JOSIAH IN THE BOOK OF JOSHUA
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I

FOR the last thirty years or so, scholars have frequently remarked on the essentially royal nature of the figure of Joshua in the deuteronomistic history (Dtr). The major arguments are as follows.

(1) According to Josh 1:7-8, Yahweh commanded Joshua to meditate on the book of the law day and night. This corresponds to the daily reading assigned to the king by Deut 17:18-19. The law under consideration in each case is clearly one written in a book. The language used makes the kingly nature of Joshua’s task as obvious as possible. The “turn not from it to the right hand or to the left” of Josh 1:7 is an almost exact quotation of Deut 17:20. The surprising demonstrative pronoun of Josh 1:8 (“this book of the law”) retains the usage of Deut 17:18-19. This was no casual reminiscence, but a deliberate editorial effort on the part of Dtr. He created Josh 1:3-5a on the basis of Deut 11:24-25. Then Josh 1:5b-6 was composed on the model of Deut 31:6-8, with Josh 1:9 continuing the same theme. Between Josh 1:6 and 9, Dtr quite deliberately inserted into his literary models vv 7-8 concerning Joshua’s royal obligation towards the law. Clearly, Dtr considered what he had to say here of great importance.

(2) Yahweh’s charge to Joshua in Josh 1:1-9 is cast into the form used for the installation of a king. Porter has shown that the linkage here of the issue


2 I believe the potential literary-critical problems in Josh 1:1-9 (M. Noth, Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien [3rd ed.; Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1967] 41 n. 1 and more recently R. Smend, “Das Gesetz und die Volker,” Probleme biblischer Theologie [ed. H. W. Wolff; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1971] 494-509) have been adequately dealt with by Porter, “Succession,” 103 n. 6. E. Otto analyzes Josh 1 into a deuteronomistic basic text (his Quelle B) and later additions related to the redaction of Dtr as a whole (Das Mazzotfest in Gilgal [BWANT 107; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1975] 86-88). Otto is overly dependent on the criterion of singular versus plural address (see n. 13 below) and automatically considers citations of passages outside of Joshua as secondary to the basic source B. Overall, there seems to be little reason to distin-

of obedience to the law with the more general form used for the installation of office holders\textsuperscript{4} restricts that more general form to the specific function of royal installation. The same genre, with the key element of law included, was also used by Dtr to effect the succession of royal power from David to Solomon in 1 Kgs 2:2-4. The verbal parallels to Josh 1:1-9 are striking.\textsuperscript{5}

(3) In Josh 8:30-35, Joshua leads a ceremony of covenant renewal, taking what would be the king’s role in the time of the monarchy.\textsuperscript{6} He builds the altar, gathers the people, and reads the law to them. We could just as easily be reading about Solomon or Josiah. In fact, if we are willing to read with the LXX, Joshua even exercises the royal prerogative of non-priestly sacrifice in v 31.\textsuperscript{7}

(4) Joshua takes power immediately upon the death of Moses. This is not the charismatic pattern of the judges or prophets, but the royal pattern of smooth dynastic succession.\textsuperscript{8} Compare Josh 1:2 with 1 Kgs 2:2.

(5) Joshua is to partition the land among the various tribes (Josh 11:23), a task reflecting the royal power to subdivide the kingdom into districts (1 Kgs 4:7-19).\textsuperscript{9}

(6) In Josh 1:16-18, the people pledge uncompromising obedience to Joshua as the successor to Moses. We need only think of the statements in Near Eastern vassal treaties demanding obedience to the suzerain’s successor\textsuperscript{10} to understand the royal environment in which such concerns are at home.

(7) To authenticate the transition of power from Moses to Joshua, Yahweh gives Joshua a special sign of divine favor, the dry-shod passage through the Jordan (Josh 3:7). The people respond with obedience and deep awe (Josh 4:14). This same rhythm of events is discernible in Dtr’s treatment of Solomon’s succession (1 Kgs 2:12; 3:12-13, 28). The wisdom given to the new king through the theophany at Gibeon creates awe in the minds of his subjects.\textsuperscript{11}

(8) In Dtr, Joshua undergoes a double installation, first by Moses (Deut 31:7-8), then by Yahweh (Josh 1:1-9). A similar two-stage process, designation by Yahweh himself and then installation by some human agency, can be traced in the cases of Saul (1 Sam 9:17; 10:1), David (implicit in 1 Sam


\textsuperscript{5} For example, the hiphil of ḫld in Josh 1:7-8 and 1 Kgs 2:3.

\textsuperscript{6} Widengren, “King and Covenant,” 13-15.

\textsuperscript{7} 2 Sam 6:13, 17; 24:25; 1 Kgs 3:4, 15; 8:62; 9:25; 12:33; 13:1; 2 Kgs 10:24 LXX. The alternation of the subject from singular to plural to singular again in the MT of vv 31-32 is awkward. The MT could have arisen from dittography.


\textsuperscript{9} Good, “Joshua,” 992.

\textsuperscript{10} For example, the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon regarding the rights of the crown prince Ashurbanipal, ANET, 535-38.

\textsuperscript{11} Porter, “Succession,” 128-29.
Mazzotfest, and the prophetic address of Jehu (1 Kgs 19:16; 2 Kgs 9:1-6, 13). It is also reflected in the coronation psalms.\textsuperscript{12}

Moving beyond those arguments already advanced by others, the writer would like to suggest three more strong indications that Dtr considered Joshua to be a royal figure.

In Josh 1:5, the promise of Yahweh to his people is concentrated on one individual. To compose Josh 1:3-5, Dtr directly quoted the promise of land and victory directed to all Israel (Deut 11:24-25), but in defiance of what is supposed to be his usual practice,\textsuperscript{13} he has changed the address to the second person singular.\textsuperscript{14} This concentration of the whole nation's promise on one person was an aspect of royal ideology. For example, in the royal psalms the nation's military success is spoken of as though it were the king's accomplishment alone (Pss 2, 18, 20, 21, 45). In fact the ideological similarity of Josh 1:3, 5 to the promise to David in 2 Sam 7:9-10 is remarkable. Both passages link the promise of the restful land made to all with the individual military success of the one individual upon whom this general promise has become focused.

According to Josh 1:18, the people consider death the appropriate penalty for those who do not obey Joshua. In Deuteronomy's view, verdicts of priests and prophets must not be despised on penalty of death (Deut 17:12), but in actual historical practice this was a concomitant of royal authority. Insubordination towards the kings could be a capital offense (1 Sam 11:12; 22:16; 2 Sam 16:5-9; 19:21; 1 Kgs 2:24, 39-46; 21:10).

According to Deut 17:18, the king is to write for himself a copy of the law. Josh 8:32 indicates as faithful a fulfillment of this obligation as one could wish. In obeying Deut 27:3, Joshua reproduces his own copy of Moses' law on the altar stones: "And he wrote there upon the stones in the presence of the sons of Israel the copy of the law of Moses which he [Joshua] had written." The supposedly awkward 'āšēr kātab of Josh 8:32, omitted by LXX\textsuperscript{B} and many impatient commentators, is no problem at all when read in this light. Deut 17:18 and Josh 8:32 are the only two occurrences of the expression mīšnēḥ tōrā in the OT. Furthermore, the striking use of "this book" in Josh 1:8 seems to mean that Dtr pictured Joshua as having this document—that is, his personal copy of the law—in hand on the occasion of his installation, a practice reminiscent of 2 Kgs 11:12, the coronation of Joash.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 129-31.

\textsuperscript{13} G. Minette de Tillesse, "Sections 'tu' et sections 'vous' dans le Deutéronome," VT 12 (1962) 47-73. To consider vv 3-4 secondary to their context on the basis of their singular address (Otto, Mazzotfest, 87) is to ignore the perfect sense provided by the singular/plural alternation in the text as it stands: Joshua himself is addressed in the singular (vv 2, 5), but when included with the people, he and they are addressed in the plural (vv 3-4).

\textsuperscript{14} Compare bipnēḵem (Deut 11:25) with lēpānēḵā (Josh 1:5). The versions return the suffix to the plural but this is out of harmony with the singular address of what follows and makes nonsense out of the meaning of v 5a.
Joshua, therefore, is pictured by Dtr as a royal figure. He could hardly have made his point clearer without committing a serious anachronism: Joshua is a sort of proto-king sketched out along the lines of the ideal deuteronomistic monarch. We must now go on to ask if Dtr had any particular historical king in mind, in whose image the traditional figure of Joshua was re-formed.

II

Which OT king kept the book of the law scrupulously (Josh 1:7-8), mediated a covenant between God and people (Josh 8:30-35), and re-established the passover on an ancient model (Josh 5:10-11)? We might toy with the possibility of David or Hezekiah at first, but it is of course King Josiah who comes most strongly to mind. Let us trace in a more detailed way the three parallels we have just drawn.

(1) Obedience to the law. Yahweh instructs Joshua to keep the law carefully: “Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left” (Josh 1:7). As death draws near, Joshua takes leave of his people, admonishing them with the same words: “turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left” (Josh 23:6). This expression for keeping to the legal straight and narrow is used four times in Deuteronomy.\(^\text{15}\) Considering the context, Dtr has certainly quoted it from the law of the king (Deut 17:20). Significantly, Dtr never uses this indication of total, uncompromising obedience again, except in reference to one man, Josiah. “And he did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh, and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left” (2 Kgs 22:2).

In a work as carefully constructed as Dtr, this is hardly likely to be accidental. Josiah is the only king since the archetypal David perfectly to meet Yahweh’s requirement according to the standards laid down by Deuteronomy. According to Dtr’s interpretation of his people’s history of origins, Joshua also, the Josiah of ancient days, had this same standard laid upon him. Joshua was just as perfectly faithful as Josiah has been. At his death, Joshua passed this standard on to a people who were really not able to live up to it again, not until the heroic Josiah appeared on the scene.

To make clear the parallel he wished to draw between the Josiah of his own day and the Joshua of former times, Dtr has read back into classical history the concept of the law being encapsulated into a book. We must remember that the idea of a book of divine law was something rather new in 622 BCE. In a culture accustomed to oral law, the thought of God’s law being rolled up into a volume must have been fresh and exciting. Dtr betrays some of his own excitement by expressly referring to Josiah’s new law as a “book” eleven times in 2 Kgs 22-23. The book of the law had not

\(^\text{15}\) Deut 5:32; 17:11, 20; 28:14.
been mentioned by Dtr before this (leaving aside an essentially timeless negative editorial judgment in 2 Kgs 14:6) except in regard to Joshua. Josh 1:8 exhorts him to meditate on the “book of the law,” a phrase used elsewhere by Dtr only in reference to Josiah’s book (2 Kgs 22:8, 11). The altar on Ebal is constructed according to the “book of the law of Moses” (Josh 8:31), and Joshua reads there from the “book of the law” (v 34). Josh 23:6 has the dying leader call for obedience to the “book of the law of Moses.” This book then drops from view almost entirely, until Josiah’s priests rediscover it.17

It is Joshua, therefore, who in the matter of strict obedience to the law functions in Dtr’s history as an earlier version of Josiah. Of Joshua Dtr could say, “He left nothing undone of all that Yahweh had commanded Moses” (Josh 11:15), and of Josiah, “Before him there was no king like him, who turned to Yahweh with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses” (2 Kgs 23:25).

2 Covenant mediation. Widengren has already made the case that Joshua in Josh 8:30-35 and Josiah in 2 Kgs 23:1-3 are both serving as royal covenant mediators.18 It is important to note that it is only for these two that Dtr reports a genuine royal covenant mediation. Dtr says nothing about covenant renewal in regard to Solomon’s temple dedication, as Widengren himself remarks.19 In 2 Kgs 11:17, it is the priest Jehoida who renews the covenant, apparently as a stand-in for the underage Joash.

It was important for Dtr to include Josh 8:30-35 in his history. Scholars have generally been puzzled by the inclusion of these verses in such an awkward place in the sequence of events,20 but Dtr clearly went to some effort to break into the sequence of his source (cf. the reference of 9:1 to 8:29) to include them. In part, certainly, he did so to provide a fulfillment for Deut 27:2-8. The emphasis on Joshua as the covenant maker and the additional details concerning Joshua’s personal copy of the law (Josh 8:32), the reading from a law book (v 34), and the attendance of absolutely everyone (v 35), however, point forward in time directly to the royal covenant mediator Josiah, who gathered “all the people, both small and great, and . . . read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant” (2 Kgs 23:2). No other

16 2 Kgs 14:6 does mention “the book of the law of Moses” in regard to Amaziah.
17 Dtr does have David refer to it in 1 Kgs 2:3, but only by implication: “as it is written in the law of Moses.”
18 Widengren, “King and Covenant,” 3-4.
19 Ibid., 8.
20 Noth’s explanation is probably the most reasonable: “Der dtn-istische Redaktor hat das Stück an der Stelle eingeschoben, wo nach seiner Meinung den Israeliten durch die Eroberung von ha-‘Ai der Weg nach Sichem offen stand”; M. Noth, Das Buch Josua (HAT 1/7; Tübingen: Mohr, 1938) 29. Otto (Mazzotfest, 89, 91) assigns it to his deuteronomistic Quelle B as the last bit of material from it. His argument denying a connection to Josh 23 (p. 91 n. 5) is circular, depending a priori on his assumption that his Quelle B is an independent narrative source.
ceremony within Dtr's purview corresponds so exactly to Josiah's covenant renewal as Joshua's does.

(3) Passover. In his 18th year, Josiah instituted an archaizing passover based on the newly discovered law book (2 Kgs 23:21-23). Its distinguishing feature was the centralization of the celebration in Jerusalem in obedience to Deut 16:2, 5-6. In Dtr's express opinion, every other passover kept since the time of the judges had been deficient on this important point (2 Kgs 23:22). In fact, he did not even mention passover throughout his whole presentation of history from the judges to Josiah's 18th year.

This is in vivid contrast to the Chronicler, who seems to have had information about an important reforming passover under Hezekiah (2 Chr 30). It may be that Dtr, in his effort to make Josiah seem as heroic as possible, has consciously played down the role of Hezekiah as reformer. Are we to imagine that Dtr was simply ignorant of Hezekiah's achievements, or has he simply passed over them because they so closely parallel Josiah's work, which Dtr wished to present as totally revolutionary (2 Kgs 22:13)?

In any case, it was to Joshua that Dtr looked through his comment in 2 Kgs 23:22 for the ancient model of Josiah's ceremony. Josh 5:10-12 corresponds exactly to Josiah's celebration. Both festivals are public, not domestic, and are centered on the sanctuary of Yahweh's choice.

There are vexing problems concerning the origin and transmission of the tradition of a Gilgal unleavened bread ceremony and its place in the history of the development of passover. The recent discussion has been extensive.21 It is quite clear, however, that Josh 5:10-12 are in no way the work of Dtr, nor was he responsible for their location between the Gilgal circumcision and the episode that follows in Josh 5:13-15.22 How, then, could we imagine that Josh 5:10-12 might play any role in Dtr's conception of Joshua?

Dtr was a faithful preserver of the traditions he inherited,23 but this does not imply that he simply copied older material out of some antiquarian interest, without intending to integrate it into the overall unity of his work. In fact, he was quite willing to let his sources speak for him when they could make an important point. For example, both the ark story24 and the Nathan oracle25 serve as key turning points in his narrative, although he himself did not create them. In the case of Josh 5:10-12, an ancient, non-deuteronomistic

22 Noth, Josua, 4, 17; Otto, Mazzotfest, 62-65; Soggin, Joshua, 74.
23 Noth, Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien, 95-97.
bit of tradition again takes on pivotal meaning for Dtr, even though from a literary-critical point of view he did not interfere with it in any major way.

Dtr's disinclination to interfere, in fact, went so far as to prevent him from adding any notice that Joshua himself had anything to do with the Gilgal ceremony. Nevertheless, although Joshua is not present in the text of Josh 5:10-12, he was certainly there in Dtr's conception of things. Joshua, as the chief actor in the preliminary circumcision (Josh 5:2-9), is by the strongest implication of context meant to be the instigator of the Gilgal celebration as well. No other major activity in Josh 1-12, 23 takes place without his leading presence, except the spying out of Jericho.

Dtr's editorial activity is more subtle in the case of Josh 5:10-12 than with Josh 1:7, 23:6 or Josh 8:30-35, but once again Joshua serves him as a forerunner of Josiah, providing an explicit historical precedent for Josiah's revolutionary reforming passover.

III

If we now re-read the book of Joshua, alert to Dtr's presentation of the figure of Joshua as a sort of prototypical Josiah, several other passages and events take on a deeper meaning, resonating, as it were, with fuller harmonics.

For example, Joshua as holy war leader helps give us a fuller insight into the way Dtr viewed his contemporary hero, Josiah. Joshua is pictured, of course, as a classic holy war leader, especially at Jericho, and many holy war motifs surround him. For Dtr, this traditional picture of Joshua must have set up sympathetic vibrations with his own conception of Josiah, who apparently returned to the old-fashioned citizen militia, restoring and reorganizing it to meet the military demands of Judah's new situation. One specific motif of holy war ideology that Dtr himself supplied to the figure of Joshua comes in Yahweh's charge to him in Joshua 1. This whole chapter is strangely unmilitaristic, given that it introduces a book full of war and bloodshed. The coming expedition across the Jordan is pictured less as a violent invasion than as a triumphal procession, one in the best traditions of holy war: "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you" (Josh 1:3 quoted from Deut 11:24). Josh 1:10-15 also leaves the reader with the impression of the conquest as an unopposed march through a land already at Israel's feet. It is as though Dtr is tempering the traditions of a violent past, inherited from the pre-deuteronomistic book of Joshua, with his own experience of Josiah's triumphant, but essentially peaceful, recovery of ancestral territory left wide open by Assyrian withdrawal.

The details of Josiah's northern expansion are sketchy and controversial. The order of events remains unclear. Even the extent of territorial advance

26 G. von Rad, Der heilige Krieg im alten Israel (Zurich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1951) 7-13, 43-44.
beyond southern Benjamin cannot be determined with confidence, and we should use extreme caution in proposing annexation or administrative occupation of Samaria and beyond.28 But even if the ideology of the return of lost lands went far beyond pedestrian reality, the ideology did remain in force,29 and given the advanced state of Assyrian collapse, Josiah’s advance, however limited, must have been essentially peaceful.30

Josiah’s presence in Bethel and other cities of Samaria (2 Kgs 23:19) means that for Dtr, at least, it could be said of both Joshua and Josiah that every place that the soles of their feet trod upon was given them. Even if cold reality did not completely square with nationalistic hope, Joshua serves Dtr once more as a forerunner of Josiah.

Josiah also pioneered Josiah’s aspirations by seeking to occupy the territory of the Davidic empire, at least in Dtr’s view. The promised land of conquest is presented by Dtr in the wide open and optimistic terms of Deut 1:7 and Josh 1:4. The book of Joshua does not encompass so wide a territory, of course, and Dtr was well aware of it (Joshua 12; Judg 3:3). These ideal frontiers, inherited from Deut 11:24, are laid programmatically before Joshua as a forerunner of Josiah. By the same token, some parts of the Davidic empire, Edom, Moab, and Ammon, are clearly excluded by Dtr from the land of promise (Deut 2:5, 9, 11). These are areas into which Josiah apparently made no attempt to penetrate.31

Dtr’s emphasis upon Joshua as the one who caused Israel to inherit the land now becomes more understandable. Joshua was the pioneer who, in part, fulfilled the aspirations of Josiah, or at least those of some of the king’s supporters. Therefore, Dtr, writing out of his own experience with Josiah, makes the land the symbol of promise and salvation in his theology of history.32

Another theological overtone is created by the interplay of Joshua and Josiah in Josh 1:17. Why do the men of the Transjordan add this reservation to their pledge of absolute obedience: “only may Yahweh your God be with you, as he was with Moses” (Josh 1:17)? What does this slight hesitation reflect in the mind of Dtr? Was not Joshua’s quasi-royal office enough to


29 Even Welten remarks (Königstempel, 164): “Dass Josia eine Wiederherstellung des davidischen Grossreiches anstrebe, ist direkt nicht zu beweisen. Es soll damit aber nicht bestritten werden, dass diese Idee zu seiner Zeit lebendig war.”

30 There is still no reason to dissent from John Bright’s judgment (A History of Israel [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959] 295): “since these provinces had been abandoned by Assyria, they could not have offered much resistance.”


justify obedience? Not in Dtr’s opinion. He had realized what legitimate, but evil, holders of royal office could do. The difference between Saul and David, both legitimate kings, was simply that Yahweh was with the latter, but not the former (1 Sam 16:18 etc.). Manasseh was legitimately king but worked terrible apostasy. His grandson Josiah, on the other hand, wields authority not simply as the legal occupant of the Davidic throne, but as one who has earned Yahweh’s favor by his obedience (2 Kgs 22:18-19). His predecessor Joshua likewise exercises true authority, in the last analysis, because of the promise, “Yahweh your God is with you wherever you go” (Josh 1:9).33

Understanding Josiah’s influence on the deuteronomistic figure of Joshua also helps us recognize another area of theological interaction between Dtr’s present and the classical past. In Josh 23:12, Joshua warns the people about the danger of intermarriage with the inhabitants of the land. Dtr also makes an issue of this with Solomon (1 Kgs 11:1-8) and Ahab (1 Kgs 16:31). It is a concern inherited, of course, from Deut 7:3. The problem of mixed marriages and warnings against them have a long and complex tradition in the OT,34 and this concern probably never dropped out of sight completely. For Dtr, however, the issue has taken on increased importance because of Josiah’s expansion, or at least hoped-for expansion, into the former kingdom of Israel. Judah was faced with a real, as opposed to theoretical, crisis of foreign admixture for the first time in generations. The outsiders brought in by the Assyrians (2 Kgs 17:24; Ezra 4:2, 10; ANET, 284) had had a hundred years to intermingle with the indigenous population.35 The problem would have been compounded if Josiah used Greek mercenaries as has been suggested.36 Joshua’s call for ethnic purity now takes on deeper meaning. It is as though Dtr has taken it upon himself to suggest national policy to his hero king. As in the days of Joshua, Josiah’s policy towards this issue of miscegenation can only be that of Deut 7:3.

Even some of the traditional Joshua material, inherited by Dtr and left seemingly untouched by him, has taken on a new level of meaning. After Israel is defeated by the men of Ai, for example, Joshua tears his clothes and falls before the ark to intercede for the people (Josh 7:6-9). Could Dtr or his original readers have failed to appreciate the parallel to King Josiah, who upon hearing the book of the law and realizing how completely out of compliance with it the people are, displays a similar anxiety over his people’s

33 Dtr makes this same point in regard to the judges (Judg 2:18; 6:12) and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:7).
34 J. Halbe, Das Privilegrecht Jahwes Ex 34, 10-26 (FRLANT 114; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1975) 149-60.
fate (2 Kgs 22:11-13)? Joshua goes on to purify Israel with righteous violence. By fire and execution he cleanses the nation of sinful objects and the perpetrators of evil (Josh 7:12, 15, 25). Again, this traditional story would create a sort of sympathetic vibration with the events of 2 Kgs 23:4-20 in the minds of Dtr’s original readers.

IV

Recognizing that it is Josiah who hides behind the mask of the deuteronomistic Joshua gives us a deeper insight into Dtr’s editorial method. His approach to theological history was strongly colored by his hero worship of Josiah. This shows up in his descriptions of figures other than Joshua as well. Both Moses and Samuel are pictured as holy war leaders (Deut 2:33-36; 1 Sam 7:7-11) with a strong interest in covenant renewal (Deut 31:9-13; 1 Sam 7:3-6), reminding us once more of Josiah. Although the kings of Judah were ostensibly judged by the example of David, the perfect king (1 Kgs 3:3; 11:4, 6; 14:8; 15:3, 5, 11; 2 Kgs 14:3; 16:2; 18:3), actually David’s piety was not the decisive criterion. Josiah’s was. Even the kings who met the level of David’s faithfulness only received partial approval (1 Kgs 15:14; 22:44; 2 Kgs 12:4; 14:4; 15:4, 35), unless by practicing cult centralization they met Josiah’s standards as well (2 Kgs 18:4-5). The David who was the prototype of the perfect king was not really the David whom the historian met in his sources, but, as in the case of Joshua, an image of Josiah projected back into history.

Understanding the figure of Joshua in this way gives support to those who believe that the primary edition of Dtr was produced during the reign of Josiah as support for the Davidic kingship, as a call to faithfulness to the newly-discovered book of the law, as a challenge to reoccupy Israel irredeemably, and as a way to interpret the old traditions for a new age.37

The Joshua of Dtr is in many ways a thinly disguised Josianic figure who acts out the events of Dtr’s own day on the stage of the classical past. Against the backdrop of Gilgal, Ai, and Hazor, he struts out a deuteronomistic script recalling contemporary events involving Jerusalem, Bethel, and a Judean expansion to the north. While all this was obvious to Dtr’s seventh-century readers, the passage of years and later exilic redaction have made Joshua’s make-up and costume less transparent than originally intended. In this study we have tried to capture afresh what Dtr was trying to do in the book of Joshua.