

INTRODUCTION

The Law of Moses (hereafter, *torah*) asks and answers questions essential to the reading of Scripture. Some of these questions are launched upwards: Who is YHWH¹? What are his credentials, promises, and expectations? Can he be trusted? Other questions of *torah* are launched outwardly: Who is this Moses? What are his credentials? Can he be regarded as a reliable guide? Finally, questions of *torah* are launched inwardly: What does it mean to be the people of God? How are such people identified? Where do they come from? Where do they go? Far more than a mishmash of short stories, endless genealogies, and odd rules; *torah* makes specific claims about the nature of Yahweh, Moses, and the people of God. Like any living document, it must be remembered, interpreted, and applied afresh by each generation.

The book of Joshua attempts to do just this. Scripturally, it snaps on the end of *torah*, offering the story of the first generation to venture beyond the scarps of Mt. Nebo where the tracks of Moses stop abruptly, then disappear. For the *Exodus* generation, and indeed for Moses himself, a walkabout in a land of promise could only be appreciated by proxy, unless, of course, one were to include a deep-down ache for a place to call home. For the *Eisodos* generation, on

¹The personal/covenant name of God in Hebrew is spelled with four consonants, represented by the Latin letters YHWH (Hebrew originally gave no direct indication of vowels). As such, it is often referred to as the Tetragrammaton (Greek for “four letters”). Because the Jews avoided pronouncing the holy name, they did not add the “proper” vowel signs to the Tetragrammaton when they started writing in the vowels, and we do not know with certainty what those vowels should be. The author would prefer to represent it just with the consonants, as it appears here, but for the convenience of the readers, College Press has added in the most widely accepted vowels for this name.

the other hand, a walkabout will become reality.² To fully appreciate their position, though, the words of *torah* and its stories of men whose feet trod this land centuries earlier must be remembered. By the late second millennium B.C., the trail of these early walkers is already old, but not yet cold; *torah* retrieves the pathways of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Beyond the task of remembering, the text of Joshua will also interpret *torah*. Moses is clear about the rules of Canaanite engagement (e.g., Deuteronomy 7 and 20), the division of land among the tribes (e.g., Num 26:52-56; 33:50-54), the establishment of cities of refuge (e.g., Num 35:6-34), and a host of other issues. These instructions must be relocated and reconsidered in light of contemporary events. Given the twists of real life, the practice of law seldom hinges on a single point (oh, if only it were so easy!); more often it flexes longways through a whole set of variables. Put differently, *torah* is uncompromising with regard to Canaan's residents. So how, then, should this code be read in the case of Rahab, the alien, or the Gibeonites? Similarly, *torah* is clear that once God's people are in the land, Yahweh will select one place of sacrifice and dwelling. How, then, should the "imposing altar" of the Transjordan tribes be understood? Clearly, one cannot read Joshua the text – much less Joshua the man – without sensing the challenge of interpreting a living document. There are no comfortable precedents here. Moses laid it down in the past, but Joshua must live it out in the present.

Just as the text will reach back to make contact with *torah* before reaching forward to touch contemporary situations, Joshua will also use *torah* as a base from which to advance a case of its own. While

²The city of Athens is conveniently marked . . . if you can read Greek! Over the door in the back of the public bus is a sign, lettered in block characters, ΕΞΟΔΟΣ, *exodus*, or the "way out." Every Bible reader immediately recognizes the idea; Israel's "exodus" experience is described in a book with the same label. It tells the story of how Israel "got off the bus of slavery," by leaving Egypt.

The bus in Athens, however, has another sign. This one is over the front door. It reads, in block characters, ΕΙΣΟΔΟΣ, the "way in." For those getting on the bus this is the entrance. While there is no book of the Bible by this name, it would be an appropriate way to consider how Israel enters the *Heartland*. It is, for them, a kind of *eisodos*.

the whole of this present work is given to isolating and describing the particulars of that case, three may be mentioned up front as they are worth watching. First, as already stated, *torah* inquires as to the identity and authority of Yahweh. Joshua will continue to infill this theme, but adds significantly to the picture of Yahweh as both promise-keeper and war-maker. Israel cannot achieve victory by its own savvy; only when the people move in conjunction with “a great commission” and – more importantly – “a great commissioner” can any ground (or “earth”) be gained. Second, *torah* inquires as to the identity and credibility of Moses. Again, this base will be confirmed and developed. As expected, the role of Moses as the legitimate interpreter of *torah* will eventually give way to his successor, Joshua. What is unexpected is the slowness with which this conclusion comes. Third and finally, *torah* inquires as to the identity and conduct of God’s people. On this point, a most startling conclusion awaits the reader who grinds it out to the very end. The story of Joshua turns out to be less about fighting and more about walking, less about cheering and more about choosing, and less about erecting barriers and more about penetrating them. Finally, arising in a most unexpected irony, the text will offer one answer to the question of how Israel itself is to be defined. Given the number of geographical particulars that litter the book – and ballyhoo about the modern state of Israel that litters the evangelical church – it is interesting that this final measure is quite indifferent to any lines on the ground.

However, before proceeding directly to details of the text and its contents, other introductory points should be considered as important background material to Joshua study. Those who have given attention to the literature will quickly recognize the bulk of what follows; if there is anything new here, it is merely the voice or the arrangement. To assist the latter, four heads serve as organizers: history and prophecy, language and text, strategy and structure, and setting and archaeology.

HISTORY AND PROPHECY

Within the Christian Bible, Joshua is considered the first of twelve books of Old Testament history. These extend from Joshua to Esther, follow the Pentateuch, and precede the books of poetry

and prophecy. Structurally, this fourfold arrangement (Pentateuch-History-Poetry-Prophecy) is a legacy of an earlier text tradition, the Greek Old Testament or Septuagint (hereafter abbreviated LXX). It groups biblical books according to literary type and has been embraced as Scripture since the earliest centuries of the church's existence.

The question of "history," and hence, "books of history" as a literary type has attracted the concern of some in the modern period. One might argue that the purest "history" is a grocery list of facts, i.e., names, dates, places, etc. But even then, would not selectivity and arrangement govern the presentation? Clearly, the "books of history" not only muster select tidbits, but do so in a string of sorts, in a context of "story," offered in quest of a particular goal. This narrated thoughtfulness need not relegate these dozen books into the class of wild invention as extremists argue. After all, effective – and even entertaining – rhetoric has never been the sole domain of the novelist. On the other hand, as V. Philips Long suggests, history writing has always been representational art, "constrained by the actualities of the subject matter."³ His conclusion is helpful; it offers slack to the reins of "story-telling" without turning them loose altogether. Biblical prose may not constitute historiography in a modern sense, but only one with extraordinary faith could dismiss the whole lot as pure fiction! The "books of history," therefore, thoughtfully explain critical moments and key figures in Israel's story. They do so upon the sturdy conviction that there is a relationship between past, present, and future realities. God moves; men choose; history complies. Everything points this direction.

Efforts to read the book of Joshua as a historically invested text are few in the present age.⁴ Among commentaries, Marten H. Woudstra's work remains the champion of conservative approaches.⁵

³V. Philips Long, *The Art of Biblical History*, vol. 5 of *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, ed. by Moises Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1994), p. 68.

⁴Reasons for this are many, but may be specifically tied to the difficulty of linking archaeological results with the story of the text, alleged contradictions between the books of Joshua and Judges, preconceptions about the origins of biblical text, and a predisposition against the miraculous.

⁵Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).

Trent Butler's volume is far more thorough, but shot through with source-critical theory.⁶ Both vie to integrate textual and historical approaches into their readings. For Woudstra, the purpose of Joshua is ultimately tied to a life-truth: the author wants his audience "to know how the promise made to the forefathers was fulfilled during the Conquest so his chosen people would trust and obey him in future generations."⁷ Butler is less straightforward, preferring to see Joshua as a revelation that arrived "in a protracted period of tradition formation and preservation."⁸ It carries essential truths regarding the identity of Israel and the promises of Yahweh into everyday life.⁹ Voices like Woudstra and Butler, while different from each other and from our own reading at many points, represent the spirit of investigation embraced here: historical interests must be blended with textual study.¹⁰

In order to accomplish this blending, assistance must be sought in many corners. One cannot overlook Yohanan Aharoni's timeless contributions¹¹ or recent works by Daniel Hillel,¹² and Anson F. Rainey and R. Steven Notley.¹³ Valuable writings such as these offer portals to the larger sweep of historical and geographical concerns. Likewise, perspectives offered by K.A. Kitchen,¹⁴ K. Lawson Younger Jr.,¹⁵ and Amihai Mazar¹⁶ demonstrate that the text of Joshua is not far removed from a late second millennium B.C. context.

⁶Trent Butler, *Joshua*, vol. 7 of WBC, ed. by David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Waco: Word Books, 1983).

⁷Woudstra, *Joshua*, p. 18.

⁸Butler, *Joshua*, p. xl.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. xlii.

¹⁰This encouragement is needed now more than ever. Consider the essay by Gary N. Knoppers, "The Historical Study of the Monarchy: Developments and Detours," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, ed. by David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), pp. 207-235.

¹¹Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, rev. ed., trans. by A.F. Rainey (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979).

¹²Daniel Hillel, *The Natural History of the Bible: An Environmental Exploration of the Hebrew Scriptures* (New York: Columbia University, 2006).

¹³Anson F. Rainey and R. Steven Notley, *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006).

¹⁴K.A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

¹⁵K. Lawson Younger Jr., *Ancient Conquest Accounts: A Study in Ancient Near*

Oddly, this problem of “history,” so absorbing to moderns, does not appear to be an issue within the Hebrew canon. No such formal category of biblical texts even exists! In the traditional Jewish organization of biblical books (attested by the Masoretic Text or, hereafter, MT), Joshua is found dancing in the company of the *N^obi'im*, or “Prophets.” Here, Joshua leads Judges, Samuel, and Kings in a line known as the “Former Prophets.” With respect to load, these four carry the twin burden of “theological testimony” and “interpretative commentary.”¹⁷ With respect to contents, these four present a kind of arcing trajectory that begins with the *Heartland* won and concludes with the *Heartland* lost.¹⁸ The dance that begins as a fling fades to the floor at the end. This crisis is worth pondering; we will return to it below.

That Joshua is a “book of prophecy” or that Joshua the man functions as a “prophet” should come as no surprise. After all, is not Moses the נָבִי (nābī’, “prophet”) without equal (Deut 34:10) and Joshua his attendant (מְשָׁרֵת מֹשֶׁה, *m^ošārēth mōšeh*)?¹⁹ Like Moses, Joshua engages Yahweh in direct conversation and reliably represents his voice to others. This relationship endows Joshua with the authority to function prophetically in his community. Unlike Moses, however, Joshua’s character is much more opaque and guarded; only through inference can the reader gain access to his inner thoughts and feelings. So despite his very public role, the Joshua of

Eastern and Biblical History Writing, JSOTSupp 98 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).

¹⁶Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000–586 B.C.E.*, The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1990).

¹⁷These categories are drawn from the work of Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), pp. 103-104. For Brueggemann, “theological testimony” is all about proclaiming the work of God, while “interpretative commentary” suggests that the work of the Former Prophets draws freely from other literature available to the narrator.

¹⁸Throughout this work, the term *Heartland* is used to describe the geographical core of the biblical story. This term avoids the political connotations aroused by reference to the modern states of Israel, Jordan, and Palestine.

¹⁹Although it should be noted that the text never explicitly describes Joshua by the terms/titles commonly used of prophets, i.e., nābī’ (“prophet”), רוֹאֵה (rō’eh, “seer”), or חֹזֶה (hōzeh, “visionary”).

the text is a very private character. This insulation both blinds and bends him before the reader. Why does Joshua acquiesce to the arrogant scouts from The ‘Ay? How can he be so easily snookered by the Gibeonite ruse? What is his role with regards to the delegation of manipulation sent to Transjordan? These textual moments suggest that, despite the occasional shaft of access to the Divine, this prophet must toil “a little lower than the angels,” not to mention the more obvious horizon of the narrator and reader.

Mention of the narrator leads to a final word on the subject of history and prophecy. It should be remembered that each of the books of the Former Prophets is written anonymously; this is true of Joshua as well. Only much later do interpreters cast about for possible authors and editors. The usual list of suspects are those who loom large in the biblical story: Samuel, Nathan, Gad, and, of course, Joshua himself. Investigation nets nothing more than traditions of speculation.²⁰ Unlike we moderns, the text itself cares little for the question of authorship. Instead, it is efficiently steered by an omniscient narrator who sets scenes, musters voices, manages time, and, for the most part, keeps well out of sight. Instead of wrangling over the question of authorship, a better – and more biblical – investment would be to give energy toward an understanding of the language, strategy, and context of the narration.

LANGUAGE AND TEXT

Early texts of Joshua are preserved in Hebrew and Greek. The Leningrad Codex (B19^A), dated A.D. 1009 or 1008, represents “the oldest dated manuscript of the complete Hebrew Bible.”²¹ Its very existence is a credit to the Masoretes who responsibly preserved and transmitted it. Their text critical work (oftentimes called the Masoretic Text, or “MT” for short) is the basis for many close read-

²⁰According to the Talmud (*Baba Bathra* 14b, 15a), Joshua the son of Nun is responsible for writing the book by his name. However, it also acknowledges that Joshua’s death was subsequently recorded by Eleazar son of Aaron, and that the death of Eleazar son of Aaron was recorded by Phinehas son of David. See Woudstra, *Joshua*, p. 5.

²¹K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1967/1977), p. XI.

ings of the 656 verses of Joshua, including the present one. It is widely available with apparatus under the title of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. This text is well preserved; the Masoretes suggest few adjustments.²² Students in the future may have access to the next generation of critical text, the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, currently being released in sections. Unfortunately, the pace of the study has not yet brought a Joshua volume forward to publication. Anticipation over this future work runs high, as it promises to add unpublished evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls to the discussion.²³

The Septuagint (LXX) gives testimony to the early Greek text of Joshua. This is available in critical form through the Cambridge²⁴ effort, although students may have more ready access to the concise work of A. Rahlfs.²⁵ Finally, one must also note the careful work of Max L. Margolis to reconstruct a “proto-LXX” version of the Joshua text.²⁶ That such an attempt could even be made reveals the edge of the storm when it comes to textual criticism and the book of Joshua. Numerous and, at times, significant differences between the Hebrew and Greek text traditions have placed this text at the center of the swirling debate.²⁷ This is hardly the place to test its currents though; suffice it to say that those responsible for the Joshua of the LXX were not inclined to settle for a wooden translation. Awkward passages in the MT are pruned or smoothed. Idioms are glossed. Occa-

²²The Masoretes proposed only 32 adjustments of the *qere* (“as read”) and *kethib* (“as written”) variety for the entire book.

²³Fragments from “two distinct manuscripts” were found in Cave 4 at Qumran. Other citations from Joshua were found among Dead Sea Scroll materials, and in one case, among fragments found at Masada. See Leonard Greenspoon, “The Book of Joshua—Part 1: Texts and Versions,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 3 (2005): 236.

²⁴A.E. Brook and N. McLean, *Joshua, Judges and Ruth*, vol. 1, part IV, in *The Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1917).

²⁵A. Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935).

²⁶Max L. Margolis, *The Book of Joshua in Greek* (Paris: Geuthner, 1931–1938).

²⁷Greenspoon observes how the Greek text is “approximately 4-5 percent shorter” than the Hebrew text. He continues: “Such figures mislead for there are places where the LXX is longer than MT; further, there are quite a few passages where the number of words in each tradition is about the same, but many of the words are different in meaning or structured differently” (“Book of Joshua,” p. 234).

sionally, insertions are added and paragraphs are even rearranged, to make the text less cumbersome for its Greek readership. Clearly, the guarded approach of the Masoretes does not extend to these Hellenists. For the latter, the Old Testament is much more open to dynamic interpretation. That this effort is likely the work of the church (rather than the synagogue) is interesting indeed, and is deserving of future investigation concerning Hellenistic Christians and Scripture. In the meantime, to satisfy the curious, the work of A. Graeme Auld on the text of Joshua is probably the best place to begin.²⁸ For the rest, expedience demands that one eye be closed to the problem and that the priority of the MT be simply assumed. Only occasionally, will a quick peep be given to the LXX. Of course, to be consistent with the series in which this volume appears, all direct quotes (indicated in bold face) are drawn from the New International Version of the English Bible.

STRATEGY AND STRUCTURE

Conclusions concerning the literary context for Joshua have, in many ways, controlled ideas concerning the book's strategy and structure. Early critics recognized what has been observed here, namely, that Joshua is deeply connected to *torah*. At the beginning of the 19th century, W.M.L. DeWette made this relationship formal, linking the book of Joshua to Deuteronomy.²⁹ This recognition prompted the thought that Joshua be considered as a part of the *torah* itself, and hence, in the minds of some, the Pentateuch (five books of Law) grew into a Hexateuch (six books of law). The same dissecting search for "sources" (the "JEDP" or "documentary hypothesis") that had been previously been applied to Genesis through Deuteronomy was extended to Joshua. Various voicings of the quest angled off in many directions.

²⁸G. Graeme Auld, *Joshua Retold: Synoptic Perspectives* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998).

²⁹See the summary of the idea of the "Deuteronomistic History" by S.L. Richter in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books*, ed. by Bill T. Arnold and H.G.M. Williamson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), pp. 219-230.

These were brought back together again in 1943 through the hypothesis of Martin Noth.³⁰ Noth began by recognizing the intimate connection between Deuteronomy and Joshua, but took this observation in a new direction. For him, the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) was too unified in style and substance to be the work of multiple hands. He therefore proposed that they be considered the work of a single historian or “compiler.” The introduction to this sweeping work and, hence, the source of its controlling ideas was the book of Deuteronomy. Thus was born the idea of the “Deuteronomistic History,” an elongated account describing how Israel first won, and subsequently lost, the *Heartland*. For Noth, the anonymous teller of this story hailed from the time of the exile (called simply the “Deuteronomist”), and therefore had the long view needed to observe how God had worked with Israel through the course of time. This effort involved repeated promises of blessing and warnings of destruction. But in the end, when the warnings went unheeded, God sent Israel into exile. The Deuteronomistic history was therefore an apology of sorts, a tragedy that justified divine choice in the face of human defiance. Much attention has been given to Noth’s hypothesis in the years since it was first offered, to refine the process whereby the text reached its present state and to the ultimate meaning behind it.

One does not have to accept the presuppositions of critical scholarship to appreciate its partial grip on the truth. Without a doubt, the text of Joshua peers beyond itself. For those of DeWette’s generation, seizing upon the fact that Joshua looks intently back to *torah*, and perhaps even to Deuteronomy in particular, is a point gained. Likewise, to the credit of Noth and his generation, the recognition that Joshua rightly anticipates specific events in Israel’s future story is also helpful. Clearly, Joshua functions within a larger intertextual process stretching *both* backward and forward; it shares momentum, personalities, theology, and language not just with *torah*, the Former Prophets, and the rest of the Old Testament, but with the New Testament as well. One cannot wrench the book out of any one of these contexts without severing essential links.

³⁰Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSupp 15 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1981 [1943]).

Since the mid-1980s, the recognition of “narrative art” has nudged the discipline of Old Testament study off of the mark of “compositional investigation” and has granted it new life. Instead of investing more effort in sorting out theories of editorial layering, more fruitful research may investigate character description, plot development, the play of voices, intertextuality, gapping, and similar dynamics. These are liberally mustered here, as pioneered within the field of biblical studies by Robert Alter,³¹ Meir Sternberg,³² H. Chanan Brichto,³³ and Adele Berlin,³⁴ among others. In this vein, Robert Polzin’s *Moses and the Deuteronomist*³⁵ and L. Daniel Hawk’s *Joshua*³⁶ are excellent examples of literary approaches to the book of Joshua. I have learned much from them; it is an indebtedness that will reveal itself.

This kind of literary sensitivity reveals that the text of Joshua is composed of several kinds of materials. It gives the book an uneven appearance, as prose narrative, geographical lists, boundary descriptions, inventories, legal interpretations, and exhortations are stitched together into a single tapestry. This can be puzzling not only for the unprepared reader, but for the expositor venturing into the recesses of the Old Testament! The prose of Joshua 1–12 lends itself well enough to pulpit use; from chapter 13 on, however, difficulties mount. Only by understanding the structure and goals of the text as a whole — a task most appropriately investigated through literary tools — may assistance be found in first appreciating, and then appropriating the larger message in a contemporary age.

That message may be outlined in three moves. The first is here titled, “How Yahweh Led Israel into Canaan” (1:1–12:24). This

³¹Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic, 1981).

³²Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1985).

³³Herbert Chanan Brichto, *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics. Tales of the Prophets* (New York: Oxford, 1992).

³⁴Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983).

³⁵Robert Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges. A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1980).

³⁶L. Daniel Hawk, *Joshua*, Berit Olam. Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry (Collegetown, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000).

entrance is nothing short of miraculous: waters are parted at Israel's approach, and the occupants of Canaan either shrink back in fear, foolishly expose themselves, or fight each other. Setbacks for Israel are limited, and divine assistance is great. This culminates in the inventory of conquered chiefs.

In the second move of the book, Israel finds itself in the *Heartland*, hence, the title: "What Happened after Israel Arrived in Canaan" (13:1–21:45). Here, action is arrested; a progress report is given. It becomes clear that despite the initial successes, there is much work to be done. Village by village, region by region, tribe by tribe, land grants are detailed and distributed. Included here are special grants for the sake of religious and judicial institutions.

Far from an irrelevant appendix, the pieces are reeled together in the third and final move: "How to Be Israel" (22:1–24:35). Here, a series of speeches press a summary for the book. The definition of Israel is reexamined, as are the role of torah loyalty and choice-making in serving Yahweh.

Through it all, the subject of the *Heartland* is never too far out of sight. As a vibrant symbol for Israel, it recalls verbs of promising and gifting and resting, not to mention the figures of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It also anticipates the partial success of occupation and the eventual loss of home in the exile. Still, one gets the distinct feeling, that while the *Heartland* is an important aspect of the story, it is not at the center. It is the view through the windshield, but not the reason for the journey. Certainly the revealed journey travels through the *Heartland*, noting physical boundaries along the way, but is more concerned with other, less tangible issues. To reduce these to bullet points may damage the presentation either by simplification or by leaping ahead of the evidence, but with that risk in mind, three objectives may be highlighted here. Perhaps this advance notice will assist in the hunt.

First, the book of Joshua is concerned with *t Torah* obedience. The primer for this plot is "a great commission" issued by Yahweh, distributed among his people, and used to induce courage, comfort, and, above all else, obedience. From the start, therefore, the question arises: will *t Torah* be instinctively recalled on the field and correctly adapted to ever-changing circumstances? The exhortation "to be strong and courageous" is raised. That energy is given a specific direction: strength and courage must be mustered in order "to care-

fully obey all the law my servant Moses gave you” (1:7). To obey Moses is to obey *torah*. To obey *torah* is to obey Yahweh.

Growing from the first concern is a second: the book of Joshua seeks to communicate the identity and ongoing program of Yahweh. A “pedestrian campaign” by the people will only be successful to the degree that it follows the lead of Yahweh. This will be no contest of arms. Here, the question is voiced: is Yahweh dependable as war-maker and promise-giver? A positive answer assists in the matter of obedience. It also integrates this book into the largest context: Joshua’s story joins the ongoing story.

Third and finally, the book of Joshua is concerned with rightly defining the people of God. With so much attention given to boundaries on the ground, the temptation is to identify Israel on the basis of landlines alone. While obviously these physical boundaries will be important, the narrator is keen to keep the balance of God’s people in view. And fascinatingly, examples of faith are repeatedly drawn from unexpected corners. These examples underline a conclusion that suggests that those who *become* Israel are those who are chosen and rescued by Yahweh. Those who *remain* Israel are those who choose and serve Yahweh. If this message is marvelous in modern ears where “individual choice” is a way of life, imagine how much more so (and dangerous!) it sounds when voiced in a closed society where identity, rank, and power are not just predetermined, but group-determined.³⁷ This setting is crucial for appropriating the message of Joshua.

SETTING AND ARCHAEOLOGY

The tumultuous period of time known by archaeologists of the *Heartland* as the Late Bronze Age (hereafter LBA) stretches from

³⁷Describing the social structure of ancient Israel is admittedly difficult. Help here is coming, however, as biblical scholars begin to develop and use new tools of analysis. Consider Bruce J. Malina, *Windows on the World of Jesus: Time Travel to Ancient Judea* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993); John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina, eds., *Handbook of Biblical Social Values* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998); and K.C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

approximately 1550–1200 B.C. (See Supplemental Study on Archaeological Periods p. 35.) Its arrival is signaled by a resurgence of Egyptian power, as a series of foreign rulers (Hyksos) were driven from the Nile basin. The effects of this revolt are significant, locally and internationally; an invigorated Egypt recenters itself, then expands its interests in all directions. In fact, the Egyptian shadow cast across Canaan is a characteristic but irregular feature of the two centuries to follow.³⁸

If one follows this shadow to the other side of the Late Bronze Age, its end is signaled by the presence of large-scale upheavals across the eastern Mediterranean. These are noted on one point of the compass by the smoldering ruins of Priam's Troy and on other points by the wholesale collapse of regimes connected to centers at Mycenae, Hattusus, and Ugarit. A domino effect spurs refugee groups such as the Philistines to jostle for new homes on foreign shores. Robert Drews describes the curtain drawn over the ancient world in this moment with crisp efficiency: it is "The Catastrophe."³⁹ Hence, the LBA is framed by the renewal of Egypt in 1550 B.C. and the tumultuous upheavals of 1200 B.C. Obviously much will happen on the ground in the intervening 350-year period.

Patterns of settlement in the LBA are being uncovered and analyzed by *Heartland* archaeologists. Broadly speaking, when compared to previous centuries (Middle Bronze Age, or MBA, ca. 2000–1550 B.C.), cultural trends in the LBA signal a region in decline. Lines of trade are slowed and severed. Smaller villages dry up and disappear. Nomadism appears on the rise. Technology slumps. Areas located on the fringes of good land are deserted. Even some old urban centers located in very viable zones suggest crisis by their impoverishment and reduction in size. New constructions may appear on the other side of occupation gaps, but these cannot arrest the larger downward spiral. Ancient defensive earthworks are ignored or patched up for reuse. It is possible that this "urban" decline slows somewhat about halfway through the period (ca. 1400 B.C.) although further exploration is needed to confirm this suspicion.

³⁸Mazar uses the metaphor of the Egyptian "shadow" to characterize the whole of the LBA. See his "In the Shadow of Egyptian Domination," in *Archaeology and the Land of the Bible*, pp. 232-294.

³⁹Robert Drews, *The End of the Bronze Age: Changes in Warfare and the Catastrophe, ca. 1200 B.C.* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1993).

For readers of the Old Testament, this setting is important, as interpreters who regard the text of Joshua as historically credible, often insert the arrival of Israel in Canaan somewhere in the midst of this LBA spiral. Passages such as 1 Kings 6:1 and Judges 11:26, taken literally, suggest this. However, as it is understood from archaeological data alone, no clear corresponding pattern of widespread destruction exists, either early or late in the period. Israel's arrival in Canaan refuses to be measured in ashes.

What is measurable, and relevant in the spiral, may be summarized using three kinds of evidence: the record of Egyptian raids, clay tablets associated with the site of el-Amarna, and the appearance of new settlements in the highlands of the *Heartland*. The literary character of the first two is balanced by the nonliterary character of the third. A quick sketch of these three items is helpful for establishing a context for reading Joshua.

The 18th and 19th Dynasties of New Kingdom Egypt align with the LBA of the *Heartland*. Rulers of these dynasties were, for the most part, eager to control the region, if for no other reason than to profit from its trade goods and use its space as a buffer against northern enemies. The bickering city-states of LBA Canaan may have even been organized into a formal province governed from Gaza. Secondary control points were established along lowland highways at some half-dozen places like Aphek, Megiddo, and Beth Sha'an. These Nile-born fingers should not be confused with a cultural invasion, however. Egyptian policy seems to be one of simple subjugation, extortion, and exploitation. To ratchet up the "fear factor" among the Canaanite city-states and to ensure compliance, periodic raids by Thutmose III, Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV, and others were mounted.

These Egyptian raids assist the reader of Joshua in at least two ways. First, of course, is in the matter of map making. More than 350 site names in Canaan and Syria are preserved in these royal records.⁴⁰ They may, in part, be coordinated with site names found in the biblical text.⁴¹ While not the highest priority of this study, the attempt

⁴⁰Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, p. 154.

⁴¹Consider the example of 119 names offered in the topographical list of Thutmose III and discussed by Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, pp. 72-74.

to identify and evaluate Joshua's site names on the ground will be an important feature.⁴² Second, these raids help clarify a picture of Egyptian foreign policy in Canaan. Mirroring the trajectory of the LBA itself, the 18th Dynasty begins with strength, wavers, and then wanes before giving way to the 19th Dynasty. Moreover, Egyptian interest seems to be directed toward the more profitable (and strategic) lowlands of the Mediterranean coast and the Jezreel Valley. The central highlands of the *Heartland*, particularly in the south where the roads lead nowhere, appear irrelevant to their concerns. This uneven and piecemeal foreign policy of Egypt may be significant for reasons that will be seen.

Beyond the record of New Kingdom raids in Canaan, tablets associated with the site of Tell el-Amarna in Egypt help fix the context of LBA. At this site, the capital of Amenhotep IV (or Akhenaten), some 350 clay tablets were found. These were pressed with the diplomatic languages of the day⁴³ and represent a valuable archive of letters sent to the Pharaoh. Approximately half of these are dispatched from city-state leaders in Canaan; the rest hail from other corners of the ancient Near East. Together they paint a picture of weakening Egyptian power during the first half of the 14th century B.C. (the approximate middle of the LBA).

Canaanite chiefs complain of bully alliances, conspiring arms dealers, and roving gangs. They appeal to the Pharaoh for military aid in buttressing "Egyptian" interests, which, more often than not, are really their own interests (no surprises here!). As in the case of the record of Egyptian raids, the el-Amarna tablets preserve the names of numerous LBA centers; many correspond with biblical mentions. Most intriguing, however, are complaints about *'Apîru* men: mercenaries without property rights, who, at times, work both for and against the Canaanite chiefs. Not surprisingly, they seem to

⁴²This effort is facilitated by regular reference to J. Monson, *Student Map Manual: Historical Geography of the Bible Lands* (Jerusalem: Pictorial Archive, 1979); Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*; Burton MacDonald, "East of the Jordan": *Territories and Sites of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Boston: ASOR, 2000); Yoel Elitzur, *Ancient Place Names in the Holy Land: Preservation and History* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004); and Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*.

⁴³Several languages and dialects have been identified in the Amarna archive. The bulk is in various dialects of Akkadian, while Hurrian, and Hittite are also attested (Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, p. 88).

be a real threat in the highlands, where Egyptian leverage is most remote. Every scholar who has contemplated the period under review has considered the relationship between these troublemaking 'Apîru (or *Habiru/Hapîru*) men and the biblical Hebrews. Could the Canaanites grouching at the 'Apîru be leveled at the *Hebrews*? It is an attractive connection at a glance, but one that does not hold up under the evidence, be it linguistic, geographic, or social. What the 'Apîru men really do for the Joshua reader is to suggest the degree to which the region has destabilized by 1400 B.C., the nature of Egyptian weakness (or selective disinterest) in its northeastern flank, and the havoc that a relatively small group of armed troublemakers can wreak among the city-states of LBA Canaan.

Finally, to sketch a context for this work, the appearance of new settlements in the highlands must be mentioned. This topic presses the discussion to the very end of the LBA and considers its collapse against the appearance of a new cast of characters in a new era. *Heartland* archaeologists agree that the human landscape changes dramatically when one moves from the end of the Bronze Age to the beginning of the Iron Age. This trend was noticed early on by Lawrence E. Stager, whose numbers are used here.⁴⁴ Diminishing site size and density in the LBA produced a situation where only 23 urban sites are known in the hill country stretching between the Jezreel Valley and Beer-sheba corridor. These sites are, on average, some seven and a half acres in area. By contrast, when one moves across the threshold of ca. 1200 B.C. into the beginning of the Iron Age, the number of highland sites soars from 23 to 114 in the same area. Of the 114, at least 97 are newly founded. In size, they are half that of their LBA predecessors, averaging slightly more than four acres. Stager goes on to point out how those who occupied these sites also adapted (or developed?) lifeway strategies appropriate for

⁴⁴Lawrence E. Stager's seminal article on this subject is "The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel," *BASOR* 260 (1985): 1-35.

The ongoing publication of work such as the Manasseh Hill Country Survey will undoubtedly force some reassessment of these numbers. The hard numbers described only generally by Adam Zertal ("Israel Enters Canaan—Following the Pottery Trail," *BAR* 17 [Sept./Oct. 1991]: 28-47) are slowly being disseminated. See Adam Zertal, *The Shechem Syncline*, vol. 1 in *The Manasseh Hill Country Survey* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), and *The Eastern Valleys and the Fringes of the Desert*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

hill country living. These include tactics of deforestation, terrace farming, the use of cisterns for water storage, houses that doubled as stables, and multigenerational family compounds.

Naturally, interest in this data has been great, and debates over how it is to be interpreted continue to the present.⁴⁵ The material-cultural nature of the evidence has lent itself to other angles of analysis; the contribution of social-scientific approaches here has been substantial, and yet, far from conclusive.⁴⁶ For some, elements of continuity from lowland to highland sites suggest that the settlers were not new to the region, but merely bands of locals moving upland. Others point to elements of discontinuity in order to suggest that these settlers were newcomers from outside. Stager navigates the debate carefully to reach his conclusion: “clearly there was a sizable influx of people into the highlands of central Palestine in the 12th century B.C.”⁴⁷ That no one truly doubts that this is the presence of “early Israel” is telling. In fact, confirmation of the matter comes by way of the so-called “Israel Stela.” Dated to the closing decades of the previous century (ca. 1212 B.C.), an engraved stone records the exploits of one Merneptah, an Egyptian pharaoh of the 19th Dynasty. Among his victims in Canaan is a tribal group known as “Israel.”⁴⁸ Apparently their “demise” is worth bragging about. Hence, as the curtain of the LBA closes, Israel is already in its place posing some kind of challenge to Egypt. The proof is carved in a granite monument standing more than seven feet tall!

⁴⁵As a sample of the debate, consider Israel Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (Jerusalem: IES, 1988); Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na’aman, eds., *From Nomadism to Monarchy. Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel* (Washington: BAS, 1994); William G. Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

⁴⁶As examples, see Robert B. Coote and Keith W. Whitelam, *The Emergence of Early Israel in Historical Perspective*, The Social World of Biblical Antiquity Series 5 (Sheffield: Almond, 1987); T.E. Levy, ed., *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* (London: Leicester University, 1995); or Robert D. Miller, *Chieftains of the Highland Clans: A History of Israel in the 12th and 11th Centuries B.C.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

⁴⁷Stager, “Archaeology of the Family,” p. 3.

⁴⁸There is some debate however, over how to interpret this “Israel” in Canaan. See Michael G. Hasel, “*Israel* in the Merneptah Stela,” *BASOR* 296 (1994): 45-61.

Hence, the question lingering today does not concern the timing of Israel's arrival; highland settlements and Merneptah have all but settled that. The question concerns Israel's true origins and nature. Did this "early Israel" come from within the *Heartland*, from outside it, or is it the result of some combination thereof? Three models give voice to the options: an infiltration model, a revolt model, and a conquest model. Issues of continuity and discontinuity with respect to material culture are vital pieces to assessing each, as are the perceived strength and weaknesses of sociological analogies. Finally, presuppositions concerning the rootage of Joshua 1–12 in history also figure into weighing these ideas. A quick overview of these three models of Israel's origins will close this discussion.⁴⁹

The infiltration model holds that Israel entered Canaan from without, coming peacefully as semi-nomadic tribesmen from neighboring deserts. Entering Cisjordan⁵⁰ annually with their herds, in search of grass and water, they eventually settled down, joined together in a community of equals, and became a part of the historical record as "Israel." This view seeks support by appealing to the patriarchal stories of Genesis that depict rustic herders and by appealing to life patterns of semi-nomads rediscovered by explorers in the 19th century. The model was formally voiced in the 1920s and 1930s by Albrecht Alt and Martin Noth.⁵¹ While attractive in some ways, the model elevates sociological analogs over clear descriptions in the biblical text. Moreover, as more thorough study of semi-nomadic groups has shown, the infiltration model is founded upon exaggerations and misconceptions about how and why herders operate the way they do.⁵²

⁴⁹Overviews and evaluations of these three models are found in many places. Particularly helpful is the effort by K. Lawson Younger Jr., "Early Israel in Recent Biblical Scholarship," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, ed. by David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), pp. 176-206.

⁵⁰The term "Cisjordan" is explained on p. 103 in Chapter 3.

⁵¹See Martin Noth, *The History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1965).

⁵²However Fritz has argued for a modified approach to this model, utilizing a more sensitive understanding of nomadism. See Volkmar Fritz, "Conquest or Settlement? The Early Iron Age in Palestine," *BA* 50 (1987): 84-100.

A second model of Israel's origins in Canaan hinges on a potent mix of contemporary social, historical, and political ideas. Sometimes called the "peasant revolt model," this view begins with a downward spiral of the LBA and the observed disparity between the "haves" and the "have-nots" of the land. It suggests that in a tumultuous "class struggle," the heavy-handed elites of Canaan lost control of those they sought to exploit. The exploited individuals fled the urban lowlands and settled in the more remote highlands. There, they coalesced into a group and under Joshua's leadership set about establishing a new order. As understood, Israel's arrival comes not from outside of Canaan, but as a result of a socio-economic struggle within the land. This theory was initially advanced by George Mendenhall,⁵³ but found modification in the work of Norman Gottwald, Israel Finkelstein, and others.⁵⁴ As a child of the 1960s and 1970s (revolutionary decades in their own right) the model reads the biblical story as myth, a cover story invented to hide a less-than-glorious past. The overt influences of liberation theology, Marxism, historical reductionism, and a selective reading of the biblical and archaeological evidence are clear.

The third and final voicing of Israel's origins in Canaan is the conquest model. By far, the most traditional of the three views presented here, the conquest model takes its cue from a positivist reading of the text of Joshua. Archaeological and sociological evidence is then used to fill in the missing details. Here, Israel surges into the land in a single onslaught and is overwhelmingly (and militarily) successful. Advocates of the conquest model such as W.F. Albright⁵⁵ or Yigael Yadin⁵⁶ sought widespread destructions in Canaan to pinpoint the arrival of Israel. However, when these levels did not materialize as expected, some either dismissed the text or sought to con-

⁵³G.E. Mendenhall, "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," *BA* 25 (1962): 66-87.

⁵⁴See Younger for the evolution of this model ("Early Israel," pp. 181-191).

⁵⁵For example, see W.F. Albright, "Archaeology and the Date of the Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," *BASOR* 58 (1935): 10-18.

⁵⁶To see Yigael Yadin's views toward the end of his life, see his "Is the Biblical Account of the Israelite Conquest of Canaan Historically Reliable?" *BAR* 7 (1982): 16-23.

tort the archaeological record.⁵⁷ As argued here, neither of these conclusions is necessary. It is suggested that Joshua reveals far less destruction than the advocates of the conquest model first believed. Similarly, apparent “contradictions” between the text of Joshua and the text of Judges melt when simplistic readings are elevated to give room for literary concerns.

Hence, in the end, each of these three models selectively reads the biblical text, pulling some details from it while ignoring others. The text, like the historical formation of early Israel itself, is a complex production. Elements of peaceful infiltration, local assimilation, and violent conflict are all attested to some degree.⁵⁸ Overall, however, it is here concluded that “early Israel” comes from outside the *Heartland*. It moves in with varying degrees of success: scouting and shouting, dealing and stealing, waiting and measuring, but at all times, walking. Any continuity with respect to material culture is a matter of lingering locals, for after all, even when taken at face value, the biblical story of Joshua is a pedestrian expedition that eventually leads to a less-than-glorious conclusion. Needless to say, every walker is changed as a result of the experience.

SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIODS

Systems of time reckoning used in the study of the *Heartland* grow from the outline of Christian Jürgensen Thomsen, first offered in the 19th century. Thomsen’s “Three Age System” drew its primary categories from the presumed development of technology, hence “Stone Age,” “Bronze Age,” and “Iron Age.” While it is realized that this development was more complex than that which Thomsen envisioned, the labels he created have stuck and continue to be used up to the present day.

⁵⁷For an example of the latter, see J. Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest* (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1981).

⁵⁸The “mixed multitude theory” seems to be sensitive to these dynamics (Ann E. Killebrew, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity in the Biblical World: Canaanites, Egyptians, Philistines, and Israelites 1300–1100 B.C.E.* [Atlanta: SBL, 2005], pp. 184–185). We await a fuller presentation of this idea.

Most relevant for the current study is the period of time known as the Bronze Age. While not everyone agrees on the details, scholars have divided and subdivided this block into ever-finer segments for the sake of organization and communication. As these may assist descriptions of historical and archaeological issues in the study of Joshua, some general comments on the subject of periodization are in order.

The beginning of the Bronze Age corresponds with the beginnings of urbanization in the *Heartland*, a threshold crossed around 3400 B.C. The end of the Bronze Age is aligned with a series of disruptions corresponding with 1200 B.C. The 2,200 years that passed between these two endpoints is usually divided into three blocks, known as the Early, Middle, and Late Bronze Ages. The Early Bronze Age, or EBA, (3400–2000 B.C.) witnessed a rise and fall of cultures; in this time the great pyramids of Egypt were built, the Sumerians settled in Mesopotamia, and quite possibly, at the very end of this period, Abraham left Ur for the Promised Land. The Middle Bronze Age, or MBA, (2000–1550 B.C.) follows the EBA, and, in the case of the *Heartland*, appears to be a moment of high culture. Canaanite art, pottery, jewelry, literature, city-building, and defensive systems reach a level of sophistication unmatched in the region for centuries on either side of the mark. It is unlikely that Israel had anything to do with this, however; they were occupied in Egypt, laboring in obscurity as slaves. However, the cultural climax reached in the *Heartland* during this time would leave a lasting legacy. The Canaan faced by Joshua was likely the residues from this MBA achievement. Hence, the Late Bronze Age, or LBA, (1550–1200 B.C.), believed to be the setting for Israel's arrival, was already suffering in a downward spiral that would continue to the collapse that marks the horizon between the Bronze and Iron Ages. The moment of Joshua's arrival therefore, would correspond with a stretch of great unrest as the surviving city-states squabbled with each other for limited resources and appealed to Egypt for help.

As the Bronze Age gives way to the Iron Age, new dynamics come into play, new people groups come to the fore, and new lines and labels are drawn. Temporally speaking, the Iron Age begins where the Bronze Age leaves off, in the collapse of 1200 B.C. Its other end is usually marked by the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of

the Babylonians in 586 B.C. Hence, the six-century stretch called the Iron Age is, by far, of shorter duration than the Bronze Age that preceded it. Still, it is a most critical period for the reader of the biblical text. The Iron Age is a time of smallish kingdoms in competition with each other; one of these will be the Israel of Saul, David, and Hezekiah. To facilitate the descriptive task here, the Iron Age is divided into two blocks: Iron Age I and Iron Age II. The Iron Age I endures for two centuries, from 1200 to 1000 B.C. In this time Israel settles comfortably into a monarchical mode. In the four centuries that follow, known as Iron Age II, that united monarchy will fragment, struggle, and be dissolved. The same could be said of Israel's competitors, for, as the Iron Age comes to an end – and Thomsen's Three Age System with it – the following period will not be characterized by technological labels. It will be an Age of Empires.