

Joshua 4:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

Analysis

Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

This verse contains the prescribed response to children's questions about the memorial stones. The Hebrew verb yada (יְדָה, "let...know") means more than cognitive awareness—it implies experiential understanding and personal appropriation of truth. Parents must actively transmit covenant history, not merely answer questions passively. The phrase "Israel came over this Jordan on dry land" (beyabashah avar Yisrael, בְּיַבְשָׁה עָבָר יִשְׂרָאֵל summarizes the miraculous crossing concisely.

The emphasis on "dry land" (yabashah, יַבְשָׁה) recalls the Red Sea crossing (Exodus 14:21-22), creating deliberate typological connection between the two events. Both demonstrate Yahweh's absolute sovereignty over nature and His faithfulness to covenant promises. The use of "Israel" rather than "we" or "our ancestors" maintains corporate covenant identity—later generations participate in the same covenant community that experienced these redemptive acts.

Theologically, this establishes that covenant knowledge transfers through testimony, not mere genetic descent. Each generation must hear, believe, and appropriate the gospel. Parents serve as primary catechists, responsible for ensuring children understand redemptive history and their place within God's covenant people. This anticipates the New Testament pattern where households

receive baptism and instruction together (Acts 16:14-15, 31-34; 1 Corinthians 7:14), with parents charged to raise children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

Historical Context

This command to teach children reflects the covenant structure established at Sinai and renewed in the Plains of Moab (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25; 11:18-21). The Shema liturgy commanded Israelites to teach children diligently, talking of God's works "when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deuteronomy 6:7). This comprehensive approach to catechesis made faith formation central to daily life rather than confined to formal religious occasions.

The parallel with the Red Sea crossing was deliberate and profound. Just as that generation experienced deliverance from Egyptian bondage through a miraculous sea-crossing, this generation experienced entry into inheritance through miraculous river-crossing. Both events demonstrated that salvation and blessing come through divine intervention, not human achievement. The pattern established God's covenant faithfulness across generations.

Jewish tradition maintained this emphasis on teaching children, developing sophisticated educational systems including memorization of Torah, study of oral tradition, and apprenticeship in trades. By Jesus' time, synagogues served as both worship centers and schools. The early church inherited this emphasis on catechesis, developing baptismal instruction, creeds, and catechisms to ensure systematic transmission of apostolic faith to subsequent generations.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How are you actively teaching children (your own or others) about God's redemptive works and covenant faithfulness?
2. What parallels between the Jordan crossing and your spiritual journey can you articulate to help others understand God's saving work?
3. How does understanding your identity as part of "Israel"—the covenant people of God through Christ—shape your sense of connection to biblical history?
4. In what ways do you integrate faith formation into daily rhythms rather than confining it to formal religious occasions?
5. How can you make your testimony of God's faithfulness a permanent part of your family's spiritual heritage?

Interlinear Text

דִּבְּרָה	אַתָּה	וְיֹצְאֶת	בְּנֵיכֶם	לֵאמֹר	בְּבָשָׂר
know	H853	Then ye shall let your children		saying	on dry land
H3045		H1121		H559	H3004

עָבָר	אַתָּה	וְיֹצְאֶת	בְּרִיאָה	בְּרִיאָה
came over	Israel	H853	this Jordan	H2088

עָבָר	אַתָּה	וְיֹצְאֶת	בְּרִיאָה	בְּרִיאָה
H5674		H3478	H3383	

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 3:17 (References Israel): And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

Isaiah 51:10 (Parallel theme): Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?