

# Joshua 23:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age.

## Analysis

**And it came to pass a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age. And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age:**

Joshua's farewell address occurs after "a long time" (miyamim rabim, מִיָּמִים רַבִּים, "from many days"), likely 15-20 years after the conquest's completion, when Joshua approached his death at 110 (24:29). The phrase "the LORD had given rest" (heniyach Yahweh, הֵנִיחַ יְהוָה) uses terminology central to Deuteronomy and Hebrews—the "rest" God promised has been provisionally achieved. Yet this rest remains incomplete (13:1), anticipating greater rest fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 4:8-11).

Joshua's self-description—"I am old and stricken in age" (zaqanti bati bayamim, זָקַנְתִּי בָּאֵתִי בַיָּמִים, literally "I am old, I have come in days")—acknowledges his mortality with dignity. Unlike leaders who cling to power, Joshua recognizes that his time is ending and must prepare the next generation. This models godly leadership transition—knowing when to pass responsibility while providing final wisdom. Moses similarly delivered farewell addresses (Deuteronomy), as did Paul (Acts 20:17-38; 2 Timothy), establishing a pattern of departing leaders imparting crucial instruction.

The audience—"all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers"—includes both the general assembly and specifically identified leadership. This comprehensive gathering ensures that Joshua's final words reach all levels of society. The repetition in verse 2 emphasizes the importance of what follows—this isn't casual conversation but solemn testamentary instruction requiring full attention from the entire covenant community.

## Historical Context

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The timeframe "a long time after" suggests this address occurred around 1380 BCE (early chronology) or 1200 BCE (late chronology), during the period when Israel transitioned from unified conquest under Joshua to tribal administration described in Judges. The "rest" mentioned was relative—major Canaanite resistance was broken, allowing agricultural settlement and population growth, but pockets of Canaanite presence remained (23:7, 12-13), creating ongoing tension.

Ancient Near Eastern farewell addresses follow recognized genre conventions: the dying leader reviews past accomplishments, warns against future dangers, and calls for covenant loyalty. Examples include Jacob's blessings (Genesis 49), Moses' farewell (Deuteronomy 31-33), and David's charge to Solomon (1 Kings 2:1-9). Joshua's address conforms to this pattern while uniquely emphasizing exclusive Yahweh worship and warning against intermarriage/alliance with remaining Canaanites—concerns that would dominate Judges' narrative.

The mention of "elders, heads, judges, and officers" indicates Israel's developing governmental structure. "Elders" (zekenim) provided traditional tribal leadership; "heads" (rashim) led clans or military units; "judges" (shofetim) administered justice; "officers" (shoterim) functioned as administrators or enforcers. This distributed leadership structure, established under Moses (Exodus 18:13-26; Deuteronomy 1:9-18), prevented autocracy while ensuring local governance. Joshua addresses these leaders as multipliers—they would transmit his instruction throughout their respective spheres.

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. How does Joshua's recognition of his mortality and preparation of successors model godly leadership transition?
2. What does the concept of "rest" in Joshua teach us about the partial fulfillments of God's promises that point toward ultimate fulfillment in Christ?
3. How can older Christians follow Joshua's example of imparting wisdom to the next generation before their time ends?

## Interlinear Text

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וַיְהִי	בַּיָּמִים:	רַב־יָמִים	אֲשֶׁר	אֵחָרִי	הָנָּה יָמִים
H1961	in age	And it came to pass a long	after	H834	had given rest
H3117		H7227	H310		H5117

יְהוָה ה	לְיִשְׂרָאֵל	מְכֹל	אֹיְבֵיהֶם	מִסָּבִיב	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ
that the LORD	unto Israel	H3605	from all their enemies	round about	that Joshua
H3068	H3478		H341	H5439	H3091

זָקֵן	וְאֵ	בַּיָּמִים:
waxed old	and stricken	in age
H2204	H935	H3117

## Additional Cross-References

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**Joshua 13:1** (References Lord): Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.

**Joshua 21:44** (References Lord): And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.

**Joshua 11:23** (References Lord): So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.