

**The True Story of the Whole World, pp 63-69**  
**Act 3 --- The King Chooses Israel. Redemption initiated**  
**Scene 3 --- “A Land and King for God’s people” --- Conquest and Chaos**

Creation	Rebellion & Fall	Abraham and Sara	Egyptian Captivity	Promised Land
All creation Adam and Eve	The Garden Cain and Abel Babel Flood (Noah)	Isaac <b>Jacob and Esau</b> <b>12 sons (tribes)</b> <b>Joseph in Egypt</b> The above = “The Patriarchs”	Moses Plagues Exodus Mt. Sinai Wilderness	Joshua Judges Kings Saul David Solomon Divided Kingdom

**Joshua 1-11, 23, 24, Judges 7, 21:24, 25**

*In a nutshell.....*

*The book of Joshua tells the story of the Israelites’ conquest of Canaan under Joshua’s leadership. While Israel fights several battles, the narrative stresses throughout that the Israelites are entirely dependent upon the Lord for their success. The story of Gideon actually emphasizes disarmament as a sign of Gideon’s trust on God alone.*

*The story of the book of Judges is not encouraging. Israel fails in its vocation to be a holy nation, a light to the nations. Time and again the Israelites do what is evil in the eyes of the Lord, and the Lord hands them over to their enemies. The Israelites greatest sin is idolatry, following the gods of the surrounding culture (Canaan, including the “Philistines”).*

**Sound familiar?**

- crossing the Jordan
- The walls of Jericho falling down
- The sun standing still
- Gideon and the ‘fleece’
- Samson

**Other Biblical references**

Hebrews 11:32  
Deuteronomy 7:2  
[Joshua--hardly any!]

**Main Themes of “Conquest and Chaos” (Joshua and Judges)**

1. Idolatry is a ‘life and death’ matter. “You shall have no other gods....”
2. Israel’s ‘cycle of disobedience’ is oppression, repentance, deliverance, but it is a downward cycle into chaos. At the end of Judges, ‘everyone did as he saw fit’
3. God’s holiness is presented as a very ‘high bar’, to be mirrored by the holiness of God’s people, and not to be taken lightly.

**Of note.....**

Pastor’s note: *These narratives introduce the concept of “Holy War” and present real challenges for Mennonites today, as we hold fast to the teachings of Jesus to ‘love our enemies’.*

*These instructions to Joshua were specific to his time, deserve careful study, and will also need to be set into the context of the entire Biblical narrative, before assuming they are a model for Christian ethics today. Of note is that Joshua, the military hero of the conquest, virtually disappears from the Biblical narrative which follows.*

*One scholarly book which addresses this question from an Anabaptist perspective is by Millard Lind, Yahweh is a Warrior, to be found in our church library.*

1. What do you notice about God in this text?
2. Is there any part of the text that is surprising? Why?
3. What in this text encourages, troubles, surprises, or confuses you?
4. Is there anything in this text you had never noted before? Why do you think it stood out to you this time?
5. How does the action in this passage fit into God's salvation plan?

### **Specific to the texts for this Sunday**

1. Joshua says the land is to be a place of rest for the Israelites, but it became a 'place of tempting, of temptation' (p.66, True Story.....). What were the dangers of coexistence for the Israelites?
2. "Loving neighbor" is listed by Jesus as a core commandment. What would have 'loving neighbor' looked like as Israel stood ready to enter Canaan?
3. Trace the 'disarmament' theme in the story of Gideon. What do you conclude?
4. Have you ever 'cast a fleece' in order to discern God's will? What was the outcome?
5. Our country places high value on diversity, and [historically] on being a 'melting pot'. What relationship does this have to the admonitions to holiness and purity placed upon the Israelites? To the history Mennonites have of being 'not of the world'?
6. The authors of True Story..... suggest "the Sabbath laws serve as a powerful reminder the Lord is the one who sustains the creation and that there is more to life than mere consumption". Discuss the ways 'consumption' might be an idol today.
7. Contrast 'everyone doing as he saw fit' (Judges 21:25), with the individualism of modern day society. Might modern day "individualism" be a parallel to ancient idolatry?