.*

This is a curious set-up. The LORD doesn't give the tribe of Levi any land at all. Rather, He designates them to be priests throughout Israel. This is *as He said to them* in the desert.

*“Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting. Hereafter the children of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. But the Levites shall perform the work of the tabernacle of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a statute forever, throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up as a heave offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, ‘Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.’”*

— Numbers 18:21–24

In a sense, they must live as guests. To the secular mind, this sounds ridiculous, even parasitic.

But it's actually a brilliant design. This is what will make the covenantal sacrificial system work. When everyone was in the desert, there was no problem getting the priests and the people together. They were already together.

But now the Israelites will be scattered all over Canaan. If the Levites were all in one home region, who would run worship? Would the priests have to travel to the various locations every Saturday? What if that's a three-day journey?

Instead, the LORD prepositions them.

---

This isn't just practical; it casts the Levitical function in stone. With no allotted land of their own, the Levites have no option but to fulfill their God-given role, and the other tribes have no option but to respect it.

3 Joshua 13:15–23 (ESV)

*And Moses gave an inheritance to the tribe of the people of Reuben according to their clans. So their territory was from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Valley of the Arnon, and the city that is in the middle of the valley, and all the tableland by Medeba; with Heshbon, and all its cities that are in the tableland; Dibon, and Bamoth-baal, and Beth-baal-meon, and Jahaz, and Kedemoth, and Mephaath, and Kiriathaim, and Sibmah, and Zereth-shahar on the hill of the valley, and Beth-peor, and the slopes of Pisgah, and Beth-jeshimoth, that is, all the cities of the tableland, and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses defeated with the leaders of Midian, Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, the princes of Sihon, who lived in the land. Balaam also, the son of Beor, the one who practiced divination, was killed with the sword by the people of Israel among the rest of their slain. And the border of the people of Reuben was the Jordan as a boundary. This was the inheritance of the people of Reuben, according to their clans with their cities and villages.*

*Moses gave an inheritance also to the tribe of Gad, to the people of Gad, according to their clans. Their territory was Jazer, and all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the Ammonites, to Aroer, which is east of Rabbah, and from Heshbon to Ramath-mizpeh and Betonim, and from Mahanaim to the territory of Debir, and in the valley Beth-haram, Beth-nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, having the Jordan as a boundary, to the lower end of the Sea of Chinnereth, eastward beyond the Jordan. This is the inheritance of the people of Gad according to their clans, with their cities and villages.*

*And Moses gave an inheritance to the half-tribe of Manasseh. It was allotted to the half-tribe of the people of Manasseh according to their clans. Their region extended from Mahanaim, through all Bashan, the whole kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair, which are in Bashan, sixty cities, and half Gilead, and Ashtaroth, and Edrei, the cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan. These were allotted to the people of Machir the son of Manasseh for the half of the people of Machir according to their clans.*

*These are the inheritances that Moses distributed in the plains of Moab, beyond the Jordan east of Jericho. But to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance; the LORD God of Israel is their inheritance, just as he said to them.*

After detailing the land allotment for the tribes to settle east of Jordan, the command that the Levites don't get a land of their own is repeated.

In Hebrew, repetition is how things are emphasized. This must be important.

---

There's a curious analogy to this Levitical role in many modern companies—the information technology department (AKA tech support or network managers). Having all the IT folks in one place impedes their function. Instead, they should dwell like Jane Goodall amongst the analysts in the other departments.

This can't be fully explained in a one-page devotional, but there's a book, based on a friend's PhD dissertation, which does—*Who Owns the Data* by Frank L. Eichorn.

4 Joshua 14:1–15 (ESV)

*These are the inheritances that the people of Israel received in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun and the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the people of Israel gave them to inherit. Their inheritance was by lot, just as the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses for the nine and one-half tribes. For Moses had given an inheritance to the two and one-half tribes beyond the Jordan, but to the Levites he gave no inheritance among them. For the people of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim. And no portion was given to the Levites in the land, but only cities to dwell in, with their pasturelands for their livestock and their substance. The people of Israel did as the LORD commanded Moses; they allotted the land.*

*Then the people of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know what the LORD said to Moses the man of God in Kadesh-barnea concerning you and me. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought him word again as it was in my heart. But my brothers who went up with me made the heart of the people melt; yet I wholly followed the LORD my God. And Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God.' And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, just as he said, these forty-five years since the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness. And now, behold, I am this day eighty-five years old. I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming. So now give me this hill country of which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said."*

*Then Joshua blessed him, and he gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. Therefore Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD, the God of Israel. Now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath-arba. (Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim.) And the land had rest from war.*

Caleb's smash-mouth attitude is a wonder to behold. He's 85 years old and his attitude is still, "Let me at 'em." Is he a beast or what?

The answer is, "What." He's not a beast; he's faithful. The LORD promised victory and he believed Him. He was ready to go in 45 years ago. His frustration has been building the whole time.

---

Faith can look a lot like courage, but they're often exact opposites.

Courage is the refusal to cave in to fear. In Caleb's case here, faith is the absence of fear.

He's not afraid of the Anakim, and he's not afraid that he might be wrong about God's promise.

That's faith.

5 Joshua 15:1–12 (ESV)

*The allotment for the tribe of the people of Judah according to their clans reached southward to the boundary of Edom, to the wilderness of Zin at the farthest south. And their south boundary ran from the end of the Salt Sea, from the bay that faces southward. It goes out southward of the ascent of Akrabbim, passes along to Zin, and goes up south of Kadesh-barnea, along by Hezron, up to Addar, turns about to Karka, passes along to Azmon, goes out by the Brook of Egypt, and comes to its end at the sea. This shall be your south boundary. And the east boundary is the Salt Sea, to the mouth of the Jordan. And the boundary on the north side runs from the bay of the sea at the mouth of the Jordan. And the boundary goes up to Beth-hoglah and passes along north of Beth-arabah. And the boundary goes up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. And the boundary goes up to Debir from the Valley of Achor, and so northward, turning toward Gilgal, which is opposite the ascent of Adummim, which is on the south side of the valley. And the boundary passes along to the waters of En-shemesh and ends at En-rogel. Then the boundary goes up by the Valley of the Son of Hinnom at the southern shoulder of the Jebusite (that is, Jerusalem). And the boundary goes up to the top of the mountain that lies over against the Valley of Hinnom, on the west, at the northern end of the Valley of Rephaim. Then the boundary extends from the top of the mountain to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah, and from there to the cities of Mount Ephron. Then the boundary bends around to Baalah (that is, Kiriath-jearim). And the boundary circles west of Baalah to Mount Seir, passes along to the northern shoulder of Mount Jearim (that is, Chesalon), and goes down to Beth-shemesh and passes along by Timnah. The boundary goes out to the shoulder of the hill north of Ekron, then the boundary bends around to Shikkeron and passes along to Mount Baalah and goes out to Jabneel. Then the boundary comes to an end at the sea. And the west boundary was the Great Sea with its coastline. This is the boundary around the people of Judah according to their clans.*

Judah gets a huge chunk of land. Why?

Because Jacob said so. His older brothers committed sins that cost them preeminence, and it fell to Judah.

*“Reuben, you are my firstborn,  
my might, and the firstfruits of my strength,  
preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.  
Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence,  
because you went up to your father’s bed; ...  
Simeon and Levi are brothers;  
weapons of violence are their swords. ...  
I will divide them in Jacob  
and scatter them in Israel.” — Genesis 49:3–4a, 5, 7b (ESV)*

---

But Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah have been dead for centuries. Should their descendants bear the consequences of their actions?

Yes. This gets us back to the collective responsibility theme. We like to think of ourselves as individuals, not as a collective like a beehive. But that’s not how the Bible sees us. This needs a whole DEEP series.

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. Do the ways that "life's not fair" trouble you?
2. When is nepotism appropriate?
3. What jobs/functions should be scattered vs. concentrated?
4. Have you ever seen faith look like courage?
5. Do you feel responsible for others?

*Items for prayer:*