

Week 12, Lecture 31.¹ Joshua, a Second Moses

Source: Coogan, Michael David. "Joshua." *NJBC*. Prentice Hall, 1996.

Review: Beginning of the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel; 1-2 Kings. **Not Ruth!**)

Largely a product of the 7th century (reign of Josiah 641-609)

Revised during the Exile (after 587/586)

Levine's lecture suggested there might have been revisions as late as the 3rd century! [No hint of this in Coogan.]

Theological Problem: Why have YHWH's people been defeated? Is the power of Ashur and Marduk greater?

Theological Answer: The defeats were punishments **by YHWH** for the idolatry & injustice of his people.

Much of the early history is an "idealized past:" **the way it should have been; what we should have done**

Repeats actions of Moses.²

1) Sending Spies to scout out the land

Moses: From the Wilderness (Numbers 13; Deuteronomy 1:19-46.)

Joshua: From Transjordan (Joshua 2)

2) Sending spies on a more specific mission

Moses: to Transjordan (Num 21:32)

Joshua: to Ai (Josh 7:2-5)

3) Israel Passes through Water

Moses: through the Reed Sea, as on dry ground (Exodus 14)

Joshua: through the Jordan, as on dry ground (Joshua 3)

4) Celebration of Passover

Moses: Before the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12)

Joshua: After Entry into Canaan (Joshua 5:10-12)

While the people of Israel were encamped in **Gilgal** they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at evening in the plains of Jericho. 11 And on the morrow after the passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. 12 And the manna ceased on the morrow, when they ate of the produce of the land; and the people of Israel had manna no more, but ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

Gilgal. Right on the West Bank where they crossed the Jordan.

Gets its name from the Hebrew word *gāl*, which means "**to roll**" because Joshua circumcised his whole army there.

"Today I have **rolled** away the reproach of Egypt" (Josh 5:9). Very holy, but not a smart military strategy!

5) Encounter with the heavenly being

Moses: Burning bush (Exod 3:5)

"Do not come near; **put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy** ground." (RSV)

Joshua: In the Land, Commander of YHWH's Army (Josh 5:15)

"**Put off your shoes from your feet; for the place where you stand is holy.**" (RSV)

6) Uses an "instrument" to invoke divine help for victory

Moses: extends "God's rod" vs. Amalek (Exod 17:11-13)

. . . ⁹ And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the **rod of God in my hand.**" . . . ¹¹ Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat upon it, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his

¹ Lectures are numbered consecutively. Although this is this week's first lecture, its number reflects its place in the **total** sequence.

² Michael Coogan, "Joshua," *NJBC*, 110-111. I have slightly rearranged the material.

hands were steady until the going down of the sun. ¹³ And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. (RSV)

Joshua: Extends his hand while holding a javelin vs. the inhabitants of Ai (8:18-26)

¹⁸ Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai; for I will give it into your hand." And Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city. . . . ²⁵ And all who fell that day, both men and women, were twelve thousand, all the people of Ai. ²⁶ For Joshua did not draw back his hand, with which he stretched out the javelin, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. (Josh 8:18, 25-26 RSV)

7) Farewell Speeches before their deaths

Moses: entire book of Deuteronomy Joshua: Joshua 23-24

See also: Jacob (Genesis 49); David (1 Kings 2:1-9; 1 Chr 28-29); Jesus (John 14-17)

8) Serve as Covenant Mediators

Moses: Exodus 24

Joshua: Joshua 24

9) Serve as Intercessors for the People

Moses: Exodus 32:11-14; Num 11:2; 14:13-19; Deut 9:25-29

¹¹ But Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does thy wrath burn hot against thy people, whom thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. ¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou didst swear by thine own self, and didst say to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it for ever.'" (Exod 32:11-13 RSV)

Joshua: Joshua 7:6-9

[after preliminary defeat at Ai] ⁶ Then Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust upon their heads. ⁷ And Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord GOD, why hast thou brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan! ⁸ O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! ⁹ For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and will surround us, and cut off our name from the earth; and what wilt thou do for thy great name?" (RSV)

10) Instruct people to purify themselves before divine manifestations

Moses at Sinai (Exod 19:10-15)

So Moses went down from the mountain to the people, and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. ¹⁵ And he said to the people, "Be ready by the third day; do not go near a woman." (Exod 19:14-15 RSV)

Joshua before Jericho (Josh 3:5)

⁵ And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." (RSV)

Joshua Fulfills Commands of Moses

Action	Command of Moses	Joshua's Fulfilment
Instruct Reuben, Gad, East Manasseh to join in conquest	Numbers 32; Deut 3:12-20	Josh 1:12-18
Erect altar on mount Ebal	Deut 27:1-26	Josh 8:30-35
Extermination of inhabitants of the land	Deut 20:16	Josh 11:14 ³
Extermination of the Anakim	Deut 9:2	Josh 11:21
Division of the Land by Lot	Num 34:13	Josh 14:2
Establishment of the cities of asylum	Num 35:9-15; Deut 19:1-10	Joshua 20
Establishment of the cities of the Levites	Num 35:1-8	Josh 21:1-42

One [Horrific] Example

But as for the towns of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you must not let anything that breathes remain alive. (Deut 20:16 NRSV)

³ Coogan gives this reference as 11:15.

All the spoil of these towns, and the livestock, the Israelites took for their booty; but all the people they struck down with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, and they did not leave any who breathed. (11:14 NRSV)

Result of Literary Parallels

One of the consequences of these parallels and fulfillments is that Joshua is presented as little more than a carbon copy of Moses, and it is thus difficult to penetrate behind the literary traditions to the historical Joshua.⁴

Joshua: Prototype of Ideal King

Serves as a model for the Deuteronomistic Historian for depictions of: David, Hezekiah, & especially Josiah

"Idealized Past" of the Deuteronomistic Historian. "What we should have done"

Ideal of Christian Warrior, has been at times used to justify "extreme military action," e.g., the Crusades
Post-biblical use of imagery: influenced America's sense of "manifest destiny." Justified mistreatment of natives.
Currently used by many "on the right" in the modern state of Israel to justify mistreatment of Palestinian natives.

Week 12, Lecture 32. The Covenant at Shechem, Josh 24:1-28 Part A, Joshua 24:1-13

7-Fold Division Outline⁵

1. Cultic assembly at Shechem before God, v 1.
2. Prophetic proclamation in divine first person of God's choice and direction of Israel, vv 2–13.
3. Prophetic call to obedience in prophetic first person, vv 14–15.
4. Oath of allegiance by people responding to the divine history of salvation, vv 16–18.
5. Warning of consequences & Reaffirmation of allegiance of decision, vv 19–21.
6. Formal ceremony binding Israel to her decision, vv 22–24.
7. Documents to implement and preserve the agreement; Dismissal vv 25–28.

Cultic Assembly at Shechem Before God

¹ Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God (RSV / PJM).

RSV/PJM: I will be using the RSV translation, modified from time-to-time to make it more literal.

Comments. An originally independent narrative that has been incorporated into the DH.

The "independence" will become more clear as the lecture proceeds.

The chapter gives a familiar story, but there are important differences between this chapter and other versions of the story.

Joshua 24: 2-13. Prophetic proclamation in divine first person of God's choice and direction of Israel

² And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Your fathers lived of old beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.' ³ Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac; ⁴ and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. ⁵ And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagues Egypt with what I did in the midst of it; and afterwards I brought you out. ⁶ Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. ⁷ And when they cried to the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did to Egypt; and you lived in the wilderness a long time. ⁸ Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan; they fought with you, and I gave them into your hand, and you took

⁴ Coogan, "Joshua," 111.

⁵ Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, vol. 7, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 266, gives a 9-fold outline, which I have modified, mainly to get convenient groups of verses for lecture purposes.

possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you. ⁹ Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel; and he sent and invited Balaam the son of Beor to curse you, ¹⁰ but I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he blessed you; so I delivered you out of his hand. ¹¹ And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, and the lords of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I gave them into your hand. ¹² And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow. ¹³ I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you dwell therein; you eat the fruit of vineyards and oliveyards which you did not plant.'

Covenant Form. Recitation of the beneficent deeds of the great king as grounds for loyalty on the part of the vassal.

2-4, Abraham to Esau. A summary of Genesis 12-55, but there is no mention of the Joseph story!

7, Darkness, *ma'ăpēl* occurs only in this biblical verse.

It is never used in Exodus. In Exod 14:20 the word used is *hoshēk*, the normal word for "darkness" (98x in OT) This is an indication that this is an "independent" tradition.

7. Made the sea come upon them

The expression is odd. A "causative" form of the verb *bō'*, "to come" It appears to be God's direct action. In Exodus 15:1 (Song of Moses) "horse & rider he has cast into the sea" it is not the sea that moves! In Exod 14:26, YHWH acts through Moses to cause the waters to "return", a form of the verb *šūb*. Thus, this appears to be independent of the traditions found in Exodus.

7, No Sinai Covenant! We expect it between verse 7a, which mentions the Sea and 7b, which mentions the wilderness ⁷ And when they cried to the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did to Egypt; and you lived in the wilderness a long time.

Also: no mention of the Passover! [Post-lecture note: We have seen how celebrating a Passover is a major parallel between Moses and Joshua for the final editor. The fact that the Passover is not even mentioned here is a sign that the editor is using material that he did not compose himself!]

As Levine pointed out: this is most peculiar in a covenant "renewal" ceremony.

In its **present** (biblical) context this is a **renewal** of a previous covenant.

In its **pre-biblical context** this was the **original covenant** – at least for the group that preserved it.

This group had no sense that they were "renewing" a previous pledge.

9-10 Different version of the Balaam Legend

Here it appears that Balaam actually cursed Israel, but YHWH refused to listen

In Numbers 22 Balaam is confronted by the Angel of YHWH before he has a chance to curse

11, The lords of Jericho fight. According to Joshua 6, the men of Jericho offered no resistance.

They remained shut up inside their city for 6 days as the Israelites circled the city each day.

Furthermore, the word "lords" is in tension with the earlier report that Jericho was ruled by a "king."

12, "Hornet," *šir'ā*. The meaning of the word is obscure. It occurs only 3x (Exod 23:28; Deut 7:20, and here)

Most modern translations render it as "hornet," following the LXX and Vulgate

NET renders it as "terror;" NEB as "panic." Coogan thinks it might be a personification of the destroying angel.

Break Lecture Here

Week 12, Lecture 32. The Covenant at Shechem, Josh 24:1-28 Part B, Joshua 24:14-28

Joshua 24:14–15. Prophetic call to obedience in prophetic first person

¹⁴ "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ And if you be unwilling to serve the LORD, choose

this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Joshua presented as a **prophet**, encouraging the people to be faithful to YHWH.

The Deuteronomistic Historian has a high regard for prophets, and so he portrays Joshua as one of them.

Serving other gods in Egypt. In Genesis we hear that Abram's ancestors served other gods "beyond the river."

This strengthens the impression of "diversity" among those who came out of Egypt.

However, in Genesis-Deuteronomy there is no mention of his descendants serving other gods **in Egypt!**

Ezekiel (20:5-8; 23:3,8) knows of this tradition

⁷ And I said to them [the Israelites in Egypt], Cast away the detestable things your eyes feast on, every one of you, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God. (Ezek 20:7 RSV)

Amorites, in whose land you dwell

In contrast to chaps. 1-12, and to some extent with 13-21, but in concord with Judg 1:1-3:6, the Amorites still occupy much of the land.⁶

15, Choose! The people must make a choice. Worship of YHWH is not compatible with the worship of other gods. That is why they have to "put away" the other gods.

Joshua 24:16-18. Oath of allegiance by people responding to the divine history of salvation

¹⁶ Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; ¹⁷ for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; ¹⁸ and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land; therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."

Basis of Tribal Confederacy. Coogan comments that the basis of the tribal confederacy is the worship of YHWH. Here the people are "claiming the history of salvation" as their own.

Compare how on Thanksgiving, all Americans regard the Pilgrims as "our ancestors."

God's blessings of the first Pilgrims are claimed as blessings "on us"

-- even if historically the Pilgrims hated our "historical" ancestors.

Joshua 24:19-21. Warning of consequences & Reaffirmation of Allegiance

¹⁹ But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD; for he is a holy God; he is a **jealous** God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. ²⁰ If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good."

²¹ And the people said to Joshua, "Nay; but we will serve the LORD."

A Jealous (*qannô'*) God

The Hebrew word *qannô'* occurs only here and in Nah 1:2. The synonym more frequent word is *qannā'* occurs 6x.

This use of the "rare word" is another piece of evidence for the "independence" of this early tradition.

This is not monotheism -- it is **worship** of only one God who does not tolerate worship of other gods -- who do exist!

Joshua 24: 22-24. Formal ceremony binding Israel to her decision

²² Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." ²³ He said, "Then put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel." ²⁴ And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey."

Deuteronomistic Historian

It was **common practice** for ancient historians to insert their own ideologies in the speeches given to characters.

⁶ Coogan, "Joshua," 131.

The oath of the people; the warning by Joshua; their final oath of absolute loyalty to YHWH --
These represent the theology of the DH; they are not a stenographic record of what happened.

Joshua 24:25-28. Documents to implement and preserve the agreement; Dismissal

²⁵ So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem.

²⁶ And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a great stone, and set it up there under the oak in the sanctuary of the LORD. ²⁷ And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us; for it has heard all the words of the LORD which he spoke to us; therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God."

²⁸ So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance. (RSV)

Covenant Format: "wrote these words"

It was common for the stipulations of covenants to be written, deposited, and read periodically.

Archaeology

Excavations at Shechem have uncovered a series of temples from the second half of the second millennium BC [1500 - 1000] which had at their entrance one or more large standing stones; it is reasonable to identify these structures, or at least the latest, with the temple of Ball/El of the Covenant . . . which also had a standing stone (*maṣṣēbâ*; Judg 9:6 [emended]).⁷

26, A Great Stone. Here the stone is not called a *maṣṣēbâ* (standing stone, pillar) but simply 'eben, "stone"

This is "probably to avoid" conflict with Deut 16:22

nor shall you erect a sacred pillar [*maṣṣēbâ*], such as the LORD, your God, hates. (NABRE)

The DH is here "sanitizing" the tradition

The Oak

Not just an oak, but the well-known oak, mentioned in one form or another in Gen 12:6 35:4; . . . It is especially the tree of Gen 35:4 (*hā'ēlā*, "the terebinth") that is alluded to; the unique vocalization here (*hā'allā*) may be a Masoretic effort to dissociate Joshua from that repository of heterodox cult objects. Despite the different vocalization, however, the mention of the familiar tree connects Joshua not just with Moses, but with ancestral tradition.

The "ancestral tradition" in question would be the worship of "other gods." Deuteronomy 16:21 forbade such trees.

You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah beside the altar of the LORD your God which you shall make. (RSV)

The archaeologist Dever argues that the tree was a symbol for Asherah, the consort of YHWH.

According to Dever, before the Exile, many Israelites thought that YHWH, like other gods, had a consort.

In one of her lectures, Levine refers to her as "Mrs. YHWH."

26, Joshua wrote in: **The Book of the Law of God.**

If Joshua actually wrote anything, this would have been about 1200 BC

At the time the DH originally wrote (ca. 625 BC), this would be most of what we now call Deuteronomy.

The full Torah / Pentateuch would not yet exist for a few hundred more years.

The **final editors** imagine the whole Torah going back all the way to Moses.

The phrase "the book of the Law of God" occurs **only** in Neh 8:18

Ezra read from the book of the law of God day after day, from the first day to the last. They kept the feast for seven days, (NABRE)

Recall the scene in the PBS Video *The Bible's Buried Secrets*, where the scroll is being read after the Exile.

⁷ Coogan, "Joshua," 131.