

The God Who Gives Rest in the Land: Joshua

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Accurate Old Testament interpretation depends upon a sound understanding of Old Testament theology. This principle is true regardless of the text under consideration, but is especially crucial for grasping the significance of books with controversial contents. Certainly the book of Joshua fits this description. After all, it includes accounts of holy war, of dividing God-given land, and of miracles. It claims to fulfill promises offered to Abraham and Moses years earlier. Given its contents, then, interpreters must take great care in stating what the book says about God, God's relationship to Israel and the rest of the world, and God's standards for receiving divine blessing.

This article seeks to state Joshua's basic theological emphases. To do so, it addresses the book's authorship and date, place in the Old Testament, and contents. Special attention is given to how this book gathers ideas from previous texts and is then in turn used in subsequent scriptures. Hopefully this approach will make Joshua's theological contribution to Biblical Theology accessible to scholars, students, and ministers.

Though Joshua includes many important theological emphases, its main idea is that God gives rest to Israel in the promised land. At long last the chosen people reside in the place God promised Abraham would belong to his descendants (Ge 12:7). It must be remembered that this giving of land only occurred after the original inhabitants had refused to repent over a four-hundred-year period of time (Ge 15:13-16).

God's graciousness to Israel therefore does not include an arbitrary expulsion of the Canaanites. Rather, rest for Israel coincides with judgment for the Canaanites, and Joshua warns his people against suffering a similar fate.

Joshua's Place in the Hebrew Canon

One of the chief differences between the English and Hebrew Bibles is that the former welds together Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther to form a section of historical books, while the latter links Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings together as the Former Prophets. The English Bible thereby depicts the events of Israel's history from conquest (c. 1400 or 1250 B.C.) to the return to Jerusalem during the Persian era (c. 425 B.C.), then proceeds to Job. The Hebrew Bible, on the other hand, describes events that span the conquest to a few decades after the Babylonian captivity (c. 550), then presents the prophetic books. These canonical distinctions allow a subtle but important interpretative shift in thinking.

By distinguishing Joshua-Kings as prophetic literature the Hebrew canon emphasizes the common ground shared by the prophetic books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve) and their more heavily-historical predecessors. This grouping treats the Former Prophets as both proclamation and as history written from a specific perspective. It also allows readers to discover that the prophets were neglected throughout Israel's past, and

that they influenced books that they did not write. The Hebrew order helps readers absorb the events from a prophetic viewpoint, then encounter the words the prophets themselves used to interpret the times in which they lived.

In the Prophets segment of the canon, it becomes evident that the members of the prophetic movement united narrative history and a deep concern for theological commitment in their written works. They did so to make sense of their nation's history. Here prophets and those who agree with them preach and write God's word. Prophets explain and predict the past. Prophets anoint and denounce kings. The existence of the prophetic books indicates that long after the prophets died the people of God determined that these men and women indeed spoke for the Lord.

As they tell Israel's history the Former Prophets display at least five distinct characteristics.¹ First, they assess the past based on God's covenant with Israel. Second, whenever predictions occur they are formed by noting how God has blessed or punished Israel in the past and by noting what specific promises the Lord makes to individuals such as David. Third, they create plot by selecting events and persons for inclusion that fit the prophetic view of the past, present, and future. Fourth, they assess characters in the history based on whether they help gain or lose the promised land. Fifth, they encourage readers to turn to the Lord so they can experience blessing instead of punishment as stated in Deuteronomy 27-28. Indeed, the book of Deuteronomy heavily influences all the prophetic writers.

Authorship, Date, and Purpose

Who wrote Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings and in what manner has sparked

lively debate during the past half century. This debate has basically been divided between scholars who think the books were written by a single author who carefully crafted a consecutive history using accurate sources, those who believe the texts were composed by two, three, or more careful editors writing at different stages of Israel's history, and those who think each book had a separate author. These commentators include a variety of data in their discussions, but usually begin with evidence from the books themselves.

Textual Evidence

No author is ever identified in the text. Major characters in the accounts could have played a role in the books' composition, of course, but none is singled out as an author in any direct way. Given this situation, it is necessary to examine other types of information the accounts offer to determine when they were written, and by whom. Though other factors are also important,² two basic details may provide insight into these issues. The first element is the scope of events covered in the books. At least 700 years unfold. Joshua's conquest of Canaan, the history's initial event, occurs no later than 1250 B.C.³ Second Kings ends with a description of how Jehoiachin, a Judahite king exiled in 597 B.C., is given kind treatment in the thirty-seventh year of his imprisonment in Babylon (2 Ki 25:27-30). This notation places the author of that material beyond 560 B.C. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the books were complete sometime after that date. Since no further events are described, the author of the books could have written the material by 550 B.C.

The second factor is that several written sources are mentioned in the books themselves. Joshua 10:12-13 and 2 Samuel

1:17-27 are poetic texts that the author says may be found in the "Book of Jashar." It is impossible to know the contents of this source, since only these references from the book have survived. C. R. Kraft suggests, "It seems to have been an ancient national song book, the antiquity of which is suggested in part by the relatively poor state of preservation of the Hebrew text of each poem."⁴ Regardless of its origins, the author(s) of Joshua and 2 Samuel freely admits using the source, which is an implicit invitation to check the accuracy of the citation.

Three written sources are mentioned in 1-2 Kings. The Book of the Acts of Solomon is listed in 1 Kings 11:41, and seems to be cited as the main source for most if not all of the Solomon material found in 1 Kings 1-11. The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel is claimed as a source for every northern king's reign except for Jehoram and Hoshea, while the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah is cited as a source of information on all of Judah's rulers except for Ahaziah, Athaliah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah.⁵ In each instance where these three sources appear the author implies that further details on each king's era were available in those works. This impression leaves the true nature of the source material very much in doubt, which has allowed various scholarly opinions to arise.

In the decades after Julius Wellhausen popularized source criticism of the Pentateuch, several scholars, following Wellhausen himself,⁶ sought to divide Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings into more sources. Some critics argued that the same J and E sources supposedly found in the Pentateuch also run throughout the books that follow.⁷ Other commentators basically rejected the J and E hypothesis,

and chose to strive to identify the nature of all the stated and unstated sources used to write the books.⁸ Based on the variety of the books' material and the difficulty of determining what the stated sources, much less the unstated sources, contained, most experts correctly concluded that the so-called Pentateuchal sources are not present in the Former Prophets.

Did the books' author use other sources? If so, what was the nature of these sources and the ones the biblical text mentions? Interpreters must exercise caution and humility when answering these questions. Though only three sources are explicitly revealed, other data may have been used. After all, the stated sources all refer to poems or to the activities of kings. Yet the books also include genealogies, divisions of land, and accounts of battles. Several narratives about prophets also appear, which makes it possible that the author gathered written or oral materials from prophetic sources. As for the contents of the sources named, 1 Kings 11:41 indicates that the Book of the Acts of Solomon "comprised contemporary annals, biographical materials, and extracts from records in the Temple archives."⁹ The Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah probably contained similar details, since they are said to chronicle dates, royal achievements, and important events (e.g. 2 Ki 13:8). Whether or not these "events" include the prophets' lives and teachings, though, is impossible to determine.

Do such conclusions lessen the historical value of the Former Prophets? No, because archaeological evidence indicates that the historical data is accurate and reliable.¹⁰ The author researched Israel's history, chose appropriate material from available sources, and crafted the data into

a coherent whole. Readers are even invited to peruse the documents to read more about the kings. Certainly the author wrote from a theological viewpoint, but that fact does not automatically mean the history is inaccurate (see below). Indeed, theological scruples may lead to a greater concern for accuracy and truth. There is no compelling reason, then, to doubt that this openly honest author faithfully used accurate sources to write the books, even though the sources' exact contents and age cannot be recovered.

Several conclusions about the books emerge from this brief discussion of sources. First, they were completed sometime subsequent to Jerusalem's destruction, perhaps by 550 B.C. Second, the author freely admits using sources for this centuries-long history, claims the sources are accurate, and invites inspection of these sources. Third, as will be stated later, the book's theological interests do not negate their historicity, or *vice versa*. Fourth, more explicit knowledge of the author's identity and methodology must be gained by moving beyond an analysis of the books' sources to their literary and theological characteristics.

Theories of Authorship

Though earlier scholars had suggested some of the same points, it was Martin Noth who in 1943 set what remains the agenda for the authorship discussion.¹¹ Noth claimed that one author wrote all four books. His theory was clear, concise, and in step with then-current critical opinions on the Pentateuch and the Prophets. He argued that the author was heavily influenced by the language and thinking "found in the Deuteronomic Law and the admonitory speeches which precede and follow the Law."¹² Because of the influ-

ence of Deuteronomy's standards on the writer's work, Noth called the author "the Deuteronomist." Further, Noth said the "Deuteronomist" selected source materials that were then carefully crafted into a unified whole.¹³ Part of the crafting process included writing Deuteronomy 1-4 to introduce the history, providing narrative links between "books," and composing strategic speeches that summarize and advance the story.¹⁴ Finally, Noth stated that the "Deuteronomist" had probably witnessed the fall of Jerusalem (and thus must have penned the history by 550 B.C.)¹⁵ and therefore wrote to explain to future generations how Israel lost its land.¹⁶ The "Deuteronomist" was, then, a careful, theologically astute individual who chronicled the negative side of Israel's history.

Many commentators accepted Noth's basic thesis, but modified certain theological or compositional details. For example, Gerhard von Rad and H. W. Wolff observed that the history's theology might be more hopeful than Noth thought. Von Rad claimed that the "Deuteronomist" emphasized how God fulfilled Prophetic predictions in history, and that the great historian believed God would continue to work with and through David's descendants because of the promises made to David in 2 Samuel 7:13.¹⁷ According to von Rad, the partially hopeful ending of the history (2 Ki 25:27-30) implies "that the line of David has not yet come to an irrevocable end."¹⁸ Wolff also located positive theology in the many texts that encourage Israel to repent and turn to the Lord.¹⁹ These passages indicate that God still cares for Israel, and calls this nation back to its prior relationship with the Lord. These, and other,²⁰ studies helped balance Noth's

presentation of the books' theology.

R. K. Harrison provided a strong perspective against Noth's single-author theory in his comprehensive *Introduction to the Old Testament* (1969). While agreeing that a person heavily influenced by covenant thinking and the book of Deuteronomy wrote Joshua, Harrison correctly argued that this conclusion need not be based on an acceptance of source critical theories of the Pentateuch.²¹ As for Noth's theory, he writes, "The term 'Deuteronomist' can only be applied ... in the sense that the author recognized with Moses (Deut. 28:1ff), that obedience to God brought blessing, while disobedience resulted in calamity."²² He concludes that the book was written within Samuel's lifetime (c. 1045 B.C.), and suggests that Samuel may have been involved in its composition.²³ Other evangelical scholars state that either Joshua or some other contemporary of the events wrote the book.²⁴

From the time the seminal writings of Abraham Keunen and Julius Wellhausen appeared,²⁵ some scholars have concluded that at least two editors were responsible for collecting the history. Alfred Jepsen located two editors, one with a priestly perspective and one with prophetic convictions.²⁶ Jepsen could not be sure, though, where one editor spoke and the other did not. Rudolf Smend agreed with Jepsen's concept of prophetic and priestly editors, and added a third compiler who displayed keen interest in the law. Thus, Smend claimed that a prophetic editor wrote an initial history after Jerusalem's fall (587 B.C.), a priestly compiler reworked the history c. 580-560 B.C., and a law-oriented editor completed the work after 560 B.C.²⁷ These individuals were all heavily influenced by "deuteronomic" thought, which ex-

plains the books' unity. G. H. Jones basically agrees with Smend's conclusions, because he thinks this theory explains both the unity Noth emphasizes and the diversity inherent in the text.²⁸ Jones therefore believes that a "deuteronomic school," or movement, may have produced this history after several decades of theological reflection.²⁹

Following F. M. Cross' suggestion that there is no explanatory text for Jerusalem's fall to match the one for Samaria's demise (2 Ki 17), R. D. Nelson said that one pro-David editor wrote during Josiah's time, and was followed by an exilic writer who explained how and why the monarchy ended. Nelson based his argument on detailed structural, theological, and linguistic grounds.³⁰ This 1981 volume stated the two-author theory more carefully than it had been in the past, yet also generally agreed with other commentators who advocated the multiple-authorship position.³¹

Conclusion on Authorship

Though it is prudent to be cautious about the author of an anonymous document, the single author approach is probably the best answer to the problem. At least four reasons point to this conclusion. First, this position best explains the Former Prophets' unity. As is evident from the texts themselves, each new "book" in the history is linked to its predecessor. Thus, Moses' death links Joshua to Deuteronomy, Joshua's death ties Judges to Joshua, Samuel's career as Israel's last judge unites Judges and 1-2 Samuel, and David's final days helps 2 Samuel flow into 1-2 Kings. Certain themes also hold the books together, such as conquering the promised land, God's promises to David, and Israel's loss of land through idol worship.

Second, the single author theory ad-

equately explains the history's diversity. Because the author used source material that spans from the conquest to the destruction of Jerusalem, some diversity is to be expected. It is also true that the author had to include various ideological viewpoints to portray Israel's theological heritage accurately.

Third, as Burke Long has argued, the single author hypothesis fits the nature of ancient historiography. Indeed, ancient historians, such as Herodotus, often used diverse types of material to present a series of scenes that created the author's main arguments.³² Seen this way, what some scholars consider evidence for two or more editors can actually be viewed as part of a carefully structured whole.

Fourth, the single author theory retains its scholarly attractiveness without encountering the difficulties of the multiple author position. Proponents of multiple editions do not agree on the number, date, or criterion of the proposed redactions. They are forced to posit "schools" that last for decades to account for the books' unity; or, must utilize highly selective and sensitive criteria to separate one edition from the other.³³ These tendencies appear to be based too much on a preference for source criticism than on the text itself. Without question, the single author viewpoint has its own problems, such as accounting for the books' various theological emphases, but it does deal resourcefully with theological, historical, and literary issues.

A fairly distinct authorial portrait emerges from these discussions. The author is an anonymous individual who carefully collected relevant source data and shaped this material into a consecutive account that spans Joshua-Kings. This person finished the work by c. 550 B.C.

The narrative itself is a sweeping account of Israel's tragic loss of the land it was promised in the Pentateuch.³⁴ This tragedy occurred because the nation failed to live up to covenant standards, particularly those found in Deuteronomy. Despite this correlation with Deuteronomy, it is unnecessary to conclude the historian wrote any part of that book. Deuteronomy's influence is sufficient to explain the emphases in Joshua-Kings. Though the loss of the promised land was quite a negative event, the Deuteronomist did not view the situation as permanent. Living after the nation's defeat, this great writer looked to God's eternal covenant with David as proof that Israel was not finished.

With this portrait in place, some tentative conclusions about the author's methodology can be suggested. First, the author decided to compose a history of Israel based on the theological principles found in Deuteronomy. Second, this individual collected and collated the written sources the books mention, perhaps other materials not specified in the texts, and unique information the author possessed. Third, the author wove an account that stressed a continuity of leadership and mission from Moses to Joshua, the growth of the monarchy, the promises to David, and the prophets' role in predicting the nation's demise. Throughout the process the Deuteronomist stressed that God was the one who determined history. Thus, theology and detail were combined in a way that created a history, an assertion that is discussed below.

Approaching Joshua's Theology

Joshua continues the theological emphases detailed in Deuteronomy, yet at the same time reaches as far back as Genesis 12:7 and 15:6-16 to keep promises made

to Abraham. The book also looks ahead to when Israel will be at home in Canaan, at rest from enemies, but surrounded by new challenges to their faith. Its message therefore is grounded in Mosaic principles, and at the same time exemplifies the prophetic beliefs that will permeate the Latter Prophets. Clearly, the book provides a theological, historical, and canonical base for reviewing the Pentateuch's teachings and for preparing readers for the convictions that will dominate the next several books of the Old Testament.

Difficulties in Interpretation

As has been noted in the preceding section, scholars have taken a variety of approaches to the authorship and dating of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Not only do commentators disagree about the actual date of the final form of the books, they also debate the dates and possible authors of the sources behind them, not to mention the date and origins of the possible oral traditions behind the written sources that were used in the compiling of the books we now possess.³⁵ These are not inconsequential matters, but they cannot be solved here. It must suffice to conclude that an author/historian writing after the fall of Jerusalem in c. 587 B.C. composed the books using accurate source material collected from persons or places current scholars know little or nothing about.³⁶

Historians also discuss the possible scenarios for the invasion and conquest of Canaan, questioning the comprehensiveness of the victory, its actual date, and the number of Israelites that participated.³⁷ Again, these are not minor matters. What can be said, however, is that the Old Testament has been called a reliable source of information on the conquest by scholars of various theological

commitments.³⁸ A real invasion did occur, and Israel certainly was a force in Canaan by c. 1220 B.C., so it is incorrect to deem the military events recorded in Joshua mythic or legendary.³⁹ Attempts to determine the full extent of what happened through utilizing archaeology have confirmed the general contours of the events, yet have not yielded tremendous amounts of detailed information on specific battles and persons.⁴⁰ Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that Joshua stands on firm historical ground when it makes its theological observations.

There is wide agreement on Joshua's basic theological convictions, and there are also certain questions that the book brings to the minds of most interpreters. No one seriously disputes the fact that Joshua continues the theological themes begun in Deuteronomy. Joshua believes that Israel is only as strong as their commitment to the covenant that Moses describes in his final speeches to the people. War must be conducted according to the standards found in Deuteronomy 7 and 20. The land must be distributed as Moses declared in Numbers 32, 34, and 35. Passover and covenant renewal services are to be observed. Because of this obedience, God can be expected to fight for Israel in a manner similar to the exodus miracles (cf. Dt 27-28).

Even with these principles in place, though, difficulties remain. The chief one for most writers is the whole concept of "Holy War," a practice that seems contradictory to the biblical passages, many of them in Deuteronomy itself, that speak of God's love and kindness. This issue will be dealt with when it arises in the text, but it is appropriate to address it briefly now. If Joshua is read in isolation from the rest of the Old Testament this

problem is more acute than if it is considered in canonical perspective. The canon does not deal with the death of the Canaanites in an arbitrary or flippant manner. Rather, it prepares the reader from Genesis 15:16 onward for this difficult material. There the text gives Israel four hundred years in Egypt for the Amorites to change their ways. Leviticus 18:24-30 takes pains to state that the people of Canaan are involved in repulsively immoral practices that force Yahweh to judge them. What occurs, then, is not some kind of God-ordained hate mission. Rather, it is divine judgment for sin similar to that which God has reluctantly meted out since the Garden of Eden. Deuteronomy 27-28 has made it abundantly clear that if Israel sins in a similar manner that they will also feel the effects of the wrath of the Lord. Israel has no moral free pass in these accounts. They are simply the human instruments of divine intervention in human affairs, and are on this mission based on a once-in-history revelation from God through Moses.

Theological Outline

Joshua unfolds in a fairly simple way. First, in chapters 1-12 Israel conquers the bulk of Canaan according to the promises of God. Here God is portrayed as Israel's God, the God of all the earth (2:11), and the God who fights for Israel. The Lord prepares Joshua to take Moses' place (1:1-18), then prepares the people to fight for the land that will be their inheritance from their God (2:1-5:15), then leads the people to victory (6:1-12:24). As in Exodus 15, the Lord is depicted as a warrior who gives Israel the victory over nations seemingly more numerous and powerful. Second, Joshua 13-21 describes the dividing of the

land. God is seen here as the God who gives the people a place of rest. Ironically, they must fight to possess the outer reaches of the land of rest, which indicates the divine expectation of faithfulness and obedience has not changed. Third, chapters 22-24 describe covenant renewal ceremonies that present the key to long-term possession of the land. Here Yahweh is the God who expects real commitment in victory, in times of suffering, and in times of plenty. These ceremonies prove that the Lord is still the same God who asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, who asked Jacob to give up his household idols, who called Moses, who renewed the covenant in the plains of Moab.

Each of these sections clings to the theology propounded in the Law. There is no deviation from monotheism. There is no wavering from the written word that Moses gave the people. There is no doubt that the land they are invading is from God, a gift that they in no way merit. Still, mistakes are made. The people are as human as their parents. But they confess their mistakes, unlike their parents, and learn to avoid the harsh penalties that come from ignoring God's explicit word. Because they do, the book of Joshua depicts what is in effect as great a theological and historical triumph as the nation ever experienced.

The God Who Fights for Israel: Joshua 1-12

It should come as no surprise to readers of the canon that the Lord is prepared to fight on Israel's behalf.⁴¹ Yahweh delivered the people from Egyptian bondage through miraculous means. The victory song after the Red Sea covered Pharaoh's forces focuses on the notion that Yahweh is "a man of war" (Ex 15:3) who

gives Israel the upper hand over their foes. God also led the chosen nation by the fire and the cloud, gave them manna to eat, and dwelled in their midst *via* the worship center. Exodus 17:8-16, Numbers 21:1-4, and Numbers 21:21-35 depict battles in which Yahweh directs Moses to wage war against enemies the Lord has destined for defeat. Indeed it was Yahweh who ordered the people to come to the land in the first place, and who punished them for not invading earlier (cf. Nu 13-14). The issue, then, as the book begins is not whether the Lord intends to fight on Israel's side, but on what terms and in what way this divine aid will happen. The terms become apparent as God prepares the nation to attack the promised land.

Just as Moses was the key to Israel's trek to the edge of victory, so Joshua will be the most important human element in their future success. He has already been designated as Moses' successor (Nu 27:15-23; Dt 3:21-22, 31:1-8), and he must come to accept the fact that his efforts towards "the establishment or renewal of God's kingdom society must be a continuation of the work of Moses."⁴² To this end, God encounters Joshua, reminding him that he has been called to lead Israel at this point in time as surely as Moses was called to lead Israel at the burning bush, and as surely as Jacob was called to be the bearer of the Abrahamic covenantal promises at Bethel. God's leaders are not self-selecting. They are the chosen heads of the chosen nation.

Like Moses before him, Joshua's call experience gathers themes from the past in order to explain the nation's future. He must take the people forward so that the promises to the "fathers," to the patriarchs, will come true (1:1-6). He must meditate on the received word of God

mediated through Moses if he is to be successful and courageous in his efforts (1:7-9). At the same time, he will have all the divine resources given his predecessor, most particularly the presence of God, an "item" that was vital to Moses' calling (cf. Ex 3:12, 4:12) and to Israel's ability to move forward in the desert (cf. Ex 34:5-9). Because of the Lord's presence he will succeed in his endeavor to do what Moses was not able to do due to the events of Numbers 20. Israel has no doubt that he is the man for the job (1:10-18).

This call story not only prepares Joshua for what follows, it also prepares readers for the themes that will come in the rest of the book. First, the call account expresses the canonical basis for Israel's foray into Canaan. God promised the patriarchs that the land would belong to their descendants, and the patriarchs believed the Lord, thus making the promises apply directly to themselves (Ge 12:7, 15:1-6, etc). For Joshua, as much as for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and, by extension, Moses, the promises must be believed and pursued in faith. Lacking faith, the people will never accept an abstract notion such as Yahweh fighting for them. Certainly the attitude of the previous generation bitterly proved this point. Second, the call story provides the standard by which the nation must operate as they live by faith. They have the covenantal principles expressed in the Mosaic law to guide them. This law will restrain sin, reward obedience, direct their worship, govern their private affairs, and demonstrate their distinctiveness as God's holy people. Without it they have no life (cf. Dt 8:3, 32:47).

Third, the story stresses the physical goal toward which the nation is headed. Israel wants to possess the land their ancestors believed would belong to their

descendants. Walter Kaiser links the patriarchs' faith and the land by noting that the promised land was the place where the promise of Israel being a blessing to all nations could come true. Certainly this place is Israel's inheritance, a fact Deuteronomy stresses twenty-five times, but if the chosen people live as God intends the holy land will also be the place of blessing for all nations.⁴³ Fourth, the account also highlights the spiritual goal for the people, which is to "rest" in the land after the long travels and travails they have endured (1:15; cf. Dt 3:20, 12:9-10, 25:19). Trent Butler comments, "It [rest] represents freedom from enemy oppression and deadly war. It represents life lived with God by the gift of God."⁴⁴ Ironically, though, he continues, the people must wage war so that the rest may come to them.⁴⁵

Fifth, the means by which the goals will be achieved are also explained. There is one God who reveals himself to Joshua, and this is the same God whose self-revelation as the self-existent God of the patriarchs spurred Moses to confront Pharaoh. This God is the Lord of the whole earth, since Yahweh pledges to be with Joshua wherever he goes, a unique promise in a theological milieu that believed individual gods of the nations were landlocked to their adherents' geographical boundaries. God created the heavens and earth, and thus is able to accompany the chosen people to any location necessary to give them victory. This is the God who promises to fight for Israel. God gives the land because the land belongs to God (cf. Lv 25:23). Having prepared the leader for what will follow, Yahweh proceeds to prepare the people as well. The chief lesson for the people to absorb is that they must apply

the old principles they have learned in the past to their new situation. They have what they need to succeed. No novel theologies or battle plans are necessary.

As they did in Numbers 13, the Israelites send spies to determine the nature of their objective (2:1). Almost captured, the spies are delivered by a prostitute named Rahab (2:2-7). This Canaanite woman bargains for her life, yet does so based on theological convictions. She says that Israel's earlier victories over the Egyptians and the Amorites have become known, and that this knowledge has led to terror in Jericho (2:8-10). Why? Because they realize God's role in these events, and reason that Yahweh is Lord of heaven and of earth (2:11). In other words, there is no place where an enemy of Yahweh would be safe. Yahweh is not confinable in Egypt, the desert, or in Canaan. This God crosses all boundaries and shatters limited conceptions of deity. In the mouth of a non-Israelite, this speech is all the more impressive. Her foreignness also emphasizes the theme of Israel's relationship with God blessing peoples beyond their ethnic group (cf. Ge 12:1-9). When the men conclude their agreement to spare Rahab and her family they return to Joshua, certain Israel will triumph because God has prepared the way (2:15-24). Their optimism puts the fear expressed in Numbers 13-14 to shame.

Thus emboldened, Joshua leads Israel across the Jordan River, a barrier that has come to transcend mere physical boundary (3:1). God has brought them to the promised land. They are no longer "beyond the Jordan" (Dt 1:1), no longer in the place of punishment. Gray writes, "Theologically and in its present context the crossing of the Jordan marks a decisive juncture, heralding the consumma-

tion of God's gracious acts in the fulfillment of the promise of settlement, or 'rest' in the Deuteronomistic idiom."⁴⁶ As in the miracle at the Red Sea, the people are privileged to pass over on dry ground, a miracle that links the exodus to the current historical situation. God's work continues in a similar way in a new and distinct setting. Indeed, Soggin states that the similarities between the Red Sea and miracle and this situation "take nothing away from the miracle itself, which is reduced neither to a normal phenomenon nor to a 'routine', but on the contrary is effectively given a setting in history, outside the whole mythical sphere."⁴⁷ Yahweh is with the people as powerfully as in the past in real strategic historical moments.

Israel marks the event by the piling of twelve stones at Gilgal, where they set up their headquarters (4:9, 20). Beyond the miraculous nature of this event, there are two practical theological reasons for its memorializing. One is that the people might remember to follow Joshua (4:14). The other is that Israel and the people of Canaan might know and fear the Lord (4:24). As with Rahab's confession of faith, the text emphasizes God's reputation here. No issue in the conquest matters more than the glorification of the creator before the peoples of the earth, so once again Israel's obligation to bless others rises to the surface.

Israel's enemies are terrified of news of the miraculous Jordan crossing (5:1), yet the Lord does not send the army into battle immediately. Instead, two more preparatory events are ordered, both of which, like the dry-shod crossing into the land, tie the nation to the best days of its relationship with Yahweh. First, God commands that the men be circumcised, a tra-

dition begun by Abraham in Genesis 17:9-14 that highlights Israel's covenant with the Lord. This specific ritual occasion also signals that the men who disobeyed in Numbers 13-14 have all died and the army may now move forward with the conquest (5:2-5; cf. Dt 2:16).⁴⁸ God has renewed the nation and readied them for the new task in the new land.

Second, the people celebrate Passover (5:10), which links them to their deliverance from Egypt. Moses carefully explained in Deuteronomy that every event in Israel's past has the impact of things that happened to them, and that the covenant made at Sinai was truly made with this generation of Israelites (cf. Dt 5:3). This observance of Passover affirms such teaching. What God did for them in Egypt God does for them in Canaan. Their sense of history thereby informs their activities in the present. After Passover the manna ceases (5:10-12). Yahweh's provision now switches from the miraculous manna to the miracle of living off the bounty of the promised land. They receive the fruit of the land as a prelude to receiving the cities of the land.⁴⁹ God's people surely know now that they have experienced a new beginning, a fresh opportunity to be the Lord's holy nation.⁵⁰

As if all the previous preparatory events were not sufficient to express God's intention to give Joshua the land, a final revelatory meeting occurs. Joshua has already been called to replace Moses in a Moses-like call experience. Now the leader of God's armies meets with the head of Yahweh's army, an encounter that the text says requires Joshua to remove his sandals due to its occurrence on "holy ground" (5:15), an unmistakable reference to Exodus 3:1-6. God is truly with him as he was with Moses (cf. 1:1-9). Having led

his charges in every covenantal observance relevant to their situation, Joshua receives God's full approval and affirmation of his obedience. The holy nation is ready for holy war.

Scenes and situations change from account to account in Joshua 6-12, but one principle remains constant: God fights for Israel as long as the people are obedient to the covenant. Jericho falls because of faith in divine power, not because of a long and successful siege against a fortified city.⁵¹ Because of her faith, Rahab and her family are spared death due to the command of God (6:17), a privilege no one else in the city receives. Canaan's judgment, predicted in Genesis 15:16, now begins. Israel's role as instrument of divine punishment is accentuated by its commitment to take no spoil, but rather to place all captured wealth in the "treasury of the Lord" (6:18-19). This is not an excursion meant to enhance Israel's financial standing.

This unifying principle is illustrated when Israel fails to take their next objective, Ai, a relatively easy target. One family has kept spoil from Jericho, an offense that violates the holy war concept, and it is not until they are executed that the nation can once again expect victory (7:1-26). Clearly, if Yahweh does not fight for the people they have no chance for success. This war is about glory for the Lord, about promise keeping, and about covenantal fidelity, not about whose army is particularly large or effective. Just as clearly, the entire nation stands or falls together because the covenant was made with the whole nation. They are a *community* of faith as much as a collection of individuals who believe in and follow the Lord. Selfishness, disregard for Yahweh's commands, and covering up sin therefore harms the entire group.⁵² The fact that the

whole community punishes the offenders demonstrates the solidarity of their repentance and desire for renewed relationship with the Lord.⁵³ Once the covenant relationship is restored, Ai falls (8:1-29).

Joshua freely acknowledges Israel's dependence on God by observing the ritual on Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim that Moses commands in Deuteronomy 27 (8:30-35). The memorial stones are put in place and the covenant blessings and curses read. Israel is living the covenant. They have experienced both its promises and its consequences by now, particularly in the Ai episode. By recognizing Yahweh's sovereignty in battle, Joshua's obedience is complete (8:35). The Lord's faithfulness is likewise complete.

Israel missteps by making a treaty with the Gibeonites, a Canaanite country they mistake for foreigners, but even that mishap leads to a great victory (9:1-10:14). Indeed God fights for the people to the extent of making the sun stand still so that victory over the enemy could be achieved (10:14). Eventually Yahweh wages war effectively enough to give Israel the southern sector of the land (10:42). The text gives Yahweh credit for triumphs in the north as well (11:1-9; cf. 11:8), and praises Joshua for carrying out everything that the Lord commanded through Moses (11:15). As was the case with Pharaoh, God hardens the heart of the enemy kings to wage futile wars against Israel so that their punishment might be complete (11:20). Again, the conquest does more than reward Israel, for it fulfills all the promises of judgment the canon has unveiled over time.

God's fighting is completed. Canaan has been subdued, giving Israel a place in the promised land (11:23-12:24). Israel has work to do to possess the land, but God has done as promised. The fact that Israel

will have to expend some effort to control their inheritance has been evident since Deuteronomy 7:22, where Moses says the conquest will not occur all at once so that the land will not become a vast haunt for thistles and beasts. Israel's periodic returns to a set camp at Gilgal also point to this eventuality (cf. 10:15).

Joshua's life work, and in a very real way Moses' as well, has also been achieved. Every promise offered in Joshua 1:1-18 has been kept, and the people are no longer a nation without a homeland.⁵⁴ Moses' longing look at the land in Deuteronomy 34 has become more than a look. It has developed into a promise kept by the God who made it. Joshua and Moses' commitment to God's word has been vindicated as well, as has Joshua and Caleb's belief that the land could have been theirs forty years sooner. Also, the second generation's determination to keep covenant and follow Joshua's leadership has been rewarded. They have set a high standard for future generations in faith as well as in warfare. All this is true because the Lord has fought for the chosen people.

Canonical Synthesis: God-given Rest in the Land

Canonical references to the conquest of Canaan focus on the fulfillment of promises to Abraham, the grace of God, the power of God, the law as the word of God, and the concept of rest as a future blessing for God's faithful. After the long canonical buildup to the fulfillment of the land promise, the conquest texts are almost an anticlimax. After all, readers have known since Genesis 12:1-9 that the Lord intended Abraham's descendants to have the land. The promise was repeated to Isaac (Ge 26:3) and Jacob (Ge 28:4, 13), and held a promi-

nent place in the exodus accounts (cf. Ex 3:8, 6:4, 13:5, etc). Much of the legislation in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy anticipates a settled culture dwelling permanently in Canaan. Still, the wonder of this event must be clung to, cherished as a remarkable monument to the fact that the Lord keeps all promises. This promise asked for faith, yet also generated faith, for it was based on Yahweh's trustworthy character.⁵⁵ This promise's fulfillment gives hope that all God's pledges are kept, regardless of how long it takes.

It must be noted, though, that the fulfillment of the land promise does not cease with the conquest. The power of God's word must guide the people's actions. Deuteronomy 28:15-68 has graphically illustrated the truth that the land may be forfeited by hardened covenant breaking, at least until the nation turns from its sin. Judges, Samuel, and Kings state convincingly that when Israel breaks the Mosaic covenant they suffer the consequences. Second Kings 17 says that the exiles of 722 B.C. and 587 B.C. occurred due to covenant unfaithfulness. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve call Israel to repent and return to the Lord, with Jeremiah leading the way with 111 usages of the word "repent." Clearly, only a nation that understands that they cannot live by bread alone, but must draw sustenance from God's word (Dt 8:3), can survive. Only a people that believe the word is their life (Dt 32:47) will continue on in the holy place.

Both the land and God's covenant are evidences of God's grace. Moses takes great care to tell the people that God's love (Dt 4:37-38), not Israel's power (Dt 8:17) or righteousness (Dt 9:6), secures the inheritance. As creator, Yahweh owns the world and gives Canaan to Israel as a sa-

cred trust (Lv 25:23). As God's stewards, they are under the creator's protection, safe from their enemies.⁵⁶ Only a lack of covenant fidelity can sever this security, so several psalms celebrate the blessing of possessing the Law. Psalm 19:7-14 stresses the Law's perfection and consequent ability to help human beings identify and remove hidden sins that jeopardize the precious relationship with the Lord. Psalm 119 heightens these twin benefits of the Law and conveys a strong sense of joy in obeying standards that keep one close to the creator. Nehemiah 8:1-18 portrays a scene in which a post-exilic Jerusalem community uses the Law to rejuvenate their commitment to the Lord.⁵⁷ Clearly, God's grace extends to every area of life necessary to keep the people safe in the land.

Besides Yahweh's grace, the conquest demonstrates God's undeniable power. Particularly as the Lord fights for Israel in ways human beings can only consider miraculous this strength becomes as inherent as the loving grace already described. Jeremiah 2:7 states near the beginning of a long treatise (2:1-6:30) on Israel's covenant infidelity that God brought the people to a good land, only to see them defile it through idolatry. Ezekiel claims that Yahweh took Israel out of Egypt, gave them the covenant, and gave them the land, only to have them serve idols (Ez 20:12-17). Once again it is God's powerful hand that made the conquest possible. Amos 2:10 agrees that Israel's possession of Canaan was God's work, not the nation's.

Some of the psalms are even more explicit on the subject.⁵⁸ For example, Psalm 44:1-3 states that God's might, not Israel's, won the victory. In Psalm 78, one of scripture's most God-centered psalms, the

poet claims God "brought" Israel to "His holy land" and "drove out the nations" (78:54-55). Psalms 104-106 present a theological summary of Yahweh's work from creation to the exile. Included in the Lord's mighty acts is the giving of the land as an inheritance (105:11, 44). Again, God's power achieves the victory, and Israel has only to accept the blessing and live by the covenant.

In both the Prophets and the Psalms, the power of God evidenced in the conquest is juxtaposed with Israel's unfaithfulness. God's power has worked for their good, but they reject the gift and the one who gave it. Such ingratitude seems especially foolish in light of the Lord's ability to cause the sinful great pain. In forgetting God's grace Israel has also forgotten God's power.

Over time, "rest in the land" takes on significance far beyond nationhood or geography. Of course, resting from enemies and wilderness journeying can hardly be overestimated.⁵⁹ Still, as time went on and their messages went unheeded, the prophets looked to an era when the exiled peoples would return to the land.⁶⁰ Isaiah 44:24-28 predicts a return to the land in Cyrus' time (c. 539 B.C.), and Isaiah 49:14-21 says the return will prove God's love for Israel. Jeremiah 31 views a return to the land as a prelude to a new covenant with Israel that will mark all covenant persons as faithful followers of God (31:1-34). As in Isaiah, security in the land will demonstrate divine love (31:35-40). Ezekiel 28:25-26 claims this new security will make God's greatness evident to the nations. In these texts, then, the restored rest will result in a new chance in the land, in new experiences of God's love, in a new covenant, and in a new opportunity to bless all nations by exalting Yahweh before them. The proph-

ets expect these events to occur sometime in the future, so these visions give the faithful hope in dark times.

The God Who Divides the Inheritance: Joshua 13-21

Israel's mere presence in the land does not complete God's plans for the nation. Moses' detailed plans for settling the people in specific areas, for setting aside Levitical cities, and for establishing cities of refuge have been outlined in Deuteronomy 1:38 and 3:28, as well as in Numbers 27:18-23, 32:17, and 34:17.⁶¹ Dividing the land remains the one part of Joshua's calling that has not been accomplished (cf. Jos 1:6; Dt 31:7).⁶² Thus, it is necessary for God's, Moses', and Joshua's purposes that the inheritance Yahweh gives Israel be divided between the heirs. Completion of the conquest will also mean the holy people have done *their* part in fulfilling the covenant. These chapters depict this completion process by describing general tribal divisions of land, special allotments of land, and instances where the people are or are not anxious to do their part in finishing the military task. As the book unfolds significant themes emerge, such as the importance of obedience to God's plans, courage in fighting the Canaanites, the equality of each tribe, the concept of the land as inheritance, and the grounding of canonical theology in history.

God assigns Joshua the task of dividing the promised land (13:1-8), so obedience is an issue from the start. Commentators have long puzzled over 13:1, which seems to contradict 11:23. The former passage speaks of the whole land having been taken, while the latter indicates land remains unconquered. Many possible source-critical solutions to this

problem have been offered, but the issue is also a theological one. God fights for Israel in chapters 1-12, then exhorts the people to fight in chapters 13-21. Joshua leads Israel into battle in the first section, taking every objective he attacks, then exhorts them to finish the work themselves in the second section. Major cities have been taken and serious alliances broken, but individual places are left for each tribe to win. Just as Israel's obedience to God's revelation completes the covenant, so Israel's response to Yahweh's victories completes the conquest. The human effort must cooperate with the divine initiative. Obedience must accompany miracle.

Inserted between the land lists are three accounts that demonstrate that in this setting obedience can only be displayed by the showing of courage in battle. Caleb, Joshua's contemporary in age and faith, demands the opportunity to fight for the most hard-to-take territory (14:6-15). All the people need his spirit. Joseph's tribe complains about not having enough space, only to be told by Joshua to attack difficult enemy positions (17:14-18). Again, determination and courage are expected. Similarly, Joshua tells seven tribes they have waited long enough to secure their inheritance (18:1-10). God gives the people the land (18:10), but they must grasp the inheritance in a Caleb-like manner.

Special allotments made to Joshua (19:49-51), for cities of refuge (20:1-9), and to the Levites (21:1-8) highlight the nature of the land as divine inheritance. God owns the land (Lv 25:23), and thus may divide it. The division of holy ground calls Israel to respect the land, neither selling it at will nor acting however they wish in it. Having a portion in God's land requires reverence for its purpose and value.⁶³ Giving specific allotments shows respect for the

covenant's explicit statements regarding cities of refuge and the Levites (cf. Nu 35:6-34; Dt 4:41-43, 19:1-14; Nu 35:1-5). Allowing Joshua a particular piece of ground recognizes his position as God's chosen leader. Even the casting of lots to determine where each tribe will live (e.g. 18:10-11) reflects a belief that God may be trusted to put each family in its appropriate place.

How the land is divided tribe-by-tribe indicates an inherent equality in the nation as a whole. This belief in the right to equality grows out of the conviction that God created the whole earth and elected Israel to be the holy nation that would receive an inheritance of holy land. Paul Hanson explains that

This was a right based not merely upon a social ideal, but on the Yahwistic confession that every Israelite was the child of the same parents, a heavenly Parent to whom belonged the whole earth, who had chosen Israel as an inheritance out of all the families of the earth (Deut. 32:8-9; 9:26, 29; Ps. 28:9, 79:1; Jer 10:16), and who now distributed, with even-handed fairness, the land among the people.⁶⁴

Israel's system precludes the sort of oppression seen in other ancient lands where royalty or large land owners could control most of a country's property.⁶⁵ In other words, it negated the slavery system the people had experienced in Egypt.

Finally, the conquest and division grounds Israel's theology in historical reality. Martens asserts, "Land is real. Earth is spatially definable. Life with Yahweh takes place here and now. The quality of that life is all-embracing—it relates to Yahweh, to neighbor, to environment."⁶⁶ It is also true that war is real, Canaanites are real, and cities are real. Israel's theology does not occur in mythological

realms, but in life and death struggles, in mundane affairs, in the real events of history. Even the miracles are set in specific occurrences at specific times. They do not happen in a vacuum or in a mythological world. Still, it is difficult to express adequately how miracles and the "normal" course of human events intersect. T. S. Eliot captures the truth in this dilemma when writing about the incarnation in "Choruses from 'The Rock'":

Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment in time and of time, / A moment not out of time, but in time, what we call history: transecting, bisecting the world of time, a moment in time but not like a moment of time, / A moment in time but time was made through that moment: for without the meaning there is no time, and that moment of time gave meaning.⁶⁷

The conquest happens in moments of time whose meaning transcends normal happenings, yet does happen, in ways that make readers consider and believe, yet wonder at their magnificence.

Canonical Synthesis: Faithfulness in the Land

Three canonical usages of Joshua 13-21 deserve mention. First, the author of Hebrews 4:1-13 links sabbath rest (Ge 2:2), Israel's failure to enter Canaan the first time (Nu 13-14; cf. Ps 95:11), and Joshua's work in an effort to exhort God's people to strive to receive God's offer of final rest. He warns that rest takes faith, obedience, and diligence, all of which he clearly believes the Israelites lacked. No diligence means no rest in his view, and Joshua certainly says basically the same thing to the tribes who tarry in taking their inheritance (cf. 17:14-18:10). Second, Israel's full possession of Canaan does not occur until

David's victories in 2 Samuel 8:1-14. Israel does not do its share of the work until centuries after God places them in the land. The promise has, then, both a fixed and continuous nature.

Third, the prophets chastise Israel for abuses of the principle of equality. Slavery, oppression, and using the land to gain unfair financial advantage are inherently wrong based on the covenantal concept of inheritance. Hanson claims,

When Amos, Micah, and Isaiah inveighed against those who bought and sold property and amassed real estate at the expense of the impoverished, they were appealing to the early Yahwistic notion of equal distribution to which the right of the *nahal* [inheritance] gave social form.⁶⁸

The same may be said for Elijah's denouncing of Ahab for Jezebel's killing Naboth for not selling his land, his "inheritance" (1 Ki 21:3), to Ahab.⁶⁹ Before God, kings and paupers have the same status as they dwell together in the land Yahweh gives both as a gift (cf. Dt 17:14-20). Both live on inherited property, and neither merits the gift, so one oppressing the other is condemned.

The God Who Requires Ongoing Commitment: Joshua 22-24

This section reveals that Joshua and the generation he leads understand that conquering Canaan hardly concludes the covenant. Rather, the God who has had a relationship with them since Abraham is a living God who loves and relates to successive generations (cf. Ex 3:13-15). Therefore, it is necessary that they serve Yahweh according to Mosaic principles regardless of whether their inheritance is east or west of the Jordan River. It is necessary for each generation to embrace the covenant as its

own, for their God transcends geographical and tribal boundaries (22:1-34), physical obstacles (23:1-16), and generational passage of time (24:1-33). Only covenant renewal on Israel's part allows them to "keep up with" a deity without physical or temporal limits. Only ongoing commitment to an exclusive relationship with Yahweh allows them to avoid mixing their faith with Canaanite fertility-dominated polytheism or rejecting the Lord altogether.⁷⁰

Once he deems the land suitably "at rest," Joshua releases the Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassehites who were given an inheritance east of the Jordan by Moses in Numbers 32:1-43, yet who were charged with helping their fellow tribes conquer the land (22:1-4). Joshua commends these warriors, charges them with keeping the Mosaic covenant, blesses them, and sends them to their homes (22:5-6). On the way home, however, they erect an altar, thus causing the other Israelite tribes to fear another Achan incident (22:13-20; cf. 7:1-26).

Theological reflection settles the problem. On the one hand, the troubled tribes fear a breach of the one altar law (22:16; cf. Dt 12:13-32), which would in turn incite a Baal-Peor or Achan-type judgment from God (22:17-20; cf. Nu 25:1-18; Jos 7:1-26). Without question, their concerns are covenantally based and canonically ordered. The tribes living east of the Jordan counter with covenantal issues of their own. This altar, like the stones gathered by Jacob and Laban in Genesis 31:48, is "a witness" in this case of their unity with the other tribes, and is not a place of sacrifice. They are in full agreement with Deuteronomy 12:13-32 (22:29). Their concern is to preserve the covenantal oneness between themselves, their children, their God, and their nation (22:28-29). They

want to give a witness to future generations of their faith so that it can never be said they have “no portion” (22:27), no inheritance in the land.

Their explanation satisfies those concerned (22:30-34). It also indicates that God’s covenant people may relate to Yahweh and to one another regardless of geographical separation. If God could take Israel from Egypt to Canaan, then God can dwell among all the people at all times wherever they may be. This fact becomes crucial when Israel actually suffers exile and has to deal with exercising faith outside the promised land.

The book’s final chapters depict Joshua’s last two speeches to the people. His initial oration reminds his audience of truths derived from Deuteronomy 4:25-26 and 6:13-15, Joshua 1:1-18, and Joshua 2-12. Thus, like its predecessor, this chapter contains serious theological thought. Because God has fought for Israel (23:1-5; cf. chs. 1-12), which has brought to pass all Yahweh’s promises (23:14; cf. 1:1-18), the people must obey “the book of the law of Moses” (23:6; cf. 1:1-9) by rejecting other gods and eschewing marriage to their adherents (23:7-13; cf. Dt 6:13-15). Failure to obey will result in loss of land (23:16; cf. Dt 4:25-26, 28:15-68). This speech asserts that God has overcome all military obstacles to Israel’s life in the land. Israel has “only” to overcome covenantal obstacles to continue to enjoy the benefits of God’s victories.

Joshua’s concluding speech presents a canonical and theological summary that summons the tribes to covenant renewal. Beginning in 24:2, he charts the past, noting Abraham’s polytheistic beginnings (Ge 11:26-32), the patriarchs’ journeys (24:3-4; cf. Ge 12:1-50:26), the Red Sea victory (24:5-7a; cf. Ex 15), and the desert

period (24:7b; cf. Nu 13-14). He concludes by mentioning the early military victories (24:8; cf. Nu 21:21-35), the Balaam incident (24:9-10; cf. Nu 22-24), and finally the conquest itself (24:11-13; Jos 1-12). Only the covenant is not mentioned, but he has already mentioned it in 23:6, 16. All these events constitute the basis for Israel’s relationship with and obedience to Yahweh. Theologically interpreted events should create the impetus for the nation’s future.

Three responses are expected to flow from this relationship: fear of the Lord, service of the Lord, and rejection of all other gods (24:14). These impulses were evident in Exodus 19:1-20:17, for the people respected the Lord’s awesome presence on the mountain (Ex 19:7-25), agreed to do God’s will (Ex 19:8), and received the monotheistic ten commands (Ex 20:3-17). God’s work on their behalf stood behind these elements (Ex 20:1-2). Israel agrees to the covenant in Exodus 24:1-4. Joshua asks for a similar response now, yet warns the people that God cannot be fooled. Monotheism alone pleases Yahweh (24:15-20). Gerhard von Rad observes, “As far as we can see, this cultic intolerance is something unique in the history of religion.”⁷¹ Israel agrees to the covenant renewal, and Joshua writes their pledge “in the book of God’s law” (24:27).

Joshua’s warnings are part exhortation and part suspicion. Moses predicted in Deuteronomy 31:16, 29 that the people would break the covenant *someday*, so Joshua knows each generation must renew its love for Yahweh. As Christoph Barth says

Human beings cannot keep a vow of this kind faithfully for generation after generation. What happened at Shechem was only a beginning. Time and again Israel would in fact forget, violate, and deny the

Shechem oath. Israel had to be reminded and rebuked by divine judgments. God would not himself forget. He would keep, lead, call and teach Israel, repeatedly reminding it of its commitment.⁷²

Another way of stating Barth's comment is, "Faith is not genetic. It must be exercised by each new person and generation." For this reason Moses commands intergenerational teaching (Dt 6:1-9), and Joshua's last act as Israel's leader is to insure faithfulness in his time, even though he knows Moses' words will come true at some point in the future. For now, however, it is pleasant to read that Israel served God during Joshua's time (24:29-31) and that Joseph's bones are finally laid to rest in the land of promise (24:32; cf. Ge 50:25; Ex 13:19).

Many canonical connections have already been noted, but one more should be included. Just as Moses' call story serves as the model for future call accounts, so does Joshua's covenant renewal set the standard for later similar observances, rare as they are in Israel's history. Samuel leads covenant renewal in c. 1050 B.C. when Saul becomes king (1 Sa 12:1-25). Josiah renews the covenant c. 622 B.C. (2 Ki 23:1-3), as do Ezra and Nehemiah (c. 440 B.C.) (cf. Ne 9:1-38). Sadly, these instances are separated by years, generations at times, of covenant breaking such as that foreseen by Moses. Still, Joshua sets a standard that removed all excuses from the lips of the unfaithful. He places life and death before the people as only a man who experienced slavery, Sinai, desert, and conquest could do.

Conclusion

Joshua seems like the closing act and a notice of future acts at the same time. God's promises have materialized due to

divine election, divine power, and one faithful human generation. But readers can hardly think the human race's sin problem has been solved or that all nations have been sufficiently blessed. Moses' dire predictions preclude such delusions. New details soon emerge that demonstrate how right Moses was in Deuteronomy 31:16, 29, yet also how right he was in Genesis 3:15, 12:1-9, 15:1-6, Leviticus 16:21-22, and Deuteronomy 18:15-22. An uneasy peace settles over the canon even as the Israelites bury Joshua, Joseph, and Eleazar (24:32-33).

ENDNOTES

¹For a fuller discussion of these five details, see Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, New American Commentary 8 (Nashville: Broadman, 1995) 54-58.

²One such factor is the appearance of the phrase "until this day" (1 Ki 8:8, 9:13, 9:21, 12:19; 2 Ki 2:22, 8:22, 10:27, 14:7, 16:6, 17:23, 17:34, 17:41), which, taken at face value, could mean that the situation described existed when the books were composed. It is likely, though, that the phrase states what was true when the source being used was written. Cf. Brevard S. Childs, "A Study of the Formula, 'Until This Day,'" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82 (1963) 279-292.

³This conclusion reflects the latest possible date for the conquest. Some scholars place the Exodus itself as early as c. 1440 B.C., while others believe the event occurred c. 1290 B.C.

⁴Charles F. Kraft, "Jashar, Book of," in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Vol. 2*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962) 803.

⁵Cf. John Skinner, *1-2 Kings*, rev. ed., Century Bible (London and Edinburgh: T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1904) 23.

⁶Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*. 1878. Rpt. (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1983).

⁷For example Otto Eissfeldt concluded that J, E, and an older lay (L) source are evident in Genesis-Kings (*The Old Testament, an Introduction including the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and also Similar Types from Qumran: The History of the Formation of the Old Testament*, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd, 3rd ed. [New York: Harper and Row, 1965] 241-248, 297-299). Cf. Immanuel Benzinger, "Jahwist und Elohist in den Königsbüchern," in *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft II/2* (Berlin-Stuttgart-Leipzig: Töpelmann, 1921); Gustav Hölscher, "Das Buch der Könige, seine Quellen und seine Redaktion," in *Eucharisterion Hermann Gunkel zum 60 Geburtstag, Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments* 36 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1927); and Rudolph Smend, "JE in den geschichtlichen Büchern des Alten Testament, herausgegeben von H. Holzinger," in *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 39 (1921) 204-215 for variations of the J and E theory.

⁸Prominent proponents of this type of analysis include S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*. 1892. Rpt. (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1972) 188-189, who adds prophetic and temple sources to the three stated sources; and Skinner, *1-2 Kings*, 23-33, who also adds prophetic, priestly, political, and succession sources.

⁹R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

1969) 726.

¹⁰Cf. John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972) 127ff.

¹¹Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, trans. David Orton, JSOTSup 15 (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1981).

¹²*Ibid.*, 4. Indeed, Noth believed the "Deuteronomist" wrote Deuteronomy 1-4 as an introduction to the then-existing book of Deuteronomy, which then served as an introduction to the history as a whole (see *ibid.*, 14-17).

¹³Noth says, "Dtr. was not merely an editor but the author of a history which brought together material from highly varied traditions and arranged it according to a carefully conceived plan. In general Dtr. simply reproduced the literary sources available to him and merely provided a connecting narrative for isolated passages. We can prove, however, that in places he made a deliberate selection from the material at his disposal" (see *ibid.*, 10).

¹⁴Cf. *ibid.*, 9, for a discussion of how the author created transitions between books, and *ibid.*, 5, for Noth's opinions about the role of the key speeches in the history.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 90-92.

¹⁷Gerhard von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, trans. David Muir Gibson Stalker, *Studies in Biblical Theology* 9 (London: SCM, 1963) 74-91. Von Rad thinks that 2 Samuel 7:13 is the first and greatest of eleven prophetic promises in the "deuteronomistic" history.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 90-91.

¹⁹Hans Walter Wolff, "The Kerygma of the Deuteronomistic Historical Work," trans. Frederick C. Prussner, in *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions*, ed. Walter A. Brueggemann and Hans Walter Wolff (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975) 83-100. Note Wolff's summary of the historian's main theological points on p. 98.

²⁰Cf. Dennis J. McCarthy, "II Samuel 7 and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84 (1965) 131-138, for an analysis of both the positive and negative aspects of God's promise to David within 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings. See Helen A. Kenik, *Design for Kingship: The Deuteronomistic Narrative Technique in 1 Kings 3:4-15*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 69 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983) for a representative work on how the "deuteronomist" shaped important speeches.

²¹R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 732.

²²*Ibid.* For significant arguments in favor of Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy, see Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963) 24-69; and R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 495-541, 637-662.

²³Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 673.

²⁴M. H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 12-13; Gleason Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1974) 264-265.

²⁵Cf. Abraham Kuenen, *Historisch-Kritische einleitung in die Bücher des Alten Testaments: Vol. 1*, ed. T. Weber, trans. Philip Henry Wicksteed, 3 vols. (Leipzig, Germany: Otto Schulze, 1886-1894); Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1889); and Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*. For an outstanding summary of these and other multi-redactional theories, see Richard D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 18 (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1981).

²⁶Alfred Jepsen, *Die Quellen der Königsbuches* (Halle, Germany: Niemeyer, 1953).

²⁷Cf. Rudolf Smend, "Das Gesetz und die Völker: Ein Beitrag zur deuteronomistischen Redaktionsgeschichte," in *Probleme Biblischer Theologie: Gerhard von Rad zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans Walter Wolff (Munich: C. Kaiser, 1971) 494-509; and Rudolph Smend, *Die Entstehung des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978) 110-125. Smend's ideas were adopted and adapted by Walter Dietrich in Dietrich, *Prophetic und Geschichte: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk*, *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments* 108 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1972); and Timo Veijola in Veijola, *Das Königtum in der Beurteilung der deuteronomistischen Historiographie* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1977). Helga Weippert suggests another

three-editor theory in "Die 'deuteronomistischen' Beurteilungen der Könige von Israel und Juda und das Problem der Redaktion der Königsbücher," *Biblica* 53 (1972) 301-339. Weippert thinks that a first edition appeared at the time of Samaria's destruction (722 B.C.), a second near Josiah's era (640-609 B.C.), and a third after Jerusalem's fall.

²⁸Gwilym H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings: Vol. One*, New Century Bible (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 43-44.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 44.

³⁰Cf. Frank Moore Cross, "The Themes of the Book of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History," in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1973) 274-289; and Richard D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History*. John Gray also claims there were two redactions, one c. 597 B.C. and one after 587 B.C., in *I and II Kings*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 38. In *1 Kings*, Word Biblical Commentary 12 (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), Simon John De Vries says that a first edition was written by "a contemporary of King Josiah" (xlii) and was "revised by a member of the same school living during the Babylonian exile, c. 550 B.C." (xliii).

³¹Though I do not share Nelson's preference for the double redaction theory, his book is careful, balanced, and quick to point out the weaknesses of other multiple author positions (see Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History*).

³²Burke O'Connor Long, *1 Kings, with an Introduction to Historical Literature*, The Forms of the Old Testament Literature 9 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 16-21.

³³Cf. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings: Vol. One*, 44; and Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History*, 43-98.

³⁴For two thorough analyses of the role of the land motif in the Pentateuch, see David J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, JSOTSup 10 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1978); and, especially, John Herbert Sailhammer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

³⁵For an extensive survey of these issues consult Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, Word Biblical Commentary 7 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), xx-xlii; and Robert G. Boling and George Ernest Wright, *Joshua: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 6 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982) 37-80.

³⁶This conclusion applies to Judges, Samuel and Kings as well.

³⁷Cf. John Gray, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, New Century Bible (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 9-34.

³⁸Scholars differ a great deal in what they mean by "reliable," of course, but Marten H. Woudstra is perhaps the strongest recent proponent of Joshua's historicity. Less traditional commentators at least agree with Gerhard von Rad's comment that the author of Joshua "was certainly no historian in the modern sense of the term. Nevertheless, the way in which he uses his sources is not for all that as naïve as it appears to be...."

- And for the very reason that he incorporated documents nearly contemporary with himself, his account was given reality for its own time" (*Old Testament Theology: Vol. 1*, trans. David Muir Gibson Stalker [New York: Harper and Row, 1962] 303).
- ³⁹Cf. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 325-334.
- ⁴⁰Cf. Boling and Wright, *Joshua*, 74-88 for an analysis of "What Archaeology Can and Cannot Do."
- ⁴¹For solid analyses of God's portrayal as warrior in the Old Testament consult *ibid.*, 27-37.
- ⁴²E. John Hamlin, *Inheriting the Land: A Commentary on the Book of Joshua*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 4.
- ⁴³Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 124-127.
- ⁴⁴Butler, *Joshua*, 22.
- ⁴⁵*Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶Gray, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, 68.
- ⁴⁷J. Alberto Soggin, *Joshua*, trans. R. A. Wilson, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972) 61.
- ⁴⁸Boling and Wright, *Joshua*, 188.
- ⁴⁹Butler, *Joshua*, 103.
- ⁵⁰Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, 103.
- ⁵¹Donald Harold Madvig, "Joshua," *Expositor's Bible Commentary: Vol. 3* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 277-278.
- ⁵²Hamlin, *Inheriting the Land*, 57-62.
- ⁵³Gray, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, 91.
- ⁵⁴Butler, *Joshua*, 130.
- ⁵⁵Christoph Barth, *God with Us: A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 178-179.
- ⁵⁶Elmer A. Martens, *God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 104-105.
- ⁵⁷For an analysis of how the whole canon views the law as a gift, consult Elmer A. Martens, "Embracing the Law: A Biblical Theological Perspective," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 2 (1992) 1-28.
- ⁵⁸Cf. Boling and Wright, *Joshua*, 13-27.
- ⁵⁹Martens, *God's Design*, 107-108.
- ⁶⁰Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 147.
- ⁶¹Gray, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, 123.
- ⁶²Madvig, "Joshua," 316.
- ⁶³Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 299-300.
- ⁶⁴Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987) 64.
- ⁶⁵Hamlin, *Inheriting the Land*, 110.
- ⁶⁶Martens, *God's Design*, 115.
- ⁶⁷T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1971) 107.
- ⁶⁸Hanson, *The People Called*, 65.
- ⁶⁹*Ibid.*
- ⁷⁰Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 22.
- ⁷¹*Ibid.*, 26.
- ⁷²Barth, *God with Us*, 182.