
JOSHUA 1-24

Lesson 12, Old Testament, Adult Religion Class, Tuesday, 15 Nov 2011

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OUTLINE

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 - b. Israel supports Joshua (1:10-18)
 - c. The spies and Rahab (2:1-24)
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2. Conquering the Promised Land (6:1 – 12:24)
 - a. The central campaign: Jericho and Ai (6:1 – 8:35)
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 - a. Summary of instructions (13:1-33)
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 - a. Joshua's first sermon (23:1-16)
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 - c. Postscript (24:29-33)

INTRODUCTION

Joshua is the first book of what Christians call the Historical books (Joshua through Esther), but to Jews it is the first book of the *Nevi'im*, the Prophets, which includes Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings (the 'former prophets') and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve minor prophets (Hosea through Malachi), all called the 'latter prophets.' That the first books (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) should be considered 'the Prophets' along with Isaiah and the others reflects the emphasis in these first books of the role of prophets in the history of Israel, from Joshua the successor of Moses down to the Babylonian captivity.

Like Deuteronomy, Joshua itself is a 'bridge' book, transitioning between Moses' Pentateuch and the accounts of Israel after entry into the Promised Land. Not only is the story told in the pages of the book part of that transition, but the themes begun in Deuteronomy are continued in Joshua. In fact, because of these continuing themes and perspectives, some scholars see the hand of a single editor or 'school' of editors at work in the books of

Deuteronomy through Kings, sometimes referred to collectively as the Deuteronomistic History. Others note the similarities but also key differences in style and content, thus alluding to the many sources that might be at play in the books' creation, including those from the later northern kingdom of Israel and those from the southern kingdom of Judah.

The book of Joshua covers the period of Joshua's lifetime, from Moses' departure to the settlement of the land by the Israelites and Joshua's death. It explains how Israel came into the land and conquered it from the people already there. Many scholars today question the historical accuracy of the book, given the paucity of supporting archaeological and textual evidence outside of the Bible for the events described:

The comprehensive conquest saga in the Book of Joshua is a fictive literary composition aimed at presenting the occupation of the entire Land of Israel, initiated and guided by the Lord and carried out by the twelve tribes under Joshua. . . . in no case can we trace a direct literary

relationship between the story/tradition and its literary reflection (Dever, 39).

Other more conservative scholars support the conquest model of Joshua, citing locations such as Hazor that have destruction layers matching this period and offering solutions to the challenges at Jericho.

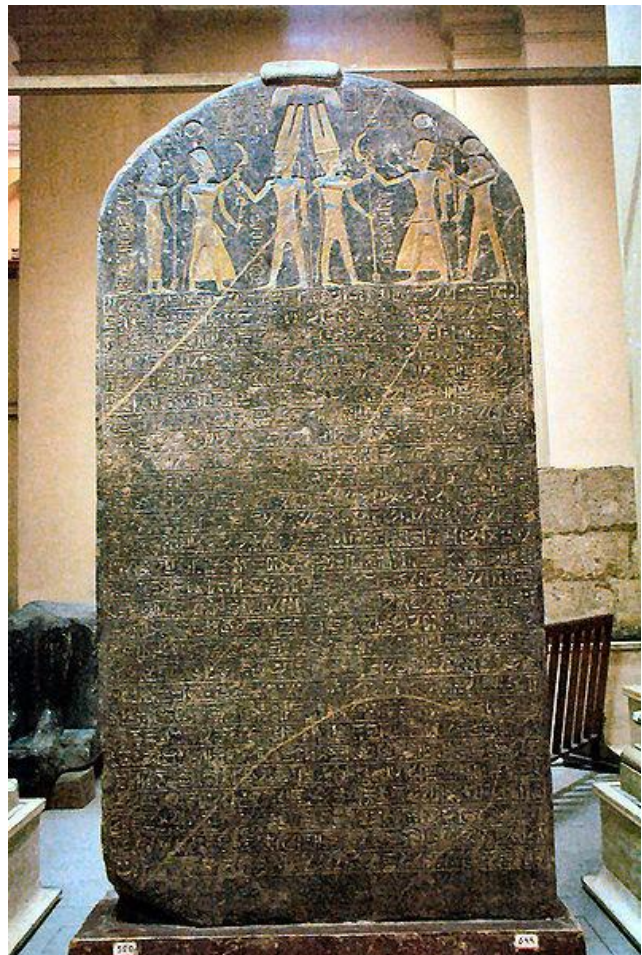
The most important thing to consider is the full picture we get in Joshua, not just the gloating generalizations that they destroyed “all that breathed” (10:40) or “took the whole land” (11:23). A careful reading shows that even in the book of Joshua, their victories were regional and many cities and towns remained in the hands of the previous inhabitants of the land. In addition, not all the battles resulted in burning or destruction that would be noted in an archaeological investigation. In short, they conquered some of the land with Joshua, occupying lands in the central highlands, and then over time expanding their influence and control. This is the picture presented in Judges, Samuel, and Kings where the Israelites were surrounded by other cultures and continued to do battle and otherwise engage with them over a long period of time until becoming the dominant culture under the early kings, David and Solomon.

So some of the statements in Joshua were surely added by later editors for their own purposes. Said Holzapfel and company of the book of Joshua: “This is clearly a religiously oriented historical narrative, told with the didactic purposes of affirming that Jehovah keeps his covenant promises and of explaining how the Israelites came to live in Canaan” (Holzapfel, 148-149).

One important external piece of evidence in this time period is the Merneptah stele (right; photos courtesy Wikipedia Commons), dated to 1207/8 B.C., inscribed with the victories of the Pharaoh Merneptah (the pharaoh after Ramses II), where he mentions conquering a group of people identified as “Israel” somewhere in the central highlands of the land of Canaan. So by the end of the 13th century B.C., Israel was readily identified as a separate group of people, worthy of Egypt’s attention (as a potential threat) and living in the hill country of what we know as Israel.

In addition to the conquest evidence, the book of Joshua correctly identifies the political situation of Canaan of its day. Thus both it and Judges align well with the archaeological records when the details of Joshua are fully taken into account.

Said John Lundquist, archaeologist, “We can thus see the extraordinary richness and diversity of the evidence that can be used to unite the discoveries of archaeology with the witness of the Bible. In the case of the Israelite Conquest of Canaan, such evidence



allows us to fill out our understanding of the biblical record and to add many levels of understanding and of appreciation to the accounts given in the books of Joshua and Judges of this series of events” (Jackson, 237; the full article is highly recommended on this topic).

ENTERING THE PROMISED LAND (1:1 – 5:15)

INTRODUCTION

One of the themes of Joshua is that the leader the book portrays is the rightful successor to Moses. To help achieve this, it portrays Joshua doing many of the same things Moses did, most of which are described in these first chapters. This includes parting the waters (Joshua 3; Exodus 14) and sending out spies to see the land (Joshua 2: Numbers 14-15).

Joshua's preparation for his calling included the following:

- Exodus 17:9-14 – Let the battle against the Amalekites
- Exodus 24:13 – Went with Moses to mount Sinai.
- Numbers 11:28 – Was with Moses most of his life.
- Numbers 13:16 – Had his name changed by Moses from Hosea ('salvation') to Joshua ('YHWH saves').
- Numbers 14:6-10, 30-38 – With Caleb, spied out the land and came back with a positive report.
- Numbers 27:18-23 – Commissioned to serve with Moses.
- Deuteronomy 31:23 – Commissioned to replace Moses.
- Deuteronomy 34:9 – Filled with the spirit of wisdom.

COMMENTARY

The Lord speaks to Joshua (1:1-9)

After Moses' departure, the Lord spoke to Joshua, telling him to "go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to thee" (1:2). The extent of their inheritance was given as from the wilderness on the east and south to the Euphrates river on the north to the sea on the west. This was the ideal border description and Israel never fully controlled the full extent of that territory in their history, though under Solomon and later Josiah came closest.

Joshua was promised by the Lord, "as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee" (1:5). Just as Moses had told Joshua three times in Deuteronomy 31, so the Lord echoed to him three times in this chapter: "be strong and of a good courage" (1:6, 7, 9), which the people echoed back to him (1:18) and Joshua counseled them later (10:25). This probably reflects a call to both physical and emotional strength.

"This book of the law" (1:8) was to be a source of study and meditation for Joshua, referring to the Law given to Moses. Interestingly, a similar

reference to the Torah is given in the first Psalm (1:2), tying both the Prophets and the Writings back to Moses' books.

Israel supports Joshua (1:10-18)

Joshua and his leaders told the people to prepare because in three days they would move into the land. He reminded those of the tribe of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh that had settled on the east side of the Jordan already of their promise to go with them, and they replied, "All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee" (1:16-17).

The spies and Rahab (2:1-24)

Joshua and Israel were camped near Shittim, just northwest of the Dead Sea. Joshua selected two men and sent them to spy out Jericho. Arriving at the city, they found lodging with a woman named Rahab, who is described as a harlot. Though of that background, Rahab is the hero of the story while the spies go unnamed. Somehow the king heard of the men's presence in her house and sent a message that

she should deliver the men to him. Instead, she hid them on her roof and lied to the king's men, saying that the Israelites had already left and gone out the city gate, thus saving their lives.

She proposed to the spies that in exchange for their freedom, they should save her and her family when they later attacked the city. She explained that everyone was in fear of them after hearing how they came out of Egypt and conquered the kings on the east of the Jordan. The men agreed, leaving her a "scarlet line" (or crimson cord) to hang on her window to mark the house. They escaped out of her window, which was on the outside wall of the city, and returned to report to Joshua that "the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land" (2:24).

Rahab later married Salmon and had a son named Boaz, who was the great-great-grandfather of David (Ruth 4:20-22). She was also therefore in the ancestry of Jesus (Matthew 1:4-6). She is mentioned twice in the New Testament as an example of faith (Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:5).

Crossing the Jordan (3:1 - 4:24)

Moving from Shittim to the edge of the river, Joshua commanded the people to prepare to cross the river behind the Ark of the Covenant. He set the stage by reminding them that they had "not passed this way heretofore" (3:4) so they would need to follow the Lord's direction. To prepare them, Joshua told the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for to morrow the Lord will do wonders among you" (3:5).

Alluding to the similarity to Moses, the Lord promised Joshua that he would "magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee" (3:7). Joshua then directed the ark to move ahead of the people. When the priests actually started walking into the river, the miracle happened—the river dropped and dried up so all could cross. The priests moved to the middle of the river while Israel crossed over past them (that could have taken quite a while). When everyone was crossed over, the priests came up out of the river bed and the waters started to flow again.

Related to this story, Elder Boyd K. Packer taught:

Shortly after I was called as a General Authority, I went to Elder Harold B. Lee for counsel. He listened very carefully to my problem and suggested that I see President David O. McKay. President McKay counseled me as to the direction I should go. I was very willing to be obedient but saw no way possible for me to do as he counseled me to do.

I returned to Elder Lee and told him that I saw no way to move in the direction I was counseled to go. He said, "The trouble with you is you want to see the end from the beginning." I replied that I would like to see at least a step or two ahead. Then came the lesson of a lifetime: "You must learn to walk to the edge of the light, and then a few steps into the darkness; then the light will appear and show the way before you" ("The Edge of the Light," *BYU Today*, Mar. 1991, 22-23).

The text notes that the area where the river was blocked was upstream at a place called "the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan" (3:16). Though the location of these cities is not positively known, they are probably related to Tell ed-Damieh and Tell es-Sa'idiyeh or Tell umm-Hamid, and are clearly north of the crossing sixteen or seventeen miles. The cause of the blockage has been seen before: "The high banks in the region and the tectonic nature of the Jordan Valley have contributed to periodic collapses of earthen mounds into the river, damming it temporarily. This has occurred at least three times in recent history: 1267, 1906, and 1927. On the last occasion the river was blocked for some twenty-one hours" (Zondervan 2:25-26).

To commemorate their crossing, Joshua had one man from each tribe retrieve a large rock from the middle of the river and carry it to their camping spot. They piled the rocks together as a memorial of their experience, which the editor of the book notes, "are there unto this day" (4:9).

What kind of memorials do we use to remind us of God's love and blessings?

Preparations for battle (5:1-15)

The crossing of the Jordan took place on "the tenth day of the first month" (4:19). Therefore, it was time again to celebrate Passover, preceded by a

circumcision event for those who had not gone through that covenant activity. After the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month, “the manna ceased” (5:12).

As Joshua was pondering how to take Jericho, he saw a man “with his sword drawn in his hand” (5:13). Joshua asked him if he was with or against Israel, and he replied that he was the “captain of the host of

the Lord” (5:14). Joshua fell to the earth and asked for direction, to which the messenger replied that Joshua was to remove his shoes because the place was holy—another echo of Moses’ experience at the burning bush when he removed his shoes (Exodus 3:5). Many believe this figure was the Lord himself because of this similarity to Moses, but the account is too brief and too lacking in detail to be certain.

CONQUERING THE PROMISED LAND (6:1 – 12:24)

INTRODUCTION

The conquest of the land is divided into three segments: the central, southern, and northern campaigns. The early campaigns provide more details than the later ones, which was often the case with military accounts of that day. Though the account concludes that the entire land had been

conquered, a careful reading shows that only select areas had actually been acquired by the Israelites; the rest remained for future generations to deal with.

COMMENTARY

The central campaign: Jericho and Ai (6:1 – 8:35)

Camped at nearby Gilgal (meaning ‘rolling’; see 5:9), The Lord instructed Joshua to take Jericho by an unusual method. They were to surround the city and march once around it for six days, carrying the Ark of the Covenant with them. On the seventh day, they were to march around it seven times, then seven priests were to blow seven ram’s horn trumpets seven times. On the final blast of the horns, all the people were to shout, and then the walls would fall down. Joshua instructed the people not to take anyone alive except Rahab and her family and all the booty from the conquest was not to be kept in the camp of Israel but to come to the “treasury of the Lord” for a tithe of the conquest. This is exactly what happened, “And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord” (6:24).

One man, however, did not follow Joshua’s commands. Achan took some of the booty for himself and hid it in his tent, though no one outside of his family knew about it. Therefore, when Joshua sent an army to the next town, Ai (which means ‘ruin’),

the army lost terribly to the townspeople: “they fled before the men of Ai” (7:4). Rending his clothing and falling to the ground, Joshua pled with the Lord to know what had gone wrong. The Lord explained that “Israel hath sinned” (7:11). Even though only one man had done it, the sin was attributed to the whole camp. Joshua was instructed to “sanctify the people” (7:13) and gather them the next day for judgment, for “thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you” (7:13).

Casting lots, Joshua narrowed the offender first to the tribe of Judah, then the family of the Zarahites, then Zabdi, then finally Achan himself. Joshua told him to confess, and Achan said he had taken clothing, silver, and gold and buried them under his tent. Joshua sent people to find it and they brought it back for all to see. This booty and all of Achan’s family and possessions were taken to the valley of Achor (meaning, ‘trouble’), where Joshua said, “Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day” (7:25). And Achan and his family were all killed and the stolen items burned. Though this punishment might seem severe, it should be remembered that Achan’s sin had cost 36 men their

lives (7:5). In addition, the entire camp had been defiled because of his disobedience. His family was included in the punishment because they must have been complicit in Achan's acts as he buried it in the family tent.

Elder James E. Faust said:

Private choices are not private; they all have public consequences. . . . Our society is the sum total of what millions of individuals do in their private lives. That sum total of private behavior has worldwide public consequences of enormous magnitude. There are no completely private choices (*Ensign*, May 1987, 80).

The second attack on Ai went much better. Ai is situated about 10 miles from and 3,500 feet above Jericho. The troops would have climbed up the Wadi Makkuk from Jericho (Shanks, 65). A small group was sent to attack the city, then flee, drawing out the armies of Ai. But it was an ambush, with more troops lying in wait. Once out of the city, the men of Ai were surrounded and killed, their city burned.

Moving on to Shechem near Mount Ebal, Joshua there built an altar (8:30). Obeying Moses' commandment (Deuteronomy 27:1-8), Joshua "wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses" (8:32). Half the people stood near mount Gerizim and half near mount Ebal while Joshua read the Law (probably Deuteronomy; see Photo 17 in the LDS Bible).

The southern campaign: Gibeon, Jerusalem, and more (9:1 - 10:43)

Gibeon concluded that being a tributary was better than being destroyed, so "made peace with Israel" (10:1). But other kings from Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon decided that this was not acceptable, so mounted an attack. Gibeon appealed to Joshua for help, so Joshua took his army and moved toward them at night. They were able to route the army with the help of a hailstorm. Then it records that Joshua said, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed" (10:12-13). The command for the sun and the moon to stand still has an alternate translation. The word translated "sun" is actually 'sunrise,' the word "still" could also

be rendered 'be silent' (or do not appear). The army was attacking at night and needed more night time to accomplish it under the cover of darkness, so Joshua commanded the sunrise to be delayed and the night to continue, which happened. For those who question how the earth could have stopped rotating without losing all gravity or something, this interpretation allows it to be achieved by means of heavy cloud cover, offering them continued darkness, something that can be implied by the hailstorm in the previous verse.

The kings fled into a cave and Joshua had his men cover it with stones, trapping the kings inside. After the battle was over, he released the kings from the cave and had them put on the ground while the men of Israel put their feet on their necks in a token of victory. With this powerful image before them, Joshua used the key phrase one more time: "Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight" (10:25). Then the five kings were hung on trees and their bodies put back in the cave.

The record then marches quickly through other conquests: Makkedah (10:28); Libnah (10:29-30); Lachish (10:31-32); Horam, king of Gezer (helping Lachish (10:33); Eglon (10:34-35); Hebron (10:36-37); and Debir (10:38-39).

The northern campaign: Hazor (11:1-15)

Just two areas are mentioned in the northern campaign: a battle at the waters of Merom (11:1-9) and Hazor (11:10-11). The record concludes that Joshua did exactly what Moses and the Lord had commanded him.

Summary of conquests (11:16 - 12:24)

The remainder of chapter 11 and all of chapter 12 recount and summarize the exploits of the army of Israel and provide a list of unconquered areas, including the land of the Philistines which will play a prominent role in the book of Judges.

The only JST change in the book of Joshua happens in this section. In 11:20, it says:

For it was of the LORD to **destroy them utterly, because they ~~harder~~ hardened** their hearts, that

they should come against Israel in battle, ~~that he might destroy them utterly, and~~ that they might have no favour, ~~but that he~~ **they** might destroy them **in battle**, as the LORD commanded Moses.

This verse not only continues the pattern of changing all references to the Lord hardening others' hearts to them doing that themselves, but relates to something Nephi said in the book of Mormon that the people of the land "had rejected every word of God, and they were ripe in iniquity; and the fulness of the wrath of God was upon them;

and the Lord did curse the land against them, and bless it unto our fathers; yea, he did curse it against them unto their destruction, and he did bless it unto our fathers unto their obtaining power over it" (1 Nephi 17:33-35).

Otherwise, the Joseph Smith Translation manuscript notes that "All the rest of the Chapters in Joshua are Correct."

ALLOCATING THE PROMISED LAND (13:1 - 22:34)

COMMENTARY

These chapters outline how Joshua allocated the land out to the various tribes and families. It also recounts specific places where the local inhabitants remained, giving a charge to the people to deal with them later. In a real example of a picture being worth a thousand words, see Map 3 in the LDS Bible.

Chapter 20 allocates the six cities of refuge that were partially allocated in Numbers 35, while chapter 21 sets aside forty-eight cities for the Levites, allowing them to minister to all the other tribes throughout the land. It is important that the six cities of refuge were Levitical towns as well, giving the Levites a moderating authority in such concerns.

The allocation section concludes with Joshua calling the 2-1/2 tribes from the east of the Jordan to acknowledge that they had kept their word in fighting with the other tribes to win the lands. However, right after he advocates for them to be faithful to the Lord, they built an altar on their side of the Jordan, causing tension between the tribes, even the threat of war. A delegation was sent to inquire about this altar. The 2-1/2 tribes explained that it was not an altar for sacrifice, which was forbidden in the Deuteronomic code, but a memorial to help their children remember all that God had done for them. This answer was acceptable to the delegation and the conflict was resolved.

RETAINING THE PROMISED LAND (23:1 - 24:28)

COMMENTARY

Joshua's first sermon (23:1-16)

As Joshua neared the end of his life, he called the people together. Reminding them of the great blessings the Lord had given them in bringing them into the land, he warned that if they were not faithful, they would not be able to stand against their enemies and in fact would even "perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given you" (23:16). The main point of the first speech is in verse 14: "not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the

Lord you God spake concerning you." The Lord always keeps his word.

Joshua's second sermon (24:1-28)

In a bit of a repeat of the reading of the Law at Shechem (Joshua 8), Joshua again gathered the people there for his second and final sermon. He recounted how God had blessed them since the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, how he brought them out of bondage in Egypt and brought them through the reed sea, how he delivered them from the

Amorites, from Balak and Balaam, and helped them with their battles against Jericho and the other people of the land. (The word “hornet” in verse 12 should say ‘plague.’) The Lord had given Israel “a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not” (24:13).

Remembering all of that, he admonished the people to “fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth” (24:14). He commanded them to “put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood (meaning the Euphrates), and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord” (24:14).

In a well-known verse, Joshua invited the people to choose this day who to serve—either the Lord or the other gods worshipped by people all around them. Then with finality he declared: “but as for me and my house [my family], we will serve the Lord” (24:15). The response of the people was positive: “we also serve the Lord; for he is our God” (24:18). Joshua rejoined: “Ye cannot serve the Lord” (24:19), meaning he wasn’t certain they could really do it. But the people showed their commitment by reiterating: “we will serve the Lord” (24:21).

Joshua said that they were all witnesses of the oaths made this day and the people agreed, saying yet one more time, “The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey” (24:24).

Joshua then wrote their covenant down and set up a large stone to mark the day and serve as a reminder.

Postscript (24:29-33)

The record states that Joshua died at 110 years of age, the same age as Joseph of Egypt (Genesis 50:26), which is interesting because in Egypt, that was considered the perfect age, and they both had ties to that country. His burial place is recorded along with the continued commitment of the people during and in the generation after his life.

Finally, the book concludes with the fulfillment of the request made by Joseph in Egypt to bury his bones in the land of Canaan (Genesis 50:25), then tells of the death and burial of Eleazar, the high priest and son of Aaron, who was replaced by his son, Phinehas.

Like Israel, we live in a world full of sin and enticements that would cause us to forget our covenants. The Lord had Joshua drive these influences out of the Promised Land before Israel occupied it so as to preserve the people. The fact that they were not completely successful is later a contributing factor to their destruction.

Like Joshua, we need to rid our lives of evil influences. We can’t control everything in our environments, but we can control what goes on in our homes and have an influence on other places, too. May we make our homes like temples, places of purity, faith, and peace, and have all things in our homes be reminders of God and not distractions from him.

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