DID JOSHUA HAVE A CRYSTAL BALL? 
THE OLD GREEK AND THE MT OF 
JOSHUA 10:15, 17 AND 23

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When I was collating the variants of MS 2648 (a.k.a. Göttingen, Rahlfs Verzeichnis 816),¹ I also looked at one of the most beautiful witnesses to the Old Greek text of Joshua: the so-called Joshua-roll of the Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana at Vatican City (Italy). Brooke and McLean, the editors of the Cambridge Old Testament in Greek critical edition used the roll in their 1917 publication of Part 4 of their project: the books Joshua, Judges and Ruth.² The roll was already known at the Vatican in the 17th century. More precisely, E. Schelstrate, director of the Vatican Library from 1683 to 1692, mentioned it already in his inventory of the Palatine Greek manuscripts “redatto,” re-donated to the Vatican. After its re-donation to the library, it was sold again. But finally, in 1814, the roll again appeared in the Vatican collection. The Vatican published a book and parts of the roll in 1950.³ In 1984 a facsimile edition of the roll and a better introduction were published.⁴

Dated to the 9th or 10th century, the roll contains pictures and text. As I was working on Josh 9:27 to 11:3, I checked the roll and found out that it contained a couple of pictures with the appropriate texts of my pericope.\(^5\) Table 13 pictures a battlefield, huge hailstones, and Joshua who makes the sun stand still. Under the picture one can read the text of Josh 10:9–14 (folio 453). This passage is the famous passage about the sun and the moon standing still and Joshua obtaining a victory over the Amorites.

Under the victory picture, there is another picture: Joshua is taking a rest after the battle and is explaining the victory. To the right of the picture, the five Ammorite kings flee for their lives (folio 453). The text that is placed right under this depiction starts with Joshua ordering to search for the five kings. That is part of Josh 10:17.

Two more pictures complete the story: in the first, Joshua is sitting on an even larger throne and judging the five kings, who are lying on the ground in front of Joshua (folio 453). In the second, there are the five kings, wearing a yoke. They are standing amidst a crowd of celebrating people (folio 454, respectively table 14 and 15). The editor of the book correctly connects the text from the first mentioned picture on table 13 with the following pictures. He writes: "Il lungo estratto del libro di Giosuè, comincia a tav. XIII e dice" (The long excerpt from the book of Joshua begins at Table XIII and says; p. 35) and then he quotes the text of Josh 10:16–26. In this passage the five kings are brought before Joshua.

Along with the four pictures, the roll provides a continuous text that contains the following material from Josh 10:9–14 (part of verse

\(^5\) Tables 13 to 15 on folios 453–454, which are numbered as Tav. E and F in the 1950 book, see also the 1950 publication, pp. 33–35.