

# The Blessing of Cities

Joshua 15:20-63

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, February 11th 2024

## I. Introduction - The importance of reading every word of Scripture

I have a book that gives advice to us preachers on how to preach. And it's a pretty good book. But that book suggested that chapters 16-21 of Joshua "don't have too much to say to contemporary congregations."<sup>1</sup> And the general consensus is that it is not really a preachable text - nor are the following chapters. So why did I read every word to you and why am I not skipping over this like most pastors do? I think you already know the answer. It's in your outline. It is because I am convinced that every Word of the Bible is important. Deuteronomy 8:3 commands us to live by every word and Jesus quotes that verse and affirms that verse in Matthew 4:4. That means that there must be something that we *can* live by in these words. In Matthew 10 Jesus appealed to one word in a very obscure passage that is very difficult to understand, and then He explains why He brought it up in his debate with the Jews. The explanation is that "the Scripture cannot be broken" - not even the tough parts. Now, it is true that not all words are equally important for *preaching*. Some of the important data in this chapter is intended for scholars. So I am only going to preach on the parts that directly impact your lives.

## II. The importance of cities in relationship to the farms (vv. 21-63)

And the first lesson that I see in this chapter is the importance of cities in relationship to the farms. We just read the names of 122 cities. For God to go to all the trouble of listing those cities, they must be important to Him.

And if you trace what the Bible says about cities from Genesis to Revelation you will find that the concept of the city is a very important concept in the Bible. The Bible begins with a godly garden and ends with a godly city. *And that's not an accidental progression. Not at all.* For the Dominion Mandate of Genesis chapter 1 to be fulfilled, it is critical that there be the development of godly cities. God commanded the building of cities and blessed Israel by letting them inherit cities and villages. He calls the post-exilic community returning from Babylon to build godly cities. There is a rich theology of cities from Genesis to Revelation, with Revelation itself ending with a beautiful description of a massive city (the New Jerusalem) that will be a blessing to the whole world.

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<sup>1</sup> "The majority of the twenty-five commentaries I have on Joshua detail the parceling out of the land to the Israelites. Those details don't have too much to say to contemporary congregations." Jr. Huffman John A. and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, Joshua, vol. 6, *The Preacher's Commentary Series* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1986), 205.

I won't take the time to give you an entire theology of cities this morning (though an entire book could be written on that subject), but I have mentioned *this* much because a lot of people disdain living in cities and think it is more spiritual to live on the farm or at least in the countryside away from people.

But let's think about that for a bit. Do people on the farm produce everything that they use or even everything that they eat? No. They even have to go to the store to buy what *other* farmers have produced and they use essential technology on their farm that the farmer himself could not produce. Without specialization of labor *that is provided by cities*, you wouldn't have the technology to can your home-grown foods, or to freeze-dry them. You wouldn't have electricity, rototillers, shovels, cars, cell phones, and a host of other things that farmers use.

Now, I can appreciate the desire to live in the countryside as a *preference*, but I want you to realize that there are huge advantages to cities, and the farmers benefited from the cities and the cities benefited from the farmers. I won't give you an exhaustive list of why cities can be both a blessing and a curse (and yes, they *can* be a curse), but let me suggest a few ways in which cities and villages are indeed a tremendous blessing. And hopefully, this chapter will erase from your mind forever the idea that farming is more spiritual than selling vehicles in the city. It is not.

1. First, if everyone lived self-sufficiently on his own farm, there would be no division of labor and it would be impossible to completely fulfill the Dominion Mandate given in Genesis chapter 1. Impossible. Division of labor can obviously be used to promote evil too, but it can also be used for tremendous good, and division of labor is essential for fulfilling all the commands that God has given in the Bible.
2. Second, division of labor enabled *specialization* of labor in the Bible, such as pastors, craftsmen, doctors, and traders. Jesus and the apostles did not live on the farm. They certainly *benefited* from what farmers produced, but they *specialized* in preaching and evangelism.
3. Third, this division of labor *and* specialization in turn helped to promote technological advances. It would be impossible to build the massive tractors and harvesters that farmers use today without the technological advances that division of labor and specialization have enabled. And the same was true in the Bible. Study the technologies that developed over Biblical history and you will realize that none of those technologies could have developed if everyone's main occupation was farming. Think of the existence in the Bible of ceramics (what a great invention), wheels (what a blessing wheels were), medicine, iron smelting, and iron tools, plows, axes, arrows, chariots, enduring stone highways, and a host of other technologies *that were produced by specialists who lived in the cities*.
4. Fourth, these technological advances in turn helped to lower the costs of production and began to generate wealth for everyone - including the farmer.

5. Fifth, the most efficient ways for centers of trade and culture to develop was through cities. Granted, they can produce concentrated evil in culture as well as concentrated good. But the city by itself is not evil; it is *how* the city is used. God's plan was for the citizens to use these 122 cities faithfully.
6. And finally, the farmers who were blessed by God were able to sell their excess produce to the cities and thus make enough money to be able to buy things from the city. So there was a mutual benefit of both to each other. This is just basic Biblical economics.

The bottom line is that the cultural mandate given in Genesis 1 cannot be achieved on farms alone. God calls us to take dominion of every facet of life, not just farming. Thus there are numerous passages that speak of the incredible blessing of cities and the trouble people *automatically* experience when the cities are vaporized by war. I'll just read one example out of many that could be found: Psalm 107:4-9 says,

4 They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way; *They found no city to dwell in.* 5 Hungry and thirsty, Their soul fainted in them. 6 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He delivered them out of their distresses. 7 *And He led them forth by the right way, That they might go to a city for a dwelling place.* 8 Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! 9 For He satisfies the longing soul, And fills the hungry soul with goodness.

If you were the tribe of Judah, you would have been so blessed to have inherited these cities. You would have seen them as a good provision - just like that Psalm says. And you would have been thankful that God only mandated that they destroy a few cities. The other cities, towns, and villages were able to instantly be inhabited, with the result that Judah had a huge head start in taking dominion of every area of life while in the land. Here's the thing: *God forced the division of labor, specialization, and the resultant economic advancements that both city and farm could produce.* Let me repeat that. In this chapter *God forced the division of labor, specialization, and the resultant economic advancements that both city and farm could produce.*

Rushdoony also points out that the city was the God-ordained locus of justice, where justice was administered publicly in the gates of the city. The whole countryside around had their justice in the gates of the city. It was the place for town council meetings, court sessions, public hearings, and all of the other necessary administrations of justice.

And cities had *other* purposes too, but I think I have said enough to show that cities have an important place in God's plan, and we need to recognize the legitimacy of that place. OK, enough said on that point.

### III. The relationship of towns and villages to cities (vv. 44-46,51,54,57,59,62)

But this passage doesn't just mention cities. It mentions towns and villages. And the wording is very interesting. Verse 32 says, "all the cities are twenty-nine, with *their* villages." There is some tight connection between the city and the villages. Verse 36 - "fourteen cities with *their* villages." And similar language is found in several other verses. Verse 45 adds "with its *towns* and villages" as does verse 47.

In a later point I will comment on the *division* of this chapter into eleven groupings. But let me anticipate that because I think it will help to correct a slightly wrong view that at least some people hold to. It's not a huge point. But some people think that each county was named after the chief city in that county, and the rest of the towns and villages belonged that city's county. But that's actually not the way it is worded. It's not just one city in a county that has its towns and villages. All of them did. And there were clearly not 122 counties in Judah. There were only eleven.

There is a *different* relationship that makes cities very close to their towns and villages. And let's talk about that close relationship. The relationship is so close that sometimes the villages are actually spoken of as "daughters" of the city - kind of like the urban sprawl. The city daughters or produces this urban sprawl. So the literal Hebrew of Numbers 21:25 and 2 Chronicles 13:19 is the city *with its daughters*, though it is translated the same way as here. It speaks of there being a close relationship between city and village. What is that relationship?

First, the city was fortified, whereas the towns and villages were not. So anytime there was war, the people in the towns and villages would flee into the walled city with their money, cattle, and goods. And it would sustain the city during a long seige.

But for other dependencies, let me quote from Joel Drinkard, who speaks of the mutual dependence that cities, villages, and farms had with each other. This is speaking of their function entirely apart from the county structure. He says,

The OT speaks of the fields of a city or village (Lev. 25:34; Josh. 21:12; Neh. 11:25, 30) ... Large cities would not have had enough land surrounding to meet its food needs, so they would depend on the trade of the surplus produce from the smaller villages. The villages in turn would depend on the cities for the manufactured goods and items of trade from distant areas.<sup>2</sup>

I don't think I need to say more, but you can see from I have already said that farm, village, town, and city all played vital roles in the economic life of Israel. The villages tended to have the industries that would be most frequently needed by the farmers (like

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<sup>2</sup> Joel F. Drinkard Jr., "Cities and Urban Life," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 302.

blacksmiths), the industries in the towns would be a little bit more separated from the farms, and the cities would have the most specialization.

#### **IV. The listing of the 9 Levitical cities of Judah, one of which (Hebron) was a city of refuge (Num. 35:2–8; Josh. 21:1–42; 20:7–9; Deut. 4:41–43; 1 Chron. 6:54–81)**

The next interesting thing about this list of cities is that nine of them were Levitical cities where the theological experts among the Levites were able to reside. Not all of the Levites resided in those cities. Only certain ones did. Later Scripture shows that the rest of the Levites resided in the other cities and even in towns and villages to be able to minister to the smaller congregations. The Levites were called scribes. They were basically the trained theologians and the pastors. They were not the ruling elders. The ruling elders were not clergy; they were lay leaders who came from the other tribes.

But in this chapter, God ensured that there would be *cities* where large groups of Levites would live so as to *specialize* in studying the Bible and applying it to life, and would train people in that application, and would be available to help civic officers on the tough decisions that they would sometimes need to make. Civic officers would consult them. By the way, our denomination's Form of Church Government, chapter 6, section 3 recognizes this when it speaks of one of the many roles that pastors have is "to counsel civil magistrates when requested to do so." Don't think of the pastor's only role as being within the church.

But the Levites in the Levitical cities were needed for far more than simply to give advice to civil magistrates. The Levitical cities were the places where huge advancements in theology and the application of God's Word to every area of life could take place. They were basically think tanks. And today we need such think tanks. Those kinds of think tanks are starting to reappear (praise God!) in various places of North America. Chalcedon Foundation has been one such think tank for a long, long time. But there are numerous others, like the one Joe Boot is heading up in Canada, and Jeff Durbin in Mesa, Arizona, and many other locals. In any case, the Levitical cities mentioned here are Ain, Beth Shemesh, Debir, Eshtemoa, Hebron, Holon, Jattir, Juttah, and Libnah. They housed the best theological acumen of the Levitical tribe.

Other Levites were scattered into every hamlet of Israel. You may remember that the curse God put upon two of the sons of Jacob (Levi and Simeon - because of their cruelty) was that they would be scattered throughout Israel and would not have their own state government. Well, this chapter shows exactly that. Levites were scattered throughout Israel. And as to Simeon, nine of the cities in a later chapter that is said to be given to Simeon is now listed as being a city of Judah. So they were citizens of Judah just like the Levites were citizens of each tribe where they resided.

Here's the point: though the original Levi was cursed, God turned the curse into a blessing by enabling trained theologians to be pastors in every synagogue of Israel. He is able to

turn the curses that God's people experience into blessings. Praise God! I love that about this chapter! And the other Levites that were scattered in every town and village were a blessing too since worked together with the local elders to help provide oversight to the congregations of Israel - now called synagogues. And by the way, the true form of Presbyterianism is exactly the same in the Old Testament synagogues as they are in the New Testament assemblies. The Levites were the teaching elders and the other elders came from the lay people of that congregation. There has always been a distinction between teaching elder and ruling elder. And praise God, our denomination is restudying this, and there seems to be a consensus of moving in that direction - whether it ends up being one office with two orders (as I believe it should) or two separate offices.

But there is an additional interesting fact about *one* of these Levitical cities (the one mentioned in verse 54), and that is that it is a city of refuge. It is Kiriath Arba (which will later have its name changed to Hebron). We will be delving into the cities of refuge in much more detail in chapter 20, so all I will say here is that the *church itself* was very involved in rescuing people from injustice. It was a kind of interposition. Well, that meant that those judging the manslaughter cases had to be experts in God's law - and they were; it was the Levites who occupied the cities of refuge.

And Christendom followed this pattern. For hundreds of years it was the *church* that had this kind of expertise, and it was the *church* that functioned as the city of refuge - a sanctuary from injustice. Sadly, the church of today is so backslidden and theologically illiterate that I'm not sure I would always trust a church's justice. Many pastors have never studied Biblical justice in the law of God. But praise God, the CPC is up to the job of delivering good justice with good procedure. I have seen it over and over. Our denomination has done a stellar job.

But back to the Middle Ages and beyond, the church communities where the theological think tanks existed became equivalents to these cities of refuge. And even the emperor of Christendom respected the church's role in that. The emperor dared not invade the churches or overturn their pronouncements of innocence. So that is just to whet your appetites for chapter 20. Cities of refuge were a very important part of God's plan. They also had symbolic typological teaching purpose - that we must flee to Jesus. So the Gospel itself is embedded in those cities. But we will deal with all of that when we get to chapter 20.

## V. Simeon's cities (19:2-9) are listed here as being a part of Judah

I've already touched on the next point - that nine of the cities listed in verses 21-47 are said to belong to the tribe of Simeon in chapter 19. Those cities of the tribe of Simeon were under Judah's jurisdiction and eventually the Simeonites were completely assimilated into Judah. And I've already given *some* application. Let me give you two more applications related to the tribe of Simeon. What God promised in Genesis 49, he kept in this chapter. He is a promise-keeping God. That's one application.

But it also illustrates the impact that the sins of parents can have on succeeding generations. Again, once again, God turned a curse into a blessing. Their assimilation into Judah would later prove to be a tremendous blessing. I won't say more about that this morning.

## VI. The state of Judah is divided into eleven districts = *mishpacha* (v. 1) = counties

Nor will I spend a lot of time on the next point. Commentators point out that Judah was divided into eleven districts in this chapter - whatever those districts were. That much is crystal clear. And I have put the names of those eleven districts into the text box in your outline.<sup>3</sup> But all of 122 cities are listed in groupings *within* each of those eleven districts. What are those eleven districts? Some commentaries are puzzled by these districts, but the simple answer is that these are the *mishpacha* counties mentioned in verse 1.<sup>4</sup> He's already said that He was going to group them according to their *mishpacha*. And He did. When we looked at verse 1 some weeks ago we saw that the *mishpacha* were the smallest civil units related to the state. The cities, towns, and villages were civil units, but they answered to the *mishpacha*, and the *mishpacha* answered to the state. So these districts simply reinforce all of the applications that I made to civics in that sermon.

## VII. Judah's failure to drive out the Canaanites (vv. 45-47,63) is a failure of faith and action

OK. The *last* lesson that I want to give this morning is that Judah was not successful in defeating all the Canaanites. Verses 45-47 list three Philistine cities that still existed - and they existed *within Judah*. That's the point. Those three cities are said to be Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza. They were given to Judah, yet Judah did not claim them. And those three cities continued to be under Philistine control all the way up to David's day. Verse 63 mentions

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<sup>3</sup> The districts are 1) the South, bordering Edom (vv. 21-32), 2) Shephelah 1 (vv. 33-36), 3) Sphephelah 2 (vv. 37-41), 4) Shephelah 3 (vv. 42-44), 5) Sphephelah 4 (vv. 45-47), 6) Hill Country 1 (vv. 48-51), 7) Hill Country 2 (vv. 52-54), 8) Hill Country 3 (vv. 55-57), 9) Hill Country 4 (vv. 58-59), 10) Hill Country 5 (v. 60), 11) Wilderness (vv. 61-63)

<sup>4</sup> Speaking of the changes in these divisions in the first century AD, M'Clintock summarizes by saying, "Josephus regards Idumæa as part of Judæa, for he immediately after reckons that as one of the eleven districts into which Judæa was divided. Most of these districts were denominated, like our counties, from the chief towns. They were, 1. Jerusalem; 2. Gophna; 3. Acrabatta; 4. Thumna; 5. Lydda; 6. Emmaus; 7. Pella; 8. Idumæa; 9. Engaddi; 10. Herodium; and, 11. Jericho." John M'Clintock and James Strong, "Judæ'a," in *Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1891), 1046.

that Jerusalem was still occupied by the Jebuzites. And it continued to be occupied by the Jebusites all the way up to the time of David, the ideal king. That means that Judah *failed* in its conquest when it preferred to live at peace with the pagans. In contrast, David (who typified Jesus) conquered them. Verse 63 says,

As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.

God had intended Jerusalem to be a place where His Word reigned supreme over the surrounding area. And it once did. Hebrews chapters 5, 6, and 7 all say that Melchizedek was the king of Salem, and Salem is an early abbreviated name of Jeru-salem in Genesis 14. Melchizedek was either the preincarnate Son of God or (more likely) a godly priest/king who was a symbolic type of Jesus. And I tend to believe that he was a literal earthly king who was a type of Jesus.

Well, that means that Melchizedek represented one of the godly cities in Genesis. Jerusalem went *way* back in time. But over time Salem apostatized and was occupied by God-haters. And what God intended to be the Scripture-saturated capitol of Israel, stayed as a pagan city that was saturated by the wisdom of man. If God's Word is not the ruling document of a nation, then some other word will automatically become the law of the land. That's exactly what has happened in America. America has rejected God's perfect law of liberty and we are now groaning under so many onerous laws that even the federal government has been unable to count all the laws on the books. God wants the capitol of every nation to be ruled by a godly Melchizedek - a civil magistrate who is a Christian and who is in tune with God's perfect law of liberty.

In Judges 1, Israel conquered the *lower* unwalled part of Jerusalem, but not the citadel. But even the lower part of Jerusalem was quickly taken back by the Jebusites a few verses later and in Judges 19:11-12 it is still called an "alien city." That's a sad tribute to Judah's failure.

And verse 63 is added by a later inspired prophetic editor of Joshua in the time of Judges. The phrase "to this day" does not refer to a time in the life of Joshua, but to the time of a later prophet. Later prophets would sometimes add explanatory notes (by God's authorization) to earlier books. In this case, we know for a fact that the inspired prophet who added this note had to have been one of the prophets in the time of the Judges. If you read liberal commentaries, they will say something different. Liberals like to say that Joshua was written after the exile of Israel to Babylon - which is ridiculous for many reasons. But one reason we know they are wrong is that *David* conquered Jerusalem, proving that this book had to have been written much earlier than David. In my footnotes I will give ample proof that 99.9% of the book of Joshua was written by Joshua *himself*.<sup>5</sup> As Joshua 24:26 says, Joshua wrote the words of this book right into the canon of Scripture - into the Book of the Law; *he* was the one who added it to the Pentateuch. But a later

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<sup>5</sup> See appendix



prophet put in a few inspired explanatory notes about ancient names and other details so that later readers would understand it. So that's what "to this day" means.

But why was *this* note included *here*? Many commentators believe that it is a rebuke to Judah for failing to have the faith of Caleb and Othniel.<sup>6</sup> It stands in such stark contrast to the faith of Caleb and Othniel earlier in this chapter. Apparently the generals of Judah got tired of fighting and ended up being content to live side-by-side with the ones that God had doomed to destruction. But here is the thing: *you cannot live at peace with anything that God has declared war against without seeing negative consequences*; and those negative consequences are given in the book of Judges. And I love the application that Jack Hayford wrote. He said,

Here is the first hint of the failure of Israel's conquests. Their failure would negatively affect the moral and social fiber of their lives for generations. God does not want us to fail to drive the enemy completely from our lives, homes, and families. Unresolved issues leave a crack in the door into the invisible realm that can allow the powers of darkness a foothold in our lives.

For example, if a person has won the victory over fear, but begins to entertain anxious thoughts, then this spirit of fear may dominate his or her life again. Likewise, if one has been delivered from a problem with pornography, but chooses to watch movies with suggestive scenes, then he or she risks being bound again by lust. In every case, the enemy must be completely driven out and the door slammed shut.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> McConville says, "Seen from another perspective, the incomplete possession may be implicitly laid at the door of the Israelites by way of censure. The land has been completely and unconditionally bestowed upon Israel by Yahweh: how is it then that it has not in practice been occupied? This is a central question that the book of Joshua poses throughout." J. Gordon McConville and Stephen N. Williams, *Joshua, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 79.

<sup>7</sup> Jack W. Hayford, *Spirit Filled Life Bible For Students* (Nashville; Atlanta; London; Vancouver: Thomas Nelson, 1995), Jos 15:63.

And I say, “Amen.” Tremper Longman,<sup>8</sup> Robert Hubbard,<sup>9</sup> and A. W. Pink<sup>10</sup> all point out that this failure to obey the Lord’s command for complete conquest meant that the Canaanites would continue to be a snare and a temptation to idolatry for generations to come.<sup>11</sup> They were a thorn in the flesh. As we have seen before, it is imperative that we declare an all-out war against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and that we purpose to enter fully into all that Jesus has purchased for us. May the Lord help us to do so. Amen.

## VIII. Appendix

While I don’t agree with everything that Harstad says, he sums up some of the evidence for an early date:

“The following are indications of early composition, that is, still in the second millennium B.C.: 1. According to 6:25, Rahab continued to live within Israel “to this day,” which implies that the book (or at the very least, chapters 1–6) was in its final form during her lifetime. 2. Josh 9:27 describes the Gibeonites as still providing their service at the LORD’s altar “to this day.” This reflects a time of writing before Saul’s attempt to annihilate the Gibeonites (2 Sam 21:1–2). The phrase “for the place he would choose” (Josh 9:27) also indicates a time prior to the building of the temple at Jerusalem. 3. The author writes before King David dislodged the Jebusites from Jerusalem (15:63; 18:16, 28). David conquered Jerusalem in

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<sup>8</sup> “Unfortunately, the Jebusites will prove to be a snare for Israel later.” Tremper Longman III, ed., *Deuteronomy Thru Ruth, vol. 2, Layman’s Bible Commentary* (Barbour Publishing, 2009), 140.

<sup>9</sup> Hubbard says, “...the tribes’ inability to dislodge the Canaanites from their inheritances (15:63; 16:10; 17:12–18), a stalemate that keeps alive the fatal lure of idolatry that ensnares the Israelites in Judges.” Robert L. Hubbard Jr. and J. Andrew Dearman, *Introducing the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 131.

<sup>10</sup> Arthur Walkington Pink, *Gleanings in Joshua* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 357–358.

<sup>11</sup> Pink says, “Judges 1:8, supplies an additional detail, informing us. “Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.” However, it would appear that during the next few years, while Israel were occupied in conquering other parts of the country, the Jebusites recovered the fort of mount Sion at least, which remained in their hands till the time of David (2 Sam. 5:7). Matthew Henry suggested: “It may, therefore, be justly looked upon as the punishment of their neglect to conquer other cities which God had given them, that they were so long kept out of this.” So today, if the Lord’s people be slack in performing their duties, they need not be surprised if some important centers of Christendom remain under the control of the enemy, having the management of the same—how many of the denominational boards, seminaries, etc., are now governed by modern Jebusites!” Arthur Walkington Pink, *Gleanings in Joshua* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 357.

about 1000 B.C. 4. Josh 16:10 refers to Canaanites living among the Ephraimites in Gezer. The time of writing would then have to be before the Solomonic era in light of the information in 1 Ki 9:16–17. 5. The Hurrian names Hoham, Piram, Sheshai, and Talmai appear in Josh 10:3 and 15:14. Hurrian language, culture, and personal names disappeared by the end of the tenth century B.C. See the textual note on “Rahab” in 2:1. 6. The text contains archaic Hebrew forms. For example, see the textual notes on “ask” in 4:6, on “then ... built” in 8:30, and on “then ... spoke” in 10:12. 7. Ancient tradition points to Sidon as the earlier of the two Phoenician ports, Tyre and Sidon.<sup>15</sup> In Joshua the references to Sidon (rather than Tyre) as a significant power may reflect a time of writing before Tyre rose to become the powerful city-state that it later was (Josh 13:6; 19:28; but see also Josh 19:29, where Tyre appears). The commentary mentions additional items that in our opinion point to a second millennium B.C. composition. See, for example, the textual notes on “came to a house of a woman, a prostitute” in 2:1, the textual notes on the terms in 7:21, and the commentary on the covenant form followed by Joshua in chapter 24. While the evidence cited above points to an early date and is compatible with authorship by Joshua himself, the following features are ambiguous or may suggest at least some authorial or editorial activity after Joshua’s lifetime: 1. The author records the death of Joshua at the end of the book (24:29). Talmudic tradition credits Eleazar with recording the death of Joshua, and Phinehas with recording the death of his father, Eleazar (24:33).<sup>16</sup> Some have suggested that the final editor of Joshua may have been Eleazar, Phinehas, or one of the “elders” mentioned in 24:31. That verse states: “Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who prolonged [their] days after Joshua and who knew every deed of the LORD that he did for Israel.” However, we think that the wording of 24:31 suggests that at least 24:29–33 may have been written in a later and darker period of Israel’s history when the golden years of those elders and their eyewitness testimony to God’s works of salvation were past. 2. Joshua uses archaic names for some Canaanite cities. The archaic names probably were the ones current in Joshua’s lifetime. Some examples are (archaic) Kiriath-arba for (the later name) Hebron in 14:15; Baalah for Kiriath-jearim in 15:9; and Kiriath-sannah for Debir in 15:49. Yet at the same time, each of those verses explains the old name by supplying the newer one too, as if the generation at the time of the book’s final composition may have been unfamiliar with the older names. 3. “To this day” (הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה) is repeated often in the book.<sup>17</sup> This suggests that the author (of this phrase, at least) is writing at a time somewhat separated from the events recorded in the context. In some instances, the elapsed time clearly is less than a lifetime (e.g., in 6:25, described above). In other instances (e.g., 9:27; 15:63; and 16:10, described above), the circumstances would allow for an elapsed time of several centuries, although they do not require such a large amount of elapsed time. Just how much time intervened between the original events and the current time indicated by “to this day” (הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה) is not specified by the phrase itself. To illustrate, consider three verses in which the phrase “to this day” refers to the “day” when the Pentateuch was in its final form: in Gen 26:33 and 32:33 (ET 32:32), the starting point for the time interval is the patriarchal era (so the elapsed time would be many centuries), whereas in Deut 10:8 the starting point is an event in the lifetime of Moses (so the elapsed time might only be a few decades). 4. In one manuscript tradition the author writes about crossing the Jordan River in the first person plural: “the LORD dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until we crossed over” (Josh 5:1).<sup>18</sup> Does this suggest that the author was an actual participant in the crossing, such as Joshua himself? If

so, then the passage might be compared to those in Acts where the author, Luke, records events in which he himself participated with first person plural forms, for example, “We sailed from Philippi, ... and we came to them at Troas” (Acts 20:6).<sup>f</sup> On the other hand, some OT passages prescribe that later generations of Israelites are to confess God’s redemptive acts as if they themselves were original participants in those acts. Through faith, later generations of God’s people are incorporated into salvation history and the prior history of God’s redeemed becomes their—“our”—history. For example, later generations are to teach their children that when God struck down the firstborn in Egypt, he saved “our houses” (Ex 12:27). “We” in Josh 5:1 might be understood in that light. Shortly before 5:1, Joshua prescribed that the Israelites were to teach their children that God had dried up the Jordan River for “you” to cross, even as the Lord had dried up the Red Sea “before us until we crossed over” (4:23). Joshua himself was a participant in that crossing of the Red Sea, and so “we” is literal there, but subsequent generations could confess that same history as their own too.” Adolph L. Harstad, *Joshua, Concordia Commentary* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 2004), 9–12.