

Moses hands over to Joshua (Deuteronomy 31–34, Joshua 1-6)

Moses had a special job to do. God spoke to Moses and he passed on what God said to the people. That is the work of a prophet and we will hear about other prophets later in the history of God's people.

Having set out from Egypt, the Israelites travelled for many years before they settled down in a particular place. God led them by a pillar of cloud during the day and by a pillar of fire at night. The pillar of cloud never left them during the day and the pillar of fire never left them at night. God gave these people food and water and he guided them with teaching through lessons like the Ten Commandments. These commandments told the people to love God and to love each other.

One day, when Moses was very, very old, he stood before the Israelite people and made a special speech. He told them to listen to God. He said that he would not be crossing the River Jordan on the next stage of the journey but not to worry because God was with them. Moses handed over the job as leader to his assistant Joshua. Moses met with Joshua and God told Moses and Joshua that the people would not always follow him as their God. God said that there would be times ahead when the people would do just as they wanted and would forget about loving God and loving each other and this would make God sad and angry. God spoke to Joshua and told him that he would always be with him. Then Moses and Joshua went to the Israelites and shared the words that God had given to them. Then Moses died and the people were very sad.

God spoke to Joshua and said that the people should cross the River Jordan into the land that God was giving them. God told Joshua that he would always be with him like he had been with Moses.

While the people were preparing to travel, Joshua sent two spies to check out the land, especially the town of Jericho.

The spies travelled to the land across the river and stayed with a woman called Rahab. The king of Jericho heard that two foreigners who could be spies had been seen and he sent some guards to get them from Rahab's house. Rahab hid the two Israelites under some dried grass on the roof to protect them and she sent the guards away, saying that the men had left. When the guards had gone, she went to the Israelites and said that she had heard about their powerful God, she knew that God was giving the land to the Israelites and please would they save her family. They made a plan and she let them escape down a rope from her window which was part of the wall of the town and which she would mark with a red rope when the Israelites came to take the town.

When the two spies went back to Joshua, they told him what had happened and what Rahab had said.

Joshua and all the Israelites travelled to the River Jordan and were given God's special instructions about how they were to cross. God said that he would hold back the water like he had done at the Red Sea when they had just left Egypt. So, the Israelites crossed the River Jordan.

Joshua knew that if they were to take the land that God had promised them, then first they must capture the city of Jericho. A few days after crossing the river, when the Israelites were camped near Jericho, Joshua saw a stranger standing in front of him and the stranger was armed with a sword. "Who are you?" Joshua asked. "Are you one of our soldiers or on the side of the enemy?" "Neither," the man replied, "I am the commander of the Lord's army". The stranger was a special messenger from God. Joshua just had to do what God said. He spoke to the people and told them the instructions from God.

The next day, as God told them to, all the Israelite army marched round the city of Jericho with seven priests blowing trumpets and men carrying God's commandments in a special box. The Israelites marched once round the city and then went back to their camp. The same thing happened the next day and the next day and every day for 6 days. Then, on the seventh day, the Israelite soldiers and the priests with their trumpets and the men carrying the special box started walking round the city walls. But this time they didn't walk round once, or twice or three times – no, this time they walked round six times. Then, on the seventh time, the priests with the trumpets lifted them high and blew and all the people SHOUTED.

Joshua called out, "God has given us the city!" Then the walls began to shake. The walls began to crack. The walls began to crumble..... And with a great C-R-A-S-H! The walls fell down. Remember Rahab? She and her family were kept safe