

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY – CHARLOTTE

CONQUERING KING OR SAPIENTIAL SCRIBE? JOSHUA AS COVENANT EXEGETE IN  
THE MOUNT EBAL TORAH CEREMONY

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## Introduction

Despite its brevity, the account of the covenant renewal ceremony on Mount Ebal (henceforth, “CRC”) in Josh 8:30–35 is one of the highest theological vistas in the book of Joshua. Herein, the people of Israel are ushered by their covenant leader into worship of Yahweh, in accordance with Torah, and are saturated with the law of the Lord as they enter their new land. Before holy war can continue, the people must pause to be renewed in their covenant identity. Moreover, the CRC itself serves a vital narrative function in its characterization of Joshua: not only is Joshua portrayed as the Torah-abiding covenant leader poised and chosen to succeed Moses, but he also is characterized as the interpreter, the exegete, of the Mosaic law on behalf of the people. In this way, Joshua is depicted not so much as a royal figure, but as a sage-like scribe, one who is authorized as covenant leader both to preserve and to interpret Torah on behalf of Yahweh’s people. Thus, the Ebal CRC demonstrates the children of Israel’s persistent need for covenant renewal, and bolsters Joshua’s authority as the legitimate successor to Moses in his scribal role as covenant mediator and exegete.

## Historical Context of Joshua 8:30–35

On the heels of the recapitulation of the law by Moses on the plains of Moab, Joshua is selected by Yahweh to lead the covenant nation into the land of promise after the death of Moses by carrying out holy war against the inhabitants of Canaan. God commissions Joshua to lead the people in invading the land according to his word to Moses (Josh 1:1–9).<sup>1</sup> In the same way that Yahweh was with Moses, so he promises to be with Joshua, so long as Joshua is careful to do all

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<sup>1</sup> Chirichigno points out that in the midst of this “succession” narrative, Joshua is referred to for the final time by the epithet “Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, which he takes to signal the end of Joshua’s service to Moses and the beginning of his service to Yahweh as covenant leader. The epithet serves “as an illustration of the disciple-like service which prepared Joshua for his own service to Yahweh as leader of the people of Israel.” G. C. Chirichigno, “The Use of the Epithet in the Characterization of Joshua,” *TrinJ* 8 (1987): 77–8.

that Yahweh has commanded in the law he gave to Moses (Josh 1:5, 7–9). As the newly minted covenant leader of Israel, Joshua’s responsibility was two-fold: Joshua is depicted as military commander on the one hand, and distributor of the land on the other, both of which are subsumed under his chief role as true successor to Moses as covenant leader of Israel.<sup>2</sup>

Joshua takes command by dispatching two men into Jericho in order to take stock of the city. There, they found refuge in the home of a Canaanite prostitute Rahab, who rescued them from those seeking to capture them. Afterwards, Joshua leads the people across the Jordan river in a second exodus episode, wherein the waters part for them as they pass through (cf. Exod 14). Unfortunately, reports of moral and military success are swiftly followed by covenant breach. Before Israel fell upon Ai in an effort to overthrow it, Achan had taken some of the things that were banned under *herem* law. The Israelites were subsequently and soundly defeated because of the Lord’s anger against them. When finally found out, Achan confessed his sin and was executed by the people. It was only after covenant discipline was carried out according to Yahweh’s command that Joshua and the nation were permitted to invade Ai and reduce it to ashes (Josh 8:1–29). Joshua’s fastidious commitment to Torah, which pervades Josh 8:30–35, is demonstrated here as well, as Joshua commands his men to remove the king of Ai’s body from the tree before sundown (8:29), illustrating his obedience to Moses’ command in Deut 21:22–23. Despite the great victory he achieved for the people against Ai, Joshua’s mind is still fixated on

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<sup>2</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, “The Deuteronomic Theology of the Book of Joshua,” in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*, eds. Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville (Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 8; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 200–3. There is no denying that the narrative character of Joshua is strongly deuteronomic, and that this deuteronomic “flavor” to the book of Joshua eclipses his personal narrative role and pervades the entirety of the biblical work. “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.”

obeying the law.<sup>3</sup> This supreme commitment to Torah functions as the preeminent literary theme in Josh 8:30–35, one that is governed in large part by Mosaic commands in Deuteronomy.<sup>4</sup>

### Exposition of Joshua 8:30–35

#### *Act I: Joshua's Obedience in Altar Building (vv. 30–31)*

Our pericope serves as the conclusion to a major section in the book of Joshua beginning in Josh 5:2–12. At the beginning of the narrative block, the men partake of the covenant sacramental sign and all the people celebrate the Passover meal together, and the section ends with Joshua's reading of the entire law to all the people of Israel.<sup>5</sup> After Joshua's successful campaign against the city of Ai, readers suddenly find the people of Israel transported nearly twenty miles north of Ai, where the narrative portion just concluded (8:29), to Mount Ebal, near Shechem.<sup>6</sup> The destruction of Ai, presumably, had stricken the surrounding and watching Canaanite nations with sufficient fear for the nation of Israel to advance their camp that far north

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<sup>3</sup> Sarah Lebhar Hall, *Conquering Character: The Characterization of Joshua in Joshua 1-11*, LHBOTS 512 (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 137.

<sup>4</sup> The Ebal CRC is overwhelmingly deuteronomistic in its orientation and intention, thus an introduction to its key biblical influences is in order. Two passages from Deuteronomy are key to a proper interpretation of Josh 8:30–35. First is Deut 11:26–32, which delineates the results of the peoples' covenant behavior: blessings for obedience, and curses for disobedience. Moreover, Moses explicitly instructed the people that, upon entering the land of promise, they should "set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal" (Deut 11:29). This pattern is carried out east of the Jordan by Moses himself in Deut 28, but it is incumbent upon Joshua as covenant leader after Moses' death to ensure that the renewal ceremony that Moses had in mind was executed properly. Deuteronomy 11 establishes a tradition of blessing and curse associated with the two mountains, and reinforces the peoples' – and especially Joshua's – duty to accomplish all that Moses had set before the people upon arrival in Canaan (Deut 11:32). The second text to consider is Deut 27. It is difficult to overstate the significance that Deut 27 plays in the events that unfold in the CRC of Josh 8 (see Appendix D for a comparison of Moses' commands in Deut 27 and Joshua's obedience to those commands in Josh 8). Moses' commands regarding the covenant ceremony to be carried out in the land of promise operate as a sort of rubric which Joshua meticulously follows in his oversight of the CRC on Mount Ebal. The particle 'כִּי' features prominently in both Deut 27 and Josh 8, and underscores the theme of totality in the book of Joshua as a whole. The thrust of the text is chiefly theological: before holy war can continue, covenant renewal is of preeminent importance for the entirety of the covenant community, especially after a heinous covenantal breach has occurred (7:1–26).

<sup>5</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *Joshua: No Falling Words*, Focus on the Bible (Ross-Shire, England: Christian Focus, 2000), 71.

<sup>6</sup> Davis captures the literary intent nicely: "We are wrenched from conquest to covenant." *Joshua*, 71.

without considerable confrontation.<sup>7</sup> The significance of the peoples' proximity to Shechem should not be overlooked, for it was there that Abram first received Yahweh's covenant promises that the land on which he was standing was the very land which God was giving him, and where Abram subsequently erected his own altar to Yahweh (Gen 12:6–7). The fact that the Israelites now stand on that very ground where their ancestor Abram stood was evidence of God's love for and faithfulness to his covenant children.<sup>8</sup>

It is here that Joshua commences his precise execution of deuteronomistic law.<sup>9</sup> First, Joshua builds an altar for sacrifice to the Lord, in accordance with Moses' command in Deut 27:5.<sup>10</sup> Altar building in the Pentateuch often symbolized that the patriarchs were claiming the land that rightly belonged to them by virtue of God's gracious promises to them. Thus Joshua's building of an altar is a living picture not only that the people of Israel have entered their homeland, but that the land itself belongs exclusively to Yahweh himself and that Canaan was a gift to his chosen people.<sup>11</sup> Up until this point, Joshua has already led the people in several solemn ceremonies immediately following after significant events in the conquest narrative: after the people cross the Jordan they set up twelve memorial stones, a generation of men took the covenant sign of circumcision, Joshua oversaw a Passover meal, and the judgment on Achan for his sin. The pause here in the midst of holy war symbolizes two essential elements of the

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<sup>7</sup> Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 146. However, this take on the text, admittedly, is highly contested. Hess also suggests that perhaps Shechem was occupied peacefully by the Israelites, or the city joined them in alliance (Richard S. Hess, *Joshua*, TOTC 6 [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996], 173). See Appendix C for a brief survey of the geographical issues involved in the Mount Ebal CRC.

<sup>8</sup> Davis, *Joshua*, 72.

<sup>9</sup> Creach refers to Josh 8:30–35 as a sort of “midterm report,” in that Joshua had been told to observe all the Moses had commanded him, and now readers see Joshua in the initial stages of conquest doing just that. Jerome F. D. Creach, *Joshua*, Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 82.

<sup>10</sup> Solitary altars in the OT are not unheard of. Averbeck has argued that the building of the altar at Shechem in Josh 8:30–31, explicitly commanded in Deut 27:4–7, presupposes the legitimacy of altars that are divorced from a temple. Richard E. Averbeck, “*תַּבְאַל*,” *NIDOTTE* 2:889–91.

<sup>11</sup> Woudstra, *Joshua*, 145; David G. Firth, *Joshua*, EBTC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021), 166–7.

conquest narrative: the people's need for covenant renewal, and the significance of Joshua's role in mediating the law of Moses to the people.<sup>12</sup>

Joshua erected this altar of uncut stones<sup>13</sup> on Mount Ebal. The mountain itself receives mention only in Deut 11:29; 24:4, 13 and here in our pericope. It features prominently in Deut 27 as the mountainous locale of the pronouncement of the curses as a result of covenant disobedience.<sup>14</sup> Mount Ebal is portrayed then as both the mountain of curse and now the mountain of worship, a fitting picture itself of the mutual poles of covenant life.<sup>15</sup> The Israelites just witnessed covenant curse in their own ranks earlier in the execution of Achan (Josh 7), which permitted them to go up and take Ai. Covenant discipline is the very means by which the nation experiences its need both for Yahweh's protection in battle, as well as his presence with them to fulfill their covenant identity. Thus, it is only fitting that the people now pause and renew the covenant after heinous covenant breach.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Davis: “[The pericope is here] to underscore the fact that covenant obedience has priority over military victory... to show that heeding God’s word is more crucial than fighting God’s war.” *Joshua*, 72. The relation between Moses and Joshua in the Ebal CRC is difficult to overstate. The two figures form a sort of *inclusio* that frames the passage: Joshua is mentioned in vv. 30, 33, and 35, but Moses pervades the middle verses (vv. 31–33). L. Daniel Hawk, *Joshua, Berit Olam* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 131–2. We will explore this in more depth below.

<sup>13</sup> As easy as it is to gloss over in a cursory reading of the passage, a relatively fair amount of attention has been devoted to the fact that Moses prescribed uncut stones as the building blocks of the altar on Mount Ebal (Deut 27:6; cf. Exod 20:25). Boling posits that the use of uncut stones would have contrasted with the hewn stones commonly used in pagan altars (R. G. Boling, *Joshua: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, AB 6 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982], 248). Calvin held that the divine purpose of the uncut rocks was “to prohibit the perpetuity of altars,” for an abundance of altars would have caused division among the people. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of Joshua*, trans. Henry Beveridge, in vol. 4 of *Calvin’s Commentaries*, 22 vols. (reprint ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 132. Butler appropriates Joshua’s care to obey Mosaic law by the fact that he “follows primitive construction techniques rather than following the trends of modern architecture” (Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, WBC 7 [Waco: Word, 1983], 92). Although it is difficult to ascertain exactly why Yahweh through Moses prescribed the use of uncut stones, the primary narrative thrust of the passage remains the same: Joshua was meticulous in his obedience to Torah. One omission from the Josh 8 pericope is the plastering of the stones used in the ceremony (Deut 27:2, 4), but since the text so emphatically rehearses Joshua’s obedience to the Deuteronomic command, Firth argues that it is safe to conclude that Joshua did in fact plaster the stones as well. *Joshua*, 168.

<sup>14</sup> D. M. Howard, *Joshua*, NAC 5 (Nashville: B&H, 1998), 215.

<sup>15</sup> Butler, *Joshua*, 91.

<sup>16</sup> Hamlin refers to Josh 8:30–35 as “the climax of the Achan-Ai sequence.” E. John Hamlin, *Joshua: Inheriting the Land*, ITC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 69. Hall makes a similar point: “The covenant ceremonies and reminders at Ebal cement the lesson of Israel’s experience at Ai.” *Conquering*, 146.

Atonement and worship are at the heart of the Ebal CRC. Joshua proceeded to offer both whole burnt offerings (Lev 1) and peace offerings (or “fellowship offerings,” Lev 3) upon the altar of Yahweh,<sup>17</sup> the means that God had provided for his people to reenter his presence and continue walking in covenant faithfulness.<sup>18</sup> Burnt and peace offerings were also offered at Mount Sinai when Israel first received the law (Exod 24:3–8). Thus there is an intentional link between the covenant made with Israel at Sinai and its renewal here at Ebal in the promised land.<sup>19</sup> In the inimitable words of Noort, in the Ebal CRC, “Sinai is coming home.”<sup>20</sup>

#### *Act II: Joshua’s Obedience in Torah Copying (vv. 32–33)*

It was “in the presence of the people of Israel” that Joshua made a copy of the law of Moses, clearly demonstrating Joshua’s scribal role (v. 32). Although “Torah” can refer in the HB to the entirety of the Pentateuch or Deuteronomy or the decalogue more specifically, Joshua most likely only copied the entirety of the book of Deuteronomy.<sup>21</sup> The word “copy” (אַפִּינָה) literally means “a second.” In Deut 17:18, the Israelite monarch is commanded to make a copy of the Torah for himself. It is clear that Joshua’s written copy of the law here is not his own personal copy, but rather is for the covenant community. Joshua copied the law onto stones, more than

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<sup>17</sup> The passage appears to indicate that it was the *people* who offered the burnt and peace offerings (the verb is plural). Why did the Levites not perform the sacrifices? But the Levitical priests are present (v. 33), and they were the ones carrying the ark of the covenant. It is likely that the priests were overseeing the ceremony itself with Joshua as covenant head, and likely offering the sacrifices themselves.

<sup>18</sup> Howard, *Joshua*, 215. Hamlin notes that the purpose of sacrifice in this instance is not to “appease an angry God.” Yahweh’s just wrath has already been quenched in the covenant discipline executed on Achan. “Rather, the sacrifice is to maintain and enhance the relationship of solidarity between God and man.” *Joshua*, 69.

<sup>19</sup> Woudstra, *Joshua*, 147.

<sup>20</sup> E. Noort, “The Traditions of Ebal and Gerizim: Theological Positions in the Book of Joshua,” in *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic Literature: Festschrift C. H. w. Brekelmans* (ed. M. Verenne and J. Lust; BETL 113; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 178.

<sup>21</sup> Firth, *Joshua*, 168. Calvin adds that “no stones however large could suffice to contain all the details. I therefore think that by the term Law only its substance and sanctions are denoted.” *Commentaries on the Book of Joshua*, 133.

likely a second set of stones specifically for this task, not the stones of the altar itself.<sup>22</sup> The stones therefore would serve a public function, allowing the people to read for themselves what the Lord demanded of them in their covenant union.<sup>23</sup> The people could count on the law itself speaking clearly to them. “Though the priests should have been dumb,” Calvin writes, “the stones themselves spoke plainly.”<sup>24</sup> Not only would a copy of Yahweh’s covenant serve his own people, but it would testify to the surrounding nations that the Lord was the supreme ruler and judge of the land of Canaan.<sup>25</sup>

Verses 33–35 are united particularly by their frequent use of the word “all” (כָל, five times in these three verses) as the means of accentuating the theme of totality, one that permeates all of Joshua. The biblical author stresses the motif in several ways: all Israel was there to witness the ceremony of covenant renewal and hear the reading of Torah, not only Israelite men, but the women and children (8:35), not only native born Israelites – this CRC did not discriminate on the grounds of ethnicity<sup>26</sup> – but even the sojourners<sup>27</sup> who had joined the ranks of Israel (8:33) were

<sup>22</sup> Howard, *Joshua*, 216. He goes on to note that, although the most natural reading grammatically would make the altar stones the preferred choice, Joshua’s relentless commitment to Torah makes us think that he would use a second set of stones for the copy of Torah, for Deut 27 prescribes two sets of stones, one plastered and one uncut.

<sup>23</sup> Public displays of legal texts were not uncommon in the ANE, particularly as a means of punctuating their authority and validity. Richard D. Nelson, *Joshua: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 120.

<sup>24</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of Joshua*, 133.

<sup>25</sup> Contrary to our thesis that the purpose of the Ebal CRC was to confirm Joshua as legitimate successor to Moses as covenant leader and Torah exegete, Hill has argued that the purpose of the ceremony is its function as a Hebrew land grant ceremony. “Lastly, as previously indicated, the intention or purpose of the Ebal ritual is not covenant renewal or even the legitimization of Joshua as Moses’ successor. Rather, it is the formal instrument by which Israel is authorized to possess Canaan as the land of the promise as Yahweh’s heir.” Andrew E. Hill, “The Ebal Ceremony as Hebrew Land Grant,” *JETS* 31.4 (1988): 406. Although I agree that Yahweh’s claim over the land is demonstrated here, and thus authorizes Israel to take that land by virtue of God’s giving it to them (because the land, after all, is Yahweh’s), I think that Hill’s proposal fails to account for the most straightforward reading of the text – that of a covenant renewal ceremony – as well as the literary context preceding Josh 8:30–35, that of Joshua’s confirmation as covenant leader in the midst of holy war.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. McConville, who argues that “the equation of nationhood with ethnicity,” already abolished in the political vision of the book of Deuteronomy, is subverted in the book of Joshua as well. J. G. McConville, *God and Earthly Power: An Old Testament Political Theology: Genesis–Kings*, LHBOTS 454 (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 104.

<sup>27</sup> The word here (גַּזָּב) corresponds to a “stranger” but with the additional dimension of “sojourner” or “protected citizen.” A “stranger” in Israel, although not ethnically of the people of God, functioned nearly as a covenant member, enjoying various privileges within the community, while a “foreigner” could be distinguished not only by ethnicity, but by worship as well. It is worth noting that Boling interprets these two words (גַּזָּב and גַּזְבָּן) the exact opposite as we have here. He takes גַּזָּב as referring to Israelites, for they had “long been present in the land,” and גַּזְבָּן

invited to hear and heed the voice of Yahweh to his people.<sup>28</sup> In other words, there is no one outside the covenant community who is excluded from both the privilege of hearing Torah and the responsibility of keeping it.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, there is a correspondence in Joshua between Torah obedience and the heart's covenantal loyalty to Yahweh. To put it simply, total obedience to God's law indicates total heart love and loyalty to God himself. In light of this, Joshua's commitment to the law in 8:30–35 only serves to punctuate his rightful status as the nation's new covenant leader, a second Moses, for his heart is fixed on what Yahweh has promised and commanded, and places the impetus on the nation to humbly submit themselves to the rule of God himself.<sup>30</sup>

### *Act III: Joshua's Obedience in Torah Reading (vv. 34–35)*

Joshua's obedience to all of the Torah of Moses now reaches its crescendo in vv. 34–35. It was only after Joshua had presided over the offering up of sacrifices and copying the law of Moses that he now proceeds to read that law. Now the narrator indicates that Joshua read all the words of Torah, including the blessings and the curses.<sup>31</sup> The people of Israel needed all the

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to refer the native peoples of the land, i.e. the land of Canaan. *Joshua*, 249. This cuts directly against previous episodes in the book of Joshua, for example the story of Rahab and her family being grafted into the covenant community by virtue of her faith in and loyalty to Yahweh alone (cf. Josh 2:8–14). Timmer points out this same point in Daniel C. Timmer, "Joshua," in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*, ed. Miles V. Van Pelt (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 167.

<sup>28</sup> It would be anachronistic to conclude that the text here intends to say that some Israelites were born in the promised land ("native-born") and others were not. The anthropological categories given here are ethnic, not geographical, meaning they refer to those who are native to Israel on the one hand, and those who were not on the other. Woudstra, *Joshua*, 149.

<sup>29</sup> Nelson, *Joshua*, 120. McConville makes the same observation, that in the Ebal CRC "Israel is portrayed, not according to its tribes, but in such a way as to highlight both the *totality* of the people and its *individual* and varied membership." McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 111, emphasis added.

<sup>30</sup> The text does not indicate whether the people respond verbally to the reading of the law or not. They were passive in voice, but active in listening. This fact makes Hall question whether this ceremony truly constituted covenant renewal, for no response is given by the covenant community, as in Deut 27:12–13, where the people recite the blessing and the curse of the covenant. *Conquering*, 147–8. However, I see no reason to truncate the definition of a proper covenant renewal ceremony so that it must include a verbal response from the people. Moreover, it is possible that all the people did respond in one way or another in the course of the Ebal CRC, but it simply was not recorded for us.

<sup>31</sup> Although the biblical author does not specify exactly what Joshua read, the fact that he read "the blessings and the curses" seems to indicate that he was reading either all of Deuteronomy or selected portions of it (e.g. the

words of the law in order for all the nation to walk completely in the way of the Lord.<sup>32</sup> This was the first public reading of Torah that the biblical author records since the death of Moses.<sup>33</sup>

Verse 35 provides a fitting and jarring grammatical element to the conclusion of this section. The emphasis in the previous verses has been clearly placed upon Joshua and the things he has done in accordance with Torah. Now, suddenly, readers are told there was something that Joshua did *not* do. By way of two negations in the clause (לֹא־הָיָה דָבָר מְכֻל אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר לֹא־הָיָה דָבָר אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה) the narrator reports that were was not a single word that Joshua did not read of all that Moses had commanded. Or, to put it positively, if Moses had commanded it, then Joshua did it.<sup>34</sup> Not only was Joshua faithful in obeying every jot and tittle of the Mosaic law in the construction of the altar on Mount Ebal, but he eclipses the letter of the law and actually reads Torah in the hearing of all the people.<sup>35</sup> In order to reinforce further the comprehensive nature of the gathered community on Mount Ebal that day, the term **בָּהּ** is used to refer to the entire

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Decalogue). These two seem to be the most popular options among commentators. Few if any actually think that Joshua read the entirety of the Pentateuch.

<sup>32</sup> Finsterbusch prefers to translate the clause, “Joshua read all the words of the law, namely the blessings and the curses,” but this is only because she balks at the need for Joshua to read the entirety of the law when Moses had only recently recapitulated it to the nation on the plains of Moab prior to invasion. Joshua’s reading then, she argues, would be “superfluous.” Karin Finsterbusch, “Deuteronomy and Joshua: Torah in the Book of Joshua in Light of Deuteronomy,” *JAJ* 3.2 (2012): 180. However, what she fails to account for is the nation’s incessant need for covenant renewal from the heart. The people needed to hear the words of Torah constantly, not only because they were prone to forget them, but because they were prone to forsake those words and rebel against Yahweh himself. The central problem of Torah-keeping is not a failure to *remember* in the strictly cerebral sense of the word, but a failure to *believe* God and his word.

<sup>33</sup> Howard, *Joshua*, 217. The portrayal of Joshua in the Ebal CRC prefigures the covenantal role that Ezra, another sapiential scribe, fulfills in his interpretation of Torah for the second generation of returning exiles. Upon entrance into the land of promise at the earliest stages of conquest, it was essential for Joshua and the people to be saturated all over again with the words of Yahweh: his promises, his blessings, his commandments, and his curses. So in the return to the land of Canaan, after habitual covenantal breach has occurred for centuries and righteous covenant discipline executed upon God’s people in the exile, it is equally essential for those re-entering the land to hear the Torah of Yahweh in order to remember their covenantal identity and reaffirm their covenantal commitment to him. Cf. Ezra 8:1–8.

<sup>34</sup> There is a parallelism in 8:35a capturing this relation between the two covenant leaders that demonstrates Joshua’s obedience:

*There was not a word  
of all that Moses  
had commanded  
that Joshua  
did not read.*

Hess, *Joshua*, 172.

<sup>35</sup> Nelson, *Joshua*, 120. A similar command is given by Moses in Deut 31:10–13, regarding the reading of the law at the Feast of Booths. The language of that passage is nearly identical to that of Josh 8:34–35.

assembly of the people of Israel, its only occurrence in Joshua.<sup>36</sup> The entire nation was in need of renewal, and it was only through faith in Yahweh's promises and submission to his word and rule that Israel would truly receive and enjoy all the privileges of covenantal life in the land.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Narrative Function of the Ebal Covenant Renewal Ceremony: The Centrality of Torah in the Life of Israel**

#### *Israel's Need for Covenant Renewal*

The Ebal CRC serves two primary functions in the narrative shape of the book of Joshua. First, it punctuates the need for the new generation to affirm their covenantal commitment to Yahweh as the one true God. The previous generation that died in the wilderness had ostensibly affirmed its covenantal loyalty to the Lord, only to fail time and time again.<sup>38</sup> Now, upon entrance into the promised land, the conquest generation was called upon to commit themselves to following Yahweh in their new life in the land. This is demonstrated in several ways in Josh 8:30–35. We have already mentioned that the narratives preceding this one are concerned with

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<sup>36</sup> Howard, *Joshua*, 217. The inchoate deuteronomic theme of the unity of Israel finds clear expression in the early chapters of Joshua, and, as we have highlighted, especially so in the realm of covenant renewal. The nation, in order to remain united and planted in the land of promise, had to be united as one singular nation in their faith in Yahweh and observance of his Torah. Nothing less than covenant obedience, both in faith and obedience, would justify their endurance in the land. Wenham, *Deuteronomic*, 199–200. Earl makes a similar comment, “The presence of the entire community here emphasizes the unity of Israel, and that the law is for everyone, being at the centre of the life of the community.” Douglas Earl, *Reading Joshua as Christian Scripture*, JTISup 2 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 156

<sup>37</sup> The pericope as a whole is constantly – yet only slightly – shifting focus between both *individual* and *corporate* dimensions. The majority of the emphasis is reserved for the individual Joshua (and Moses, for that matter) and his obedience to Torah for the service of the people, but it extends to the corporate covenant community gathered together for their own renewal. All the words of Torah were read before all the people because Torah was for the entire assembly, not only Joshua or the Levites or other leaders.

Although beyond the scope of this essay, we could add that covenant renewal at this juncture in the narrative also prepares the people of Israel for the bizarre episode immediately following it concerning the Gibeonite covenant (Nelson, *Joshua*, 119). Thus, upon covenant renewal, immediately following after covenant breach and discipline, the nation now has the opportunity to live out Yahweh's Torah in the contexts of conquest and treaties.

<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the significance of covenant renewal (or lack thereof) is not lost on the remainder of the OT corpus. Subsequent chapters in the story of the people of Israel rehearse the epic failure of her covenant leaders and mediators (with several notable exceptions) to cultivate in the land and in the hearts of the people fertile ground for Torah to flourish. At least part of the responsibility of the people of Israel in their covenant relationship was to remember the chronicles of covenant failure inscripturated for them from their nation's past, and to respond to such episodes by repenting and believing in Yahweh's covenant promises.

covenant discipline. The book of Joshua starts out so splendidly, only to come to a sudden, jolting stop at the covenant failure of Achan. The Achan–Ai narrative sequence demonstrates that the peoples' ultimate need lies not in military strength, but covenant fidelity; not in conquering enemies, but in having their hearts renewed in covenant communion with Yahweh.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, it is the entire nation that needed covenant renewal, not exclusively the leadership or the soldiers. Entrance into Canaan was a national and covenantal event, not merely a military effort. Thus, covenant renewal was both warranted and indispensable.

#### *Joshua as Second Moses and Covenant Exegete*

Secondly, Josh 8:30–35 bolsters Joshua's authority as the legitimate successor to Moses in his priestly role as covenant mediator and exegete.<sup>40</sup> We will examine each of these one by one. First, Joshua is portrayed as a second Moses in his covenant leadership.<sup>41</sup> Many have observed a succession narrative in Josh 1 in which Joshua receives his commissioning from Yahweh himself. His promises to Moses evoke the Abrahamic covenant (v. 3); he promises Joshua his presence as he was with Moses (v. 5); he commands him to uphold Torah above all else (vv. 7–8); and he reiterates again his presence with Joshua (v. 9). Joshua then receives the

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<sup>39</sup> Davis, *Joshua*, 72.

<sup>40</sup> Goswell has provided a thorough but succinct summary of the various ways that Joshua resembles Moses in Joshua: "In the early chapters of the book of Joshua, Joshua is presented as the divinely authenticated successor to Moses (1:3, 5, 17, 18; 3:7; 4:14), and he is shown to emulate Moses in various ways.<sup>15</sup> From the start of the book, Joshua is established as a second Moses (1:5: "as I was with Moses, so I will be with you"). This Moses typology is seen when he intercedes for sinful Israel (7:6–9) just as Moses did (Deut 9:25–29). Like Moses before his death, Joshua makes speeches that follow the covenant form (Joshua 23, 24). At times, he is seen as a prophet like Moses, giving a word of prophecy (3:9–13; 6:26; 7:13). The crossing of the Jordan recapitulates the earlier Red Sea crossing under Moses (4:23). Likewise, Joshua's encounter with the commander of the Lord's army recalls the burning bush experience (5:14, 15; cf. Exod 3:2–5). Like Moses, Joshua celebrates the Passover (5:10). Just as God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, Moses' arch-enemy, he hardens the heart of Joshua's enemies (11:20; cf. Exod 9:12). Joshua 12:1–6 lists Moses' victories over "the kings of the land," and this is immediately followed up in 12:7–24 with a listing of Joshua's victories. Joshua 13:8–33 records Moses' allotment of land to Israelite tribes, and chs. 14–19 go on to list Joshua's allotments. Joshua's effecting a victory with his outstretched javelin (8:18, 26) recalls Moses' use of his rod in Exod 14:16 and 17:11." Gregory Goswell, "Joshua and Kingship," *BBR* 23.1 (2013): 32.

<sup>41</sup> When we argue that Joshua functions in the narrative as a second Moses, we are not affirming that he assumes every role, office, or function that Moses filled. Many scholars have affirmed that Joshua is portrayed in the book as a second Moses, but only in particular ways. Unlike Moses, McConville observes, Joshua has a different relationship to Torah, and Joshua is not subsequently succeeded by anyone, perhaps a foreshadow of the tumultuous era of the judges when the nation lacked a stable, permanent covenant head. *God and Earthly Power*, 97.

trust and loyalty of the trans-Jordanian tribes, that “as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you” (v. 17). Moreover, in Josh 8:30–35, Joshua is clearly depicted as the one who leads the nation into the obedience to and preservation of Torah. These texts demonstrate at least one dimension of Joshua’s portrayal in the book, that of the rightful successor to Moses at the helm of God’s covenant people.

Secondly, Joshua functions as a sage-like scribe who not only models faithful covenant obedience like Moses before him, but he actually serves as the very interpreter of Israel’s Torah on behalf of the people, demonstrated most clearly in Josh 8:30–35. Joshua never writes down his own law, nor does Yahweh ever give to Joshua a covenantal law to inscribe. Instead, Joshua is commanded to copy the law that Yahweh had already graciously bestowed on his people. He does not provide a new word from the Lord *per se*, rather he communicates the same gracious word he has been given.<sup>42</sup>

Many scholars have argued that the primary literary mode of Joshua in the CRC is that of a royal figure, one who prefigures the eventual rise of the monarchy that would ideally rule Israel. Although Joshua never actually assumed the office of a king, “several indications in the book show him in a ‘kingly’ light, acting with the authority of a king and in ways in which kings were supposed to act.”<sup>43</sup> Nelson has argued that Joshua is a Josianic figure, particularly demonstrated in his obedience to Torah, covenant mediation, and supervision of the Passover festival.<sup>44</sup> But the monarchic parallels are not as unassailable as some have suggested. The king

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<sup>42</sup> Butler calls Joshua’s word “second-hand.” *Joshua*, 94.

<sup>43</sup> Howard, *Joshua*, 214. Butler, e.g., sees Joshua’s bringing both whole burnt offerings and peace offerings as a fulfillment of a kingly office (cf. 2 Sam 6:17–18). *Joshua*, 92.

<sup>44</sup> Richard D. Nelson, “Josiah in the Book of Joshua,” *JBL* 100 (1981): 531–540. Porter makes a similar argument centered around the king’s royal duty to devote himself completely to Torah. See J. Roy Porter, “Succession in Joshua,” in *Proclamation and Presence: Old Testament Essays in Honour of Gwynne Henton Davies* (ed. J. I. Durham and J. R. Porter; London: SCM Press, 1970), esp 110–17. Gerbrandt’s thesis that Joshua functioned as the first king of Israel rests on several theses regarding the paradigmatic Davidic monarchy: 1) Josh 1:1–9 functions as a succession account, resembling that of a kingly father crowning his princely son; 2) the king had a responsibility to perpetuate his people’s existence on the land, which Joshua did; 3) Joshua’s relation to the covenant and the law

is commanded to make a copy of the law for himself (Deut 17:18), while Joshua inscribes a copy for the nation (John 8:32–33)<sup>45</sup>; Joshua does not offer the sacrifices in the CRC all alone (Josh 8:31) as kings do later in the biblical history (e.g. David, 2 Sam 6:17–18; Solomon, 1 Kings 3:15); and Hall argues that the characterization of Joshua in the entire book of Joshua is coherent, and does not need a retroactive reading from the Josianic narrative to make sense of it.<sup>46</sup>

Instead, the preferred characterization of Joshua in the Ebal CRC is that of a wise scribe, an exegete, of Mosaic Torah. Chambers sees Josh 8:30–35 as the final act of Joshua’s ultimate confirmation of his role as covenant interpreter.<sup>47</sup> Joshua is referred to in the epilogue of Deuteronomy (Deut 34:9) as “full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him.” The instances of the phrase **רְאֵת הַקְּרָבָה** occur in situations regarding a person’s skill in “‘concretizing’ Yhwh’s commands (to Moses) within specific artisanal and judicial contexts” (cf. Exod 28:3; Isa 11:2).<sup>48</sup> Joshua, as the leader of the CRC, interprets the commands of Moses in Deut 27 and wisely carries out those instructions in a way contextualized to the Israelites’ moment in Josh 8. Deut 27 has, up until Josh 8:30, already been fulfilled in some ways, but not

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resemble the responsibilities of a king (here is where he invokes Josh 8:30–35, and also makes mention of Joshua’s similarly to Josiah); 4) Joshua’s farewell address in Josh 23 comports well with a king’s exhortation to his people to keep the covenant; and 5) the king had responsibility for the defense of the nation in war. “Joshua,” he concludes, “was not the king, but he was a forerunner of the later kings.” For his full study, see Gerald Eddie Gerbrandt, *Kingship According to the Deuteronomistic History* (SBLDS 87; Atlanta: Scholars, 1986), 116–23.

<sup>45</sup> A similar point can be made for the act of reading: the king reads his copy of Torah for the sake of his own godliness (Deut 17:19), while Joshua reads to the covenant community (Josh 8:34–35).

<sup>46</sup> Hall, *Conquering*, 150. Moreover, in general it is misleading to assert that whenever covenant leaders fulfill royal functions they are therefore functioning in a royal mode. The various offices that individuals at some point or another in Israel’s history occupy in their role as “covenant leader” – whether prophet, priest, king, or judge – inevitably exhibit a degree of overlap in their roles and responsibilities. Their roles are not mutually exclusive from one another, although they are still distinct from one another. Simply to identify certain royal features in Joshua is far from asserting that his narrative function is monarchic in general. These offices, ultimately, will not be united in any one covenant leader until the coming of Jesus Christ. J. G. McConville, “King and Messiah in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History,” in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day (JSOTSup 270; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 286.

<sup>47</sup> Kline also detects evidence of a pattern of succession here, but he argues more along the lines of ANE covenant treaties than does Chambers. For his full comments, see Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1963), 121–2.

<sup>48</sup> Nathan Chambers, “Confirming Joshua as the interpreter of Israel’s *Tôrah*: The Narrative Role of Joshua 8:30–35,” *BBR* 25.2 (2015): 151.

every way possible. Thus, as covenant leader, Joshua is responsible for executing the remaining portions that the people have yet to accomplish, namely the copying of the law and the altar ceremony. In order to achieve faithfulness to Torah, the ceremony “required creative interpretation and application to new circumstances,” of which Joshua was authorized to do on the basis of his covenant leadership as successor to Moses.<sup>49</sup> Joshua is chiefly obedient to Torah in all that it prescribes, qualifying him to preserve Torah in all that it contains, resulting in his authoritative interpretation of Torah in all that it teaches for all the people of Israel.

### **Covenant Renewal in Redemptive History: Jesus as Sapiential Scribe and Covenant Exegete**

Covenant renewal was a gracious gift to Yahweh’s people, but the Scriptures of Israel provide an even greater hope for Israel: the new covenant. Yahweh’s promise of a new covenant drips off the pages of the writing prophets, including Jer 31:31–37, one of the premier new covenant texts in the OT. “I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer 31:33). No longer will Yahweh’s Torah be written on stone tablets, as Joshua had done, but the Lord himself will inscribe his law onto the hearts of those whom he calls into covenantal union.

The imagery invoked here is scribal in nature, but the Lord’s scribal activity is accentuated in a greater manner: the new covenant, the new Torah, will exceed the old covenant because Torah will now no longer reside inside the ark on tablets of stone only to be consulted by the religious leadership. Instead, Torah will inhabit the very hearts of all of Yahweh’s people. Thus will Moses’ word to Israel on the plains of Moab, “But the word is very near you. It is in

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<sup>49</sup> Chambers, “Confirming,” 153.

your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it" (Deut 30:14). The new covenant, therefore, both internalizes and universalizes Yahweh's Torah in the hearts of his people.<sup>50</sup>

This promise is fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus not only shares a name with Joshua, but he too is the sapiential scribe who inscribes and interprets the Torah of the Lord before all his people. He not only reads the word of the Lord, but he *is* the Word of Yahweh incarnate (John 1:1–2), and by his Spirit he inscribes the Torah of the new covenant, the gospel, upon the tablets of the human hearts of his chosen people (2 Cor 3:3).<sup>51</sup> Christ reads the law of the gospel to his people by the same Holy Spirit within them, the one testifying to their own spirits that they indeed are children of God (Rom 8:15–17).

Jesus did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it (Matt 5:17), for all the Scriptures, including the Law, find their greatest fulfillment and purpose in Christ himself (Luke 24:27). The new commandment that he gives to those who follow him is ultimately an old one, for its chief aim and end are the same as the Torah in the Scriptures of Israel, to love God and love one's neighbor (John 13:34; Mark 12:29–31). As the principal author of Torah, Jesus is authorized to determine its true meaning as its principle exegete.<sup>52</sup> And as the nation of Israel made Torah the

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<sup>50</sup> Scott R. Swain, "New Covenant Theologies," in *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives*, eds. Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 561.

<sup>51</sup> The sixteenth century German theologian Konrad Pelikan, commenting on Christ's fulfillment of the Ebal CRC in Josh 8:30–35, is worth quoting in full here:

But Christ our Lord writes on living and perfect stones the second law, namely, he writes the gospel and the commandment of love toward God and our neighbor onto the hearts of the faithful, which are stones suitable for the building of an altar. Jesus reads his law to us, when he reveals the hidden things of the law, when he inculcates and inspires the fear and love of God, when he stirs the hearts of the elect to keep the divine law and shows the meaning of the law by declaring it in the gospel and in the apostolic Scriptures.

Konrad Pelikan, *Commentary on Joshua* 8:33–35, quoted in N. Scott Adams, ed., *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, RCS Old Testament 4 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 123.

<sup>52</sup> Jesus himself proclaimed this reality to the obdurate Pharisees in Mark 2:23–28, regarding the Sabbath. By declaring himself Lord of the Sabbath, not only is Jesus announcing that he is the ultimate *telos* of Sabbath rest in general, but he is equally claiming to be the rightful interpreter of all the Law teaches. Jesus' words here are chiefly an *authorial* claim and therefore an *authoritative* claim: as the author of Torah, Jesus has full authority to interpret its true meaning.

center of their covenant life, so the new covenant community makes Christ, “the end of the law” (Rom 10:4), the center of their communion with God and the aim of their obedience, a faith in Christ that expresses itself in love (Gal 5:6).<sup>53</sup>

By his perfect, perpetual, and personal obedience to every word of Torah, Christ purchased complete redemption for all those who forsake their own attempts to justify themselves by works of the law and receive by faith his perfect righteousness (Gal 2:16). His ministry far eclipses that of Moses and Joshua (Heb 3:1–4:13), for he serves as covenant mediator for all eternity (1 Tim 2:5). Just as Yahweh was with Moses and Joshua (Josh 1:5), so Christ too, by his Spirit, is present in and among his covenant people forever (Matt 28:20), and he leads them continually in covenant renewal as the Spirit transforms and conforms his elect into his image from one degree of glory into another, until they behold the face of their Father in their true promised land (2 Cor 3:16).

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<sup>53</sup> Earl, *Reading Joshua*, 156.

## Appendix A: The Ebal Covenant Renewal Ceremony in the ESV, BHS, and LXX

### ESV (8:30–35)

**30** At that time Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal, **31** just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the people of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, “an altar of uncut stones, upon which no man has wielded an iron tool.” And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD and sacrificed peace offerings. **32** And there, in the presence of the people of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. **33** And all Israel, sojourner as well as native born, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded at the first, to bless the people of Israel. **34** And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. **35** There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.

### BHS (8:30–35)

30 אָז יָבַנָה יְהוָשָׁע מִזְבֵּחַ לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהַר עֲיָבֵל:  
**31** כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה עַבְדֵּיהוָה אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכֶתֶב בְּסֶפֶר תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה מִזְבֵּחַ אֱכֹנִים שְׁלֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר לְאֱהֹנִיר עַלְיָהוּ בְּרִזְלָן  
 וַיַּעֲלוּ עַלְיוֹן עַלְוֹת לִיהוָה וּבְנָבוֹחַ שְׁלֹמִים:  
**32** וַיַּכְתְּבֵשָׁם עַל־הָאֱכֹנִים אֶת מִשְׁנָה תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר כָּמֶב לְפָנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
**33** וְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּקְרְבָּנָיו וַיַּשְׁתַּרְמִמוּ וַיַּשְׁפְּטוּ עַמְקִים מִזְהָהוּ וְאַרְוֹן נָגֵד הַכְּמֻנִים הַלְוִיִּם נְשָׁאִים אַרְוֹן בְּרִית־יְהוָה בְּגַר:  
 בָּאָרֶחֶת צָצִיו אֶל־מִזְבֵּחַ הַר־גְּרִיזָה וְהַחְצִיו אֶל־מִזְבֵּחַ הַר־עֲכָל כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה עַבְדֵּיהוָה לְבָרֶךָ אֶת־הָעָם יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרִאשָׁנָה:  
**34** וְאֶחָרִידִים קָרְא אֶת־כְּלִיד־קְרִבִּי הַתּוֹרָה קְרָבָה וְהַקְלִילָה כְּכָל־הַכְּתֻוב בְּסֶפֶר הַתּוֹרָה:  
**35** לְאֱהֹנִיר זָכָר מִכְלָא אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר לְאֱהֹנָר יְהוָשָׁע נָגֵד כְּלִיד־קְרִבִּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַנְשִׁים וְהַטְּרִים וְהַגָּר הַהְלָקָה:  
 בְּקָרְבָּם:

### LXX (9:2α–ζ)

**2α** Τότε φωκοδόμησεν Ἰησοῦς θυσιαστήριον Κυρίω τῷ Θεῷ Ισραὴλ ἐν ὄρει Γαιβάλ, **2β** καθότι ἐνετείλατο Μωυσῆς ὁ θεράπων Κυρίου τοῖς υἱοῖς Ισραὴλ, καθὰ γέγραπται ἐν τῷ νόμῳ Μωυσῆ, θυσιαστήριον λίθων ὄλοκλήρων, ἐφ' οὓς οὐκ ἐπεβλήθη σίδηρος, καὶ ἀνεβίβασεν ἐκεῖ ὄλοκαυτώματα Κυρίω καὶ θυσίαν σωτηρίου. **2γ** καὶ ἔγραψεν Ἰησοῦς ἐπὶ τῶν λίθων τὸ δευτερονόμιον, νόμον Μωυσῆ, δινέγραψεν ἐνώπιον τῶν υἱῶν Ισραὴλ **2δ** καὶ πᾶς Ισραὴλ καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ δικασταὶ καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς αὐτῶν παρεπορεύοντο ἐνθεν καὶ ἐνθεν τῆς κιβωτοῦ ἀπέναντι, καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ οἱ Λευΐται ἥραν τὴν κιβωτὸν τῆς διαθήκης Κυρίου, καὶ ὁ προσήλυτος καὶ ὁ αὐτόχθων, οἱ ἥσαν ἡμισυ πλησίον ὅρους Γαριζίν, καὶ οἱ ἥσαν ἡμισυ πλησίον ὅρους Γαιβάλ, καθότι ἐνετείλατο Μωυσῆς ὁ θεράπων Κυρίου εὐλογῆσαι τὸν λαὸν ἐν πρώτοις. **2ε** καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα οὕτως ἀνέγνω Ἰησοῦς πάντα τὰ ρήματα τοῦ νόμου τούτου, τὰς εὐλογίας καὶ τὰς κατάρας, κατὰ πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ νόμῳ Μωυσῆ. **2ζ** οὐκ ἦν ρῆμα ἀπὸ πάντων ὃν ἐνετείλατο Μωυσῆς τῷ Ἰησοῖ, ὁ οὐκ ἀνέγνω Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὰ ὅτα πάσης ἐκκλησίας υἱῶν Ισραὴλ, τοῖς ἀνδράσι καὶ ταῖς γυναιξὶ καὶ τοῖς παιδίοις καὶ τοῖς προσηλύτοις τοῖς προσπορευομένοις τῷ Ἰσραὴλ.

## Appendix B: Translation of Joshua 8:30–35

**8:30** At that time<sup>54</sup> / Joshua built<sup>55</sup> an altar to<sup>56</sup> the Lord, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal, / **31**  
as<sup>57</sup> Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded the children of Israel, / as it was written<sup>58</sup> in the  
scroll<sup>59</sup> of the law of Moses, / an altar of uncut stones,<sup>60</sup> upon which no iron tool has been used. /  
And on it they offered up<sup>61</sup> whole burnt offerings to the Lord and sacrificed<sup>62</sup> peace offerings. **32**  
And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, / he<sup>63</sup> wrote on the stones a copy<sup>64</sup> of the law  
of Moses, / which he had written.<sup>65</sup> **33** And all of Israel, / both the sojourners and the native

<sup>54</sup> **At that time** (v. 30): This use of **וְ** is strongly disjunctive, and usually indicates approximate time and relative action. Although the verb appears in the imperfect, it retains a past time meaning. “The non-perfective verb form regularly... has a past time reference after **וְ**.” (IBHS §31.6.2c) Rabinowitz remarks that the **וְ**+non-perfective construction appears here “because of the reference in the immediately preceding context (vm 27) to ‘the word of the Lord which he commanded Joshua.’” Isaac Rabinowitz, “**וְ** Followed by Imperfect Verb-Form in Preterite Contexts : A Redactional Device in Biblical Hebrew,” *VT* 34.1 (1984): 60. Moreover, **וְ** plus a finite verb is typically used to denote “action within a larger narrative unit,” but twice in Joshua it functions to introduce a new narrative unit, both of which, importantly, involve the people of Israel building an altar. Boling, *Joshua*, 246. Cf. John A. Cook, *Time and the Biblical Hebrew Verb: The Expression of Tense, Aspect, and Modality in Biblical Hebrew*, LSAWS 7 (Winona Lake, IN: 2012), 260–4.

<sup>55</sup> **Joshua built** (v. 30): The opening verb **בָּנָה** is a *wayyiqtol*, which typically does not present past time, but when following **וְ**, as in the note above, it functions as a preterite, and is “distinguished from the imperfect by its vocalization and accent in the Qal of weak verbs.” The preterite frequently occurs after **וְ** in prose (Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*, 2nd ed. [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984], §177). Joüon describes this not as a proper preterite, but simply a long imperfect (Joüon §113i).

<sup>56</sup> **To the Lord** (v. 30): The **לְ** preposition here could refer to possession (the altar belonging to Yahweh), but more likely it is of specification, meaning the altar has been built for the purpose of Yahweh and his worship. Williams, *Syntax*, §273.

<sup>57</sup> **As** (v. 31): The relative particle with the prefixed preposition (**רַאֲכָה**) indicates agreement between two things. In this case, Joshua built the altar in the manner which Moses had prescribed earlier. Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 122-3.

<sup>58</sup> **As it was written** (v. 31): The Qal passive participle here retains the past tense (Moses had already done the writing).

<sup>59</sup> **In the scroll** (v. 31): This clause is omitted in LXX.

<sup>60</sup> **Uncut stones** (v. 31): The adjective literally means “complete.” The verse goes on, however, to indicate that “complete” in this context means no one has ever wielded a tool against it in order to cut against it.

<sup>61</sup> **They offered up** (v. 32): The *wayyiqtol*, following an imperfect verb, “signifies a (con)sequential or explanatory situation in the past time,” and can appear after a clause beginning with **וְ**. IBHS §33.3.3b.

<sup>62</sup> **They offered up ... and sacrificed** (v. 32): LXX is slightly more economical than MT, capturing the same meaning but only using one verb with a compound object: “and he sacrificed to the LORD burnt offerings and peace offerings.” Boling, *Joshua*, 245–6.

<sup>63</sup> **He** (v. 32): The subject is implied in the verb, but Joshua is clearly intended, as LXX makes explicit. This same clarification occurs also in v. 34. Boling, *Joshua*, 246.

<sup>64</sup> **A copy** (v. 32): Lit. “a second,” *HALOT* categorizes the word as primarily meaning “in second position,” or referring to someone second in command, but can also refer to a copy of something, as it does here. *HALOT* 2:650.

<sup>65</sup> **Which he had written** (v. 32): The challenge with this relative clause is that the verb, since it is a third masculine singular form, is ambiguous as to its antecedent. Grammatically, the verb could refer either to Moses or Joshua. LXX<sup>b</sup> omits the clause altogether (Nelson, *Joshua*, 116). “Moses” is the nearest antecedent, but, as Butler points out, the “intention appears to be to emphasize the work of Joshua.” Butler, *Joshua*, 90. McConville suggests that the

born,<sup>66</sup> / with their elders, officials, and judges,<sup>67</sup> / were standing on both sides<sup>68</sup> of the ark before the Levitical priests, / who were carrying the ark of the covenant of the Lord, / half of them in front of Mount Gerizim, and half of them<sup>69</sup> in front of Mount Ebal<sup>70</sup>, / just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded / to bless the people of Israel first.<sup>71</sup> **34** And afterward,<sup>72</sup> he read all the words of the law<sup>73</sup> / – the blessings and the curses<sup>74</sup> – / according to all that is written in the scroll of the law. **35** There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded / that Joshua did not read / in the presence of the entire assembly of Israel, / including the women, and the children, and the sojourners who lived<sup>75</sup> among them.

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ambiguity might be deliberate, “since in important respects Joshua continues the work of Moses.” J. Gordon McConville and Stephen N. Williams, *Joshua*, THOTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 45.

<sup>66</sup> **Both the sojourners and the native born** (v. 33): Both nominals here appear in the singular form with the prefixed preposition and the definite article, *בָּנָר אֶזְרָח*. The article is gentilic, referring to a single member of a collected group, typically employed when referring to national or ethnic groups. Arnold and Choi, *Guide*, 39. Williams calls this the generic use of the article. Williams, *Syntax*, §92.

<sup>67</sup> **Their elders, officials, and judges** (v. 33): Each of these substantives are anarthrous due to the fact that each of them contain a pronominal suffix. Williams, *Syntax*, §82.

<sup>68</sup> **Both sides** (v. 33): The clause is made up of two near demonstrative pronouns with a prefixed *בָּ* preposition. The *בָּ* here is inclusive, meaning both this [side] and this [other side]. Thus, “both sides” captures the meaning sufficiently. Williams, *Syntax*, §327.

<sup>69</sup> **Half of them** (v. 33): The noun here *בָּנָר אֶזְרָח* is unusual in that it has both a definite article and a pronominal suffix. Joüon simply takes this as an error in the MT (Joüon §140c). Boling writes that the conundrum “continues to resist explanation.” *Joshua*, 249.

<sup>70</sup> **In front of Mount Ebal** (v. 33): Nelson points out that technically the Hebrew allows for the people to actually be facing the mountains themselves, but it seems more likely that the people are facing one another inward. Nelson, *Joshua*, 116.

<sup>71</sup> **At first** (v. 33): It is unclear what this clause is modifying. It could be referring to what Moses had commanded long before, or it could be referring to the pronouncement of the blessing itself, that it should precede the reading of the blessing and curse. Grammatically, either are a legitimate option, but I prefer the latter, that the blessing should come first, as I have translated it above. Robert G. Bratcher and Barclay M. Newman, *A Handbook on the Book of Joshua* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1983), 121.

<sup>72</sup> **Afterwards** (v. 34): This use of *בָּ* is temporal, often followed by the *כִּי*, as here. The sense is sequential, that is, after Joshua had built the altar, offered sacrifices, and made a copy of the law, then he read it. Williams, *Syntax*, §360.

<sup>73</sup> **All the words of the law** (v. 34): The definite direct object marker appears with the seghol pointing because it is affixed to the noun via maqqep, signifying that “the object is completely affected.” *BHRG* §33.4.2. In other words, it was not just that Joshua read a portion of the words of the law, but he read the entirety of the law (or at least the portion that he was intending to read), all of its words.

<sup>74</sup> **The blessings and the curses** (v. 34): This parenthetical comment clarifies and supports the likelihood that the reading of the law is derived from Deuteronomy. Both nouns are singular, and could be translated “the blessing and the curse.” However, if Deut 28 is in fact in view here, translating them in the plural makes the most sense.

<sup>75</sup> **Who lived** (v. 35): The verb here is literally “those who walked” (*בָּנָר אֶזְרָח*). “Walking” among a group can serve as an idiomatic way to refer to those who dwell among others, or one could plausibly render it that these people simply traveled along with the Israelites. The people of Israel have only just completed their forty year journey in the wilderness, so for the nation to still be referred to implicitly as “traveling” or pilgrim people would not be mistaken. *HALOT* 1:247.

Grammars used:

<i>BHRG</i> :	§33.4.2
Williams:	§177, 82
GCK:	§29h, 47m, 127f, i
Waltke/O'Connor:	§31.6.3c, 33.3.3b
J-M:	§113i, 140c

## **Appendix C: An Overview of the Text Critical and Geographical Issues in the Study of Joshua 8:30–35**

Upon first encountering the Mount Ebal renewal ceremony in Josh 8:30–35, it can cause a considerable amount of sensory overload when one discovers that this small, seemingly innocent pericope has generated a great deal of controversy. The two primary issues in the study of Josh 8:30–35 involve both text critical questions and geographical questions. At first glance, the two questions seem unrelated, but in fact one’s proposal to the text critical question will naturally inform their response to the geographical question. This brief appendix will simply outline the issues at hand, while offering a modest solution for each of the two problems.<sup>76</sup>

We turn first to the text critical question of Josh 8:30–35. The textual tradition of the renewal ceremony is complex and deserves its own space for a general introduction to the issues involved. The covenant renewal ceremony on Mt. Ebal is located at three different places in the textual traditions. First, the MT places it immediately after the destruction of Ai in Joshua 8, and immediately prior to the report of the response of the Levantine kings in MT Josh 9:1. This location emphasizes, as we have argued above, that the nation’s need for covenant renewal on the heels of covenant breach was paramount to the success of execution of holy war moving forward. Additionally, if the MT is followed, then the CRC itself actually precipitates the local kings mustering their forces jointly in order to meet Joshua and Israel for battle. Israel’s CRC is what finally provokes the surrounding rulers to fight.

In the LXX, however, the pericope is postponed two more verses away from its MT location, appearing in Josh 9:2ff, falling in between the short summary section regarding the local kings and the episode of the Gibeonite deception and subsequent covenant with Israel. The

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<sup>76</sup> It is important to clarify from the outset that, so long as one maintains a commitment to the authority and infallibility of Scripture, the answers to these two questions do not dramatically alter the interpretation offered above in our exposition of the passage.

position in the text makes explicit the connection between Joshua's destruction of Ai and the Levantine kings marshaling their forces into one to fight the oncoming Hebrew menace. And finally, we have a small textual fragment from Qumran, 4QJosh<sup>a</sup>, that places portions of Josh 8:34–35 (along with other transitional material not found elsewhere in the biblical corpus) immediately before the ceremony of circumcision in Josh 5:2–9. It seems safe to conclude that most likely the entirety of the Ebal CRC pericope was once here in the Qumran texts, but was simply lost or destroyed. The strength of this location, Hall points out, is that it appears to conform ever so slightly more to the Mosaic commands in Deut 27, where Moses exhorts the people to set up the altar to Yahweh immediately after crossing the Jordan into Canaan (cf. Deut 27:2).<sup>77</sup> Tov suggests that the pericope was placed in the Qumran scroll where it was “in order to stress the similarity between Moses and Joshua,” since both figures experience eventful crossings of bodies of water, Moses the Red Sea and Joshua the Jordan.<sup>78</sup>

Needless to say, the conundrum is not a simple one to solve. The problem for those who wish to maintain the MT as the primary witness, it is commonly argued, is that the narratival “flow” of the LXX and 4QJosh<sup>a</sup> locations appear smoother and more logical. Even Davis admits that “8:30–35 does give us a literary jolt.”<sup>79</sup> The narrative is moving along nicely, reporting the details of the conquest, then suddenly (and some have pointed out the strong disjunctive force of נִשְׁׁבָּת in 8:30; see Appendix B above) readers have been ushered into a new scene, out of a sequence of war and into a stage of renewal. Moreover, a grammatical question only compounds the confusion. In the MT, Josh 9:1 begins with the ambiguous temporal clause לִי יָהִי כַּשְׁמַע, where the

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<sup>77</sup> Hall, *Conquering*, 140.

<sup>78</sup> Emanuel Tov, “Literary Development in the Book of Joshua as Reflected in the MT, the LXX, and 4QJosh<sup>a</sup>,” in *The Book of Joshua*, ed. Ed Noort, BETL (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 83. Tov’s essay is thorough and goes much deeper than we will here on 4QJosh<sup>a</sup> specifically.

<sup>79</sup> Davis, *Joshua*, 71.

antecedent of the infinitive construct “hear” could either be the destruction of Ai at the hands of the Israelites in 8:29 or the reading of the law at the CRC in MT 8:35.

Some have noticed the similar subject material shared between Josh 8:30–35 and a second covenant renewal ceremony at the end of Joshua, 24:1–28, and have even made attempts to pair the two together because of their related content. Soggin, perhaps the most bold of all, opts to locate the pericope after Josh 22:27 although there is no textual evidence to support this placement. He states that 8:30–35 “have no link with what precedes them nor with what follows.”<sup>80</sup> It seems likely that the 4QJosh<sup>a</sup> location is most likely an attempted scribal correction to the passage to make it comport more with an overly literal reading of Deut 27.<sup>81</sup> The LXX appears to swap one confusion for another: if the Greek variant is chosen, then the text gives the impression that the people of Israel commenced covenant renewal on Mount Ebal because the Levantine kings had convened for battle, which does not fit with the theological emphases of the passage.<sup>82</sup>

Auld simply takes it that, since there are three variant traditions, then the pericope as a whole “is in fact not original at all, but a latecomer looking for a suitable home.”<sup>83</sup> Finsterbusch summarizes the “unavoidable” (critical) conclusion regarding the problem of the various locations of the Ebal pericope: “the different positions of the account reflect the fact that the passage was (composed and) added only when a redactor became aware that his ‘Joshua’ lacked

<sup>80</sup> J. A. Soggin, *Joshua: A Commentary*, OTL, trans. R. A. Wilson, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 1972), 241. However, he does go on to note that that does not mean that the Ebal CRC is a historical fiction, he just believes it has “undergone numerous corrections.” 242. Responding to Soggin and his take that Josh 8 and 24 represent variant traditions of the same event, Merrill writes, “What this view fails to appreciate is the need for every generation to affirm its commitment to covenant with Yahweh. It was most appropriate for the assembly to meet at the commencement of the conquest and for the next generation to do so on the eve of Joshua’s death.” Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 130n48.

<sup>81</sup> Firth, *Joshua*, 164.

<sup>82</sup> Firth, *Joshua*, 164–5.

<sup>83</sup> A. Graeme Auld, *Joshua Retold: Synoptic Perspectives*, OTS (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 110–11. He goes on, “But I would be very resistant to assigning Josh 8:30–35 to the same stratum as any of the material in Joshua whose attested position was constant according to all our available witnesses.”

the fulfilment of Moses' directives in Deut 27. This was obviously not so at an early (or the earliest) compositional stage of Joshua.”<sup>84</sup> However, particularly when she assumes that the variety of locations of the text renders it late and unoriginal, Finsterbusch is begging the question. There are numerous other instances in the early chapters of Joshua that establish the legitimacy of Joshua's succession of Moses as covenant leader, which we have documented above. Although we have argued in this essay that the CRC is the pinnacle of the first half of Joshua's characterization as both covenant leader and covenant interpreter, that by no means requires us to conclude that the passage was created for this purpose. Simply because the pericope obtains a literary and theological purpose in its placement in the MT does not render it inauthentic.

The question, then, is whether the text's character is theological or chronological. But it is important to recall that the OT, as Christian Scripture with a divine author, does not concede to the pressure of the false dichotomy. The Scriptures of Israel are both historical and theological – they report true events that have significant theological import. Of course, here the question is not (for us, at least) whether Josh 8:30–35 is true, but whether the biblical author/editor placed this pericope in this location (in the MT) as a continuation of the narrative chronologically, or whether it was placed here for theological purposes. Hess provides a helpful suggestion to a possible literary method in Joshua. External events, he argues, that is, activities carried out by the covenant community in relation to the Canaanite nations, are intertwined in the biblical witness with internal events, or things that occur within the covenant community itself. In other words, the narrator switches back and forth throughout the book, especially the first thirteen chapters, between events that take place within the community and outside the community. Hall makes the same point, referring to the phenomenon as the biblical author's “characteristic oscillation

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<sup>84</sup> Finsterbusch, “Deuteronomy and Joshua,” 177.

between events [“external”] and theological reflection [“internal”].”<sup>85</sup> This suggestion is useful when considering the location of Josh 8:30–35 in the narrative sequence of the book of Joshua. There is good reason to believe that the location of the “floating pericope” in MT is warranted if indeed the reporting of the events of Joshua have a *literary* structure or character to them, in which the external activities of Israel are intertwined with the internal in the portrayal of the conquest. The Ebal CRC exemplifies this pattern beautifully, that, after their defeat of Ai, “coming as it does on the heels of defeat, the people of Israel pause to return glory to Yahweh, and renew their attention to the blessings and curses of the covenant.”<sup>86</sup> Indeed, as we have argued, the MT’s location of the pericope after the destruction of Ai and before the deception of the Gibeonites serves a profoundly *theological* function.<sup>87</sup>

Pitkänen has suggested that the pericope fits well into its literary context, whether or not it appears in Josh 5, 8, or 9. In all three variants, the narrative appears in the early stages of the conquest, and so long as one does not demand a strict chronology, then “from a narrative viewpoint, there is no need to regard Joshua 8:30–35 as an addition, but the passage can be seen as an integral part of the design of the book of Joshua as a whole.”<sup>88</sup> Moreover, the placement of Josh 8:30–35 in this location serves a thematic function, emphasizing the peoples’ need for covenantal renewal through a fresh recapitulation of the Torah. The people had only recently been guilty of committing a heinous act of covenant treason, and had subsequently received covenant discipline from the Lord. Thus covenant renewal is both warranted and expected for Yahweh’s people.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Hall, *Conquering*, 145.

<sup>86</sup> Hall, *Conquering*, 145.

<sup>87</sup> Hess, *Joshua*, 171–2.

<sup>88</sup> Pekka A. Pitkänen, *Joshua*, ApOTC 6 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 186–7.

<sup>89</sup> Davis, *Joshua*, 71.

I modestly propose that the MT location remain the preferred choice among those studying Joshua. There are three primary reasons to stick with the MT.<sup>90</sup> First, as we briefly mentioned above, the LXX and 4QJosh<sup>a</sup> do not actually provide superior readings of the passage.<sup>91</sup> Both introduce new problems that must be addressed accordingly that are no less difficult to resolve than the issues posed by the MT. Secondly, scholars assume that MT Josh 8:30–35 breaks the narrative flow from the destruction of Ai to the Canaanite kings assembling, but this is never actually proven nor defended. The text, as we showed above, is ambiguous as to the antecedent of the infinitive construct is ambiguous. We are, frankly, not told what the kings heard.<sup>92</sup> It is not implausible that the kings could have “heard” of the Israelites’ CRC and subsequently joined forces out of fear, for perhaps they had heard the same report that Rahab had heard about Yahweh: “For we have heard how the LORD dried up- the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt... And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath” (Josh 2:10–11). If the nation of Israel were renewing their covenantal commitment to this God, then the Levantine kings indeed were in deep trouble. Thirdly and lastly, the fact that the pericope appears in different locations demonstrates that its narrative purpose is intentional, and, even if the MT position is not original, “either preserves the oldest text or represents a deliberate departure from earlier tradition.”<sup>93</sup>

The second question we will address, more briefly, is geographical. Noort argues that the presupposed march of the Israelite nation to Shechem right through the heart of Canaan proves difficult to maintain, especially if one argues that the land simply lay open before them. The true

<sup>90</sup> These are adapted from Hall, *Conquering*, 141–4.

<sup>91</sup> Ed Noort admits as much in “The Traditions of Ebal and Gerizim: Theological Positions in the Book of Joshua,” in *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic Literature: Festschrift C. H. w. Brekelmans*, eds. M. Verenne and J. Lust, BETL 113 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 165.

<sup>92</sup> Hall, *Conquering*, 143–4.

<sup>93</sup> Hall, *Conquering*, 144.

heart of the problem, he posits, is strictly geographical, in that most scholars presume that the two mountains in question, Ebal and Gerizim, are in fact in the vicinity of Shechem.<sup>94</sup>

Chambers points out that many modern commentators hold that the ceremony is far too early in the conquest narrative, for there is no way that the Israelites could have made their way to Shechem unperturbed by Canaanite forces in order to hold such a renewal ceremony. On the other hand, early commentators thought that the covenant renewal occurred too late in the narrative in order to achieve proper obedience to Deut 27:2–3.<sup>95</sup> So the problem is that it seems unlikely that Israel could march forward with no conflict all the way to the region of Shechem to carry out covenant renewal, and yet the text repeatedly and emphatically asserts that Joshua and the nation completed the CRC strictly according to Moses' command. Noort points out that the chronological disjunction is found also in the fact that in MT Josh 9:6 and 10:6 presuppose Israel to be in Gilgal, the location of the nation's camp. "Thus the movement to Shechem is an [*sic*] geographically odd excursion with a return to 'normal' geography in Joshua 9."<sup>96</sup> However, Hall argues that these concerns are probably anachronistic, that the locations of Mounts Ebal and Gerizim and their location relative to Shechem likely would not have bothered ancient readers, and could even evidence intentional ambiguity on the part of the biblical author.<sup>97</sup>

It seems to me that if we remain committed to the location of Josh 8:30–35 as reflected in the MT tradition, a strictly chronological reading of the pericope is unnecessary, while a strictly historical reading is essential. This simple suggestion provides at least a modest solution to the problem of geography. Of course, every biblical author is selective in what he chooses to include or exclude from the biblical witness. Although it appears to us odd that he chooses not to include

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<sup>94</sup> Noort, "Traditions," 165.

<sup>95</sup> Chambers, "Confirming," 142.

<sup>96</sup> Noort, "Traditions," 165.

<sup>97</sup> Hall, *Conquering*, 142–3.

how exactly Israel made their way to Shechem, especially if the people of Israel did in fact encounter resistance on their journey there,<sup>98</sup> we must content ourselves with the fact that what the biblical author chose to convey was, in his inspired opinion, necessary and sufficient both to communicate the theological purpose he intended in the history he recorded and to edify future generations of readers of the Scriptures of Israel.

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<sup>98</sup> Noort writes that is it “completely incomprehensible how Joshua, after the victory of Ai, could have marched into the heartland of a hostile country, built an altar there, inscribed the law on stones, performed a ritual of blessing and curse and marched back to Gilgal in the neighbourhood of Jericho, leaving altar and law where they were, and proceeded to conquer the south of Palestine.” Ed Noort, “4QJosh<sup>a</sup> and the History of Tradition in the Book of Joshua,” *JNSL* 24.2 (1998): 129.

## Appendix D: A Comparison of Joshua 8:30–35 with Deuteronomy 27:1–13

Joshua 8:30–35 has been referred to as “a literary accumulation of citations from Deuteronomy.”<sup>99</sup> As we have established above, Joshua’s scrupulous fulfillment of Torah qualifies him as Moses’ successor, and his sage-like scribal activity qualifies him both to preserve Torah for the good of the nation and to interpret Torah for the edification and faith of Yahweh’s people. The theological foundation for Joshua’s characterization in the Ebal CRC is found principally in Deut 27 (although other textual allusions and points of obedience exist and should not be ignored). The chart below documents the explicit ways that Joshua remained faithful in every dimension of Moses’ commands in Deut 27 in the Ebal CRC.

<b>Deuteronomy 27 Moses’ Command</b>		<b>Joshua 8 Joshua’s Obedience</b>
V. 2	Set up large stones	V. 31
Vv. 3, 8	Write on the stones all the words of Torah	V. 32
V. 4	Set up the stones on Mount Ebal	V. 33
V. 5	Build an altar of stones to the LORD	V. 30
V. 6	An altar of uncut stones	V. 31
V. 6	Offer burnt offerings on the altar	V. 31
V. 7	Sacrifice peace offerings	V. 31
Vv. 12–13	Half the people on Mt Gerizim and half on Mt Ebal	V. 33
	<i>Reading of Torah</i>	Vv. 33–34

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<sup>99</sup> Butler, *Joshua*, 90.

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