CONQUEST OF THE LAND, LOSS OF THE LAND:
WHERE DOES JOSHUA 24 BELONG?’

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After the conquest of the land, Joshua gathered all the people of Israel and addressed them. According to the book of Joshua, he did so twice. Despite some commonalities, the content and language of the speeches in Joshua 23 and 24 differ, and each has its own distinct themes.

The two important themes in Joshua 23 are strict observance of the Torah and the relationship with the nations that remain in the land. After the complete and successful conquest of the land, noted in Josh 21:43–45, Joshua’s exhortation introduces a dark perspective. If the Israelites do not keep to everything written in the book of the law of Moses, if they mix with the nations that remain and serve their gods, then (1) God will not drive out the remaining nations from the land, but rather (2) the Israelites will be the ones to be destroyed and driven from the good land that God has given them.

The central theme in Joshua 24 is the choice to serve God in the land given to Israel. Or to put it differently: who is to be God in the land of Israel? God has always protected Israel from its enemies and has given it this land. Joshua, therefore, calls upon the people to serve God and to set aside the foreign gods that their forefathers served. But if Israel does not wish to serve God, Joshua urges them to choose between the gods of their ancestors and the gods of the land they now live in.

In the final form of the book of Joshua, the conquest of the promised land is qualified and conditioned by these two texts, Joshua 23 and 24, each text signaling a particular emphasis. These different perspectives at the end of the conquest of the land have proven useful for

* As a former student, friend and colleague of Ed, it is a great pleasure for me to contribute to this book in his honor. With enthusiasm and vast knowledge, Ed introduced me to biblical studies and archaeology. Under his supervision I wrote my MA thesis on the final two chapters of the book of Joshua, after which I ventured into the area of Second Temple Judaism and the Dead Sea Scrolls. It seems, therefore, fitting that in my contribution in honor of Ed I return to this chapter that stands at the closure of the conquest of the land.
understanding the formation and composition of larger bodies of literature in the Hebrew Bible. The double ending of the book of Joshua, together with Josh 24:29–31 and 24:32–33, as well as the double beginning of the book of Judges, marked by Judg 1:1 and 2:8, has presented biblical scholars with a primary test case for hypotheses about a Hexateuch, a Deuteronomistic History and an Enneateuch. Joshua 24 especially has proven to be a key text.

In 1998, in his Forschungsgeschichte of the book of Joshua, Ed Noort could still consider a Hexateuch model on the basis of Joshua 24 as a thing of the past. But since then this text has served as the basis for a resurgence of hypotheses about the relatively short existence of a Hexateuch in postexilic Judah. While from a form-critical perspective Gerhard von Rad called Josh 24:2–13 “einen Hexateuch in kleiner Form,” recent scholars have taken Joshua 24 not as preceding the formation of a Hexateuch, as von Rad did, but as evidence of and the conclusion to an actual Hexateuch. These scholars consider Joshua 24 to be a post-Deuteronomistic and postexilic composition. In addition to Hexateuch hypotheses, the late dating now in vogue for Joshua 24 has led scholars to consider the text as pivotal in the composition of an Enneateuch. Thus, recent interpretations of Joshua 24 have extended well beyond the confines of the Deuteronomistic History.

Concomitant with a reappraisal of Martin Noth’s Deuteronomistic History hypothesis, the analysis of Joshua 23, as well as the thorny question of its relationship with Joshua 24, has also attracted renewed attention. Many scholars now uphold the priority of Joshua 23 over and against Joshua 24. Joshua 23 is understood to be firmly set within the frame-

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1 Strictly speaking only Josh 24:28–31 and Judg 2:6–9 present a repetition.
5 For a convenient overview, see T.C. Römer, The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction (London 2005).
6 But, for an opposite view, see recently U. Becker, “Endredaktionelle Kontextvernetzungen des Josua-Buches,” in Die deuteronomischen Geschichtswerke: Redaktions- und religionsgeschichtliche Perspektiven zur “Deuteronomismus”-Diskussion in Tora und