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Hebrew Union College
Jewish Institute of Religion
Cincinnati, Ohio

Poetics in the Book of Joshua

Jonathan Magidovitch

Referee, Professor David Weisberg

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

1985

To my father Avshalom's memory
and my sister Claire's honor -- rabbis
of brilliance and passion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

The book of **Joshua** is rich with character and with situation. As readers, we are engaged by these qualities of the Joshua narrative. A closer examination of the narrative reveals a variety of poetic devices which function as road-maps for the readers; guiding them through the complexities of the **Joshua** story and shaping an understanding of its characters.

In our opening chapter we have a discussion of poetics and interpretation. Here we define poetics and we discuss its function as a basis for interpretation. We then graph a model of the various schools of interpretation and discuss their strengths, their weaknesses, and, ultimately, their relatedness.

In our second chapter we discuss the use of marker and formula in a block of material from Joshua. These poetic devices divide this block of text into smaller parts and even smaller episodes. This division leads to a discussion of the relationship among these parts and episodes. Another term for this relationship is plot structure.

Our third chapter discusses characterization as a poetic device. We outline three levels of characterization: the type; the agent; and the full-fledged character. We show examples of each level character; noting that the lower level characters serve as foils which motivate the full-fledged characters to the very actions which make them full-fledged. We note, also, that characters can function to focus our attention on important thematic material to come

later in the narrative.

In our fourth chapter we discuss two uses of repetition. The first type of repetition is where a statement is made, then followed immediately by a virtual copy of itself. This is shown to be an important device for revealing character and for making theological statements. The second type of repetition is the reoccurrence of a formula. This repetition serves both to focus our attention on specific thematic material and to unify the book of Joshua.

Our fifth chapter is a discussion of the Joshua author's use of metaphor. We present three possible reasons which might underlie this use of metaphor, then we note the effect that each of these possibilities might have on subsequent interpretations.

We conclude, in chapter six, with a summary of our work.

CHAPTER ONE

Poetics and Models of Interpretation

In this thesis we will attempt an analysis of the book of Joshua using tools provided by the science of poetics. Our goal is to come to an understanding of how this book is structured. To meet this goal, we will point out the appearance of poetic devices. We will discuss these devices, and we will demonstrate how these devices function within Joshua. We will, at times, make statements about how the structure we uncover leads to interpretive statements.

The logic for this step is that, by developing a clear understanding of the structure of a work, we provide the basis for statements about the meaning of a work. Poetics provides the method for discovering how a text is put together. Poetics, therefore, is essentially descriptive. It does not ask what the reader is to make of the text.

Interpretation does ask these questions. It is in the act of interpretation that the reader deals with issues of meaning and connotation; of significance and relevance. Interpretation cannot stand alone, though. There must be a basis upon which the interpretation is built. There must be a link between the interpretation and the text being interpreted.

Poetics provides such a basis, for simply put, poetics is a method of precise reading. Poetics provides the interpreter a sharply focused picture of the text. It is this picture which is responded to by the interpreter. The sharper the picture; the sharper the interpretive

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response can be to this picture.

We are setting up a distinction between poetics and interpretation. As we have seen, these terms are closely associated. Often they are bundled together. Such packaging is in evidence in the following statement from Mortimer Adler's **How to Read a Book**:

> A good book deserves active reading. The activity of reading does not stop with the work of understanding what a book says. It must be completed by the work of criticism; the work of judging. (Adler, p.237)

Adler is using the words "active reading" as the group name for a whole series of processes. This group of processes begins with the physical act of reading the material on the page. And for Adler, it ends with the process of interpretation. Between these two extremes lies the realm of poetics. It is through the reader's implicit or explicit understanding of poetics that the material being read is brought to the point where it can be submitted to interpretation.

Adler's concept of active reading describes a creative process involving the reader and the text. The end product of active reading; that is the interpretation, is unique for each reader. On the subject of creativity, Carl Rogers writes:

> The creative process is the emergence in action of a novel relational product growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other. (Rogers, p.71)

The text becomes material in the life of the reader. The

reader interacts with the text in novel, creative ways. This novelty grows out of the uniqueness of the reader.

This understanding of the process of "active reading" leads to a problem for interpretation. For every reader there will arise a unique interpretation of the text. How, then, can we judge one interpretation as more valid than another?

In order to make such judgments about the validity of interpretation, we require a standard against which the interpretation can be judged. The selection of this standard changes in much the same way as fashion changes. There are three major trends in this shifting scene. First, there are those interpreters who assert that the meaning of the text lies solely within the text. Second, are those interpreters who assert that the sole meaning of the text lies within the interpreter. And, third, are those who assert that the author's intent is the sole validation for interpretation.

For the sake of clarity, let us now set up a model which graphically situates these three schools of interpretation. Consider an equilateral triangle. At each apex we have one of these three interpretive schools:

```
        text itself      /\
                        /    \
                      /        \
                    /            \
    interpreter   /_____\   author's intent
```
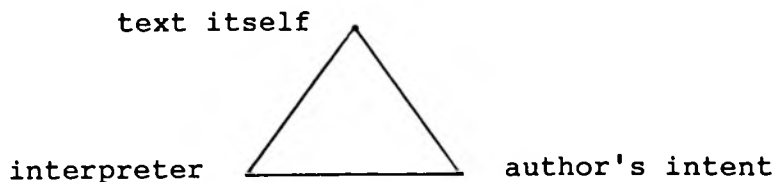
To be an adherent of one of these three interpretive schools is to be at one extreme of this triangle. Interpretations

conducted at any of these extreme stances have associated with them particular strengths and weaknesses.

Let us now consider those interpreters who function as if the text itself is the sole source of validation for their interpretation. They claim for their interpretations that they are merely drawing out of the text the meaning that is in the text. This is a useful claim, as Susan Horton notes below:

> That interpretation consists in the retrieval of what was "really there" or what "really happened" is one of the fragile fictions upon which the enterprise of interpreting depends. (Horton, p.3)

Having the text as sole validation for interpretation is useful, but it is a fiction. As we have already stated above, interpretation is a creative process that emerges from the novel relationship between the interpreter and the text. The text may well have a certain, unchanging meaning. Even so, this meaning cannot jump out of the text into the mind of the interpreter. Some mental process is required of the interpreter. Thus, the limitations of the interpreter will influence the interpretation.

To suggest that interpretation is simply a statement of what the text is saying, is to suggest a magical leap of meaning from the text directly to the interpretation. In reality, the interpreter is the agent which connects the text to an interpretation. As such, the interpreter shapes the meaning of the text into an interpretation.

A second trend in validating interpretation asserts that the meaning of a text is determined solely by the interpreter. The logic behind this second stance is that we cannot know with certainty what the text really means and we cannot know with certainty what the author intended the text to mean. All we can know with certainty is what we, as interpreters, understand. Therefore only the interpreter's understanding of a text is an acceptable source of validation for interpretation.

This is egalitarian, but it does not provide sound basis for the comparison of various interpretations. Under this system, all interpretations are necessarily equally valid. There is no logical reason to accept one interpretation as any more correct than any other interpretation.

The third major trend in validating interpretations asserts that the meaning of the text is determined by the author's intentions. This assertion is built on the verifiable fact that a given word sequence does not represent just one meaning. For example, suppose we were to read the sentence: "I am going to the store." We do know that someone is going to the store. We do not know if this sentence means that some one person is going to the store rather than some other person. We do not know if some person is going to the store rather than to the park.

The meaning of even this simple sentence above is dependent upon the context in which we read the sentence.

Context is created by the author. The author chooses what
is to be presented, in what order it is to be presented, and
in what manner it is to be presented.   Hirsch, who speaks
for this third school of interpretation, states:

> If a determinate word sequence does not in
> itself necessarily represent one particular,
> self-identical unchanging complex of meaning,
> then the determinacy of its verbal meaning must
> be accounted for by some other discriminating
> force which causes the meaning to be _this_
> instead of _that_, all of which it could be.
> That discriminating force must involve an act
> of will, since unless one particular complex of
> meaning is _willed_, there would be no
> distinction between what an author does mean by
> a word sequence and what he could mean by it.
> (Hirsch, p.47)

Hirsch is stating that there is a will which determines the
meaning of a given word sequence.   It is this will which
limits interpretation.   Interpretation, for Hirsch, must do
more than state what a text could mean.   It must state what
a text does mean, and this meaning is determined by the
author.

Like the other two approaches, this third approach
to interpretation provides sound basis for interpretation,
but it does have problems. First, even if the text does have
a certain, unchanging meaning and even if we have come to
some sense of this meaning by arriving at an understanding
of the author's intent; still, the interpreter functions as
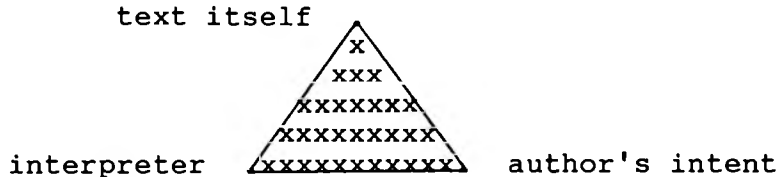the agent who connects this meaning to an interpretation.

A second problem is that we cannot know what the
author willed if the author is not available for interview.
Hirsch does have an answer to this:

Correctness   is   precisely   the   goal   of

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> interpretation and may in fact be achieved even
> though it can never be known to be achieved.
> We can have truth without being certain that we
> have it, and, in the absence of certainty, we
> can nevertheless have knowledge -- knowledge of
> the probable. (Hirsch, p.173)

In other words, we will never know if we have interpreted the text as the author intended. But, we can know if an interpretation is "probably" correct.

We have now outlined the three extreme stances under which the act of interpretation can be undertaken. Extremes, by their nature, function in the realm of the ideal rather than in the realm of the real. Interpretation as it is practiced is built upon some combination of the three ideal interpretive stances. Let us return to our triangle. This time we shade in the center portion of the triangle:

```
          text itself
                     /\
                    /x \
                   /xxx \
                  /xxxxxx\
                 /xxxxxxxx\
  interpreter   /xxxxxxxxxx\   author's intent
```

In practical terms, an interpreter's stance falls in the shaded area of the triangle. It may be closer to one extreme but it cannot ignore the other two extremes.

Poetics provides the basis for interpretation; it does not call for a particular interpretive stance. Essentially, poetics is a method for careful reading of the text. We look for patterns in the text. These patterns will point to choices made by the author in the presentation of material. By working back through these choices, we can come to some sense of what meaning an author was trying to

put before us. This becomes the basis of subsequent interpretation, interpretation built upon the interaction of the author, the text, and the interpreter.

This argument is complex and needs further expansion. To start this, we bring in the following statement by Robert Alter:

> I do not presume to judge whether a literary text may ever be thought to have an absolute fixed meaning, but I certainly reject the contemporary agnosticism about all literary meanings -- theological, psychological, moral, or whatever -- of the biblical tale by understanding precisely how it is written. (Alter, p.179)

Alter is speaking specifically of biblical interpretation and he is speaking with full awareness of the problems of interpretation. He concludes that a text does have a meaning and that this meaning can be divined "by understanding precisely" how the text is written. This precise reading of text is the task of poetics.

Up to this point, we have spoken of poetics in non-technical ways. We must now present a precise definition of the term. This term has a broad range of meanings, therefore we will cite two definitions and then put forth our working definition.

The first definition comes from **A Handbook to Literature**:

> Poetics: A system or body of theory concerning the nature of poetry. The principles and rules of poetic composition. The term is often used today as equivalent of "aesthetic principles" governing the nature of any literary form. Thus critics sometimes speak of a "poetics of FICTION." (Holman, p.403)

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Holman's definition can be considered the classical definition of poetics. What for Holman was a new use of the term, "the 'aesthetic principles' of any literary form," has come to be the mainstream use of the term.

Our second definition of poetics comes from Adelle Berlin:

> Poetics is an inductive science that seeks to abstract the general principles of literature from many different manifestations of those principles as they occur in actual literary texts. (Berlin, p.15)

The process of poetics is made clearer by Berlin than by Holman. She states that poetics is an approach to literary texts. The goal motivating this approach is to induce from texts general principles applicable to all literature.

Berlin's definition of poetics is more in line with contemporary use of the word. And, though it lacks the precision of Holman's definition, hers is the one we will use as our working definition.

Approaching biblical material through poetics does not differ in any logical way from approaching contemporary works. There are, however, special problems in working with the biblical materials. One such difficultly is the aura of the "sacred" which surrounds biblical material:

> Any ancient library is hard to read and understand. Because the contents of biblical life and thought are already blurred through antiquity and distance, an unconsidered attitude that the writings are "sacred" can move the looker beyond haziness into blindness itself. (Sandmel, 1978, p.5)

As Sandmel has aptly noted, the "sacredness" of biblical

materials can be a formidable obstacle to such an analytical approach as we are here suggesting.

Alter notes the same obstacle to poetic study of biblical materials as was noted by Sandmel. (see Alter, p.16) He goes on to make explicit yet another problem likely to be encountered in dealing with the Bible using poetics:

> Any attempt to recover the literary art of the Bible is bound to encounter a variety of obstacles intervening between the would-be knower and the object of knowledge....one discovers that the characteristic procedures of biblical narrative differ noticeably from those of later Western fiction but that biblical conventions can be grasped by some process of cautious analogy with conventions more familiar to us, as is the case with the use of type-scenes and verbatim repetition in the biblical stories. There are, however, still other aspects of the Bible that would appear to baffle our efforts to make sense of it as literary form. (Alter, p.131)

By our working definition, poetics seeks to abstract general principles from particular works. Even so, we approach each text with a set of principles derived from our previous experience with literary materials. Because we are so far removed in time from the writing of the biblical materials, it is possible that our modern sense of poetics will need serious reconstruction in order to handle biblical material.

For this thesis, we have chosen as our text the book of Joshua. Our emphasis throughout will be to present a poetic analysis of material from within this book. We will, from time to time, suggest possible interpretations that arise from this analysis, but we will stop short of an all-encompassing interpretation of the book.

Such an interpretation should rightly be based on a thorough analysis of the entire book. Our analysis will be more tightly focused in scope. We will examine one block of material in depth, and we will examine a few features which extend beyond this block.

Chapters two through five of this thesis each will open with a description of a poetic device found operating within the book of Joshua. The chapter will then move to the Joshua material itself in order to show precisely how this device is functioning. By the end of the thesis we will have presented an analysis both of the book of Joshua and of the poetic tools used in doing this analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

Marker and Formula

The book of **Joshua** opens with the word vayehi, which for convenience sake, we will henceforth render as "and it was." This word appears sixty times in **Joshua**. Using the 1955 JPS translation as reference, this word appears, on average, once in every two-thirds page of this story, whereas in the rest of Bible this words appears on average one in every two point one pages of text. This is not mentioned as basis for any claim to statistical significance, rather this is merely to say that the reader of Joshua encounters this word often. On the basis of its frequency, this device "and it was" bears examination.

In his comment on chapter one, verse one of Joshua, Rashi states that this device connects this book to the Torah, referring specifically to the section on the death of Moses. Radak speaks to the vav that is the first letter of the book. He says:

> The vav is merely a convention of composition in the Hebrew language and does not necessarily signal a connection between passages. Otherwise, he argues, it would not always be possible to explain why many other books of Scripture begin with vav. (Artscroll,p.88)

Of interest to us is that both these commentators do discuss this word and that both of them state that it is a device of the language. Their view on the exact nature of the device differs. Rashi sees it as a conjunctive, joining a section to something which precedes it. Radak puts forth no hypothesis about the function of this device. He does reject Rashi's assertion though, and he rejects it on the grounds that this same device appears elsewhere with a

different function.

Rashi's assertion about the function of the device here may well be correct. However, the logic in Radak's rejection of Rashi is not correct. A literary device can be used differently in different settings. To say that a device cannot have given use in one place because it has a different use elsewhere is placing an unnecessary constraint on the device.

In his commentary on Joshua, Boling treats the whole phrase "and it was after the death of Moses" as a unit:

> The formula wyhy 'hry mwt NN, where NN stands for a personal name, is significant in Dtr (Judg 1:1, 2 Sam 1:1; and, slightly modified, in 2 Kg 1:1), but rare in the Tetrateuch (only in Gen 25:11). Moses, Joshua, Saul and David, are crucial figures in Dtr and the author-compiler has used them to divide the time span treated in the work into four eras. (Boling, p.117)

Boling is treating "and it was" as part of a slightly larger formula by dealing with it as a unity with "after the death of NN." As such, this formula serves as a chronological divider.

The formula serves as a linguistic marker saying: new section here. This is in line with Rashi's understanding of "and it was" which we can now paraphrase as: new section here; joined to prior section.

That Boling has connected "and it was" to a larger formula and only then dealt with its function provides us with guidance for our understanding of all appearances of "and it was." The marker "and it was" does function as a general statement: new material here. However, in its

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larger formulaic context, we might read in it more specific information about what sort of new material we are to encounter.

Uses of "and it was" subsequent to the opening word of Joshua go without note by Rashi, Radak, and Boling. They are viewing this linguistic marker on a much broader scale than we will now attempt. Rather than seeing this device as a tool for connecting Joshua to its larger biblical context, we will look at its use within the book. The hypothesis behind this examimation is that the device is a linguisic marker which sub-divides the Joshua story into its episodes. This is asserting that this device works in the same way within the book of Joshua as the commentators have suggested that it works within the rest of Bible; or in Boling, as it works in the rest of Deuteronomic writing.

Rather than deal with each of the sixty uses of "and it was" in Joshua, we will focus on its uses from chapter 5:1 through 9:27. These verses open with the news that the Amorite kings have heard of the Bene Israel and are afraid. Chapter nine concludes with the dispensation of the Gibeonites. This choice of verses is important as we will need to have discussed their structure prior to our discussion of other poetic devices.

In our chosen block of material from Joshua, the marker "and it was" appears fourteen times. By our hypothesis, we would need to show the existence of fourteen sub-units or episodes within this block of material. Not each of these fourteen episodes is, poetically speaking, on

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the same structural level. Some episodes are themselves components of larger narrative units within our block of material.

We have seen that Boling chose to treat the marker "and it was" in the context of a larger formula, i.e. and it was after the death of NN. Within Joshua the marker "and it was" also functions as part of at least one formula.

At three points in our block of material, Joshua 5:1-9:27, we see our marker in such a formula. The pattern for this formula can be described as the marker "and it was" followed by a reference to the natives, the ones to be conquered, hearing of Joshua, the Bene Israel, and their God.

This formula is seen in Joshua 5:1, 6:27, and 9:1. It divides our block of material into three parts. In each part there is an encounter between Joshua et al, and a native population. The first part details the encounter with Jericho. The second describes the encounter with Ai, and the third with Gibeon.

To make this more clear, we now look at the first part of our block of material, Joshua 5:1-6:26. This part opens with our formula: we have new material here; foreigners have heard about God's great acts and the coming of the Bene Israel.

The formula has already told us that God is with the Bene Israel. This concept is expanded as we are told of the Exodus from Egypt and about the circumcision of all the

Bene Israel.

We find our marker again in 5:8. Here we notice a skip in time. The Bene Israel had been circumcised and were ailing. Along with this material was narrative explaining this circumcision. When we get to verse 5:8, we see the marker "and it was." We skip in time to the end of the healing process. We are ready to go on with our story.

Now we are told about the celebration of the Passover on the plains of Jericho. This explanation brings us to verse 5:12. In summary, the material from 5:2 through 5:12 is an assertion of the connection between the Bene Israel and their God. God pulled them out of Egypt. They did not listen to God, so God made them wander in the desert until that entire generation died off. God gave them manna. They circumcised themselves in accordance with God's command. They celebrated the Passover. All this is the substance of the relationship between Israel and God.

Once this relationship is established, we have a shift of scene. The marker "and it was" appears again. We are now at 5:13. Joshua is near Jericho. The time is not specified. He is apparently alone. Joshua encounters a man standing before him holding out his sword. Joshua approaches this man and asks: "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

The man responds: "I am an emmissary from the Lord of Hosts." Without hesitation, Joshua falls face forward to the ground. Joshua asks what the man has to say to "his servant." The man tells Joshua to remove his sandals for

this ground is holy.

As readers, we immediately respond to this command to remove sandals. We have heard this before. In **Exodus** 3, Moses has a similar experience. Moses is out alone. He is tending his father-in-law's flock. Moses sees an angel of God and a burning bush. God then tells Moses to remove his sandals for this ground is holy.

In **Exodus**, this episode serves to make explicit the connection between God and Moses. It also serves as prelude for God's promise to deliver Canaan to the Bene Israel.

The parallels between this Exodus episode and our Joshua episode are clear. They have been dealt with in the literature on Joshua and are important to a clear understanding of Joshua. By its similarity to the Moses episode, we can make statements about how the author intends us to see the relationship between God and Joshua. This parallel episode allows us to flesh out the abstract promise that God has already made to Joshua in Joshua 3:7 where we read: "As I was with Moses, so will I be with you." Specifically, Moses received God's promise of land in Exodus and we now see that it is as if that promise was made to Joshua as well.

Before going on, let us return to look at the marker which preceded this episode. We had been reading in a unit that dealt with the relationship between the Bene Israel and their God. We encountered the marker "and it was." This told us that new material was coming. We had a change of

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focus and a change of setting. We were now outside the camp, and our attention was drawn to Joshua and to his relationship with God.

In general terms, we are still talking about relationship to God, but now more specific information has been tendered. We now know that Joshua is a leader of similar status to Moses. Joshua is in direct communication with God. And, like Moses, Joshua will receive a promise of conquest.

Indeed, this promise does follow on the heels of Joshua's encounter with God's emmissary. God tells Joshua that Jericho is "given over into your hand." God then gives Joshua clear instructions for taking the city, and Joshua delivers these instructions to the priests and the people. These directions fill up the remainder of this episode which started with Joshua's solitary encounter.

In 6:8, we again find our marker "and it was." Here, we again have a shift, or more accurately, a jump forward in the narration. We move from the giving of orders to their execution.

The marker appears again in verse 15. Here also the narrative skips forward. We are now dealing with the events of the climactic seventh day of the siege. The marker appears again in verse 16. We now jump to the seventh circuit on the seventh day.

The priests blow their shofar blasts for the city has been given over into the hands of the Bene Israel. With victory at hand, our narrator comes in with a warning

against taking booty. This was God's victory so the booty is God's. After this warning the marker appears again.

We are now in verse 20. We shift from the narrator's warning to a scene of the people shouting and running straight into the city. In this episode, there has been a noticeable change of tone. Gone is the caution of the previous episode. It is replaced by exuberance; dangerous exhuberance.

This episode brings us to the end of the first of our three parts of material within our chosen block of material. We have seen seven appearances of the marker "and it was." At each appearance there was a definite shift in the narration. These shifts can be described as shifts in setting, in dramatis personae, in time, or in tone.

Overall, however, there is a unity to this material. It all seems to focus on the event of the capture of the city of Jericho. At this time, we should go back over this part and its episodes in search of other unifying elements.

Above we suggested that the capture of Jericho "seems to be the focus" of this part of Joshua. Going back over the episodes would have us turn this view on its ear. The capture of Jericho turns out to be little more than the occasion for a moral or theological statement.

Our first episode, 5:1-12, was an assertion of the connection between the Bene Israel and their God. Our marker did appear within this episode. It functioned as a device for speeding along the narrative process.

Our next episode, 5:13-6:7 showed that there is a connection between Joshua and God which parallels the relationship between Moses and God. With this as foundation, this episode then shows that God has given Jericho over to the Bene Israel. Therefore, from this episode, we learn that this conquest belongs to God; not to the Bene Israel.

Our next episode, 6:8-26 is an account of the siege of Jericho. God's directions become actualized. The siege begins. The account of this siege contains within it three more appearances of our marker. The marker in verse 15 serves to move the story to the climactic seventh day of the siege. The marker in verse 16 brings us to the seventh circuit on the seventh day. Here, at the brink of victory, we read a cautionary statement that all the wealth of the city belongs to God. To take it would be to endanger the Bene Israel. In this episode we also have mention of Rahab. She is permitted to retain her property. The implications of this will be discussed later.

This cautionary statement mentioned above fits in well with our earlier episodes, for in them the groundwork was laid for our understanding that the victory at Jericho was God's victory. The spoils belong to the victor. Here we are reminded of that truism.

We are effectively reminded, but in an "I told you so" kind of way, we see that the Bene Israel do not remember this. This irony comes to us with the appearance of the marker in 6:20. In this episode, victory is here and the

Bene Israel go running into town, swords held high. We do not yet see anything go awry, but the foreshadowing is here. We have noticed their cavalier attitude from the outset of this episode.

In this first part of our block of material, Jericho has been captured. As readers, we have seen the process of this capture; specifically that it was God's victory. This first part has also set up a tension. We, the readers, seem to know something that the Bene Israel do not. That is, we know that the capture of Jericho was God's victory, and we suspect that the Bene Israel are not clear on this point.

This part closes. Its action is complete. Yet, as readers, we are still waiting for the axe to fall. It is this anticipation which draws us into the second of the three parts of our chosen block of narrative material.

Our analysis of this second part will be less deep than was our treatment of the first part. This second part is also sub-divided into episodes. They differ from each other in setting, in dramatis personae, in time, or in tone as did the episodes in part one.

In our analysis of this second part, we start with the opening marker. We see in 6:27: "And God was with Joshua and his fame was country-wide." This is the same formula we saw in 5:1. We have our marker "and it was." This is embedded in a formula which tells us that God and Joshua are connected and that foreigners know about this.

The events of part two are built around the conquest

of the city of Ai.   Speaking metaphorically, it is in part
two, 6:20-8:35, that the axe falls. We learn that Achan has
gone against the decree about taking booty. His actions put
the Bene Israel in danger.   The direct result of his action
is that the Bene Israel suffer a humiliating defeat at the
hands of the citizens of Ai.   This defeat calls for a
purging of Achan's evil from the midst of the Bene Israel.
Only after this purgation are the Bene Israel able to
capture the city of Ai.

As with the capture of Jericho, the reader is made
aware that the victory is God's.   The Bene Israel are doing
the fighting but they are doing it as soldiers of God. This
is made particularly clear by a parallel between the
conquest of Ai and the conquest of Jericho.

We recall that immediately prior to the conquest of
Jericho, in episode two of part one, i.e.5:13-6:7, Joshua
met God's emmissary.   At the time of this meeting, the
emmissary is described as standing before Joshua with his
sword drawn.

Immediately before the conquest of Ai we have a
parallel tableau.   In 8:18 we read that God tells Joshua:
"Hold out your sword in your hand toward Ai, for I will
deliver it into your hand." Joshua maintains this symbol-
laden stance while the Bene Israel successfully storm Ai.

Just as the earlier occurrence of this tableau told
the reader that it was the sword of God that defeated
Jericho; so this tableau with Joshua tells us that by God's
sword is Ai defeated.

That Ai is defeated tells us that the people are again on good terms with their God. The defeat which had occurred upon the first attack of Ai told us that the people were on bad terms with God.

This defeat at Ai had its seeds in the conquest of Jericho. It was punishment for the violation of God's injunction against taking booty. After purifying themselves, after righting themselves with God, the Bene Israel were again in a position to carry on God's battle. Indeed, only when the Bene Israel are fighting alongside their God are they successful.

This is the moral lesson of part two of our block of material. The Bene Israel are successful only when they follow God's commands. Their defeat at Ai is harsh instruction but it is effective.

We know that it is effective because the lesson is not taught again. After the purification of Bene Israel, the **Joshua** author tells us that the "booty rules" are now changed. In 8:2 we read: "You shall treat Ai and her king as you treated Jericho and her king; however, you may take the spoil and the cattle as booty for yourselves."

With this new ground rule and with Joshua standing, sword drawn, as a symbol of God's presence at the battle, the Bene Israel defeat Ai. Part two ends with the city utterly destroyed. And, unlike the end of part one, we have no forboding sense of danger for the Bene Israel. They are on good terms with their God. They have learned their

lesson.

At this time we should make explicit that our talk about the marker "and it was" has led us onto new turf. This marker divides our block of material into parts. We have already looked at part one in detail. We have taken a less deep look at part two. Our emphasis here was on the connection between part two and the events of part one.

We did note that part two began with the same formula as did part one and that this marker told us: "new material here; material that deals with foreigners learning about the relationship between God and the Bene Israel."

We will shortly discuss part three of our block of material, 9:1-27. However, before this discussion, we should make clear that we are now talking about plot structure. This transition is an outgrowth of our discussion of the marker and the formula in which it is embedded. The marker and the formula have divided our block of material for us. This division allows us to see inter-connections between the episodes which may have been obscure before.

Speaking now of plot structure, we see that in part one the Bene Israel conquered Jericho as agents of God. In this conquest, they deviated from God's explicit command. They took booty. Part two was a playing out of the effect of this deviation. In part two, the Joshua author is graphically describing the result of this disobedience.

Part three of our block of material deals with another departure taken by the Bene Israel in their capture

of Jericho.   The departure dealt with in this part is that
the Bene Israel made terms with Rahab. They did not destroy
her and by refraining from this they violated a command of
their God.

In part two, the nature of the departure from God's
command was abundantly clear.   The command against taking
booty from Jericho appears within the book of Joshua
immediately before the climax of the siege.   The injunction
against making terms with the natives, i.e. with Rahab, is
not within Joshua itself.

We must go back to Deuteronomy in order to find this
command.   In Deuteronomy 7:12 we read:

> When the Lord your God brings you to the land
> that you are about to invade and occupy, and He
> dislodges   many   nations before   you   -- the
> Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites,
> Perizzites,   Hivites,   and Jebusites,   seven
> nations much larger than you -- and the Lord
> your God delivers them to you and you defeat
> them, you must doom them to destruction: grant
> them   no terms and give them no quarter.
> (Deuteronomy 7:12)

The   command   is clear.   It allows for no exceptions.   By
making terms with Rahab, this command has been breached.
The question that remains is whether this law found in
Deuteronomy is still operative in Joshua.

To prove that this law is still operative in Joshua
we need to look first at the opening lines of Joshua. Here,
we are being told of God's instructions to Joshua. In 1:7-8
we read:

> But you must be strong and resolute to observe
> faithfully all the Teaching that My servant
> Moses enjoined upon you. Do not deviate from it

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> to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. (Joshua 1:7-8)

This charge does not state any specific commands which must be followed. However, we do note a phrase which "rings a bell." We have already heard the words: "Do not deviate from it to the right or to the left."

This phrase has appeared five times in Deuteronomy. At each occurrence, this phrase came as the prologue to a set of laws enjoined upon the people by Moses. If we turn to Deuteronomy 5:59, we read:

> Be careful, then, to do as the Lord your God has commanded you. Do not turn aside to the right or to the left: follow only the path which the Lord your God has enjoined upon you, so that you may thrive and that it may go well with you, and that you may long endure in the land that you are to occupy. (Deuteronomy 5:59)

The sense, even the exact wording of this verse from Deuteronomy is echoed in the opening lines of Joshua. When we read Joshua, we are to recall Deuteronomy. When in Joshua we are told to follow commands, it is the commands given by Moses in Deuteronomy that we are to follow.

As mentioned above, each of the five appearances of the phrase: "Do not turn aside to the right or to the left," that appear in Deuteronomy come as prologue to a set of laws. The appearance cited above, Deuteronomy 5:29, is the prologue for the law about making no terms which was also cited above.

While we cannot say with certainty that the law in Deuteronomy was anticipating the Joshua narrative, we can be fairly certain that the Joshua author was aware of

Deuteronomy. Indeed, the poetic evidence points toward the author of **Joshua** and **Deuteronomy** being the same person. That, however, is another thesis.

We have just set forth a proof that, in the capture of Jericho, the Bene Israel broke a command against making terms with the natives of the conquered lands. Just as part two of our block of material was a playing out of a breach of a command, so is block three a playing out of a breach of a command. Here, the command that was violated was the command against making terms with the natives.

As did the first two parts of narrative, the third part also opens with our marker "and it was." As before, it is embedded in the now familiar formula: "and it was when a foreigner heard about the Bene Israel and their God."

Here, the Gibeonites have heard that the Bene Israel are coming. They are afraid and their fear brings out the con-artist in them. They dress up like road-weary travelers. They approach the Bene Israel and present themselves as foreigners from afar who have heard about the greatness of the Bene Israel and their God. They state their desire to bind themselves to this power by treaty. The Israelites are convinced by the Gibeonites' story and they make terms with them. In Joshua 9:14-15 we read:

> The men took their word because of their
> provisions, and did not inquire of the Lord.
> Joshua established friendship with them; he
> made a pact with them to spare their lives.
> (Joshua 9:14-15)

We know that the Bene Israel are being taken in. Furthermore, we know that they have fallen into the

difficult position of breaking a command of God. We have seen that this can place Israel in dire straights as it did during the first attack of Ai.

The Joshua author includes a phrase which tells us not to have too much pity on the Bene Israel. Their own weakness has gotten them into this bad situation. We read that the men "did not inquire of the Lord." They made the treaty of their own accord. They could have consulted oracles or cast lots as they did in the episode with Achan. They could have but they did not; and down the line, the Bene Israel will pay for this failure.

For our purposes, however, we have come to the end of our block of narrative. It is not an isolated narrative. As we have seen, this block of material, Joshua 5:1-9:27, is connected to Deuteronomy through reference to legal material in that book and through the character of Moses. This block is connected to the first sections of Joshua by the character Rahab. This block is also connected to the material which follows it by having embedded within it the seeds from which further narrative will grow.

At this time a summary of where we have been is in order. Our discussion was of a small block of narrative material from the book of Joshua. We noticed that it contained a high frequency of the term: "and it was." We looked at what commentators had to say about this term, and we decided that it was a marker that said: "new material here." We then applied this hypothesis to the first part of

our block of material from Joshua. We noticed that, indeed, wherever this marker appeared there was a shift in the narrative. This shift was in setting, in dramatis personae, in time, or in tone.

This discussion led into an analysis of parts two and three of our block of narrative material. This direction led us inevitably to a discussion of the plot structure of this block of material.

Part one of this block of material set up a situation. The Bene Israel were fighting as God's agents. As His agents, they conquered Jericho. However, in this conquest, two of God's commands were broken. The first command was broken by Achan, who took booty. Part two of our block of material played out the consequences of this breach.

The second command was broken in making terms with Rahab, a native. Part three of our material plays out the consequences of making such a treaty. Unlike part two, part three ends without a definitive statement of consequence. We are not yet sure how the Bene Israel will pay for this second infraction. We know only that they must honor their treaty.

By use of a poetic device, i.e. a narrative marker, we were able to divide a block of material into parts and episodes. Once divided, the interplay between the episodes and parts became more clear. We saw, or alluded to, fourteen different episodes. These were built into three different parts. The focus of each part was an encounter

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between the Bene Israel and a foreign power. These parts were also interconnected with part one being the controlling part. In this encounter at Jericho, two commands were broken. Parts two and three were narrative units which played out the consequences of these breaches.

Because the block of material is not isolated, we are unable to draw from it a definitive statement about the consequences of breaking commands. However, we can take from this block the lesson that the Bene Israel are connected to their God and that there are consequences to be reckoned with when they break their God's commands.

We are now ready to move on to a discussion of the use of character in Joshua. In our discussion of poetic devices as markers and of plot structure, we have already met two significant characters, Joshua and Rahab. In the next chapters we will discuss the presentation of these characters and possible motivation for choices made by the Joshua author in his presentation of these characters.

CHAPTER THREE

Agent, Type, and Full-Fledged Character

For our discussion of character in **Joshua**, we again turn to Adelle Berlin. She gives a clear and efficient description of the three basic character types we find in the **Joshua** story:

> In literary criticism it is customary to distinguish flat characters from round characters. Flat characters, or types, are built around a single quality or trait. They do not stand out as individuals. Round characters, on the other hand, are much more complex, manifesting a multitude of traits, and appearing as "real people." In addition, to quote M.H. Abrams, "Almost all dramas and narratives, properly enough, have some characters who serve as mere functionaries and are not characterized at all." I see here three categories and to avoid confusion I will rename them. The round character is the full-fledged character; the flat character is the type; and the functionary is the agent. (Berlin, p.23)

Using Berlin's terminology, then, we will discuss character in terms of the agent, the type, and the full-fledged character.

Our discussion of Rahab, who fits into to category of full-fledged characters, will be preceded by a study of the agent and the type. This will form the backdrop against which the fullness of the characterization of Rahab will stand out in higher contrast.

Before approaching any characters, it is important that we restate and clarify our methods and goals. For the purposes of this level of our analysis, we are looking at the characters of the **Joshua** story as fictional. They may well have historical antecedents, however that is not our focus. Rather, we are interested in the literary presentation of these personages. Our questions include

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such queries as: Why do we meet a given character? What is reported about a character; by them? And, how are we to respond to these characters? Not all these questions are appropriate to all the characters we will discuss, however these questions do represent the type of question important to a poetic study of character.

This approach to character is not new to biblical study. In his book The Art of Biblical Narrative, Robert Alter writes:

> To scrutinize biblical personages as fictional characters is to see them more sharply in the multifaceted, contradictory aspect of their human individuality, which is the biblical God's chosen medium for his experiment with Israel and history. Such scrutiny cannot be based merely on an imaginative impression of the story but must be undertaken through minute critical attention to the biblical writer's articulations and narrative form. (Alter, p.12)

Alter is allowing that there exist other ways to study biblical characters, but he suggests that to study them as "fictional characters" is to see their human individuality. Alter then asserts that it is this human individuality through which the biblical God interacts with Israel.

This statement is not scientifically verifiable, but such verifiability is not Alter's goal with this statement. He is stating his understanding of what Bible does and how Bible does it. For Alter, Bible was written to express a particular theology. In this theology, God is the ultimate power in the universe. This God chooses to relate to individual people. And, it is in this relationship that the

biblical characters come to understand God.

On this point it is best to let Alter speak for himself:

> The biblical writers fashion their personages with a complicated, sometimes alluring, often fiercely insistent individuality because it is in the stubbornness of human individuality that each man and woman encounters God or ignores him, responds to or resists him. Subsequent religious tradition has by and large encouraged us to take Bible seriously rather than to enjoy it; but the paradoxical truth of the matter is that by learning to enjoy the biblical stories more fully as stories, we shall also come to see more clearly what they mean to tell us about God, man, and the perilously momentous realm of history. (Alter, p. 189)

The enjoyment of biblical stories, Alter tells us, is not to be based on merely an "imaginative impression" of the story. This enjoyment derives from scrutiny of the characters which is built upon a precise reading of the text. By this, Alter is suggesting in non-technical terms that the study of character is an element of careful poetic analysis of the text.

Adelle Berlin speaks from this same school of biblical study. In her clear and well thought out style, she gives a few pointers which aid in a poetic analysis of biblical characters. Speaking of the goals of biblical characterizations, she writes:

> The purpose of character description in Bible is not to enable the reader to visualize the character, but to enable him to situate the character in terms of his place in society, his own particular situation, and his outstanding traits -- in other words, to tell what kind of person he is. (Berlin, p.37)

Underlying Berlin's statement is a warning. Before we can

understand biblical characterization, we must come to some understanding of the goals behind it. It makes little sense; it would be of little value to study biblical characters in terms which are alien to the author's intent in their presentation.

This opens up huge issues basic to the whole enterprise of poetic analysis. Above, Berlin has used the word "purpose." This is clearly speaking of the biblical author's purpose; of the intent which motivated his characterizations. The poetic issue here is whether the author's intent is a valid criterion for poetic analysis. This issue is serious and we recommend a careful reading of E.D. Hirsch's work Validity in Interpretation which speaks to it.

Hirsch opens this work with an overview of major trends in modern literary analysis. Most powerful of these schools was the school which removed the author's intent as a source for validation of interpretation on the grounds that the author's intent is not knowable. By way of summary, Hirsch writes:

> Once the author has been ruthlessly banished as the determiner of his text's meaning, it very gradually appeared that no adequate principle existed for judging the validity of an interpretation. (Hirsch, p.3)

Hirsch says that we must have a determiner of validity and that the author is the most sound source of such validation. However this argument is not strong enough for us or for Hirsch.

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Hirsch bolsters his argument by removing the only real objection to using the author's intent for validation of interpretation. Remember that the weakness of Hirsch's school was in the uncertainty of knowledge of the author's intent. Hirsch writes:

> Since genuine certainty in interpretation is impossible, the aim of the discipline must be to reach a consensus, on the basis of what is known, that correct understanding has probably been achieved. (Hirsch, p.17)

It is this very logic, working with probable correctness, that is the underpinning of all scientific research. For Hirsch, and for all scientists as well, working with probable correctness is an acceptance of human limitation. We cannot test every datum along every variable. We therefore resort to studying samples, and from here, projecting statements about the universe from which the sample was drawn. The best we can do is to put together as much data as we can, and from this, make statements about the author's intent and about our response to his work.

We have gone on a tangent, albeit an important one. Now we return to the second of the issues of poetic analysis raised by Berlin. Related to the issue of author's intent is the issue of genre. By that we mean that in interpreting a work, or its characters, a reader must be sensitive to the type of work he is reading. Hirsch describes the role of genre in reading as:

> An anticipated sense of the whole verbal meaning by virtue of which the presently experienced words are understood in their capacity as a functioning whole. (Hirsch, p.82)

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This whole is of a type be it drama or epic or laundry list. It is recognition or anticipation of this type which forms the basis for an accurate reading of any material.

Returning to Adelle Berlin's statement on the purpose of character which was cited above, we see that she makes clear that she is speaking about characterization in Bible. Implied by her specification is that characterization is a function of the genre of the material being studied. The characterization most suited to a mystery novel necessarily differs from that which we see in Bible.

Our purpose here is not to build up an elaborate concept of genre. For that study, we again suggest a reading of E.D. Hirsch. For our purposes, it is important to note that we are reading Bible as a genre with perhaps only one example of its type.

To make this statement explains little about genre or about Bible, but it does form the basis for asserting that we must look at biblical characters in terms of how the biblical author uses them. This is in opposition to but not in exclusion of other potentially useful methods of character study. Again, we read in Berlin:

> We must keep in mind that narrative is a form of representation. Abraham in Genesis is not a real person any more than a painting of an apple is a real fruit. This is not a judgement on the existence of a real Abraham any more than it is a statement about the existence of apples. It is just that we should not confuse a historical individual with his narrative representation. (Berlin, p.13)

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In other words, one is free to study biblical characters as historical personages. That, however, is not the task we have chosen.

We have now seen some general and helpful statements about character. Both Alter and Berlin recommend a careful poetic analysis of the narrative material as crucial to character study. In his book **The Poetics of Prose**, Tzvetan Todorov provides us with a powerful framework for our study of character in Joshua. He opens his discussion of characters saying: "There is no character except in action, no action independent of character." (Todorov, p.66) This simple statement is a caution against trying to examine character as isolated from the narrative in which we encounter them. Todorov then goes on to describe the poetic process by which character is presented to the reader:

> The appearance of a new character invariably involves the interruption of the preceding story, so that a new story, the one which explains the "now I am here" of the new character, may be told to us. A second story is enclosed within the first; this is called **embedding**. (Todorov, p.70)

Todorov continues:

> The formal structure of embedding coincides (nor is such coincidence an accident) with that of a syntactic form, a particular case of subordination, which in fact modern linguistics calls embedding. (Todorov, p.70)

We have already seen such a syntactic form at work in the previous chapter. Interruptions of the flow of the narrative were consistently marked by "and it was." We are now ready to go to the Joshua story to see how character functions within its narrative structure.

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As Berlin herself suggests (Berlin, p.32), her three classifications of biblical characters were brought in for our convenience and not to suggest that the Joshua author worked with any such structural model in his writing. Therefore, the lines between the agent, the type, and the full character are not sharp. With this in mind, we now outline our work to come. As example of the agent, we will look at the King of Jericho. As example of the type, we will look at the spies sent out by Joshua to Jericho. And, as example of the full-fledged character, we will look at Rahab.

Our entire encounter with the King of Jericho happens within the first episode of Joshua. We open with our marker and by its second occurrence in 2:5 we have already finished with the King. The mere brevity of our encounter with this King tells us that his function in the narrative is limited.

We never actually meet this King. We do receive report about him. In 2:2 we read:

> The King of Jericho was told, "Some men have come here tonight, Israelites, to spy out the country." (Joshua 2:2)

We are not told the source of this reconnaissance. We are not shown the King's abode; neither are we told anything about his appearance nor about his personality. We do know, and this is crucial, that this King has an intelligence network in place.

The next verse reveals more about this King. We

read:

> The King of Jericho thereupon sent orders to Rahab: "Produce the men who came to you and entered your house, for they have come to spy out the whole country." (Joshua 2:3)

In this verse, we see the King respond to the information given to him. His response is surprising only in that we were not already aware of the completeness of the intelligence given to the King.

The **Joshua** author is making clear choices in his presentation of the King. It is important to the author only that we readers be aware that the spies have not slipped into Jericho undetected. Also, he wishes us to see Rahab in the difficult position of dealing with an order from her King which countermands her chosen course of action.

This accomplished, we neither see nor hear more from this King till it comes time for his execution. This character, the King of Jericho, thus serves as an agent who brings into the narrative elements crucial to the telling of the story. We have no use for this character beyond his function as a narrative agent, so that is all the **Joshua** author gives us.

The two spies sent by Joshua appear in the same episode in which we meet the King. We should note that their appearance crosses over the second instance of our marker "and it was" in 2:5 and continues through to the third appearance of the marker in 3:2.

Examining the marker in 2:5, we see that it is of

the lowest order of episode markers. Its narrative function is to move our story ahead to the nighttime. This marker also tells us that the King and his messengers are now out of the picture. We are ready to focus on Joshua's two spies and their interaction with Rahab.

First mention of the two spies comes in Joshua 2:1. We have just heard the Bene Israel pledge their allegiance to Joshua. In so doing they say:

> Any man who flouts your commands and does not obey every order you give him shall be put to death. Only be strong and resolute. (Joshua 1:18)

On the heels of this we read:

> Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim, saying, "Go reconnoiter the region of Jericho." (Joshua 2:1)

We know virtually nothing about these men. We do know, however, that they are operating under penalty of death. They must obey Joshua, and obey they do. In 2:2, we are told that the spies set out on their mission and they meet Rahab.

Rahab's actions are important, but now we are interested in the two spies. The next bit of information we read about them is that they have been hidden from the King's messengers. After Rahab dispatches the messengers, we are told:

> Now she [Rahab] had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under some stalks of flax which she had lying on the roof. (Joshua 2:6)

These men came to Jericho under orders from Joshua. They arrive at the house of a harlot, and she hides them up on

her roof. We are not told what thoughts are going through the minds of these spies, but we must wonder at their naive trust of Rahab.

They are strangers to the city. They have never met Rahab before. They have no reason to trust her; indeed they do not even ask for proof of her trustworthiness. Yet, when she sends them to hide on her roof, they obey. Clearly, this is unlikely behavior.

We readers must wonder at the author's characterization of these spies. That they took orders from Joshua is reasonable. They would have died if they acted otherwise. But, that they take orders from Rahab involves a great risk. We wonder if there is anyone from whom these spies will not take orders.

To our surprise, the next statement about the spies comes just after Rahab has dispatched the King's messengers. We read:

> The spies had not yet gone to sleep when she came up to them on the roof. (Joshua 2:8)

Pardon the cliche, but who could even think of sleep at a time like this?! These men should have been quaking in their boots; not letting their eyelids get heavy.

Once all are together on the roof, we read of a telling exchange between Rahab and Joshua's spies. The spies ask no questions. They simply listen as Rahab tells them that she is aware that God has given the land over to the Bene Israel. She recounts the history of the Bene Israel in sufficient detail that the spies should have at

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least noted its accuracy. Then Rahab extracts from the spies terms of protection for herself and her family.

The spies' response to Rahab's request is two-fold. First they pledge their lives for hers:

> The men answered her, "Our persons are pledged for yours, even unto death! If you do not disclose this mission of ours, we will show you true loyalty when the Lord gives us the land." (Joshua 2:14)

Rahab then lowers the men out her window to the outer side of the city wall. She sends them off to the hills and tells them to hide out for three days till the search party gives up looking for them. The men, in their customary form, do exactly as this woman tells them. But before they leave the area, they add a codicil to their agreement with Rahab:

> But the men warned her, "We will be released from this oath which you have made us take [unless,] when we invade the country, you tie this length of crimson cord to the window through which you let us down." (Joshua 2:17-18)

By this addition the spies place the entire burden of the agreement on Rahab. They are bound to it, yes. But, they do not wish to take any responsibility either for the striking of the agreement or for the potential stumbling blocks to its implementation.

Our final view of these two spies is on their return to Joshua. They report their findings. Actually, they report to Joshua what Rahab has told them.

We are using these spies to exemplify the character type. Berlin has stated that types are built around a single quality or trait. The word "submissive" would do

well to describe these men. They do what they are told. They do not seem to think about what they do. And, they go out of their way not to take responsibility for the one, single action that they do without specific instruction. This removes them to below the level of full characters.

We see more of them than we do of the King of Jericho. We hear dialogue involving them. Their actions are not one-hundred percent anticipated. This elevates them above the level of agent.

Earlier we mentioned that the examples of agent and type would be introduced to provide a background against which the fuller characters would show up in greater contrast. This was speaking in terms of the structural exigencies of this thesis. However, now that we are ready to discuss Rahab, we can restate this as follows: the agent and the type function as foils against which the full-fledged characters play; and it is in this play that the full-fledged characters are given the impetus for the very actions which make them full characters.

In material which follows her outline of the three levels of characterization, Berlin speaks of the full character saying:

> The character [is one] who has a broader range of traits (not all belonging to the same class of people), and about whom we know more than is necessary for the plot. (Berlin, p.32)

We bring in this point because the very first bit of information we learn about Rahab is that she is a harlot.

We wonder why we are told this about Rahab. Her

profession does not seem at all involved with or necessary to the plot. We are not alone in our wonderment. In his **Anchor Bible** commentary Boling writes:

> It remains true that the visit to her [Rahab's] house was the sum total of the men's reconnaissance activity. Probably the narrator intends to titillate by reminding readers of an immemorial symbiosis between military service and bawdy house. (Boling, p.145)

One man's opinion against another's, we find nothing probable in this explanation of the author's telling us Rahab's profession.

Rashi and Radak both comment on this detail about Rahab and their comments are virtually identical. They play with the similarity in the Hebrew of "harlot" and "food" and say that Rahab is a seller of all kinds of food. We are not compelled to accept their suggestions, we are not even sure that they believed what they wrote. Their intention almost certainly was to eliminate any seaminess from this story.

What is important to us is that Rashi, Radak, and even Boling felt a need to comment on this detail. Implicit in their commenting is an awareness of the detail here that goes beyond the confines of this embedded story of Rahab. In order to understand why we are told Rahab is a harlot, we must ask high level questions about the Joshua author's intentions behind his presentation of Rahab. Before dealing with such questions, we need more information about the doings of this woman.

The first words we hear Rahab speak come two verses after her inglorious introduction to us. The King's men

tell her to produce Joshua's spies. We then read:

> The woman, however, had taken the two men and
> hidden them.   "It is true," she said, "the men
> did come to me, but I didn't know where they
> were from.   And at dark, when the gate was
> about to be closed, the men left; and I do not
> know where the men went. Quick, go after them,
> for you can overtake them." (Joshua 2:4-5)

As we soon find out, this harlot's first words are an
outright lie.   The King and his men are the foil whose
movement puts Rahab in the position of lying.   We know
nothing about them, but we are learning volumes about Rahab.

Joshua's spies, our types, have been on the roof
while the "lie scene" took place.   Rahab then joins them.
We have already noted the painful naivite of these spies.
Now we readers are brought even further into the realm of
irony as we watch these men interact with a woman we know to
be both a harlot and a liar.

The substance of this interchange between Rahab and
the spies is described by Boling in his comment on 2:9-11:

> The pagan prostitute is the first one to recite
> the saving history. (Boling, p.146)

Out of Rahab's mouth comes a clear and accurate statement of
the history of the Bene Israel.   This functions as the
motivation for her lying and for her granting protection to
Joshua's spies.   That is, Rahab knows with whom she is
dealing and she places her bet on the winning side.

Motivation now made clear, Rahab then extracts a
promise of protection from the spies.   They make their
agreement. Rahab lets them out through her window, and then
she sends them on their way.

In this speech, Rahab delivers a command to the spies to which we have already referred:

> She said to them, "Make for the hills, so that the pursuers may not come upon you. Stay there in hiding three days, until the pursuers return; then go your way." (Joshua 2:16)

As is the case so often with Rahab, we wonder how she comes by her information. How did she know the mission of the spies? How was she able to recite the history of the Bene Israel and their God? And, now, how did she know that the King's men would be out on the hunt for three days?

With characteristic sensitivity, Rashi picks up on this problem. In his comment on 2:16, he says:

> She saw by means of the holy spirit that the [King's] men would return after three days. (Mikraot Gedolot, p.5)

It is no small thing that Rashi attributes to Rahab communication with the divine spirit. This attribution places Rahab on the level of prophets, for only prophets obtain information from the divine spirit.

The entire Rahab story appears embedded within the opening scenes of Joshua. In this short space, we are given a representation of a rich, complex character. Indeed, we have more character here than we know what to do with. She is a whore yet she has inexplicable access to true information. She lies yet she does so out of respect for and fear of the God of Israel. She is a lone woman yet she extracts a promise out of two men; a promise that, as we have seen, these men had no right to make.

Rahab stands out as a full-fledged character. Her

actions preclude our placing her in a stereotyped role. She is independent. She knows what she wants. She responds to the God of Israel.

Our question is: what is she doing in the book of Joshua? We have several possible answers. First, we have discussed in the previous chapter that Rahab's extraction of terms from the spies is played out in the Gibeon story which comes later in Joshua. In both instances, the Bene Israel were bound to their agreements. We might say that the inclusion of the detail of Rahab's profession here is a comment on the Gibeonites whom we meet later.

This answer speaks in terms of the poetic structure of Joshua and thereby makes more clear the process of embedding Tzvetan Todorov spoke of earlier.

The embedded story of Rahab sharpens our perception of the greater narrative into which it is embedded. We say greater speaking both of size and of import. The Rahab story is a magnifying glass placed in the narrative to draw our eyes to the Joshua author's most significant issue; that being the complex relationship between the Bene Israel and their God. We are interested in Rahab because she is supplemented by the Gibeon story. We are interested in the Gibeon story because it speaks to a difficulty in the relationship between the Bene Israel and their God.

In looking at the agent, the type, and the full-fledged character we have added an important element to our poetic analysis of Joshua. In our chapter two, we examined the poetic structure of a block of material from Joshua. We

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saw three parts in this block. Part one was the controlling part.   That is, events in part one were played out in parts two and three.

Now we have looked at character. Each of the characters we examined came from part one of the block of material used in chapter two. These characters have no part external to the first part of material. Yet, just as we saw structural and plot connections between parts one and two and parts one and three; here also, we see connections and they are through character.

Rahab lied. The Gibeonites lied. Rahab extracted terms from the spies. The Gibeonites extracted terms from the Bene Israel. The Bene Israel honored their agreement with Rahab. Likewise, they honored their agreement with the Gibeonites. We even noted that what seemed like an extraneous detail about Rahab may be seen as a comment about the Gibeonites.

Our next chapter will be an extension of where we have been in these last two chapters. We will look at the character of Joshua. In so doing we will bring into our discussion the issues of poetic use of repetition and the use of point of view. These will help us clarify our understanding of the extremely complex character of Joshua, and they will bring us to the point from which we can make statements about how this character functions within the book of Joshua.

CHAPTER FOUR

Repetition

When discussing the poetic use of repetition in the
book of Joshua, we will subdivide our analysis into two
kinds of repetition. The first type is that repetition
where a bit of narrative is followed immediately by a
virtual copy of itself. Our example will be of an address
made by God to Joshua which is followed by an account of
Joshua's enacting the contents of the address.

The second type of repetition is already familiar
turf for us. We have spoken of markers and formulas. In
chapter two we showed how repeated use of the marker "and it
was" functioned as a signpost in the text which revealed to
us structure and plot connections. Also in chapter two, we
used the formula "do not deviate from it to the right or to
the left" to prove that a Deuteronomic law was still
operative in Joshua.

Now we will look at another formula, "until this
day," which appears seventeen times within Joshua. Our
purpose in examining this formula is to provide basis for
comments on the role of the character of Joshua and on the
structural and thematic unity of the book of Joshua.

Looking at repetition in terms of poetics is one
solution to a central problem of biblical criticism; that
being whether to deal with text as a unified work or as the
work of many authors. In his work, The Old Testament: An
Introduction, Otto Eissfeldt provides a compact statement of
the history of this problem:

> The Jewish tradition concerning the compilation
> of the Pentateuch by Moses was taken over by
> the Christian church. Nevertheless, already at

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an early date, doubts were voiced both by
Christians and Jews concerning the absolute
reliability of this tradition, even if at first
it was only a matter of isolated and
unsystematic individual points of doubt. There
was to be a long wait, more than a millennium,
before a positive theory concerning the
composition and origin of the Pentateuch arose
to replace the tradition. The doubts are in
part to be explained as arising from dogmatic
and ethical objections to many statements of
the Pentateuch which could therefore hardly be
attributed to Moses. Thus the Clementine
Homilies feel it to be objectionable that often
there are attributed to God such strongly
anthropomorphic actions as swearing, and
limitations of various kinds are expressed
concerning him; that there is a narrative
concerning Noah's drunkenness, and that Abraham
appears as the husband of three women, and the
authors would like to deny these pieces of
material to Moses. Other objections arise from
observations of historical criticism, or from
the criticism of style and literary form. It
was recognised that the text itself
occasionally demands a date of composition
different from that of the tradition. It was
noted that in the books which follow the
Pentateuch, the supposed work of Moses, the
style was substantially the same as before and
that no such clear difference of style was
observable as one might have expected with a
change of compiler. A whole series of
repetitions and contradictions was discovered
which could only with difficulty be understood
if the Pentateuch was compiled by one author.
(Eissfeldt, p.158-9)

Eissfeldt has covered a lot of ground here. Examining his

discussion part by part is necessary.

According to Eissfeldt, Jewish tradition accepted

Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. He later notes that

the same tradition attributes the last few lines of

Deuteronomy to Joshua. It was under this assumption of

authorship that the commentaries of Rashi and Radak were

written. Thus, necessarily, their solutions to textual

problems must not challenge the poetic unity of the biblical

material.   For them to do otherwise, would be to burn their bridges while they are standing on them.

Eissfeldt then   speaks of the rise of an organized assault on the unity of the biblical material. Whether this was   due   to   the   dogmatic   and   ethical   objections   is questionable.   We   have   already seen how Rashi and Radak handled   the   ethical objection to Rahab's harlotry without challenging the authorship or unity of the text.   Clearly, though,   it   is easier to "clean up" the text if one is less insistent than a Rashi about maintaining unity.

Eissfeldt then mentions other causes for doubt about the authorship and the unity of the biblical text that arose from historical criticism and from the criticism of style and literary form.

The   last   two   sentences   quoted   above   leave   us wondering   about   the   logical   consistency   of   Eissfeldt's argument.   First he says that the style of the books which follow   the   Pentateuch   is substantially the   same   as   the Pentateuch.   The logical extension of this statement would be   some   discussion of a single author for both Pentateuch and the following books. However, this is not the direction Eissfeldt takes.   Instead he says, and we quote again:

> A   whole   series   of   repetitions   and
> contradictions was discovered which could   only
> with difficulty be understood if the Pentateuch
> was compiled by one author. (Eissfeldt, 159)

As they say in the swamplands, this is clear as mud. First Eissfeldt   says that the style of Pentateuch and the following books is so similar as to suggest being compiled

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by one and the same compiler. He then goes back to Pentateuch and says it is so full of repetitions and contradictions that it would be difficult to explain its composition without resort to a theory of multiple compilers. It seems that Eissfeldt is playing both sides of the issue and doing so to the detriment of his argument.

Inherent in Eissfeldt's statement about repetitions in biblical text is a view of poetics which does not account for repetition in a unified text, that is a text compiled or composed by a single author. We return again to Tzvetan Todorov. As part of his discussion of poetics in primitive narrative, Todorov deals with the esthetic principles commonly used to judge literary works from both present and past. The example Todorov uses throughout his discussion is Homer's Odyssey. We read:

> Adopting a position based on an esthetic proper to primitive narrative, commentators on early narrative declare one or another of its parts alien to the body of the work; and worse still, they believe themselves to be referring to no particular esthetic. Yet it is precisely in the case of the Odyssey, where we have no historical certainty, that this very esthetic determines scholarly decisions as to "insertions" and "interpolations." (Todorov, p.53)

Todorov then goes into a list of esthetic laws commonly used in making scholarly judgments about primitive texts. One law is of particular interest to us:

> the law of nonrepetition (incredible as it seems that anyone could imagine such an esthetic law): In an authentic text, there are no repetitions. "The passage which begins here and repeats for the third time the scenes in which Antinous and Eurymachus have previously

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> thrown stools at Odysseus....This passage may
> rightly be regarded as suspect." According to
> this principle, we may regard a good half of
> the Odyssey as "suspect" or even as "a shocking
> repetition." But it is difficult to imagine a
> description of the epic genre that does not
> account for repetitions, which appear to have
> so fundamental a role in the form. (Todorov,
> p.55)

What Todorov states with the Odyssey as example could well have been stated with Bible as exemplar. Todorov has not given particular roles which repetition might play. This is context dependent. We do take from Todorov his challenge to the law of nonrepetition; a law inherent in Eissfeldt's thinking.

By way of summary of his material on primitive narrative, Todorov writes:

> There is no "primitive narrative." No
> narrative is natural; a choice and a
> construction will always preside over its
> appearance; narrative is a discourse, not a
> series of events. (Todorov, p.55)

Here again we are being reminded that writing narrative involves making choices about the presentation of material. Repetition, in its various forms, is one such choice on the author's poetic palette.

Earlier we mentioned that we would discuss two kinds of repetition. The first will be of the type where a narrative bit is followed immediately by a virtual copy of itself. In Joshua 5:2 we read:

> At that time the Lord said unto Joshua: "Make
> thee knives of flint, and circumcise again the
> children of Israel a second time." (Joshua
> 5:2)

This is followed by :

> And Joshua made him knives of flint, and
> circumcised the children of Israel at Gibeath-
> haaraloth. (Joshua 5:3)

We must wonder at this seemingly inefficient style. It would have been more compact and equally understandable were the Joshua author to have given us God's command then to tell us: "Joshua did thus." Why then is this bulkier style chosen?

In thinking through this question, it would be helpful to examine our concept of motivation. As readers, when we see a character do something, we want to know why they do it. To support this truism, we bring two examples. First, we draw from the genre of the mystery novel. The mystery writer presents us with a series of actions about which we know little or nothing. Our desire to know the who, the how, and the why behind the events pulls us through the novel. Even at the point when we know who did the crime and how they did it, we still want to know the motive. It is through motive that we make judgments about the criminal. We add that motive also plays a substantive role in our legal system.

Our second example comes from that group of jokes which all start: "Do you know why the chicken crossed the road?" Clearly, we do not know. Just as clearly, the chicken does not know either. The power of these jokes lies in that the stupid chicken functions as a tabula rasa upon which we can display the mixed-up, often comical motivation for our own human actions.

Getting back to Joshua, we see that we have a need

to know why Joshua circumcised the Bene Israel. The focus is on the act itself. This occurs in 5:3. If all we read was this verse, we would not be satisfied. Therefore, through use of repetition, we learn that Joshua does this circumcision in accordance with a direct command from his God.

This alone does not justify the repetition. The repetition is a poetic vehicle. By means of it, we see that Joshua follows God's commands to the letter. As written, we see not only that Joshua does the circumcision, we see also that he does it using the very tool that God commanded him to use. Robert Alter speaks to what this kind of repetition tells us about a character:

> The constantly reiterated pattern of command or prophecy closely followed by its verbatim fulfillment confirms an underlying view of historical causality; it translates into a central narrative device the unswerving authority of a monotheistic God manifesting Himself in language. (Alter, p.91)

We have already stated that Joshua is about the complex relationship between the Bene Israel and their God. This pair of verses, God's command and Joshua's action, places the character in relationship to his God. Joshua obeys with precision and punctuality.

We have spoken of the similarity of these verses, now we focus on their difference. We note that in 5:2 we found the words "again" and "a second time." This sense of doing the act again is absent in 5:3. We notice, also, that 5:3 contains a reference to the place of this event. This

etiological statement, calling the place foreskin-hill, picks up on the act of circumcision which is central to this episode.

If these verses were isolated, we might not even note these differences. However, reading on in chapter five, we see that these differences are crucial. In the verses immediately following Joshua's action we find the following discussion of his action:

> And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: all the people that came forth out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness on the way, after they came forth out of Egypt. For all the people that came out of Egypt were circumcised; but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt had not been circumcised. For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the nation, even the men of war that came forth out of Egypt, were consumed, because they hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord; unto whom the Lord swore that He would not let them see the land which the Lord swore unto their fathers that He would give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. And He raised up their children in their stead; them did Joshua circumcise. (Joshua 5:4-7)

These verses pick up on and explicate the differences we found between 5:2 and 5:3. In this way 5:4-7 are a logical outgrowth of the two verses that precede them.

In his commentary on this material, Robert Boling writes:

> Several units, drawn from a variety of "sources," are easily distinguishable, so that there is no need for elaborate documentary analysis. Here the basic ingredients were epic (5:1,10-12), archival priestly lore (5:2-7), and a didactic or catechical activity (4:19-24, 5:8-9) which had the last word. (Boling, p.184)

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We have already begun to see internal connections in 5:2-7. Boling refers to this material as archival priestly lore and as one of several units. We can agree that these verses are to be taken together. But, it is equally important to see how they function in the flow of this narrative.

To do this requires an examination of the context of this material in 5:2-7. We will start with the smallest unit of material, the verse 5:3. We will then expand our scope incrementally till we have sufficient material for making general statements about the verse; about this use of repetition, and about what Joshua is saying to us.

We recall that 5:3 was a statement that Joshua circumcised the Bene Israel. This statement included a description of the tool Joshua used and the location of the event. This verse was preceded by a command from God that Joshua is to perform a circumcision of the Bene Israel a second time. The verse, 5:3, was followed by a discussion of the significance of "a second time."

These verses, 5:2-7, appear within a single episode of Joshua, but they do not open the episode. In verse 5:1 we find our marker "and it was" and 5:8 opens with a second appearance of the marker. This clues us to the start of new material.

Examining 5:1, we see that the marker is part of the larger formula "and it was when foreigners heard about the Bene Israel and their God." We have discussed this formula before, and we saw that it served to signal the opening of a

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part of material in which the Bene Israel have an encounter with foreigners. Further, we saw that through this encounter some aspect of the relationship between the Bene Israel and their God was played out. The goal of this was to teach them and the reader some point about the proper mode of behavior for maintaining a good relationship with their God.

We also recall that 5:1 was the opening verse of a block of material which we examined in terms of structure, plot, and character. It is time now to place this block of material in its larger context; that is in the book of Joshua.

The material in Joshua which precedes this block can be described as setting the stage. In this material we meet the major characters of the drama which is to be played out in Joshua. We meet Joshua, son of Nun, servant of the late Moses. We meet the Bene Israel. We meet their God.

In this material we are introduced to the two-fold task which lies before these characters. They are to take the land which God has given them. And, they are to do according to all that is written in the book of the law. That is, they are to follow all God's commands as they were given to Moses and passed on to Joshua.

In this material we have the spy mission which provides Joshua with the necessary intelligence for the capture of Jericho. We see the people sanctify themselves in preparation for their witnessing of God's wonders. In this material we see a miracle performed by God; the river

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Jordan stops flowing to allow the Bene Israel to pass on dry land. We see the Ark of the Covenant being brought into the promised land. We see a monument set up at Gilgal. This monument is a perpetual reminder of God's providence.

The action of these first four chapters has been constant. It has been significant. Everything is now set for the conquest. Everyone is in the Land. God has shown His presence and power. The atmosphere is charged. The action is ready to begin.

And, begin it does. The first thing we hear of the natives of the Land is that they know something awful is about to befall them:

> And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, that were beyond the Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, that were by the sea, heard how that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel, until they were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was their spirit in them anymore, because of the children of Israel. (Joshua 5:1)

This one verse, this first mention of the inhabitants of the Land, is both the beginning and the end of the story of the conquest. The natives know that God is with the Bene Israel. The kings know that their dominion over the Land is ended. The story of the conquest is over. But, the story of Joshua is just beginning.

As we have seen, the author opens with the marker in the formula about foreigners. He then gives a one sentence statement which foreshadows the outcome of the upcoming seven year battle. This done, the author gets along with

his important story; that being the developing relationship of the Bene Israel and their God. It is at this point that we read of God's command to Joshua concerning circumcision.

Earlier we began a discussion of the near exact repetition of material in 5:2 and 5:3. We noticed the similarity of these verses and we noticed and wondered at their specific difference. Robert Alter speaks to this evocative power in repetition:

> The authors of the biblical narrative astutely discovered how the slightest strategic variations in the pattern of repetitions could serve the purposes of commentary, analysis, foreshadowing, thematic assertion, with a wonderful combination of subtle understatement and dramatic force. (Alter, p.91)

It seems likely that the repetition we are discussing is inexact by design. The **Joshua** author wants us to note the difference.

Indeed, this difference between 5:2 and 5:3 becomes the point of departure for 5:4-7. This material offers an explanation for this second circumcision. Embedded in this explanation, we find a history of the Bene Israel. We have already heard one history and that was from the mouth of Rahab. She spoke of God's saving power. In this history, we see the other side; God's retributive power. God caused the entire generation of the Exodus to die in the wilderness because "they hearkened not to the voice of the Lord." (Joshua 5:6) Now there is a new generation of the Bene Israel. It is this generation which is circumcised by Joshua.

Joshua does his duty. The circumcision is complete.

Now in 5:8, we come to our marker again. We are ready for new material. The time skips ahead to the healing period after the circumcisions. God again speaks to Joshua:

> This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. (Joshua 5:9)

In other words, God has cleared the slate against the Bene Israel of all infractions by earlier generations. They are starting fresh with no points against them. It is in this state that the Bene Israel celebrate their first Passover in the Land. It is at this time that the manna ceases to fall. Now the Bene Israel "did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan." (Joshua 5:12) These were free people eating the fruit of their land. They were ready now to fight as God's warriors.

As free people, this generation of the Bene Israel is now responsible for its actions. They know what they are supposed to do. The story of Joshua is a carefully constructed account of the mistakes of the Bene Israel, of God's punishment of them for their mistakes, and of their procedures for correcting their mistakes and thus righting themselves with their God. We already know from 5:1 that the Bene Israel will triumph over the natives of the Land. What is of concern to us are all the twists and turns that befall them in what should have been a smooth conquest.

We have examined the first of our two types of repetition. This repetition was of the type where a bit of narrative is followed immediately by a virtual copy of itself. In our example we noted similarity. From this we

were able to state that Joshua obeys his God with precision and punctuality. We also noted difference between the verses. This difference made us consider an issue we might have overlooked. It also provided the Joshua author with a point of departure for telling of the retributive power of God.

We are now ready to consider our second type of repetition; the recurrent formula "until this day." As noted earlier, this formula appears seventeen times within Joshua. In the first thirteen appearances of this formula, it is not attributed to any speaker, and its appearance interrupts the flow of the narrative. These comments point to our understanding of the function of this formula. Before continuing this discussion, it will prove useful to examine other thoughts on this formula.

In his commentary on Joshua, Rashi makes no specific mention of this formula. He does, from time to time, comment on the verse in which the formula appears. For example, the first appearance of the formula is in 4:9:

> Joshua also set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, at the spot where the feet of the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant had stood; and they have remained there until this day. (Joshua 4:9)

Rashi's comment on this verse is:

> These are different than the ones that Joshua put in the Jordan river. (Mikraot Gedolot, p. 70)

Rashi's comment is, thus, not about the formula. Rather, it is about the complex issue of who places which twelve stones

where.

Radak does make a comment about one appearance of the formula. His comment comes to explicate 15:63 which reads:

> But the Judites could not dispossess the Jebusites; the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so the Judites dwell with the Jebusites until this day. (Joshua 15:63)

Radak's comment follows:

> Joshua writes thus because he was writing according to the received tradition. They [the Jebusites] were not expelled from Jerusalem, and also in the time of David we found that they were there. (Mikraot Gedolot, p.26)

At face value, Radak does not seem to be making a comment on the formula. He seems to be discussing the statement about the Jebusite hold on Jerusalem. However, implicit in Radak's comment is an answer to the question: "Until what day?" His answer is that the day referred to by the formula could be within the lifetime of Joshua. Or, it could be up to the time of King David, for as we read in II Samuel 5:7-8, David does finally take the Jebusite stronghold in Jerusalem.

Radak's comment deals with a particular point of historically verifiable data. However, his underlying question "until what day," is central to any understanding of the function of this formula.

In the **Joshua** volume of **The New International Commentary on the Old Testament**, Marten Woudstra deals with this same question about the formula. First he cites Abrabanel on the problem:

> Abrabanel held that the book [Joshua] was
> probably from the hand of the prophet Samuel,
> who believed that the expression "until this
> day" was an indication of a considerable lapse
> of time between the events and their
> description in the book. (Woudstra, p.5)

Abrabanel's conjecture fits in well with the above cited comment by Radak. Woudstra, though, brings in a rebuttal to this position:

> As noted above, the expression "until this day"
> was believed at an early stage of Joshua
> studies to be an indication of a date
> considerably later than the time when the
> events recorded actually occurred. However,
> this expression is not as clear an indication
> of late composition as is sometimes thought.
> Looking back in the recent past was done even
> within the lifetime of Joshua himself. [cf.
> 22:3; 23:9-10] (Woudstra, p.11)

We add that such looking back was done by Joshua himself, who in his final speech to the Bene Israel brings in significant points from their recent history using this formula.

Robert Boling makes a comment about the formula at its appearance in Joshua 8:29. The city of Ai has just been vanquished in a second siege by the Bene Israel. After their victory, Joshua orders that the King of Ai be impaled. At nightfall his body is pulled down from the stake and buried at the city gate under a cairn. This cairn, we are told, is there "until this day." Boling comments:

> Since the finished book [of Joshua] is prepared
> for people who will be living in exile, it is
> scarcely probable that the cairns are any
> longer supposed to have evidentiary value. It
> is an ironic conclusion to the story of
> Joshua's second victory. (Boling, p.242)

Boling, here, also speaks to the question "until which day?"

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He assumes a late date for the writing of the formula into this context, and as a result, he is forced to see its inclusion here as ironic.

An extensive discussion of this formula is to be found in **The Journal of Biblical Literature.** In his article "A Study of the Formula 'Until This Day'" Brevard Childs notes:

> It has been observed that one of the most characteristic elements of the etiological story is the use of the formula, "until this day." (Childs, p.279)

As etiology, this formula would function to explain the presence of a custom, a name, or an artifact. By extension from Boling's statement on 8:29, such statements in Joshua are ironic for the customs, names, or artifacts to which they refer are not likely to be present or available to the audience reading the Joshua narrative.

Whether or not this motivates Childs' argument is unclear, however Childs does go to some effort to suggest a nonetiological function for the formula. Childs writes:

> It is important to note that the formula is used in two distinct ways: the first usage is an apparently etiological function, and the second, in a nonetiological idiom to express the terminus ad quem of a temporal sequence. (Childs, p.280)

In other words, Childs states that the formula can be used nonetiologically in a statement such as: We have been doing "X" continuously until this very day. This is in contrast to an etiological function in which a present day condition is causally linked to a single event in the past.

In this scan of the literature on the formula "until

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this day," we see that the focus of study has been on answering the question "until what day?" There is another question to be asked. We wonder who is the speaker of this formula.

We noted earlier that only in its last four appearances is the speaker attributed. We can say of the formula's first eleven appearances only that it is a narrator who is speaking. The formula comes from a voice outside the action of the story. This voice seems to be speaking to an audience which is also at a distance from the events depicted in the narrative.

Put another way, at eleven points in the Joshua narrative we are made conscious of a voice not directly involved in the events about which we are reading. This has the effect of forcing us out of the flow of the narrative. It forces us to change our point of view. Noting this effect of the formula gives us a clue to understanding its functioning in Joshua.

We now must look at specific appearances of the formula. We see it first in 4:9. Here we are told of twelve stones that Joshua set up in the middle of the Jordan river, and we are told that these stones are there "until this day." In 5:9 we have just witnessed the circumcision of the Bene Israel. As a result of this, God has rolled away from the Bene Israel the disgrace of Egypt. We are told that the name of the place in which this event is set is called Gilgal "until this day." After the scorching

defeat at Ai, we are told that the Bene Israel raised a huge mound of stones over the body of Achan which is there "until this day." In 9:27 we have been told that the terms made with the Gibeonites must be upheld but that they are still hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Bene Israel "until this day."

A pattern is emerging. There is a great event be it crossing the Jordan on dry land or the entire community fulfilling the command of circumcision or a stunning victory or defeat in battle. After the event some landmark, or in the case of the Gibeonites, some social structure is described. Then this landmark or structure is, by an intrusion of an unnamed speaker, said to be extant "until this day."

In a discussion of point of view, Adelle Berlin comments on such intrusions by the narrator into the flow of a story:

> The most blatant intrusions of the narrator's voice are in etiologies, geographical notes, and similar information. (Berlin, p.57)

Our intrusions qualify both as informative and blatant. We wonder why the Joshua author has included them in his narrative. Berlin puts forth a suggestion about this:

> It [an intrusion] is clearly the narrator's comment, his evaluation of the events in the story, and would generally be understood by biblicists as a typical insertion by the deuteronomic historian. But in another sense it is not really outside the story at all, at least in the sense of an addition. If fact, it makes the reader concious that there is a story and that there is a narrator. (Berlin, p.47)

Why then, we must ask, is it important that we readers be

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aware that there is a story and that there is a narrator? Forcing this awareness seems contrary to most writing styles which use artfulness to cover up reminders of the art form.

We could respond that this Joshua narrative is primitive and therefore the devices used in its construction are poorly integrated. We could also respond that the exposed structure is part of the art form; that the structure is exposed for a reason.

In order to fathom the reason behind such a choice of writing style, we return to a comment made earlier in this chapter. We stated that as early as Joshua 5:1, we are told the outcome of the conquest story. The Bene Israel will be victorious because they are fighting alongside God.

Still, the conquest story is a compelling one. It draws our attention to itself. This conquest story, though, is not the important story of the book of **Joshua**. Therefore, it is plausible that whenever we are most involved in the flow of the conquest that the narrator throws a wrench into that narrative. This forces us outside that narrative.

When we are forced out of the conquest narrative, where then are we? We are in the greater narrative about the complex relationship between the Bene Israel and their God. In this schema, the entire conquest story is seen as an embedded narrative which, to repeat a simile, functions like a magnifying glass placed within the text in order to sharpen our view of the material considered essential by the

Joshua author.

An examination of the four final appearances of our formula supports this understanding of the function of the formula. In stark contrast to the first thirteen appearances of the formula, its final four appearances in 22:3 & 17 and 23:8 & 9 do not disrupt the flow of the narrative. In each case, we know the speaker. In 22:3, 23:8, and 23:9 the speaker is Joshua himself. In 22:17 the speaker is Phineas, son of Eleazar. Further, in these occurrences of the formula "this day" is the day on which the formula is spoken. Indeed, the only usage of this formula that is not disruptive to the narrative flow is if "this day" is the here and now of the speaker.

These four appearances have one more thing in common. They all appear after the end of the conquest story. In Joshua 21 we read:

> The Lord delivered all their enemies into their hands. Not one of the good things which the Lord had promised to the House of Israel was lacking. Everything was fulfilled. (Joshua 21:42-43)

The dividing of the conquered lands is complete. The conquest is over.

And, now that the conquest narrative is over, it can no longer interfere with our attentiveness to the central narrative of Joshua. These final four appearances of the formula serve as testimonial to the fact of the Joshua story that obedience to God brings reward and disobedience brings punishment.

For example, the context for 22:3 is that Joshua has

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called together the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. He is about to send them to their East-of-Jordan lands. In so doing, Joshua says:

> You have not forsaken your kinsmen through the long years until this day, but have faithfully observed the Instruction of the Lord your God. (Joshua 22:3)

These tribes followed the commands given by God to Moses and then to Joshua. Therefore they will get what was promised to them. We notice that the formula is not disruptive. It functions as a statement that an action has continued from the past to the present.

The context for the appearance of the formula in 22:1 is that word has come to the Israelites that the Eastern Tribes have built an altar that should not have been built. Phineas says to them:

> Is the sin of Peor, which brought a plague upon the community of the Lord, such a small thing to us? We have not cleansed ourselves from it until this day. (Joshua 22:16)

The sin of Peor is a reference to idol worship for which 24,000 of the Bene Israel were killed. (see Numbers 25:1-9) Here the formula is used to say that improper conduct of the Bene Israel toward their own God is still on the ledger against them. Therefore, they certainly want to prevent another such infraction on their part.

The last two appearances of the formula function in an equivalent manner. In all four cases, the formula draws attention to the relationship between the Bene Israel and their God.

Looking back at our conclusions on the function of the first thirteen occurrences of the formula, we see that their function is actually the same as of these last four. They draw attention away from the conquest narrative and shift it to the relationship between the Bene Israel and their God.

Thus all seventeen appearances of the formula are performing the same function, though there are two distinct ways in which this purpose is achieved. There is yet another function of this formula. Because it is interspersed throughout Joshua; because it is constantly pointing our attention to the relationship between the Bene Israel and their God, this formula serves as a unifying element in the book.

By cuing readers to the overarching theme of Joshua, the formula tells us to see this book as a single-thrusted statement rather than as a series of unrelated incidents. We are to take a lesson away with us after reading Joshua. God is all powerful. The Bene Israel are bound to this God. When they do God's will they prosper. When they subvert God's will they suffer defeat.

Tied into this theme is the question of how the Bene Israel are to know God's will. This is dealt with most directly through the character of Joshua. He receives instruction directly from God. We have seen earlier in this chapter that Joshua is absolutely obedient to his God. This becomes the model of behavior for the Bene Israel. We read:

On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the

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> sight of all Israel, so that they revered him all his days as they had revered Moses. (Joshua 4:14)

Thus, it is by Joshua's example that the Bene Israel learn how to respond to God's commands. And, it is through Joshua that they are given the commands.

By examination of poetic devices used in the writing of Joshua, we have come to see the book as a unified work with an overarching statement to make. We have looked at the functioning of marker and have seen that this provides clues to plot structure. We have looked at character and seen how it functions within this structure. Specifically, we saw how characters function as parts of embedded narratives which themselves serve to focus our attention on the greater narrative in which they are embedded. We studied uses of repetition and saw how it functions both to highlight essential qualities of a character and how it alters our point of view. We saw that this alteration in our point of view brought our attention out of the embedded narrative and into the major thematic stream of **Joshua**. In this function, we also noted that repetition serves as a unifying poetic device.

All this leads to our final question. The Joshua author has a simple point to make. Why, then, does he not choose to make his point simply? Why does he choose to employ markers, intricate plot structures, multi-level characterizations, repetitions, and changes in point of view?

CHAPTER FIVE

Metaphor; Author's Intention and Interpretation

In our opening chapter, we presented a definition of poetics. We made a distinction between poetics and interpretation. In a word, the process of reading is a multi-staged process. This process starts with the act of deciphering the symbols on the printed page, and it culminates in an interpretation of the material. Poetics asserts that the words of a text are elements in an orderly whole. Poetics then describes the ordering principles of this whole.

A poetic analysis, thus, renders a clear, precise picture of what a text is saying and how it is saying it. What was approached as a set of elements is now seen as a set of interrelated poetic structures. Among these structures are marker, formula, character, embedded narrative, and repeated narrative. Each of these has an identifiable function. Each structure points the reader to some theme of the narrative.

One of our working assumptions is that these structures do not appear by accident. Rather, they are the result of deliberate choices made by the Joshua author. At the conclusion of our fourth chapter, we summarized our discussion of poetics in Joshua. At this point, we had one more question, though. All our evidence points to Joshua being written to deliver a simple theological lesson. We must wonder then at the Joshua author's choice of presentation. The author could have come straight out with his statement. A few verses would have been sufficient space. Yet, instead, we find twenty-four chapters of

material filled with intricacies of plot and character.

To set this problem in its plainest terms, we must wonder why the Joshua author has not chosen the simplest route available in presentation of material. We should recall that this question is not totally new for us. In our discussion of repetition in Joshua, we wondered why the **Joshua** author chose to make a statement in one verse and follow it by a virtual replication of itself in the very next verse. Our analysis showed that this seemingly cumbersome style was actually an efficient and effective means for making a point about the character of Joshua. Here, also, the Joshua author's choice of presentation serves ends that warrant a style which, on the surface, seems inefficient.

The **Joshua** author embeds theology into story. In poetic terms, the author is employing an elaborate metaphor in order to deliver his theological message to the readers. This is a fact of the text. As readers, we are concerned with how to integrate this aspect of the text into whatever interpretation we construct of the text.

Using the model we presented in our first chapter, we can state our task as follows: we have read a text. This text is structured by poetic devices. The overarching device employed by the author is metaphor. We must come to some understanding of the author's intent in using metaphor. Then, with the analyzed text before us and with the author's probable intent before us, we can enter into the realm of

interpretation.

The shape which this interpretation takes depends largely upon choices we make about the school of interpretation we find most appealing or most useful. We can choose to focus our interpretation most sharply on the text, or on our perception of the author's intent, or on our personal response to what we have read. Each of these foci will produce an interpretation most suitable for a particular function. That is, if our goal in interpretation is some kind of personal search, then we are free to focus our interpretation on our personal response to the text. However, such an interpretation will be of little use if our goal in interpretation is to convince others what the text is "really" saying.

In chapters two through four, we have presented a poetic analysis of large sections of the Joshua story. This presentation forms the backdrop for our present discussion. Now we turn to the issue of the Joshua author's use of metaphor. As we have stated before, we are working under the premise that the Joshua author has made intelligent choices in his presentation of material; that these choices are made with an eye to expressing his tenor in the clearest, most efficient manner possible. Working under this premise, our task becomes one of scoping out and analyzing possible reasons which underlie the Joshua author's choice of using metaphor to present his material. Below, we will introduce three such possibilities. We will then discuss the implications for interpretation embedded in

each of these possibilities.

Before going into this discussion, we need to set forth our working definition of metaphor:

> METAPHOR: An implied analogy which imaginatively identifies one object with another and ascribes to the first one or more qualities of the second or invests the first with emotional or imaginative qualities associated with the second. (Holman, p.313)

From this definition, we see that metaphor requires two objects which are placed in implied relationship.

The two objects of a metaphor differ in their nature. It is this difference which calls for metaphor to be used. I. A. Richards provides terminology for discussing the properties of the objects of metaphor:

> The TENOR is the idea being expressed or the subject of the comparison; the VEHICLE is the IMAGE by which this idea is conveyed or the subject communicated. (Holman, p.314)

The tenor of metaphor tends to be an abstract object or concept, something that we find difficult to express in non-poetic language. The vehicle tends to be a concrete object which is more easily expressed. Using this terminology, the Joshua author sets up a metaphor. The vehicle is the story of Joshua with its complexity of character and situation. The tenor is the theology that the Joshua author wishes to express. We are now ready to present three possible explanations for the Joshua author's use of metaphor.

First, we have seen that the Joshua author embeds theology into story. We can see this style itself as a theological statement. Second, the Joshua author may have

chosen to present his material by means of metaphor because the very structure of metaphor allows the reader a freedom of interpretation which would not have been possible had the author chosen to present his material by means of, for example, declarative statements. A third possible reason behind the Joshua author's choice of metaphor for his presentation might have been a consideration of the following problem: how does one write about that of which one cannot have certain knowledge?

We now return to our first possibility. We stated that the Joshua author may have chosen to embed theology into story in order to make a theological statement. We have already seen many theological statements derivable from the Joshua story. These statements were noted in our analysis which spanned our chapters two through four.

Before going on to discuss the overarching theology of Joshua derivable from the author's use of metaphor, it will be useful to summarize the theological statements we have already noted. To provide structure to this overview, we will first list a theological point made by the text and then cite an example of it from our analysis. The points we cite are provided by Millard C. Lind in his book Yahweh is a Warrior: The Theology of Warfare in Ancient Israel.

Lind's first point is that "the Deuteronomic historian recognized the occupation of Canaan as a response of obedience to Yahweh." (Lind, p.159) We saw this concept played out in the conquest of Jericho and in the conquest of Ai. The Joshua author went to great length to let the

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readers know that victory was the by product of the Bene Israel being on good terms with their God. Before the victory at Jericho we read that God has cleared the slate against the Bene Israel. They have undergone circumcision. They have celebrated the Passover. God then tells Joshua:

> This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. (Joshua 5:9)

This statement by deity comes as response to obedience. They are on good terms with their God, therefore they win the battle at Jericho.

The other side of this equation is that when the Bene Israel are disobedient of their God they suffer defeat. This we saw in the incidents at Ai. The first attempt to take the city met with failure. This was because the sin of Achan defiled the Bene Israel. They were not fit to serve as God's army, and until they rid themselves of sin, they could not defeat Ai.

Lind's second point is "that Yahweh the warrior fought by means of miracle, not through the armies of his people." (Lind, p.23) This point is made both implicitly and explicitly in Joshua. At Jericho, the victory is achieved without fighting. The Bene Israel simply march around the city in a proscribed manner. They blow their shofar blasts, and the city falls before them. At this point the action speaks for itself, that is, we are not told that this is a miraculous victory. We simply see that it is a miracle. Later in Joshua this point is made explicit. In Joshua 24 we read:

> The citizens of Jericho and the Amorites,
> Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites,
> Hivites, and Jebusites fought you, but I
> delivered them into your hands. I sent a
> plague ahead of you, and it drove them out
> before you -- [just like] the two Amorite kings
> --not by your sword or by your bow. I have
> given you a land for which you did not labor.
> (Joshua 24:11-13)

This leads to Lind's third point: "the human agent in the work of Yahweh was not so much the warrior as the prophet." (Lind, p.23) This is to say that the Bene Israel were less consequential in their victories than was Joshua. As we saw throughout the story, it was Joshua who was in communication with God. It was Joshua who kept the Bene Israel on good terms with their God. This, rather than any military prowess, was the source of their strength.

In summary, then, the God of Israel was all powerful. This God made His will known to the Bene Israel through their prophet, Joshua. The Bene Israel were free to choose whether or not they would obey the commands of their God. When they did obey, God granted them victory. When they disobeyed, God caused them to be defeated. Thus the abstract concept of being on good terms with their God was played out in the concrete realm of the battlefield.

This is the theology of Joshua that can be culled from a careful reading of the story. We were able to find this theology by paying attention to poetic devices such as markers, formulae, character, plot, and repetition. We are now discussing the use of yet another poetic device; metaphor.

We have stated that this device may also have been employed by the Joshua author to make a theological statement. We might cast this statement as follows: The God of Israel is active in history. Based on this theology, the most appropriate means of discussing this God is through story. To clarify, the Joshua author sees God as active in his world. In discussing this God, he creates a vehicle, a story world. He places God as the ultimate power in this story world. Thus the story and God's role in the story become the concrete object of a metaphor for history and God's role in history.

The Joshua author's use of metaphor takes God out of the abstract and places this God into the concrete realm of history. This use of metaphor by the Joshua author can be seen as the author inviting his reader to perform a parallel operation. That is, we are being invited to see God active in our history just as the Joshua author saw God active in his history.

This, then, is one possible reason that the Joshua author chose to use metaphor in his presentation of material. This use of metaphor provides an efficient means of making a statement about God's role in history. This statement could have been made directly. Such directness may have rendered the statement less powerful in that it would have been abstract. We would not have had the concrete example of the Joshua story; a story which presents in a clear manner how God operates in history.

In presenting this first possible reason for the

Joshua author's presentation by means of metaphor, we are preparing the ground for interpretations built largely upon an understanding of the author's intent. We are saying that the author's use of metaphor is a reflection of his intent to deliver a particular theological message. The interpreter's job becomes one of finding this message.

Our second possible reason that the Joshua author chose to present his material by means of metaphor is that metaphor, by its very structure, allows the reader a freedom of interpretation that is not available when other means of presentation are employed.

In metaphor, two objects are placed implied relationship. The abstract tenor of the metaphor is made clearer by its implied relationship to the vehicle. Metaphors, though, are not a one-way street. What is the vehicle in one reading of the metaphor can become the tenor in another reading of this same metaphor. The result is that the objects of metaphor take on a richness of meaning which would not have been present were the objects not placed in relationship. Aspects of each object are implied into the other, while both objects are free to function as symbols.

The **Joshua** author's use of metaphor allows the reader to see either of the objects of the author's metaphor as symbols. This becomes an invitation to the reader to generalize the specifics of the narrative. Rather than reading the battle of Jericho simply as historical material

which speaks of an event situated in a particular time and in a particular place, Jericho becomes a symbol. Jericho becomes the victory we achieve not by our sword and not by our bow.

This understanding of the function of metaphor allows the reader a sound method of working around thorny problems with the theology of Joshua. For example, there are readers of Joshua who see Joshua and its embedded theology as justification for territorial claims to lands in the Middle-East. There are also readers who feel abhorrence toward this story and its theology. Representative of this second group is Samuel Sandmel. In The Hebrew Scriptures Sandmel writes:

> The intent of the biblical authors needs to be understood. They were relating what they believed to be the history of God's people doing God's will. The Canaanites , in their view, had never done anything but oppose God's will. It was the Canaanites' misdeeds that brought about their downfall, for Yahve was punishing them and Israel was Yahve's agent. To Yahve the Canaanites had become justly hateful, and hence Israel must also hate them.
>
> There is little religious affirmation to be found in this unrelieved animosity. What religious note there is seems limited to a recognition on the part even of the biblical writers of the wrongness of the animosity. They did not, however, try to expunge the animosity from the account, but rather attempted to justify it by developing the view (found also in Gen.15:16) that the Canaanites had earned Yahwe's displeasure. (Sandmel, 1978,p.429)

Our sensibilities are indeed bothered by what we read in Joshua. The question then arises: what are we to do with this book?

Our discussion of metaphor becomes invaluable at the point when we start asking such fundamental questions as this. We stated that the Joshua author has an abstract message to convey, a theology. He chooses to present this material using story. His vehicle is a history of the conquest of the Land. Much can be made of the sources available to the Joshua author in his writing. Much can also be made of the author's relationship with those materials. This is important work. Through it we might establish whether the Joshua author felt as we do about the actions of the Bene Israel vis a vis the natives of the Land. This, however, is not at issue here. It is enough that we state clearly that the Joshua author has chosen a vehicle for his metaphor and that both the vehicle and the tenor can be read as symbols.

This effectively answers objections to Joshua such as those raised by Sandmel. If we are not satisfied with a literal reading of the vehicle, we are free to read it as symbolic. The same approach is available to readers in their approach to the tenor, the theology of Joshua.

The theological material of Joshua can also be read as symbolic. At first hearing this seems odd, however we have a long tradition of reading biblical theology as symbolic. This was central to the work of Philo, of Saadia Gaon, and of Maimonides.

It would be fair criticism to state that such reading of Joshua bears questionable relationship to the text. It is in anticipation of this criticism that we

stressed throughout our work that any interpretation which asks questions about meaning and connotation or significance and relevance must be based on a careful reading of the text. The validity of any interpretation of Joshua is in direct relationship to the precision of the reading upon which the interpretation is based.

It is through such precise reading that the interpreter comes to know, with more or less probability of correctness, the author's intent behind his presentation. As E.D. Hirsch argues, this intent forms the most sound basis available for determining the validity of interpretation. (Hirsch, p.5) Thus, precise reading and sensitivity to the author's intentions guard against interpretations of text which are more imaginative than they are text-related; that is more eisegetical than exegetical.

The Joshua author's use of metaphor allows the reader freedom in interpretation. This freedom is not, however, a wild card. Interpretation must be based on the material we have before us. An interpretation which is built upon reading material as symbolic cannot ignore the literal level of the material. That is, we may see a flag as a symbol for a country or for patriotism. These symbolic values derive logically from the literal image of "flag." We are not free to derive from the image "flag" symbolic interpretations which are not related or "relate-able" to the flag.

In this presentation of a second possible reason for

the Joshua author's use of metaphor, we remain cognizant of the author's intent. It remains possible that the Joshua author is intending to present a particular theological message. This second possibility allows that the author may have had other intentions in his choice of presentation as well. Specifically, the author's use of metaphor allows the reader a freedom of interpretation. In other words, the Joshua author's use of metaphor can be seen as invitation to the reader to create personal, idiosyncratic interpretations of the Joshua story.

Our third possible reason that the Joshua author may have chosen to present his material by means of metaphor is out of an awareness of the difficultly of making statements about God. Since we have no empirical evidence about God, it is, therefore, difficult to speak in concrete language about God. The author's use of metaphor may be seen as a poetic response to this difficulty.

This difficultly is a theological concern. Therefore, at this point, we need to set out a definition of theology. In his work Elements is a Philosophy of Reform Judaism, Alvin Reines discusses two definitions of theology. First, Reines cites what he labels the "classical definition of theology:"

> Theology is the study which treats of God, his nature and attributes, and his relation to man and the universe. (Reines, p.136)

This definition is sound yet is not without its problems. On the plus side, Reines notes that this definition properly limits the term theology to the study of God. This is in

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contrast to definitions of theology which might include "the study of the principles of a religion in its totality." Such study is more properly to be labeled "the philosophy of a religion." (Reines, p.137)

On the minus side, Reines points out that this classical definition of theology is built upon an unnecessary assumption. Again quoting Reines:

> ...the clear implication [in this classical definition] is present that there is an _ens reale_ of which theology is the study. (Reines, p.149)

In answer to this real limitation of the classical definition of theology, Reines proposes his own definition:

> Jewish theology, (in Reform Judaism,) is therefore defined as "the study of the meaning of the word God produced by the finite being named Jew who is called by his name to give authentic response to finitude." (Reines, p.149)

In the **Elements**, Reines defines his terms such as authentic response and finitude. For our purposes, we see that Reines removes the limitation of the classical definition while retaining its precision. He does so by making the _ens reale_ of theology the "meaning" of the word God. Meaning, unlike God, is available to scientific study. It is this second definition of theology upon which we base our discussion.

We opened this chapter with a statement that the **Joshua** author has a simple theological message to convey to his readers. We noted that this message is delivered by means of poetic devices. Our discussion in this chapter examines the use of metaphor. We can now focus these

remarks.   The **Joshua** author's theological message can be
taken   as   an   attempt by the author to give the reader a
meaning for the word God.   The Joshua author produces a
meaning for the word God which is for him an authentic
response to his need for a meaning for the word God.

In our discussion of metaphor, we have seen that we
readers are free to see both the tenor and the vehicle of
the Joshua author's metaphor as symbolic.   We now add that
the entire metaphor can function as a symbol. In this case,
we might read the symbol as follows: The Joshua author has
a need to find meaning for the word God. The author sets up
his meaning for the word God as the tenor of a metaphor. As
the vehicle of this metaphor, the author writes a story in
which God is presented as the author understands God to
exist in the author's world. The symbol here is the process
of finding a meaning for the word God.

As   readers, we can see this work by the **Joshua**
author as a call upon us to do analogous work.   We may or
may not find the Joshua author's tenor or vehicle satisfying
to our own needs for an understanding of the meaning of the
word God.   However, we can draw from the Joshua author's
metaphor the lesson that we, also, are to seek meanings for
the word God; meanings which are satisfying to us.

This presentation of a third possible reason for the
Joshua   author's   presentation through   metaphor   again
attributes intention to the author's choice.   In this case,
we are suggesting that the Joshua author chose metaphor as
his mode of presentation because he was unable to present

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his material in concrete language.

This third possibility is in fact an indictment against the Joshua author. Our first possibility allowed that the Joshua author knew precisely what he wanted to communicate and that he chose his presentation accordingly. Our second possibility allowed that the Joshua author knew what he wanted to express but that he was aware of the reader's right and need to interpret the Joshua story in creative ways. Our third possibility suggests that the Joshua author chose metaphor as his mode of presentation in order to cover up a weakness; his inability to formulate abstract concepts in concrete terms. This leaves the reader with an abundance of possible interpretation of the Joshua material. However, the reader gains this freedom at the expense of the precision provided when some clear sense of the author's intent is available for validation of interpretation.

In this chapter, we have presented a problem. We noted at the outset that the Joshua author seems to take an unnecessarily long route in reaching his goal of delivering a theological statement to his readers. In our discussion we have presented three possible reasons for this circuitous path.

These reasons were, first, that by embedding theology into story by use of metaphor, the Joshua author is making a theological statement. God is active in history. Second, the use of metaphor allows the reader interpretive

freedom since, by its very structure, metaphor lends itself to symbolic interpretation. And, third, making direct statements about God is difficult since we cannot be certain that we know what we are talking about. Metaphor, again by its very nature, provides means for speaking of such abstracts in concrete terms.

The assumption underlying this discussion was that the Joshua author is a capable writer, therefore his choice of presentation must have had some basis. Each of the three reasons we set forth could explain the author's presentation. Further, these possibilities are not mutually exclusive. Neither are they exhaustive of the full range of possible reasons for the Joshua author's choice of presentation.

As always, our goal in this chapter has been to highlight the Joshua author's use of poetic device. Each such device represents a choice made by the author. Seeing a device at work in the Joshua story gives us cause to ask why this particular device was used? It is through answering this question that we come to understand how the book of Joshua is constructed. This understanding leads naturally to questions about why the book was constructed as we see it.

As we have stated in a number of ways, we cannot answer such questions with certainty. Our discussion of metaphor can be seen as the broadest outline of our interpretive method, for in discussing metaphor, we are speaking not just of small elements of the Joshua material.

We are looking at the book as a whole. We are seeing it, in toto, as the result of a poetic choice by the Joshua author.

It would be folly to state with certainty that the Joshua author chose to present us with this book for such and such reason. Rather, we chose to present possibilities; possibilities which invite our reader to find other possibilities.

CHAPTER SIX

Summary

We noted in the opening lines of our second chapter that words and phrases are often repeated in the Joshua text. For our argument, this functioned as a signal flare which tells the reader to pay attention to these words and phrases. We are interested in them as they function in the context in which we read them. Our underlying assumption, here, is that the Joshua author chooses and uses words carefully.

We divided these repeated words or phrases into several types. First, we discussed poetic markers. We found that these markers functioned to divide the text into sections which we called, in ascending order of length, episodes, parts, and blocks. The markers told us something about the nature of the material we were about to encounter. Generally, an appearance of a marker told us of a switch in setting, dramatis personae, time, or tone.

We also discussed repeated phrases which we called formulae. These formulae were either composed of a marker plus some specifier or they were indivisible. The formulae functioned in several ways. They might introduce a new section of material. In this function, the formula functioned similarly to the marker, only with the formula, the nature of the material to be encountered was made more clear.

The formulae might also function as a device for forcing a change in the point of view of the narrative. This change in point of view had the effect of making the

reader aware of a level of the Joshua story into which sub-stories and character were embedded. Another function of this use of formula was to unify the text. This sense of unity derives from a phrase being used throughout Joshua to achieve a particular end.

Related to formula, but less rigid in its structure, are images and phrases which "ring a bell." We noted several instances of this device. When Joshua was ordered to remove his sandals, that rang a bell. When Joshua was told not to deviate to the left or to the right of God's Teaching, that rang a bell. And, when we saw Joshua standing before Ai with his sword held high, that also rang a bell. In all these cases, the phrase or image sent us back to the context in which we had previously seen this same phrase or image. This earlier context provided material essential to our understanding of the present appearance of the phrase or image.

Our argument then moved to a discussion of character. Based on secondary sources in this area of biblical study, we divided character presentation into three levels: the agent; the type; and the full character. These levels of characterization were distinguished along several lines.

First, we suggested, more by implication than statement, that the amount of space devoted to a character is a measure, albeit an imprecise one, of that character's importance in the Joshua story. We stated that the less we

know about a character, the lower the level of that character. How much a character says and how much is said about a character also provides a measure of the status of the character. The same sort of determination of status can be built from analysis of the actions of a character. Of note is how much action the character is involved in and, of this action, how much is independent action versus action which is a direct, predictable response to other characters and situations.

This concern with the level of a character was not seen as an end in itself. Rather, the fuller the character, the more likely it was that this character would have something to say regarding the major thematic concerns of the Joshua story.

Another element of our argument was what we called "embedding." This is a process by which character and situation are placed within the narrative flow in order to clarify some aspect of the narrative in which the character and situation are embedded. As we saw, embedding can also function as foreshadowing.

There were instances, noted in our analysis, where the Joshua author made use of irony. That is, we readers knew something that the characters in the narrative did not know. After the victory over Jericho, we were aware that the Bene Israel were headed for a fall. They were not. We were aware that Joshua's spies were getting involved in dangerous matters. They were not. The effect of irony is to cause us to see the limitations of the characters. A

side effect of irony is that it functions as a test of the reader's sensitivity to the ramifications of what is going on in the story. This sensitivity requires of the reader an awareness of the ground rules by which the characters are operating. That our awareness differs from the character's is the source of the irony.

Throughout our argument, we have spoken in terms of choices made by the Joshua author in presentation of material. The Joshua text is the result of all such choices. Our final point of argument was that even the choice of using metaphor to embed theology into story rather than stating theology outright is a poetic issue which has resultant implications for interpretation.

The techniques of our argument are not new. Commentators such as Rashi and Radak worked from assumptions about the text which required a view of text not unlike the view suggested in our analysis. Also, there is an ever increasing body of contemporary analysis of biblical material which employs techniques similar to those we have used.

Our goal in this thesis was two-fold. The primary objective was an analysis of the text of Joshua using the tools of poetics as the means for approaching the text. Our secondary goal was to analyze these poetic tools themselves. We have stopped short of a full discussion of meaning and connotation; of significance and relevance. In part, this is because we have not given a full analysis of the text

upon which such a discussion should be based.   We ask that
this be taken as an invitation to further study of Joshua.

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