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The Perception of Time in the Book of Joshua

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's Degree

in the Zalman Shamir Department of Bible,

Bar-Ilan University

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Abstract

This study will argue that the biblical perception of time, as seen in the book of Joshua, is a complex, dynamic view of time. It will note the linear time perception, as the unfolding of the events in sequences, one after another, marking it by linear time references. Also, the present study will note cyclical time perception in cosmic terms, parts of the day, and the change between night and day, marked by respectful time references. Finally, it will recognize the phenomena of collapsing time for the sake of highlighting the presence of God and His involvement in “pregnant, eventful now.” Importantly, this work will concentrate on how these two views of time correlate and produce a rather complex and dynamic time perception that carries the theological nuance of re-enforcing communion with God. Communion with God, in a sense, collapses time and introduces the reality of the flow, a meaningful and God-oriented experience requiring a complete focus on God.

1. Introduction

This study will argue that the biblical perception of time, as seen in the book of Joshua, is a complex, dynamic view of time. It will note the linear time perception, as the unfolding of the events in sequences, one after another, marking it by linear time references. Also, the present study will note cyclical time perception in cosmic terms, parts of the day, and the change between night and day, marked by respectful time references. Finally, it will recognize the phenomena of collapsing time for the sake of highlighting the presence of God and His involvement in “pregnant, eventful now.”

Linear time references are those marking the events or duration of time in terms of the sequencing. In the book of Joshua these are sometimes anchored by a crucial event like time reference “After the death of Moses” (Josh 1:1), or determined precisely with the date from the calendar like “the tenth day of the first month” (Josh 4:19) or durational like “Three days” (Josh 1:11; 2:16, 22; 3:2; 9:16); six days (Josh 6:3, 14); or plain like “the seventh day” (Josh 6:4; 15); or “tomorrow” (Josh 3:5; 4:6, 21; 7:13). These will be rendered closely in the following pages of the present study.

Cyclical time references indicate cosmic, daily, or yearly repetitive events or, more precisely, patterns. Some of the cyclical time references in the book of Joshua are “day and night” (Joshua 1:8), “evening” (Joshua 7:6; 8:29; 10:26; 13:6), “night” (Joshua 6:11; 8:3, 9, 13; 10:9), “in the morning” (Joshua 7:14), etc. These will be explained in detail as this study progresses.

Importantly, this work will concentrate on how these two views of time correlate and produce a rather complex and dynamic time perception that carries the theological nuance of re-enforcing communion with God. Communion with God, in a sense, collapses time and introduces the reality of the flow,¹ a meaningful and God-oriented experience requiring a complete focus on God.

¹ The term *flow* in this study will be used as defined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the father of positive psychology. He defines flow as optimal experience or “The state of consciousness that creates total involvement, creativity, and full enjoyment” (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishing, 1990), vii-viii). Flow for this study is the experience of being in God’s presence, the experience when one is focused solely on God, when the reckoning of time *per se* is not of the primary importance. This is a sanctified or theological time, the “now” of spiritual growth and transformation, re-affirming of the Image and Likeness of God in his people.

1.1 History of the Research of the Book of Joshua:

The research on the book of Joshua may be traced in many different directions. These directions largely affected the study. One of the challenges is undoubtedly the dating of Exodus, which affects the time frame of Joshua. The archaeological discussion brought the highest and the lowest esteems to this book. Another vital direction to consider is the problem between history and historiography.² The connection between the book of Joshua with other literary units was of deep concern as well. These opposing scholarly stands and research directions resulted in often harsh treatment of this book. The research on Joshua may be described in the words of A. Campbell and M. O'Brian: "no other generation in the biblical history of Israel received the praise that is bestowed on the generation of Joshua; no other book of Bible has been so widely condemned by so many as a symbol of all that is appalling and inhuman".³

In his two-volume commentary on Joshua, Trent Butler offers an in-depth history of the research on Joshua.⁴ For this work, the contours of the previous research on the book of Joshua will be presented, starting with different conquest models, the results of the form, tradition, source, and redaction criticisms concerning this book. Also, the Deuteronomistic History, Joshua's ANE context research and theological studies, and the essential and recent commentaries will be considered.

1.1.1 Differing Conquest Models

Over the years, scholars paid much attention to contrasting features of the book of Joshua. The interpretation of the book of Joshua was primarily based on the exploration of archeological evidence and weaving daunting hypotheses about its inception and the conquest itself. "The origin of ancient Israel, their settlement in the land of Canaan and transformation into an organized kingdom are one of the most stimulating and, at the same time, most controversial chapters in the history of early Israel."⁵ The conquest narratives were especially

² Scholars like A. Alt, M. Noth, W. F. Albright, and G. E. Wright greatly influenced the studies on this book engaging in the debate on history and historiography. See Richard Hess, "Foundations for a History of Israel" in Bill T. Arnold and Richard Hess, eds., *Ancient Israel's History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 1-22.

³ Antony F. Campbell, and Mark A. O'Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History: Origins, Upgrades, Present Text* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 101.

⁴ Trent C. Butler, *Joshua 1-12*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 7a (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 40-156.

⁵ Eleazer D. Oren, "Opening remarks" in Shmuel Ahituv, and Eleazer. D. Oren *The Origin of Early Israel-Current Debate Biblical, Historical and Archaeological Perspectives* (Jerusalem, Israel: Ben-Gurion University of Negev Press, 1998), 12.

burdened with both, archaeological clues and literary hypothesis. Still, they were given little or no historical value. Scholars were interested in the reconstruction of the conquest of the land by ancient Israelites or the possession of Canaan. Consequently, a plethora of theories mushroomed: different theories of conquest, theory of infiltration, theory of the revolt of the peasants, etc.

The advancement in archaeology in the 20th century prompted archaeologists and scholars like William F. Albright, Yigael Yadin, John Bright, and Yohanan Aharoni to drive different conclusions on the conquest of Canaan described in the book of Joshua. As the excavation occurred, scholars quickly connected the finding to the biblical verses.

W. Albright advocated the model of conquest, mostly seen as the traditional or model according to the biblical text. Y. Yadin promoted this model in Israel, which presupposes invasive conquest as Israel entered Canaan. From the evidence gathered in Bethel and Lachish, George Ernest Wright concludes, “During the 13th century certainly suggests that a campaign such as that depicted in Josh. 10 was carried out.”⁶ This model requires dating in 1 Kings 6:1, as a figurative number, “placing Israel’s entrance into Canaan c. 1270 B.C. or later”.⁷

Albrecht Alt proposed that Israel peacefully infiltrated the land, building his argument on the geopolitical situation in the region (advancement of Hyksos) and considering the state of population and organization in Palestine in 2000 CE. Division in the city-states by pharaohs “resulted in the splitting-up of the territorial units to an extraordinary degree.”⁸ Israel enters the land from Trans-Jordan during this period, gradually penetrating the Canaanite society. Hence, he understood that the conquest of the land depicted in the Book of Joshua happened under the rule of David and Solomon. This was the final phase of the years-long settlement and occupation. As proof of his claim, Alt offered evidence of the pottery from the time frame close to Israel’s entrance into the land.⁹

Yohanan Aharoni challenged Alt’s view by excavating the Galilee region and proposing a two-wave conquest. According to Aharoni, the first stage presumed the taking of

⁶ George Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), 50.

⁷ I. Provan, V. Long, and T. Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 140.

⁸ Albrecht Alt, *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1989), 156.

⁹ See: Albrecht Alt, *Essays*, 133-237.

the southern areas of Transjordan. He sided with Alt on the duration of the settlement: it lasted for centuries, in his opinion.¹⁰

1.1.2. Joshua among the Critics

Since its inception with Herman Gunkel's work, form criticism influenced biblical studies and the book of Joshua. Hugo Gressmann suggested that Joshua's opening narratives' form and function were etiological. Later, scholars argued about the possibilities that likely influenced the book's development. A. Alt and Martin Noth worked on recognizing the form of etiological saga narratives that contain time markers "until this day."

Claus Westermann recognized that the relationship of narratives in Joshua is built from tensions into resolutions. Slowly, scholars started to label some parts of the book of Joshua as not historical. For example, Friedemann Golka marked some of the narratives as accurate and others labeled unreal.¹¹ One of the extremes is M. Coogan, who labels it "historical-theological fiction"¹² while favoring archaeological evidence and concluding: "The cumulative evidence of shreds and strata of texts and tesserae, has contributed to the erosion of biblical authority as traditionally understood, for it had forced us to reconsider our sacred texts."¹³

Source critics usually considered the book of Joshua while looking for different sources in the Pentateuch according to Wellhausen's approach. Deuteronomistic influence (D) on the book was described and commented on, with no or few J and E sources present. The list of towns in the book was usually labeled as Priestly work (P).¹⁴

¹⁰ See: Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1967), 200-210.

¹¹ For C. Westermann's and F. Golka's arguments see summary of T. Butler: Butler, *Joshua 1-12*, 56.

¹² Michael David Coogan, "Archaeology and Biblical Studies: The Book of Joshua" in Michael William H. Propp, Baruch Halpern, and David Noel Freedman, *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 29.

¹³ Coogan, "Archaeology and Biblical Studies, 27.

¹⁴ See Pekka M. A. Pitkänen, *Joshua*, Apolos Old Testament Commenatry, Vol 6 (Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2010), 28-29.

1.1.3. The Book of Joshua and Literary Units (Pentateuch, Deuteronomistic History)

“In order to understand the text, one should know where it begins and ends,”¹⁵ rightly claims E. Blum. This is especially significant in reading Genesis through 2 Kings.

Considering this textual continuum, one may experience a large narrative framework. To name a few, linear time progress without ceasing is presently marked with chronological indicators and common compositional traits. However, the linking among the texts does not always represent the unity of the work.¹⁶

Depending on the research of biblical scholars through the ages and their pre-supposition, the book of Joshua was numbered in Hexateuch (added to Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy), Heptateuch (adding Judges), Octateuch (adding Ruth), Enneateuch (adding books of Samuel and Kings, and numbering set of two as one, and excluding Ruth), or going other direction, it was a constituent of Deuteronomistic History (Deuteronomy with the Former prophets of the Hebrew Canon: Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings).

Gerhard Von Rad regards Joshua as a part of the coherent whole with the Pentateuch and argues for promises being fulfilled: “God, who created the world, called the first ancestors of Israel and promised them the land of Canaan. Having grown in numbers in Egypt, the people of Israel were led into freedom by Moses, amidst miraculous demonstrations of God’s power and favor, and after prolonged wanderings in the desert were granted the promised land.”¹⁷ In his observation, he argues that the book of Joshua is centered around the creed in Josh 21:43-44, explaining that God acted as promised. He sees Yahwist and Elohist traditions merge in Gilgal account in Joshua 3-5, making another level of interconnectedness of the Hexateuch.¹⁸

Martin Noth initiated the epochal turn in the research of Joshua by placing it in the literary unit of Deuteronomistic History, a work of Deuteronomistic historians, or Deuteronomistic editors. He observes that there was no Deuteronomistic editing in the books

¹⁵ Erhard Blum, “Pentateuch–Hexateuch–Enneateuch? Or: How Can One Recognize a Literary Work in the Hebrew Bible?” in Thomas Dozeman, Thomas Romer and K. Schmid, eds. *PENTATEUCH, HEXATEUCH, OR ENNEATEUCH? Identifying Literary Works in Genesis through Kings* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature), 43.

¹⁶ See Blum, “Pentateuch–Hexateuch–Enneateuch?”, 48-49.

¹⁷ Gerhard Von Rad, *The Problem of Hexateuch and Other Essays* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), 2.

¹⁸ Von Rad, *The Problem of Hexateuch*, 46.

of Genesis-Numbers. Noth argues for a self-contained work: “Deuteronomist’s work must be discovered as a literary entity and unity”¹⁹ He builds the argument for this hypothesis on passages he marked “Deuteronomistic” in each of the books of interest. In the book of Joshua, these are Josh 1, 12, and 23, but this is not the end of his work, DH “still expands and arguments his material, with longer or shorter additions, in order to express his particular viewpoint... He does this with the old conquest story... where he inserts and reworks the whole section”.²⁰

1.1.4. Studies of Joshua in ANE Context

Lawson Younger in his *Ancient Conquest Accounts* tends to compare the conquest account of Joshua with Ancient Near Eastern conquest accounts to “gain a better understanding of biblical narrative.”²¹ This approach yields manifold observations.

The emergence of the recent scholarship which treated this book in comparative method with Ancient Near Eastern historical texts shed new light on its structure and form. The interest of this research lies in the perception of time of the biblical author of the book of Joshua and the tensions time perception resonates. However, it is hard to single out ancient Israel’s time perception without considering the Ancient Near Eastern states, cultures, and systems. Close contact between the nations most accomplished using trade resulted in common or similar writing manners. The clash of cultures and religions followed trade, while yearly wars and deportations highlighted diversity within large kingdoms.

One of the scholars to give attention to the historical ANE texts as evidence is J. van Seters. He uses the first-millennium Assyrian king’s oracles as evidence for DH as the author of Joshua. His selective evidence-picking is motivated by the goal of his work for he utilizes first-millennium texts only to support the DH author. He marks Joshua’s conquest strikingly resembling Assyrian campaign reports.²² Contrary to this approach, L. Younger in his “Ancient Conquest Accounts” offers a thorough examination of a variety of texts from the entire fertile crescent, from both the first and the second millennium. In this study, he shows

¹⁹ Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield, UK: University of Sheffield, 1981), 13.

²⁰ Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 13.

²¹ K. Lawson Younger, *Ancient Conquest Accounts: A Study in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History Writing* (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1990), 52.

²² See John Van Seters, “Joshua’s Campaign of Canaan and Near Eastern Historiography,” in V. Philips Long, ed., *Israel’s Past in Present Research: Essays on Ancient Israelite Historiography* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 174.

“that the conquest account in Joshua 9-12 shares a similar transmission code with its ancient Near Eastern counterparts”.²³ Equally sound, “the commonality of such set language does not negate the fact that a war took place”²⁴. J. Hoffmeier in his article “The structure of Joshua 1-11 and the Annals of Thutmose III” lays out similarities between Josh 1-11 and the Annals of Thutmose III. He argues that Joshua’s narrative is comparable to its counterparts in the ancient Near Eastern world and recognizes six structural similarities. These are 1) divine commission, 2) intelligence (spies) reports, 3) march through the difficult geographical region, 4) setting the camp, 5) siege, and 6) fall of the city. He concludes: “The New Kingdom period, when Israel would most likely have departed from Egypt and entered Canaan, proves to be the most likely time for Egyptian daybook scribal tradition to have been embraced by Israelite scribes and thus to leave its mark on the composition of Joshua 1-11”.²⁵ By doing so, J. Hoffmeier has laid the groundwork for future generations of biblical scholars.

A few years later, R. Hess provides a good summary of the plethora of sources useful for the comparative study of the book of Joshua. His main concern is on the West Semitic texts, treaties, and territorial depictions and they’re echoing in Joshua, in the form of the proper names, place names, people group names, and lists. He claims: “This evidence will suggest that items in the book of Joshua resemble texts from the West Semitic world in the second millennium BC.”

1.2. History of the Research of Biblical concept of time

The concept of time sparked much debate over the centuries in pre-modern times and academia.

Augustine’s treatment of the matter summarizes the essence of the problem: “What, then, is time? I know well enough what it is, provided that nobody asks me, but if I am asked what it is and try to explain, I am baffled.”²⁶ These Augustine’s words are often used to start the chapters on time to show the complexities of the problem and the baffling it causes. Ralph Rosen is right to note that:

All cultures-ancient and modern alike must at some point realize that the very notion of existence implies some sense of time, whether it is a static time, time that flows in one direction like a river or that moves like a continuous circle; time that implies endless futurity or an ever-growing

²³ Younger, *Conquest Accounts*, 241.

²⁴ Younger, *Conquest Accounts*, 266.

²⁵ James K. Hoffmeier, “The structure of Joshua 1-11 and the Annals of Thutmose III” in A. Millard, J.K. Hoffmeier and D.W. Baker, eds., *Faith Tradition & History* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 179.

²⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, translated by R. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1961), 11.14.17.

past. The consciousness of self—arguably the most fundamental token of humanity—implies consciousness of mortality, which in turn implies consciousness of time, for it is impossible for the sentient human being to escape the constant reminders of earthly mutability, corporeal decay, and the end of life itself. Even attempts to transcend time must come to grips with the fact that our inexorable movement from birth to death is a process and the process itself implies some sort of movement through time, whether we construe it as forward, backward, or in an endless loop.²⁷

Certainly, the process found between the poles of birth and death strongly shaped the biblical perception of time, and this notion must be considered. The question of our interest is concerned with the perception of time among biblical authors because recent scholarship marked this conception as primitive. The work of Sacha Stern *Time and process in ancient Judaism* is of particular interest because it challenges the biblical perception of time. He summarizes his research in words: “Initially I tried to search all ancient Jewish sources for references to the concept of ‘time’. I expected to find indications that time was viewed as linear, or cyclical, or both, that the flow of time was experienced as relative or absolute, that timesaving was considered an ethical virtue, and time-wasting the opposite, and so forth. To my surprise, nothing in the sources could be found.”²⁸ Even though this argument is in accord with my research on time, Stern’s conclusion is problematic because it challenges the ability of the biblical authors to perceive time: “When used as a concept, the word *zeman* only refers to the temporal coordination of events, never to the dimension of time as a whole. The dimension of time is also conspicuously absent from passages where its mention would have been most expected: for instance, in accounts of the creation and structure of the universe. This gradually led me to the realization that ‘time’ as a general concept may have been unknown.”²⁹ Bottom line of Stern’s thought is that the concept of time was unknown to the biblical authors.

Mette Bundvad was the first to confront S. Stern firstly in her article “Defending the Concept of Time in the Hebrew Bible,” which grew into the major study of time in the book of Ecclesiastes, *Time in the Book of Qohelet*. Bundvad’s main point is that: “successful coordination of different processes in time indicates an understanding of the specifically

²⁷ Ralph Rosen, “Ancient Time Across Time,” in Ralph Mark Rosen, ed., *Time and Temporality in the Ancient World* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2004), 2.

²⁸ Sacha Stern, *Time and Process in Ancient Judaism* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 1.

²⁹ Stern, *Time and Process*, 2.

temporal aspect of the process. In other words, coordinating events according to a temporal axis requires a concept of time. This is important because the authors of the Hebrew Bible constantly demonstrate the ability to coordinate processes in time.”³⁰ This reasoning is built on detailed research on different biblical passages. For example, she looks at Amos 1:1. She concludes that he “conveys simultaneity” or that he is aware of two different king’s dynasties as well as of the event of the earthquake. This ability must be rooted in a complex perception of time.

M. Köchert, in his article *Zeit und Ewigkeit in Psalm 90*, explores experiences of time and space in ancient Israel. He is concerned with the phenomenon of how children “have time,” and adults occasionally have it. In other words, adults are always busy, while children have all the time at their disposal. He looks at the perception of time in space as bound together and concludes that our modern perception of time is no different from the perception of time in Ancient Israel.³¹ In the comparison between Ps 102 and Ps 90, Köchert utilizes the words of the theologian of time – already mentioned Augustine, to emphasize that God’s today is eternity. By doing so, he ties the concept of time directly with God.³²

Some older scholarly contributions are also worth mentioning in shaping our understanding of the perception of time among biblical authors. James Barr’s 1969 study offers a theology of the biblical concept of time while giving a strong critique of the lexical approach. He comments on both Hebrew and Greek words for time and notes that even though the words may depict similar concepts, the concepts themselves are completely different. This for Barr is especially evident in the example of the time words, where Hebrew words depict cyclical concepts, and Greek words depict the linear understanding of time. He does not recognize linearity in the Hebrew Scriptures but adds: “The fact that the Greek philosophers had theories about time does not mean that the Bible will necessarily have a view of time which contrasts strongly with theirs, or indeed have a “view” of time at all.”³³ Thus, his study is beneficial to some extent because he is inconclusive on essential matters.

³⁰ Mette Bundvad, “Defending the Concept of Time in the Hebrew Bible”, *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*, 2014, Vol. 28, No. 2, 292.

³¹ See: Mattias Köchert, “Zeit und Ewigkeit in Psalm 90”, in R. Kratz & H. Spieckermann Eds., *Zeit und Ewigkeit als Raum göttlichen Handelns*, (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2009), 155-186.

³² Köchert, 185-186.

³³ James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, (London, UK: SCM Press, 1969), 165.

Further, Gerhard von Rad went in the other direction by concluding that the Old Testament offers only a linear concept of time as a completely independent understanding of existence, emphasizing the uniqueness of Israel. Von Rad rushed to conclude that the linearity of Israel's time perception is unmatched.³⁴ As this study advances, the Egyptian time perception will be compared to Israel's and many similarities will be noted along the way.

Simon DeVries's 1975 study *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Time and History in the Old Testament*, gives detailed exegesis of the passages containing the Hebrew word for day as used respectively in the present, future, and past tenses. On his methodology and its outcome for the perception of time, DeVries comments: "Everywhere the role of time-designations affects interpretation to some degree, but there are a great number of passages where the time-word proves to have a determinative effect, requiring radical changes."³⁵ These words show the importance of studying time-words of the Bible and lead to recognizing timely from timeless and vice versa. He also writes: "In the Hebrew Scriptures, the quantitative measurement of time and the qualitative identification of time are joined in dynamic tension, helping men to see their place in nature and in history. ...the succession of opportunities ("days") makes him aware of an ever-imminent responsibility to respond to the new crisis of God's address. ...dialogue and interaction between a transcendent Deity and finite but eminently responsible humanity." DeVries sees the unit of the day as a possibility in the interaction between God and men. However, this study may be characterized as the study of the Old Testament "day," and not a comprehensive study of Old Testament time.³⁶

Marc Brettler emphasizes the problem of understanding that occurred in the 20th century: "middle of the 20th century there was a common perception that biblical time is fundamentally different in nature from time as it was understood in classical antiquity. The contrast was often drawn between biblical teleological time-time that is oriented toward the end or completion and Greek cyclical time."³⁷ He suggests that biblical time and teleological time are not significantly different.

³⁴ See Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol 1 (Edinburgh, UK: Oliver and Boyd, 1973), 90-102.

³⁵ Simon DeVries, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Time and History in the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 338.

³⁶ See DeVries, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, 349-350.

³⁷ Marc Brettler, "Cyclical and Teleological Time in the Hebrew Bible," in Ralph Mark Rosen, ed., *Time and Temporality in the Ancient World*, (Philadelphia, PA: the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2004), 111.

Biblical perception of time is complex and yet to be wholly understood and uncovered. E. Kim nicely summarizes the starting point for the biblical understanding of time:

In the Old Testament, even though we cannot find a definitive biblical term for time and eternity, there are various lexical data from which we can determine the biblical conception of time and eternity: *yôm* (daylight, day, eschatological day, or today), 'ôpen (right time, proper time), 'et (a specific time, moment, or time in general), 'atth (the present, now, at this time), *mô'ed* (appointed time, meeting place or time, or time of feast), *zmn* (a specific time or hour), *r's* (beginning of a certain time period), *qts* (end time), *qdm* (ancient time), *nesah* (lastingness, perpetuity, or forever), *ad* (eternity), *olâm* (remote time, long time, duration, perpetuity, eternity, age, or world), 'lm (hidden time or remote time), and so forth.³⁸

Understanding the time words in the context will yield the perception of time of the biblical authors and the perceptions recorded in their works.

1.3. History of research of time in the book of Joshua

Research of time in the book of Joshua *per se* is found among the pages of the commentaries on this book as well as in other scattered volumes and articles. Some are more interested in the problem of the chronology of the book.³⁹ In contrast, others depict the theological understanding of the time, which is of prominent interest in this work.

Daniel Fleming offers a detailed discussion of the period of time of the siege of Jericho. He explores the seven-day time-marker in the Bible as well as attested in the Ugaritic Keret story and in the Mari letters. He sees direct contact with rituals, and the interval of time, developing directly from the battle narrative: “the seven days that give the siege its frame are consistently identified with the duration of festivals, and they represent one narrative element that is seen as demanding a cultic context.”⁴⁰ Rigorous obedience to time brings the success in both, the biblical and Ugaritic accounts.

³⁸ Eunsoo Kim, *Time, Eternity and the Trinity: A Trinitarian Analogical Understanding of Time and Eternity* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2010), 18.

³⁹ For the comprehensive analysis of the matter of biblical chronology see: Jack Finegan, *Chronology Principles of Time Reckoning in the Ancient World and Problems of Chronology in the Bible* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendricks Publishing 1995). Jeremy Northcote gives an overarching method for Old Testament chronology while depicting the history of the problem in his article: Jeremy Northcote, “The Schematic Development of Old Testament Chronography: Towards an Integrated Model” in *JSOT* 29.1 (2004) 3-36.

⁴⁰ Daniel Fleming, “The Seven-Day Siege of Jericho in Holy War” in R. Chazan, W.W. Hallo, and L.H. Schiffman, *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 228.

Brian Peckham considers the time in the literary unit of DH. Interestingly he notes: “Each historian had a different conception of time”.⁴¹ Accordingly, one may look for the perception of time among different authors or redactors in each book. This is possibility which is to be considered.

Peckham perceives the depth of the consciousnesses of time of the biblical authors and observes: “Time was critical for the biblical historians, not as a fact, not as a fact of their data, but as a basic principle of their interpretation”.⁴² His greatest observation of time in Joshua is the sudden realization of time or *progression* during the day and the pauses during the night. He embarks on this realization “from 'today' of Deuteronomy to the rapid succession of a limited number of days occupied in conquering the land”.⁴³ It would be interesting to explore in future research what Peckham’s “today” of Deuteronomy is for J. G. McConville and J.G. Millar in their work *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, where they state: “temporal and spatial details play an important role in setting the tone for what follows.”⁴⁴

Also, Peckham observes some of the challenges, like the contrast of duration of the battle mentioned in Josh 11-18 and Josh 10:28-43, explaining these with different redactional hands. For him, “In Joshua Deuteronomist corrects the sequel, continues the dating begun in Deuteronomy, and introduces competing systems of chronological reckoning.”⁴⁵ The complexities of time are being respected. On the other hand, he perceives the fast unfolding of events or battles, like with the king of Hazor, that “took no time at all.”⁴⁶ He notes parallel progression when the time unfolds during the “ritual time”. Additionally, Peckham documents measurable (Josh 14:7, 10) and immeasurable (Josh 13:1; 23:2) times in this book.

Mette Bundvand offers a treatment of Joshua 10,12-13 concluding that the author shows the ability to coordinate the multiple time processes at once. On one hand, the slowing of the sun occurs while the prolonging of the battle on the field lasts. This ability shows

⁴¹ Brian Peckham, “History and Time” in R. Chazan, W.W. Hallo, and L.H. Schiffman, *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 313.

⁴² Peckham, “History and Time”, 295.

⁴³ Peckham, “History and Time”, 304.

⁴⁴ J. G. McConville and J.G. Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield University Press, 1994), 23.

⁴⁵ Peckham, “History and Time”, 309.

⁴⁶ Peckham, “History and Time”, 304-305.

competence in the apprehension of time, and not only in one aspect, but on several levels. She concludes: “biblical writers, including the author of Joshua 10:12-13, easily coordinate seemingly unrelated processes according to their placement on a temporal axis.”⁴⁷

The Hebrew phrase שלש ימים “three days” gained some scholarly attention in the last two decades. David Howard in his article *Three Days in Joshua 1-3: Resolving a Chronological Conundrum* tackles this problem and offers a new chronology based on a close reading of the text. One of the important observations is that not the entire days were counted but rather fragments. In the words of E. Thiele: “reckoning was according to the inclusive system, whereby the first and last units or fractions of units of a group were included as full units in the total of the group.”⁴⁸ Howard continues and sees Josh 3:2 as the unexpected delay because of the ritual concern. By doing so, he sees the “three days” of the book of Joshua as in fact seven days.

Even though Howard is concerned with ritual purity and observance, he is not aware of the Sabbath when he argues for a seven-day period. He goes on to emphasize these days as days of ritual significance: “Thus it is clear that proper ritual observance was indeed a concern here in the early chapters of Joshua. This was so much so that even the events themselves fall into patterns with ritual significance. There is a clear pattern of Joshua and the people wanting to do things right before they took possession of the land.”⁴⁹

Contrary to Howard, Gene Tucker sees these inserts as “dischronologized”⁵⁰ narratives giving more value to the hypothetical redactions of the book, than to the received text. R. Boling and G. E. Wright comment: “this period of time is apparently to be understood as identical with the period of preparation for the crossing of the river,”⁵¹ which indirectly argues for literal “three days.”

⁴⁷ Mette Bundvad, “Defending the Concept of Time in the Hebrew Bible”, *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*, 2014, Vol. 28, No. 2, 293.

⁴⁸ E. R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 52.

⁴⁹ Howard, “Three Days,” 550.

⁵⁰ See: Gene M. Tucker, “The Rahab Saga (Joshua 2): Some Form-Critical and Traditio-Historical Observations”, in James M. Efrid, ed., *The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays - Studies in Honor of William Franklin Stinespring* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1972), 76.

⁵¹ R. G. Boling and G. E. Wright, *Joshua: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, (Garden City, NY: The Anchor Bible, 1982), 149.

Gershon Brin is one of the most thorough authors in commenting on time perception in Joshua in his 2001 work *The Concept of Time in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*. He organizes material under concepts and time formulas which is extremely useful for the research. Also, he explains the temporal terms by their use of tense: past, present, and future. For example, he is aware of the gravity temporal phrases carry and says: “These phrases also serve to indicate a precise moment in time, and particularly to remember a date in history.”⁵²

Considering all said, one more aspect of time could feature some unknown aspects of the book of Joshua. The time duration of narratives may be seen as an exegetical key. Notably, E. Assis notes that the book portrays a unique dynamic when it comes to the recording of time:

“יתר על כן: משך הזמן שמסופר עליו בפרקים א - ה אינו יותר מכמה שבועות, ואילו פרקים י - יא מתארים כמה שנים.”⁵³

The first part of the book slows the events down, describing a few weeks of historical time, while in the second part, the book records time on a much faster level – by reporting time in years. E. Assis writes:

כאן יצר המחבר פער מכוון ביחס שבין ' זמן הסיפר ל'זמן המסופר'. הרחבה בזמן הסיפר מצביעה על חשיבות ועל הדגשה ומרכזיות. ההרחבה נותנת לקורא מפתח שבעזרתו הוא יכול לחשוף את המטרות שטבע המחבר ביצירתו. לנוכח כל אלה יש להגדיר מחדש את מטרתו של ספר יהושע כך שיובא בחשבון גם חלקו הראשון. הפער בין הפירוט הרב בפרקי ההכנה (א - ה) לבין הצמצום בפרקי הכיבוש (ו - יא) מבטל את האפשרות שמטרת הספר להציג תיאור היסטורי של מהלך הכיבוש, שכן סיפור זה מוצג באופן חלקי ביותר.⁵⁴

This apparent gap or expansion of time is central to understanding the book’s purpose. The author’s purpose of showing God’s promises fulfilled is mirrored by his portrayal of a time, particularly by slowing the narrative. Having in mind the complexities of the time perception of the biblical author, one is to consider time references and allusions in a more detailed fashion. The notion of time reduction calls for further investigation among biblical books and ANE counterparts. The above-given snippets from the previous research on time in the book of Joshua call for the in-depth study of time words in context to show all the aspects and complexities of time perception in this book.

⁵² Gershon Brin, *The Concept of Time in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 185.

⁵³ Elie Assis, *From Moses to Joshua and from the Miraculous to the Ordinary: A Literary Analysis of the Conquest Narrative in the Book of Joshua* [Hebrew] / פרקי הכיבוש יהושע / ממשה ליהושע ומנס לטבע נותח ספרותי של פרקי הכיבוש יהושע (Jerusalem, Israel: Magnes Press, 2005), 8.

⁵⁴ Elie Assis, *From Moses to Joshua*, 8-9.

Notably, the research done by Mette Bundvad on the book of Ecclesiastes⁵⁵ uses a few good methods like describing the importance of time in some poems in Ecclesiastes (ch. 3); presenting the present, the future and the past separately and then going on to connect these different timeframes (chapters 4-5). The isolating present, past, and future time frames may be one possibility for conducting this research as well.

1.4. The Necessity of the Research:

Since there is no comprehensive understanding of the perception of time in the book of Joshua, research on this topic is necessary for a few reasons. Firstly, the study on the perception of time will update the knowledge about the author of this work in a way that will illumine how the author perceived time. Secondly, the living memory of the conquest of the land portrayed in this book will be enhanced by knowledge of the time in which they occurred. Thirdly, this work will present a fresh approach to the crisis in the studies of Joshua caused by methodological confusion that led the scholars to produce conflicting arguments. Methods of M. Budvand of treating the past, present, and future separately and then making synthetic conclusions may flash some disagreements.

Uncovering the concept of time found in the book of Joshua may also draw the deeper theological understanding of this book. Especially important is understanding of the phrase “until this day” which sparked many debates. Thus, Brevard Child’s treatment of this formulation is necessary for this work. Childs argues against scholars who emphasized the role of etiological narratives in this method, concluding that these contain non-historical events and mythical features. Especially troubling for Childs was Gunkel’s mythological characterization of the biblical narratives.⁵⁶ Jeffrey Geoghegan⁵⁷ provides an excellent summary of the debate on the interpretation of “until this day” and the observations on the use and implications of the term from the point of Deuteronomistic History.⁵⁸ Accordingly, further understanding is needed, and it will benefit the field of biblical studies.

Time as a concept was not a primary concern in the Bible; as Antje Jackelén writes: “In the Old Testament, as in the New Testament, one does not deal with notions of the

⁵⁵See Mette Bundvad, *Time in the Book of Ecclesiastes* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁵⁶ See Childs, Brevard S. “A Study of the Formula, ‘Until This Day.’” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82, no. 3 (1963): 279–92.

⁵⁷ Jeffrey Geoghegan, *The Time, Place, and Purpose of the Deuteronomistic History: The Evidence of "Until This Day"* (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006).

⁵⁸ *Deuteronomistic History*, from now on DH.

essence of time.”⁵⁹ In other words, time is not described *per se*, nor is its definition given. However, “time is narrated, for the things that the Bible describes take place “in, with, and under” the experience of time.”⁶⁰ Accordingly, Bible offers a coexistence of time concepts and at the same time, enters into the polemic with contrasting views. For example, the Hebraic or Biblical concepts of time differ drastically from Greek ones. Thus, χρόνος a dominant word for the expression of time of the Greek philosophers, and it is associated with the movement of everything. The New Testament uses this word 54 times to show the “duration of time.”⁶¹ On the other hand, the word καιρός is used 84 times and denotes a moment or time tied with an opportunity and “refers also to “the coming moment of judgment and/or Parousia.”⁶² In short, the New Testament used these terms differently than Greek philosophers. Indeed, it would be beneficial to address and compare these concepts with the Old Testament terms.⁶³ Useful for the opening of this discussion would be J. Manek’s argument that the biblical concept of time is realistic,⁶⁴ and J. E. Bruns’ claim that it is symbolic.⁶⁵

Also necessary for this work is Brevard Child’s treatment of the “until this day” formulation. Childs argues against scholars who emphasized the role of etiological narratives in this method, concluding that these contain non-historical events and mythical features. Especially troubling for Childs was Gunkel’s mythological characterization of the biblical

⁵⁹ Antje Jackelén, *Time and Eternity: The Question of Time in Church, Science, and Theology* (London, UK: Templeton Foundation Press), 80.

⁶⁰ Jackelén, *Time and Eternity*, 64.

⁶¹ Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990–), 488.

⁶² Balz and Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary*, 233.

⁶³ Useful for this quest will be Ma’afu Palu, *Jesus and Time an Interpretation of Mark 1.15* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 24-27; Thorleif Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970), 123-154; Iliria L.E. Ramelli “Time and Eternity” in Mark Edwards, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Philosophy* (London, UK: Taylor and Francis Group, 2021), 41-54; Antje Jackelén, *Time and Eternity: The Question of Time in Church, Science, and Theology* (London, UK: Templeton Foundation Press), 64-119; Jindřick Mánek, “The Biblical Concept of Time and Our Gospels,” *New Testament studies*. 6, no. 1 (1959): 45–51, et al.

⁶⁴ Jindřick Mánek, “The Biblical Concept of Time and Our Gospels,” *New Testament studies*. 6, no. 1 (1959): 45–51.

⁶⁵ J. Edgar Bruns, “The Use of Time in the Fourth Gospel.” *New Testament Studies* 13, no. 3 (1967): 285–90.

narratives.⁶⁶ Jeffrey Geoghegan⁶⁷ provides an excellent summary of the debate on the interpretation of “until this day” and the observations on the use and implications of the term from the point of Deuteronomistic History.⁶⁸ Accordingly, this phrase and all others must be understood in its context and the ancient Near Eastern context, which was not the case in the previous research. So, it is necessary to offer a work that will consider the aspect of time both in ancient Israel and the ancient world. The “slowing of the narrative” present in this book is an essential literary feature utilized by the temporal words and phrases as well. Finally, this study is necessary because it will inform about the perception of the time of the author of the biblical historical work.

1.5. Method, Scope, and Plan of Study:

This study sets out to determine whether the time perception in the book of Joshua is complex or primitive, as labeled in the previous research. The leading research question of this study will be: “What is the perception of time described in the book of Joshua?” Bunvand’s methods mentioned earlier will be some of the leading approaches to treating time in this study. The final text of the book will be the main object of this study, and it will not be engaging in compositional issues besides minor quotations of scholarly work in this area.

This work will concentrate on the first twelve chapters of the book of Joshua and try to discern how complex the time perception of the author is. The text’s final form will be the focus of this research. The priority will be given to the theological thrust of the book on the topic of time rather than the biblical chronology per se, while some chronological problems will be tackled.

Chapter 2 will offer the linear perception of the book of Joshua, while Chapter 3 will offer a cyclical time perception seen in this book. Chapter 4 will draw the contours and implications of interpolation of the two differing time perceptions. Chapter 5 will introduce the authentic Israelite notion of the sanctified flow, or extreme focus on the relationship with God, as the perception of time embedded in covenantal exchange. Chapter 6 will profess the comparative study between the book of Joshua and the Annals of Thutmose III from the temple of Karnak. So-called Cognitive Environment Criticism will be applied. The conclusion will follow in Chapter 7.

⁶⁶ See: Childs, Brevard S. “A Study of the Formula, ‘Until This Day.’” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82, no. 3 (1963): 279–92. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3264630>.

⁶⁷ Geoghegan, *The Time, Place, and Purpose*, 23.

⁶⁸ *Deuteronomistic History*, from now on DH.

2. Linear Perception of Time in Joshua

The linear time perception is very well recorded in the book of Joshua, with plenty of references like “After the death of Moses” (Josh 1:1); durational “Three days” (Josh 1:11; 2:16, 22; 3:2; 9:16); six days (Josh 6:3, 14); the seventh day (Josh 6:4; 15); the tenth day of the first month (Josh 4:19); tomorrow (Josh 3:5; 4:6, 21; 7:13), etc. This perception of time of Ancient Israel is often the only one recognized by some scholars. G. Mantzaridis, an Orthodox Christian scholar, voices the usual and constricted point of view that the Old Testament time perception is only linear. He writes, “The expectation of the fulfillment of the promises of God to his chosen people within history dictates the adoption of a linear concept of time.”⁶⁹ God “chooses his people, guides them, and steers them towards the fulfillment of his promises to them.”⁷⁰

Mantzaridis also notes that in the Old Testament concept of time is not nonexistent: “There is no concept here of time as an absolute on which the events of history are to be recorded, but it is the events themselves and their unfolding that are the constituents of time.”⁷¹ The present chapter will draw the contours of linear time perception recorded in the book of Joshua. However, against Mantzaridis and Stern, and in accord with Bundvad, as mentioned in the introduction, some important notions will be noted, showing that Ancient Israel did not perceive time in strictly linear terms. Therefore, the understanding of the ancient Israel that God is over time will be interwoven as well.

2.1 “After the death of Moses” (Joshua 1:1) וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי מוֹת מֹשֶׁה

Many time references and phrases uproot the linear idea of time in the book of Joshua. One of the pivotal time references is the one opening the book, which reads: “After the death of Moses” (Joshua 1:1). Hebrew phrase וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי מוֹת מֹשֶׁה is essentially “transitional”⁷² as Richard Hess observes. It encompasses the truth that succession is taking place, and it is being anchored to the event of immense value, the death of the beloved leader. This linear phrase of succession is connected to Moses and serves as a prominent link and continuity of leadership now assumed in the character of Joshua. Marten Woudstra writes about Joshua: “He was the one to complete Moses’ unfinished mission and lead Israel into the promised

⁶⁹ Georgios Mantzaridis, *Time and Man* (South Canaan, PA: STS Press, 1996), 5.

⁷⁰ Mantzaridis, *Time and Man*, 5.

⁷¹ Mantzaridis, *Time and Man*, 4.

⁷² Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 73.

land. Thus, the continuity of leadership is assured.”⁷³ However, the linearity of succession is the key point of text: after the death of the leader who was God’s servant, new events are unfolding. Therefore, as A. Harstad observes “The time for fulfillment under Joshua has come.”⁷⁴

Importantly, Gershon Brin writes: “This sort of formula mostly appears at the openings of books, as an indication of the conclusion of one era and the start of a new one,”⁷⁵ observing that similar phrasing may be seen in opening of Judges “After the death of Joshua” (Judges 1:1).⁷⁶ The use of this phrase marks a new beginning, or as R. Hubbard concludes: “a new day dawns for Israel.”⁷⁷

This time reference serves as a genuine narrative binder. Not only that it connect the book to where Deuteronomy 34 leaves, but it goes back to Numbers 27:12-13 when Joshua was initially commissioned. With this time marker, progression is pronounced, as Goslinga notes, it ties previously mentioned time references as well, so it “refers to the end of the thirty-day mourning period for Moses (Deuteronomy 34:8)”⁷⁸ These were the days of weeping and mourning. D. Firth argues that one may go back in time even further. He writes: “This in turn refers back to the anointing of the seventy elders in Num. 11:16-30.”⁷⁹ Accordingly, the beauty of the linear time reference “after the death of Moses” carries both proximity to this event, and the distance from it, bringing the past events under the tension of “now” of the book of Joshua. Importantly, “now” of the book of Joshua extends after Joshua’s death (Joshua 24:31), into the time of death of the elders who outlive him. In this manner, one may see that the death of the faithful leader is not the end for the obedience to God, it lasts.⁸⁰

⁷³ Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), 56.

⁷⁴ Adolph Harstad, *Joshua* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 58.

⁷⁵ Brin, *Concept of Time*, 27.

⁷⁶ Notably, connecting one event to another in terms of dating and linear succession is very prominent in the biblical books of Samuel and Kings. See Brin, *The Concept of Time*, 27.

⁷⁷ Robert L. Hubbard, *The NIV Application Commentary: Joshua* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 74.

⁷⁸ C. J. Goslinga, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, 1986), 35.

⁷⁹ David G. Firth, *The Message of Joshua: Promise and People* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 32.

⁸⁰ See the section 2.6.2 on the time reference “all the days of Joshua.”

Moreover, the dread of the lasting component in the time reference of “death” is very prominent. It stands in clear opposition to life. Rehab uses it while leveraging for the life of her family: “deliver our lives from death” (Joshua 2:13). So, the death becomes a component of the Sipes’ oath *לְמֹות תְּחַתִּיכֶם בְּפָשְׁנוּ*, meaning “Our life for yours even to death!” (Joshua 2:14). Alter’s translation sheds more light on puzzling Hebrew text: “Our own lives in your stead to die.”⁸¹ Spies recognize the faithfulness and frankness of Rehab and tie their own lives to her willingness to live and hold her par to the covenant.

Also, disobeying the commandments of the leader leads to death and ends one’s life. Thus, Joshua 1:18 reads “Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death.”

2.2.1 “Three Days” *שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים* (Joshua 1:11; 2:16, 22; 3:2; 9:16)

Another linear time reference used in the book of Joshua is “three days” or in Hebrew *שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים*. This time marker indicates the duration in Joshua 2:16 and 22, as D. Howard explains in his commentary: “Under the system of inclusive time reckoning found in Hebrew Bible, this period would include the end of the day on which they arrived at the Jordan (v. 1), a second day during which we are not told what transpired, and a third day when they actually crossed the Jordan (vv. 14-17).”⁸² However, there is another take on literal “three days” in Joshua. Likely, as a possibility addressed in the previous scholarship, the narrative uses the literal “three days” to frame “seven days”. Biblical scholars offered different takes on clear biblical statements: *וַיְהִי מִקְצֵה שְׁלוֹשֶׁת יָמִים*.

D. Howard builds the case for seven days, even though there is no biblical evidence to support this claim. He explains that the first day is a day of giving the instructions by Joshua (Joshua 1:10-11), sending the spies (Joshua 2:1a), their meeting with Rehab (Joshua 2:1b-21), and escaping into the hills (Joshua 2:22). The second day is a continuation of hiding of the spies in the hills (Joshua 2:22). The third day is when spies partially hid and return to give the report (Joshua 2:22-23). Howard continues to claim that the fourth day represents the second set of “three days” introduced in Joshua 3:2 when people left Shittim, marked by an early rising marker which will be discussed later in this study. Day six is the second day of the second “three days” when instructions for crossings were given, especially concerning the

⁸¹ Alter, *Hebrew Bible*, Vol 2, 13.

⁸² David Howard, *The New American Commentary: Joshua - An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 119.

ark (Joshua 3:2-4) and the sanctification of people (Joshua 3:5).⁸³ However, these are the same 3 days. Accordingly, one cannot speak of 7 days. Finally, the seventh day, in Howard's assessment, is the day of the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River. He writes: "It is interesting to note that the total number of days here is seven, the number of completion and perfection, a number often found in the religious and priestly materials in the OT."⁸⁴ Notably, this is clearly wrong.

Also, Howard adds, "This is particularly appropriate here in the early chapters of Joshua, given the concern in the book for correct ritual and ritual purity. A few days later, seven days were spent marching around Jericho in activities also clearly marked by ritual significance."⁸⁵ Butler is against Howard, stating: "The numbers still do not add up to crossing the Jordan in three days, and the many activities cannot be so easily squeezed into the seven-day timetable."⁸⁶

A similar approach is seen in the work of Wilcoxon. Wilcoxon is focused and, to an extent, frustrated with Joshua's narrative: "In a straightforward narrative of ordinary events, such time indications would serve the purpose of clarifying the passage of time during or between incidents. ... However, Joshua 1-6 does not narrate ordinary events in a straightforward manner, and some of the time references in the narrative do not readily clarify the chronology of the action."⁸⁷ He adds: "This is probably due to the fact that these time references have their real significance, not in the chronology of narrated events, but in the temporal sequences and durations of a complex cultic observance, the pattern of which is contained in the cult legend."⁸⁸

In other words, Wilcoxon subordinates time referencing under the notion of cult, placing it under the influence of the observance of the Passover and the Day of Atonement. By doing so, he limits and oversimplifies the complexities of the time perceptions seen in the

⁸³ See David Howard, "Three Days in Joshua 1-3: Resolving a Chronological Conundrum", *JETS* 41/4 (December 1998), 548-549.

⁸⁴ Howard, "Three Days in Joshua 1-3", 549.

⁸⁵ Howard, "Three Days in Joshua 1-3", 549.

⁸⁶ Butler, *Joshua 1-12*, 577.

⁸⁷ Jay. A. Wilcoxon, "Narrative Structure and Cult Legend: A Study of Joshua 1-6," in J. Coert Rylaarsdam, ed. *Transitions in Biblical Scholarship: Essays in Divinity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 60.

⁸⁸ Wilcoxon, "Narrative Structure," 60.

book of Joshua. These feast days are the sole organizational principles of the narrative for Wilcoxon because he is preoccupied with theorizing about the composition in terms of cultic context. Unfortunately, compositional theories get the attention of diachronic scholars rather than the final form, meaning, and fluidity of the texts. In this matter, Boling sides with Wilcoxon when explaining abundant time referencing in Joshua 3-6 in the following words: “The fact that there are so many time references in chapters 3-6 suggests that in the background is an extended complex of cultic events.”⁸⁹

Howard, who advocates the harmonization of the text pushes back by explaining: “Prepositional phrases themselves follow a sequence: “within three days” (1:11), “and they stayed there three days until the pursuers returned” (2:22), “at the end of three days” (3:2). The first reference looks at the three days as upcoming. The second looks at them as coming to completion. The third also looks at them as coming to completion, but the context makes clear that these are a different set of three days.”⁹⁰

Den Braber and Wesselius, add to this scholarly hoax, and argue for a possible complete chronological reconstruction: “We will see that on the basis of the indications of time provided in the text, if we take them completely seriously, we can indeed reconstruct one single chronological scheme which must underlie these chapters, which also makes it less likely that the discontinuities in the text are to be explained from its supposed history.”⁹¹

R. Hubbard argues that this reference is more symbolic than actual when he writes: “In biblical narratives, “three days” seems to have a symbolic rather than chronological sense. It denotes a stylized biblical time period to mark momentous events or important transitions.”⁹² In a like manner, J. Creach perceives the time reference of the three days as “figurative, denoting a brief time of uncertain length.”⁹³ Creach is certain that “a scouting expedition like that described in Joshua 2 would have required more than three days.”⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Boling, *Joshua*, 159.

⁹⁰ Howard, “Three Days in Joshua 1-3”, 547.

⁹¹ Marieke den Braber, and Jan-Wim Wesselius, “The Unity of Joshua 1-8, its Relation to the Story of King Keret, and the Literary Background to the Exodus and Conquest Stories”, *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*, 22:2, (2008), 254.

⁹² Hubbard, *Joshua*, 84.

⁹³ Jerome Creach, *Joshua*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2003), 46.

⁹⁴ Creach, *Joshua*, 45-46.

Time perception problems in the book of Joshua were often seen as mere chronological problems. Their solution, as Howard writes, “is commonly sought in hypotheses of contradictory or conflated sources or traditions. Such solutions, however, are often unconvincing and are in no way demanded by the evidence of the text.”⁹⁵ Also, challenges of complex narratives and convergence of manyfold tensions and problems, teased in the introduction to this study, often lead scholars to a dead end. So, Firth acknowledges that in the book of Joshua, “it is not always easy to follow what is happening, something complicated by the fact that this is clearly dischronologized narrative, that is for narrative purposes it does not recount everything in its actual sequence.”⁹⁶ But is it so?

Woudstra claims that the time reference of “three days” may be perceived as fluid as an “indefinite period.” He writes: “The three days of 1:10 may have been an indefinite period, allowing for the mission of the spies to have occurred in the meantime. This mission may have taken as many as four or five days. The three days here begin with Israel’s departure from Shittim.”⁹⁷ The present study will partially continue in Woudstra’s steps and argue that the “three days” of Joshua 1:10 possibly lasted longer than three chronological days. In this quest, a comparative study of the Ancient Near Eastern world seems to be illuminating, showing a new possible solution avenue.

2.2.2 A New Proposal: ANE Three Days vs Israelite Three Days

One Hittite inscription to commanders of the border garrisons provides the same time reference of “three days” as seen in the event of Joshua’s spies and Rehab. The Hittite inscription reads: “Whenever the enemy attacks, the troops are to follow the enemy’s track for three days.”⁹⁸ Gregory McMahon writes about the context of this inscription “An essential element in Hittite administration of provinces was “lord of the watchtower.””⁹⁹ The other wall-enclosed cities like Jericho, might well have a similar person in charge of the security of the city. Most likely, the action of Jericho’s officials was essentially in accord with this Hittite inscription.

⁹⁵ Howard, “Three Days,” 539.

⁹⁶ Firth, *Joshua*, 54.

⁹⁷ Woudstra, *Joshua*, 79.

⁹⁸ William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, *The Context of Scripture*, Vol 1 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 221-222.

⁹⁹ Hallo and Younger, *The Context of Scriptures*, 222.

In the book of Joshua, spies were apparently seen, so “it was told to the king of Jericho, “Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land” (Joshua 2:2). Rehab said to spies that they specifically must hide for three days: “Go into the hills, or the pursuers will encounter you, and hide there three days until the pursuers have returned. Then afterward you may go your way” (Joshua 2:16). Most likely, this time reference was a well-known fact.

Moshe Weinfeld writes about the Hittite practice: “The instructions to the Hittite tower commander specify that if an enemy invades a place, he must be pursued for three days.”¹⁰⁰ Henceforth, one is to note the prominent military setting of the account and clear commanding language. This setting implies a military-like relationship to time, which is free from idioms. Notably, this language implies chronological referencing, the actual three days. The unifying context of finding the enemies and the time reference of three days is profound between the Hittite inscription and Rehab’s episode.

The research done by D. Fleming indicates that the time reference of three days also had chronological implications. He writes that in Mari archives periods of days “3 and 5 stand out among these counts of future time, evidently as standard short-term estimates, or conventions.”¹⁰¹ He adds that these periods of days “represent real-time or precise demands.”¹⁰²

Based on discoveries by Fleming, and similarities with Hittite inscription, an important observation concerning the “three days” time reference in the book of Joshua must be made. Namely, in all its complexities, challenges, and beauties, the book includes the polemic on time with the Ancient Near Eastern world as well. With a close reading of the text, one may notice that Rahab the prostitute insists on a strict three-day period of hiding the spies. This instance seems to correspond to the practice of the inhabitants of the Canaan of the time of Israel’s receiving of the land. Joshua’s time reference is modified by the word *שְׁלֹשָׁתַיִם*, but this is not a vital difference for the perception of time. The present study argues that Joshua’s “three days” have a different meaning from Rahab’s “three days” also re-enacted by

¹⁰⁰ Moshe Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 142-143.

¹⁰¹ Daniel Fleming, “Counting Time in Early Second Millennium Mesopotamia: Mari, Old Babylonian, and Old Assyrian Letters,” *M.A.R.I.* 8 (1996), 677.

¹⁰² Fleming, “Counting Time,” 677.

the spies. Here, the Israelite's time perception voiced by Joshua and the local ancient time-perception culture of Jericho, pronounced by Rehab, are two different perceptions.

The Hittite text sent to the Commander of the Watchtowers serves as the witness that the military conduct of the time required three actual days of pursuing the intruders. Hence, Rehab who lives in the vicinity of the watch tower, in the city walls, insists that the spies must hide for three actual days, as they do. Therefore, the narrative of Joshua is not simply dischronologized or making no sense, but rather engaging with the foreign culture as Israel progresses in the land. Logically, spies were the first to encounter different time perceptions, and they had to respect them in order to preserve their lives. Apparently, in Jericho watchtower, personnel had similar commands to those Hittites preserved in writing.

The Hittite inscription states that if the king is close by, he must be informed: "If, however, His Majesty is nearby, the margrave must appear before His Majesty and bring offender with him."¹⁰³ Similarly, Rehab's narrative witnesses that the king of Jericho was informed: "And it was told to the king of Jericho, "Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land (Joshua 2:2), and that the king took the action, as recorded in v. 3. In other words, the episode of spies in Jericho is influenced by the Jericho's time perception, about which one may learn by comparison with ANE texts.

On the other hand, Israel's time reference is not only idiomatic as proposed by scholars, for the sake of literal expression *per se*. More importantly, it is ideological. In Israelite time perception, "three days" are embedded in a relationship with God, and based on faithfulness. Grammatically, in all its occurrences, it is modified.¹⁰⁴ When Joshua addresses the nation, he conveys the thrust that within "three days," meaning, at God's will, they will cross. So, Joshua's reference is essentially the reference to staying faithful. The time reference is collapsed by theological prevalence. Accordingly, with the time reference "at the end of the three days" in Joshua 3:2, the narrative resumes Joshua's or Israelite time perception. The usual Hebrew phrase in Joshua 3:2 is modified by the word *קִצָּה*, and denotes a moment in time, after the "three days". In this verse, it is generally understood that it took three days for people to reach the banks of Jordan. However, this, too, must be understood from ideological and theological perspectives. People are to engage in liturgical procession

¹⁰³ Hallo and Younger, *The Context of Scriptures*, 222.

¹⁰⁴ In Joshua 1:2 it is modified by *בְּעֵר*, and in Joshua 3:2 and 9:16 is modified by *קִצָּה*. This stands in contrast to the ANE time perception seen in Rehab's story where in both instances (Joshua 2:16, 22) the "three days" are not modified at all, reading *שְׁלֹשָׁת יָמִים*.

with the ark, as the narrative explains, “At the end of three days the officers went through the camp and commanded the people, “As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it” (Joshua 3:2). To do so, people must “Consecrate” themselves (Joshua 3:5), because “tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you” (Joshua 3:5). Israelite’s “three days” are ideological call for sanctification, that may be understood in a theological sense as entering the sanctified flow when time *per se* does not matter but the unfolding of the amazing process involving God. J. Gordon Harris adds to the understanding of holiness as a means of inhabiting time: “Holiness is the basis on which God does miracles, and the holy God demands a holy people. In turn, worship and holy warfare demand ritual and personal holiness. There is no time to waste because only hours remain to worship and prepare spiritually.”¹⁰⁵ Essentially, holiness is what moves and defines time in this instance. When the nation becomes holy, or separated for God alone, the next step will happen. In other words, holiness will cause the time to collapse in this narrative as God’s work introduced with many time references throughout the book (1:2; 3:2, 5, 7) starts to unfold and constitute “eventful now.”¹⁰⁶ Three theological days of Joshua 1:10, encompass three Rehab’s

¹⁰⁵ J. Gordon Harris, Cheryl Anne Brown, and Michael S. Moore, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 33.

¹⁰⁶ There are several instances of the “eventful now” in the Scriptures when the time encapsulates theological ideas and serves as the frame for the narrative. Prominent examples include the story of the Binding of Isaac (Gen. 22) and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19-20). Both of these events may be understood as theophanies, or the flow, as mentioned earlier in this study, the time when the relationship with God is the only one that matters, and time *per se* is put aside or not experienced.

The Binding of Isaac

The narrative of Binding of Isaac employs time referencing in order to employ theological ideas, and the “eventful now” of time flow may be recognized as the narrative’s backbone. The time reference וַיְהִי אַחֲרַיִם הַדְּבָרִים וַיֵּלֶךְ אַחֲרָיו brackets the narrative (Gen 22:1 and 22:20). Nahum Sarna translates this bracketing phrase as “Some time afterward” (Nahum Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 233.), and explains that “the phrase indicates an indefinite connection with foregoing events” (Sarna, *Genesis*, 233.).

The early rising in this narrative is fronted before “the three days” marker. Abraham “rose early in the morning” וַיִּשְׁקֶם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר (Gen. 22:3). This reference signals the preparation for the flow that is about to unfold. The fronting of the time marker of the flow may communicate Abraham’s character. The author is certain that Abraham will deliver, and, in this case, the eventful now already starts before three days or the time of preparation. Abraham is ready to be in God’s presence, living out his הִנְנִי “Here I am” (Gen. 22:1). Certainly, holiness is the flow prerequisite and the driver of the eventful now of entering the presence of God. The time reference “on the third day” (Gen. 22:4) indicates the end of travel time as well as sensitivity for entering communion with God and executing His will. Epic of Gilgamesh uses the same temporal formula “on the third day” to indicate the end of the journey and reads: “On the third day on the appointed spot they arrived” (ANET, Gilgamesh, 1.III.48). “On the third day” is the final time-reference used before the flow in Abraham’s narrative. G. von Rad praises the virtues of Abraham and sees “three days” reference as the marker of endurance. Von Rad writes: “He was on the way three days, and one already sees from that his obedience was firm and not simply a brief effervescence” (Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1973), 240.). D. Kidner similarly observes “The note of time, *the third day*, ... chiefly speaks of the

chronological days, as they are slowly defined by “tomorrow,” and “today”, and as they become the pregnant reality of marvelous and amazing crossing of the Jordan river, the God’s work. The three days of Joshua may be understood in the following words of DeVries who was writing about future time designation, so they are “beyond man’s immediate reach, and in the hand of God”¹⁰⁷

Accordingly, this study argues for a distinction between Joshua’s ideological three days, and Rehab’s and Spies’ chronological three days. The book of Joshua executes an excellent command of perception of time and polemic with ANE time perception is only one of the examples. Additional interplay of Israelite and ANE perceptions is seen in linear time reference of labeling the days of celebration, reminiscent of Egyptian time recording. This

protracted test and sustained obedience” (Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 154.).

As the flow of eventful now unfolds, time references cease. The use of consecutive Vavs drives the narrative and underlines the intensified and dramatic character of the flow (Gen. 22:4b-13). From seeing the mountain נִרְאָה (Gen. 22:4) to seeing the ram נִרְאָה (Gen. 22:13), Abraham experiences flow: a time when time *per se* is not of any importance, but sole reliance on God is at stake. The lasting component of “eventful now” is underlined by time reference אֲשֶׁר יֵאָמֵר הַיּוֹם “as it is said *to this day*” (Gen. 22:14).

Sinai Event

The giving of the Torah is framed with the two temporal references. The first, בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי “on the third new moon” (Ex. 19:1). The second, בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא “on that very day.” These references are followed by the theological theme of consecration and preparation for Israel to be “a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6) to God, clearly temporally framed: “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow and let them wash their garments and be ready for the third day” (Ex. 19:10-11). People are to be preparing הַיּוֹם “today” and מָחָר “tomorrow,” so they are נִכְנָיִם (Nif’al participle, masculine, plural, כֹּן) “firmly established, steadfast, reliable” for יוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי the third day. The time reference of the third day is immediately repeated, underlying its importance in connection with God: “For *on the third day* (בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי), the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people” (Ex. 19:11). R. Alan Cole suggests that this temporal reference “denotes the completeness of the process of purification” (R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 154.).

Again, in Ex. 19:15 the *third day* reference carries the theological message of readiness for meeting the Lord: “Be ready for the third day.” John Durham translates the mentioned phrase again featuring the verb נִכְנָיִם as “Be completely ready” (John Durham, *Exodus*, World Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 257.). Interestingly enough, the unfolding of the “eventful now” is marked with reference to an early morning start בְּקֵיצַת הַבֹּקֶר “at the daybreak” or “as morning set off” (Translations are mine.), on the third day בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי. Durham renders the Hebrew phrase בְּקֵיצַת הַבֹּקֶר “as the morning was breaking” (Durham, *Exodus*, 266.). At the same time, Brevard Childs translates “when morning came” (Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1974), 341.). Therefore, at daybreak, an intensified unfolding of events is inaugurated, and the time when time does not matter and does not count is flowing. The flow includes theophany: thunders, lightning, the sound of the horn, clouds, smoke, and God’s Presence (Ex. 19:16-25). Notably, no time references occur after the initial one “at the daybreak on the third day” (Ex. 19:16). Durham calls this *promised Advent* starting “right on schedule at daybreak, the reason that Israel had to be “completely ready” by the third day” (Durham, *Exodus*, 270.). The theophanic flow is like in the narrative of Binding of Isaac, moved by consecutive Vavs, and no time references are utilized.

As seen in the narratives of Binding of Isaac, Giving of Torah, and Crossing of Jordan, time referencing is utilized to signal the Theophanic Flow or eventful now, full of God’s presence.

¹⁰⁷ DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 284.

will be touched upon later in the study, in the comparison between the book of Joshua and Annals of Pharaoh Thutmose III.

Another example when the same time reference reinforces the theological point of the narrative is seen in Joshua 9:16. The context of the occurrence is the Gibeonite deception described in chapter 9. The time reference indicates the “opening of the eyes” or the moment of realization. “At the end of three days” (Joshua 9:16), Israel realizes that she was deceived. The theological context of the covenant-making and giving of the oath is at stake (Joshua 9:19). Accordingly, this time reference is embedded in the theological frame. The oath was made invoking God’s name, and if it is broken, the relationship of God may be compromised. Howard explains: “The repeated phrase “by the Lord the God of Israel” in vv. 18-19 emphasizes the solemnity and the binding nature of the oath they had sworn: this was taken in his name and could not be broken.”¹⁰⁸

2.2.3 Wordplay on “three days” in Joshua 3:4 and 20:5.

Apart from the above-mentioned occurrences of the “three days” temporal marks, an additional Hebrew phrase binds the time referencing together. Namely, a distinct Hebrew phrase מִתְּמוֹל שְׁלֵשׁ יָמִים in Joshua 3:4 is an interesting time reference indicating the past and it is constructed as the wordplay. Boling translates it as “previously,”¹⁰⁹ while Alter renders it as “time past.”¹¹⁰ ESV has plain “before,” while Thomas Dozeman has prominently stronger: “never before.”¹¹¹ Hawk transmits the literal meaning of the phrase: “From tomorrow, three days ago,”¹¹² but makes a mistake in translating תְּמוֹל. The literal meaning is “from yesterday, to the third day (day before that),”¹¹³ or simply put “day before yesterday,” “three days ago,” or “since yesterday and since the day before that, meaning for some time.”¹¹⁴ P. Pitkänen

¹⁰⁸ Howard, *Joshua*, 229.

¹⁰⁹ Boling, *Joshua*, 153.

¹¹⁰ Alter, *Hebrew Bible, Vol 2*, 15.

¹¹¹ Thomas Dozeman, *Joshua 1-12: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 258.

¹¹² Hawk, *Joshua*, 62.

¹¹³ Translation is mine.

¹¹⁴ HALOT, 1545–1546.

translates “You have not been here before.”¹¹⁵ Similarly, Harstad underlines: “It does not simply mean that Israel had not taken that route within the last three days.”¹¹⁶

At the same time, literal translation uncovers the wordplay contained in the phrase. The “three-day” time reference is echoed, idiomatically. The same is seen in Joshua 20:5 when the narrative recalls the laws about the Sanctuary cities. Thus, apart from two occurrences in Joshua, there are two occurrences of this time reference in Deuteronomy (4:42 and 19:6), when these laws are initially proclaimed.

Interestingly, the book of Joshua uses the recurring theme of linear time denoting “three days,” echoed in literal translation or/and out loud reading of Hebrew text. Now the direction is not the future, but it is oriented toward the past or backward. This shows a great skill in using the time referencing as a narrative binder.

2.3 Six Days נֶשְׁפֹּט יָמִים (Joshua 6:3, 14)

Linear designation of six days in the book of Joshua presumes the expansion into the seventh day, making the seven-day period of time. This is especially prominent in the narrative of conquering the city of Jericho. The commandment given assumes continual action: “You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days (Joshua 6:3). Hebrew phrase נֶשְׁפֹּט יָמִים indicates duration. The same practice of marching is to be repeated daily: “And the second day they marched around the city once, and returned into the camp. So, they did for six days” (Joshua 6:14). Notably, the culmination is not attained by this time reference. Certain steps are completed, and the commandments are acted out, like the daily march, but no wondrous act is included. Only at the seventh day, the theological and actual completeness will be achieved. This time reference may be recognized as chronological one, while the seventh day designation carries both chronological and ideological significance.

2.4 The Seventh Day (Joshua 6:4, 15)

The insistence of the narrative of the book of Joshua of transforming or collapsing time into a Divine act is confirmed by using the “seventh-day” reference for the pivotal event of conquering Jericho. Time is both recorded and collapsed into a great act of God, or miracle.

¹¹⁵ Pitkänen, *Joshua*, 126.

¹¹⁶ Harstad, *Joshua*, 151.

Theological framing arises from the ritual one, dressed into the significance of the number seven. K. Gangel observes the significance of the number seven in the words: “The number seven, used no fewer than fourteen times in this chapter, is the number of divine perfection or completeness.”¹¹⁷

Also, Woudstra writes “The number seven (*seven priests each carry a signal horn*) is doubtless symbolical, recalling God’s works at creation. The Lord who creates also works in the history of redemption. On the seventh day, he will act on his people’s behalf.”¹¹⁸ God’s action is the vehicle of the narrative, while time referencing was used to lead the reader to the pinnacle of the story. Here also, time is recorded, but collapsed, making the event of direct God’s involvement shine through.

2. 5 Precisely Dated Events – Crossing and Passover

In the book of Joshua, only two important events are precisely chronologically referenced: the Crossing of the Jordan (Joshua 4:19), and the celebration of the First Passover in the Land (Joshua 5:10). For the former Howard notes “The text carefully dates the events here.”¹¹⁹

The pivotal day of crossing the Jordan River was meticulously time-referenced by giving the precise day and month of the event: “The tenth day of the first month” (Joshua 4:19). The time reference does not mention the name of the month. This is the most common practice of Ancient Israel seen in Pentateuch, while occasionally, mostly in the book of Exodus, the month was named (Exodus 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; Deut. 16:1). In this instance, the day was referenced before the month, which most likely indicates the practice started back in the book of Numbers.¹²⁰

J. Gray theorizes that a hypothetical Priestly source was behind this precise time referencing. He writes that the first month according to “Babylonian reckoning, the pre-exilic month Abib, pos-exilic Nisan, our April. Such accurate fates usually indicate P. The date may

¹¹⁷ Gangel, *Joshua*, 110.

¹¹⁸ Woudstra, *Joshua*, 110.

¹¹⁹ Howard, *Joshua*, 154.

¹²⁰ For example, Genesis 8:5 references the month first, and then the day, and reads “in the tenth month, on the first day of the month.” Same is seen in Exodus: “In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening” (Exodus 12:18). Leviticus also favors the month: “In the seventh month, on the first day of the month” (Lev. 23:24). The book of Numbers shows both variants. In some instances, it notes the month first (Num. 9:5), but in others, favors the day: “the first day of the second month” (Num. 1:1). Finally, Deuteronomy favors the day in the time referencing: “on the first day of the eleventh month” (Deut. 1:1).

reflect the association of this public sacrament with the tradition of the selection of Passover lamb on the tenth day of the first month (Exodus 12:2-3), in connection with the preparation for the Exodus.”¹²¹ However, time perception seen in the book of Joshua has an important interpretational role, and it cannot be diminished to a hypothetical compositional matter.

The celebration of Passover is described in a combination of linear and cyclical time perceptions. These were used interchangeably. Firstly, In Josh 5:10, the text utilizes cyclical time perception, by mentioning the Passover, the Feast Day repeated yearly: “While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover” (Joshua 5:10a). The Passover is recurring each year This study labels the celebration of Passover as cyclical because of its return to the celebration of the past event, and its multifaceted re-enactment. Passover itself may be recognized as the time reference, but more in a cyclical perception, as the event is repeated continually in the cycle. Secondly, this cyclical reference is followed by a linear one: “on the fourteenth day of the month” (Joshua 5:10b). Finally, this event is referenced even more precisely, now with the cyclical time reference “in the evening.” The book of Joshua utilizes both linear and cyclical perceptions of time in describing events.

Additionally, the book of Joshua uses time referencing as a tool for making a theological point. The crossing of the Jordan River and Passover are the only two events in the entire book of Joshua precisely dated by stating the day and month that describes many important events like the fall of Jericho, et al. The narrative connects these two by time-referencing them in the same manner. The Passover is connected to the Crossing, and back to the initial Passover and the Crossing of the Red Sea by time references. Howard explains that “the fact that this happened at Passover helps to connect the crossing of the Jordan even more closely with the events of the exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea.”¹²² Theological connection is what the narrative emphasizes by time referencing. In particular, this connection is made clear in v. 23: “For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over” (Joshua 4:23).

It is intriguing that these events are not only connected in the narrative, but while connecting they are reversed. In Joshua, the crossing precedes the Passover. Once again, the narrative bends time, collapses it, and one cannot settle for ordinary, or only linear, or only

¹²¹ John Gray, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth* (London, UK: Thomas Nelson and Sons, LTD, 1967), 66.

¹²² Howard, Joshua, 141.

cyclical. This book introduces a unique perception of time based on faith that God is above time. It is not what is expected in a certain frame, but it is faith that God will deliver at his convenience. God is above time, and the sanctified flow, or time when Israel is with God is what matters the most. Notably, God’s involvement does not mean that the Ancients did not perceive time, or that their time perception was primitive. Accordingly, Étan Levine notes how the faith of the chosen people elevated the perception of time. He writes: “the Jewish mission evolved into the sanctification of time; the Jewish vocation became the creation of a spiritual calendar constructed of timeless moments, sacred events, and religious imperatives, these largely ordered by the cycles of time, the passing of seasons, and even the hours of each passing day.”¹²³ The urge to be with God and in His presence, in the sanctified flow, resulted in creation of spiritual calendar, closely interweaving linear, cyclical and time with God.

As presented so far, time is well-recorded, and by using different time perceptions. Thus, additional linear time perceptions follow the celebration of Passover, and the change in food, from Manna to produce of the land: “the day after the Passover,” “on that very day” (Joshua 5:11), and “the day after they ate” (Joshua 5:12). These linear time references converge with the cyclical one of the Passover, and they show the “explicit dating,”¹²⁴ as DeVries notes for the Hebrew phrase *בַּעֲצֻם הַיּוֹם הַהוּא* “on that very day.”

2.6 Additional Linear Time Designations in the Book of Joshua:

2.6.1 “Tomorrow” *מָחָר* (Joshua 3:5; 4:6, 21; 7:13)

The linear time reference *מָחָר* is used plentiful times in the book of Joshua and, when not modified, has the meaning of “tomorrow.” For example, this basic meaning is seen in Joshua 3:5 “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you” DeVries notes “The time word *מָחָר* functions in a number of passages like a deferred *הַיּוֹם*. This appears generally where a sequence of more than one day is involved.”¹²⁵ More likely, in Joshua, it is used to emphasize the events of the next day and the next day itself, denoting the usage that DeVries explains in the following words: “As substantive or as an adverb, it designates a today that is stretched out past the coming night into the day that is to follow.

¹²³ Étan Levine, “The Jews in Time and Space” in Étan Levine, ed., *Diaspora: Exile and the Contemporary Jewish Condition* (New York, NY: Shapolsky Books, 1986), 1–11.

¹²⁴ DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, 143.

¹²⁵ DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 282-283.

The person who announces it can envisage it as though it were today. It lies just over the horizon of time.”¹²⁶

The brevity of מָחָר is often emphasized. Brin writes: “it belongs to set of expressions that are used to describe brief time periods. ... a very near future.”¹²⁷ This study recognizes מָחָר in the book of Joshua in terms of emphasis or introduction of important events, and not so much in deferring terms.¹²⁸

When modified, it is usually part of a larger Hebrew phrase like in מָחָר בְּעֵת הַזֹּאת “Tomorrow at this time” (Joshua 11:6). DeVries observes the importance of time referencing in this case by comparison with the similar grammatical usage in the book of Judges. He writes: “But in Joshua 11 and Judges 20 Yahweh is the speaker, there is a summons, and the temporal expression belongs to a כִּי clause grounding the command in Yahweh's promise. The foremost position indicates that special emphasis is being laid upon the element of time.”¹²⁹ A similar modified phrase is used in Joshua 22:18 וּמָחָר הַיּוֹם usually translated as “today, then tomorrow”. This time reference encompasses two days, the present one and the following one.

2.6.2 All the days of the life (Joshua 1:5; 4:14; 24:31)

The Hebrew phrase כָּל יְמֵי חַיָּיָךְ “all the days of the life” is essentially linear and durational. It indicates the life span or one’s lifetime. It is utilized three times in the book of Joshua in Joshua 1:5; 4:14; 24:31. In Joshua 1:5, its subject is Joshua, in Joshua 4:14 is Moses, while in Joshua 24:31 is Israel.

Joshua 24:31 has a double occurrence of time reference. The first one, “Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua” refers to Joshua’s lifetime, while the other, “and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua,” extends for a longer period of time, up until the end of the lives of the elders. The latter is reinforced by the Hebrew verb אָרַךְ meaning “to prolong, to make long.”¹³⁰ The time-infused Hebrew phrase הָאֲרִיכוּ יָמֵי אֲחֵרַי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ indicates that the death

¹²⁶ DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 283-284.

¹²⁷ Brin, *The Concept of Time*, 145.

¹²⁸ This time reference is utilized to announce the sanctified flow, when time does not matter, but instead God’s works. This feature of מָחָר will be discussed in the following chapters.

¹²⁹ S. J. DeVries, “Temporal Terms as Structural Elements in the Holy-War Tradition,” *Vetus Testamentum*, 25(1) (1975), 81.

¹³⁰ HALOT, 88.

of Joshua is not the endpoint for Israel’s obedience. The leader left a mark that goes beyond his death.

2.6.3 Number of Years or Days

Number of years as the time reference is used in the book of Joshua to show the duration numbered in years. The Hebrew phrase אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה “forty years” in Joshua 5:6 expresses the period of time people “walked in the desert” or spent wandering after the crossing of the Red Sea and Sinai events (Exodus 19:1-40:38). In a like manner, the age of a person is expressed in years: “Joshua was 40 years old” (Joshua 14:7), or “Eighty-five years old” (Joshua 14:10), or at the time of death the leader of Israel was “110 years old” (Joshua 24:29). In these time markers, the leading word is שָׁנָה meaning “a complete year,”¹³¹ or as J. Finegan explains: “it is etymologically connected with the idea of “change” or “repeated action.”¹³²

In Joshua 5:12 the time reference בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִיא “that year” is used to designate the first year of eating the yields of the land. Also, as Howard explains: “The text ends by mentioning that this happened “in that year.” Since no specific year has been mentioned prior to this , the reference can only be seen as a concluding device to signal the end of the forty years in the wilderness.”¹³³

Often, the number was omitted from the time reference, so it transmitted as an uncertain in terms of number, but mature in terms of age designation: בָּא בַּיָּמִים “advanced in years” (Joshua 13:1, 23:1, 2). Harstad explains the meaning of the phrase by saying: “The expression בָּא בַּיָּמִים is literally to “*come into (the) days* = advanced in age,” and in each of its four OT occurrences the expression is parallel to זָקֵן.”¹³⁴

2.6.4 “A long time afterward” וַיְהִי מִיָּמִים רַבִּים (Joshua 23:1)

A time reference “A long time afterward” (Joshua 23:1), in Hebrew וַיְהִי מִיָּמִים רַבִּים, is a true narrative binder. Howard writes: “The long time harks back to 22:3; the idea of rest echoes earlier statements in 11:23; 14:15; 21:44; and the statement on Joshua’s advanced age repeats a similar statement in 13:1. All three statements refer to the passage of time in one way or another.”¹³⁵ This time reference oriented toward the past is chronologically

¹³¹ HALOT, 1601.

¹³² Finegan, *Chronology Principles*, 16.

¹³³ Howard, *Joshua*, 154-155.

¹³⁴ Harstad, *Joshua*, 497.

¹³⁵ Howard, *Joshua*, 419.

ambiguous, as Howard rightly explains “The exact time intended here is impossible to know with certainty, but it appears to refer to a time many years after the events in chapters 13-21, and even chapter 22.”¹³⁶ Even though it is chronologically fluid, this time reference is valuable for it binds the narrative together.

3. Cyclical Perception of Time in Joshua

Often, the cyclical time perception of Ancient Israel was neglected at the expense of placing emphasis on the linear time perception. B. Lang notes “The “arrow” view of time has become such an obvious element of the modern mind that even critical biblical scholarship has tended to overlook the Bible’s cyclical notion of time and history.”¹³⁷

Cyclical time perception is vivid in the book of Joshua, and it is worth exploring. The book is full of cyclical time references helping the narrative to express the beauty of the events, like “day and night” (Joshua 1:8), “evening” (Joshua 7:6; 8:29; 10:26; 13:6), “night” (Joshua 6:11; 8:3, 9, 13; 10:9), “in the morning” (Joshua 7:14), etc.

Importantly, Jackelén urges to acknowledge the cyclical perception of time when approaching biblical narrative and “to consider the cyclical as a constant companion, from the promise of the continual return of sowing and harvesting, of summer and winter, and of day and night in primal history.”¹³⁸ Additionally, she writes: “Cyclical and linear conceptions of time coexisted and interfered with each other.”¹³⁹

This chapter will present the cyclical perception of time in the book of Joshua as a constant companion to the linear perception of time described in the previous chapter. Their interaction will be pointed along the way.

3.1 “Day and Night” יוֹמִים וְלַיְלָה (Joshua 1:8)

Hebrew phrase יוֹמִים וְלַיְלָה as cyclical time references is used in Joshua 1:8 to show continuity in the acting out the Torah of God, and to “be careful to do according to all that is written in it” (Joshua 1:8). Woudstra observes that this phrase has the connotation of daily enactment of God’s Torah: “Daily meditation on the Book, and a strict observance of its

¹³⁶ Howard, *Joshua*, 419.

¹³⁷ Bernhard Lang, “God and Time: An Essay on the Bible’s Cyclical View of History,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*, 35:2 (2021), 313.

¹³⁸ Jackelén, *Time and Eternity*, 70.

¹³⁹ Jackelén, *Time and Eternity*, 68.

gracious provisions for a life in covenant fellowship with the Lord, will mean a happy achievement of life's goal and prosperity."¹⁴⁰

R. Hess writes, "Unless Joshua makes meditation upon, and obedience to, God's law his first priority, his leadership will fail."¹⁴¹ Here, the time phrase is sounded in terms of making priorities. In a similar manner, L. D. Hawk observes that it "places the book of the Torah at the center of all reflection and decision-making."¹⁴² Accordingly, the time reference inaugurates daily focus and reiteration of the Torah.

Hebrew phrase *יוֹמִים וְלַיְלָה* as cyclical time reference is constructed as merism, made of the opposites, or contrasting forms. Together in a phrase, they point to a cyclical notion *par excellence*, of constant repetition or as K. A. Mathews puts it, "'day and night' means 'continually'."¹⁴³ This continuity may be perceived by contrasting it with the creational phrase from the book of Genesis: *וַיְהִי-עֶרְבַּ וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר* (Gen. 1:5). In the account of creation, the evening is placed before the morning, suggesting the counting of the day from evening into morning. In Joshua, the order is the opposite, where lies the key of continuity. Namely, when mentioning day first, followed by the reference to night, the phrase implies the overcoming or collapsing of the creational day (evening to morning) and duration that covers two creational days (day and night). In other words, the Hebrew phrase *יוֹמִים וְלַיְלָה* partially covers two creational days, and thus means a continual, cyclical or repeated time period. In a similar fashion, R. Hubbard observes that this Hebrew phrase is an "expression for 'always'."¹⁴⁴ The time reference of continual action in Joshua 1:8 prompted Pitkänen to dismiss the verse saying: "This suggesting seems to be hyperbole."¹⁴⁵

However, one has to be cautious when concluding about the dynamics of understanding of the biblical "day." Gershon Brin suggests: "Different things have been said regarding the perception of the order of the day during the biblical period. There are those who have asserted that the day begins with the morning and others who thought that it began

¹⁴⁰ Woudstra, *Joshua*, 63.

¹⁴¹ Hess, *Joshua*, 80.

¹⁴² Hawk, *Joshua*, 12.

¹⁴³ K. A. Mathews, *Joshua* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 12.

¹⁴⁴ Hubbard, *Joshua*, 82.

¹⁴⁵ Pitkänen, *Joshua*, 117.

in the evening.”¹⁴⁶ Not to mention, Brin is inconclusive in this matter, even though in several places he argues that the morning is when the biblical day begins.¹⁴⁷ This leaves discussion and possibilities of understanding the boundaries of the biblical day open.

Finegan explains that the shift in demarcation of the day was of an early origin: “In the Old Testament, the earlier practice seems to have been to consider the day began in the morning. ... The later practice was to count the day as beginning in the evening.”¹⁴⁸ He builds his argument while interpreting the rules concerning the observance of the Day of Atonement on the 10th day of the month, in Lev. 23:27, and especially the explanation: “On the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath” (Lev. 23:32). For him these words “appear to be addition which simply defines what the tenth day of the month was at a time when the day had come to be reckoned as beginning in the evening.”¹⁴⁹ Finegan’s approach and interpretation seem reasonable. Conversely, it implies that time perception in Joshua’s period considered the evening as the beginning of a new day.

3.2 Parts of the Day

In the book of Joshua, time perception is composite. Brin writes “Many names appear in the Bible for parts of the day, which may indicate something of the biblical person’s apprehension of the element of time.”¹⁵⁰ Contra Brin, this study will argue that the biblical person had a more advanced apprehension of time, way more than “some,” and that this notion influenced the writing composition of the book of Joshua as well.

3.2.1 “The Evening” and Time of Setting the Sun

Finagen writes: “Among the parts of the day, the evening was of special importance. ...the regularly used day in later Jewish times began in the evening rather than in the morning.”¹⁵¹ The time reference for “evening” is used four times in the book of Joshua. The first instance is already mentioned and denotes the precise time of celebrating the Passover in

¹⁴⁶ Brin, *Concept of Time*, 158.

¹⁴⁷ See Brin, *Concept of Time*, 155.

¹⁴⁸ Finegan, *Chronology Principles*, 7-8.

¹⁴⁹ Finegan, *Chronology Principles*, 8.

¹⁵⁰ Brin, *Concept of Time*, 164.

¹⁵¹ Finegan, *Chronology Principles*, 11.

Joshua 5:10. The second one designates the time Joshua spent in mourning after the defeat from the inhabitants of Ai, עַד-הָעֶרֶב meaning “until the evening” (Joshua 7:6).

Remarkably, the time references used in Joshua 8 and 10 follow an interesting pattern. Not only that these chapters use both cyclical and linear time perceptions, but they strive to make theological points as well. Both passages have death for their context. In Joshua 8:29 king of Ai is hung upon the tree, while in Joshua 10:26, the five Amorite kings were also hung on the trees. Time references in both cases indicate that they hung “until evening” (Joshua 8:29 and 10:26). As sunset occurred, they were taken down from the trees (Joshua 8:19 and 10:27), and thrown out and covered with stones “to this day” (Joshua 8:29), in Joshua 10:27 even emphasized “to this very day.”

In Joshua 8:29 the Hebrew phrase עַד-עֵת הָעֶרֶב literary means “until the time of the evening.”¹⁵² Alter renders it “till eventide”,¹⁵³ implying the period of the end of the day and the start of the evening. In the same verse, another precise cyclical time reference is added וּכְבוֹרַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ literary “when the sun was setting” or simply at sunset. In Joshua 10:26, עֵת is joined to the second phrase indicating the setting of the sun.

J. Wilch notes that “It may be argued from instances in later literature that עֵת may indicate an exact moment.”¹⁵⁴ He argues that “Although the time required for the sun to set in Palestine is much more like a moment than the period of evening, the preposition *ke* never refers to the exactitude of a temporal nature. It rather indicates approximation and in a temporal situation is characteristically vague; it is best rendered with “about”.¹⁵⁵ Hence, he concludes: “Thus the parallel expressions in Jos 8:29 and 10:26 do not refer to the moment of evening or sunset, but to the approximate time of day.”¹⁵⁶

Theological implications enforced by the above-mentioned time references are profound. The narrative shows that Joshua is continually re-enacting the Torah, “day and night” (Joshua 1:8). In this instance Deut. 21:22-23: “And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not

¹⁵² Translation is mine.

¹⁵³ Alter, *Hebrew Bible*, Vol 2, 32.

¹⁵⁴ John Wilch, *Time and Event, An Exegetical Study of the Use of Ėth in the Old Testament* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1969), 22.

¹⁵⁵ Wilch, *Time and Event*, 22.

¹⁵⁶ Wilch, *Time and Event*, 22.

remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God.” Joshua follows every single step. Additionally, cyclical time references of “evening” and “setting the sun,” are used to emphasize the nature of God’s commandments that are continual, from time to time re-enacted, in the cycle, whenever needed. Also, they are joined with linear time references “to this (very) day” collapsing time, referring to any given day reader encounters this text. In this manner, the consequence of death is still in place, underlined by the linear time-reference “to this day” (Joshua 8:29) and to this very day” (Joshua 10:27). Finally, the time references indicate the change from life to death and the process of dying of a hanged person. This “approximate time”, corresponding to the time of setting the sun, symbolically corresponds to the end of the light of the day and entering the darkness of night. Time references in these passages emphasize the moments and tragedy of the death of people who “committed a crime punishable by death” (Deut. 21:22).

3.2.2 “The Night” לַיְלָה (Joshua 4:3; 6:11; 8:3, 9, 13; 10:9)

The time reference לַיְלָה “night” is used five times in the book of Joshua. Here, this time marker signals the concealed and secret military actions and always includes the geographical determinant: “So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal” (Joshua 10:9). Time reference כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה “all night” frames the actions done in darkness for gaining the military advantage. Notably, in the book of Joshua, the nighttime refers to the entire period of darkness. Only later, the night was divided into distinctive parts or watches.¹⁵⁷

Night as time reference is used as the leading narrative binder in Joshua 8. Joshua sends the army by night: “So Joshua and all the fighting men arose to go up to Ai. And Joshua chose 30,000 mighty men of valor and sent them out by night” (Joshua 8:3). Clearly, the night action stands in contrast of the first attack on Ai that failed during the day (Joshua 7:2-9). After outlining the specific commands and the plan of the attack, the narrative underlines that “Joshua spent that night among the people” (Joshua 8:9). The Hebrew text stresses the night reference. Firstly, the narrative uses the verb לִין implying spending the night or lodging, and adds בַּלַּיְלָה “on that night”.¹⁵⁸

The night is contrasted by the “rising early” of Joshua, while the night is again introduced in v. 13: “Joshua spent that night in the valley” (Joshua 8:13). Scholars like

¹⁵⁷ See Finegan, *Chronology Principles*, 9.

¹⁵⁸ Similar use is seen in Joshua 4:3 but in a simplified fashion: אֲשֶׁר־תָּלִינוּ בּוֹ הַלַּיְלָה.

Howard see this reinforcement or re-telling as “a flashback.”¹⁵⁹ The narrative seems to emphasize the military strategy, as well as the time. Understood as insert or more likely as a different point of view (Joshua 8:11-13),¹⁶⁰ as the narrative progresses, the night is again contrasted by an early action (Joshua 8:14),¹⁶¹ now, by the king of Ai, suggesting the accomplishment of Joshua’s nightly military action. Hawk observes that time reference was crucial for narrative binding: “Coming immediately after the reference to the night (v. 13), the report that “the king of Ai saw” underscores the king’s inability to perceive the Israelite stratagem. ... Like the king of Jericho, he is left in the dark.”¹⁶² Therefore, time referencing is a means of bringing the readers to engage with the events, and at the same time to say more by introducing the symbol and metaphor. Likewise, Bundvad explains this notion by stating “It is important to remember that the biblical writers, when seeking to engage with the difficult subject of time, do not only refer to concrete processes in a literal manner. Such processes are also used as images and metaphors.”¹⁶³

The full circle back to the nighttime is accomplished by the introduction of the evening time reference as well as the time reference of setting the sun. These two were explained in a previous section (3.2.1). The narrative uses time references to accomplish more than referencing time. They correspond to the context as well. Trickery and deception belong to nighttime and darkness. Time references are potent means of symbol that bring about the actualization of the event. This suggests that the author of the narrative had a complex perception of time, marvelously reflected in the writing.

3.2.3 “In the morning” בַּבֹּקֶר (Joshua 7:14)

The time reference “in the morning” or in Hebrew בַּבֹּקֶר is used in Joshua 7:14 with an explicit reason. God is about to announce who the sinner, who took the forbidden things in possession, is. Additionally, the morning has the symbolic value of bringing in the light and revealing. This time reference precedes with “tomorrow” time reference in v. 13, connected to the consecration of the people. Hence “morning” is revealing on multiple levels, because it also contrasts the state of holiness in Joshua 3:5, and reveals the state Israel found herself, as

¹⁵⁹ Howard, *Joshua*, 205.

¹⁶¹ The same Hebrew verb שָׁחַם is used in 8:9 and 8:13.

¹⁶² Hawk, *Joshua*, 127-128.

¹⁶³ Bundvad, *Defending the Concept of Time*, 294.

Howard writes: “Joshua was to sanctify the people in preparation for what God would do on the morrow. The language here echoes that of 3:5 in an ironic way,” for in 3:5 God also used “tomorrow” to point to amazing things sanctified people will witness.¹⁶⁴

Finagen observes “The coming of the light and the coming of the darkness are, of course, gradual events, and it is therefore to periods of transition which are not necessarily sharply defined that the terms “morning” and “evening,” as also “dawn” and “twilight” refer.”¹⁶⁵ Accordingly, this time reference is not precisely determined. However, in the book of Joshua marker *בִּבְקֵר* is used as a modifier of the verb *שָׁכַח*. Together they forge a unique time reference of “rising early in the morning.” The present study classifies this reference as a marker of sanctified flow and it will be discussed later.¹⁶⁶

3.3 The Feast of Passover

This study labels the Feast Day of the Passover as cyclical, repeated annually. At Sinai, God said to Moses “Let the people of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time. On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall keep it at its appointed time; according to all its statutes and all its rules you shall keep it” (Numbers 9:2-3). Is this the presentation of Passover in Joshua as well?

Some of the ordinances for the celebration include choosing the lamb on the precisely determined day “Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb” (Exodus 12:3); as well as killing the lamb on also precisely designated time: “keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight” (Exodus 12:6). These time references were discussed in the previous section.¹⁶⁷

Notably, the celebration of the Passover and the time referencing that it provides shows that time perceptions of Early Israel were already advanced, combining the linear and cyclical notions together. Importantly, this was done in making the theological point of living meaningful lives “now” and by doing so, sanctifying time. Hawk explains: “Like circumcision, Passover is a rite of beginning. The celebration of the festival, now within the land itself, provides additional confirmation of the nation’s reconstruction.”¹⁶⁸ Accordingly,

¹⁶⁴ For more details on time reference *מָחָר* “tomorrow,” see the sections: 2.6.1 and 5.1.4.

¹⁶⁵ Finegan, *Chronology Principles*, 8-9.

¹⁶⁶ See the section 5.1 on “rising early in the morning.”

¹⁶⁷ See the section 2.5.

¹⁶⁸ Hawk, *Joshua*, 81.

the time perception goes beyond mere linearity of precisely dating the time twice before the feast day, or the cyclical celebration itself. It shows the meaningful life of Israel and their God, their bond, and their relationship. Thus, time is noted but collapsed at the same time, echoing the past Passovers and their meaning into eventful relational now, reflecting the fullness of being with God.¹⁶⁹

4. Joshua 3:1-5:1: The Contours of Time

The present chapter comments on Joshua 3:1-5:1 and explores its rich interpretative and thematic correlations, with an awareness of its context and theological message. More importantly, it stresses the tension of linear, and cyclical time perception, and serves as a bridge in making the argument on the complexities of time perception in the book of Joshua.

This elaborate narrative is unique in composition and literary affluence. Trent Butler rightly notes that the complexities of the larger narrative Josh. 4 is part of in words: “Josh 3:1–5:1 presents a complex prose report incorporating a complex oral tradition. Involved in the history of tradition in this passage are Gilgal, Jericho, a camp near Jericho, two question-and-answer catechetical questions, the ark of the covenant, and the crossing of the Jordan River. Inserted in this is the tradition of Joshua’s recognition by God and the people.”¹⁷⁰

Joshua 4 does not offer a straightforward narrative of the straightforward process of crossing the Jordan River. Instead, it brings confusion, shifting of focus, and out-of-place statements about a “pivotal event”¹⁷¹ in the history of Israel, with etiological character. Also, the reader is carried with the plot across the Jordan and involved with the stones of remembrance. This event may be described in simple terms and style. Nonetheless, the author is not interested in simple, so the quest is to grab the reader and bring it to the Jordan Riverbed. Based on the textual analysis and consideration of time perception of the narrative, this chapter argues that Joshua 3:1-5:1 is text above the reach of the editors for its intentional masterful composition of the inauguration of the sanctified flow and collapsing of time as narrative binders in order to show the transformation of the nation of Israel and readers.

¹⁶⁹ For more details on this time reference and its interconnectedness with linear time perception see the following sections: 3.1 (footnote 146), and 3.2.1 on the “evening” reference.

¹⁷⁰ Butler, *Joshua 1-12*, 804.

¹⁷¹ Hawk, *Joshua*, 53.

4.1 The Text Above the Editor

Josh. 4 presents itself as the text beyond the editor's or redactor's reach. How so? Literary circling, dislocation and disorientation, overlap and overlay of actions, and often digressions may indicate that the author insisted on showing that he was presenting the genuine event at the very crossing site as it was happening, from the multitude vantage points.

Different proposals have been made to harmonize this complex narrative. Elie Assis proposes the literary method introduced by B. Uspensky. This method brings different perspectives or vantage points into one story and conveys complex meaning. Assis writes that the literary features of this narrative “express a multidimensional meaning. The complexity of the narrative is a result of a combination of three separate purposes for one event, and is the natural cause of what seems to be coarseness in the flow of the narrative. In fact, the differing aspects in the story aim at illustrating diverse purposes to the event.”¹⁷² This builds on A. Berlin’s “amalgamation of varying points of view, rather than resulting from the combination of separate sources.”¹⁷³ Accordingly, this approach falls in the third category, neither diachronic or synchronic, or in the words of Assis “a third solution.”¹⁷⁴

The text shows the epochal and long-anticipated event. So, the reader is at difficulty,¹⁷⁵ for the reader is brought into the narrative. Uspensky defines this phenomenon in terms of “assuming the point of view internal to the particular work.”¹⁷⁶ In other words, Joshua 3:1-5:1 incorporates the feature of accustoming the reader to the narrative when the reader “perceives this world as if from within”¹⁷⁷ the narrative. If editing was the primary goal, and all the doubling and mirroring is cleared up, and the repetition of possible sources addressed, Joshua 4 would be the etiology without the power to make readers feel complex layers of God’s involvement with his people. Rather, the narrative pulls the reader in the

¹⁷² Elie Assis, “A Literary Approach to Complex Narratives: An Examination of Joshua 3–4” in Ed Noort, ed., *The Book of Joshua* (Leuven, The Netherlands: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2012), 405.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 404.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 403.

¹⁷⁵ See Creach, *Joshua*, 47.

¹⁷⁶ Boris Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form* (Berkeley, CA, the University of California Press, 1973), 137.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

midst of dried Jordan masterfully. D. Hawk explains this literary phenomenon: “The structural and thematic connections demonstrate that this retelling of the crossing is not the result of clumsy editing but rather an expansion which develops the significance of the event.”¹⁷⁸ Therefore, Josh. 3:1-5:1 intentionally seems obscure to bring different perspectives and experiences of Joshua, the priests, the people crossing, and the people building the memorial, together with all who ask: “What do those stones mean to you?” (Joshua 4:6). Above all, rich literary features indicate that Joshua 3:1-5:1 may not be reduced to the primitive theories of the mere merging of the two sources or extensive redaction of original text. Conversely, the competition achieved by “the concentration of a large number of themes into the narrow nexus of Jordan crossing”¹⁷⁹ represents the intentional work of the author. This etiology, or one of the formative narratives of Israel, is, as Uspensky defines, the “intrusion of art into the life”¹⁸⁰ that assumes transformational, essentially creational qualities.

This kind of formative intrusion of text is different from the intrusion of life into art, “where the audience attempts to break down the barriers of the artistic space and “enter” into the text of artistic work forcibly violating it.”¹⁸¹ Force violation of text is seen in biblical scholarship when the hypotheses rise. For example, Richard Nelson argues that “The logical digressions and persistent reiterations in chapters 3 and 4 are undoubtedly the result of a complicated history of composition and redaction, but no hypothesis to unravel the history of their formation has met with general acceptance.”¹⁸² So, to put it rather ironically, redaction and editing is the second nature of the text, and the text cannot speak for itself. However, this is not the case for Joshua 3:1-5:1. This text is above the reach of editors, so there is no sufficient hypothesis for it. As mentioned above, this approach is neither diachronic nor synchronic. The text must be given the freedom to express itself, and this chapter shows that Joshua 3:1-5:1 expresses itself through the perception of time. The approach laid in this

¹⁷⁸ Hawk, *Joshua*, 55.

¹⁷⁹ Richard Nelson, *Joshua: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 55.

¹⁸⁰ Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition*, 138.

¹⁸¹ Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition*, 138.

¹⁸² Nelson, *Joshua*, 55.

chapter may be considered *hyper-chronic*, one above the time, for Josh. 3:1-5:1 profess extraordinary ways of the inauguration of the “sophisticated meaning.”¹⁸³

4.2 Time as Hermeneutical Key to Josh 4

Abraham Joshua Heschel observes: “The Bible is more concerned with time than with space. It sees the world in the dimension of time.”¹⁸⁴ He continues to recommend: “To understand the teaching of the Bible, one must accept its premise that time has a meaning for life which is at least equal to that of space, that time has a significance and sovereignty of its own.”¹⁸⁵ Accordingly, this work gives time equality with the space as it embarks on the quest to find the meaning of Joshua's Crossing narratives. The present chapter uses time as a hermeneutical key to unlock this complex narrative. Therefore, the context of Joshua 4 is given in the previous chapter (Joshua 3), so the hermeneutical key has to unlock the understanding of the entire unit (Joshua 3:1-5:1). Israel is encamped in Shittim (Joshua 3:1) on the west side of the Jordan river for three days (Joshua 3:2), and “early in the morning” (Joshua 3:1), they set toward Jordan, following the ark of the covenant carried by the priests, all as Joshua commanded.

“Today” of Joshua 3:7 is additionally described in Joshua 4; the narrative is expanded. However, this “today unfolding” is quite complicated and puzzling. Not to mention, “today” was prepared for by means of consecration or ritual cleaning (Joshua 3:5) and announced: “Tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you” (Joshua 3:5). R. Boling explains: “This day will be remembered as a decisive one.”¹⁸⁶ Not to mention, “today” was anticipated for 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, and the vast spatial territory together with a long time of anticipation of carrying the promise, was funneled at the crossing of the Jordan, in “intensive now.” This intensive now of the crossing event is so potent that it merges past, present, and future because God is present and acting. The action of crossing measures time, for it is “an act of Creation.”¹⁸⁷ The event inhabits the time. In other words, the action surpasses the value of presenting time in the narrative. The flow – God’s work in

¹⁸³ Assis, “A Literary Approach to Complex Narratives,” 413.

¹⁸⁴ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 6.

¹⁸⁵ Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 7.

¹⁸⁶ Boling, *Joshua*, 163.

¹⁸⁷ Hawk, *Joshua*, 78.

cooperation with sanctified people, with total focus on the fulfillment of the promise, reflects quite interestingly in the text itself.

Nelson adds to the understanding of time as the driving force of unlocking Josh. 3:1-5:1. He writes that this narrative is a “transition from a past time of the promise to a present time of fulfillment.”¹⁸⁸ However, this transition of the past is complex, explained in terms of re-enactment of it and not in terms of a mere recital.

The nation is called to focus on the high level. Absolute concentration is needed to execute God’s command: “As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it. Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about 2,000 cubits in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before” (Joshua 3:3-5). Not to mention, the focus is complete with the ritual of concentration commanded by Joshua: “Consecrate yourselves” (Joshua 3:5). The nation is now ready to draw near and enter the expanse of the flow and to collapse time by entering into the presence of God’s mighty work. Joshua is sure to explain that this flow and God, who is *among* his nation, as the text emphasizes by Hebrew lexeme בְּקִרְבָּם, will have a tremendous future outcome of driving out from before them “the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites” (Joshua 3:10).

Indeed, God is near, and his presence in the Ark of the Covenant is tangible. The language is so powerful that it inaugurates creational potential by saying: “Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan” (Joshua 3:11). As the ark is carried over the water of Jordan, the text is reminiscent of the Creational account: “the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2). This creational dance over the water was the sign of the flow, God’s work above the time, as it is now in Joshua 3:1-5:1, when the Ark was positioned above the water. So, “when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the Lord” (Joshua 3:13), the waters of Jordan were cut off flowing.

Stopping the water is retold to signal the experience of the nation who once crossed the sea walking on dry land. Even though the generation is entirely new, the text shows that re-enactment takes place. The word choice is very particular. It helps in joining the memories

¹⁸⁸ Nelson, *Joshua*, 68.

and experiences of the nation. Hebrew word יַבְשָׁה dry land is used with the word מַיִם in bridging the experience of the crossing of the sea, but also the memory of the creation of the world. Purposely, the word for the river¹⁸⁹ or the sea is substituted with the word water. The creation account of Gen. 1:9 and 1:10, together with the crossing of the sea of Exodus 14:22, are re-enacted in Joshua 3:1-5:1. Thus, past events or past time is brought up to exciting and wonderous “now,” labeled with Hebrew term הַיּוֹם meaning *this day, the day* or *today* (Joshua 3:7). Re-actualization of the past in “now” is one potent feature of Joshua 3:1-5:1.

The wondrous and extended now, or the flow, finally started to happen in Joshua 3:14-16. Joshua 3:1-5:1 uses the Hebrew verb עָבַר to reflect on the past event of crossing the sea during the exodus from Egypt. Here crossing is invigorated by mutual repetitions: “And the people passed over opposite Jericho” (Joshua 3:16); “Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan” (Joshua 3:17); “all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan” (Joshua 4:1); “When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off” (Joshua 4:7); “People passed over in haste” (Joshua 4:10); “When all the people had finished passing over the ark of the LORD and the priests passed over before the people. (Joshua 4:11); tribes “passed over armed” (Joshua 4:12); “About 40,000 ready for war passed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho (Joshua 4:13). God’s promised wonder unfolds, and the text portrays this wonder by presenting the continual crossing of Jordan. Prominent back and forth notion collapses the time, and the emphasis is on “now.” The flow of crossing measures and affects everyone involved as well as the readers.

The text mirrors the scenes of crossing so masterfully that readers feel perplexed by the tension built up by the repetition of constant crossing and constant standing and their interconnectedness. The flow of the narrative, like the waters of Jordan, was cut a few times. One of the sharp disorientation incisions is seen in Joshua 3:12: “Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man.” This verse literary cuts the text flow but emphasizes the actual flow of the miracle and the collapse of time. Namely, chapter 4 opens with the statement that the command for setting the stones was given “When all the nation had finished passing over” (Joshua 4:2), but the passing is still in force in Joshua 4:10-

¹⁸⁹ R. Boling laments because of the word choice: “The old mythic overtones of nhr, “river,” are almost completely lost, in part because of the use of plainer term “waters.”” Boling, *Joshua*, 164. However, this chapter argues that the word choice adds to the meaning of the text, connecting it to the act of creation. Accordingly, “the waters” do not water down the meaning but enrich it by echoing of creation in Genesis 1-3.

11. So, one may propose that two sets of stones were erected. The text itself goes back and forth, and this attitude may be summarized in Hawk's words: "The geographical location and chronological sequence are jumbled many times."¹⁹⁰ By this intentional feature of "temporal digressions,"¹⁹¹ author collapses time. Nelson observes: "time is frozen,"¹⁹² and the crossing is finished; only the priests are still in the riverbed, and "narrative time is unfrozen by 4:15."¹⁹³ He adds: "This literary technique of freezing time and shifting perspective is almost cinematic in its effect."¹⁹⁴ Truly, there is "cinematic" to it. However, this narrative does not only bring different points of view; it brings them for a reason. Narrative imports the "now" of many vantage points of the complex flow, conjoining past, present, and future. "Disjointed chronology"¹⁹⁵ is intentional and it is the narrative's binder.¹⁹⁶ This binder gives prominence to the flow of the miracle of God, unfolding in His presence, and discredits chronology. The work of the One who is above the time is more important than the precise sequencing of linear events.¹⁹⁷ The Author is immersed in the miraculous event and shows its effect on the people. The flow is textually represented in terms of entrancing. People are filled with wonder, feeling delighted of participating in the unfolding or fulfilling of the promise. Fulfillment holds the attention, and text mirrors the entrancement; it is full of surprises, and vantage points merge and come to attention rather unexpectedly. "Now" of God, who is present and active, leads to "forever" with Him. Time is collapsed: the past is re-imagined; the present holds full attention and is pregnant with future realities. The future markers like הַלַּיְלָה "tonight" (Joshua 4:3), מָחָר "in future times, or tomorrow" (Joshua 4:6), עַד-עוֹלָם "forever"

¹⁹⁰ Daniel Hawk, *Every Promise Fulfilled: Contesting Plots in Joshua* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 97.

¹⁹¹ Creach, *Joshua*, 46.

¹⁹² Nelson, *Joshua*, 57.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Nelson, *Joshua*, 57.

¹⁹⁵ Hawk, *Joshua*, 57.

¹⁹⁶ The *disarranged geography* is another marker of the flow. It is the seeming confusion enforced by circling in the vicinity of Gilgal, from one to the other bank of Jordan. Not to mention, the toponym Gilgal in the Hebrew language means "the circle," transferring the back-and-forth notion of the narrative and continual crossing. Because of the scope of this essay, geographical features of the narrative are not considered.

¹⁹⁷ Even though on the larger scale, or in general terms, one may trace the large linear unity of preparation for crossing, the crossing and erecting of the stones. See Creach, *Joshua*, 46.

(Joshua 4:7), and כָּל־יְמֵי “all the days”¹⁹⁸ (Joshua 7:24), are profoundly extending the “now” of the miraculous crossing event. So, what seemed “frozen” to some scholars is actually collapsed, emphasizing the notion of putting the experience into perspective. Accordingly, this feature of time collapsing in Joshua 3:1-5:1 is transformational, and the event itself is inductive.

The collapsing of time is the consequence of the people's consecration and readiness to draw near to God, even though they are to keep the life-sustaining distance. Thus, the collapsing of time is used to emphasize God's greatness and the possible relationship with him after the consecration and preparation. In other words, collapsing of time is sensitivity to eternal, lasting realities, the reality of God, for when one draws near to God, time is not of importance. Thus, the flow is being in one accord with God, completely attuned. Everything described in Joshua 3:1-5:1 is happening “now” in the sanctified time of God's presence. Mircea Eliade observes that the “sacred times are indefinitely recoverable, indefinitely repeatable.”¹⁹⁹ Lived sacred time or flow is recoverable and repeatable as a formational experience, also called etiology. Therefore, the intrusion of art into the life described above plays out. The sanctified flow collapses time by merging past and future into pregnant now, which is an entrancing event combining creational and salvation elements into a transformational experience. Creation and salvation merge in the transformation of the nation, witnessed by nature as well. Many textual crossings, textual standings, and textual settings of the stones point to a totality of the sanctified flow, the joint work of God and his people. This creative act forged a stronger nation, from disoriented to oriented people, from wandering to sedentary, or as Nelson considers this creation echo, “a journey from desert chaos to landed order, from Moses to Joshua, from desert manna to the produce of the land, from outside the land to inside it.”²⁰⁰ The sanctified flow or “complex, eventful, pregnant now” of Joshua 3:1-5:1 is a “creative change”²⁰¹ of the past and people, which determines the future. In a sense, the “now” of this narrative is the access to “forever” (Joshua 4:7). Readers

¹⁹⁸ Robert Alter translates “at all times,” while ESV has “forever.” See Alter, *The Hebrew Bible*, Vol 2, 17.

¹⁹⁹ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1959), 69.

²⁰⁰ Nelson, *Joshua*, 68.

²⁰¹ Leonard Thompson, “The Jordan Crossing: Šidqot Yahweh and World Building” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Sep., 1981, Vol. 100, No. 3 (Sep., 1981), 356.

are also being changed by the tensions of the sanctified flow, and text shapes them. The author makes the readers feel like Israel was, entranced.

5. The perception of Time Flow in the Book of Joshua

This chapter will consider the time reference of “rising early in the morning” and its variants as the inauguration of the time flow, also labeled as “pregnant, eventful now.” In Lang’s words, “God would episodically interrupt the course of events, as it were vertically from above, challenging groups or individuals to change their life *now*, at this very moment.”²⁰² Against Lang, who labels these interruptive events as cyclical in nature, this study will label them as special or unique events when time is not important but the event itself. Importantly, Against Stern, it will be noted that as these events unfold, time is still well recorded, showing that the time perception of Ancient Israel is not primitive but complex and even advanced.

5.1.1 “The early morning” reference as a marker of the time flow וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּבֹקֶר (Joshua 3:1; 6:12, 15; 7:16; 8:10)

An interesting pattern of indicating important events is recorded in the book of Joshua. Namely, a crucial event is introduced by the time reference “the early morning”, and its similar variants denoting early rising. The present study labels this time perception phenomenon as the sanctified flow of time, or period when recording of time is not a primary goal. Rather the unfolding of the God-involved event is of the utmost concern. So, this is a time marker of extreme focus, and a marker that expresses the prevalence of the process or event. In other words, the sanctified flow is when people are focused on God, and when the time *per se* does not matter.

The Hebrew verb שָׁכַם utilized in this phrase is important to understand for it inherently contains time reference. Not to mention, the root initially had the meaning of “loading up the animals in the morning.”²⁰³ This was done very early in the morning. Hence, the most common meaning relates to an action done early.²⁰⁴ Bartelmus refers to the phrase as “the formula of tirelessness”²⁰⁵ and notes: “The focus is always on someone doing

²⁰² Lang, “God and Time,” 313.

²⁰³ HALOT, 1492.

²⁰⁴ HALOT offers an explanation: “to do early; the earliness of the action is often emphasized by adding an adverbial expression such as בְּבֹקֶר” (HALOT, 1492).

²⁰⁵ TDOT, Vol. 14, 685.

something early in the morning, i.e., as a rule on setting out in the morning.”²⁰⁶ Plainly said this implies “the first thing in the morning” action. Additionally, the root itself has denominated “shoulders” for animals carrying the weight on their back or “shoulders,” as pointed out in HALOT: “upper part of back.”²⁰⁷

The following examination of this time reference will point out that “rising early in the morning or at dawn” is a profound narrative marker carrying immense interpretational value.

5.1.2 Joshua 3:1

Joshua 3:1 reads: “Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and they set out from Shittim”. The Hebrew phrase **וַיִּשְׁכֶּם יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בַּבֹּקֶר** serves as the time marker of extreme focus, and sets the stage for important event – setting out toward the banks of Jordan. R. Hubbard connects this time reference to the importance and emotional state it brings: “The early morning start may imply corporate eagerness energized by the spies’ debriefing finally to “get moving.”²⁰⁸ Woudstra sees this phrase as a time marker meaning “without delay”²⁰⁹

Boling offers an intriguing translation of the Hebrew verb **שָׁכַם** in Joshua 3:1. He renders “Joshua got busy next morning.”²¹⁰ His reasoning goes along the following lines argued for the same root in Genesis 19:2 by E. A. Speiser: “the verb **שָׁכַם** constructed with **בַּבֹּקֶר** “in the morning” does not mean merely “to rise” but is “to act persistently, diligently” or the like.”²¹¹ Similarly, McConville proposes: “Joshua rose early is a typical expression in the book indicating haste and readiness to proceed.”²¹² However, if considered from the perspective of time mapping, this expression is not so typical or as Pitkänen labels it as “striking modern reader as redundant.”²¹³ Contrary, this time reference indicates decisiveness to act according to God’s will. In a sense, this time marker indicates narrative feature of collapsing time for the sake of emphasizing the process, or event. As in Joshua 3:1 and its

²⁰⁶ TDOT, Vol. 14, 687.

²⁰⁷ HALOT, 1493.

²⁰⁸ Hubbard, *Joshua*, 150.

²⁰⁹ Woudstra, *Joshua*, 79.

²¹⁰ Boling, *Joshua*, 153.

²¹¹ Ephraim A. Speiser, *Genesis* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 138.

²¹² J. Gordon McConville and Stephen N. Williams, *Joshua* (Grand Rapids: MI: Zondervan, 2010), 19.

²¹³ Pitkänen, *Joshua*, 133.

other occurrences, this marker signals that time will not matter per se. Rather the unfolding of event, or eventful now, representing a crucial turning point in Israel's history, prevails mere denoting of time.

5.1.3 Joshua 6:12, 15.

The occurrence of the rising-early-time-marker in the episode of the conquest of Jericho is additional evidence of the deep focus on “eventful now” that it inaugurates. Joshua 6:12 reads: Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD” and the ritual procession of priests and military with the sound of trumpets followed. This time reference not only denotes early action, but it marks an extremely important one, in this case, repeated continually for six days (Joshua 6:14). Essentially, this time reference may be understood as cyclical for it is modified by word “morning” in Hebrew, בֶּקֶר. The following verse utilizes the linear time perception by mentioning בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי “on the second day” (Joshua 6:14) and אֶשֶׁת יָמִים “the six days” (Joshua 6:14). Clearly the coexistence of linear and cyclical views is prominent.

Joshua 6:15 brings an essential switch in the time-marking vocabulary, as the episode of Fall of Jericho culminates on the seventh day. “The climatic episode”²¹⁴ marries together linear perception of time marked by בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי “on the seventh day”, with the cyclical perception of time, changing the usual בַּבֶּקֶר to וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ כַעֲלֹת כַּדְּמָה “they rose very early,” or “when the dawn broke.”²¹⁵ In a similar fashion, Hubbard writes “Two new narrative tidbits imply camp-wide, eager excitement. The day begins not “just early” but at daybreak, and today all camp, not just Joshua, rises to greet it.”²¹⁶ Especially, in Joshua 7:16, the narrative adds בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא “on this day” marker, as Brin explains, “used in the Bible when mentioning a given time that had previously been mentioned in the text.”²¹⁷ Therefore, time recording is profoundly present.

The narrative used two ways of precepting time to emphasize the long-anticipated “now.” The “now” anticipated for six days of early rising, unfolds by rising at the break of the first light, bringing immense focus of action, or seven-fold marching and shouting that makes the walls of Jericho collapse. Not only that the walls collapse, but the narrative

²¹⁴ Howard, *Joshua*, 172.

²¹⁵ Howard, *Joshua*, 172.

²¹⁶ Hubbard, *Joshua*, 190.

²¹⁷ Brin, *Concept of Time*, 333.

collapses time as well, by prioritizing the now of “this day.” The narrative culminates in emphasizing the actions of the pregnant now or sanctified flow, the period when God acts: “So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city” (Joshua 6:20).

Some scholars like C. F. Keil undermine the complexities of time perception and state that the only reason for getting up early was technical, that they could accomplish 7 circles marching: “On the seventh day the marching round the town commenced very early, at the dawning of the day, that they might go round seven times.”²¹⁸

Firth connects the time references of Joshua 3:1 and 6:12, 15 and shows that they are the indicators of the miraculous: “The statement Joshua rose early deliberately echoes 3:1; reminding readers that just as Israel crossed the Jordan by Yahweh’s miraculous intervention, so also they will take Jericho.”²¹⁹ Therefore, this time reference is a cue of God’s involvement. The focus is shifted to what God does now.

Anticipation of the unfolding of great things may be seen in some of the translations of this Hebrew phrase. R. Drucker writes: “This refers to time when the first rays of the morning sun can be seen bending over the horizon.”²²⁰ D. Jackman renders it: “with a dawn start,”²²¹ while Alter has “as dawn broke.”²²² Apparently, the faith of receiving the promised gift shines through these time references, as Joshua exclaims: “Shout, for the LORD has given you the city” (Joshua 6:16).

5.1.4 Joshua 7:16

After Israel was defeated by the Amorites because of Achan’s sin, God addressed Joshua (Joshua 7:10-13) who was in distress and uttering confessional prayer (Joshua 7:6-9). The narrative uses the time referencing to bring the important process of finding the culprit. The gradual narrowing of the focus is conceived by the time references, starting with

²¹⁸ Carl F. Keil, *Commentary on the Book of Joshua* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2001), 103.

²¹⁹ Firth, *Joshua*, 79.

²²⁰ Reuven Drucker, *Yehoshua, The Book of Joshua: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic, and Rabbinic Sources* (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1982), 183.

²²¹ David Jackman, *Joshua: People of God’s Purpose* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 71.

²²² Alter, *Hebrew Bible*, Vol 2, 23.

“tomorrow” (Joshua 7:13), then making it more specific “in the morning” (Joshua 7:14), and finally entering the “eventful now” by reference to “early rising in the morning” (Joshua 7:16).

The important event or “now” of finding out who committed the sin and why God is angry with Israel was dramatically introduced by triple time referencing. Additionally, these are framed by another two time-references. The preceding one is a cyclical time reference, and it describes the duration of Joshua’s mourning עַד-הָעֶרֶב “until the evening” (Joshua 7:6). Unlike the majority of the commentators, E. Assis is sensitive to noting it by saying “Joshua mourns for a full day.”²²³ The other time reference is linear and reads בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה “today” or “this day.” However, this is not the end of reinforcing the narrative with time markers. The chapter culminates with double עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה “until this day” in Joshua 7:25 and 26, sealing off the textual unit and emphasizing the importance of the event.

Assis writes about the relevance of finding the sinner: “The sin of Achan is a threat to God’s support for Israel.”²²⁴ Without this support, Israel is no more. Time stops for Israel, or becomes heavy to bear. Their leader once promised to be exulted is now face down (Joshua 6:6). Narrative even references the evening, implying the darkness of the events to come.

Framed by cyclical and linear markers, the important event that stopped Israel from receiving the land was gradually introduced by tri-fold time signals. Time is collapsed into the process of God’s work in the eventful now, underlined by Joshua’s words to Achan with a time reference: “The LORD brings trouble on you *today*” (Joshua 7:25). However, God acts, as Butler stressed in a laconic way: “God captures the thief.”²²⁵

DeVries notes that time reference in Joshua 7:25 “characterizes the essential upshot of the entire event while pointing emphatically to the time – the immediate present when the verdict was to be carried out.”²²⁶ Immediate present or eventful now, as labeled before in this study, is the notion that prevails the recording of time. The event collapses time in the book of Joshua. What God does is above the time. Now fulfilled with God’s presence and action is of the most importance.

²²³ Elie Assis, “The Sin at Kadesh as a Recurring Motif in the Book of Joshua,” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*, 31 (2009), 8.

²²⁴ Assis, “The Sin at Kadesh,” 11.

²²⁵ Butler, *Joshua 1-12*, 85.

²²⁶ DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, 147.

This eventful now, indicating coming back to good terms with Their God, refers “to real historical present, and Joshua 7:25 uses it in an appeal for decisive action.”²²⁷ Finally, it is sealed with a double time reference “to this day” in Joshua 7:26, which not only overcomes the time boundaries and indicates the time of the writing of the book,²²⁸ but also any time when a reader encounters the text. Stoning, as a means of death, has lasting consequences.²²⁹

5.1.5 Joshua 8:10

Similar time referencing is used in Joshua 8 twice. In the first instance, “Joshua arose early in the morning” (Joshua 10:8), signaling the victory of God’s involvement. In the second instance, the enemy king “rose early,” when God’s strategy was proven.

As showed earlier, the time references of early rising were used in contrast to the time reference of “night.”²³⁰ Strikingly, the military strategy orchestrated by God himself (Joshua 8:1-2) soured a marvelous victory for Israel and glorification of God and His commandments in Covenant renewal (Joshua 8:30-35).

5.2 Joshua 10 – Sun stands Still - the Long Day.

The unique day of Joshua 10 is a day of sanctified flow. The narrative uses time references to describe this marvelous event of God’s involvement, or better to say, of man’s alignment with God’s interest.²³¹

How does this event constitute the sanctified flow or time perception of immense focus on God? G. Oeste “The chronological arrangement of Josh 10:7–14 seems to recognize the unusual nature of Joshua’s role by first relating two clear instances of Yahweh’s decisive

²²⁷ DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, 151.

²²⁸ See Harstad’s treatment of the Hebrew phrase עָרַב הַיּוֹם הַהוּא in Introduction to his Commentary on Joshua. He writes that this time reference “suggests that the author is writing at a time somewhat separated from the events recorded in the context.” Harstad, *Joshua*, 11.

²²⁹ See the section 2.1. on “death” as time reference.

²³⁰ The section 3.2.2 deals with the issue of time reference “night” framing the “rising early” reference, as the structural and thematic organizational feature of Joshua 8.

²³¹ For further dialogue with the recent scholarship see Daniel Vainstub, Yizhaq Hezi, and Avner Uzi, “The Miracle of the Sun and Moon in Joshua 10 as a Solar Eclipse,” *Vetus Testamentum* 70, 4-5 (2020): 722-751. They propose that this event occurred during the solar eclipse.

Mahri Leonard-Fleckman, “Stones from Heaven and Celestial Tricks: The Battle at Gibeon in Joshua 10,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (2017): 385–401. She sees Joshua 10:10-14 and 10:16-27 in dissonance while arguing that the Gibeon battle is an independent tradition.

Younger, *Ancient Conquest Accounts*, 314. Younger (note 54) suggests that the long day of Joshua 10 may be understood as Israel’s perception of the battle, by quoting one Confederate soldier. Soldier exhausted from the battle exclaims: “The sun seemed almost to go backwards, and it appeared as if the night would never come.”

battle intervention (10:10, 11) before relating Joshua’s unique request (10:12–13) and Yahweh’s compliance (10:14), thereby securing Yahweh’s decisive role in the victory.”²³² This means that time-referencing may be used as the hermeneutical key to understanding the narrative.

The five Amorite kings made an alliance against the city of Gibeon (Joshua 10:1-5), because Gibeonites made a covenant with Joshua (Joshua 9). The Gibeonites reached to Joshua to protect them and uphold the oath, and Joshua immediately acted: “So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor” (Joshua 10:7). Importantly, God encouraged Joshua: “And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you” (Joshua 10:8).

The verb in perfect נתתים “I gave them,” means that the nations and “the land already belongs to Israel, God has already given it to them,”²³³ in the words of Howard. Addressing Israel with נתן is a trusty encouragement to follow God’s lead and be faithful.

The nighttime reference governs Joshua’s trust in God: “So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal” (Joshua 10:9). Even at night God is able to bring them victories (Joshua 8).²³⁴ As a sudden encounter happens, God’s involvement is apparent: “The LORD threw them into a panic before Israel, who struck them with a great blow” (Joshua 10:10), and “the LORD threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died” (Joshua 10:11). Most likely, the battle started before the sunrise, as the armies met in the loom of the night.

Another time reference is impressive and reads “the day of Lord’s giving of Amorites,” the Hebrew language תַּתְּ יְהוָה אֶת־הָאֲמֹרִי בַיּוֹם הַהוּא. In short, one may translate it as “the Amorite Day.” Wilch is certain that it is the time reference uncovering the meaning of the event: “Each battle had its own day; it was this temporal characteristic that made it both unique and a historical reality.”²³⁵ On the Amorite Day, when they already belonged to Israel, and already in their hands, Joshua in total accord with God, faithful in His words said:

שָׁמַשׁ בְּגִבְעוֹן לְיוֹם

²³² Gordon Oeste, “A Day Like No Other” In the Context of Yahweh War: Joshua 10:14 and the Characterization of Joshua,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 57-4 (2014), 702.

²³³ Howard, *Joshua*, 81.

²³⁴ See the section 3.2.2 on the “night” time reference.

²³⁵ Wilch, *Time and Event*, 95.

“O sun in Gibeon halt,
And the moon in Ajalon Valley”²³⁶

The narrative follows with the anti-time statement: “And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped until the nation took vengeance on their enemies” (Joshua 10:13). Harstad observes “The sun stood still for about a day,”²³⁷ while Woudstra is taken by the delay in time and writes: “There was a halting of the sun and a delay in its going down.”²³⁸ The stopping of cyclical time of setting the sun and going out of the moon, as well as the delay in the linear day, is a narrative’s collapsing of time *par excellence*. Time was very well referenced, but it did not matter when people were in total accord with God. Thus, the sanctified flow is relational, showing the covenantal partnership of working together for a common good and showing faithfulness. Joshua was faithful to God, and God was faithful to Joshua. The sanctified flow or prolonged and meaningful now, inhabited now unfolds in the relationship between God and man. Interestingly, Hawk notes: “Yhwh and Joshua virtually reverse roles.”²³⁹

Hawk observes that “There is surprisingly little narrative buildup for such a cataclysmic event.”²⁴⁰ This is to some extent true, but if one follows the time-referencing more closely, one is able to sense important narrative intentions, like Howard does. He sees the time references as true narrative binders as he writes “The words about the moon’s stopping and standing still are linked with the all-night march (v.9) ... the connection between the moon and such a march are obvious.”²⁴¹ The close reading of the text is a necessity to recognize the underlying notions of the narrative. Accordingly, this narrative inaugurates two-fold polemic with the ANE world. Namely, theological and temporal.

Theological polemic with the ANE world, more specifically with the Amorite Gods, underlines the event of the sanctified flow. M. Michael detects this polemical notion: “Immobilization of the sun and the moon signifies the fall of the corresponding gods—and by

²³⁶ Alter, *Hebrew Bible*, Vol 2, 37.

²³⁷ Harstad, *Joshua*, 422.

²³⁸ Woudstra, *Joshua*, 175.

²³⁹ Hawk, *Joshua*, 152.

²⁴⁰ Hawk, *Joshua*, 15.

²⁴¹ Howard, *Joshua*, 249.

extension of all the polytheistic deities. Under the military onslaught of Yhwh and Joshua, they are silenced at the very least and perhaps meet their demise.”²⁴²

Hand in hand with theological polemic, the polemic of time perception unfolds. Joshua on behalf of God of Israel, and by His might, stops and silences the means of time reckoning in the ancient world, the sun and moon. Israel herself was most likely using both sun and moon to organize the calendar. If not simultaneously, certainly, they were used one at the time.²⁴³ Genesis 7-8 suggest usage of the solar calendar, while Exodus 19:1 suggest the use of the lunar calendar: “On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt” (Ex. 19:1). Israel’s attitude was a reflection of the ANE world. J. Thames writes that ANE world was infused in time-reckoning: “Since the earliest reckonings of the passage of time as attested in Mesopotamia, the preferred system of measurement was based on the phases of the moon, which demonstrated predictable and observable changes that efficiently marked progression through time.”²⁴⁴ Also, solar reckoning proved to be more precise, so gradually, both were used as lunisolar systems. Remarkably, with the collapse of time in the stopping of the sun and moon, a sanctified flow is being introduced, as time perception above others (linear and cyclical). Israel’s most important time perception is meaningfully inhabiting time, showing one accord with God. Again, time is recorded, but God is recognized as the Only above the time. Faith in this God shapes Israel’s time perception into an urge for hyper-focus on being in the presence of God.

6. Time Mapping in the Book of Joshua and the Annals of Thutmose III in Karnak Temple

In order to show that the perception of the time of Ancient Israel was not primitive or not alone linear but rather complex, this study will offer a comparison between the book of Joshua and the Annals of Thutmose III from Karnak Temple in Egypt. It will build on Hans Schmid’s observation²⁴⁵ “that Israel did not talk very differently from its neighbors

²⁴² Matthew Michael, “Twilight of the Gods: Hidden Polemics in Joshua 10:12-14,” *Hebrew Studies* 55 (2014): 59-72.

²⁴³ See Sacha Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar, Second Century BCE-Tenth Century CE* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3-4.

²⁴⁴ J. T. Thames, “Writing ritual and calendar together: The biblical cultic calendars in ancient Near Eastern context,” *Religion Compass*, e12417 (2021), 2.

²⁴⁵ “Daß Israel auf weite Strecken von Geschichte nicht sehr viel anders gesprochen hat als seine Nachbarn.”

throughout broad stretches of history,”²⁴⁶ and Étan Levine’s statement that “Biblical thought hardly emerged *in vacuo*.”²⁴⁷ This endeavor will show that these two works share a common time-perception contours, while the Israelite presents one unique thread. Both accounts show familiarity with linear and cyclical time perceptions, and they are using them interchangeably. Apart from presenting the linear and cyclical notions, some theological time indicators of Egypt and Israel will be addressed.

6.1 Opening With a Time Reference:

The Book of Joshua: “After the death of Moses” (Josh 1:1).

The Annals in Karnak Temple: “Year 22, 4th month of the season, day 25” (line 6).

The Book of Joshua begins with a strong allusion to the past, recalling the dramatic event of the death of Israel’s beloved leader. This event as a time reference is captivating for it was followed by collective “weeping and mourning” (Deut. 34:8) for thirty days. Moses lived for 120 years (Deut. 34:7), led Israel through the desert for 40 years, and was certainly most remarkable: “There has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses” (Deut. 34:10). The time reference is the death of men “whom the Lord knew face to face” (Deut. 34:10), and the men who did “all the great deeds of terror” (Deut. 34:12) in front of the people of Israel. Certainly, the collective memory of the people was fresh enough to remember this great leader and his works, and above all his relationship with God. In this context, “After the death of Moses” (Josh 1:1) is one complete and very sound time association, stronger than stating the precise date. The author employs the feature of recalling the past as a means of dating. This practice is present in other biblical books as well.

In this instance, and as well as in similar ones, Thutmose III’s annals in Karnak show linear time, stating: the year, the month, the season, and the day. This four-level time reckoning is uniform and continues throughout the annals. Also, it is generally attested practice in Egyptian formal records. R. Parker explains: “The calendar year consisted of three seasons, each of four lunar months. The months had names, taken from important festivals occurring in them, and the seasons were called akhet, “flood” or “inundation,” peret, “emergence” and shomu, “low water” or “harvest”.²⁴⁸ The book of Joshua uses a similar

²⁴⁶ Hans H. Schmid, “Das alttestamentliche Verständnis von Geschichte in seinem Verhältnis zum gemeinorientalischen Denken.” In *Wort und Dienst. Jahrbuch der Kirchlichen Hochschule Bethel*. NF 13. Edited by H. Krämer. Bethel bei Bielefeld: Verlagshandlung der Anstalt Bethel, 11.

²⁴⁷ Étan Levine, *Heaven and Earth, Law and Love: Studies in Biblical Thought* (Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 3.

²⁴⁸ Richard Parker, “The Calendars and Chronology” in J.R. Harris, ed., *The Legacy of Egypt* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1971), 13.

method to record the time elsewhere, like it seen in Josh 4:19 “on the tenth day of the first month”. This is two-level time reckoning, which may be expanded to three-level reckoning by adding the time of the day: “On the fourteenth day of the month in the evening” (Josh 5:10).

6.2 The Present is Depicted along with Spatial (Geographical) References:

The Book of Joshua: “Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel” (Joshua 1:2).

The Annals in Karnak Temple: “the day of the feast of the king’s coronation as far as the town of “That-Which-the-Ruler-Seized”, [of which the Syrian name is] Gaza” (Line 13).

Before any battle has taken place, both texts describe some sort of leadership confirmation, along with the spatial-geographical denotation. In the book of Joshua, time is depicted as a combination of time words and verbs. Time word used is וְעַתָּה describing the present moment, followed by two verbs implying immediate action: לָקוּם עֲבָר. Interestingly, HALOT offers a possible translation: “Now exactly”²⁴⁹. In the Annals of Thutmose III, the day when the king assumed his power and leadership is set with a precise day as “the day of the feast of the king’s coronation”. Therefore, Siegfried Morenz notes “the Egyptians preferred to relate time, whether it was viewed as cyclic or linear, to living creatures or to events. That is to say, they did not envisage it as an absolute quantity, or at least only as this, but related it to something else and thereby gave it quality.”²⁵⁰

In the Semitic text, spatial is introduced with mention of the river Jordan and the “land” given to Israel. Annals cover the entirety of the kingdom with the word “as far as”, and Gaza as the endpoint of its dominion. Both texts describe the present tense, the moment, and what the leaders have geographically. The difference is that the “coronation” of Joshua is with the legacy of Moses, directly through God’s command, while the pharaoh is considered the direct heir of gods, son of Re (Line 5). Also, pharaoh’s day is a recurring event.

6.3 Anticipation of the future events:

The Book of Joshua: “Within three days you are to pass over this Jordan to go in to take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess” (Josh 1:11).

The Annals in Karnak Temple: “They are fallen” (Line 65).

²⁴⁹ HALOT, 902.

²⁵⁰ Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (London, UK: Routledge, 2004), 76.

Joshua is certain of future events, and this trust he connects with God's action. Thutmose III exclaims: "They are fallen" at the very moment of entering the valley of Jezreel. The battle did not happen,²⁵¹ and the pharaoh anticipated victory, for the enemy did not guard the mountain range pass well. These two examples show the literary aspects of conquest accounts. L. Younger appreciates the use of rhetoric: "On the one hand, the Egyptian ideology of kingship dictated this. But, on the other hand, the type of account employed demanded it".²⁵² Similar is seen at the beginning of the Annals, where the scribe calls the conquest victorious before they embarked from Egypt: "[His majesty passed the fortress of] Sile, on the first campaign of victory" (Line 7).

Joshua's trust is underlined with the time reference of "three days". Scholars deliberately argued about three references of "three days" and whether they may be taken literary. Interestingly enough, the Annals from Karnak twice skip 10-day periods, and once skip 3-day periods. What is skipped in the Annals seems to echo in Joshua, for the biblical author does not leave any period in Josh 1-3 unaccounted for. By doing so, the author invokes tension which is resolved in the great work of God by passing over the Jordan River. Parallely, spies spend three days in the hills after Rahab also anticipates future events of them possibly being caught. This time reference is confirmed with several more time-words. Repetition of these words emphasizes the confidence in the favorable unfolding of future events. "Three days" is doubled with Rahab's story (Josh 2:16), advertised again with "at the end of the three days" (Josh 3:2) and again with "tomorrow" (Josh 3:5). Lastly, it was highlighted with "today" (Josh 3:7). Also, the Annals show one similar feature in line 83: "Prepare ye! Make your weapons ready since one will engage in combat. With that wretched enemy in the morning." Pharaoh is certain that the battle will happen "in the morning" but he is not certain of its outcome. Morenz writes that Egyptians "anticipate future events, and evidently thought that these are predetermined."²⁵³

Accordingly, this future event in Joshua is announced thoroughly, multiple times which represents an assurance that it will unfold. Contrary, the Egyptian source is not very certain;

²⁵¹ Some scholars argue that an insignificant contingent of the Asiatic army met the Egyptian army in the mountain range. Lines 75-83 speak about the re-formation of the army, waiting for the rare end of the army to join. These lines may support this small battle before the real battle for Meggido. See R. B. Partridge, *Fighting Pharaohs: Weapons and Warfare in Ancient Egypt*, (Manchester, UK: Peartree Publishing, 2002), 206-207.

²⁵² Younger, *Ancient Conquest Accounts*, 198.

²⁵³ Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, 68.

even though the event is announced, there is doubt: the battle still takes place, and the victory is confirmed much later when the city falls, 7 months later, as another source reports (The Barkal Stela, Line 20). They anticipate it, they think that it is predetermined, but future fails them. Even though both texts anticipate future events, the Semitic is certain of it.

6.4 Future is “double-checked”:

The Book of Joshua: “Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them. And they said to Joshua: “Truly Lord has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us” (Josh 2:23-24).

The Annals in Karnak Temple: “They came to tell his majesty: “The desert is well and the garrisons of the south and north also!” (Line 84).

Even though both accounts anticipate a positive unfolding of future events, both are still “testing the waters”. Joshua sends the spies, while the pharaoh is listening to the reports of intelligence. Moses also sends the spies but on God’s command: “Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel. From each tribe of their fathers, you shall send a man, every one a chief among them” (Numbers 13:2). Joshua himself was one among the spies who spent forty days in the land and brought the report along with fruits. He and Caleb advised for the taking of the land, while another 10 spies advised against it. Spies also proved that they may be deceived as in the episode of taking Ai (Josh 7:2-5).

6.5 Reiteration of the presence of God is a moving and uniting force:

The Book of Joshua: “Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, Lord your God is with you wherever you go!” (Josh 1:9) and “They answered to Joshua: “All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go” (Josh 1:16).

The Annals in Karnak Temple: “I swear Re Loves me, and Amon favors me...Behold they will say, these enemies whom Re abominates, has his majesty set out on another road because he has become afraid of us? ...Behold we are following thy majesty everywhere that [thy majesty] goes, for a servant will be after [his] lord” (Lines 40-49).

In Joshua, God assures him of His protection, and after he assumes command, people, and warriors answer him, “Wherever you send us, we will go.” Also, Joshua is charged not to be frightened. In the Annals, Thutmose III assures his warriors that he is under the protection of the gods. Pharaoh is concerned with what his enemies will say about his actions, so he is

afraid of being seen as afraid. His warriors, like Joshua's, use the same wording and agree to go "everywhere".

Common traits between these two accounts are 1) Invocation of the presence of God, 2) Not being afraid, and 3) Spatial reference: "everywhere." The presence of God and its reiteration among the people is a moving force that overcomes geographical difficulties like Jordan or the mountain range.

6.6 Cyclical or cosmic time is well recorded:

The Book of Joshua: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it" (Josh 1:8).

The Annals in Karnak Temple: "A halt was made by his majesty outside, there and awaiting the rear of his victorious army. Now the leaders had just finished coming forth on this road when the shadow turned. His majesty reached the south of Megiddo on the bank of Qina brook, when the seventh hour was in its course in the day" (Line 80).

Joshua is commanded to make use of Moses' law in such a way to "meditate on it day and night" (Josh 1:8). This time reference *וַיִּזְכֹּר וְלַיְלָה* is understood by scholars to mean: "always"²⁵⁴, pointing toward the popular usage of the phrase in Ps 1:2²⁵⁵. The feature of continuity and perpetuity may be seen in the disposition of the words with fronted *וַיִּזְכֹּר*, which stands in contrast to creational day with fronted *וַיִּזְכֹּר* (Gen 1:5). The scholarly debate addressed this problem in detail paring sides to the question of when does the biblical day starts. In my opinion, fronted *וַיִּזְכֹּר* may be taken yet another way to express continuity, for in this case author may imply the period of two days. The first day is marked by *וַיִּזְכֹּר* and another day starts with *וַיִּזְכֹּר*.

The annals also record the cosmic time stating: "when the shadow turned," meaning noon, when "the shadow clock should be turned around".²⁵⁶ With another reference to the system of hours. The biblical author does not utilize precise time references like these.

²⁵⁴ Hubbard, *Joshua*, 82.

²⁵⁵ See Boling, *Joshua*, 125.

²⁵⁶ James Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 236.

6.7 A call for the flow:

The Book of Joshua: “Be strong and courageous” (Josh 1:6).

The Annals from Karnak Temple: “Be steadfast! Be steadfast! Be vigilant! Be vigilant!” (Line 83).

Another interesting dimension common for both accounts is a petition for being in a constant state of courage, or more precisely, in the translation of D. Howard Jr. – in the constant state of “resoluteness.”²⁵⁷ Timewise this state is to be constant and fruitful or designated as *the flow*. Flow is usually defined as an “optimal state of consciousness where we feel our best and perform our best; flow refers to those “in the zone” moments where the focus gets so intense that everything else disappears. Action and awareness start to merge. Our sense of self vanishes. Our sense of time as well. And all aspects of performance, both mental and physical, go through the roof.”²⁵⁸ Thus, flow is intense creational performance when time is not important, but focuses on the execution of the mission. Flow is the state of resoluteness: determination to bring the purpose.

Firstly, God invites Joshua three times to be “strong and courageous” (Josh 1:6 and Josh 1:7 and Josh 1:9), and then the people call him also to be “strong and courageous” (Josh 1:18). These are a total of four calls to be in the state of flow, to be determined to execute God’s will. The annals in Karnak also have four calls for flow doubled in the line 83: “Be steadfast! Be steadfast! Be vigilant! Be vigilant!”, as well as in line 93: “Be steadfast, be steadfast! Be vigilant, [be vigilant]!” Thus, flow is the state of alertness and caution, bringing victory and overall success. A call for the flow stands in contrast to death and thus it is the life-sustaining quality which these texts advocate.

Joshua’s account, God and people commissioned Joshua to remain in the state of the flow. In the pharaoh’s account, he is regarded as godly, and he commissions his warriors. The uniqueness of the biblical author is in his double commission of Joshua, both God and people are united in the wish for this state to last. Intense focus to accomplish important things is underlined with the use of the adverb רק – only (Joshua 1:7). Only peak performance in flow is desired. Additionally, the book of Joshua brings a more complex views of the flow, labeled in this study as sanctified flow, or pregnant, eventful now.

²⁵⁷ Howard, *Joshua*, 84.

²⁵⁸ Steven Kotler, and Jamie Wheal, *Stealing Fire* (New York, NY: Dey Street Books, 2017), 3.

6.8 The important segment is marked with early morning time reference “at the dawn”:

The Book of Joshua: “On the seventh day they rose early, at the dawn of day.” (Josh 6:15)

The Annals in Karnak Temple: “Year 23, 1st month of the third season, day 21, the day of the feast of the true new moon. Appearance of the king at dawn” (Line 84).\

Focus to act in the state of the flow, in both accounts, is brought by the common time reference of rising at the dawn. Joshua and his people “rose early, at the dawn of day” (Josh 6:15), as well as the pharaoh who appeared among his soldiers at dawn. HALOT explains daybreak as: “the reddish glow which precedes the dawn,”²⁵⁹ and “the very first sign of brightness preceding the break of day.”²⁶⁰

“The pivotal scene”²⁶¹ of the seventh day starts early when the day breaks with the procession: “and marched around the city, in the same manner, seven times.” Similarly, after the pharaoh’s appearance at dawn, Annals immediately continues: “Now a charge was laid upon the entire army to pass by” (Line 84). Both accounts follow with the capture of the city.

In the book of Joshua, there are three more occurrences of early rising in Josh 3:1; 6:12; and 7:16. These might be paralleled with the phrase “Awakening in the tent of life, prosperity, and health” which indicates the waking up of Thutmose III. This phrase is repeated twice in the Annals in line 56 and line 84. As mentioned before, in Joshua, this was the marker of anticipation of direct God’s involvement or the fulfillment of His promises.

6.9 Life-long, the lasting component supports the main character’s well-being:

The Book of Joshua: “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. I will be with you” (Josh 1:5).

The Annals in Karnak Temple: “Life, prosperity, health!” (Line 74).

The main proponents in both accounts are being supported with the blessing sounding with life-long- or lasting-time allusions. In Joshua, God encourages him of his continuing presence for “all the days” of his life. Pharaoh is addressed often (Lines 39, 56, 74, 83, and 84) through the Annals with greetings: “Life, prosperity, health!” This greeting or saying, whenever the pharaoh’s name is mentioned, also calls for a lasting abundance of life. If we connect this state with the previously recognized flow (Number 8), one can realize that the

²⁵⁹ HALOT, 1467.

²⁶⁰ HALOT, 1467.

²⁶¹ Hawk, *Joshua*, 98.

flow in Joshua’s case is only possible in the presence of God, confirming “I will be with you” (Josh 1:5). For the Pharaoh, who is already regarded as a god, flow is marked with “life, prosperity, health” (Line 74). Therefore, flow as thorough absorption into the desired action is secured with divine presence. The realm of the divine disables distractions seen in people with opposite attitudes: “no man shall be able to stand before you” (Josh 1:5).

Interestingly, the administration of the oaths in both accounts also includes lasting characterization. Joshua’s oath given “כָּבַעַת הָהָיָא” has a lasting consequence for those who rebuild Jericho. They will be indefinitely “cursed” (Josh 6:26), so “At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates” (Josh 6:26). The oath has endless efficacy. Similar is seen in *the Barkal Stela* of Thutmose III: “Then my majesty had administrated to them an oath fealty, with the words: “We will not repeat evil against Amon-Re, who lives forever, our good lord, in our time of life, since we have seen his power, and he has given us breath as he wishes” (Line 24). The prisoners are charged and swore to obey Amon-Re as long as they live. This is underscored with the words: “since we have seen his power”, as a potential death penalty which was already witnessed previously.

A comparison between Joshua 1-6 and the Annals of Thutmose III from the Karnak temple has revealed several significant similarities and one important difference in the time perception of the two authors. As the table points out (Table 1), both authors demonstrate a complex and multi-layered time perception:

Table 1

	<i>Time Perception:</i>	<i>Joshua 1-6</i>	<i>Annals of Thutmose III</i>
1.	Opens with a time reference	“After the death of Moses” (Josh 1:1)	“Year 22, 4 th month of the season, day 25” (Line 7)
2.	Present time is depicted along with spatial (geographical) references	“Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel” (Joshua 1:2).	“The day of the feast of the king’s coronation as far as the town of “That-Which-the-Ruler-Seized”, [of which the Syrian name is] Gaza” (Line 13).
3.	Anticipation of the future events	“Within three days you are to pass over this Jordan to go in to take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess” (Josh 1:11).	“They are fallen” (Line 65).
4.	Future is “double checked”	“Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and	“They came to tell his majesty: “The desert is well and the garrisons of

		<p>came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them.</p> <p>And they said to Joshua: “Truly Lord has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us” (Josh 2:23-24).</p>	<p>the south and north also!” (Line 84).</p>
5.	Reiteration of presence of God is moving and uniting force	<p>“Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, Lord your God is with you wherever you go!” (Josh 1:9).</p> <p>“And they answered to Joshua: “All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go” (Josh 1:16).</p>	<p>“I swear Re Loves me, and Amon favors me...Behold they will say, these enemies whom Re abominates, has his majesty set out on another road because he has become afraid of us? ...Behold we are following thy majesty everywhere that [thy majesty] goes, for a servant will be after [his] lord” (Lines 40-49).</p>
6.	Cyclical or cosmic time is well recorded	<p>“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it” (Josh 1:8).</p>	<p>“A halt was made by his majesty outside, there and awaiting the rear of his victorious army. Now the leaders had just finished coming forth on this road when the shadow turned. His majesty reached the south of Megiddo on the bank of Qina brook, when the seventh hour was in its course in the day” (Line 80).</p>
7.	Calls for the flow	<p>“Be strong and courageous” (Josh 1:6).</p>	<p>“Be steadfast! Be steadfast! Be vigilant! Be vigilant!” (Line 83).</p>
8.	Important segment is marked with early morning time reference “at the dawn”	<p>“On the seventh day they rose early, at the dawn of day.” (Josh 6:15).</p>	<p>“Year 23, 1st month of the third season, day 21, the day of the feast of the true new moon. Appearance of the king at dawn” (Line 84).</p>
9.	Life-long, lasting component supports the main character	<p>“No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. I will be with you” (Josh 1:5).</p>	<p>“Life, prosperity, health!” (Line 74).</p>

7. Conclusion

The primary goal of this study is to present the complexities of the biblical perception of time in the book of Joshua. Accordingly, the biblical author has a marvelous command of precepting the time, both in linear fashion and cyclical fashion.

Linear perception of time is recorded in many different ways: 1) denoting the moment in time “after the death of Moses” (Joshua 1:1) or “on the seventh day” (Joshua 6:15); 2) shortly anticipated time, like “tomorrow” (Joshua 3:5; 4:6, 21; 7:13); 3) durational in the strict chronological terms, intrusion of ANE reckoning “three days” (Joshua 2:16, 22); 4) ideological or theological marker “within three days” implying sanctification; 5) durational in unspecified terms like “A long time afterward” (Joshua 23:1) or “All the days of the life” (Joshua 1:5; 4:14; 24:31); and 6) Precisely dated events, like crossing on “the tenth day of the first month” (Joshua 4:19), and the Passover “on the fourteenth day of the month” (Joshua 5:10).

Cyclical time perception is also well-marked throughout the book. Interestingly, these time references are the carriers of symbolic meaning and important theological messages. For example, the continual aspect is seen in time reference “day and night” (Joshua 1:8). “The Night” marker (Joshua 4:3; 6:11; 8:3, 9, 13; 10:9) usually implied the hidden and mysterious things, while “the evening” (Joshua 7:6) and time of setting the sun indicated new beginnings and change. “The morning” (Joshua 7:14) indicated the revealing of the truth.

Importantly, linear and cyclical perceptions intermingle, confirming that the author is capable of processing and noting different time concepts while constructing or presenting his own. Above all, he used them to signal to time when time per se is not important, but the reality or “pregnant, eventful now” and “sanctified flow” of God’s cooperation with His people in covenantal and relational terms. This phenomenon is presented by collapsing time for the sake of emphasizing the event and presenting the complex narratives as those beyond the reach of the editors. As the inauguration of the time flow and extreme focus on the event that is more predominant than time itself, this study labeled the time reference of “rising early” in the morning or at dawn (Joshua 3:1; 6:12, 15; 7:16; 8:10).

Thus, time references in the book of Joshua serve interpretational purposes, proving to inaugurate polemical qualities as well. This study addressed the underlying theological and temporal polemics, like opposing Stern’s argument that biblical perception of time is primitive, Von Rad’s and Mandzaridis’ observations that Old Testament time is strictly linear and agreeing with Bundvand’s and Jackelen’s statements on complexities of biblical time perceptions based on the constant use of both linear and cyclical perceptions. On top of this,

time references presented themselves as carrying inductive qualities, involving the readers in the events, and as strong narrative binders often pointing toward symbolic qualities, depicting meaningful, “pregnant now.” The present study aims to advance work in the linguistic field scholars have produced (Barr, DeVries, Von Rad, Brin, Kim, Geoghegan, et al.), describing different time words apart from their context because they failed to produce systematic and comprehensive biblical time perception.

The comparison made between Joshua and the Annals of Thutmose III revealed the facts that the ancient world shared the common complexities of time perceptions. In short, strict linear time is well recorded from event to event, along with “daily” cosmic or cyclical time. The present time is often depicted with spatial references but also with a reiteration of God’s trust. Future is anticipated, but in Joshua, which is the most important difference between the two, the author is certain of it because it relates to God’s promise. Joshua believes that God already gave Israel the land (נתן in perfect), or that He is just about to provide them with (נתן in imperfect). The flow is introduced by the same time-referenced focus point of rising “at the dawn”. Also, the time flow is called for to be the prominent state of the characters in charge who, with God’s presence, continue to succeed. Joshua’s flow goes beyond Pharaoh’s for it presumes a relationship with God, and thus makes it sanctified flow when time does not matter. On the other hand, Pharaoh is considered god, but time is burdensome to him; there is no meaningful inhabiting of time, like in Joshua, when God is acting with His people.

Lastly, this study argues that the concept of time in the book of Joshua is expressed in dynamic ways, in terms of linear time perception, cyclical time perception, and the sanctified flow of inhabited time with God.

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תקציר

מחקר זה יטען כי תפיסת הזמן המקראית, כפי שניתן לראות בספר יהושע, היא ראייה מורכבת ודינמית של זמן. זה יציין את תפיסת הזמן הליניארית, כמו התגלגלות של האירועים ברצפים, בזה אחר זה, המסמנת אותה על ידי הפניות זמן ליניאריות. כמו כן, המחקר הנוכחי יציין תפיסת זמן מחזורית במונחים קוסמיים, חלקים מהיום והשינוי בין לילה ליום, המסומנים בהפניות זמן מכבדות. לבסוף, היא תזהה את התופעות של התמוטטות הזמן כדי להדגיש את נוכחותו של אלוהים ואת מעורבותו ב"בהריון, עתיר אירועים". חשוב לציין, עבודה זו תתרכז באופן שבו שתי השקפות זמן אלו מתואמות ומייצרות תפיסת זמן מורכבת ודינמית למדי הנושאת את הגוון התיאולוגי של אכיפת הקהילה מחדש עם אלוהים. ההתאחדות עם אלוהים, במובן מסוים, ממוטטת את הזמן ומציגה את מציאות הזרימה, חוויה משמעותית ומכוונת אלוהים הדורשת התמקדות מלאה באלוהים.

עבודה זו נעשתה בהדרכתו של פרופ' אליהו עסיס
מן מחלקה לתנ"ך ע"ש זלמן שמיר של אוניברסיטת בר-אילן.

אוניברסיטת בר-אילן

תפיסת הזמן בספר יהושע

דמיטריג'י סטנוג'ביק

עבודה זו מוגשת כחלק מהדרישות לשם קבלת תואר מוסמך

במחלקה לתנ"ך ע"ש זלמן שמיר,

אוניברסיטת בר-אילן

תשפ"ה

רמת גן