

THE DEUTERONOMIC THEOLOGY OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

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THE close relationship between the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua has long been observed. Linguistically Deuteronomy has closer links with Joshua than with any other part of the former prophets.¹ In content too Joshua forms a perfect sequel to Deuteronomy; the program of the holy war of conquest set out in Deuteronomy is successfully carried out in Joshua.² As is well known there have been two main theories to explain the relationship between these books. According to the Hexateuch theory, Joshua forms not only the conclusion of the Pentateuch, but was created out of the same four main sources J, E, D and P.³ According to the deuteronomic history theory, Joshua is the second part of the great historical work, comprising Deuteronomy and the former prophets, which was created by a deuteronomist during the sixth century B.C., using earlier sources. The latter theory has commended itself to the majority of recent commentators on Joshua.⁴ It is generally supposed that there were two stages in the deuteronomistic editing of Joshua and that chs. 13–21 and 24 represent secondary additions by the deuteronomist to an earlier deuteronomic book of Joshua. It is on the arrangement of the material that this hypothesis rests, and it is admitted that there is very little change in outlook between the two deuteronomists. Therefore, for the purposes of the study of the theology of the book it is not really necessary to take into account the different stages of its redaction. But it will be argued here that the arrangement of the material is more subtle than at first appears, and that its theology is so close to the book of Deuteronomy that there is little need to postulate a secondary redaction by a later deuteronomist who was responsible for editing Kings.

The books of Deuteronomy and Joshua are bound together by five

¹ See S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy*³ (ICC; Edinburgh, 1902), pp. xci–ii.

² Cf. A. C. Tunyogi, "The Book of the Conquest," *JBL*, 84 (1965), pp. 374–80.

³ A similar type of approach is still advocated by G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the OT* (London, 1970), pp. 197 ff.

⁴ E.g., M. Noth, *Das Buch Josua*² (Tübingen, 1953), pp. 7 ff. H. W. Hertzberg, *Die Bücher Josua, Richter, Ruth*² (Göttingen, 1959), pp. 8 ff. J. Gray, *Joshua, Judges and Ruth* (London, 1967), pp. 16 ff. J. Bright, "Joshua," *Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, 1953), pp. 541 ff., offers a hybrid theory combining features of the Hexateuch and deuteronomic history hypotheses.

theological leitmotifs: the holy war of conquest, the distribution of the land, the unity of all Israel, Joshua as the successor of Moses, and the covenant. The opening chapter of Joshua not only provides a perfect link with the book of Deuteronomy, by its reference to the death of Moses (Josh 1:1; Deut 34), but concisely introduces the five main themes of the book of Joshua: holy war (vss. 2, 5, 9, 11, 14), the land (vss. 3, 4, 15), the unity of Israel (vss. 12–16), the role of Joshua (vss. 1–2, 5, 17), and the covenant (vss. 3, 7–8, 13, 17–18).

I. Holy War

According to G. von Rad, "Deuteronomy is by far the richest source in the Old Testament for the concepts and customs of the holy war."⁵ By means of explicit legal enactments (Deut 20:1–20; 23:10–15; 25:17–19) and militaristic speeches (7:16–26; 9:1–6) the book of Deuteronomy expounds the principles of the holy war. The book of Joshua illustrates these principles in some detail. Chs. 1–11 contain four full-length statements of the holy war theme: the conquest of Jericho, the second attack on Ai, the Judean and the Galilean campaigns (chs. 2, 6, 8, 10, 11). In addition, there are two stories of failure to carry out the holy war, the first attack on Ai and the treaty with the Gibeonites (chs. 7 and 9).

Holy war begins with Yahweh's promise of success and an exhortation to fight bravely (Josh 1:6, 9; 6:2; 8:1; 10:8; 11:6). The narratives stress that it is God who takes the initiative in the conduct of the war. It is he who sends Israel into battle and ensures its success. Because God is fighting for it, Israel need only trust and be confident. That Yahweh directs the war is brought out vividly by the vision of "the commander of the Lord," who appears to Joshua with a drawn sword in his hand (5:13–15). While encouraging Israel, Yahweh strikes terror in the hearts of its enemies before the battle even begins (2:9, 24; 5:1; 9:24; 10:21). The function of the spies in Josh 2 is not so much to bring back tactical information as to encourage Israel's faith:⁶ they say, "Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands; and moreover all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of us" (2:24).

After God has given his instructions to Joshua, Joshua obeys; then he instructs the people, and they obey. The pattern of divine command — obedience of the people is central in the holy war stories. Verbal repetition is used to stress the fidelity with which the command is carried out (1:2, 11; 6:2 ff., 6–8; 8:1–2, 3 ff., 9 ff.; 11:6–7, 9). So Israel goes out to battle in obedience to Yahweh's command. Then Yahweh fights for Israel. This is explicitly stated in the story of the battle near Gibeon:

⁵ *Der heilige Krieg im alten Israel* (Zürich, 1951), p. 68.

⁶ See S. Wagner, *ZAW*, 76 (1964), p. 268.

“the Lord threw down great stones from heaven” (10:11), and “the Lord fought for Israel” (vs. 14). Divine intervention is implicit in the sudden collapse of the walls of Jericho, and possibly in Joshua stretching out his javelin towards Ai (Josh 8:18; cf. Exod 14:16; 17:9–13). The enemy panics, and Israel pursues. Their cities are burnt to the ground, and all human beings are killed. Other valuables, such as gold, silver and cattle, are given to the treasury of the Lord. In the case of Jericho, the cattle were also killed, and at Hazor the horses were hamstrung (6:21 ff.; 8:20 ff.; 10:28 ff. and 11:6 ff.).

We have two stories showing what happened when Israel failed to keep the rules of the holy war. In the first assault on Ai Israel was defeated because Achan had transgressed the ban at Jericho. But even if the narrator had not said that Yahweh was angry with Israel, it might have been expected that the attack would fail, because there is no mention of a word from Yahweh to start the battle (ch. 7). Similarly in the case of Gibeon, Israel “did not ask direction from the Lord,” and so afterwards regrets its action (9:14).

We have seen how the principle of strict obedience to the command of Yahweh forms a leitmotif of the holy war stories. However, it is not confined to them. It runs through the whole book. Israel's prompt and exact obedience is stressed in chs. 3–4 and 13 ff. It binds together the large complex of stories in chs. 1–4 and connects ch. 23 with ch. 1. It may further be noted that the form and themes of the holy war are used to relate the crossing of the Jordan; and, like the crossing of the Red Sea, it is a miraculous sign: “so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty” (4:24).

II. *The Land and Its Distribution*

The purpose of the holy war was to take possession (*yrš*) of the land which Yahweh promised to the patriarchs (Deut 1:8; 6:10, 18; 7:8; 34:4).⁷ Deuteronomy gives some indications of the borders of the promised land (1:7; 34:1–3) and describes how Moses made a start in conquering Transjordan and allotting it to the two and a half tribes (Deut 1–3). Israel is strictly enjoined to make no treaties with the inhabitants of Canaan, but to exterminate them (Deut 7:1–5). However, it is recognized that owing to Israel's small population the process of occupation will be slow (7:1–5, 22).

The completion of this task under the leadership of Joshua is described in two stages in the book of Joshua. First, in Joshua 1–12 the conquest of the land is described, and then in Joshua 13–21 how it was

⁷ See G. von Rad, “The Promised Land and Yahweh's Land in the Hexateuch,” *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh, 1966), pp. 79 ff.

distributed among the various tribes. Just as in Deuteronomy, the book of Joshua assumes that it is the duty of the Israelites to drive out or exterminate the native inhabitants of Canaan. Thus each battle ends with the ban (Josh 6:21; 8:24 f.; 10:10, 28, 30, 35, 37, 39, 40; 11:11, 14, 21). The Gibeon incident shows that the Israelites intended to kill all who lived within the promised land (9:18). Because they thought that the Gibeonites lived afar off, they made a treaty with them (cf. Deut 20:10 ff.). In Josh 13:6–7 Joshua is told to allot the land to the tribes, though the Canaanites are still in partial occupation. God promises, "I will myself drive them out (*hwryš*) from before you" (13:6). The land is, therefore, distributed among the tribes who are expected to carry on the work of eliminating the earlier inhabitants. Caleb offers to drive out the Anakim, if Joshua gives him their land (14:12). Joshua tells Ephraim and Manasseh to drive out the Canaanites from their areas, "though they have chariots of iron" (17:18).

In both sections of the book, chs. 1–11 dealing mainly with the conquest, and chs. 13–23 dealing with the allotments, it is recognized that the task of driving out the Canaanites is unfinished. Gibeon makes a treaty with Israel (ch. 9); of the major northern cities only Hazor was burned (11:13). Some Anakim remained in Gath, Gaza, and Ashdod (11:22). The passage at the end of ch. 11 requires careful study, for on first reading it looks as though the editor is guilty of crass self-contradiction. On the one hand, he says that he took (*lqh*, vss. 16, 23) all the land; yet some of the big towns were not burnt and some of the earlier population was left (vss. 13, 22). Though possibly in the early sources of Joshua the situation was seen differently, the deuteronomic editor probably understood the taking of the land to mean the gaining of control without eliminating all the opposition.⁸ In chs. 13 ff. it is again observed several times that not all the Canaanites were driven out (13:13; 16:10; 17:13). In ch. 23 the expulsion of the remainder is apparently still the goal. Joshua promises that "the Lord your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight" (Josh 23:5), as long as Israel remains faithful to the covenant. However, the era of intense struggle is over. Twice it is said (11:23; 14:15) that the land had rest from war. More interesting is the usage of *hnyh* in this connection. Twice it is used in Deuteronomy of Yahweh giving rest to Israel. In Deut 3:20 the Transjordanian tribes are told to help the others "until the Lord gives rest to your brethren as to you." In Deut 12:10 when Israel has settled in Canaan — and "when he gives you rest from all your enemies round about" — then it is to worship at the place which the Lord will choose. The first passage is quoted exactly in Josh 1:15 and the second

⁸ See Y. Kaufmann, *The Biblical Account of the Conquest of Palestine* (Jerusalem, 1953), pp. 84 ff.

very closely in Josh 23:1. In three other passages (1:13; 21:44; 22:4) reference is made to the idea. In both Deuteronomy 12 and Joshua 23 the idea of Yahweh giving rest to Israel is closely associated with the allotment of the inheritance (*nḥlḥ*). Finally, as Y. Kaufmann has pointed out, the boundaries of the promised land in Joshua do not correspond either to those promised to the patriarchs or to the area subsequently occupied by Israel or to the ideas of later priestly writers. He, therefore, argues that the limits of the promised land in Joshua must correspond to the historical reality of the era of the conquest.⁹ This may be too sweeping a conclusion, but at least the peculiar boundaries of the promised land in Joshua fit the hypothesis that the editor envisaged a decisive military campaign but only a partial settlement.

III. The Unity of Israel

Deuteronomy repeatedly addresses its message to all Israel (e.g., 1:1; 5:1; 11:6); and twice, as if to underline that every single Israelite is involved, there is the less common phrase, every man of Israel (*kl-ʔyš yśrʔl*, 27:14; 29:9). Deuteronomy recalls that the covenant was made with all Israel (5:3). Certain punishments are prescribed with a view to their deterrent effect on all Israel (13:12; 21:21). The concern that all Israel should be involved is seen in the assertion that each tribe sent a spy (1:23), in the summons to the Transjordanian tribes to help the other tribes acquire their land (3:18 ff.), and in the listing of the individual tribes which participated in the covenant renewal ceremony near Shechem (ch. 27). Another facet of the deuteronomist's preoccupation with the unity and total involvement of all Israel is seen in his stress that Israel must worship Yahweh alone and at the central sanctuary (Deut 12–18).¹⁰

A similar concern with the unity of Israel may be seen in Joshua. The expression 'all Israel' is again frequent (3:7, 17; 4:14; 7:23 f.; 8:21, 24; 23:2), together with the phrases, 'the whole congregation of Israel' (18:1; 22:12, 18), 'all the assembly' (8:35) and 'all the tribes of Israel' (22:14; 24:1). As prescribed in Deuteronomy all Israel joins in stoning Achan the covenant breaker (Deut 13:10; Josh 7:25). All the fighting men of Israel take part in the military campaigns in Palestine (8:3; 10:7, 29, 31, 34, 36, 38, 43); the defeat at Ai coincides with Joshua's decision to send into attack only part of his forces (7:3 ff.). The participation of the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh in the Palestinian campaign is mentioned on various occasions (1:12 ff.;

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 47 ff.

¹⁰ Deuteronomy seems to be concerned with a central, as opposed to a sole, sanctuary in these chapters, unless the altar on Mount Ebal (Deut 27; cf. 11:29 ff.) is to be identified with the place which Yahweh will choose.

4:12; 22:1 ff.). The book of Joshua particularizes Israel as a union of twelve tribes (cf. 18:2), each of which receives an inheritance (Josh 13–21). Israel's constitution is symbolized by the erection of twelve stones at Gilgal (ch. 4). Like Deuteronomy the book of Joshua is interested in national rituals and feasts, such as circumcision and passover (5:2 ff.). Ch. 22 is concerned with the threat to the unity of Israel posed by the erection of an altar in the Jordan valley. The Palestinian tribes view the altar as schism from the only legitimate central sanctuary at Shiloh (22:18 ff.). But the Transjordanian tribes plead that they have erected this altar as a testimony to their unity with the west-bank tribes (22:24 ff.), so that their children will not forget that they are all one people.¹¹

IV. *The Rôle of Joshua*

The place of Joshua in both Deuteronomy and the Book of Joshua is one of the strongest links between the two books. It is clearly a fundamental concern of the editor to demonstrate that Joshua was the divinely appointed and authenticated successor to Moses. He does this in two ways: by means of the accepted legal terminology in describing Joshua's appointment, and by drawing parallels between the careers of Moses and Joshua.

N. Lohfink has shown that the appointment of Joshua as Moses' successor follows a carefully worked-out schema.¹² As leader of Israel, Joshua is given a two-fold office, military commander and distributor of the land. His work as commander is denoted by the terms "come" and "cross over" (*bw*^o and *br*); and his work as distributor of the land by "cause to inherit" (*hnhyl*). His appointment is first mentioned in Deut 1:37–38 and is taken up again in 3:28. At the close of the great covenant ceremony recorded in Deuteronomy, Joshua is installed in his double office by Moses in 31:7: "You shall come (*bw*) with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them; and you shall put them in possession of it" (*hnhyl*). Divine confirmation of his appointment as commander is given in a theophany in 31:23. Only in Josh 1:2–5 is Joshua told to start exercising his role as military commander, and then in vss. 6–9 he is confirmed in his second office as dis-

¹¹ This chapter contains a number of words characteristic of the pentateuchal source (P), and it is therefore generally regarded as a post-deuteronomistic editorial insertion (see the commentaries of Noth and Gray, *ad loc.*). This is quite possible; but in view of this chapter's conformity with the overall scheme of Joshua, it might be better to suppose that the deuteronomistic editor had access to P-like material that was independent of the documentary source. This explanation is adopted by S. R. Driver (*Deuteronomy*, pp. iv ff.) to explain the P-like passages in Deuteronomy.

¹² N. Lohfink, "Die deuteronomistische Darstellung des Übergangs der Führung Israels von Moses auf Josue," *Scholastik*, 37 (1962), pp. 32–44.

tributer of the land. But not until Josh 13:7 is he told to start exercising his second office and actually to distribute the land. Thus Joshua 1–12 is taken up with depicting Joshua in his office as commander and chs. 13 ff. with his work in allotting the land.

Furthermore, the editor of the Book of Joshua points to him as Moses' true successor by comments attributed to actors in the story or by his own editorial remarks. Thus, the Transjordanian tribes tell Joshua: "Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you" (Josh 1:17; cf. 4:14). The narratives bring out parallels between the lives of Moses and Joshua, which can scarcely be accidental. In Joshua 3–4 Joshua has his own Red Sea crossing. The Jordan river stands in a heap and the tribes of Israel cross on dry ground (3:13 parallel to Exod 15:8; 3:17 parallel to Exod 14:21–22, 29 [P]). As Moses did, so Joshua celebrates the passover. He encounters the commander of the Lord's army and is told, as was Moses, "Put off your shoes from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy" (5:15 parallel to Exod 3:5 [E]). As did Moses, he intercedes for the people when they sin (7:7 ff. parallel to Deut 9:25 ff.). As God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, Moses' arch-enemy, so he hardens the heart of Joshua's enemies (Josh 11:20 parallel to Exod 9:12 [E]). Josh 12:1–6 lists Moses' victories; 12:7–24 lists Joshua's victories. Josh 13:8 ff. lists Moses' allotments; 14:1 ff. lists Joshua's allotments. And finally, as did Moses before his death, Joshua makes two speeches which follow the covenant form.¹³

V. *The Covenant and the Law of Moses*

One of the more important developments of recent scholarship has been the discovery that the OT writers were familiar with Near Eastern treaty forms. Indeed, it has been cogently argued that the present structure of the book of Deuteronomy is in large measure based on this form.¹⁴ The similarities between this form and Joshua 23 and 24 has also attracted attention. Just as important for the understanding of the theological dependence of Joshua on Deuteronomy are the content and terminology used. From Deut 31:26 it appears that in Deuteronomy "the book of the law" is a technical term for the covenant document.¹⁵ Without such a document no covenant or treaty was valid. We have seen how Joshua 1 takes up the ideas of Deuteronomy 31 in its treatment of Joshua as Moses' successor. It also takes over the phrase "book of the law" as a description of the covenant document (Josh 1:8). The

¹³ See K. Baltzer, *Das Bundesformular* (Neukirchen, 1960), pp. 29 ff., 71 ff.

¹⁴ Among the many discussions of this feature, see particularly Baltzer, pp. 76 ff.; M. G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King* (Grand Rapids, 1963), pp. 27 ff. and D. J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant* (Rome, 1963), pp. 109 ff.

¹⁵ N. Lohfink, *Biblica*, 44 (1963), pp. 284 ff.

message of the book of Joshua seems to be that Israel was careful by and large to fulfill its covenant obligations and that this is why it enjoyed the blessings conditional on obedience and was able to conquer the promised land. Time and again explicit reference is made to "the law," "the word which Moses commanded," or some other expression for the covenant stipulations.

Often it is explicitly stated that something was done in accordance with the word of Moses. The words of Moses constitute the strategic plan for the whole conquest and the motive for distributing the land. Thus the Transjordanian tribes help in the campaign because of the word of Moses (1:13; 22:2). The crossing of the Jordan is in accordance with Moses' instructions (4:10). An altar is built on Mount Ebal as "Moses commanded" (8:30 ff.). The Gibeonites know that Moses ordered the destruction of all the native inhabitants (9:24). At the end of the Galilean campaign there is this summary: "As the Lord has commanded Moses, his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses" (11:15). The allotment of the land also follows Moses' instructions (11:23; 14:2, 5). In accordance with specific Mosaic promises, Caleb is allotted Hebron (14:6 ff.), and the daughters of Zelophehad are given part of the west bank (17:3 f.). Joshua 20 records the establishment of cities of refuge as Moses commanded, and ch. 21 the allocation of certain cities to the priests and levites.

Besides these explicit references to Israel's conscious obedience to the Mosaic injunctions, it is possible that certain other incidents are included to show its punctilious regard for the deuteronomic law. Certainly the presuppositions of Deuteronomy appear to underlie the account of the treaty with Gibeon. It was because Israel thought that the Gibeonites had come from afar that it made a treaty with them. Later when they were discovered to be living within the promised land, Israel was very angry. Why should there have been this reaction? Deut 20:10 ff. provides the answer. Israel was to make treaties only with those who dwelt outside the promised land. Its inhabitants were to be liquidated. Another possible allusion to Deuteronomy is found in the punishment of Achan, the covenant-breaker, who is stoned and whose property is burnt (Josh 7:25; cf. Deut 13). The five kings were hanged, "but at the going down of the sun, Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees and put them in the caves" (Josh 10:27). This detail suggests that the narrator had in mind the law of Deut 21:23, "the body (of a hanged man) shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall bury him the same day."

Joshua 23 sums up Israel's situation as viewed by the editor. In Joshua's day Israel was faithful in carrying out Yahweh's demands, and so enjoyed success in all its campaigns. "Not one thing has failed of all

the good things which the Lord your God promised concerning you." "But just as all the good things which the Lord your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so the Lord your God will bring upon you all the evil things . . . , if you transgress the covenant" (Josh 23:14 ff.). As long as Israel remains faithful to Yahweh, it will enjoy success; but if it forsakes him, it will be driven from the promised land. Ch. 24, the account of the renewal of the covenant at Shechem, is the strongest evidence for supposing that Joshua underwent a secondary deuteronomistic redaction. Though such a hypothesis cannot be excluded, it may be pointed out that ch. 24 is a fitting climax to the whole book. The challenge to the people to consider whether they will serve Yahweh as Joshua did (vss. 19 ff.) is in effect a challenge to the later reader to examine himself as to whether he will obey the Lord.

To sum up. The theology of the book of Joshua is largely dependent on the ideas to be found in Deuteronomy. So close in fact is the affinity of outlook between Deuteronomy and Joshua that it is reasonable to suppose that both books were edited by the same man or school. Chs. 13–21 of Joshua are sufficiently integrated into the rest of the book that it seems unnecessary to postulate that they were inserted by a secondary deuteronomistic editor. However, the evidence of the theology of Joshua does not permit us to decide the larger question, whether the Hexateuch or the deuteronomic history theory is the more adequate. On the one hand, Joshua appears at a few points to be dependent on P traditions. But it may be that the P-like passages in Joshua 22 merely represent an overlap of the vocabulary of P with that of D.¹⁶ The deuteronomic history theory, on the other hand, certainly has the advantage of economy. Yet, as has been pointed out by G. von Rad, the theological outlook of the various books in the so-called deuteronomic history is less uniform than is sometimes supposed.¹⁷ Perhaps more striking is the very different attitude toward Jerusalem in Deuteronomy and Joshua from that in Kings. Jerusalem is only mentioned in passing as an unconquered Jebusite city in Deuteronomy and Joshua (Josh 15:63), and the central sanctuary is evidently located elsewhere. In contrast, the editor of Kings appears to regard all worship outside Jerusalem as sinful (II Kings 17). Thus, although the theology of the Book of Joshua allows us to affirm a close connection between it and Deuteronomy, it is less obvious how it is related to the rest of the Pentateuch, on the one hand, and to the former prophets, on the other.

¹⁶ See n. 11 above.

¹⁷ *Old Testament Theology* (Edinburgh, 1963), 1. 346 f. He points out, among other things, the different treatments of sin and judgment in Judges and Kings.