

## Literary Structures in the Book of Joshua<sup>1</sup>

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One of the key questions for interpreting written texts involves their structure and shape. Authors may construct texts according to any of a variety of patterns, employing any of a number of structuring devices. Texts may move from episode to episode in linear fashion or, alternatively, center around an interior focal point; They may build to climactic moments or amble along disjointedly; They may allude to themselves as a means of demarcating sections and calling attention to parallels or they may shun self-reference altogether; They may incorporate flashbacks and literary parentheses or they may exhibit a sequential character. Recognition of any such structures and structuring devices proves essential to interpreting texts with understanding if for no other purpose than to permit readers to follow the flow of the argument or the course of the narrative. Just as the genre of a text gives important clues as to its character and proper interpretation (Is the text a scientific treatise or a science fiction novel?), its literary structure points the reader to the proper points of entry into the text's world of meaning.

The significance of structure for interpretation applies no less to scripture, in general, nor to the book of Joshua, in particular, than it does to Shakespeare's plays or Milton's poetry. A series of phenomena relevant to Joshua, some common to all texts, make of an essential task a formidable obstacle, however. The first difficulty to be born in mind concerns the basic problem of *identifying* structuring devices and techniques. What constitutes literary structure? Can one rightly conclude from the multiple occurrence of a given term or phrase that the author/editor has intentionally provided a clue as to the shape of the work at hand? To what extent may one rely upon content as a key to structure? How does one identify structure in texts that have purposefully been loosely organized?

A second characteristic of the book of Joshua itself compounds this common obstacle, namely, the fact that Joshua gives every appearance of a composite work. It contains older material that the author/editor responsible for the final form of the book has incorporated into its

present context. While the question of the sources of the book of Joshua do not concern this article, it should be observed that any pre-existing material incorporated into the present book may well have also imported its own structuring scheme. In fact, it may be plausibly assumed that the author/editor of Joshua had no interest in obliterating the literary distinctives of the source materials. Finally, given the length of the book and its presumed compositional history, it may be well to be alert to the possible existence of several structuring schemes operating at different levels in Joshua.

In view of these theoretical stipulations, any literary analysis of the book of Joshua will, to a degree, of course, be the reader's construct. The analysis offered here is not meant as the sole possible, nor exhaustive, examination. It is intended, instead, to highlight certain structural features of the book of Joshua that seem of particular significance. The starting point for the analysis offered below will be the consensus viewpoint, based on observations concerning content and the resumptive allusion to Josh 13:1 in Josh 23:1,2, that Joshua divides readily into three parts, namely: Joshua 1-12, usually regarded as the account of the conquest; Joshua 13-22, an account of the division of the land among the tribes of Israel, consisting primarily of descriptions of tribal territory; and Joshua 23-24, the so-called appendices, comprising Joshua's farewell address and the covenant-making ceremony at Shechem. While this starting-point proves serviceable enough as such, the analysis will describe subtleties and layers of the literary structure of the book that transcend the simple tri-partite structure. In so doing, the analysis to follow will concentrate on three categories of structuring devices readily discernible in the book of Joshua: (1) devices that establish ties to other books in the canon, (2) unifying devices that span the entire book of Joshua, and (3) devices that shape the various sections of the book.

### Canonical Structure

A complex series of themes, literary allusions, and verbal citations establish Joshua's relationship to other books in the canon, most notably to the books of Deuteronomy and Judges. Joshua 24:34, for example, refers explicitly to Gen 50:22-26 and together with it forms a

parenthesis around the account of the period of the sojourn in Egypt and the Exodus generation. In this way, Josh 24:34 demarcates the end of a major period in the history of Israel by establishing a promise-fulfillment relationship between the events of Joshua's career and the patriarchal narratives. Israel's expectant landlessness has ended: Joseph may be buried on Israelite soil. Thus Josh 24:32 sets the book of Joshua in the context of the whole Pentateuch. This periodization, a scheme that groups events during Joshua's career with events during Moses', proves a major theme of Joshua.

Consequently, the most abundant of these linkages to other canonical books involve themes and language that focus on this interim period between Gen 50:22-26 and Josh 24:32. These ties highlight parallels between the lives and careers of Joshua and his predecessor. Joshua opens (1:1-9) with an explicit reference to Joshua's succession in language replicating that found at the end of Deuteronomy in relation to this succession (Josh 1:6, 7, 9 // Duet 31:7; 32:23) and cast in the form of a divine assurance employing language that duplicates similar assurances given Moses at the outset of his career (Exod 3:12, 15). Parallels to key moments in Moses' career span the entirety of the book. The following table lists major parallels in the order of their occurrence in the book of Joshua:

Joshua	Moses
Commission (1:1-9)	Commission (Exod 3-4; cf esp. Josh 1:9 and Exod 3:12)
sends spies (2:1; 7:2; cf. 18:4-9)	sends spies (Num 13//Deut 1:19-25; Num 21:32)
Israel's fame among the nations inspires fear (2:22-24; 5:1; 6:1,27; 9:1-2; 10:1-5; 11:1-5)	Israel's fame among the nations inspires fear (Exod 15:15-16; Num 22:3; passim)
crossing the Jordan (3:1-4:24)	crossing the Reed Sea (Exod 14)
circumcision (5:2-9)	circumcision (Exod 4:24-26)
Passover celebration in conjunction with crossing(5:10-11)	Passover celebration in preparation (Exod 12-13)
cessation of manna (5:12)	beginning of manna (Exod 16)
Joshua's encounter with divine figure (5:13-15 remove shoes)	Moses' encounter with YHWH (Exod 3:5, remove shoes)
Joshua's complaint (7:6-9)	Moses complains (Num 14)
Joshua's outstretched hand (Josh 8:18,26)	Moses outstretched hand (Exod 9:22; 10:12, 21; passim)
Ritual at Mt. Ebal (8:30-35)	Ebal and Gerizim prescription (Deut 11:26-32; 27:1-8)
Land grant to Caleb (14:6-15)	Promise of Land to Caleb (Num 14:24, 29//Deut 1:36)
Division of the land by Lot (18-19)	Instructions for the division of land by lot (Num 34)
Problem of daughter's	Problem of daughter's inheritance

inheritance (15:13-19;  
Zelophehad's -17:3-6)

(Zelophehad's - Num 36)

Cities of Refuge (20:1-9)	Cities of Refuge (Num 35)
Trans-Jordanian tribes released from their obligation (22:1-12)	Trans-Jordanian tribes placed under obligation (Num 32//Deut 3:12- 17)
Joshua's farewell (23:1-15)	Moses' farewell address (Deut 29:2-30:20)
Covenant at Shechem (24:1-28)	Covenant in Moab (Deut 31)
Joshua's death and burial (24:29-30)	Moses' death and burial (Deut 34:1-8)
Priest's (Eleazar) death and burial (24:33)	Aaron's death and burial (Num 20:22-29)

Joshua 23 and 24, Joshua's farewell address and the account of the covenant at Shechem, play particularly crucial roles in establishing parallels between the careers of Joshua and Moses thereby portraying the conquest as the completion of the Exodus. These so-called "appendices" to the book of Joshua manifest marked literary similarities to accounts found in Deuteronomy 28-33 of Moses' farewell, the covenant in Moab, Joshua's succession, and Moses' death (Josh 23:2; 24:1 // Deut 29:9; 31:28; Josh 23:15 // Deut 28:48, 63; 31:4; Josh 23:16 // Deut 28:14, 36, 64; 29:11, 25; 31:20; Josh 24:13 // Deut 28:30; Josh 24:23 // Deut 31:26; 32:12; Josh 24:25 // Deut 28:69; Josh 24:26 // Deut 28:58, 61; 29:19, 26; 30:10; 31:8, 19, 24; Josh 24:29-31 // Deut 33:1-8). Just as the concluding chapters of the book of Deuteronomy transform the entire book into a covenant book, the conclusion of Joshua highlights the fact that YHWH's covenant with Israel always opens toward the future. Joshua, like even Moses, is, in a sense, a transitional figure. While Joshua completed Moses' work to a degree, his farewell address and the covenant at Shechem emphasize the tenuous nature of Israel's fidelity to YHWH

and, consequently, of its hold on the land YHWH gives. Just as Moses' had emphasized Israel's fearsome responsibility to *choose* between good and evil, between maintaining fidelity to YHWH or abandoning him, Joshua leaves open the question of whether Israel has truly found rest from its enemies: Its security in the land God gives depends upon its faithfulness to God's covenant.

Joshua's literary relationship to Judges further confirms the transitional role of Joshua -- both the figure and the book that bears his name. While parallels with, allusions to, and citations from the Pentateuch, especially Deuteronomy, suggest that Joshua has faithfully extended and completed Moses' work, elements of the conclusion of Joshua anticipate the precarious situation to be detailed in the book of Judges. D.M. Gunn offers a very suggestive analysis of linkages between the conclusion of Joshua and the beginning of Judges resembling those which tie Joshua to the Pentateuch noted above.<sup>ii</sup> The issue involves the supposed difference in viewpoint regarding the complete (Joshua) or incomplete (Judges) state of the conquest. Gunn argues that this difference, often emphasized in scholarship on Joshua and Judges, is at best superficial. Both books regard the continued existence of the pre-Israelite population a threat primarily to Israel's continued fidelity to YHWH. Gunn calls attention specifically to a "broad measure of correspondence" between Josh 23 and 24, and Judg 1:22-36 and 2:1-10, respectively. Taking these passages together, he observes the following concentric or chiasmic structure:<sup>iii</sup>

A -- YHWH will dispossess the remnants of the nations; but if Israel allies with them, YHWH will destroy Israel (Josh 23)

B -- YHWH (through Joshua) retells the story of Israel from the patriarchal period to the present. Joshua presents the people with a choice: serve YHWH or the gods their ancestors worshipped. The people enter into covenant (Josh 24:1-27)

C -- Joshua dismisses the people; His death and burial; Summary of his career: Israel served YHWH all Joshua's career and beyond it for one generation. (Josh 24:28-31)

D -- Joseph's bones are buried; Eleazar dies and is buried (Josh 24:32-33)

E -- Judah campaigns against the Canaanites; Caleb's gift (Judges 1:1-8)

F -- The Kenites settle with Judah in the Judean wilderness (Judg 1:16)

E' -- Judah campaigns; Hebron given to Caleb; Benjamin fails against the Jebusites (Judg 1:17-21)

A' -- The other tribes fail to drive out various population groups (Judg 1:22-36)

B' -- The angel of YHWH recites the story from Egypt onward, pointing out that the people have made alliances with the people of the land and predicting that the foreign gods will entice the people; the people repent and sacrifice (Judg 2:1-5)

C' -- Joshua [had] dismissed the people; Israel [had] served YHWH all Joshua's career and beyond it for one generation. Joshua [had] died and been buried. (Judg 2:6-9)

D' -- Cf. Judg 2:10 and Exod 1:6-8 concerning the death of Joseph. (p. 111)

Several themes key to the structure Gunn observes prove to be central themes of the book of Joshua, itself: Israel was unable to take full possession of the land during Joshua's lifetime (and struggled in the attempt after his death); The Canaanites in the land pose the threat of apostasy, of disobedience to the covenant; Faithfulness to YHWH through the covenant stands



ever as a choice for Israel. Moses did not complete his work. Neither, in the final analysis, did Joshua: The task defies such completion. Covenant keeping is the responsibility of each successive generation.

In sum, the canonical-level literary structure of the book of Joshua highlights three important themes: First, just as Joshua succeeded Moses, completing his work in a sense, the Exodus finds completion only in the entry into the land. Second, just as Moses --aware that a new generation faced the choice between obedience and life or disobedience and destruction --renewed the Sinai covenant in Moab, Joshua renewed it once again in Shechem. Israel's rest in the land depends ever on its loyalty to YHWH. Third, the book of Joshua prefigures the theme, dominant in the book of Judges, of the threat posed by the continued existence of Canaanites in the land.

#### The Literary Structure of Joshua as a Discrete Unit

A second category of structuring devices spans the book of Joshua and functions to unify the wide variety of genre contained within it. One observes, first, the repetition of formula and vocabulary at either extreme of the book as examples of the rhetorical device often termed inclusio (1:1 // 24:29; 1:7, 8 // 23:6; 1:12-18 // 22:1-34). Second, the repetition of the formula concerning Joshua's advanced age (cf. also Deut 31:2 of Moses) in Josh 13:1 and 23:1 has the effect of suspending the chronological sequence of the narrative and bracketing the intervening material as an aside or summary excursus. This bracketing technique serves the purposes of the author/editor who wished to incorporate a sizable body of non-narrative material into a narrative framework.

Third, a characteristic narrative style, which can sometimes result in confusion for contemporary readers of the book, merits comment. Throughout, the narrator regularly reports YHWH's instructions to Joshua (e.g. Josh 3:7-8) and Joshua's commands to the people (Josh 3:9-4:10a), often divided into a summary (Josh 3:9-13) and details (3:14-4:10a). The narrator

then recounts the execution of these commands by first offering a summary statement or precis (Josh 4:15-18) followed by a detailed sequential report (Josh 4:19-24).<sup>iv</sup> In some instances, then, the action may be narrated as many as four times. Contemporary readers accustomed to regarding redundancy as a hallmark of unrefined style must develop sensitivity to the subtleties of this narrative technique.

Fourth, the thematic significance of the Trans-Jordanian tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half-Manasseh and the "rhetoric of incomplete fulfillment"<sup>v</sup> involving the continued existence of the Canaanites in the land comprise the scarlet threads unifying all sections of the book. References to the Trans-Jordanian tribes' tenuous status owing to their geographic distance from their counterparts in the Cis-Jordan appear with remarkable regularity in the book of Joshua (1:12-18; 4:12-13; 12:1-6; 13:8-13, 15-32). The final reference to these peripheral tribes (22:1-34) raises the issue pointedly. In what must have been seen as a common-sense solution to the problem of the distance to the central sanctuary, Reuben, Gad, and half-Manasseh constructed an altar in the Trans-Jordan. The majority tribes, viewing this as a threat to centralized worship as prescribed in Deuteronomy, and thus as a precursor to syncretism and apostasy, sent envoys to learn the intentions of their kinsman across the Jordan. Assured that the altar was intended only as a memorial replica of the central altar, the envoys returned to assuage the fears of the majority tribes. Regardless of whether the narrative intends that the claims of the Trans-Jordan tribes be understood as genuine, the issue of the relationship between geographical contiguity, kinship, and fidelity to the covenant lingers at the conclusion of this episode as an unresolved threat (Josh 22:34).

Similarly, despite Joshua's repeated implication that Israel had conquered its territory with ruthless rigor, wiping out the native population, episodes placed throughout the book call attention to the contrary state of affairs. A few of the more prominent examples of this theme include: the Canaanite prostitute Rahab of Jericho who earns pardon and membership in Israel (Josh 2; 6:22-25); the Gibeonites who deceive Joshua and the leadership into an alliance and are themselves incorporated into Israel as "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Josh

9:19-21, 23, 27; cf. Deut 29:9-10); the Anakim, none of whom "were left in the land of the people Israel; except that some were left in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod" (Josh 11:22, authors' translation); Geshur and Maacah who were spared (Josh 13:13), Geshur later to contribute a troubled prince to Israel (2 Sam 3:3); the Jebusites who maintained control of Jerusalem (15:63); the Canaanite inhabitants of Gezer whom Ephraim could not or would not expel, subjecting them, instead, to forced labor (16:10).

As the analysis of the canonical-level structure of Joshua has shown, taken together, these two themes represent the range of threats confronting Israel in the land according to the book of Joshua: The danger that elements on the fringes of Israelite society may loose contact with their roots in Yahwism coupled with the danger that Canaanite elements incorporated into, or at least tolerated in, Israelite society may corrupt Yahwism from within.

### The Shape of the Major Sections of Joshua

A third group of internal structuring schemes governs the various sub-sections of the book. For convenience, although the examination below will show that it overlooks certain prominent structural features of the book of Joshua, the consensus analysis of the book as consisting of three parts (1-12 - the conquest; 13-22 - the division of the land; 23-24 - appendices) will be the point of departure for this discussion. Several of the devices outlined above that figure into the structure of Joshua on the canonical and book levels play dual and even triple roles: Some link Joshua to the canon, unify the entire book, and shape one of its sections. As will be shown, one implication of this highly-nuanced, almost baroque, literary subtlety involves the genre of the book of Joshua. The author/editor clearly expended significant effort to shape the diversity of traditional materials available to him into literature that communicates a great deal through its literary structure. Notably, for example, the bulk of chapters 1-12 (through chapter 8) are devoted to only three incidents - the crossing, Jericho, and Ai. Thereafter, the chronology of the account becomes increasingly compressed such that by

Joshua 10:28 the author/editor offers only lists. For the book of Joshua, then, the accounts of the crossing and the Jericho-Ai complex exemplify Joshua's career. It has little interest in providing an exhaustive chronicle of Joshua's activity.

### The Structure of Joshua 1-12

The very shape of Joshua 1-12 communicates in several ways. One notes from the outset, for example, the pattern mentioned above of divine instructions to Joshua, commands issued by Joshua, summary report of their execution, and detailed expansion of the report. Significantly, only the Ai episode departs substantially from this pattern. Here Joshua issues commands in advance of any divine commission to do so (Josh 7:2-3) with catastrophic results (Josh 7:4-5).

More significant, perhaps, is the apparent sub-division between Joshua 1-8 (concerned simultaneously with the completion of the Exodus and the threat of internal disobedience) and Joshua 9-12 (concerned primarily with threats posed to Israel externally, i.e. by the nations). Contrary to the usual understanding of Joshua 1-12 as a narrative account of the conquest, three features in particular suggest that Josh 1-8 function to describe the completion of the Exodus in the initial *entry* into Canaan while at the same time prefiguring both the important internal threat/disobedience and external threat/apostasy themes. First, a formula found in Josh 5:1; 9:1; 10:1 and 11:1 concerning the report reaching the ears of the nations serves to demarcate literarily major sections in the first half of the book.<sup>vi</sup> Joshua 5:1 recounts the fear inspired in the "kings of the Amorites" when they heard of the crossing of the Jordan. The first major section of the book deals, then, primarily with preparations for and the execution of this crossing -- the completion of the Exodus. Josh 9:1-2 reports that the Cis-Jordanian kings united to resist Israel when "they heard of this." Josh 9:3 refers to the Gibeonites' reaction to the news of events at Jericho and Ai. Taken together, Josh 9:1-2 and Josh 9:3 view events at Jericho and Ai as one episode: Israel's establishment of a "beachhead" in the land. Josh 10:1 concerns reactions to the news regarding Jericho, Ai, and the covenant with the Gibeonites, while Josh 11:1 relates the

northern kings reactions to Israel's successes in the South.

Second, the structure of Josh 6-8 confirms the notion that the account of events at Ai continues the Jericho episode. From the outset of the Ai narrative Josh 7:1 links Achan's sin at Jericho with Israel's initial defeat at Ai, as do the whole account of the identification and punishment of Achan as the guilty party and YHWH's instructions to Joshua concerning the successful campaign against Ai (8:1-2). Joshua repeats the tactics he had employed at Jericho, first sending spies to reconnoiter.

Perhaps the clearest indication that the conquest of Jericho and Ai is to be regarded as the completion of the Exodus is the placement of Josh 8:30-35. This account of the erection of pillars on Mt. Ebal represents a literary conflation of Deut 11:26-32 (blessings and curses on Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, respectively) and Deut 27:1-8 (the erection of stones inscribed with the words of the law and of an altar at Ebal). The similarity to Deut 27:1-8 is particularly striking. These texts make it clear that the erection of these stones and altar is meant to symbolize Israel's taking possession of the land: "...on the day you pass over the Jordan to the land which the Lord your God gives you....when you pass over to enter the land which the Lord your God gives you...And when you have passed over the Jordan...." (Deut 27:2-4, RSV). "And when the Lord your God brings you into the land which you are entering to take possession of it....For you are to pass over the Jordan to go in to take possession of the land...and when you possess it...." (Deut 11:26-32, RSV). The erection of the stones and the altar at Ebal signifies, then, that the Jordan has been crossed (Josh 1-5) and the land has been (proleptically) taken into possession with the conquest of Jericho and Ai.

#### The Structure of Joshua 9-12

Somewhat ironically imbedded within this account of the completion of the Exodus are the episodes involving Rahab -- representing Israel's willingness to incorporate elements of the Canaanite population and thus flirt with the external threat posed Israel by its Canaanite predecessors in the land -- and Achan -- an example of Israelite disobedience to the covenant.

These themes, as has been shown, govern the structure of the book of Joshua in a number of ways. In fact, the shape of Joshua 1-12 may be viewed, alternatively, in terms of the position and function of the Rahab episode. Scholars have long noted the apparently disruptive placement of Joshua 2, which interrupts description of the sequence of events culminating in the crossing of the Jordan.<sup>vii</sup> Understood, however, as a foreshadowing of the danger that Israel will be too willing to accommodate its Canaanite predecessors, it calls to mind the episode concerning the Gibeonites in Joshua 9:1-10:11. Seen from this perspective, then, Joshua 9-12 parallels Joshua 2-8, each beginning with the account of Israel's acceptance of a dangerous foreign element into its midst as the result of the foreigner's cunning (Josh 2; 9:1-10:11), and each concluding with accounts of a series of (ultimately) successful campaigns (Josh 6-8; 10:12-12:24). In the face of the prominence of the external threat theme, the fact that Joshua seems to regard Israel's relationship with Canaanite elements in the population as a complex phenomenon deserves attention. Despite the covenant's insistence that Israel not enter into foreign alliances and its warnings that the result will be destruction, in Joshua Israel benefits from its association with these foreigners. Rahab assists and shields the spies; The Gibeonites warn of Adonizedek's alliance and pending attack. Clearly the book of Joshua offers a much more nuanced picture of Israel's relations with the nations living in the land than the many programmatic statements calling for their complete annihilation would indicate. The author/editor evidently recognized that this program was too simplistic and totalitarian to be fully carried out, and too dismissive of possible benefits from interaction with the nations to be profitable in the final analysis.

#### The Structure of Joshua 13-22

At first glance, Joshua 13-22 seems to be nothing other than a series of lists, descriptions of property boundaries, and occasional narrative elements. Closer examination, however, reveals that the author/editor of Joshua has carefully crafted a literary unit of these disparate materials. In fact, Josh 13-22 proves to be governed by a baroque, layered, polyphonic structure

manifesting up to three concurrent schemata.

Perhaps the most obvious organizational scheme for Western readers accustomed to linear progression will be the arrangement of the accounts of the division of the land according to the granting agent (Moses or Joshua) and the location at which the grant was either verified or made during Joshua's career. The complicated system of tribal enumeration which governs Josh 13-21 at this level also supports this linear scheme. According to this scheme, the land was apportioned among the tribes of Israel in several phases: First, prior to his death, Moses granted the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half-Manasseh their inheritances. Joshua validated this grant at Gilgal (Josh 13:8-14:5). In a second phase, also at Gilgal, Joshua himself made grants of territory to the principle tribes, Judah (including Caleb; Josh 14:6-15:63) and Joseph sub-divided into Ephraim (16:1-10) and the remainder of Manasseh (17:1-18). Once again one notes the precis - specifics pattern: in Caleb's case, the precis takes the form of a request (Josh 14:6-14:15; Judah, 15:1-12). The specification of territory follows in sequence (Caleb, Josh 15:13-19; Judah, 15:20-63). The Joseph material, itself, demonstrates an interesting structure: 16:1-4, a precis of Joseph's distribution; 16:5-10, details concerning the inheritance of Ephraim; 17:1-2, a precis of Manasseh's portion in the Cis-Jordan; 17:3-6, the case of Zelophehad's daughters; 17:7-13, details concerning the inheritance of the Cis-Jordanian segment of Manasseh; 17:14-18, a complaint that Joseph's portion is too small.

In the third phase, set at Shiloh, Joshua assigns territory to the remaining seven tribes. Following the introduction (18:1-7), the narrative reports that Joshua sent spies to survey the unconquered territory (18:8-10). An enumeration of the allotments to the seven lesser tribes follow (18:11-19:48) to be summarized in a concluding statement (19:49-51). Joshua 20-22, also presumably set in Shiloh, deal with miscellaneous issues: the cities of refuge (20), Levitical cities (21), and the Trans-Jordanian tribes, once again (Josh 22).

Second, a principle of concentric or chiastic organization is also apparent. Situated roughly in the center of Joshua 13-22, the most orderly (e.g. the enumeration of the tribes, first through seventh) and self-contained (e.g. the formulaic consistency and brevity) section concerns

the distribution to the seven tribes (18:11-19:48). An introduction (18:1-10) and a summary conclusion (19:49-51) frame this account. In turn, materials dealing with the distribution to the tribes of Judah and Joseph (Josh 14:6-17:18) and the allocation of cities as cities of refuge (Josh 20) and Levitical cities (Josh 21) form a second frame around this central complex. An introduction to the account of the distribution to Judah and Joseph (Josh 14:1-5) anticipates the allocation of Levitical cities to follow much later and confirms the chiasmic structure. Finally, materials dealing with the Trans-Jordanian tribes (Reuben, Gad, and half-Manasseh) comprise the outer framework (Josh 13; 22).

- D - Trans-Jordanian tribes (13)
  - C - Judah and Joseph (14:1-17:18)
    - B - Introduction to seven tribes (18:1-10)
      - A - Seven tribes (18:11-19:48)
        - B'- Conclusion to seven tribes (19:49-51)
          - C'- Refuge and Levitical cities (20, 21)
            - D'- Trans-Jordanian tribes (22)

Third, Joshua 13-21, ostensibly a description of the boundaries of the tribal holdings, demonstrates a propensity to deal with exemplary cases of difficult social and economic (i.e. real estate) conditions (cf. Josh 14:6-15, Caleb's allotment; 15:13-19, the property rights of Caleb's daughter; 17:3-6, the property rights of Zelophehad's daughters; 18:2-10, yet another espionage mission; and 20:1-9, the Levitical cities of refuge). The frequency and spacing of these "problem cases" suggests their structural importance. One notes yet again the concern for the roll of the Trans-Jordanian tribes of Reuben and Gad and their proper integration into larger Israel manifest in all three "sections" of the book to such an extent that it forms a major theme: Josh 1:12-18; 4:12-14; 12:1-6; 13:8-13, 15-33; 14:3; 17:1-6; 22:1-34.



### The Literary Structure of Joshua 23-24

Apart from the already-noted canonical role played by the final two chapters in the book, the most readily apparent literary feature of the "appendices" involves the similarities between Josh 23:2 and 24:1. While recalling Moses' farewell address and covenant-making in Moab, Josh 23:1-2 link with Josh 13:1, on the one hand, and Josh 24:1, on the other, suggesting that Joshua 13-22 be seen as an excursus. This linkage also establishes Joshua 23, Joshua's retrospective farewell address, as a pivotal passage in the latter portions of the book. Here, Joshua admonishes Israel to attend carefully to the two threats that have dominated the book throughout, namely the threat posed by the continued existence of Canaanites in the land (vv 4-5, 7, 9-10, 12-13) and the threat of possible Israelite disobedience (vv 6, 8, 11, 15-16). The manner in which the two themes intertwine in Joshua 23 is particularly noteworthy.

### Conclusion and Summary Observations

Clearly, examination of the literary structure of the book of Joshua sheds considerable light on the themes the book intends to develop. Literature communicates on many levels. Readers may indeed read passages in isolation profitably. But by attending to clues in the literary structure of a book, especially allusions, parallels, and patterns of construction, the reader's experience of reading gains added depth and dimension. The book of Joshua proves an excellent example of this process of reading. On several levels, the authors/editors of the book of communicated significant information by means of allusion and structure. In summary, the following themes have emerged from an analysis of literary structure as key themes of the book.

By means of allusions and structures which parallel the story of Moses' career, the book of Joshua casts the career of Moses' successor as both the completion of Moses' work and as the precarious beginning of Israel's covenant existence in the land. The many reminiscences of the Exodus recounted in Joshua 1-5 and the ritual on Mt. Ebal (Josh 8:30-35), in particular, call attention to the fact that entry into the land constitutes a *stage* in the YHWH's deliverance of Israel, not a discrete phenomenon. Deliverance from Egyptian bondage finds completion only

in rest in the land. YHWH did not intend merely to deliver from bondage but to deliver to rest.

On the other hand, as early as the warnings against deviating "either to the right or to the left" (Josh 1:7) from obedience to YHWH, the account of the incident with Rahab, and the report of Achan's sin magnified by Joshua's presumption, it becomes apparent that existence in the land will not automatically signify that Israel has found final and perfect rest. Repeated references to the problem posed by the geographic separation of the Trans-Jordanian tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half-Manasseh -- a separation that threatens to become a separation in national and religious terms as well -- address this theme from yet another perspective. Similarly, the various cases devoted to situations in which Israelite property-law failed to adequately anticipate all eventualities (the case of Zelophehad's daughters, or the land greediness of the Joseph clans constitute fine examples) illustrate the possibility that the land, itself, can become a source of division within Israel. The book of Joshua makes it abundantly clear that threats, both external and internal, dominate Israel's history in the land from the very outset.

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<sup>i</sup>My thanks to Priscilla L. Broen for her helpful comments on a draft of this article.

<sup>ii</sup>"Joshua and Judges," in The Literary Guide to the Bible, R. Alter and F. Kermode, eds. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1987). Pp. 102-121.

<sup>iii</sup>"Joshua and Judges," 111.

<sup>iv</sup>Other examples of this repetitive summary - detail technique include Josh 6:8-11, 12-26; Josh 9:16-21, 22-27; etc.

<sup>v</sup>Compare Gunn, 109. See also L. Daniel Hawk, Every Promise Fulfilled: Contesting Plots in Joshua, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 43-55.

<sup>vi</sup>The abbreviated reference to Joshua's fame in 6:27 does not demarcate a major section. It lacks the specificity and formality characteristic of 5:1; 9:1, etc.; cf. also 7:9.

<sup>vii</sup>See, for example, J. A. Soggin, Joshua: A Commentary, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 38-39.