

Inaugural lecture by
Prof. Dr. Koert van Bekkum

“But as for Me
and My House,
We Will Serve YHWH.”

**JOSHUA 24 AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
IN A CONTEXT OF RELIGIOUS PLURALITY**

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“But as for Me and My House, We Will Serve YHWH.” Joshua 24 and Christian
Theology in a Context of Religious Plurality

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© Ibrahim Dwaikat, wikimedia commons (Tell Batala [ancient Shechem] in the
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**JOSHUA 24 AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
IN A CONTEXT OF RELIGIOUS PLURALITY**

Koert van Bekkum

Presented in a condensed version as the opening lecture
and inaugural lecture as Professor of Old Testament,
at the official opening of the academic year
Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven
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Curriculum Vitae

Koert van Bekkum (1970) joined ETF Leuven as associate professor in 2018, became chair of the Department of Old Testament in 2019 and was promoted to professor of Old Testament in October 2020. He studied at the Theological University

Kampen, the University of Groningen and the University of Leiden. As research assistant in Old Testament in Kampen, he participated in the archaeological excavation at Tell Megiddo, Israel, and was visiting PhD-student at the Archaeological Institute of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Since 2002 he worked as assistant editor-in-chief of the *Nederlands Dagblad*, a Christian newspaper in the Netherlands. He returned to academia as assistant professor at the Theological University Kampen in 2012, after having obtained his PhD (highest grade) in 2010 at this university with a dissertation entitled "From Conquest to Coexistence: Ideology and Antiquarian Intent in the Historiography of Israel's Settlement in Canaan" (supervisors: prof. Gert Kwakkel and prof. Ed Noort, Groningen) and still holds an 0,2 fte position in Kampen. Since 2016, he has been doing his academic work as an ordained minister of the Reformed Church (liberated) of Amersfoort-West with a special vocation for theological education and research. With his research concentrating on literary, historical and theological aspects of Genesis to 2 Kings and relating their results to the Christian Tradition and Western society he participates in several international research projects. He also serves as a member of the boards of the Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België (OTW) and the Netherlands School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion (NOSTER). Koert van Bekkum is married to Alied Veling. Together they have a son and a daughter.

Summary

One of the results of the decline of the domination of Christianity and the increase of plurality of religions and worldviews in present Western societies is that Bible readers come in closer contact with the religious plural backgrounds of the biblical texts. This inaugural lecture takes a look at Joshua 24 and asks for the relevance of the biblical chapter for Christian theology in this context. In highlighting the importance of undivided loyalty and dedication to YHWH as a matter of life and death, Joshua 24 uses the veneration of God by Abram and Jacob as an example. The chapter tells about God's commitment to Israel and his magnificent acts in history. Joshua also warns the people of Israel not to turn to other gods, thus looking into the future of Israel's idolatry in the books of Judges, Samuel and Kings. The way Joshua 24 is connected to other passages in the story from Genesis to 2 Kings is explored by studying patterns of literary connections. The lecture also relates the chapter to its religious historical background as it has come to light in archaeological research at Tell Balata and Mount Ebal. One of the most striking elements of the hermeneutic of Joshua 24 is that it combines an exceptionally serious call for undivided loyalty to YHWH with flexibility and restraint in dealing with a diversity in religious forms. For today, this implies an invitation to look in a curious and appreciative way at the otherness of others. What is God, who is sovereign, doing in the lives of our fellow human beings? At the same time, an approach in line with Joshua 24 diminishes in no way the exclusive claim of religious dedication and undivided loyalty, invites people to be open about their deepest convictions, and presents a criterion for the open interreligious conversation that is increasingly part of modern Western society.

1. Introduction

Esteemed Rector, esteemed Dean, esteemed members of the Board of Trustees, dear colleagues, dear students, dear family and friends,

Last Summer I visited the Dominican church in Maastricht. Anticipating a new, more secular age, the building lost its ecclesial function already in 1796. Fifteen years ago a large bookshop was established inside the church. I did not find the theology book I was looking for. In addition to a few Bible translations and Qurans, the religion section was mainly filled with books on spirituality. A popular work on books that changed the world only mentioned the Bible in a small chapter discussing the Dead Sea Scrolls.

This was just a personal observation. At the same time, it reflects a society and culture with an ambivalent attitude towards religion. Like in most other parts of the world, inhabitants of the West live in a religiously plural society. But here more than elsewhere, it seems, has professing a faith become an option, while personal development is a mandate. On the one hand, religious extremism, ideological conflicts, and pressing world problems such as climate change and mass migration create a need to collaborate across religious barriers. Religious pluralism, in the normative sense of respecting otherness and religious rights and freedoms of others, is also regarded as one of the core values of modern societies. On the other hand, however, the West has difficulties accepting religious diversity. Belief in a reality beyond the material world is considered to be a private matter, the ethos and claims of institutionalized religion are often associated with coercion and violence, and the study of religious sources is easily perceived as something of the past.

This ambivalence also affects the field of theology and religious studies, and that of the sub-discipline of biblical studies. To me as chair of a department and newly appointed professor, it poses an important question: What does it mean to teach Old Testament at an evangelical academic institution in this context? One approach in academia, often claiming to be objective, is to reconstruct how the very God most people in the West think of when they name him was invented in ancient Israel and early Judaism.¹ Other scholars, using similar historical-critical methods, express themselves more cautiously, indicating how the God of their personal faith relates to the memoirs of God in the Bible.² A third approach focuses on a well-informed interpretation of the present canonical text of the Hebrew Bible as Jewish or Christian Scripture.³ These approaches manifest varied perspectives on the extent to which the texts should be read as expressions of power and certain interests and to what extent as actually speaking of God. As a confessional theologian I would argue that it is important to do justice to the historical nature of divine revelation and the Christian faith, and therefore that a theological approach should integrate the results of historical analysis, and that critical historical research in its turn needs to respect the religious claims of the texts. Be that as it may, this still does not answer the question of the extent to which classical exegetical skills of textual analysis and religious-historical research contribute to a Christian theology serving church and society in a context of religious diversity.

Against this background I would like to pay attention to some aspects of Joshua 24, the biblical chapter in which Joshua bids farewell to the people of Israel by presenting them with a choice of whether to serve God or idols. Joshua looks back at the history of God and his people and forward

¹ Thomas Römer, *The Invention of God* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

² Mark S. Smith, *The Memoirs of God: History, Memory, and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005). See also Bénédicte Lemmelijn, *Mijn geloof als bijbelwetenschapper? Een broos en kwetsbaar antwoord* (Antwerpen: Halewijn, 2018).

³ See e.g. the publications of Jon D. Levenson, and further R. W. L. Moberly, *Old Testament Theology: Reading the Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013); Hendrik J. Koorevaar and Mart-Jan Paul (eds.), *Theologie van het Oude Testament: de blijvende boodschap van de Hebreeuwse Bijbel* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2013); Mark J. Boda, *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

to the future – thus offering me the opportunity to present an example of my research into literary, historical and theological aspects of Genesis to 2 Kings.⁴ Yet in saying that only YHWH is the God who should be worshiped, the chapter also contains a claim that seems to be at odds with the ideal of peaceful cohabitation of religions and worldviews and might even be a source of religious conflict.

The rest of my lecture will illustrate how a literary and religious-historical analysis of the text contributes to understanding this problem, both in past and present, and show that a combination of critical and observational questions in religious studies and theological reflection is well suited to create the interaction needed to serve Church and society in this regard. The next section first discusses the function of Joshua 24 in Genesis to 2 Kings as a whole. A third section concentrates on its religious historical aspects, also in relation to archaeological remains of the religions of ancient Israel. Finally, some remarks will be made on the significance of this analysis for Christian theology in a context of religious plurality.

⁴ This research is embedded in the academic contexts of the research line “The Critical Gospel” of the Departments of Old and New Testament at ETF Leuven and the program “Discriminating Love” of the research group Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology of the Theological Universities of Apeldoorn and Kampen. In addition, it contributes to research in the network of scholars related to the project “Exploring the Composition of the Pentateuch” of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

2. Joshua 24 and the Primary History

2.1 The Primary History

Every reader of the Hebrew Bible sooner or later discovers a remarkable phenomenon: from a canonical perspective, the most important transition in the Old Testament is that between Deuteronomy and Joshua, that is, between the Torah, the books of Moses, on the one hand, and the Former and the Latter Prophets, Joshua to 2 Kings and Isaiah to the Book of the Twelve, on the other. Yet from a literary perspective, things look different, for Genesis to 2 Kings clearly presents itself as a one ongoing story from creation to exile.⁵ This literary continuum of very diverse material is divided into nine books of a different nature. The separation of the single story into nine parts and eleven scrolls serves the practical use in reading the text, but also marks clear beginnings and endings highlighting specific features and themes.⁶ Despite its diversity, this "Primary History," – which is also called "Grand Historical Masterpiece," "Enneateuch," or "Priestly Canon"⁷ – tells one ongoing story from Paradise to the loss of Jerusalem. The story can also be read as a double etiology explaining how Israel inherited the Promised Land as well as why it was lost.⁸

In recent decades, the Primary History has often been used as the point of

⁵ For this observation, see already Benedict de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, ed. by Jonathan Israel, tr. By Michael Silverston and Jonathan Israel (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy; Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2007), 127, 129.

⁶ Christoph Levin, "On the Cohesion and Separation of Books within the Enneateuch," in Thomas B. Dozeman, Thomas Römer, and Konrad Schmid (eds.), *Pentateuch, Hexateuch, or Enneateuch? Identifying Literary Works in Genesis through Kings* (Ancient Israel and Its Literature 8; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2011), 127–54.

⁷ For these terms, see David Noel Freedman, "The Law and the Prophets," in G. W. Anderson *et al.* (eds.), *Congress Volume Bonn 1962* (Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* 9; Leiden: Brill, 1963), 250–65; Th. C. Vriezen, A. S. van der Woude, *Ancient Israelite and Early Jewish Literature* (Leiden/Boston, 2005), 136–38; Dozeman *et al.* (eds.), *Pentateuch, Hexateuch, or Enneateuch*; Hendrik J. Koorevaar, *Inleiding tot de Priester-canon* (Leuven: ETF Leuven, 2018), 8–13.

⁸ E.g. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch. An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible*, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 35; Manfred Weippert, "Fragen des israelitischen Geschichtsbewusstseins," *Vetus Testamentum* 23 (1973), 441.

departure in discussing the origin and date of the biblical books of Genesis to 2 Kings.⁹ Mostly, it is presupposed that the stories of the patriarchs, the Exodus, and of Sinai originally were separate traditions having little or nothing to do with one another, while also the fathers in Deuteronomy should not be identified with the patriarchs. The question to be answered then, is when and how in Israel's history they were connected and how scribal activities during the Persian period after the exile resulted in the present literary work and the formation of the Torah and the Former Prophets. Yet there are also other models. During his career, for example, the late Adam S. van Woude vehemently opposed the idea of the separation of traditions and preferred a pre-exilic date for the basic outline of the story.¹⁰ Hendrik Koorevaar, professor emeritus here at ETF Leuven, in his turn developed an open serial model, in which he proposed that over several centuries, the separate books (with Exodus to Numbers entailing a distinct unity) were one by one added to a larger composition.¹¹

2.2 Pattern of Literary Connections

As indicated above, Joshua 24 has a central place in Genesis to 2 Kings. YHWH has fulfilled the promise of the land. The descendants of Joseph's brothers have fulfilled their promise of bringing his bones into the land.

⁹ K. Schmid, *Erzväter und Exodus. Untersuchungen zur doppelten Begründung der Ursprünge Israels innerhalb der Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments* (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 81; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999); Christian Frevel, "Deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk oder Geschichtswerke? Die These Martin Noth's zwischen Tetrateuch, Hexateuch und Enneateuch," in Udo Rüterswörden (ed.), *Martin Noth – aus der Sicht heutiger Forschung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2004) 60–95; Eckart Otto, "Ein „Deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk“ im Enneateuch?," *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 11 (2005), 323–45; Thomas Römer and Konrad Schmid (eds.), *Les dernières redactions du Pentateuque, de l'Hexateuque et de l'Ennéateuque* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 53; Leuven: Peeters, 2007); Dozeman et al. (eds.), *Pentateuch, Hexateuch, or Enneateuch*; Jan C. Gerz, "The Overall Context of Genesis–2 Kings," in Angelika Berlejung, Konrad Schmid, and Markus Witte (ed.), *T&T Clark Handbook of the Old Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 237–71.

¹⁰ A. S. van der Woude, *Uittocht en Sinai* (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1960); Idem, "Genesis en Exodus," *Kerk en Theologie* 20 (1969), 1–17; Vriezen, Van der Woude, *Ancient Israelite and Early Jewish Literature*, 159–60.

¹¹ Hendrik J. Koorevaar, "The Book of Joshua and the Hypothesis of the Deuteronomistic History: Indications for an Open Serial Model," in Ed Noort (ed.), *The Book of Joshua* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 250; Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 219–32; Idem, *Priester canon*, 44–45, 62–64. See also C. Houtman, *Der Pentateuch. Geschichte seiner Erforschung neben einer Auswertung* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 421–25; Serge Frolov, "Structure, Genre, and Rhetoric of the Enneateuch," *Vestnik SPbSU: Philosophy and Conflict Studies* 33 (2017), 354–63.

Soon, Joshua and the high priest Eleazar will die and Israel will enter a new phase in its relation to YHWH (Josh 24:29–33). This is a defining moment, in which it becomes apparent that the issue is not how to think about the gods or “God” in general. By taking the patriarchs out of Mesopotamia, liberating Israel from Egypt, defying a Moabite king and employing a famous diviner/seer, defeating the Amorite kings, and giving his people land on which they did not toil and cities they did not build, YHWH has defined who God actually is (Josh 24:2–13). Now, it is time to acknowledge that he alone is Israel’s God and they are his people (Josh 24:14–28). Both the first part of the chapter, looking back to the past, and the second, describing a choice that time and again has to be made, are aimed at the future: only this God of liberation and salvation brings life, while serving strange gods in the land of promise will lead to death.¹²

Joshua 24 tells its story in elevated prose, and is sometimes even called a poetic narrative.¹³ Unlike previous parts in the book on the conquest and settlement, the chapter does not contribute to the development of the phraseology and ways of speaking in Deuteronomy and certain passages in Numbers. Despite this fact, the chapter often refers and alludes to passages in Genesis to Deuteronomy and to Judges, Samuel and Kings. However, properly to answer the question of the place of Joshua 24 within the Primary History, the study of the relation to other passages in Genesis to 2 Kings must avoid their selection being determined by a specific perspective.¹⁴ Accordingly, it is best to focus first on the literary connections as such and to interpret them on a synchronic level before asking historical questions.

¹² Cf. e.g. Ed Noort, “Zu Stand und Perspektiven: der Glaube Israels zwischen Religionsgeschichte und Theologie. Der Fall Josua 24,” in Florentino García Martínez and Ed Noort, *Perspectives in the Study of the Old Testament and Early Judaism. A Symposium in Honour of Adam S. van der Woude on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 73; Leiden/Boston/Köln, 1998), 106–8.

¹³ William T. Koopmans, *Joshua 24 as Poetic Narrative* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 93; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 266–70.

¹⁴ Thus e.g. Erich Aurelius, *Zukunft jenseits des Gerichts. Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie zur Enneateuch* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 319; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2003), 172–90; Ville Mäkipelto, *Uncovering Ancient Editing: Documented Evidence of Changes in Joshua 24 and Related Texts* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 513; Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 172–98.

A good example of this can be found at the very end of Joshua 24, which narrates that Joseph is buried in the promised land (Josh 24:32). This verse closes a story line that already started in Genesis 33, where Jacob comes from in Paddan Aram, that is, from “beyond the River” (cf. Gen 31:21; Josh 24:2, 3, 14, 15), arrives at Shechem in Canaan and purchases a piece of land (Gen 33:18–20). The next scene of this story line in Genesis 50 shows how Joseph makes his brothers swear an oath to take his bones with them, when God will come and help their descendants. Accordingly, Exodus 13 recalls this oath in the story of the exodus, and tells how Moses took Joseph’s bones with him. Finally, these three threads all come together in Joshua 24, when Joseph is buried “in the land Jacob had purchased” (Josh 24:32). Joseph had died in Egypt, been mummified and put in a coffin, 110 years old, the perfect age for an Egyptian (Gen 50:26).¹⁵ But when his bones are brought out of Egypt and reburied in Shechem, he is no longer an Egyptian, but the proud ancestor of Ephraim and Manasseh, according to the books of Joshua and Judges the most powerful tribes in Israel’s pre-monarchic era. A few verses earlier, it is told that the Ephraimite Joshua had died and was buried in his own territory, also at the age of 110 years (Josh 24:29–30). This number has a symbolic meaning as well. For the first time in the narrative, Joshua is honored by being called “servant of YHWH,” just like Moses. Yet he still is not on the same level as Moses, for that servant of YHWH even became 120 years old.

This example is highly significant for the relation of Joshua 24 to the Primary History. Literary connections created by a pattern of similar expressions spread out from Genesis to beyond the book of Joshua. Direct references and the use of similar literary motifs alternate. Often there is a slight shift in the meaning of parallel phrases.¹⁶

¹⁵ James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 95.

¹⁶ An overview of the relations referred to in the following sub-sections is presented below on the pages 58–66 in the “Appendix – Patterns of literary connections between Joshua 24 and other passages in the Primary History.” For previous overviews and discussions, see e.g. Koopmans, *Joshua 24 as Poetic Narrative*, 348–99; Moshé Anbar, *Josue et l’alliance de Sichem (Jos 24:1–28)* (Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie 25; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991), 69–115; Reinhard Müller, *Königtum und Gotesherrschaft. Untersuchungen zur alttestamentlichen Monarchiekritik* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2, 3; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2004), 224–32; Mäkipelto, *Uncovering Ancient Editing*, 172–98.

2.3 Patriarchs

It all starts with Joshua's references to the ancestors Terah, Abraham and Nahor who lived at the other side of the River, the Euphrates, and served foreign gods (Josh 24:2, cf. Gen 11:27, 31). God took Abraham from there, showed him Canaan, the promised land, and gave him a son, Isaac (Josh 24:3, cf. Gen 24:7). The fact that Joshua refers to this distant past in Shechem is important. That relates Joshua 24 immediately to Genesis 12, for the chapter refers in diverse places to Shechem and its the terebinth tree, to the promise of the land and to Canaanites who lived in the land and could not be dispossessed.¹⁷ This highlights the notion in Genesis that Abram was not able to settle. Nevertheless, he built an altar, thus dedicating himself to YHWH and declaring his sovereignty and ownership of the land (Gen. 12:8, cf. Josh 24:14).¹⁸

This element of being a stranger is made explicit in the chapter's flashback to Esau and Jacob. Esau is given Mount Seir but Jacob goes to Egypt, as described in Genesis 36 and 47 (Josh 24:4, cf. Deut 2:5). Yet also with regard to Jacob, Joshua 24 contains numerous references to other passages, in particular those describing his travel from Paddam-Aram to the promised land, which in a way mirrors that of Abram. In Genesis 31, he crosses the River and marks the relation between his territory and clan and that of his uncle Laban by taking up a stone and setting it up as a pillar, which functions as a witness.¹⁹ Then he arrives at Shechem, obtains the aforementioned piece of land, erects an altar, and calls it "El is the God of Israel" (Gen 33:18–20). This is an important designation, for the identification between "El," the God of the patriarchs, and "YHWH," the

¹⁷ Gen 12:6–7, cf. Josh 24:1, 8, 11, 13, 18, 25, 26, 32. The motif of taking the patriarchs from Mesopotamia as a deliverance from serving foreign gods plays a significant part in early Judaism, as reflected in *Jub.* 12, *Jdt* 5:6–9 and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. For how elements in Gen 11:26–12:3 are used to rewrite this passage in *Jub.* 11:4–12:31 in the light of Josh 24:2–3, see Jacques T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, *Abraham in the Book of Jubilees: The Rewriting of Genesis 11:26–25:10 in the Book of Jubilees 11:14–23:8* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 161; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012), 37–8.

¹⁸ Arie C. Leder, "There he built an altar to the Lord' (Gen 12:8): City and Altar Building in Genesis," *Old Testament Essays* 32 (2019), 58–83.

¹⁹ Gen 31:21, 45, 48 cf. Josh 24:2, 26, 27.

God of Israel, plays an important part in the Primary History.²⁰ Joshua 24 highlights the same identification by calling the cult place in Shechem the “sanctuary of YHWH” and changing the designation into “YHWH is the God of Israel” (Josh 24:2, 23, 26).

Joshua creates an even stronger link with a following episode in Genesis by saying that he and his house will serve YHWH and by urging Israel to put away its foreign gods. He definitely has Jacob in mind, for in Genesis 35 it is at Shechem that Jacob and his house put away all foreign gods and buried them under the oak, that is, at the sanctuary of YHWH, according to Joshua 24.²¹ In this way, Abram’s dedication and Jacob’s act of choosing undivided loyalty at the cult site of Shechem function as important examples for Israel.

2.4 Exodus and Conquest

In narrating that Jacob went down to Egypt, Joshua 24 switches attention from YHWH’s dealings with the patriarchs (and their choice to serve him alone) to his acts which finally led to the fulfilment of the promise of the land. First, the exodus from Egypt and the liberation from pharaoh’s army at the Sea of Reeds is told in phrases also attested in Exodus 12–14.²² After four words summarizing Israel’s journey through the desert (Josh 24:7), YHWH’s liberating actions in the confrontation with the Amorite kings Sihon and Og are referred to by quoting Numbers 21.²³ Then, God’s protection against Balak, king of Moab, and his blessings through Balaam the seer are paraphrased.²⁴

In the history of research, it has often been observed that Joshua 24 refrains

²⁰ Gen 4:26; 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 31:5, 42; 46:1; Exod 3:1–15; 6:2–6; 33:19; 34:6–7. Cf. Koert van Bekkum, “The Divine Revelation of the Name: Warranted and Unwarranted Confidence in the Literary-Critical Analysis of Exodus 3 and 6,” in Matthias Armgardt, Benjamin Kilchör, and Markus Zehnder (eds.), *Paradigm Change in Pentateuchal Research* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte 22. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019), 60, 66–70. In Gen 33:20, the designation also creates a connection between the God of Israel, and the local worship of El, the Creator, the head of the Canaanite pantheon, in the days of the patriarchs. W. Hermann, “El‘i,” *DDD*; 277–78.

²¹ Gen 35:2–4, cf. Gen 31:19, 34; Josh 24:1, 14, 15, 20, 23, 25, 26, 32.

²² Josh 24:5–7, cf. Exod 4:30; 12:23, 27; 13:18; 14:9, 10, 13, 20, 22–23, 28, 31; 15:4, 19; 32:35.

²³ Josh 24:8; Num 21:13, 21, 25–26, 29, 31, 34–35, cf. Deut 7:24; 9:14; 31:3; 2 Kgs 21:8.

²⁴ Josh 24:9–10, cf. Num 22:5–6, 16, 37; 23:12; 24:1, 12–13.

from mentioning the stay of the people of Israel in the plains of Moab and that terminology from the book of Deuteronomy is not very prominent.²⁵ For now, it is interesting to observe how this kind of language is present in Joshua's retelling of Israel's conquest of the land. In the flow of the narrative from Genesis to Joshua terminology of conquering and dividing the land follows a certain narrative logic. It all starts with quite general promises and formulations regarding the idea of inheriting the land. Yet as soon as this becomes more concrete in Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua, this develops into more precise terminology on how to conquer the promised territories and how to divide the land by lot. Accordingly, new terms and concepts are created in describing divine promises and commands.²⁶ It is interesting to see that Joshua 24 refrains from the detailed phraseology in Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua 1–12 and 13–19, but seems to step backwards and offer a general overview. In addition, other remarkable things occur.

It is no surprise that the chapter makes use of the well-known list in Genesis to Judges of pre-Israelite nations that inhabit and continue to inhabit the promised land,²⁷ nor is the summarizing statement that "the kings of the Amorites were swept away."²⁸ Yet this statement, highlighting the divine initiative in conquering the land, is followed by a direct quotation from Deuteronomy 6, telling the people not to forget YHWH and not to serve

²⁵ For a discussion, see e.g. S. David Sperling, "Joshua 24 Reexamined," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 58 (1987), 119–36; Mark O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 92; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 77–81.

²⁶ See Koert van Bekkum, "Geography in Numbers 33 and 34 and the Challenge of Pentateuchal Theory," in Hans Barstad and Klaas Spronk (eds.), *Torah and Traditions: Papers Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society for Old Testament Studies and the Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap, the University of Edinburgh 20th July – 23rd July 2015* (Oudtestamentische Studiën 70; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017), 97–9, 115–6; idem, "Historical Geography and the Diachrony of the Geographical Concept of Joshua 15–19," in Chris McKinny, Kyle Keimer, and Aharon Tavger (eds.), "See the Whole Land is Before You." *New Directions in the Historical Geography of the Ancient Near East* (History, Archaeology, and Culture of the Levant; University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, forthcoming).

²⁷ Gen 10:15–19; 15:19–21; Exod 3:8; 3:17; 23:23; 33:2; 34:11; Deut 7:1; 20:17; Josh 3:10; 9:1; 11:3; 12:8; 24:11; Judg 3:5. Cf. Koert van Bekkum, *From Conquest to Coexistence: Ideology and Antiquarian Intent in the Historiography of Israel's Settlement in Canaan* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 45; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011), 129–42.

²⁸ For this reading, slightly deviating from MT's "two Amorite Kings," see Diana Edelman, "Are the Kings of the Amorites Swept Away?," *Vetus Testamentum* 41 (1991), 279–86.

“other gods” but Him, for he “brought you out of Egypt,” has given you “cities you did not build,” and “vineyards and olive groves you did not plant.”²⁹

This passage in Deuteronomy 6 highlights YHWH’s saving and liberating actions in view of the next generations. It is of great importance that Israel keeps telling its experiences and bearing witness to God’s great deeds in the past. In this context, the notion that YHWH is a “jealous” (*qannô*) God – also mentioned in Joshua 24, there in combination with “holy” (*qādôš*) – has two aspects. First, after all he has done, God cannot accept that Israel would be unfaithful to him and serve foreign gods. Second, it implies a strong resolve to protect Israel from the evil from which he has delivered it (cf. Deut. 6:24).³⁰ By turning aside to other gods, Israel will suffer and finally vanish from the land. Deuteronomy recalls and updates previous events for the present generation and identifies the new generation with the older one. In a similar way, Joshua 24 recalls and updates the past for the generation that will come after the death of Joshua. But the chapter is doing that in a specific way. Let me highlight the three most important aspects of this:

First, the setting of the farewell meeting is important. Joshua, a man of battle and worship,³¹ has gathered all tribes of Israel, elders and commanders, judges and officers. Other passages mentioning an assembly of these functionaries suggest that they represent Israel as a religious community, but also as one that prepares for battle.³² It is all the more surprising that Joshua only highlights the divine initiative in the conquest of land. In Genesis 48, Jacob and Joseph seem to be proud to have taken a mountain slope from the Amorites by force.

²⁹ Deut 6:10–15, quoted in Josh 24:13, cf. 24:2, 4, 14, 16, 17, 19.

³⁰ Cf. E. Reuter, *qn*’, *ThWAT*, Bd. 7, 58–60; H. G. L. Peels, *qn*’, *NIDOTTE*, Vol. 3, 937–40.

³¹ Exod 17:9–14; 24:13; 32:17; 33:11; Num 11:28; 13–14; 26:65; 27:18–25; 32:12, 28; 34:17; Deut 1:38; 3:21, 28; 31:3, 7, 14, 23; 34:9; Judg 1:1; 2:8, 23; 1 Kgs 16:34.

³² Cf. e.g. Judg 20:2, 10; 1 Sam 9; 2 Sam 5:1; 15:10; 1 Kgs 8:1 (tribes of Israel); Num 11; 16; 22; Judg 8; 11; 21; 1 Sam 4; 8; 11 (elders); Num 31; Deut 20; 2 Sam 4:2; 1 Kgs 2:5; 9:22; 15:20 (commanders); Num 25:5; Deut 1, 16; 19; 21; Josh 8 (judges); Num 11:16; 16:18; 29:9; 31:28; Josh 1:10; 3:2; 8:33 (officials).

Here, the same poetic phrase is used to express the opposite: "it was not by your sword or by your bow" (Josh 24:12, cf. Gen 48:22).³³

A second major aspect is the main rhetorical structure of Joshua 24. The messenger formula in verse 2, "Thus says YHWH," is often read as characterizing Joshua as a prophet urging the people to serve God.³⁴ Although there is some truth in this observation, this interpretation tends to overlook the larger structure of this introducing formula, which is followed by an account of divine deeds and then switches in verse 14 to "Now, then ...!" Precisely this structure is also attested at the beginning of the making of the covenant at Sinai in Exodus 19, and later in passages in 1 Samuel. In the context of both Exodus 19 and Joshua 24, the people are reminded of having witnessed YHWH's acts and urged to listen to his voice. They respond with an affirmative answer.³⁵ The actual making of the covenant in Joshua 24 by writing down words and erecting a stone reflects the making of the covenant in Exodus 24 and its renewal in Exodus 34.³⁶ Moreover, Joshua 24 contains an impressive pattern of similar expressions with Exodus 23:20–23, a passage directly following the Covenant Code, preceding the ritual in Exodus 24, and elaborating on the conquest of the promised land.³⁷

Exodus 23 describes the conquest precisely at the same level of detail as Joshua 24. It also contains the element that it might be that Israel's transgressions will not be forgiven. In Exodus, it is a specific divine messenger representing YHWH and guiding Israel into the promised land.

³³ Cf. Koopmans, *Joshua 24 as Poetic Narrative*, 121. For the non-poetic expression that "YHWH fights for you," see Exod 14:14, 24; Deut 1:30; 3:22; 20:4; Josh 10:14, 42; 23:3, 10.

³⁴ Noort, "Zu Stand und Perspektiven," 96–7; Hartmut N. Rösel, *The Book of Joshua* (Historical Commentary on the Old Testament; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 365.

³⁵ Exod 19:1–8, cf. Josh 24:2, 3–13, 14, 17, 18, 21, 24. Cf. Koopmans, *Joshua 24 as Poetic Narrative*, 358–62.

³⁶ For the sequence of covenants in Exodus 19–34, see Gert Kwakkel, "The Sinaitic Covenant in the Narrative of the Book of Exodus," in Jason P. Van Vliet (ed.), *Living Waters from Ancient Springs: Essays in Honor of Cornelis Van Dam* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), 27–40.

³⁷ Exod 24:1–8, cf. Josh 24:1, 18, 21, 24, 25, 26. Exod 33:2 and 34:10–14, cf. Josh 24:12, 18, 19, 25.

³⁷ Exod 23:20–33, cf. Josh 24:2, 3, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 18, 15, 19, 24, 25. Cf. Hans Ausloos, "The Book of Joshua, Exodus 23, and the Hexateuch," in Noort (ed.), *Book of Joshua*, 263–66.

He has to obeyed, for he will not forgive Israel its transgressions.³⁸ Joshua adds to this storyline by heightening the tension in urging the people and saying that YHWH himself will not forgive. Accordingly, there is a true cliffhanger at the end of the book of Joshua. Is there a future for the people of Israel or not? Here, the emphasis is not so much on the importance of the divine commands, for the content of the covenant written on stone is different. In Joshua 24, the obligation of the covenant does not comprise a law collection, such as the Covenant Code or the law in Deuteronomy 12–26, but clearly regards the people’s choice to choose YHWH as its God and to be undividedly loyal to him. Accordingly, the chapter is – despite contrary claims, in particular since Gerhard von Rad³⁹ – clearly familiar with the covenant at Sinai, but only turns out to be very flexible in its use.

One of the most remarkable examples of this – and this is the third aspect to be mentioned – is the use of the word “house” in verse 15, “For me and my house, we will serve YHWH.” This is not just a “detail enhancing drama to the scene.”⁴⁰ In ancient Israel as well as in biblical law, the stories, and prophecies, the primary social unit is not the individual, but the *bēt ’āb*, the “house of the father,” that is, the extended family of a senior male, his wife and children and other dependents, such as unmarried daughters, daughters-in-law, related widows, and grandchildren.⁴¹ Derived from this, the circle of responsibility can be made smaller and focus on a nuclear family, a couple or individual, but it can also be expanded: from the clan

³⁸ For this messenger at Sinai and in wilderness narrative, see Exod. 23:20–23; 32:34; 33:2 and 34:11–17; Num. 20:16, cf. Num. 22:22–35. For a similar character described in different terms, see Josh 6:2–5. See Hans-Dieter Neef, “‘Ich selber bin in ihm’ (Ex 23,21): Exegetische Beobachtungen zur Rede vom ‘Engel des Herrn’ in Ex 23,20–22; 32,34; 33,2; Jdc 2,1–5; 5,23,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 39 (1995), 34–75; Walter Hilbrands, “Das Verhältnis der Engels zu Jahwe im Alten Testament, insbesondere im Buch Exodus,” in Riemer Roukema (ed.), *The Interpretation of Exodus: Studies in Honour of Cornelius Houtman* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology 44; Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 81–96; Hans Ausloos, “The ‘Angel of YHWH’ in Exod. xxxiii 20–33 and Judg. ii 1–5: A Clue to the Deuteronom(ist)ic Puzzle?” *Vetus Testamentum* 58 (2008), 1–12.

³⁹ Gerhard von Rad, “Das Formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuchs,” in Idem *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (Theologische Bücherei 8; München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1961), 14–6; 44–7.

⁴⁰ Rösel, Book of Joshua, 371.

⁴¹ Cf. J. David Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and as Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient Near East* (Studies in the Archaeology and History of the Levant 2; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2001), 135–83; Rainer Albertz and Rüdiger Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 24–41.

and village to the city and tribe, to all Israel, and even to humanity as a whole. At his farewell, Joshua is still the leader of both his extended family – which just had been given the town of Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim as an inheritance (Josh 19:50) – and Israel (Josh 24:1). But he, the people and the reader know that when he dies, this will change and there will be a transfer of leadership. In speaking of “me and my house” and “we,” Joshua underlines that he and his extended family are determined to honor YHWH. At the same time, no matter how the form of leadership will change in the future, he gives the right example of how it should look in choosing to serve God with undivided loyalty. Apparently, the previously observed rhetorical structure of covenant making is used in service of this moment in Israel’s history.⁴²

2.5 Judges, Samuel and Kings

In this light, it becomes all the more interesting to see how passages closely related to Joshua 24 later in the Primary History develop the themes of leadership and serving foreign gods. The first passage already follows in Judges 2:1–5, in which the specific divine messenger from Exodus 23 guiding Israel into the promised land travels from Gilgal to Bochim, that is, from the place of the beginning of the glorious conquest to the place of weeping. The messenger contrasts God’s promise under oath to the patriarchs with the threat that YHWH would no longer drive out the inhabitants, if Israel made a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and tolerated their cult. The eternal covenant and threat stand side by side, and the messenger does not resolve the tension. Obviously, the promise of the land has been put at risk and the people react to this indictment with remorse and self-reproach.⁴³ Immediately after this scene, the verses in Joshua 24 describing Joshua’s

⁴² For texts alluding to other passages by mimicking its narrative structure, see Jefferey M. Leonard, “Identifying Subtle Allusions: The Promise of Narrative Tracking,” in Ziony Zevit (ed.), *Subtle Citation, Allusion, and Translation in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2017), 91–113.

⁴³ Judg 2:2–3, cf. Josh 24:12, 18, 24, 25. Judg 2:1–5 also shares vocabulary with Exod 23:20, 21, 29, 32, 33; 34:11, 12, 15; Num 33:55; Deut 7:5, 12; and Josh 23:13, and is best understood as continuing this story line. Cf. A. van der Kooij, “And I Also Said: A New Interpretation of Judges ii 3,” *Vetus Testamentum* 45 (1995), 294–306.

death and burial are repeated, thus underlining again the crisis in leadership and loyalty (Judg 2:6–9, cf. Josh 24:28–31). Accordingly, the question of both Israel’s covenant and governance is open.⁴⁴

The telling beginning of the book is followed by a description of a cycle of forsaking YHWH, following other gods, thus provoking his anger and suffering under people who raided them, and finally being rescued from this distress by judges (Judg 2:11–16). This might suggest that there will be forgiveness anyway, because of YHWH’s oath that he would never break his covenant (Judg 2:1). But this is definitely not the case. Parts of Joshua 24 are quite extensively repeated in Judges 6, this time by an anonymous prophet at the beginning of the story of Gideon in response to Israel’s cry for help against Midian (Judg 6:7–10).⁴⁵ This time, the main emphasis is not on what YHWH has done in the exodus, conquest and settlement. As in Judges 2, no appeal follows, only a devastating observation: “You have not listened to/obeyed my voice” (Judg 6:10).

God nonetheless brings deliverance through Gideon. But this story also ends in disappointment. Gideon realizes that only YHWH is King in Israel and makes that clear to the Israelites. He nonetheless seems to forget why this is the case, for he behaves like a king and does not explicitly acknowledge that not he, but YHWH liberated Israel from Midian (Judg 8:22–27). The story comes to a terrible end in Judges 9, which contains a few ironic reversals of Joshua 24 that can hardly be missed. All the citizens of Shechem gather at the terebinth tree of the city’s pillar and express their loyalty – neither to YHWH nor to the house of Jerubba‘al, but to his son Abimelech (“my father is king”).⁴⁶ The new king kills his brothers; only Jotham escapes in order to reveal this injustice, which ends in the destruction of the temple tower of El Berith in Shechem and the death of Abimelech (Judg 9:42–56).⁴⁷

⁴⁴ For a different interpretation of the deliberate double report of Joshua’s death, see Serge Frolov, “Joshua’s Double Demise (Josh, xxiv 28-31; Judg. ii 6-9): Making Sense of a Repetition,” *Vetus Testamentum* 58 (2008), 315–23.

⁴⁵ Cf. Josh 24:2, 4, 5, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 24. Klaas Spronk, *Judges* (Historical Commentary on the Old Testament; Leuven: Peeters 2019), 206–7.

⁴⁶ Judg 9:6, 16, 19, cf. Josh 24:1, 14, 25, 26, 32.

⁴⁷ Aliëtte Meerveld, “De macht van de goden en de kracht van de koning. Koningschap en afgoderij in het verhaal van Gideon en Abimelech,” MA thesis, Theologische Universiteit Kampen, 2014.

In Judges 10, the next passage echoing the language and content of Joshua 24, the biting irony even enters into the response of YHWH himself. Instead of renouncing the gods of Canaan after having started to serve the Ba'alim and Ashtarot in Judges 3:6–9 Israel now also begins to worship "the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines" (Judg 10:6). This is truly a new phase in Israel's downward spiral, looking forward to Jephthah's and Samson's conflicts with the Ammonites and the Philistines, and beyond them even to the later wars and alliances of Saul and David, which finally will bring relief.⁴⁸ For now, however, Israel's initial remorse in response to the Ammonite oppression, is short and formulaic and only refers to Ba'al (Judg 10:10), while YHWH's answer clearly reveals that the conflict now has become more personal and intense. Again, the indictment refers to the contrast between God's liberation and Israel's serving of other gods. YHWH, however, reverses Israel's choice to serve him: "Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them deliver you!" Israel's responds with a new confession, putting away its gods and showing new loyalty. Yet God's reaction does not demonstrate a merciful change of heart, but is rather ambivalent. On the one hand, he is angry and annoyed and willing to be out of the rescue business. On the other hand, there is still a chance that he is also affected by Israel's misery and that some judge may act as his deliverer (10:11–16).⁴⁹ From this point of departure, the plot of the Jephthah story develops until its devastating end, in which both things happen: God saves Israel from Ammon, but at the same time, Jephthah and Israel face the consequences of their own choices: the judge deprives his house of its future and the tribes plunge the people into civil war (Judg 11:1–12:7).⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Thus already M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien. Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament* (Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft. Geisteswissenschaftliche Klasse 18; Halle an der Saale, 1943), 53–4.

⁴⁹ Cf. Josh 24:2, 3–13, 14, 16, 22, 23. For the relations of this passage to Judg 6:7–10, see Koopmans, *Joshua 24 as Poetic Narrative*, 381–82; Anbar, *Josué et l'alliance de Sichem*, 109.

⁵⁰ For this interpretation of Judg 10:16 and the story as a whole, see Koert van Bekkum, "Let YHWH, the Judge, Decide." Literary, Historical and Theological Aspects of the Jephthah Narrative," in Jaap Dekker and Gert Kwakkel (eds.), *Reading and Listening: Meeting One God in Many Texts. Festschrift for Eric Peels on the Occasion of his 25th Jubilee as Professor of Old Testament Studies* (Amsterdamse Cahiers voor Exegese en Bijbelse Theologie. Supplement Serie 16. Bergambacht: Uitgeverij 2VM, 2018), 61–9.

With Samuel, things take a more positive direction. This can clearly be observed in three passages showing a pattern of literary connections with Joshua 24. The first is 1 Samuel 7 on what happens twenty years after the ark has returned from the Philistines and is brought to Kiriath Jearim. This chronological remark represents Israel's inability to live in peace in the land and to serve YHWH.⁵¹ Accordingly, when the people cry for help, Samuel speaks to them at Mizpah, urges them to put away their foreign gods and to serve YHWH. In answer to their confession, God saves them from the Philistines who attacked them. As a conclusion, Samuel sets up a stone as a witness for what has happened, but also to remind them that YHWH's

⁵¹ In the Primary History, the chronology from Exod 16:35 to 1 Kgs 6:1, that is, from Moses to Solomon and from the exodus to the building of the temple, very often combines two elements in its chronological notes: (a sum of) "forty years" and "rest." The number forty symbolizes the time in which a responsible group of people is punished and dies, which is longer than a generation (Exod 16:35; Num 14:33–34; 32:13; 33:38; Josh 5:6; 14:7, 10). Cf. J. de Koning, *Studien over de El-Amarnabrieven en het Oude Testament* (Delft: W.D. Meinema, 1940), 29–30; Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, 21. Within this framework, the number sometimes also symbolizes a time of testing Israel's loyalty and a time of grace, because Israel did not lack anything in the desert (Deut 1:3; 2:7; 8:2–4; 29:4). The notions of obedience and disobedience, punishment and loyalty also resonate in the use of the number and in the part or sum of it in Judges and Samuel (Judg 3:8, 11, 14, 30; 4:3; 5:31; 6:1; 8:28; 9:22; 10:2; 10:3; 10:8; 12:7; 12:9; 12:10; 12:14; 13:1; 15:20; 16:31; 1 Sam 4:18; 7:2; 13:1; 2 Sam 2:10; 2:11; 5:4–5, cf. 1 Kgs 2:11; 1 Kgs 6:1). The second element, that of "rest" from battle and conflict (*šbt* and *nuh*, hi., Judg 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28; 8:28; 18:7, 27; 1 Kgs 8:1, 56), not only denotes the result of liberation by YHWH, but also the goal of conquering the promised land (Exod 23:20; Deut 3:20; 25:19; Josh 1:13–15). After the conquest, all enemies are defeated and the land can be inherited, because God has fulfilled all the promises (Josh 11:23; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1). However, after Joshua's death, rest and unrest constantly alternate until YHWH brings peace and rest through the election of David and his dynasty (2 Sam 7). Only in this way, the goal of the exodus is achieved and the temple of YHWH can be built. Assuming that overlaps are explicitly mentioned in the text (e.g. Judg 10:7) and periods of leadership without chronological indications should not be counted, the numbers strikingly add up 480 years, a number mentioned in 1 Kgs 6:1–2, which possibly alludes to the genre of, or quotes a temple dedication inscription. In this way a chronology of disobedience and grace is created, that is, twelve times forty years. Cf. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, 21–5; Avigdor Hurvitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 115; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 226–33. Without chronological notices, the theological periodization is attested in Ps 78, 132, and Ps 114:1–2 "When Israel came out of Egypt (...), Judah became God's sanctuary" (cf. 1 Kgs 8:21, 51; 9:9). This chronological *Gerüst* in the Primary History from the exodus to the building of the temple also explains the solid attestation in the Masoretic tradition of the strange number of two regnal years for Saul in 1 Sam 13:1. Cf. Rachele Gilmour and Ian Young, "Saul's Two Year Reign in 1 Samuel 13:1," *Vetus Testamentum* 63 (2013), 150–54. The chronological indication in Judg 11:36 is to be ignored, because it is not made by the narrator, but by Jephthah, for whom exaggerating is clearly part of his negotiation tactics with the Ammonites: Israel never made any mistake, always respected the borders of Edom, Moab and Ammon, never had any problems with Balak, only conquered the area north of the Arnon in response to an attack by Sihon, and has been living there three centuries already. Cf. Van Bekkum, "Let YHWH, the Judge, Decide," 62–3. Finally, the often deviating numbers in the Septuagint are to be studied by paying attention to the context of the translators, who had to rethink biblical chronological indications in the light of the continuous counting of years that had become an option in historiography since the Seleucids. Cf. Rolf Strootman, "Seleucid Era," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2015, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/seleucid-era> (accessed on 27 August 2021).

liberating actions make him worthy of their loyalty, for the stone is called Ebenezer, "Up to this moment, YHWH has helped us" (1 Sam 7:1–12).⁵²

An entirely new context for the appeal to serve YHWH is found in 1 Samuel 10, on the occasion of Saul's appointment as a king (1 Sam 10:17–28).⁵³ Again, Samuel gathers the people in Mizpah, and just as in Exodus 19 and Joshua 24, the text is structured by the introducing formula "Thus says YHWH," followed by an account of divine acts and then switching to an appeal with the phrase "Now, then ...!" Again, the historical prologue starts with Israel having brought out of Egypt, but adds the other kingdoms that have subdued them since then. Now, Israel has even rejected its liberator by asking for a king (1 Sam 10:19). The verses describing Israel's obligations start with a procedure electing a king and a scene confirming the divine election as well as the suitability of the candidate: Saul – a shy, but powerful young man. They close with a ritual in which Samuel documents the stipulations obliging both the king and Israel to serve YHWH. What these rearrangement of the general rules for southern Levantine kingship as earlier laid out in 1 Samuel 8:11–18 exactly comprise is not made explicit. Apparently, the story that follows will have to make it clear how both relate to one another.

The final passage in Samuel reflecting detailed relations with Joshua 24 is 1 Samuel 12, the confirmation of Saul's kingship and Samuel's farewell (1 Sam 11:14–12:25).⁵⁴ This long chapter again starts with a gathering by Samuel – now in Gilgal, where Saul will later lose his kingship (1 Sam 11:14, cf. 15:1–35). The introductory formula is omitted, because Samuel now speaks on his own behalf as a judge. The historical introduction is split into two parts: Samuel first asks Israel under invocation of YHWH and the anointed king as witnesses to confirm that he never has harmed anyone in his leadership (1 Sam 12:1–6), and then begins his recap of YHWH's mighty acts, with

⁵² Cf. Josh 24:23, 26, 27.

⁵³ Cf. Josh 24:1, 2, 4, 5, 14, 10, 25, 26, 28.

⁵⁴ Cf. Josh 24:2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24.

an emphasis on Jacob's arrival in Egypt, the role of Moses and Aaron in describing the exodus and settlement, Israel's forsaking God, serving other gods and liberation through the judges, up to the request for a king and Saul's battle against Nahash of Ammon (1 Sam 12:7–12). Finally, the appeal to Israel and the king to remain faithful to God also comprises two steps, interrupted by a rainstorm in the time of the harvest, thus showing that being faithful is a matter of life and death and motivating the Israelites to repent of sin and to dedicate themselves to YHWH.⁵⁵

The detailed network of relations with Joshua 24 is unmistakable, but again it is notable how the specific moment determines both form and content of the covenant renewal. It affects the historical summaries and the view of leadership now held by a king. Also the manner of speaking about sin and forgiveness and the way these leaders apply that to themselves have changed (1 Sam 12:20–23, cf. Josh 24:15, 19). The kernel is the same, although formulated in an ambiguous way, so that it can be applied both to serving other gods and to worshipping a king: "Do not turn away to follow void things, which can neither profit nor save but are worthless!" (1 Sam 12:21).⁵⁶ Both Joshua and Samuel raise the tension at the moment of transfer to a different kind of leadership.⁵⁷ Time, however, has taught that it is indeed very hard to be undividedly loyal to YHWH. Samuel addresses the possibility that he himself might fall into sin (1 Sam 12:23). At the same time, in comparison with Joshua he adds a positive undertone. That YHWH is Israel's God also implies that he will protect his reputation as a liberator and think of what he has promised, thereby touching a different aspect of YHWH's jealousy and holiness (1 Sam 12:22, cf. Exod 32:11–14; Josh 7:9). Both elements of Samuel's struggles and God's resolve become a reality in Samuel's final years. After the rejection of Saul, the king he mentored, he is

⁵⁵ Cf. Tremper Longman III, "1 Sam 12:16–19: Divine Omnipotence or Covenant Curse?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983), 168–71.

⁵⁶ For *iôhû*, "void," as a characterization of rulers, nations, and other gods, see Isa 40:17, 19; 41:9; 44:29. Cf. Moshe Garsiel, "The Book of Samuel: Its Composition, Structure and Significance as a Historical Source," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 10.5 (2011), 20.

⁵⁷ Cf. Aurelius, *Zukunft jenseits des Gerichts*, 182–84.

in utter despair, saying things about YHWH's repentance that are true but at the same time put in a different light by the narrator (1 Sam 15:1–12, 29, 35).⁵⁸ Yet God makes a new beginning in commanding him to anoint a son of Jesse to be king of Israel (1 Sam 16).

Patterns of motifs and phrases related to Joshua 24 are absent in what follows next in the narrative with regard to David and Solomon. The combination of all Israel and the "elders gathering" in Shechem, and the choice of whom is to be served, however, occurs after Solomon's death in 1 Kings 12, when Rehoboam goes to Shechem, where Israel has gathered to make him king. Rehoboam fails because he does not know how to respect the northern tribes in the enthronement negotiations. The story ends with Jeroboam becoming king, fortifying Shechem and making it his capital (1 Kgs 12:1–25).⁵⁹ Explicit and implicit allusions to Joshua 24, but also to the scenes regarding Abimelech in Judges 9 and Saul in 1 Samuel 10 and 12 are hard to overlook. In discussing the difficult relation between Solomon and Israel, 1 Kings 12 also includes a historical summary and clearly suggests that a king and his people can only thrive, when he is willing to serve YHWH and to place Israel's interests above his own. As a result, YHWH executes his judgment over the Davidic dynasty by splitting the kingdom in two as prophesied through Ahijah the Shilonite (1 Kgs 12:15, cf. 11:29–39). In particular the exclamation in verse 16, "To your tents, o Israel. Now, look to your own house, o David!" contains an ironic reversal of Josh 24:15, "For me and my house, we will serve YHWH." Unlike Joshua, Rehoboam does not lead by example and because of this lack of appeal, Israel might go after other gods (cf. 1 Kgs 11:33).

This is the last passage in the book of Kings reflecting a pattern of literary connections with Joshua 24. Nevertheless, several vital phrases and

⁵⁸ Cf. J. Fokkerman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel. Volume II: The Crossing Fates* (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1986), 85–111; H. G. L. Peels, "De afgescheurde slip. Hermeneutische overwegingen bij 1 Samuël 15," *Theologia Reformata* 40 (1997), 260–76; Eveline van Staaldoune-Sulman, "The Niphal of the Hebrew Verb *nḥm* and Its Reception in Early Jewish Sources," *Judaica Ukrainica* 4 (2015), 5–17.

⁵⁹ 1 Kgs 12:1, 4, 7, 16, 25, cf. Josh 24:1, 2, 15, 16–22, 25, 29, 31, 32.

expressions from the chapter and related texts are quoted in verses in 2 Kings 17 and 18 describing why the Assyrians conquered the kingdom of Israel and exiled its population. Making the two calves in Dan and Bethel and a sacred post, bowing down to the host of heaven and worshipping Ba‘al clearly falls under the category of “forsaking YHWH and serve other gods” and not to “fear and serve” him (2 Kgs 17:16, 35). By “not obeying his voice,” Israel was also unfaithful to the stipulations of the covenant (1 Kgs 17:35; 18:12). Finally, exile also awaits the kingdom of Judah, because the Davidic king Manasseh seduced its people to do more evil than the nations which YHWH had “destroyed before the Israelites” (2 Kgs 21:8).⁶⁰

2.6 Ritual and Rhetoric of Liberation and Dedication

I would like to highlight two main elements from this overview of literary connections between Joshua 24 and the Primary History in order to summarize the function of the chapter in the ongoing story from Genesis to 2 Kings. The first, very clear element is that of the non-negotiable claim of undivided loyalty to YHWH in all passages under discussion. Whether it regards land, leadership or the cult – main themes in the Primary History – turning towards or away from God as its only liberator, and being dedicated to him time and again appears to be a matter of life and death for Israel. Precisely because of this unambiguous claim, however, the second element is all the more surprising, that is, the broad spectrum of different kinds of plurality in these passages.

First, there is an amazing plurality of *ritual*. The patriarchs dedicate themselves to God by creating or using places of divine presence with stones, trees and altars. Their memories and traditions count, even when the form of worship has changed significantly and the covenant or cult has gotten a different form, as in Joshua 24, or has become contested, as

⁶⁰ Cf. Josh 24:8, 14, 16, 20, 24.

seems to be the case with the temple of El Berith in Judges 9.⁶¹ In this way, Joshua 24 can be compared to Exodus 3 and 6, in which the transfer from the religion and the view of God of the patriarchs to that of the covenant at Sinai is explicitly reflected on.⁶² Several elements indicate that the chapter is familiar with Sinai and the division of the land by priests. Yet this is made subservient to the main issue: Israel's confirmation that only YHWH is God.

The second plurality is that of *leadership*. That Israel is required to serve YHWH has significant implications for the form of leadership. But whenever this is not acknowledged, YHWH is rejected and different kinds of leadership occur, the claim of undivided loyalty is applied to the new contexts of the judges, a king and a divinely elected dynasty.

This is also reflected in a plurality in the use of *literary forms*. In the past, scholars have tried to reconstruct the basic literary form and *Sitz im Leben* of the formula "thus says YHWH" (*kô 'āmar yhw̄h*), followed by a historical summary of divine acts, and the appeal or obligations introduced by "Now then" (*wě'attā*). Undeniably, Exodus 19, Joshua 24 and 1 Samuel 12 strongly parallel one another in structure and phrasing and the attestation of a mediator and witnesses.⁶³ Yet the search for a pattern easily presupposes elements in the texts that are in fact lacking. The assumption that the form originally reflects an ancient Israelite ritual of choosing a king leads to a reading of Joshua 24 in which a secondary association in the text, that is, of YHWH being Israel's King, becomes its main message.⁶⁴ In a similar way,

⁶¹ In the Primary History, the phrase concerning the place "YHWH will choose to put his name there for his dwelling" (e.g. Deut 12:5, 13) eventually hints at the temple in Jerusalem. Yet this is not made explicit and the verb *bhr*, "to choose," does not so much emphasize the centralization of the cult as the avoidance of idolatry, while Deut 12:7 speaks of feasts at the sanctuary by "you and your houses." This may indeed reflect an awareness of the historical contingency of Israel's cultic practices, which only gradually became centralized. Before 2 Sam 7, the formula is closely related to passages describing other altars and sanctuaries (Deut 27:1–10; Josh 9:27; 22:28–29) and its requirements seem to be met in a number of places in succession. Cf. e.g. H. Seebaß, *bhr*, *ThWAT*, Bd. 1, 600; J. Gordon McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement 33; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 21–38.

⁶² For a discussion and literature, see Van Bekkum, "The Divine Revelation of the Name," 68–9.

⁶³ Thus already James Muilenburg, "The Form and Structure of the Covenantal Formulations," *Vetus Testamentum* 9 (1959), 347–65.

⁶⁴ Christoph Levin, *Die Verheißung des neuen Bundes: in ihrem theologiegeschichtlichen Zusammenhang ausgelegt* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 137; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 114–19.

interpreters who assume that the pattern originates in a ritual of covenant renewal tend to ignore that an important element in 1 Samuel 12 is the confirmation of Saul's kingship.⁶⁵ Instead, it is better to observe that the texts are not in themselves covenantal texts, but covenantal and enthronement accounts, drawing on a variety of treaty traditions and related literary and ritual features.⁶⁶ The literary connections are real, but at the same time highly flexible. This becomes, for instance, apparent in the rhetorical notion that YHWH will not forgive Israel its transgressions (Josh 24:19). In the broader context of the Primary History, this is rightly interpreted as an indication of Israel's exile and might even confirm the hypothesis that the book of Kings simply ends in darkness.⁶⁷ Yet, if the relations to Exodus 19–34 and Samuel's hopeful words that YHWH will not abandon his people for his great name's sake (1 Sam 12:22) are taken into account, the expectation is justified that there is a future, even beyond judgment.⁶⁸ In this way, Joshua 24 does not only address the fulfilment of the promise of the land and the loss of land in exile, but also invites readers to reflect on the nature of YHWH by asking the question "Who is God in Israel?"⁶⁹

⁶⁵ J. Robert Vannoy, *Covenant Renewal at Gilgal: A Study of 1 Samuel 11:14–12:25* (Cherry Hill: Mack Publishing Company, 1978), 130. Koopmans tries to combine both elements by speaking of a pattern of an enthronement ritual accompanied by a covenantal ceremony. Accordingly, Joshua 24 becomes a cultic pledging of loyalty to YHWH, in which Israel accepts a position of vassalage. Koopmans, *Joshua 24 as Poetic Narrative*, 397–408.

⁶⁶ See Koert van Bekkum, "Biblical Covenants and Treaties in Ancient Near Eastern Context: A Methodological, Historical and Theological Reassessment," in Hans Burger, Gert Kwakkel and Michael Mulder (eds.), *Covenant: A Vital Element in Reformed Theologie. Biblical, Historical and Systematical Perspectives* (Studies in Reformed Theology 42; Leiden/Boston: Brill, forthcoming).

⁶⁷ In his monograph on the Deuteronomistic History, written during German's lost battle at Stalingrad in 1943 and in the expectation of the Russian conquest of his beloved Königsberg, Martin Noth underlined this point: a nation ignoring God, serving other gods and celebrating violence is doomed to destruction. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, 107–8.

⁶⁸ Cf. Aurelius, *Zukunft jenseits des Gerichts*, 188–90.

⁶⁹ Cf. Mladen Popović, "Conquest of the Land, Loss of the Land: Where Does Joshua 24 Belong?," in Jacques van Ruiten and J. Cornelis de Vos (eds.), *The Land of Israel in Bible, History, and Theology: Studies in Honour of Ed Noort* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 124; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 89–90.

3. Joshua 24 and Ancient Israel(ite Religions)

3.1 Literary Development

The interesting question is, of course, how the claim of undivided loyalty of Joshua 24 on the one hand and its cultic and textual flexibility on the other relate to today's religious plurality. A major step in answering this question is to sketch the relation between Joshua 24 and its own religious background, for understanding its interaction with the religious plurality of its day might inspire Christian theology to reflect on the relation to its present context.

3.1.1 History of Diachronic Literary Research

Since the rise of modern biblical studies, most scholars try to date the text with help of a literary-critical analysis, connecting the chapter to a specific phase in the development in ancient Israelite religion. Two presuppositions play a major part in these kinds of reconstructions. First, it is maintained that specific terms and phrases in the text can be connected to certain theological schools and periods. Second, it is assumed that ancient Israelite religion developed from polytheism – the veneration of many gods in the days until exile of the northern tribes in the 8th century BCE –, to a growing emphasis on monolatry and monotheism – the worship of YHWH alone in late pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic times. Along these lines, Joshua 24 was first ascribed to the Elohist source of the Documentary Hypothesis,⁷⁰ then seen as a cultic text reflecting a recurring ceremony in Shechem,⁷¹ as a proto-

⁷⁰ E.g. J. Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 41963), 133–34.

⁷¹ E.g. M. Noth, *Das System der zwölf Stämme Israels* (Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom alten und neuen Testament 52; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1930); E. Nielsen, *Shechem: A Traditio-Historical Investigation* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1955).

Deuteronomic, Deuteronomic or Deuteronomistic composition,⁷² and finally as a post-Deuteronomistic or even post-Priestly text.⁷³

This variety of opinions in a way mirrors the text itself. On the one hand, it is widely acknowledged that Joshua 24 is a clear literary unity because of its structure, rhetoric and poetic parallels in its elevated prose. It is therefore very hard to eliminate loose verses or passages.⁷⁴ At the same time, due to its textual and religious multiformity, the chapter resists location within a specific theological school as reconstructed by traditional historical criticism. Accordingly, two main options are left. The first is to view only certain aspects as most important or to remove some sentences and phrases, so that its main part can be ascribed to a certain school or textual layer. The second option is to date the text very late, because it combines all kinds of motifs and textual characteristics. In particular in the last few years, this last option of dating the text to the Persian period has gained prominence. Four issues in research are in this way combined: (a) the process of connecting what are assumed to be separate traditions, (b) the formation of the Pentateuch, Hexateuch and the Enneateuch, (c) the creation of separate books, (d) and the textual transmission of Joshua 24 as attested in the Masoretic text, the

⁷² E.g. L. Peritt, *Bundestheologie im Alten Testament* (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 36; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 239–84; C. H. W. Brekelmans, “Joshua 24: Its Place and Function,” in J. A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume Leuven 1989* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 43; Leiden: Brill, 1991), 1–9; Noort, “Zu Stand und Perspektiven,” 104–6; Uwe Becker, “Endredaktionelle Kontextvernetzungen des Josua-Buches,” in Markus Witte et al. (eds.), *Die deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke: Redaktions- und religionsgeschichtliche Perspektiven zur “Deuteronomismus“-Diskussion in Tora und Vorderen Propheten* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft 365; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 144–51.

⁷³ E.g. Anbar, *Josué et l’alliance de Sichem*, 127–32; Aurelius, *Zukunft jenseits des Gerichts*, 174–75; Reinhard Müller, *Königtum und Gottesherrschaft. Untersuchungen zur alttestamentlichen Monarchiekritik* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2, 3; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 224–32; Erhard Blum, “Überlegungen zur Kompositionsgeschichte des Josuabuches,” in Noort (ed.), *Book of Joshua*, 146–48; Popović, “Conquest of the Land, Loss of the Land,” 92–8; Christophe Nihan, “The Literary Relationship between Deuteronomy and Joshua: A Reassessment,” in Raymond F. Person and Konrad Schmid (eds.), *Deuteronomy in the Pentateuch, Hexateuch, and the Deuteronomistic History* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2, 56; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 95–7. I refrain from discussing a Hellenistic date for Joshua 24, as presented in Robert Karl Gnuse, *Hellenism and the Primary History* (London: Routledge, 2020), since dating the Primary History to this period is highly unlikely, as is shown in e.g. Menko Vlaardingbroek, “Mesopotamia in Greek and Biblical Perceptions: Idiosyncrasies and Distortions.” PhD thesis, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2014.

⁷⁴ Koopmans, *Joshua 24 as Poetic Narrative*, 266–71; Noort, “Zu Stand und Perspektiven,” 95; Popović, “Conquest of the Land, Loss of the Land,” 97; Nihan, “Literary Relationship between Deuteronomy and Joshua,” 96–7. Nihan interprets Josh 24:18–19 as a resumptive repetition of verse 18b, but this destroys the climactic sequence of Josh 24:14–28 as a whole.

Samaritan Pentateuch and Old Greek translation of the Septuagint.⁷⁵

Although much can be learned from the delicate analyses in the contributions to these discussions, several observations cast doubt on the general direction of this research. A difficult question, for example, is why Jews in Jerusalem would write a text in which Shechem, the location of the cult of the Samaritans, plays such an important part. Possible answers are that Joshua 24 is a pro-Samaritan text presenting a different opinion from, for instance, the book of Nehemiah; or that it reflects an earlier phase in the parting of Jews and Samaritans. Both possibilities, however, look forced, also because some of the textual evidence hints in a different direction. In Joshua 24:1, 25, for instance, the Septuagint relocates the whole setting to Shiloh in order to prevent a use of the text in favor of the Samaritans.

Studies of the textual transmission of the book of Joshua as a whole do not offer unequivocal evidence that chapter 24 is very late. It is indeed likely that several Hebrew versions of the book were in circulation at the beginning of the common era. In some cases, the Septuagint also seems to represent an older and better reading. Yet a detailed look at significant content related differences between the Masoretic text and the Septuagint can be interpreted in several ways.⁷⁶ Accordingly, these differences do not fundamentally challenge the result of previous research that the Old Greek translation provides a quite reliable representation of a Hebrew version that

⁷⁵ E.g. Johan Wildenboer, "Joshua 24: Some Literary and Theological Remarks," *Journal for Semitics* 24 (2015) 484–502; Konrad Schmid, "Jews and Samaritans in Joshua 24," *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 6 (2017), 148–60; Cynthia Edenburg, "Joshua 24: A diaspora-oriented Overriding of the Joshua Scroll," *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 6 (2017), 161–80; Joachim J. Krause, "Hexateuchal Redaction in Joshua," *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 6 (2017), 181–202; Thomas Römer, "The Date, Composition and Function of Joshua 24 in Recent Research," *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 6 (2017), 203–16; Ville Mäkipelto, "The Four Deaths of Joshua: Why the Septuagint is Pivotal for the Study of Joshua 24," *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 6 (2017), 217–42. See also the contributions of Harald Samuel, Erasmus Gaß, Erhard Blum, Reinhard G. Kratz, Sarah Schulz, Christian Frevel, Christoph Berner, Stephen Germany and Jean-Louis Ska in Harald Samuel and Christoph Berner (eds.), *Book-Seams in the Hexateuch I: The Literary Transitions between the Books of Genesis/Exodus and Joshua/Judges* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 120; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2018).

⁷⁶ For overviews and different outcomes, see e.g. Cornelis Gijsbert den Hertog, "Studien zur griechischen Übersetzung des Buches Josua." PhD thesis, Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, 1996, passim; Koopmans, *Joshua 24 as Poetic Narrative*, 241–66; Johan Wildenboer, "Joshua 24 in the LXX: Some Literary and Theological Remarks," *Journal for Semitics* 25 (2016), 492–98; Mäkipelto, *Uncovering Ancient Editing*, 49–163.

was almost identical to the Masoretic text and that many content related differences are interpretive in nature.⁷⁷

3.1.2 Methodological Remarks

If textual critical analysis is not decisive in dating the Joshua 24, other elements in diachronic research come into view. Three methodological observations in this respect must be made. (1) First, it must be noted that hypotheses attributing major parts of the Pentateuch and Joshua to post-Deuteronomistic scribes run the risk of using circular criteria. The notions in Joshua 24 of turning away from foreign gods and burying Joseph are rightly connected to Genesis 35 and 50. Yet the chapter cannot be considered to be post-exilic because of its close relation to these passages, when they in their turn are considered late because of their relationship to Joshua 24. Although less discussed, the same applies to the close relations to Exodus 23 and Judges 2:1–5, and those to 1 Samuel 12.⁷⁸ Moreover, this use of the literary-historical method undermines itself by its late dating of so many passages that originally determined what is assumed to be “deuteronomistic” and “priestly” and defined as their historical background.

(2) A second methodological issue arises from empirical studies of documented cases of transmission of ancient Near Eastern texts. These studies highlight that the use of the criterion of vocabulary and style in distinguishing different stages of transmission is less reliable than often

⁷⁷ E.g. Den Hertog, “Studien zur griechischen Übersetzung,” 150–83; Michaël van der Meer, “Textual History of Joshua,” in Armin Lange and Emanuel Tov (eds.), *The Hebrew Bible. Volume 1B: Pentateuch, Former and Latter Prophets* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017), 251–56. Three examples may suffice to illustrate the discussion: (1) Josh 24:11 LXX brings the list of pre-Israelite nations into harmony with its related texts in the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua. Van Bekkum, *From Conquest to Coexistence*, 106. (2) In Josh 24:4, the remark on Jacob’s going down to Egypt is in LXX followed by “and became there a great and populous and mighty nation, and the Egyptians afflicted them,” thus creating a closer connection to Deut 26:5–6. This most likely does not reflect the original Hebrew text, as is maintained by Mäkipelto, *Uncovering Ancient Editing*, 71–3, 75–6, but an interpretive addition by the translators, who applied the verse to their own status as Jews in late 3rd Century BCE Alexandria, Den Hertog, “Studien zur griechischen Übersetzung,” 182. (3) Finally, some explain the longer text of Josh 24:5–6 MT, drawing the text closer to 1 Sam 12:8, as an editorial expansion, Mäkipelto, *Uncovering Ancient Editing*, 73–5. Yet it seems better to read the shorter text of Jos 24:5–6 LXX as deleting the redundancy of the Hebrew text, Rösel, *Book of Joshua*, 367.

⁷⁸ Cf. Hans Ausloos, “The ‘Proto-Deuteronomist’: Fifty Years Later,” *Old Testament Essays* 26 (2013), 551–52.

assumed.⁷⁹ As a result, the risk that editorial strands and theological schools only exist in scholarly reconstruction turns out to be real. Elsewhere, I have proposed that it might be better to view the diverse types of language as various "narrative substances," that is, as diverse views on reality tied to specific fields of interest and terminology, each focusing on certain aspects.⁸⁰ From this perspective, the fact that events or themes are described from a different angle does not necessarily demonstrate narrative or theological inconsistency. Moreover, that some phrases or words in Joshua 24 also occur in Jeremiah or Chronicles is as such not an indication that the text is late.⁸¹ It is not without reason that looking at the linguistic profile of the Primary History as a whole and adding this instrument to the toolbox for dating texts is gaining ground. Although this only offers a general perspective, the results of this research are clear: the language used in Genesis to 2 Kings is definitely not to be characterized as Late Biblical Hebrew, but as Standard Classical Hebrew. Accordingly, these biblical books are largely to be dated to the pre-exilic period.⁸²

(3) A third and final general consideration is that dating the texts late implies that the history of pre-exilic Israel becomes an area for all kinds of speculations, which each in their turn need to explain how it is possible that the kingdoms of Israel and Judah are so closely connected in the texts and even share a common religion and ancestors. Offering such an explanation is very difficult when the twelve tribes of Israel and Judah's connection to the north are regarded as a literary construct. Moreover, historically this is a very strange situation in the light of archaeological research. Due to its nature, archaeology is not able to say much about concrete historical events,

⁷⁹ Cf. David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13–149; Raymond F. Person and Robert Rezetko (eds.), *Empirical Models Challenging Biblical Criticism* (Ancient Israel and Its Literature 25; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016).

⁸⁰ Van Bekkum, "Divine Revelation of the Name," 69–70.

⁸¹ See e.g. the discussion on the phrases "sanctuary of YHWH" in Josh 24:26, also attested in Num 19:20; Ezek 48:10; 1 Chron 22:19, and "serving foreign gods" in Jer 5:19 in Popović, "Conquest of the Land, Loss of the Land," 92–4.

⁸² See e.g. Ronald Hendel and Jan Joosten, *How Old Is the Hebrew Bible: A Linguistic, Textual, and Historical Study* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Pamela Barmash, "Rival Methodologies for Dating Biblical Texts." *Hebrew Studies* 61 (2020), 359–72.

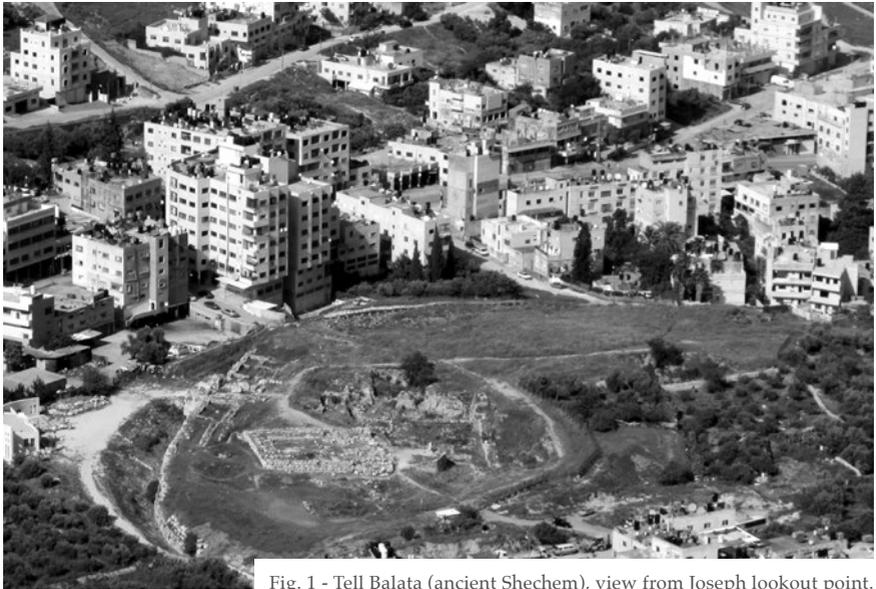


Fig. 1 - Tell Balata (ancient Shechem), view from Joseph lookout point.

but it has become more and more clear that the subsequent Late Bronze and Iron Age social structures of the southern Levant as reflected in the archaeological record remarkably coincide with the related periods in the Primary History: during the Late Bronze Age, the region is dominated by cities in the plains, a situation continuing deep into Iron I in certain areas; a large network of hundreds of small Iron I settlements reflect the tribal structures of Central Hill Country and Galilee, while a Philistine culture is attested in the Coastal Plain; the increase of social differences within tribal entities and the emergence of provincial towns lead to the development of southern Levantine patrimonial kingdoms during Iron IIa. Attestation of a number of specific historical memories in texts from Genesis to Samuel that can only be related to these early periods and the fact that the order and dates of the kings of Israel and Judah in the book of Kings are verified by

ancient inscriptions can be added to this evidence.⁸³ Some even argue that archaeologically, one can speak of a kind of all Israelite identity, despite all regional and social differences.⁸⁴

These three methodological observations demonstrate all the more how fascinating and complex the question is for the origin and composition of the biblical books that make up the Primary History. Since the maximalist-minimalist debate in the 1990s, offering a sketch of ancient Israel's history relating ("paraphrasing") the biblical text to the Late Bronze and Iron Ages is often counted as the worst a scholar with an interest in the historical background of the Bible can do.⁸⁵ However, the larger picture shows that such an attitude is not critical enough. Historical proposals should try to do justice to all the textual and material evidence on their own terms, and not reduce religious texts to the social, political and economic interests of certain groups, but try to come to a positive understanding of its religious incentives.⁸⁶ This is not to deny the legitimacy of asking questions regarding the attestation of anachronisms and elements of invented tradition. But this is the only way to explore how oral traditions, all kind of diverse written material, and possibly even books or parts of books were tied together in an ongoing pre-exilic story from creation to the present and how this resulted in a new, unique view of history.

⁸³ See e.g. Baruch Halpern, "Erasing History: The Minimalist Assault on Ancient Israel," *Bible Review* 11.6 (1995), 26–35, 47; Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt* (Oxford University Press: 2nd edition forthcoming); Amihai Mazar, "Remarks on Biblical Traditions and Archaeological Evidence concerning Early Israel," in William G. Dever and Seymour Gitin (eds.), *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors, from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palaestina* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 85–98; Van Bekkum, *From Conquest to Coexistence*, 576–82; Avraham Faust, Yossi Garfinkel and Madeleine Mumcuoglu (eds.) *State Formation Processes in the 10th Century BCE Levant* (Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology 1; Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University Jerusalem, 2021); Mark D. Janzen *et al.*, *Five Views on the Exodus: Historicity, Chronology, and Theological Implications* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021).

⁸⁴ Avraham Faust, "An All-Israelite Identity: Historical Reality or Biblical Myth?" in Justin Lev-Tov, Paula Wapnish, and Allen Gilbert (eds.), *The Wide Lens in Archaeology: Honoring Brian Hesse's Contributions to Anthropological Archaeology* (Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2017), 169–90.

⁸⁵ Thus e.g. Niels Peter Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition* (Library of Ancient Israel; Louisville: John Knox Press, 2008), 163–66.

⁸⁶ For an illustration in the form of an evaluation of the volumes published by the "European Seminar in Historical Methodology," see Koert van Bekkum, "'The Situation Is More Complicated: Archaeology and Text in the Historical Reconstruction of the Iron Age IIA Southern Levant,'" in Eveline van der Steen, Noor Mulder-Hymans and Jeannette Boertien (eds.), *Exploring the Narrative. Jerusalem and Jordan in the Bronze and Iron Ages: Papers in Honour of Margreet Steiner* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 583; London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 215–44.

3.1.3 Joshua 24 and the story “from Shechem to Shechem to Shechem”

The question, of course, is how this results in a positive sketch of the date and religious-historical background of Joshua 24. As argued above, I think it can be maintained that the chapter as we now have it reflects a pre-exilic composition.⁸⁷ Further, it is to be noted that it combines three literary motifs: that of Abram’s and Israel’s coming to Shechem and dedicating themselves to YHWH (Gen 12), of Jacob’s and Israel’s turning away from foreign gods (Gen 35), and of the burial of Joseph (Gen 50). This combination of motifs in turn is connected to the narrative substance of accepting obligations and making a covenant because of YHWH’s liberating acts with Israel in the exodus and conquest (Exod 23; Judg 2). In this network of connections, it is hardly possible to establish which text came first. Accordingly, even if one book or part of a book existed in separate form and could be dated earlier than other books, these motifs comprise one continuous storyline across the boundaries of the biblical books. They are formulated very closely to one another, while at the same time respecting their different contexts and backgrounds. The same applies to the passages in Judges, Samuel and to 1 Kings 12, which further elaborate on these themes by being connected deliberately to Joshua 24 in order to form one literary complex.⁸⁸

Beyond 1 Kings 12, however, there is no longer a pattern of connections, although echoes of Joshua 24 occur in remarks on the fall of the northern kingdom in 2 Kings 17 and 18. In this light, the remark at the end of Israel’s quarrel with Rehoboam in 1 Kgs 12:19, saying that “Israel revolted against

⁸⁷ As will be illustrated below in section 3.3, the chapter and its related texts also preserve specific memories from earlier times whose presence can hardly be explained by late dating.

⁸⁸ Two examples may suffice to illustrate the difficulties in defining the diachronic relations among the texts: (1) That Judg 2:1–5 is slightly different in scope than its most directly related text, Exod 23:20–33, might indicate that it was written by a different author. Yet the passage can also reflect a next step in the storyline. Cf. Ausloos, “The ‘Angel of YHWH’,” 10–2. (2) The loose way in which Judg 6:7–10 is connected to its direct context and the fact that the passage is also missing from the Qumran manuscript 4QJudg^a could be direct evidence of the fact that tying the scrolls of the Primary History together was a process that went through several stages. But it can also not be excluded that a scribe simply missed the verses in copying the verses between two *petuhot*. For a discussion, see See Robert Rezetko, “The Qumran Scrolls of the Book of Judges: Literary Formation, Textual Criticism, and Historical Linguistics,” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 13.2 (2013), 10–33; Jack M. Sasson, *Judges 1–12* (Anchor Bible; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), a.1.; Spronk, *Judges*, 204–6.

the house of David, as is still the case" (*ad hayyôm hazzeh*), is of exceptional importance. This verse reflects both the judgment on David's house and the hope that the situation will become different in the future, thus implying that the northern kingdom still existed when the chapter was written. As a result, the observed literary connections predate the fall of Samaria in 721 BCE.⁸⁹ If the linguistic profile and the attestation of literary and geographical pro-Judean motifs in the early books of the Primary History are taken into account, the tenth century – when the Davidic dynasty established its throne in Jerusalem – most likely serves as a *terminus post quem* for the story lines under discussion. In other words: it might well be that Iron IIA scribes in Juda or Jerusalem took existing written and oral traditions, also those clearly giving positive pre-eminence to Joseph and Shechem, and built a larger narrative complex of a story "from Shechem to Shechem to Shechem," that is, from the patriarchs to Joshua to Rehoboam. One of the main purposes of this story is to highlight that Israel and its leader need to be undivided loyal to YHWH, regardless of its historical and cultic circumstances.⁹⁰ If this is a plausible hypothesis, repetition of Joshua's burial in Judg 2:6–9 might be the result of the addition of Judges 1 and 17–21 to the book of Judges and of the later chapters of the book of Kings after the Assyrian conquest Samaria.⁹¹

⁸⁹ See e.g. Marvin A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings* (The Old Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 171.

⁹⁰ The expression "from Shechem to Shechem" to characterize Gen 12 – Josh 24 is used by Ingrid Hjelm, "Northern Perspectives in Deuteronomy and Its Relation to the Samaritan Pentateuch," *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 4 (2015), 188. For arguments in favor of dating preliminary versions of Genesis, Samuel and Joshua to the period of the early Israelite and Judean kings, see e.g. Gary A. Rendsburg, *How the Bible Is Written* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2019), 443–67; Van Bekkum, *From Conquest to Coexistence*, 404–23. For an exposition of northern elements in the Pentateuch and Joshua, see John S. Bergsma, "A 'Samaritan' Pentateuch? The Implications of the Pro-Northern tendency of the Common Pentateuch," in Armgardt, Kilchör and Zehnder (eds.), *Paradigm Change in Pentateuchal Research*, 287–300.

⁹¹ Cf. Koert van Bekkum, "Coexistence as Guilt: Iron I Memories in Judges 1," in Gershon Galil, Ayelet Gilboa, Aren M. Maeir, and Dan'el Kahn (eds.), *The Ancient Near East in the 12th–10th Centuries BCE: Culture and History* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 392; Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2012), 525–48.

Most strikingly, however, is the primary claim in this tradition, that is, that only YHWH is God in Israel. According to Joshua 24, this claim stems from an old tradition, which not only affects the religious dimensions of the extended family, of the people as a whole and its leadership, but also has been contested from the outset. The text makes this claim with help of diplomatic terminology as attested in treaty texts from the third millennium BCE on. At the same time, it is very critical of those in power and presupposes a fluctuating religious background. Accordingly, it is almost impossible to locate the origin of the claim in any particular moment in Israel's history.⁹² Yet the claim is justified, because YHWH has been loyal to Israel's ancestors, and time and again proved to be a deliverer per excellence. All the more reason to see what the actual interaction of this tradition in Joshua 24 with the religious plurality of the Southern Levant looks like at the *lieu de mémoire* of Shechem.

3.2 Material Remains at Tell Balata, Mount Ebal, and of Family Religion

For this next step it is necessary to discuss aspects of the religion practiced at ancient Shechem, with a simple question as a heuristic instrument: how might Joshua 24 have been perceived in the religious context of Iron IIA Israel and Judah?

3.2.1 Migdāl Temple at Tell Balata (ancient Shechem)

In order to do so, we first take a look archaeological remains from an older period at Tell Balata, the archaeological site identified with ancient Shechem (Fig. 1). It is located in a mountain pass between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, 2.5 Km east of the historical center of the city of Nablus in the Palestinian territories of the West Bank. The place has already been inhabited for more than five thousand years and impressive remains

⁹² In recent research, the claim of undivided loyalty to YHWH is often interpreted as mirroring the Neo-Assyrian loyalty oaths. For a critical reassessment, see Van Bekkum, "Biblical Covenants and Treaties in Ancient Near Eastern Context."



Fig. 2 - Tell Balata Archaeological Park.



Fig. 3 - First excavation of the fortress temple at Tell Balata (ancient Shechem) in 1926.



Fig. 4 - Bronze figurine covered with gold of the Canaanite god El from the fortress temple in Megiddo.

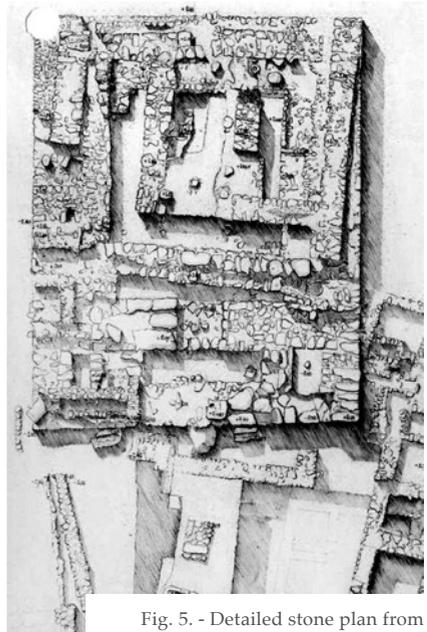


Fig. 5. - Detailed stone plan from 1930 of the fortress temple and later walls at Tell Balata.



Fig. 6 - Reconstruction of the altar on Mount Ebal.

were found, in particular from the Middle Bronze and Late Bronze Ages. Discovery of a hoard of bronze objects by Balata villagers in 1908 instigated a long period of extensive archaeological research.

First excavations at what the German theologian Albrecht Alt called the "Uncrowned Queen of Palestine" took place in 1913–1914 by an Austrian-German project and in 1926–1928 and 1931–1934 by a German expedition, which was also supported by the University of Leiden. Between 1956 and 1972 ten seasons of excavation took place by a Joint American Expedition. Finally, the Palestinian Antiquities Authorities and the University of Leiden cooperated in the Tell Balata Archaeological Park project from 2010–2014 in order to safeguard the Palestinian cultural heritage at ancient Shechem and to enhance the economic situation in Nablus through tourism development (Fig. 2).⁹³

One of the most impressive finds at the site is the Middle and Late Bronze *miḡdāl* temple, that is, a "fortress"-temple or temple "tower," which was excavated for the first time in 1926 (Fig. 3). Since then, all expeditions worked on the clarification and reconstruction of the remains of this huge temple and its court, with a platform or altar table and a large incomplete standing stone flanked by two *maṣṣēbôt* sockets from the Late Bronze Age, found in the 1960s (Fig. 2).⁹⁴ According to the excavators, two consecutive temples were in function since the late 17th century BCE, the first a tower dominating the city with a five meters thick wall and a single unified cult chamber, and then a less substantial building. City and temple were destroyed at ca. 1100 BCE and abandoned for a short time. Numerous pits for the storage of grain show that the area no longer had a cultic function in late Iron I.⁹⁵

⁹³ Hamdan Taha and Gerrit van der Kooij (eds.), *Tell Balata: Changing the Landscape* (Publications of the Tell Balata Archaeological Park Project; Ramallah: Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage, 2014), 14–36.

⁹⁴ For an overview, see Taha and Van der Kooij (eds.), *Tell Balata: Changing the Landscape*, 56–66.

⁹⁵ Edward F. Campbell, *Shechem III: The Stratigraphy and Architecture of Shechem/Tell Balāṭah* (American Schools of Oriental Research Archaeological Reports 6; Boston: ASOR, 2002), 176–85.

Because of the large standing stone, which might have been plastered and inscribed with an inscription, the possible remains of altars of earth and stones, and striking corroborations with the destruction of Shechem in the story of Abimelech in Judges 9, speculations on the relation to biblical texts have dominated the discussion from the beginning.⁹⁶ Interpreted on its own terms, the urban Middle and Late Bronze *migdāl* temple – which is also attested in Ugarit, Hazor, Megiddo, Pella, Tel Haror and Tell el-Dab’a – represents an architectural tradition of a Syrian provenance being dissimilar to the earlier open-air cultic sites. Unlike elsewhere in the Ancient Near East, Middle and Late Bronze temples in Canaan were not directly considered to be the house of a god. They are merely channels bringing the divine into the human realm, to sanctify the city and its surroundings. In the case of the contemporary fortress temple of nearby Megiddo, the local deity protecting the city was El, as is evident from a bronze statue covered with gold found in the debris of the temple (Fig. 4).

Finally, it is to be noted that the monumental architecture of *migdāl* temples and courtyards seem to have been built to emphasize the difference between the local elite and the ordinary population. Here Shechem serves as an excellent example: only a restricted group had access to the interior space of its temple, which was most likely rarely used, while the increasingly elevated spaces of the courtyard and stairs underlined the exclusive nature of the connection between the elite and the cult. Although the later temple in Shechem was much smaller in size, it also reflects this symbolism (Fig. 5).⁹⁷

⁹⁶ For an overview, see William E. Mierse, *Temples and Sanctuaries from the Early Iron Levant: Recovery After Collapse* (History, Archaeology, and Culture of the Levant 6; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 168–70.

⁹⁷ Matthew Susnow, *The Practice of the Canaanite Cult: the Middle and Late Bronze Ages* (Ägypten und Altes Testament 106; Münster: Zaphon, 2021), 58–9, 65–6, 78–9, 91–3, 216–17, cf. Mierse, *Temples and Sanctuaries*, 166–74. According to Lawrence Stager, the larger structure of the MB temple underwent change, but remained intact until the end of the 12th century BCE. Lawrence E. Stager, “The Fortress-Temple at Shechem and the ‘House of El, Lord of the Covenant,’” in Prescott H. Williams Jr. and Theodore Hiebert (eds.), *Realia Dei: Essays in Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation in Honor of Edward F. Campbell, Jr. at His Retirement* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 228–39.

3.2.2 Cultic Installation at Mount Ebal

Another find just outside Shechem stands in great contrast to the elevated temple complex in the city. This is the large stone heap on Mount Ebal that was discovered in 1980 and excavated between 1982 and 1989 by an expedition directed by Adam Zertal. Because of its form, the naturally shaped amphitheater of the mountain of Ebal and Gerizim on the spot and the fact that it is a single period site dating to Iron I, the excavators claimed that the enclosure with an isolated building in the center could somehow be related to Joshua's altar of the ceremony described in Deuteronomy 27:2–8 and Joshua 8:30–35. Although this first met great skepticism, a majority of scholars later tended to agree with the conclusion that the installation at Mount Ebal is indeed a cultic site (Fig. 6). This was finally confirmed by a detailed evaluation of all the finds in light of a cognitive-archaeological system of correlates for cultic behavior.⁹⁸

In light of the history of temples and sanctuaries in the Southern Levant, Mount Ebal is a unique site. Yet it might be compared to some *gilgālim* in the Jordan Valley and high places in the Central Hill Country, which experienced extensive occupation in the period under discussion. Accordingly, some think that the site was in use by a clan for a considerable period.⁹⁹

3.2.3 Family Religion in Pre-Exilic Israel

A final, third element to be mentioned before discussing Joshua 24 in relation to ancient Israelite religions is the phenomenon of household or family religion. This follows from the fact that religious practices in ancient Israel took place at three levels: that of the official religion of a people or kingdom, the religious practices of a clan, and the level of the household or extended family. The everyday life of the household has its own spheres

⁹⁸ For an overview and discussion, see Ralph K. Hawkins, *The Iron Age I Structure on Mt Ebal: Excavation and Interpretation* (Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement 6; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 15–72.

⁹⁹ Hawkins, *Iron Age I Structure at Mt Ebal*, 146–50, 219–20; Mierse, *Temples and Sanctuaries*, 338–39.

and characteristics, and accordingly develop their own religious symbols. Of course, there is interaction with the systems at other levels. Personal names from pre-exilic inscriptions and from the Old Testament make it clear that the worship of YHWH in Jerusalem, Dan and Bethel also occurred at a family level. The goddesses Asherah and later Ishtar obtained an important place in household religion through adoration at local shrines. Iconographic images of these and other (often protective) deities and demons from West Semitic, Assyrian and Egyptian origin also occur frequently on stamp seals, although anthropomorphic representations of major deities seem to be avoided. Typical for the level of the household and clan are rituals associated with the cycle of human life, such as birth, marriage, agricultural feasts and care for the dead. Occasional rites related to petitions and vows also played their part. With regard to each of these topics scholars conduct detailed discussions based on a combination of biblical texts and iconographic and material remains.¹⁰⁰

At the same time, it is clear that family religion in ancient Israel had no standardized profile of a cult with a holy place and that a consistent inventory of religious objects and pottery is lacking. Home shrines are very rare and only occur in Iron IIa elite homes. Cult stands, altars and smoking cups underline that religious activities were often connected with the preparation of food, while figurines highlight that fertility and economic prosperity also played a major part.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ See e.g. Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonian, Syrian and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life* (Studies in the Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 7; Leiden/ New York/ Köln, 1996), 181–372; Richard S. Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); Albertz and Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel*; William G. Dever, "Archaeology and Folk or Family Religion in Ancient Israel," in Avraham Faust, *Archaeology and Ancient Israelite Religion* (Basel: MDPI, 2019), 51–61; Rüdiger Schmitt, *Die Religionen Israels/Palestinas in der Eisenzeit 12.–6. Jahrhundert* (Ägypten und Altes Testament 94; Münster: Zaphon, 2020).

¹⁰¹ Schmitt, *Religionen Israels/Palestinas in der Eisenzeit*, 72–81.

3.3 Joshua 24 in Religious-Historical Perspective

It is now time to ask again the question: How might Joshua 24 and its related texts have been perceived in the religious context of Iron IIa Israel and Judah? In historical research the discussion has often been about the described events themselves. G. Ernest Wright, one of the first American excavators at Tell Balata, was sure that the courtyard of the *migdāl* temple provided the setting for Joshua's encounter with Israel and that he wrote the obligations of the covenant on its huge stela.¹⁰² Zertal was convinced that he had found the altar built by Joshua on Mount Ebal. Finally, Lawrence Stager, another archaeologist, more recently stated that "in fact it was in the courtyard of the of the El-berith Temple that Abimelech was made king by the 'lords of Shechem'" (cf. Judg 9:6).¹⁰³ On the one hand, the combination of a tree, a pillar, a stela and a sanctuary, the veneration of El and YHWH and the destruction of the tower and the city in the time of the judges indeed speaks volumes: this environment is loaded with concrete memories regarding Israel's ancestors and later ceremonies. On the other hand, however, by its very nature archaeology is simply not able to verify historical accounts. Therefore, disagreement on how detailed these memories are, cannot be solved by scholarly historical research. Moreover, Joshua 24 is in fact strikingly silent about the precise location of the covenant renewal ceremony.¹⁰⁴ Apparently, this is not the main emphasis of the text, just as the names of foreign gods in the Primary History are not to be read as precise religious-historical reports regarding the highly complicated religious plurality of the Bronze and Iron Age Levant.

In this light, it is far more interesting to take a look at the hermeneutic of Joshua 24, that is, the relation between its exceptionally serious call for undivided loyalty to YHWH on the one hand and its restraint in dealing with a recognizable diversity in religious forms on the other. Joshua 24 is

¹⁰² G. Ernest Wright, *Shechem: The Biography of a Biblical City* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 134–36.

¹⁰³ Stager, "Fortress Temple at Shechem," 233, 241, cf. Theodore J. Lewis, *The Origin and Character of God: Ancient Israelite Religion through the Lens of Divinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 173–4.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Hawkins, *Iron I Age Structure on Mount Ebal*, 194–97.

positive about the inclusive veneration of El by the patriarchs.¹⁰⁵ It also mentions an altar, trees, and a standing stone, which are well known from other Northwest Semitic religious traditions as incarnations of divinity.¹⁰⁶ These elements are most often interpreted as remnants of a polytheistic past. Others argue that because its embeddedness in its context, the idea that the aniconic nature of Israelite religion has something to do with divine transcendence, reflects a theological bias.¹⁰⁷ But whereas the first argument deprives Joshua 24 and its related passages from their message, the second does not seem to take sufficiently into account the complexity of historical reality.

Joshua 24 is positive about the altar and tree at Shechem, precisely because these representations of YHWH are powerful embodiments of Abram's and Jacob's dedication and undivided loyalty to him. Even Judges 9 still contains this positive connotation in the term El Berith (Judg 9:46), which in the context of the Primary History can be interpreted as a reference to the promises to the patriarchs. Yet this positive memory is outstripped by a negative element, that of an elite choosing a new leader who does not shy away from murder. In this way, God (El), the Lord (Ba'al) of the covenant (Judg 9:4), is used to legitimize oppression. According to the story, such a choice can only lead to judgment and destruction. Readers observing the parallels with the story of Saul and being familiar with the later kings of Israel and Judah will definitely have understood this message.

Accordingly, the Primary History portrays El/YHWH as someone who is worshiped in the context of both the family and the people, but at the same time exceeds the categories of family and national deities from the outset. The conviction as reflected in the texts that undividedly loyalty to him is decisive, adds an important dimension to the available religious-historical

¹⁰⁵ Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 149–52, cf. Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 32–43.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 49–53, 208; Lewis, *The Origin and Character of God*, 169–96.

¹⁰⁷ Thus Schmitt, *Religionen Israels/Palestinas in der Eisenzeit*, 52, criticizing Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessynbole* (Jerusalem: SLM Press, 2015), 406–10.

information from the Late Bronze and Iron Age Southern Levant. Opposition between the *migdāl* temple in Shechem and the cultic installation at Mount Ebal in a way illustrates the general social development from impressive architecture and many temples to the veneration of deities in the household and at smaller shrines. This even might have to do with a general Israelite ethos of simplicity and egalitarianism.¹⁰⁸ This, however, does not rule out the fact that according to the traditions reflected in the Primary History, all ways of worshipping God are in danger of abuse and degeneration.

What according to the biblical texts is at some moment accepted, actively used and transformed to describe YHWH's majesty, power and holiness, his involvement in history and being committed to Israel, can later be rejected and even forbidden. This not only regards the family religion of the ancestors, standing stones, trees, but also local altars and cult places.¹⁰⁹ When texts outside the Primary History are also taken into account, more examples can be added: naming YHWH *ba' al*, "master," was once justified, but later regarded a form of syncretism,¹¹⁰ as was the use of bull symbolism.¹¹¹ The use of storm-god imagery, however, remained prominent.¹¹² Iconographic analysis also adds the use of the winged sun-disk as a representation for YHWH in for example the days of Hezekiah.¹¹³ Time and again the biblical texts freely use their religious context and often redefine and transform the meaning of symbols. Accordingly, even the expressions "foreign" and "other gods" in Joshua 24 are not to be understood as drawing a line between Israel as a political entity and other

¹⁰⁸ Avraham Faust, "Israelite Temples: Where Was Israelite Cult Not Practiced, and Why," in Idem (ed.), *Archaeology and Ancient Israelite Religion*, 25–50, cf. Mierse, *Temples and Sanctuaries*, 304–10.

¹⁰⁹ See e.g. Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 221–23.

¹¹⁰ Cf. e.g. Smith, *Early History of God*, 73–6; Caitlin Hubler, "'No Longer Will You Call Me 'My Ba'al':" Hosea's Polemic and the Semantics of 'Ba'al' in 8th Century B.C.E. Israel," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 44 (2020), 610–23.

¹¹¹ Lewis, *The Origin and Character of God*, 196–209.

¹¹² Cf. Koert van Bekkum, "'Is Your Rage against the Rivers, Your Wrath against the Sea?' Storm-God Imagery in Habakkuk 3." In Idem, Jaap Dekker, Henk van de Kamp, and Eric Peels (eds.), *Playing with Leviathan: Interpretation and Reception of Monsters from the Biblical World* (Themes in Biblical Narrative 21; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017), 55–76.

¹¹³ Keel and Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole*, 314–21; Albertz and Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel*, 385–86.

nations. By highlighting the unique nature of YHWH and playing with the term 'house' the terms become merely very critical of all forms of religious activity on the levels of both the household and society as a whole. For the chapter has a clear message: no matter your historical, political and religious context, it is decisive that your life reflects dedication and undivided loyalty to YHWH, for he has been loyal from the outset despite all that has happened, and proved himself to be a deliverer par excellence.

4. Joshua 24 and Christian Theology in a Context of Religious Plurality

Finally, it is time to turn to the contribution of this exploration of Joshua 24 to Christian theology in a context of religious plurality. To reflect on this relation is indeed possible. In Christianity, the book of Joshua is part of Holy Scripture, the group of the authoritative texts in the Church. When Joshua 24 is interpreted in a Christian perspective, all kinds of biblical theological connections can be made. I cannot read the appeal to serve God and no other gods, because of who he is and what he has done, and reflect on ceremonies in which this is confirmed time and again, without thinking of Jesus Christ, his cross and resurrection, and of baptism and the holy supper. The impulse of Joshua 24 and its related texts to add other occasions, in which God proved himself to be a deliverer surely brings to mind all kind of experiences, differing from context to context. Accordingly, it is no surprise that Christians from all over the world remind themselves daily of Joshua 24:15, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." For more than ten years I worked as a journalist at the *Nederlands Dagblad*, a newspaper called "unabashedly Christian" by its present editor-in-chief, which has this biblical text in its crest since 1969. Today, in a highly individualized context, a theology student can present herself on social media with the New Testament equivalent of this verse, that is, Peter's statement in Acts 4 that there is "no other name under heaven" (Acts 4:12).

If both texts are related to our present context, two things immediately become clear. The first is that in the last decades we in the West have come significantly closer to the original religious plural backgrounds of both

passages.¹¹⁴ The second is that because Christianity now has become a minority religion, we become aware of the fact that also in the historical context of both passages, their major appeal was anything but generally shared. Precisely this observation provides Christian theology with challenges and opportunities. Let me, at the end of this lecture, mention a few of them.

(1) The first challenge is that in our society, many experience the appeal of Joshua 24 as a source of conflict. Much has been written about the command to annihilate the Canaanites and how these texts have been terribly misused in the course of history. Detailed analyses of Deuteronomy 7 and the book of Joshua have made it clear that the command and the description of its partly execution is to be considered as a unique, one time phenomenon that is very hard to understand and not to be repeated by anyone. At the same time, these texts about divine punishment touch on a very prominent theme in human life, that is, the question for the nature of evil and whether or not things will be put to rights.¹¹⁵ It is very interesting to see what Joshua 24 adds to this perspective. How does the chapter relate to other people and religions?

It has been argued that in Joshua and Judges, foreign gods and people are not merely rejected because they are inherently bad, but because Israel is unable to withstand their lure. This threatens Israel's fidelity to YHWH, which is a matter of life and death not only for them, but also for other peoples.¹¹⁶ As a consequence, one could say to others: "Your religion or

¹¹⁴ For Acts 4:12 and its religious background, see Craig S. Keener, *Acts: an Exegetical Commentary. Volume 2: 3:1–14:28* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 1051–52; Nicole Belayche and Simon C. Mimouni (eds.) *Entre lignes de partage et territoires de passage. Les identités religieuses dans les mondes grec et romain. "Paganismes", "judaïsmes", "christianismes"* (Revue des Études juives 47; Leuven: Peeters, 2009).

¹¹⁵ See e.g. Markus Zehnder, "The Annihilation of the Canaanites: Reassessing the Brutality of the Biblical Witnesses," in Markus Zehnder and Hallvard Hagelia (eds.), *Encountering Violence in the Bible* (The Bible in the Modern World 55; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 263–90; Arie Versluis, *The Command to Exterminate the Canaanites: Deuteronomy 7* (Oudtestamentische Studiën 71; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017); Jacques van Ruiten, "The Canaanites in Deuteronomy 7 and the Book of Jubilees," in Jacques van Ruiten and Koert van Bekkum (eds.), *Violence in the Hebrew Bible: Between Text and Reception* (Oudtestamentische Studiën 79; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019), 141–58.

¹¹⁶ Frolov, "Joshua's Double Demise," 321–22.

worldview is not necessarily wrong, but it is only mine that saves the world and therefore, our dedication to God deserves protection." This explanation, however, is not very satisfactory. Such a saying runs the risk of not taking the claims of other religions and worldviews very seriously. Moreover, the biblical texts indeed focus on Israel's undivided loyalty. Yet it is hard to deny that negative judgment, also regarding religions themselves, is involved in the destruction of idols that is commanded (Exod 34:13; Deut 7:5; 12:2–3) and that of the temple of El Berith (Judg 9:49). Samuel even says that in comparison to YHWH and his mighty acts of deliverance, other gods are "void things, which cannot save" (1 Sam 12:21).

In dealing with the question to what extent Joshua 24 might stimulate conflict, other elements are of more importance. In presenting YHWH as the deliverer par excellence, the chapter highlights that he is striving for what is generally perceived as good and just. By contrast, the remark "It was not by your sword or by your bow" (Josh 24:12) underlines that all is accomplished by God. A Christian reading of this verse certainly implies that the testimony of Jesus Christ should in no way involve coercion or violence. One might even say that according to the Primary History itself YHWH's covenant with Israel is open to outsiders. This is evident from how the book of Joshua makes use of the mixed multitude that Israel in fact is. The contrast between Rahab and Achan (Josh 2 and 7) and the solution that is found in including the Gibeonites into the people of God (Josh 9:27) shows that not ethnicity, but dedication to YHWH is the main decisive factor. These non-Israelites seem to have a better understanding of what God is doing in the fulfilment of the promise of the land (Josh 2:9–11; 9:9–10, 24). In addition, Caleb, an important character in the second part of the book, is presented as a "the Kenizzite" (Josh 14:6, 14), that is, a descendant of Esau. Moreover, the *gēr*, "stranger," is present at the covenant renewal at Mount Ebal (Josh 8:33), while regulations regarding the cities of refuge also apply to him (Josh 20:9). This pattern can also be observed in Judges, Samuel and Kings. Non-Israelites are presented as worshippers of YHWH by showing shared faith and values. Taking into account this more inclusive dimension, the remark

of Joshua 24:31 that “The people served YHWH during the lifetime of Joshua and the lifetime of the elders who lived on after Joshua, and who had experienced all the what YHWH had done for Israel” can be read as another aspect of God’s fulfilment of his promise to Abram.¹¹⁷

(2) This leads to a second challenge, that is, how to deal with exclusive claims in interreligious dialogue and the study of religion. Given the fact that globalization and migration result in a dramatic increase of religious pluralization, this has become a pressing question for governments and religious bodies.¹¹⁸ In the so-called “revisionist” view of religion, this problem is solved by almost identifying God with religious plurality, trying to ban all exclusivist language from religious discourse. According to this radical pluralist view, religions should revise their views of love and salvation. The problem with this is that it leads to profound changes in religious traditions and to abandoning passages like Joshua 24. That is not convincing, for the text simply functions as an authoritative text in Judaism and Christianity. Moreover, the hard questions raised by the chapter have to do with the reality that “on almost every religious issue there are honest, knowledgeable people who hold significantly diverse, often incompatible beliefs.”¹¹⁹ Most often these disagreements are indeed also related to a key question raised in Joshua 24 that has to do with the very core of human existence, that is, what true deliverance looks like.

Others therefore have been developing different approaches. When it is about honoring God and looking for truth and justice, exclusivism is not necessarily wrong; it can *become* wrong. Justified religious difference is

¹¹⁷ Cf. David G. Firth, “Models of Inclusion and Exclusion in Joshua,” in Hallvard Hagelia and Markus Zehnder (eds), *Interreligious Relations: Biblical Perspectives* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 70–88; Idem, “Joshua 24 and the Welcome of Foreigners,” *Acta Theologica* 38 (2018), 69–85, which mentions Othniel, a kinsman of Caleb (Judg 3:11-17), Jael, a Kenite (Judg 5), Hushai the Archite (2 Sam 15:32), Araunah the Jebusite (2 Sam 24:15–25), Uria the Hittite (2 Sam 12), Ittai the Gittite (2 Sam 15:21), foreigners coming to the temple (1 Kgs 8:41–43), the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:8–24) and Naaman the Syrian (2 Kgs 5).

¹¹⁸ David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt and David Thomas, “Introduction,” in Idem (eds.), *Understanding Interreligious Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1–11.

¹¹⁹ Basinger, David, “Religious Diversity (Pluralism),” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/religious-pluralism/>>. [assessed 3 August 2021].

a reality. Accordingly, interreligious dialogue is uneasy, but can also be robust and fruitful if conducted in a humble way.¹²⁰ A similar, more practical direction can also be found in the framework for Christian mission in the document "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct," formulated by the World Council of Churches, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and the World Evangelical Alliance from 2011.¹²¹

Among human beings, a conversation about the nature of religions and what they are able to accomplish is unavoidable. The analysis of Joshua 24 adds an interesting perspective to this discussion. On the hand, it shows that the empirical study of religion helps in understanding the text and its background. It is important to try to understand southern Levantine religions on their own terms. Too often, academic and popular studies have portrayed Canaanite religion as obsessed with prosperity and sex, thus shying away from the actual dilemmas that the text is describing. When life is complicated and tried options present themselves to deal with it, it is quite something to let go of everything and trust in God alone. Only a combination of a religious studies and theological approach is able to address this issue.

Such an approach makes it clear that the appeal of Joshua 24 combines a firm religious, epistemological, and moral point of view with a fascinating interaction with its religious context, which is both cross- and countercultural. In Christian perspective, it might even be said that God's commitment to Israel and its ancestors and his use of Northwest Semitic religious traditions in the ways he is honored is almost incarnational in nature. This is an invitation to look in a curious and appreciative way at

¹²⁰ See e.g. Dirk-Martin Grube, "Respecting Religious Otherness as Otherness versus Exclusivism and Pluralism: Towards a Robust Interreligious Dialogue," in Oliver Wiertz and Peter Jonkers (eds.), *Religious Truth and Identity in an Age of Plurality* (London/New York: Routledge, 2019), 182–99; Idem, "A Humble Exclusivism: A Contradiction in Terms or a Life Option?" in Bernard Reitsma (ed.), *Exclusion versus Inclusion: Searching for Biblical Inspiration* (forthcoming).

¹²¹ Cf. Christoph Anders and Michael Biehl, "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Trajectories in the International Ecumenical Discussion," *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 36 (2019), 3–11.

the otherness of others. What is God, who is sovereign, doing in the lives of our fellow human beings? At the same time, it diminishes in no way the exclusive claim of dedication and undivided loyalty and accordingly, presents the ultimate criterion for the open conversation that follows.

For me as a Christian theologian in a religious pluralist context this implies two things. First, I think we are called to dismantle the tribalism of all too narrow identities based on kinship, land, and boundaries – which in Joshua 22 almost led to a civil war. It is to be open to what God is doing in Christ inside and outside the Church so that we can address today's needs. Second, the lively, fast changing interaction with the present context of religions and worldviews also implies a call for theologians not to shy away from being explicit about why we study these texts and want to contribute to Church and society. Following Joshua and Peter, it is also possible to be certain and frank, for the unique claim that YHWH is God is not based on personal convictions and ideas, but on the fact that he has been faithful to Israel and proved himself the deliverer par excellence in the death and resurrection Jesus Christ.

Afterword & Acknowledgements

At the end of this lecture I also add a word of thanks. First I would like to address the Board of Trustees of the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven. You entrusted me with the task to teach, to do research and to lead the Department of Old Testament. I am deeply grateful for this trust and will do my best not to betray it. I thank the Dean, Andreas Beck and the Rector, Jos de Kock for all their encouragement and support and I would like to declare publicly how much I enjoy working with staff and colleagues. I highly appreciate the international environment, amazing erudition, warm spirituality and practical attitude that characterizes this academic institution. In particular I mention Martin Webber and Vice-Dean Maria Verhoeff, who read a first draft of this lecture (together with Mario Tafferfer, Instructor of Old Testament Language and Literature at Tyndale Theological Seminary, Badhoevedorp). I look forward to cooperation within the Department of Old Testament and the further development of the historical-canonical approach of the books of the amazing first part of Holy Scripture.

It was the collegiality and friendship of the board and staff of my other employer, the Theologische Universiteit Kampen that made my transfer to Leuven possible. Happily, I will still work among you, be it on a less daily basis than in the past, and hope to contribute to good relations between Leuven and Kampen. I am also grateful for the congregation of the Reformed Church in Amersfoort-West, which makes it tangible that my teaching and doing research is work in the Kingdom of God, even at moments when I have difficulties perceiving it that way.

Dear students, you know me already for a several years, but I would like to express my appreciation for you. Hopefully, here at ETF Leuven you will learn and experience that to study the Bible thoroughly pays off, and that when we research Scripture with all possible means and wrestle with the text, we actually say “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

Today, I am also deeply grateful for all those who contributed to my formation, from my earliest academic education in Kampen, Groningen, and Leiden to later cooperation and friendships in research groups, projects, and academic societies. The first among them, of course, are you, my dear parents and sister and brothers. Thank you so much. I am proud of you and am really happy that we can experience this day. I also thank my family in law for their love and support and specially mention my father in law. That I now wear your Kampen toga is a true honor.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife and our children, Lodewijk and Jente. The three of you are a continuing source of deep joy and happiness. Alied, your loving kindness and attention can make people fly. I thank you so much for that. At the same time, depression has made your life so hard over the last few years. Yet it did not prevent us from loving each other. Jesus led and guided us, and it is a great comfort that he will continue to do so. Thanks be to Him.

Ik heb gezegd.

Appendix

Patterns of literary connections between Joshua 24 and other passages in the Primary History

Patriarchs (Genesis)

Gen 11:27, 31 "Terah, father of Abram and father of Nahor" – Josh 24:2

Gen 12 Abram at Shechem

Gen 12:6 traveling "to Shechem" – Josh 24:1, 25, 32

— Gen 12:6 [Gen 35:4] "to the terebinth tree of Moreh" at Shechem
(*'ad 'ēlôn mōrē*) – Josh 24:26 "the oak at the sanctuary of YHWH"

(*hā'allā 'āšer bēmiqdaš yhw*)

— Gen 12:6 "the Canaanites were then in the land" – Josh 24:11

— Gen 12:7 "YHWH promises to give the land" – Josh 24:8, 13, 18

— Gen 12:8 Abram dedicated himself to YHWH by "building an altar" –
Josh 24:14–24, 26

Gen 15 God's covenant with Abram

— Gen 15:18 (cf. Exod 23:32; 24:8; 34:10, 27; Deut 4:23; 5:2, 3; 9:9; 28:69;
29:11, 13, 24; 31:16; Judg 2:2; 1 Kgs 8:21; 2 Kgs 17:15, 35, 38; 2 Kgs 23:3)
"making a covenant" (*krt bērit*) – Josh 24:25

— Gen 15:18 (cf. Exod 23:31; 1 Kgs 5:1, 4 [cf. 2 Sam 10:16]) "the River" –
Josh 24:2, 3, 14, 15

— Gen 15:19–21 [cf. Gen 10:15–19], Exod 3:8; 3:17; 23:23; 33:2; 34:11; Deut
7:1; 20:17; Josh 3:10; 9:1; 11:3; 12:8; Judg 3:5 list of pre-Israelite nations
in Canaan – Josh 24:11

— Gen 24:7 God taking (*lqh*) Abraham and promising the land to him
and his offspring – Josh 24:3

Gen 31 Jacob crosses the Euphrates and goes to Canaan

— Gen 31:21 Jacob crossing the River (*'br hannāhār*) – Josh 24:2

— Gen 31:45 “Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar”

(*lqḥ / śym 'eben*) – Josh 24:26

— Gen 31:48 “Laban said, ‘This heap is a witness between you and me

(*'ēd bēn ūbēn*) this day” – Josh 24:27

Gen 33:18–20 Jacob arrives at “Shechem,” “purchases a piece of land for a hundred pieces of silver,” builds an altar, “and he called it ‘El is the God of Israel” (*'ēl ʾēlohē yiśrāʾēl*) – Josh 24:2, 23, 26, 33

Gen 35:2–4 The house of Jacob buries its foreign gods under the oak at Shechem

— Gen 35:2: “his house” – Josh 24:15 “my house”

— Gen 35:2 “to put away all the foreign gods” (*śūr, hi. kol-ʾēlohē hannēkār*) – Josh 24:20, 23 cf. Josh 24:14, 15

— Gen 35:4 “Shechem” – Josh 24:1, 25, 32

— Gen 35:4 “the oak at Shechem” – Josh 24:26

Gen 48:28 “with[out] [my] sword and bow” – Josh 24:12 (cf. 1 Sam 18:4; 2 Sam 1:22; 2 Kgs 6:22)

Gen 50:25 (cf. Gen 33:18–20; Ex 13:19) Joseph asks an oath from his brother to take his bones with them – Josh 24:32

Gen 50:26 – Joseph dies as the age of 110 – Josh 24:29 (Joshua)

Exodus from Egypt (Exodus)

Exod 4:30 – Josh 24:7

Exod 12:23, 27; 32:35 “strike the Egypt(ians)” (*ngp*) – Josh 24:5

Exod 13:18; 14:9, 10, 13, 20, 22–23, 28, 31; 15:4, 19 – Josh 24:5–7

Covenant at Sinai (Exodus 19–34)

Exod 19 Preparing the covenant

- Exod 19:3–5 “thus says YHWH” (*kô ʾāmar yhw̄h*) to Israel + looking back at YHWH’s acts + “Now then” (*wēʿattā*) – Josh 24:2, 3–13, 14
- Exod 19:4 “having seen” YHWH’s acts (*rʾh*) – Josh 24:7, 17 (cf. Josh 24:31 [*yḏ ʿ*] and its parallel Judg 2:7 [*rʾh*])
- Exod 19:5 (cf. Exod 23:21, 22) “listen to his/my voice” in the context of the covenant between YHWH and Israel (*šmr bēqōl*) – Josh 24:24
- Exod 19:8 (cf. Exod 24:7) “we [the people, *hāʿām*] will” – Josh 24:18, 21, 24

Exod 20:3 (cf. Exod 23:31; Deut 5:7) not serve “other gods” (*ʾēlōhîm ʾāḥērîm*) – Josh 24:2, 16

Exod 20:5 YHWH is a “jealous” God (cf. Exod 34:14; Deut 4:24; 5:9; 6:15) – Josh 24:19

Exod 23:20–33 The promise of the conquest of Canaan

- Exod 23:21, 22 (cf. Exod 19:5) “listen to his/my voice” (*šmr bēqōl*) – Josh 24:24
- Exod 23:21 “He will not forgive your offenses” (*nsʾ lēpišāḥem*) – Josh 24:19
- Exod 23:23 (cf. 34:11) pre-Israelite nations – Josh 24:11
- Exod 23:28 (cf. 6:1; 11:1; 33:2) “I will send (*šlh*) panic (*šir ʿâ*, cf. Deut 7:20) ahead of you to drive out (*grš*, Exod 23:29, 30, 31; 33:2; 34:11; Judg 2:3; 6:9) the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites before you” – Josh 24:12, 18
- Exod 23:31 “Sea of Reeds,” “wilderness,” “the River” – Josh 24:2, 3, 6, 7, 14, 15
- Exod 23:32 (cf. Exod 24:8; 34:10, 27; Judg 2:2) “making a covenant” (*krt bērit*) – Josh 24:25

Exod 24 Making the covenant

- Exod 24:1, 9, 13 “elders,” “Joshua” – Josh 24:1
- Exod 24:4 Writing down words and erecting (a) stone(s) – Josh 24:26

- Exod 24:7 (cf. Exod 19:8) “we [the people, *hā’ām*] will” – Josh 24:18, 21, 24
- Exod 24:8 (cf. Exod 23:32; 34:10, 27; Judg 2:2) “making a covenant” (*krt bērit*) – Josh 24:25

Exod 33–34 Renewing the covenant

- Exod 33:2 and 34:11 “to drive out (*grš*) the nations – Josh 24:12, 18
- Exod 34:10 “making a covenant” (*krt bērit*) – Josh 24:25
- Exod 34:14 (cf. Exod 20:5; Deut 4:24; 5:9; 6:15) “YHWH is a jealous God” – Josh 24:19
- Exod 34:17 “Joshua” – Josh 24

Sihon and Og (Numbers 21; Deuteronomy 2)

Num 21:13, 21, 25–26, 29, 31, 34 ([“live in the land of] the Amorites”) – Josh 24:8

Num 21:34–35; Deut 2:24; Judg 11:21 (“give into your hand and dispossess them”) – Josh 24:8

Num 22:1 (“Israel encamped at the other side of the Jordan”) – Josh 24:8, 11

Deut 7:24; 9:14; 31:3; 2 Kgs 21:8 (“He/I [YHWH] will destroy[ed] them”) – Josh 24:8

Balak and Balaam (Numbers 22)

Num 22:5, 37 “Balak sent and called Balaam” (*šlh wqr*) – Josh 24:9

Num 22:6, 16; 23:12; 24:1, 12–13 – paraphrased in Josh 24:10

In the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy)

Deut 2:5 “I have given Mount Seir to Esau as an inheritance” – Josh 24:4

Deut 5:7 (cf. Deut 6:14; 7:4; 8:19; 11:16, 28; 13:3, 7; 17:3; 18:20; 28:14, 36, 64; 29:25; 30:17; 31:18, 20) serve “other gods” (*’ēlōhīm ’āḥērīm*) – Josh 24:2, 16

Deut 5:9 YHWH is a “jealous” God (cf. Exod 20:5; 34:14; Deut 4:24; 6:15) – Josh 24:19

Deut 6:10–15 Do not forget that YHWH has liberated you and given the promised land

- Deut 6:10–11 YHWH will have/has given “cities you did not build” and “vineyards and olive groves you did not plant” – Josh 24:13
- Deut 6:12 YHWH “brought you out of Egypt” – Josh 24:4, 5, 17
- Deut 6:13–14 – “fear and serve YHWH, your God” (*yr’* and *’bd*, cf. Deut 10:12; 13:5; 1 Sam 12:14, 24) – Josh 24:14
- Deut 6:14 no “other gods” (*’ēlōhîm ’āḥērîm*) – Josh 24:2, 16
- Deut 6:15 YHWH is a “jealous” God (cf. Exod 20:5; 34:14; Deut 4:24; 5:9) – Josh 24:19

Deut 29:9 “You are standing today all of you before YHWH your God: the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel” – Josh 24:1

Deut 31:9 – Moses wrote down his teaching in a book of the law (*ktb bšēper hattôrâ*, cf. Deut 17:18; 31:24; Josh 1:8; 8:31, 34; Josh 23:6; 2 Kgs 14:6; 23:24) – Josh 24:26

Deut 31:16 “See, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them.” – Josh 23:14, 15, 20, 23, 25

Deut 33:5 “the heads of the people were gathered, the tribes of Israel” – Josh 24:1

At Mount Ebal (Deuteronomy 27; Joshua 8:30–35)

Deut 27:1 “Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people” – Josh 24:1

Josh 8:31, 34 the stipulations of the covenant with YHWH written on stone – Josh 24:26

Josh 8:33 “All Israel ... with their elders, officials, and judges” – Josh 24:1

YHWH's Messenger at Bochim (Judges 2:1–5)

- Judg 2:2 “[not] listen to his/my voice” in context of a covenant between YHWH and Israel (*šmr beqôl*, cf. Exod 19:5; 23:21, 22; Judg 6:10; 2 Sam 12:14) – Josh 24:24
- Judg 2:2 “making a covenant” (*krt bērit*) – Josh 24:25
- Judg 2:3 “to drive out (*grš*) the nations” (cf. Exod 23:29, 30, 31; 33:2; 34:11; Judg 6:9) – Josh 24:12, 18

Prophetic indictment in response to Israel cry to YHWH because of Midian (Judges 6:7–10)

- Judg 6:8 the prophet/Joshua “said to (all of) them: “Thus says YHWH, the God of Israel” – Josh 24:2
- Judg 6:8 “brought (*yš*) out of Egypt, the house of slavery” – Josh 24:4, 5, 17
- Judg 6:9 “I delivered you out of the hand” (of Egypt/Balaam) (*wāʾašil ʾetēhem bēyad*) – Josh 24:10
- Judg 6:9 “to drive out (*grš*) the nations” (cf. Exod 23:29, 30, 31; 33:2; 34:11; Judg 2:3) – Josh 24:12, 18
- Judg 6:9 YHWH has “given you their/the land” (*ntn lāhem ʾeres*) – Josh 24:13
- Judg 6:10 “I am YHWH, your God” (*ʾanî yhw h ʾēlōhēhem*) – Josh 24:17, 18
- Judg 6:10 “(to serve) the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell” – Josh 24:15
- Judg 6:10 “[not] listen to his/my voice” in the context of the covenant between YHWH and Israel (*šmr beqôl*) – Josh 24:24

Abimelech becomes king

- Judg 9:6 (cf. Gen 12:6; 31:35) “All the citizens of Shechem and all Beth-Millo gathered (*ʾsp*), and they made Abimelech king at the terebinth tree of the pillar at Shechem.” – Josh 24:1, 25, 26, 32

- Judg 9:16, 19 the citizens of Shechem being "loyal and faithful" (*be ʿemet ûbĕtāmîm*) to Abimelech and Jerubbaʿal and his house – Josh 24:14 (to YHWH)
- Judg 9:28, 38 it is about who will "serve" whom – Josh 24:2, 16–22, 29, 31

Introduction to Jephthah story (Judges 10:10–16)

- Judg 10:10, 13 (cf. Judg 2:12; 10:6; 1 Sam 8:8; 1 Sam 12:10; 1 Kgs 9:9; 2 Kgs 17:16) "(time and again) to forsake YHWH and serve the Baʿals/ other gods" (ʿzb and ʿbd) – Josh 24:16 (cf. Josh 24:20, "foreign gods")
- Judg 10:11 looking back at a history of liberation and rescue – Josh 24:3–13
- Judg 10:13 (cf. Judg 2:12, 17, 19) serve "other gods" (ʿĕlōhîm ʿāḥērîm) – Josh 24:2, 16
- Judg 10:14 ironic reversal of Israel's choice (*bḥr*) to serve YHWH – Josh 24:22
- Judg 10:16 "to put away the foreign gods among them and serve YHWH" (*śûr*, hi. *ĕlōhê hannĕkār w ʿbd yhwḥ*) – Josh 24:14, 23; "and serve YHWH" – Josh 24:14

Gathering of Israel in Mizpah (1 Samuel 7)

[Samuel's appeal, after ark has been is twenty years in Kirjath Jearim]

- 1 Sam 7:3, 4 "to put away the foreign gods (Baal and Astaroths) among them ... and serve YHWH" – Josh 24:23
- 1 Sam 7:12 "Samuel set up a stone it up between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Ebenezer, for he said 'Up to this moment YHWH has helped us.'" – Josh 24:26, 27

Saul's election (1 Samuel 10:17–28)

- 1 Sam 10:17 Samuel gathers the people of Israel at Gilgal – Josh 24:1
- 1 Sam 10:18–19 "Thus says YHWH" (*kô ʿāmar yhwḥ*) to Israel + looking back at YHWH's acts + "Now then" (*wĕʿattâ*) – Josh 24:2, 3–13, 14

- 1 Sam 10:18 (cf. Deut 6:12; Judg 6:8–9) YHWH “brought you out of Egypt” “I delivered you out of the hand of Egypt” – Josh 24:4, 5, 10
- 1 Sam 10:19 “stand yourselves (*yšb*, *hitp.*) before YHWH” – Josh 24:1
- 1 Sam 10:25 “to establish the rights and duties (*mišpāṭ*) and document (*ktb bēšēper*) them” – Josh 24:25, 26
- 1 Sam 10:25 “Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house” – Josh 24:28

Samuel’s farewell at Gilgal (1 Sam 11:14–12:25)

- [1 Sam 12:2 “I have grown old and grey (advanced in years)” – Josh 23:2]
- 1 Sam 12:5 “and he said” + witness formula (YHWH and the anointed) + affirmative answer – Josh 24:22 (you, the people of Israel)
- 1 Sam 12:6 “YHWH brought (‘*lh*) you / your ancestors from Egypt” – Josh 24:17
- 1 Sam 12:1–12, 13, 13–17; historical summary + “Now then” + stipulations & indictment – Josh 24:2–24, 14–28
- 1 Sam 12:8 “Jacob went to Egypt” – Josh 24:4; “your ancestors cried to YHWH” – Josh 24:7; “YHWH sent Moses and Aaron” – Josh 24:5; “brought (*yš*’, *ho.*) them out of Egypt” – Josh 24:6
- 1 Sam 12:9 “they fought against them” – Josh 24:8
- 1 Sam 12:10 “forsake” (‘*zb*) YHWH; “serve” (‘*bd*) him or other gods – Josh 24:16
- 1 Sam 12:10 “to deliver (*nšl*, *hi.*) out of the hand” – Josh 24:10, 11
- 1 Sam 12:10 “we will serve you / YHWH” – Josh 24:18, 21
- 1 Sam 12:12, 24 “fear and serve YHWH” (cf. Deut 6:13–14; 10:12; 13:5) – Josh 24:14
- 1 Sam 12:14, 15 “listen to his / my voice” and Israel (*šmr bēqōl*, cf. Exod 19:5 23:21, 22; Judg 2:3; 6:9) – Josh 24:24
- 1 Sam 12:16 (cf. Deut. 11:7) “YHWH doing (‘*šh*) great things before your / our eyes” (*lě ‘ênêkem*) – Josh 24:17
- 1 Sam 12:23 “Therefore, I / we too ...” (*gam-’ānahñû / gam ’ānōkî*) – Josh 24:18

Judgment on the kings of Israel and Judah

- 1 Kgs 9:6 (cf. 1 Kgs 9:9; 11:4, 10; 14:9; 2 Kgs 5:17; 17:7, 35, 37, 38; 22:17) serve "other gods" (*'ēlōhîm 'ăḥērîm*) – Josh 24:2, 16
- 1 Kgs 12:1, 25 Rehoboam goes to Shechem, where all Israel has gathered to make him king; Jeroboam fortifies Shechem and makes it his capital – Josh 24:1, 25, 32
- 1 Kgs 12:1, 4, 7 "all Israel" is present including "the elders;" it is about who will "serve" whom – Josh 24:2, 16–22, 29, 31
- 2 Kgs 17:16 (cf. Judg 2:12; 10:6, 10, 13; 1 Sam 8:8; 1 Sam 12:10; 1 Kgs 9:9) "to forsake (the commandments of) YHWH and serve the Baals/ other gods" – Josh 24:16 (cf. Josh 24:20, "foreign gods")
- 2 Kgs 17:35 Do not "fear and serve" other gods – Josh 24:14
- 2 Kgs 17:35; 18:12 (cf. 2 Kgs 18:28 "listen to the voice/obey of the Assyrian king") "[not] listen to his/ my voice" in the context of the covenant between YHWH and Israel (*šmr bēqôl*) – Josh 24:24
- 2 Kgs 21:9 ("He/I [YHWH] will destroy[ed] them") – Josh 24:8

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