THE DEUTERONOMISTS BETWEEN HISTORY AND THEOLOGY

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There are problems about each of the words in the title set. It has been put to me that there is no significant space separating history from theology: they are both just mythology. And I have become increasingly uncomfortable over fifteen years or more about “Deuteronomistic” theories.

1. Patterns

Several features of the Solomon story as shared between Kings and Chronicles are mirrored in the book of Joshua. As the ark was ceremonially carried into the innermost part of the temple (1 Kgs viii 1-11), so it was carried ceremonially from the outer reaches of the promised land, across the threshold of the Jordan, into the special land to the west (Josh. iii-iv). The arrival of the ark inaugurated a national religious festival: whether Solomon’s great sacrifices (1 Kgs viii 62-66), or the circumcision of the people followed by passover under Joshua (Josh. v 2-12). Immediately after the festival, Joshua (v 13-15) like Solomon (ix 1-9) had a visionary experience. Both Solomon in his time and Joshua and Israel earlier were recognised twice from abroad—or at least by foreigners: the Queen of Sheba was left with no more ruach in her (1 Kgs x 5) when she observed Solomon and Jerusalem and she blessed “Yahweh your God” (x 9); and Rahab responded similarly to Joshua’s messengers, her responses described in almost identical language (Josh. ii 11). Then, just as Hiram sent an embassy to compliment Solomon and as Hiram contributed with his own Tyrian personnel to Solomon’s temple building

1 The status and roles of the queen and of Rahab are very different; but their responses to Solomon and Joshua/Israel are all the more remarkably similar.
efforts (1 Kgs v 15–32), so the Gibeonites sent an embassy to Joshua and became hewers of wood and drawers of water for Israel’s national sanctuary (Josh. ix 3–27). Just as, once the main project of temple construction and dedication reached completion, the earlier shorter Solomon story still preserved in Chronicles makes brief mention of Solomon’s own house (also 1 Kgs ix 10), so Josh. xix 49–50 reports at no greater length a settlement for Joshua himself.

1.1 The correspondences are many and varied; some are a matter of themes and the shaping of themes, and some links are marked by the use of rare and distinctive language. Either one story has been shaped or reshaped on the model of the other, or they have been conceived together as twins. The Solomon story, focussed on building the temple, and the Joshua story, focussed on occupying the land, correspond to the two readings of these ambiguous words in Jeremiah vii 3,7—ambiguous at least when left unpointed—אשיהט נระ ה 픽 מוקס: veshakhanty itkhem bamaqom [“I will dwell with you in the place”] or veshikkanty etkhem bamaqom [“I will make you dwell (or let you dwell) in the place”]. Neither in the Solomon nor in the Joshua story do these narrative correspondences have anything to do with typical Deuteronomistic or Deuteronomistic thought or language. However, they are at the centre of a wider pattern.

Joshua, like Solomon, is solemnly installed by his predecessor—the instructions are issued in near-identical language, just before Moses and David die. Neither of the founders, David or Moses, sees the culmination of his efforts. David does take control of Jerusalem, and brings the ark there, but does not build the temple or deliver the ark to its ultimate home. Moses and the ark reach the eastern part of the promised land, and the settlement of Israel begins there; yet, while he is allowed to see the land to the west, Moses does not enter it.

Both Solomon and Joshua are followed by a period of repeated apostasy in Israel and failed starts by leader after leader. And in the cases of Jeroboam and of Gideon known also as Jerubbaal, the correspondences are again very close. Like their own names, the names of their birthplaces are almost identical. The activities of each are connected with both Shechem and Penuel. Each indulges in illicit cultic innovation.² David, Solomon, and kingship in Israel replay