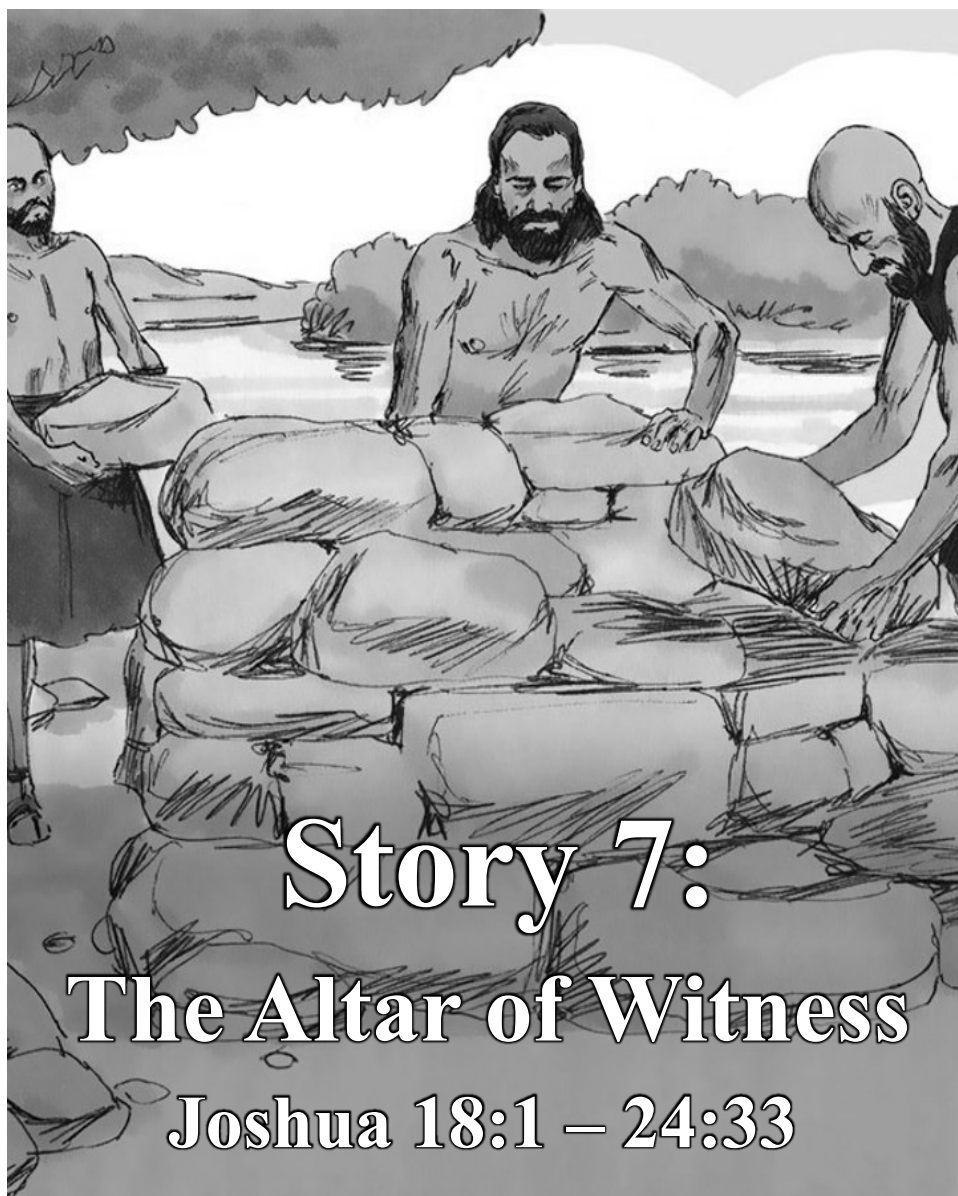


Story 7:

The Altar of Witness

Joshua 18:1 – 24:33



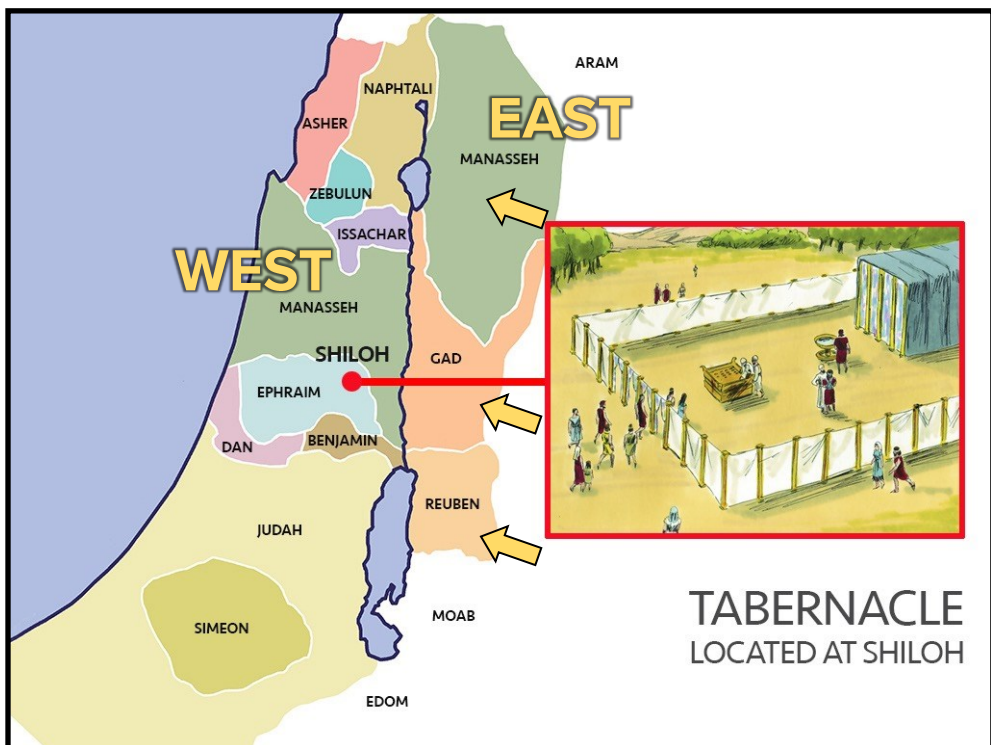
Story 7:

The Altar of Witness

Joshua 18:1 – 24:33

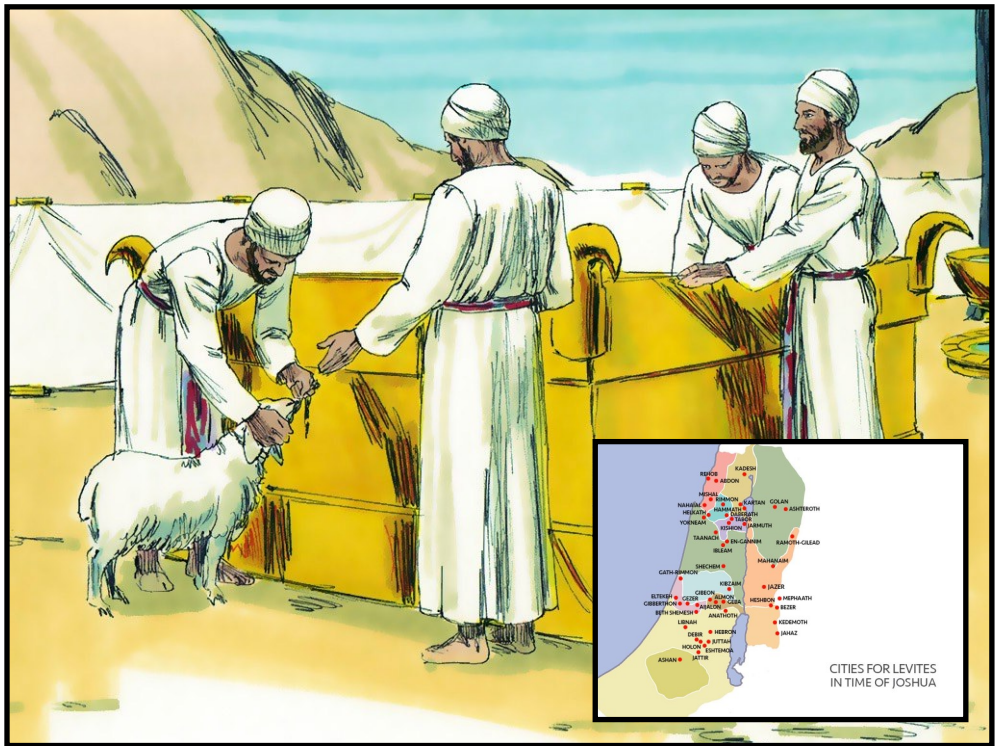


With Joshua as their leader, the Israelites conquered most of the Promised Land. There was still much more land to acquire, but they decided that it was time to begin dividing up the land between the tribes.



Most of the tribes were given land on the west side of the Jordan River. However, three tribes—Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh—were given land on the east side of the Jordan River.

Also, Joshua and the Israelites set up the Tabernacle in the city of Shiloh so that it would be in the middle of the Promised Land.

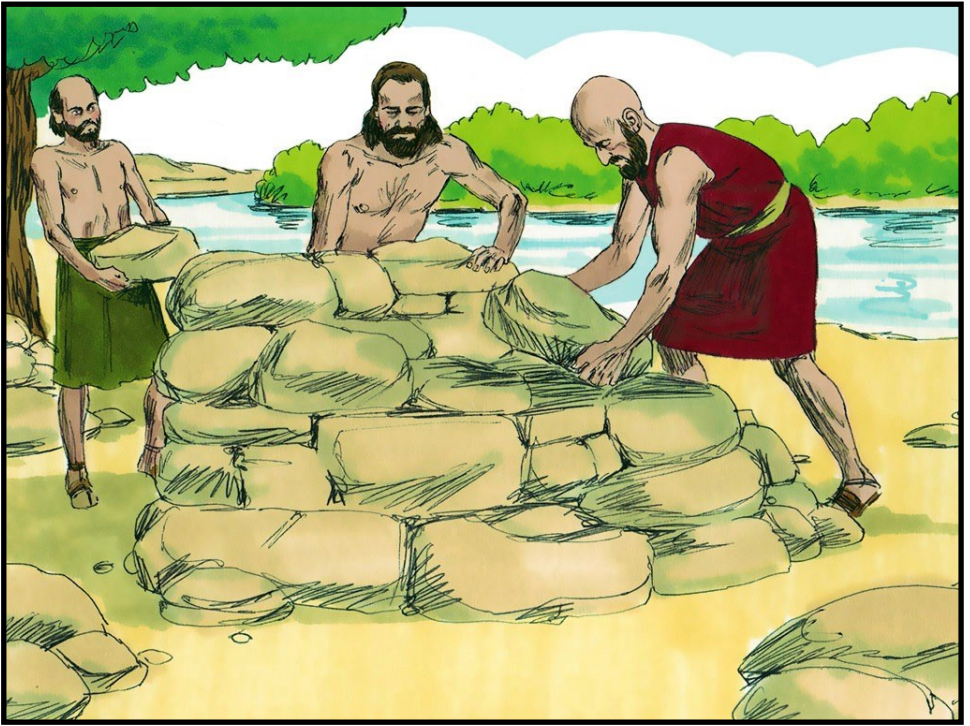


One of the tribes, the Levites, were not given any land. This was because they were a tribe of priests who ministered on behalf of the people. When the other Israelites brought their offerings to the LORD, a portion of the things they brought were given to the Levites.

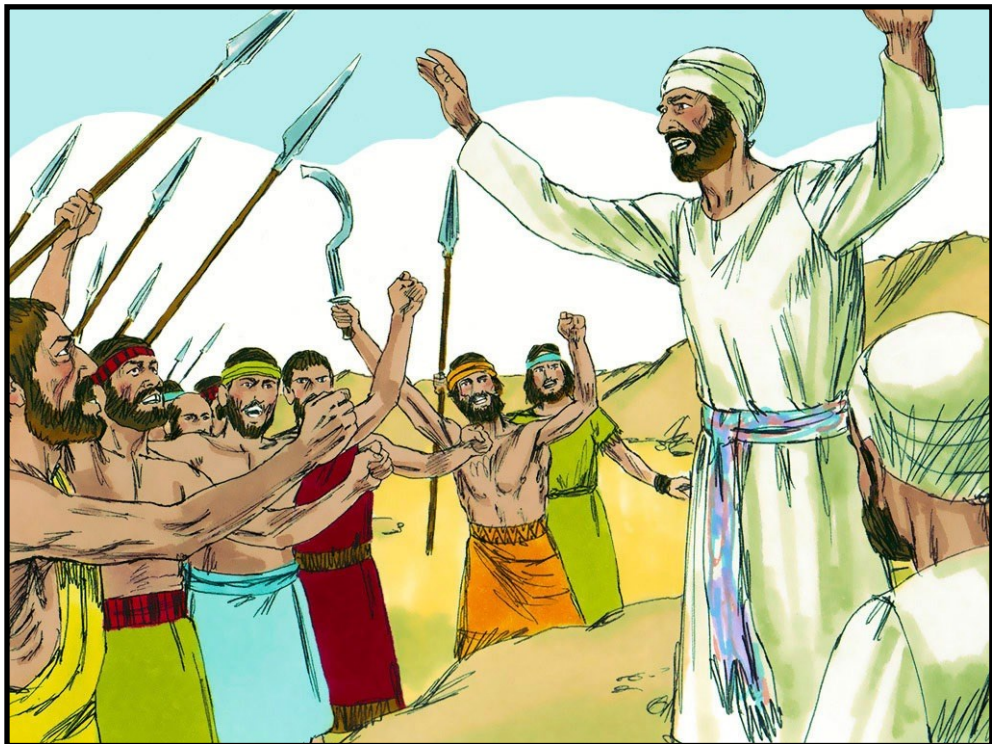
Nevertheless, the Levites were given cities throughout the Promised Land where they could live and raise their families.



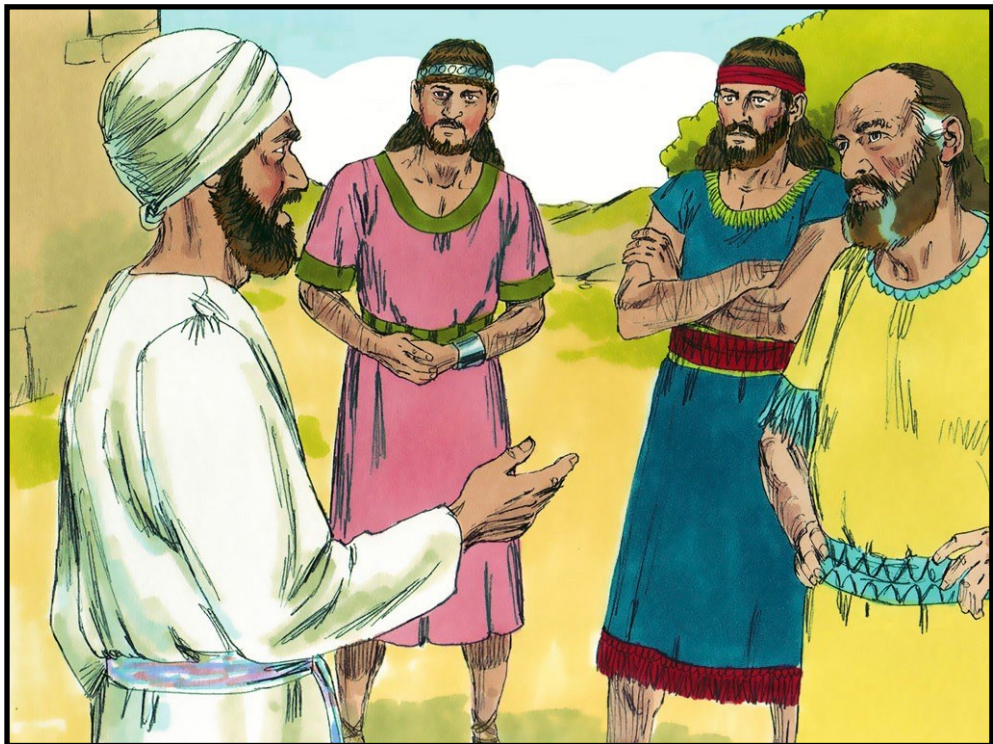
Then, Joshua called together the three tribes living east of the Jordan River and said, “You have obeyed every command that I have given you. Even though the mission to conquer the Promised Land has lasted a long time, you never gave up. You have helped the other tribes gain their land when you already had yours. Therefore, keep the law of Moses. Love the LORD your God and walk in his ways.” Then Joshua blessed them and sent them home.



When the soldiers of the three tribes—
Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh—went back to their
land on the east side of the Jordan River, they built
a large monument in the shape of an altar.



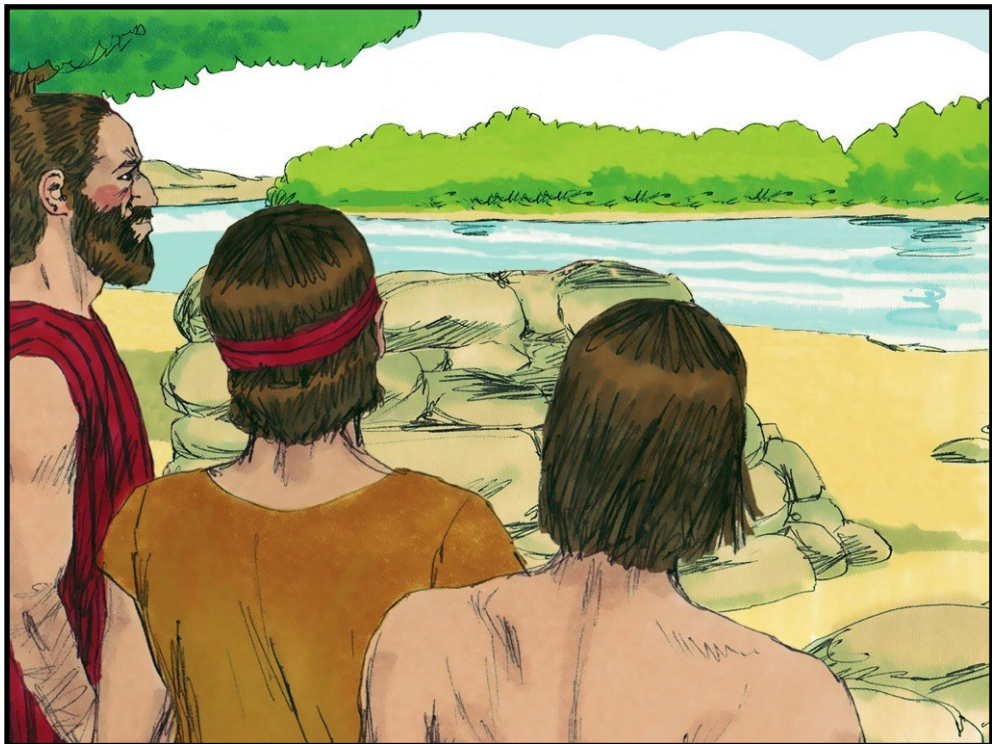
When the other tribes heard about the altar, they were furious and gathered to go to war against the three tribes. They said, “The place that God wants us all to worship is the Tabernacle in Shiloh. Have they set up their own place of worship? If they have, the LORD will judge us *all* for disobeying him.”



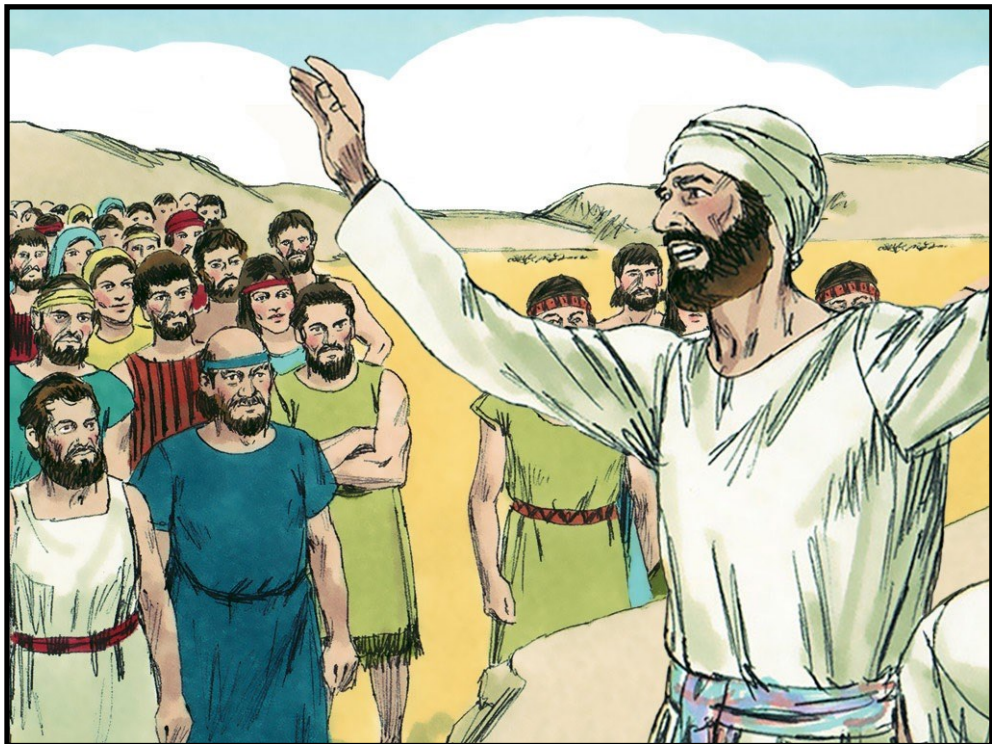
So the Israelites sent Phinehas, son of the high priest, along with ten other tribal leaders to meet with the tribes.

When they arrived they said, “How could you break God’s commands by building this altar?”

But the leaders of the three tribes replied, “We are not disobeying God. We were afraid that the tribes on your side of the river might say one day that we have no share in the Promised Land.”



“We built this altar, not to be used for sacrifices, but as a witness between you and us. The Jordan River does divide our land in half, but we are still one people serving the same God. In fact, we have named the altar: *A Witness Between Us that the LORD is God.*”



When Phinehas and the other tribal leaders heard what they had said, they were very pleased and replied, “Today we know that you have not turned against the LORD.”

So, they returned from their journey and reported all that had been told to them to the people. Everyone was glad to hear the report and praised God.



Many years passed and the LORD kept the Israelites safe and gave them peace from all their enemies. By now, Joshua was a very old man.



So Joshua summoned all the people to Shechem. There he gave them his final challenge:

“I am now an old man and will surely die soon,” he said. “Remember to be strong. Be careful to obey all that is written in the book of Moses. Don’t have anything to do with the other nations that still live in the land. Do not worship their gods or make promises in their names. Be faithful to the LORD your God, as you have done until now.”



“This is what the LORD says, ‘Remember all that you have been through: I took your ancestor Abraham from a distant land where his people worshiped other gods. I brought him into this land and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac and, later, Jacob who brought our people down to Egypt. Then I sent Moses and Aaron and afflicted the Egyptians with many plagues. And after many years, I kept my word and brought you here.’”



Joshua told the people, “Choose this day who you are going to serve, whether the false gods of those who live beyond the River or the false gods of this land. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

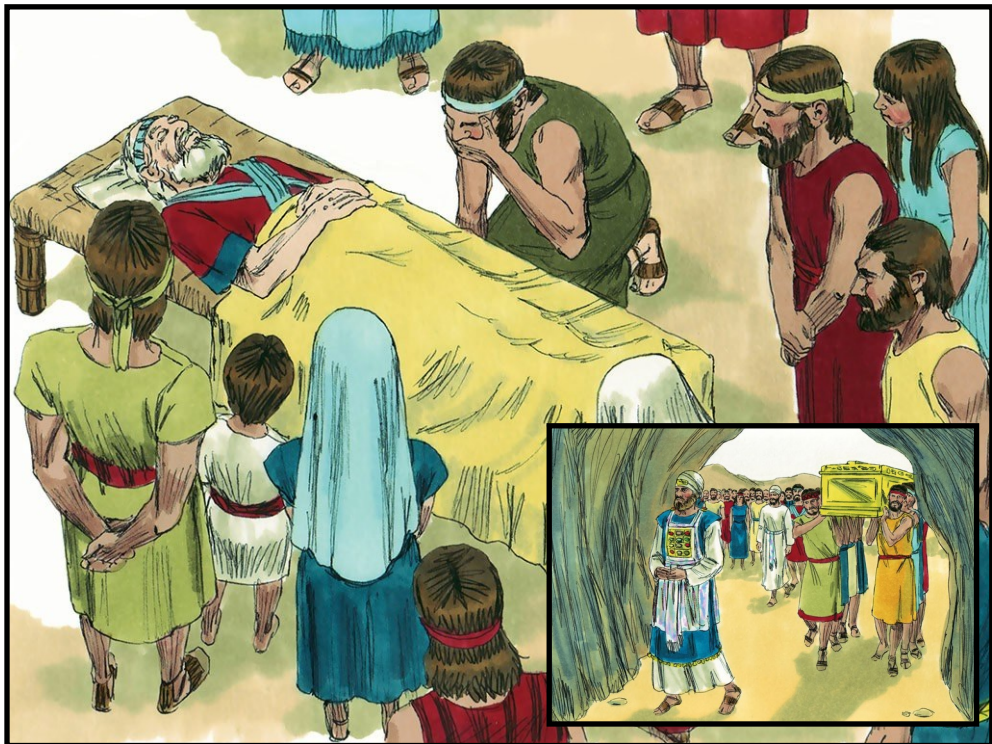
The people answered, “We will not serve other gods! The LORD has done all the great things you have said. We will serve the LORD and obey Him only. He is our God.”



On that day, Joshua made a covenant with all the people and recorded everything in the Book of God's laws.

He took a huge stone and set it up under a large oak tree next to the Tabernacle. He said, "See, this stone will be a witness against you if you break your promise and become unfaithful to God."

Then, Joshua sent everyone home.



Later, Joshua died at the age of 110 years old. They buried him in the land of Ephraim—the land that his family was granted when they divided up the Promised Land.

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