“SOUND THE TRUMPET!”
REDACTION AND RECEPTION OF JOSHUA 6:2–25’

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1. Introduction

Within the study of redaction and reception of the book of Joshua, to which our honoree has made numerous distinctive contributions,1 the narrative of the fall of Jericho (Josh 6:2–25) takes a special place. Not only does this story take a special position in the book of Joshua and the history of Israel, it also forms the focus of several redaction-critical studies which aim to disentangle the complex character of the story. From a narrative point of view, the story is rather lopsided as far as the balance between preparations for the capture of the city (Josh 6:2–19) and the actual conquest (Josh 6:20) is concerned. The first part of the narrative is not only redundant and static,2 it also contains several tensions and doublets.

The chapter is also one of several in which the Old Greek translation (LXX) differs drastically from the received Masoretic Text (MT). This oldest textual witness to the book of Joshua apparently lacks entire verses

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*I consider it a great honor to present this contribution to Ed Noort, from whom I learnt so much about the history of redaction and reception of the book of Joshua. I warmly thank my mentor Arie van der Kooij for his constructive comments on this essay.


2 The Hebrew text of Josh 6:2–19 goes at great lengths to communicate the instructions dealing with the circumambulation of the city, the specifications regarding to the division of responsibilities, particularly with regard to the roles of the priests and the lay people. The style of these verses is remarkably redundant and static, the number of verbs in the narrative wayyiqtol remarkably low (18 out of 81 clauses) over against other verbal forms (yiqtol, we-qatal, infinitives and participles). Strikingly, the Hebrew verb for movement in these verses, מָלָל, “to go,” which is attested nine times in these verses, occurs only in participial and infinitival forms (Josh 6:8, 9 [three times], 13 [five times]).
and half verses (Josh 6:3b–4, 6b, 15b, 17b, 20b), amounting to approximately one-third of the whole chapter. A quick glance through the pluses in MT shows that many of these deal with the carrying and sounding of the trumpets and constitute much of the excess baggage of the narrative. Therefore, many scholars hold the view that the shorter LXX version reflects a Hebrew Vorlage that is not only different from MT, but also attests to an early stage in the process of literary growth prior to the expansionistic longer Hebrew version attested by MT. Hence these shorter (LXX) and longer (MT) versions are often seen as two successive stages in the literary development of the chapter either by way of interpolation (Glossierung) or editorial activity.3

On the other hand the Greek version also reflects numerous literary initiatives and interpretative translations,4 which render a mono-causal explanation for the variants problematic. Furthermore, the text of Joshua 6 in the oldest extant manuscript of the book, 4QJosha (first half of the first century BCE), where extant, almost completely sides with MT.5 Hence major advocates of the theory that large-scale differences between


5 E. Ulrich, “4QJosh,” in Qumran Cave 4. IX: Deuteronomy to Kings (ed. E. Ulrich et al.; DJD XIV; Oxford 1995), 143–152. Given the close correspondence between the Hebrew texts of Joshua 6, the MT has been taken as point of comparison. Variant readings in 4QJosha are discussed in the footnotes below.