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Thomas Römer

## The Date, Composition and Function of Joshua 24 in Recent Research

A Response to Joachim J. Krause, Cynthia Edenburg, and Konrad Schmid

This article reviews the contributions of Cynthia Edenburg, Joachim Krause and Konrad Schmid and offers further arguments for the setting of Joshua 24, a post-priestly text, in the second half of the Persian period. It also underlines the Samaritan perspective of the chapter. Indeed, the aim of Joshua 24 was to create a Hexateuch, which would have been acceptable by Judeans, Samaritans and, under certain circumstances, also for the Diaspora.

*Keywords:* Joshua 24, Nehemiah 9, Persian period, Samaritans, Hexateuch

The articles by Joachim J. Krause, Cynthia Edenburg and Konrad Schmid suggest a growing consensus concerning the date, composition and function of Joshua 24. The three authors agree that Joshua 24 is a “late” text from the Persian period, which, according to Schmid, clearly presupposes the Priestly texts of the Pentateuch and, according to Edenburg, the whole Pentateuch. All three agree that Joshua 24 should be understood as a compositional and literary unity notwithstanding minor additions or revisions reflected in the MT and the Greek versions. They also agree that Joshua 24 aims to create or at least suggest a Hexateuch in its attempt to relate the book of Joshua in some way to the five books of the Torah. Such agreement on Joshua 24 is all the more striking when compared to the current state of research on Joshua 23. At a panel on Joshua 23 during the 2014 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, researchers presented a variety of conclusions concerning the date (from the seventh century to the [post-]exilic period), literary unity (one or multiple authors) and function of this text within the so-called Deuteronomistic History.

How do we explain the emergence of such a consensus? We should note that the groundwork for this consensus was paved nearly thirty years ago

with the publications on Joshua 24 by John Van Seters,<sup>1</sup> Erhard Blum,<sup>2</sup> and Moshe Anbar.<sup>3</sup> We must also recognize that the three authors represent European research, to which we can associate biblical scholarship in Tel Aviv. But the framework for consensus may indeed be broader and include North American scholars. For example, in his commentary on Joshua, Richard Nelson writes the following on Joshua 24:

“Chapter 23 works well as a summary to the book of Joshua, limiting its review to the occupation of the land. Chapter 24, in contrast, seems designed as a conclusion for the Hexateuch as a whole”.<sup>4</sup>

This statement, as well as Nelson’s treatment of the chapter as a whole, corresponds in many ways to the results of Schmid, Edenburg and Krause. To be sure, the emerging consensus on the interpretation of Joshua 24 is not universal. The advocates of the Neo-Documentarian Hypothesis may disagree with the dating of Joshua 24, but at this point their research is unclear about whether the documents of the Pentateuch extend to the book of Joshua.<sup>5</sup> Other interpreters provide clear counter arguments. Jochen Nentel, for example, eliminates all Priestly and other late passages to reconstruct an original “dtr” version of Joshua 24 that functioned as the original dtr conclusion of Joshua.<sup>6</sup> Christian Frevél admits that in its final form Joshua 24 is a

1 J. Van Seters, “Joshua 24 and the Problem of Tradition in the Old Testament,” in *In the Shelter of Elyon. Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G. W. Ahlström* (ed. W.B. Barrick and J.R. Spencer; JSOTS 31; Trowbridge: JSOT Press, 1984), 139–158.

2 E. Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (WMANT 57; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 45–61.

3 M. Anbar, *Josué et l’alliance de Sichem (Josué 24:1–28)* (BET 25; Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1992).

4 R.D. Nelson, *Joshua. A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: 1997), 268.

5 Since J. Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963 [orig. 1899]), the existence of an “old” Hexateuchal narrative was the common assumption until M. Noth invented the “Deuteronomistic History.” Interestingly, as mentioned by Krause in a footnote, the function of Joshua 24 and the question of an “old” Hexateuch is not clearly addressed by the protagonists of the “Neo-Documentarian Hypothesis.” I realized this myself at a conference in Jerusalem in May 2014, where I saw them as very hesitant in regard to this question. See on this, B. J. Schwartz, “The Pentateuchal Sources and the Former Prophets. A Neo-Documentarian Perspective,” in *The Formation of the Pentateuch. Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America* (ed. J. C. Gertz, B. M. Levinson, D. Rom-Shiloni, and K. Schmid; FAT 111; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 783–793. It is noteworthy that in this article, Schwartz admits not to have reached a conclusion on this question (793).

6 J. Nentel, *Trägerschaft und Intentionen des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerks: Untersuchungen zu den Reflexionsreden Jos 1; 23; 24; 1Sam 12 und 1Kön 8* (BZAW 297; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 69–127.

late “midrash,” but he too suggests that one could reconstruct Joshua 24 as an old pre-dtr conclusion of the Hexateuch, though Frevel does not do so.<sup>7</sup> Additional divergent interpretations of Joshua 24 include David M. Carr’s theory that Joshua 24 was a pre-P text that underwent “priestly wash”; but this hypothesis is a *petitio principia* that cannot be demonstrated with diachronic criteria.<sup>8</sup> In spite of these counter arguments, I think that the three papers of Edenburg, Krause and Schmid do indeed reflect a trend in critical biblical scholarship that is becoming the majority view on this chapter, and personally I think that this new view of Joshua 24 constitutes progress in biblical scholarship.

Having underscored an emerging consensus in the articles of Edenburg, Krause and Schmid, one should nonetheless note the differences in their research, as well as open questions that remain. My review of their contributions will deal with the following topics: How precisely we can date Joshua 24; Joshua 24 and the question of a Hexateuch redaction; whether the focus of Joshua 24 is the Diaspora or the land; the exclusive worship of Yhwh in the land and the Diaspora alike; and finally, Joshua 24 and the materiality of the Hexateuch.

### How precisely can we date Joshua 24?

The three contributions represent the difficulty in dating biblical texts. Krause and Edenburg are quite cautious in their dating of Joshua 24. Krause speaks of a text from “post-exilic times” which presupposes a “fairly fully developed proto-Pentateuch and an equally elaborate book of Joshua.” Edenburg identifies a scribe who “was familiar with the Pentateuch as well as with post-Deuteronomistic material in the Former Prophets”; she envisages a date in the late Persian or even early Hellenistic period. Pursuing a Zurich tradition, Schmid is confident about the possibility of a more precise date. He asserts that Joshua 24 must be later than P, which he dates to the

7 C. Frevel, “Deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk oder Geschichtswerke? Die These Martin Noths zwischen Tetrateuch, Hexateuch und Enneateuch,” in *Martin Noth – aus der Sicht der heutigen Forschung* (ed. U. Rüterswörden; BThSt 58; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2004), 60–95. See also C. Frevel, “Die Wiederkehr der Hexateuchperspektive. Eine Herausforderung für die These vom deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk” in *Das deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk* (ed. H.-J. Stipp; ÖBS 39; Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2011), 13–53.

8 D.M. Carr, “Strong and Weak Cases and Criteria for Establishing the Post-Priestly Character of Hexateuchal Material,” in F. Giuntoli and K. Schmid (ed.), *The Post Priestly Pentateuch* (FAT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 19–34, 28–29.

early Persian period (around 515 B.C.E.), but earlier than Genesis 35, which he argues presents a negative image of Shechem, and earlier than Nehemiah 13, which views the “Samaritans” as foreigners. However, these texts are not so easy to date, forcing him to conclude that Joshua 24 “likely emerged between the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.E.” Yet one could ask whether Nehemiah 13 is necessarily a *terminus ante quem*. It could be that Nehemiah 13 and Joshua 24 present conflicting views on the integration or exclusion of the Samaritans, with the possibility that Joshua 24 critically evaluates the view in Nehemiah.

In spite of the difficulty in dating Joshua 24, I do not find the general term “post-exilic” very helpful. Referring generally to the “post-exile” as the time of composition may even be problematic, because it suggests that there was an “exile” that ended in 539 B.C.E., even though an “exilic” or Diaspora situation continued over the centuries. I would add that there may be one indication for a *terminus a quo* in Joshua 24: If *kesita* in Josh 24:32 means “money,” as advocated in most commentaries and translations, then the text of Joshua 24 could hardly be older than the 5<sup>th</sup> century, since it was only at this time that people started to use coins in Palestine.<sup>9</sup>

### Joshua 24 and the question of a Hexateuchal-redaction

Krause, Edenburg and Schmid agree that Joshua 24 was composed in order to make the book of Joshua part of a Hexateuch. On the literary level, one must ask whether one can identify other texts belonging to such a Hexateuchal redaction. The theme of Joseph’s bones to be buried in Ephraim in Gen 50:25 and Exod 13:19 probably belongs to the same literary level as Joshua 24. These verses do not make sense in the context of the Pentateuch, but they do function well to prepare Joshua 24. Thus, Josh 24:32 marks the end of a narrative trajectory that starts in Gen 50:25<sup>10</sup> (or even in 33:19<sup>11</sup>). But the question remains whether and how one can identify other passages that would belong to the same redactional level. Eckart Otto and Reinhard Achenbach have indeed attributed many texts to a “Hexateuchal redaction,”

<sup>9</sup> E. A. Knauf, *Josua* (ZBK.AT 6; Zürich: TVZ, 2008), 200.

<sup>10</sup> In fact, the suggestion that Joseph was specifically buried in Shechem creates a link with the beginning of the Joseph story, as noted by the medieval Jewish commentator Rashi (Rabbi Solomon son of Isaac, 1040–1105): “They [Joseph’s brothers] stole him from Shechem (see Gen 37:13), and they [Joshua’s generation] returned him to Shechem.” *Rashi ad Josh. 24* (translation by M. Brettler in T. Römer and M. Z. Brettler, “Deuteronomy 34 and the Case for a Persian Hexateuch,” *JBL* 119 [2000]: 401–419, 410).

<sup>11</sup> Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (see n. 2), 44–45.

especially in the books of Deuteronomy and Numbers.<sup>12</sup> But what about the book of Joshua? Krause focuses in particular on this question. According to him, the answer is negative. He detects several post-dtr passages and also Priestly reworking, especially in Joshua 2; Joshua 3–4; and Joshua 5 and 7. These texts would reflect local additions and reworking, but they “offer no evidence for the hand of Joshua 24 nor for any other comprehensive Hexateuchal redaction.” Therefore he concludes one should not understand Joshua 24 as an “attempt to ... delimit the Hexateuch as a discrete literary work.” This raises the question about the function of Joshua 24. In a sense, Krause’s position comes close to Schmid’s idea that Joshua 24 was constructed as a hinge inside the Enneateuch in order to delimit a salvation history in the books of Genesis–Joshua and a history of doom in Judges–Kings.<sup>13</sup> But Schmid emphasizes a concrete, theological-political claim of that chapter to which I will return below.

Before responding to Schmid’s interpretation, I will comment briefly on Krause’s statement that there are no texts in the book of Joshua that would belong to the same literary level as Joshua 24. It has often been observed that Joshua 24 presents the character of Joshua as a second Moses. Like Moses in Deuteronomy, he holds a farewell speech in which he recapitulates major events from the foregoing history until the time of the conquest. In verse 26 he writes “these words” (הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה) in a book, an expression that may recall the opening of Deuteronomy (הָאֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים). Like Moses, Joshua concludes a covenant; enacts laws and decrees (v. 25); raises a stone; and writes a scroll (v. 26: “and Joshua wrote all the words in the scroll of the law of God”). One should therefore ask whether Joshua’s vision in Josh 5:13–15, which creates another parallel between Joshua and Moses (in alluding to Moses’ call in Exod 3:5), could not belong to the same literary level as Joshua 24:

Take off your sandal from your foot.  
Indeed, the place where you are standing  
is holy (Josh 5:15)

Take off your sandals from your feet.  
Indeed, the place where you are standing  
is holy ground (Exod 3:5)

12 E. Otto, *Das Deuteronomium im Pentateuch und Hexateuch. Studien zur Literaturgeschichte von Pentateuch und Hexateuch im Lichte des Deuteronomiumsrahmens* (FAT 30; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); R. Achenbach, *Die Vollendung der Tora: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Numeribuches im Kontext von Hexateuch und Pentateuch* (Beihfte der Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte 3; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003). It should be noted however that in his recent commentary on Deuteronomy, Otto is much more cautious in regards to the distinction between Hexateuchal and Pentateuchal redactors.

13 See already K. Schmid, *Erzväter und Exodus. Untersuchungen zur doppelten Begründung der Ursprünge Israels innerhalb der Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments* (WMANT 81; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999), 209–230.

Krause rightly observes in this passage that “Joshua appears as a ‘new Moses,’” but this is exactly what happens also in Joshua 24. In a Hexateuchal context the appearance of the divine warrior in Josh 5:13 can also be understood as fulfilling the promise made in Exod 23:20: “I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared.” One aim of Josh 5:13–15 is to connect the book of Joshua as narrowly as possible with the preceding Pentateuch.

In regard to the scene about the circumcision of the second generation in Josh 5:2–9, I cannot be as assertive as Krause, who states that the theological perspective of this passage is different from that in Joshua 24. It is true that Joshua 24 does not allude to the refusal of the conquest, which is narrated in Numbers 13–14 and Deuteronomy 1, but this may also be explained with the different function of the historical summary in this chapter, where the aim of Joshua’s discourse is to present all the good things that Yhwh did for Israel contrary to the “other gods” that the audience should reject. Interestingly, the link between Joshua 5 and Joshua 24 appears very clearly in the Greek version of Joshua’s funeral in 24:30–32.<sup>14</sup> This version, which apparently was also known at Qumran,<sup>15</sup> might reflect (even if the text were later reworked) the original ending of the Hexateuch, since it emphasizes the role of Joshua: “They placed there with him ... the stone swords by which he circumcised the sons of Israel in Galgal, when he led them out from Egypt as Lord ordained for them.”<sup>16</sup> The fact that Joshua appears as the leader of the exodus can again be explained by the attempt to characterize Joshua as a second Moses.

Edenburg has drawn our attention to the fact that Joshua 24 does not contain “any mention of an altar or a ceremonial meal accompanied by sacrifice. Instead, the covenant is solemnly conducted by erecting a standing stone as witness to the people’s choice.” In a footnote, she refers to Joshua 22. There are indeed quite a few important parallels between Josh 22:7–34 and Joshua 24. In both texts, the present generation is mentioned together with the fathers (22:8//24:5–7,17); an altar appears as a witness (22:28//24:27); and the priest Phinehas and his father Eleazar play a central role (22:32//24:32). Both texts also employ Priestly vocabulary and ideas.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, one could follow the suggestion of Stephen Chapman, who attributed Josh 22:7–34 to

14 For this text see also the contribution of Ville Mäkipelto in this volume.

15 B. Lucassen, “Josua, Richter und CD,” *RQ* 18 (1998), 373–396.

16 A. G. Auld, *Joshua. Jesus Son Of Naué in Codex Vaticanus* (Septuagint Commentary Series; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 83.

17 C. G. den Hertog, “Der geschichtliche Hintergrund der Erzählung Jos 22,” in *Saxa loquentur. Studien zur Archäologie Palästinas/Israels. Festschrift für Volkmar Fritz zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. C. G. den Hertog, U. Hübner and S. Mürger; AOAT 302; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2003), 61–83.

the same literary level as Joshua 24.<sup>18</sup> If we could attribute at least parts of Joshua 5 and 22 to a “Hexateuchal level,” Joshua 24 would not be an “erratic bloc” in the book of Joshua.

### The aim of Josh 24: Diaspora or the land?

Another important question running through these studies of Joshua 24 has to do with its function. Was Joshua 24 added to conclude the first part of the Enneateuch or perhaps to clarify the boundaries of “salvation history” in a larger Deuteronomistic History that began with the book of Exodus? Or can we detect a more precise aim, as suggested by Edenburg and Schmid?

According to Schmid, Joshua 24 was written to promote a theocratic constitution for all Israel in a time when Samaria and Judah had already been independent provinces for some time. In this case, the aim of Joshua 24 is to integrate Samaria or the North into Israel, an objective also found in the books of Chronicles where the focus, however, is clearly on Jerusalem. Evidence for separate centers of authority requiring integration may be supported by the letters of the Judean community in Elephantine, which were addressed to the governors of Judah and Samaria and which show that the relationship between the authorities at Jerusalem and mount Gerizim was understood not in terms of competition but in collaboration.<sup>19</sup> But the question remains about the point of view of Joshua 24. Is the perspective of Joshua 24 still a Judean one? According to Schmid, the exhortation to an exclusive worship of Yhwh is broader than a Judean perspective, since the text is addressed to all Israel, the North and the South alike.

Edenburg understands Joshua 24 to be written from a Judean Jerusalemite perspective, and she offers two possible explanations. One option is that Joshua 24 could be an attempt to accept that there are Yahwistic Diaspora communities and to “[encourage] them to choose Yahweh and maintain their separate identity among a multicultural populace in the Eastern Diaspora.” The other option is that Joshua’s discourse in chapter 24 may aim at including Samaritan Yhwh worshippers in the scriptural tradition by the construction of a common history which, at the same time, is an attempt to interpret the Samaritan cult site as a place of commemoration and not of

18 S. B. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets: A Study in Old Testament Canon Formation* (FAT 27; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 176.

19 G. Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism in the Persian Period: Studies in the Religion and Society of the Judaean community at Elephantine* (BZAW 488; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 41–44.



sacrifices, in the same way as the cultic site in the Transjordan (cf. Joshua 22). Edenburg concedes that it is also possible that the scribe who authored this conclusion of the Joshua scroll had both ideas in mind.

Edenburg's interpretation raises the question of whether Joshua 24 also betrays a Diaspora perspective. In relation to this topic, one should recall a short but important article by Ehud Ben Zvi,<sup>20</sup> in which he draws attention to the concluding works of the five books of the Torah, which shows that, in the Pentateuch, the book of Genesis has a specific status. The endings of Exodus and Deuteronomy are constructed in a parallel way, as well as those of Leviticus and Numbers. By adding the ending of Joshua, then, one could postulate a certain parallel with the book of Genesis: Genesis ends with Joseph's death and funeral in Egypt, Joshua with the death of Joshua and of Eleazar, both of whom are buried in the mountains of Ephraim.

Gen 50,26: And Joseph died, *being one hundred ten years old*; he was embalmed and placed in a coffin **in Egypt**.

Exod 40:38: For the cloud of Yhwh was on the tabernacle ... **before the eyes of all the house of Israel** at each stage of their journey.

Lev 27:34: **These are the commandments that Yhwh gave to Moses for the people of Israel** on Mount Sinai.

Num 36:13: **These are the commandments and the ordinances that Yhwh commanded through Moses to the Israelites** in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.

Deut 34:12: and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed **before the eyes of all Israel**.

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20 E. Ben Zvi, "The Closing Words of the Pentateuchal Books: A Clue for the Historical Status of the Book of Genesis within the Pentateuch," *BN* 62 (1992), 7–10.

Josh 24:29 After these things Joshua son of Nun, the servant of Yhwh, died, *being one hundred ten years old.*

24:30 They buried him in ... **in the hill country of Ephraim, ....**

24:32 ¶ The bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at **Shechem,**

24,33: Eleazar son of Aaron died; and they buried him ... **in the hill country of Ephraim.**

The literary pattern indicates a clear intention at the end of Joshua 24 to link Joshua's death with the figure and fate of Joseph at the end of the book of Genesis. Both die at the age of 110, and both are buried in the mountains of Ephraim. Whereas Genesis 50 ends "in Egypt," Joshua 24 ends in the mountains of Ephraim. Both book-endings emphasize a literary unity running from Genesis to Joshua. The parallels between Genesis 50 and Joshua 24 also indicate that the first and the last books of the Hexateuch would include the Egyptian Diaspora (represented by Joseph), and the last book would include people living in Ephraim.

But can we say that Joshua 24 promotes a Diaspora perspective? The plot of a Hexateuch delimited by Joshua 24 is undoubtedly the possession of the land. This is clear also in Joshua's final discourse, which ends with Yhwh's gift of the land to the addressees. The hexateuchal narration starts with the divine promise in the land in Genesis and ends with the fulfillment of this promise in Joshua. In this respect, the end of the Pentateuch in Deuteronomy 34 seems to be a more Diaspora-oriented text. The Torah ends with a non-fulfillment. Moses is allowed to see the Promised Land but he cannot enter it. He dies outside the land in the plains of Moab, where Yhwh himself buries him. One can understand this text as constructing Moses as a figure of identification for people living in the Diaspora. The important thing according to Deuteronomy 34 is not to live in the land, but to live and to die according to Yhwh's will and his Torah. Joshua 24, however, insists on the given land and the necessity to practice in this land the exclusive worship of Yhwh.

## The exclusive worship of Yhwh: in the land and in the Diaspora

Schmid underlines how, not only on the narrative level, but also on the intended audience's level, the author of Joshua's farewell speech insists on the worship of Yhwh alone and the rejection of other "foreign" deities. As I have shown elsewhere, the closest parallel to Joshua's historical recapitulation can be found in Nehemiah's prayer in Nehemiah 9.<sup>21</sup> The major difference between both texts is the fact that Joshua's speech is framed by the reference to the "fathers" serving other gods "beyond" the river (in Mesopotamia) and in Egypt.

*The "fathers" beyond the River served other gods (2)*

Abraham, Isaac, Esau, Jacob, Descent to Egypt (3–4)	Gen 12–50
(Moses/Aaron) Plagues and Exodus (5–7a)	Exod 7–14
Wilderness (7b)	Exod 16–18*, Num?
Conquest of Transjordan territories (8)	Num 21
Balak und Balaam (9–10)	Num 22–24
Crossing of the Jordan (11a)	Josh 3–4
Victory against the people living in the land (11b–12)	Josh 6–12
Divine gift of the land (13)	Josh 13–19? (//Deut 6; Neh 9)

*Exhortation to put away the god the "fathers" served beyond the River, in Egypt; gods of the Amorites (14–15)*

The identification of the "fathers" in Josh 24:2 as "Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor" is grammatically awkward and thus often considered to be a gloss to emphasize that Abraham was not included among the polytheistic fathers. But even without this addition, v. 2 seems to presuppose a tradition that is fully developed in the book of Jubilees (chap. 12), where Terah is forced by the habitants of Ur to worship idols.

In Josh 24:14–15, the worship of other gods is extended from Mesopotamia to Egypt. Here we can indeed make a link with the documents from Elephantine, which mention the veneration of Yahô, Anat and Ashim-

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21 T. Römer, "The Problem of the Hexateuch," in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel and North America* (ed. J.C. Gertz, B.M. Levinson, D. Rom-Shiloni, and K. Schmid; FAT 111; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 813–827, 824–825. See already T. Römer, *Israels Väter: Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition* (OBO 99; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1990), 326–327.

Bethel, so that the mention of the “other gods” in Egypt could refer to the syncretistic cult of the Elephantine community.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, Jeremiah 44 criticizes the Egyptian Diaspora in the Delta for worshipping a goddess named “Queen of Heaven.” The second part of 2 Kings 17, which probably originated in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah,<sup>23</sup> also provides a negative description of the cultic practices of the population living in the territory of the former kingdom of Israel:

“So they worshiped Yhwh but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away ....

These nations worshiped Yhwh, but also served their carved images; to this day their children and their children’s children continue to do as their fathers did” (2 Kgs 17:33, 41).

This text is polemical and written from a Southern Judean perspective. Its concern appears to be similar to Joshua 24, which also exhorts the audience to put away the gods their father served. 2 Kings 17:41 even ends with the accusation that the inhabitants of Samaria still behave religiously as their fathers did.

The expression “gods of the Amorites” in Josh 24:15 provides further insight into the author’s religiously exclusive perspective, as well as into the literary function of Joshua 24 in the Hexateuch. In the Hebrew Bible the term “Amorites” is used in various ways. It sometimes designate the populations living in the land to be conquered by the Israelites, but, in other texts, it designates the population living in Transjordan. Yet in other passages within the book of Joshua, it signifies the population in the Promised land. But none of these texts mentions their gods. In Gen 15:16, Yhwh informs Abraham about the return of the fourth generation in the land, and concludes that the “iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete (*shalem*).” We may have here an allusion to Jerusalem (*shalem*), especially when we link this text to Ezek 16:45, where the father of Jerusalem is called an “Amorite.” When Joshua 24 is read in relation to these texts, the gods of the Amorites may designate deities worshipped in Jerusalem or more broadly in Judea and Samaria, deities that the author of Joshua 24 wishes to ban. In this case, Joshua 24 could be understood as an attempt to enforce an exclusive Yhwh worship in Judaea, Samaria and the Diaspora. Such an exhortation would fit

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22 For the relevant Elephantine texts see P. Grelot, *Documents araméens d’Égypte* (LAPU; Paris: Cerf, 1972), 463–499. On the syncretism in Elephantine, see A. Joisten-Pruschke, *Das religiöse Leben der Juden von Elephantine in der Achämenidenzeit* (Göttinger Orientforschungen Reihe 3, Iranica. NF 2; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), 88–95.

23 M. Kartveit, “The Date of II Reg 17,24–41,” *ZAW* (2014): 31–44.

the conclusion of a Hexateuch, which narrates the origins of Israel in relation to Yhwh's promises to the fathers and their fulfillment in the land. This conclusion brings us back for the last time to the question of the nature of the Hexateuch that Joshua 24 tries to construct.

### Joshua 24 and the materiality of the Hexateuch

The general consensus is that Joshua 24 is a scribal attempt either at subdividing the Enneateuch into a "Hexateuch" and the history of the two monarchies or at adding a text to the Torah that recognizes Yhwh-worship by the Samaritans and the Diaspora. However, I wonder whether we should not imagine behind Joshua 24 a concrete attempt to add the book of Joshua to the scrolls of the Torah. With Marc Brettler, I have argued that there was indeed a conflict in the middle or second half of the Persian period between a Pentateuch- and a Hexateuch-party, in which the Hexateuch-party revised the scrolls of the Torah to make the scroll of Joshua the ending of Israel's foundation story.<sup>24</sup>

Several arguments support this idea. First, the book of Joshua as it now stands has a double ending. Whereas Joshua 23 concludes the (last) deuteronomistic edition of the book, Joshua 24 recalls events starting with the time of the Patriarchs. There are other cases of double book endings in the Hebrew Bible that also reflect efforts to delimit different literary units. A prime example is the case of the two endings in Malachi 3 (Eng. Mal 3:1–18 and 4:1–6).<sup>25</sup> The original ending of the scroll of Malachi is to be found in 3:19–21, a passage that announces Yhwh's judgment and the defeat of the wicked. To this ending is added a new conclusion in 3:22–24, which is structured in a parallel way because it also ends with the possibility that Yhwh will strike the land. This new conclusion was created in order to relate the Prophets to the Torah. The opening of Mal 3:22 MT (4:6 LXX, "Remember the Torah of Moses, my servant, that I commanded him for all Israel") alludes to the insert in Josh 1:7–9 so that the two passages frame the *Nebi'im*. This new conclusion underlines that, at least until the eschatological return of Elijah, the Mosaic Torah is absolutely normative.

In contrast to the ending of Malachi 3, Joshua 24 is intended to construct a Torah that includes the scroll of Joshua. As Schmid reminds us, the setting

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<sup>24</sup> Römer and Brettler, "Deuteronomy 34."

<sup>25</sup> See also the double ending of the book of Leviticus in Leviticus 26 and Leviticus 27.

of Joshua 24 in Shechem has often been explained in reference to 1 Kings 12, the place of the division of “Israel” into two kingdoms.<sup>26</sup> The pan-Israelite perspective of Joshua 24 (v. 1 mentions “all tribes”) could then be understood as a counter-program to the failure of kingship: Israel’s unity does not depend on political institutions such as the monarchy, but rather on a Torah. Of course, as Edenburg and Schmid have pointed out, Shechem also alludes to the sanctuary in Gerizim that had existed since the Persian period. But the place Shechem also frames the Hexateuch: Joshua 24 refers back to Gen 12:6–7, where, upon arriving in the land, Abram settles and builds an altar for Yhwh next to the holy oak<sup>27</sup> of Shechem. Similarly, Joshua takes a large stone “and sets it up there under the oak in the sanctuary of Yhwh” (24:26). As Schmid puts it, “Joshua 24 thus constructs a narrative arc back to Genesis 12. The promulgation of the law in Shechem takes place at the same location where the first cultic place for Yhwh was set up in the land.”

This literary strategy is comparable to that of the Pentateuchal redactor, who in Deuteronomy 34 mentions the land promised to the Patriarchs (v. 4), in order to refer back to the Patriarchal narratives in the book of Genesis.

Finally, as Krause has reminded us, the rare expression *spr trt 'lhym* (see also Neh 8:18) was possibly coined as an alternative to the term *trt mšh*, which in the Persian period became a name for the nascent Pentateuch. One could indeed argue that “the book of the Torah of Elohim” was coined as a designation for the Hexateuch. I would therefore agree with scholars such as Rainer Albertz, Otto and others that the book of the Torah of Elohim represents a “real attempt” to promulgate the Torah as a Hexateuch.<sup>28</sup> As is well known, this attempt failed and the book of Joshua became the first “deuterocanonical” book in relationship to the Pentateuchal Torah. However the texts that the Hexateuch redactor inserted throughout the first six books of the Bible succeeded in creating a close relationship between Joshua and the Pentateuch. In the Samaritan tradition one can mention the “Samaritan book of Joshua,”<sup>29</sup> and in a Christian context the “Old English Hexateuch,”

26 C. Levin, *Die Verheissung des neuen Bundes in ihrem theologieggeschichtlichen Zusammenhang ausgelegt* (FRLANT 137; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 116–118; and Anbar, *Josué*, 117.

27 According to LXX. The plural in the MT is a later, dogmatic correction.

28 See for instance R. Albertz, *Exodus 1–18* (ZB.AT 2.1; Zürich: TVZ, 2012), 24–25; Otto, *Deuteronomium*, 230–232, 244–247; see also R. Achenbach, “Pentateuch, Hexateuch und Enneateuch. Eine Verhältnisbestimmung,” *ZAR* 11 (2005): 122–154.

29 J. A. D. Crown, “Book of Joshua,” in *A Companion to Samaritan Studies* (ed. A. D. Crown, R. Pummer and A. Tal; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 42–43.

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a work from the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>30</sup> These examples indicate the continuing impact of Joshua 24 on the interpretation of the larger literary context of the book of Joshua as the continuation of the Pentateuch, an interpretation that has persisted in critical biblical scholarship from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to today.

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<sup>30</sup> B. C. Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton Ms. Claudius B. iv: the Frontier of Seeing and Reading in Anglo-Saxon England* (Studies in Book and Print Culture; London: British Library, 2007).

