THE USE OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT
IN THE NEW AND
OTHER ESSAYS

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THE RAHAB SAGA (JOSHUA 2):

Some Form-Critical and Traditio-Historical

Observations

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Two of the most problematic issues concerning the Old Testament conquest traditions are the closely-related questions of the history and the nature of the stories in Joshua 1–12. Recent discussions of the literary and preliterary history of this material have been strongly influenced by the work of Martin Noth, who has argued convincingly that the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, and I and II Kings comprise a single literary unit, the Deuteronomistic history work (Dtr.), composed in the exilic period by a writer who used older sources and oral traditions.[1] Noth also has analyzed the "sources" and traditions which the Deuteronomistic historian used in his account of the taking of the land.[2] Primarily as a result of Noth's work, the older effort to parcel out the material in the book of Joshua among the pentateuchal sources has been abandoned by most scholars.[3] However, the question of the existence of those sources within the conquest traditions has been raised from a fresh perspective recently by Sigmund Mowinckel,[4] who has argued that the remnants of a J version of the conquest can be seen in Joshua 1–12 and Judges 1. His work prompts us to examine once again the question of the literary and preliterary history of the conquest traditions, with particular attention to the pre-Deuteronomistic stages.

The second question, that of the nature of the material in Joshua 1–12, raises above all the problem of defining and interpreting etiological sagas. Noth, following Gressmann,[5] Alt,[6] and others, classified most of the individual stories in the first half of the book of Joshua as etiological sagas: Each arose as an answer to the child's question "Why?" concerning some existing phenomenon, such as the name of a place, a cultic practice or the ruin of a city. The debate which followed Noth's evaluation is well-known, and need not be reviewed in detail here. First Albright[7] and then Bright[8] argued that the etiological factor was never the primary motivating force in the creation of the tradition but was only secondarily attached to historical traditions.[9] Few have seriously questioned the presence of etiological concerns in the stories in Joshua 1–12 and elsewhere;[10] the argument has turned around whether these concerns were primary or secondary. The recent form-critical works of Childs[11] and Long[12] have tended to confirm the conclusion that the etiological formulas and conclusions are secondary, that is, either the formulas were secondarily added to received traditions[13] or these "marks" of the etiology "seldom can be used as a way of determining whether or not a given narrative served an etiological purpose."[14]

But questions remain. Both Childs and Long have directed their attention primarily to the etiological formulas which con-

1. Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1943), especially pp. 10 ff.

2. Martin Noth, *Das Buch-Josua, Handbuch zum Alten Testament* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1953), vol. 7, especially 11–13; and Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, pp. 40–47.

3. Noteworthy exceptions are Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, trans. P. R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 241–57; Eissfeldt, *Hexateuch-Synopse* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1922), pp. 66–84; and Georg Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, initiated by Ernst Sellin, trans. David E. Green (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), pp. 196–205.

4. Sigmund Mowinckel, *Tetrateuch—Pentateuch—Hexateuch*, BZAW, no. 90 (Berlin: A. Töplemann, 1964). See also Mowinckel, *Erwägungen zur Pentateuch Quellenfrage* (Trondheim: Universitetsforlaget, 1964), pp. 107–11.

5. Hugo Gressmann, *Die Schriften des Alten Testaments*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1922), 1:136 ff.

6. Albrecht Alt, *Josua*, BZAW, no. 66 (1936), pp. 13–29; reprinted in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1953), 1: 176–92.

7. W. F. Albright, "The Israelite Conquest of Canaan in the Light of Archaeology," *BASOR*, 74 (1939), 11–23.

8. John Bright, *Early Israel in Recent History Writing*, SBT, no. 19 (London: SCM Press, 1956).

9. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

10. For Noth's response to Bright, see *Der Beitrag der Archäologie zur Geschichte Israels*, SVT, no. 7 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), pp. 262–82, especially pp. 278 ff.

11. Brevard S. Childs, "A Study of the Formula, 'Until this Day,' " *JBL*, 82 (1963), 279–92.

12. Burke O. Long, *The Problem of Etiological Narrative in the Old Testament*, BZAW, no. 108 (Berlin: A. Töplemann, 1968).

13. Childs, p. 292.

14. Long, p. 3.

clude narrative units. However, the form-critical classification and evaluation of units must depend upon more than the analysis of formulas. They must include, among other matters, the examination of the structure of the unit for indications of its genre, setting, and intention. One must look now, as Long has suggested,[15] at the narratives themselves for evidence for or against etiological functions or intentions. And at the same time, since it has been argued that etiological conclusions usually are secondary to the basic traditions, one must combine the analysis of the formal elements of narratives with traditio-historical and *redactionsgeschichtliche* investigations. Only in such a way can one determine how a given story functioned through the various stages of its development and at which point the etiological conclusion was added, if indeed it did not exist in the original tradition.

So at this point our two questions coalesce. We cannot adequately deal with the issue of the genre of the stories in Joshua 1–12 (primarily the question of etiology) without examining the history of those stories. This paper is an attempt to raise these two questions in a limited way through an analysis of a single story, the account of Rahab and the Israelite spies (Josh. 2:1–24; 6:17, 22–25). Our primary focal point will be the story itself, but in the process of examining the story we hope to make a contribution to the broader questions.

THE DEUTERONOMISTIC CONTEXT

Our point of departure is the final form of the story of Rahab, as we have received it in its Deuteronomistic context. The book of Joshua, as an account of a definite stage in the history of Israel, is framed into the Deuteronomistic history work by the historian's introductory and concluding summaries in Josh. 1:1–18, 21:43–22:6, and 23:1–16.[16] The introduction in 1:1–18 is a well-rounded unit consisting of (1) Yahweh's speech to Joshua (1:1–9) including instructions for taking the land, admonitions to obey the law, and promises of success; (2) Joshua's instructions to the "officers" to

prepare the people for the crossing of the Jordan to take the land (1:10–11); and (3) Joshua's special instructions to the east Jordanian tribes to aid in the taking of west Jordan and their response (1:12–18). The location of these events is not specified. The Deuteronomistic historian assumes the location which he specified in Deut. 1:1 ff., the final wilderness stopping-place and the site of the last words and events in the life of Moses. The Mount Nebo of Deut. 34:1 he assumes to be in the immediate vicinity, "opposite Jericho." Josh. 1:1–18 continues immediately where Deuteronomy 34 had ended: After the death of Moses a new era begins under a new leader.

Joshua 2 maintains the general thread of the story to the extent that further preparations for the taking of west Jordan are made from a camp beyond the Jordan. However, a number of factors indicate a break between chapters 1 and 2. In the first place, the distinctively Deuteronomistic prose of chapter 1 is missing in 2:1 ff. Second, 2:1 specifies that Joshua sent the spies "from Shittim," a place not mentioned in the Dtr. version of the wilderness wandering. Third, chapter 1 seems to lead up directly to the crossing of the Jordan, and would be followed more logically by the narrative in 3:1 ff. than by that in chapter 2. Fourth, the reference to a crossing "within three days" (בְּעוֹד שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים) in 1:11 accommodates *either* the events in chapter 2 (cf. v. 22) *or* those at the beginning of chapter 3 (cf. v. 2), but not both. And fifth, while we cannot agree with Hertzberg that the situation in chapter 1 makes the reconnaissance of the land superfluous[17] (since the idea of the holy war and Yahweh's promises do not preclude the use of stratagems), we can recognize that the accent has shifted from the general parenetic speeches promising success to the detailed stories concerning specific places and events in the taking of the land. We conclude, therefore, with Noth[18] and others that chapter 2 presents us with the first of the pre-Deuteronomistic stories of the conquest of west Jordan.

The various contexts of the Rahab story, then, reflect the successive stages in the history of its growth and composition. It belongs first of all to the Deuteronomistic version of the taking of the

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15. *Ibid.*, pp. 2 ff., 94.
16. Noth, *Josua*, p. 9. Chapter 24, which has been edited by the Deuteronomistic redactor, poses some special problems.

17. H. W. Hertzberg, *Die Bücher Josua, Richter, Ruth*, 2nd ed., ATD, no. 9 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), p. 18.
18. Noth, *Josua*, pp. 11 ff., 21 ff.

land, Joshua 1–24. Second, it is the initial chapter in the account of the older source, Joshua 2–11. (Josh. 12:1–24 is another Dtr. summary.) Third, it is a part of the collection of stories of events around Gilgal and Jericho in Joshua 2–6, almost all of which conclude etiologically. More specifically within that collection, as we shall see, the Rahab story and chapter 6 belong together as the two parts of the account of the taking of Jericho. And finally, a Rahab story or stories once existed independently before becoming a part of that collection.

The Deuteronomistic redactor has allowed the story to stand virtually as it was when he received it, making only a few editorial additions. Most of these additions are found in Rahab's first speech to the spies, 2:9 ff., where she "is quoted as being rather well read in the Deuteronomic traditions of the exodus and the wilderness."[19] Distinctively Deuteronomistic language and point of view are seen at least in 2:9b (cf. Deut. 11:25), 2:10b (which recalls the Dtr. version of the Amorite wars, Deut. 2:30–3:7), and 2:11b (cf. Deut. 4:39).[20] It is possible that the entire unit 2:9b–11 stems from Dtr.,[21] but the precise parallels to Deuteronomistic language are not visible in verses 10a and 11a. The only other demonstrably Dtr. addition in chapter 2 is verse 24b, which parallels verse 9b.

The question of the presence of Dtr. material in the story's conclusion in 6:17, 22 ff. is more problematic. Mowinckel has attributed verse 23b to Dtr., apparently on the basis of the attitude it reflects toward the presence of foreigners within Israel;[22] Noth considered verse 25b a late addition and verse 26 Deuteronomistic;[23] and Bright raised the possibility that verse 27 was also Deuteronomistic.[24] However, in none of these instances can Deuteronomistic language or perspective be demonstrated with certainty. And at any rate only verses 23b and 25b bear directly upon the Rahab story, since verse 26 is the conclusion to the story of the destruction of Jericho (chapter 6), and verse 27 is a general summary statement concerning Joshua.

Beyond these few redactional additions, it is very likely that the original beginning of the old collection was dropped when it was incorporated into the historian's work. The present beginning of the collection in 2:1 is too abrupt, and וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוֹשֻׁעַ is an unusual beginning for a literary work.[25] One would expect at least a specification of the place in Trans-Jordan and possibly a general chronological reference. Furthermore, the historian expresses himself above all in introductory and concluding summaries. It is likely, then, that chapter 1 has displaced an older beginning, but the shape and contents of that introduction no longer can be determined.

The Deuteronomistic historian has framed this story (and the others in the older collection) into his theological history of Israel, but he has made few changes in the story itself. His additions contributed little of significance, and hardly changed the story at all. He was satisfied to fill out slightly Rahab's recitation of the salvation history and to underscore Yahweh's activity in history on behalf of Israel. This indicates that he had before him a story which was already completed and already a part of a larger context which extended at least through chapter 6. It is to be emphasized that the etiological conclusion as well as the picture of a conquest (not a migration) from the east of the Jordan by all the tribes of Joshua existed in the tradition before his time.

We must, therefore, examine in greater detail the earlier stages of the tradition, since the structure, genre, and intention from an earlier setting of the story remain in this final (literary) setting within the Deuteronomistic history work.

THE PRE-DEUTERONOMISTIC REDACTION

Context and structure

We turn now to an investigation of the pre-Deuteronomistic history of the Rahab story. The first issue before us is that of the relationship of the saga to its context in the source which the Deuteronomistic redactor incorporated into his history.

We have seen that 2:1 stands now as the beginning of the older collection of stories used by the redactor and also that chapter 2

19. John L. McKenzie, *The World of the Judges* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 48.
20. Noth, *Josua*, pp. 29 ff.
21. Cf. John Bright, "The Book of Joshua: Introduction and Exegesis," *IB*, 2: 543.
22. Mowinckel, *Tetrateuch—Pentateuch—Hexateuch*, p. 33.
23. Noth, *Josua*, pp. 9, 36, 41.
24. Bright, *The Book of Joshua*, p. 543.

25. Cf. Mowinckel, *Tetrateuch—Pentateuch—Hexateuch*, p. 49.

interrupts somewhat the sequence of events which moves more logically from the end of chapter 1 directly to 3:1 ff. The impression that chapter 2 is out of place is confirmed by an examination of its relationship to 3:1–5:15. The latter unit contains the traditio-historically complex account of the crossing of the Jordan (3:1–5:1), and the report of the first events in the land of Canaan, including the circumcision of the people of Israel (5:2–9), the first passover in the promised land (5:10–12), and the enigmatic story of Joshua's encounter with "the commander of Yahweh's army" (5:13–15). There is no inner connection between the stories of the taking of Jericho (chapters 2 and 6) and the accounts of the crossing, the circumcision, and the passover.[26] The brief narrative concerning Joshua and "the commander of Yahweh's army" is more closely related to the themes of chapters 2 and 6, but its brevity, terseness, and isolation indicate that it is an independent tradition. Furthermore, the mood and tone of chapters 3–5 are quite different from that of chapter 2. The cultic and theological concerns in chapters 3–5 stand in contrast to the more "secular" account of the scouting expedition.[27] The thread which holds together all the stories in chapters 2–6 is their common locality, the region of Gilgal and Jericho.

In the pre-Deuteronomistic source the story thread of chapter 2 is woven into that of chapter 6. The most obvious connections are drawn in 6:22–26 which concludes both the Rahab story and the account of the fall of Jericho. The other explicit link is in 6:17b which reports Joshua's instructions that only "Rahab and all who are with her in her house" are to be spared from the ban. But chapter 2 itself also contains links with the story of Jericho's destruction. Whatever the precise mission of the spies was, it is clear that their expedition is in preparation for the overthrow of Jericho as the first step in taking the land. Furthermore, the spy story consistently assumes the imminent total destruction of Jericho (cf. especially 2:13–14, 18–19), an assumption which is pointless without a sequel. Our analysis supports the conclusions of Noth[28] and Mowinckel[29] that this combination of chapters 2 and 6 was a result of the literary efforts of a pre-Deuteronomistic redactor.

26. Cf. McKenzie, *World of the Judges*, p. 48.
27. Cf. Mowinckel, *Tetrateuch—Pentateuch—Hexateuch*, p. 13.
28. Noth, *Josua*, p. 29.
29. Mowinckel, *Tetrateuch—Pentateuch—Hexateuch*, pp. 14, 42.

There are, however, factors which show that the stories in 2 and 6 once existed independently of one another. An examination of the structure and genre of the Rahab story as it appeared in the pre-Deuteronomistic source will begin to make some of these factors clear while at the same time bringing out the intention or function of the account at that stage in its development.

The structure of the Rahab story in chapter 2 and its epilogue in 6:22–25 is as follows:

Chapter 2

I. Introductory report of Joshua's sending the spies and their arrival in Jericho (1)
II. Account of events in Jericho (2–21)
    A. First scene: Rahab hides the spies (2–7)
        1. The report to the king and his response (2–3)
        2. General report that Rahab hid the spies (4a)
        3. Rahab's response to the men sent by the king (4b–5)
        4. Specific report that Rahab hid the spies (6)
        5. The pursuit by the king's men (7)
    B. Second scene: the agreement between Rahab and the spies on the roof (8–14)
        1. Introduction (8)
        2. Rahab's speech to the spies (9–13)
           [9b, 10b, 11b, Dtr.]
           a. Recitation of the history of salvation and account of the fear of Israel (9–11)
           b. Covenant request (12–13)
              (1) Request for an oath and a sign (12)
              (2) Plea for herself and her family (13)
        3. Response of the spies: their oath (14)
    C. Third scene: oath at the window (15–21)
        1. Rahab lets the spies down through her window (15)
        2. Her instructions for the escape (16)
        3. The spies' oath and instructions to Rahab (17–20)
           a. Promise of faithfulness to the oath (17)
           b. Instructions (18)
           c. Conditions of the oath: promise and threat (19–20)
        4. Rahab's acceptance (21a)

5. Report of the departure of the spies and the tying of
   the cord (21b)
III. The escape and return of the spies (22–24) [24b Dtr.]
   A. Their escape (22)
   B. Return and report to Joshua (23)
   C. The content of the report (24)

Epilogue (6:22–25)
   I. Joshua's instructions to the spies (22)
  II. Report of their saving Rahab and her family (23)
 III. Report of the burning of the city (24)
  IV. Etiological summary (25)
   A. Rahab and her "father's household" saved
   B. She dwelt in Israel "to this day"
   C. Reason: because she saved the messengers

The two main features of the structure of chapter 2 are a nar-
rative framework reporting the action and three little conversa-
tions.[30] The first conversation is between Rahab and (presumably)
the men sent by the king of Jericho. In the second one Rahab
requests a sworn agreement—a covenant—from the spies and they
grant it. And in the third the spies detail their terms for the agree-
ment and Rahab accepts.

In the pre-Deuteronomistic source, the unit which begins in 2:1
does not conclude until 6:26. Chapter 6:22–26 is the epilogue to
both 2:1–24 and 6:1–21, and assumes both the Rahab story and
the account of the destruction of Jericho. Most of it should be
attributed to the editor of the pre-Deuteronomistic source as his
effort to draw the two stories together.[31] But at this redactional
stage in the development of the traditions, the links between chap-
ters 2 and 6 are not merely superficial and not limited to the epi-
logue. Some of the dominant themes of chapter 2 are left hanging
in the air without the content expressed in 6:22–26.

On the other hand, however, there is a sense in which chapter 2
can be considered a more or less complete unit. We have seen that
2:1 marks a distinct break from chapter 1 and a clear if incomplete

30. Cf. Noth, Josua, p. 29.
31. Cf. Mowinckel, Tetrateuch—Pentateuch—Hexateuch, pp. 14, 35, 42. Mowinckel
sees 6:25 as the original conclusion to the Rahab saga which has been placed at the
end of chapter 6 by the pre-Deuteronomistic redactor.

new beginning. Furthermore, in 2:24 a definite conclusion has
been reached in the story: Spies were sent out; they have accom-
plished their mission and given their report. This observation
suggests—but does not by itself prove—that a story of Rahab and
the spies once circulated independently in the oral tradition, and
that its present dependence upon the story of the miraculous cap-
ture of Jericho is a result of the work of a redactor.

The impression that a Rahab story once circulated independently
in the oral tradition is strengthened as one looks at the structure
and contents of the chapter for evidence of an earlier stage in its
development. Most of this evidence is in the inconsistencies, repe-
titions and duplicates, and unevenness in the style which we take
to be traces of an earlier form (or forms) of the story.

In the first place, the sequence of events in the story is somewhat
inconsistent and confusing. The spies were sent out to view the
land and they returned with a report concerning "the whole land,"
but the story concerns only their activities in Jericho. It is possible
that the account of the events in Jericho has been combined with
another tradition about Joshua's spies which paralleled the account
of the spies sent by Moses (cf. especially Numbers 13–14). The
order of events in the first scene is especially confusing, since there
are two reports that Rahab hid the spies (vv. 4a and 6), both of
which disrupt the sequence. The first (v. 4a) comes between the
speech of the king's men and Rahab's response. This inconsistency
usually is smoothed over in the translations by rendering the waw
consecutive imperfects וַתִּקַּח and וַתִּצְפְּנוֹ in the past perfect: "But
the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. . . ." The
other more specific account of the hiding of the spies follows
Rahab's speech to the king's men but precedes the report of their
response to her speech. The problems of sequence and duplication
in verses 2–7 are coupled with a distinctly terse style. We would
expect, for example, some notice that Rahab knew of the danger
to her guests before she took steps to protect them.

The problem of sequence arises again in the narrative frame-
work of the third scene (vv. 15–21). We are told that Rahab let
the spies down on a rope through her window which was in the
wall, presumably in the wall of the city,[32] gave them instructions

32. The precise meaning of בְּקִיר הַחֹמָה in v. 15 is unclear.

for their escape, they responded with an extended speech, and she then sent them on their way. We are left with the picture of the spies pausing to complete their agreement with Rahab as they cling to the rope from her window. Moreover, one would have expected the spies to spell out the terms of their agreement as they acceded to Rahab's request for a sworn agreement, but the report of their escape through the window (vv. 15–16) stands between their acceptance and their conditions. Some of the inconsistencies in the story, then, turn around the relationship of the speeches to the narrative framework.[33]

Furthermore, the generally uneven style tends to indicate a complex prehistory. The smooth and almost verbose speech in verses 17–20, for example, stands in contrast to the terse and fragmentary account in verses 2–7. This unevenness is probably best explained as a result of the pre-Deuteronomistic redactor's efforts: He has taken over old traditions and supplemented them through his own editorial work. The exact identification of those editorial additions is, however, an almost impossible task.[34] Whether or not it is possible to discern the shape of the older traditions at all is a question to which we shall return.

Genre

We raise now the question of the genre of the Rahab story as it appeared in the pre-Deuteronomistic source. The attempt to classify this unit and to draw relevant conclusions from that classification makes it immediately clear that our formal categories are in need of greater clarification and precision. The narrative as a whole is an etiological saga. That is to say at least that its aim (or better, *one* of its aims) is to account for a phenomenon by giving the story of its origin.[35] As we have seen, the most obvious sign of the etiology, the formula in 6:25, is a part of the work of the redactor of the older traditions. However, the etiological features of the story are not limited to this conclusion, but occur throughout

the central part of chapter 2 as anticipation of just such a conclusion. As the story stands, the major result of Rahab's actions on behalf of the spies and their agreement with her—the main themes of chapter 2—is the preservation of Rahab and her family. So whatever the shape and contents of the earlier tradition may have been, at this stage it has the distinctive marks of the etiological saga concerned with an ethnological question: It is a narrative account of heroic deeds of the past, some of which have a private rather than a public nature; and it explains the existence of a certain clan and that clan's special relationship with Israel. The various suggestions that the story was an etiology of cultic prostitution within Israel in general or at Jericho in particular[36] do not affect this conclusion but bear only on the question of the older oral tradition. The story emphasizes the relationship between Rahab and the spies and through them the relationship between her clan and Israel.

Whether or not the story actually owes its existence to the etiological question itself[37] is not determined by these observations alone, however. To pursue that question further we must examine the intention or purpose of the story.

Intention

We have argued that at least one intention of the story is etiological. The dominant, if not the original, motif is the fate of Rahab and her family. But there is at least one other major motif— and intention—in the story. The examination of the structure shows that the two main themes are (1) the mission of the spies, presented in the beginning and concluding sections of chapter 2, and (2) Rahab's actions on behalf of the spies and the etiological epilogue.

What is the purpose of the spies' expedition, and what point does the *report* of that expedition make in its context? The purpose of the expedition and its results have been interpreted variously by different commentators. Many have seen beneath the present story

33. Hertzberg has also seen a duplicate in the references to swearing an oath and to giving a sign in v. 12 (p. 21).

34. Cf. Noth, *Josua*, pp. 12–13, 21.

35. Cf. Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), pp. xx ff.

36. G. Hölscher, "Zum Ursprung der Rahabsage," *ZAW*, 38 (1919–1920), 56 ff.; Mowinckel, *Tetrateuch—Pentateuch—Hexateuch*, pp. 13–14.

37. This is the question posed by Y. Kaufmann. Cf. *The Biblical Account of the Conquest of Palestine*, trans. M. Dagut (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1953), p. 71.

an old tradition which told how the city of Jericho was captured through an act of treason by Rahab, but the redactor has subordinated this tradition to the story of the collapse of the city walls, leaving only vestiges of the story of her treason (such as the account of the red cord which originally served as a signal to the Israelites).[38] Whether or not this was in fact the case must remain a matter of conjecture. However, on the level of the written tradition the purpose and results of the expedition are quite clear. At this point we can agree with Kaufmann: "Rahab does not help the Israelites to conquer Jericho, she does not disclose secrets to them, she does not give them signals. She merely expresses the terror and dismay of the Canaanites before the might of Israel's God (2:9-11, 24)."[39] The men were sent as spies to "view the land," an obviously military enterprise; but, as their report to Joshua makes clear, the "military" institution is the holy war.

This brings us to the question of the function of the spy motif within the story. The intention of this motif was *not* to show the cunning or the military skill of Joshua and his army. As we look at the broader Old Testament context we soon realize that some of the phrases in this motif have a very familiar ring. There are other accounts of the use of spies (cf. especially Numbers 13-14), and also of the use of strategems and trickery in the conquest stories (cf. especially Josh. 8:1-23 and Judg. 1:22-26). While our story to some extent echoes such themes, the nearest parallel to the spy motif in chapter 2 is Numbers 13-14. The spies sent by Moses return with answers to two questions: Is it a good land, and shall we be able to take it? The spy motif in Joshua 2 deals only with the second question, to which the spies give a positive answer: "Surely Yahweh has given the whole land into our hand!" (2:24a). They have answered with the formula which is used repeatedly in the accounts of holy wars.[40] The war cannot begin without the assurance that Yahweh is with the people to give them victory. In the more common pattern, the assurance is received through the consultation of the deity, but the formula and the results are the same in this case: Yahweh is with us; the war may begin.

The place of chapter 2 in its context is now comprehensible. Given the theory of the holy war, it was essential that it be absolutely clear that Yahweh had given the land into the hand of Israel even before she entered the land. So the function of the spy motif here is to show that the conquest did not begin until the will of Yahweh had been determined.

It appears clear, then, that the Rahab story does not owe its existence to the etiological question, but to a number of factors. Among these factors are the theological conception and cultic institution of the holy war. The fact that the etiological intention dominates the story in its present form by no means proves that this intention created it. It dominates the Rahab story primarily because of the work of the pre-Deuteronomistic editor who added the epilogue and no doubt turned the thread of the story more in the direction of his conclusion. The etiological character of the story is then secondary in the sense that it is basically—if not exclusively—the work of the redactor of the story. Furthermore, as Childs has shown, the expression "and she *lived* in the midst of Israel to this day" is not a pure etiological formula which clearly draws the inference from the story to the present day.[41]

Setting

We turn now to the question of the setting of the Rahab story at the level of the pre-Deuteronomistic redaction. Since that setting was a literary one, the questions become those of the date and authorship of the redaction, the character of the work, and the perspective of the writer. These questions cannot be treated fully without a close examination of Joshua 2-11 (and Judges 1) as a whole, but some conclusions are warranted on the basis of the Rahab story.

Noth attributes the pre-Deuteronomistic stage of Joshua 2-11 to a *Sammler* who assembled his story from old traditions, including the series of etiological sagas (Joshua 2-6) concerning events in

38. Hölscher, pp. 54 ff.; K. Möhlenbrink, "Die Landnahmesagen des Buches Josua," *ZAW*, n.s. 15, 56 (1938), 258 ff.; Noth, *Josua*, p. 22; Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. J. McHugh (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 236.

39. Kaufmann, pp. 75-76.

40. Cf. G. von Rad, *Der heilige Krieg im alten Israel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), pp. 6 ff., for the pattern of the holy war and texts in which the formulas recur.

41. Childs, p. 286. Cf. also p. 284.

the region of Gilgal. On the basis of Josh. 11:1–15 and the point of view of the *Sammler*, he has dated this work to approximately 900 B.C., arguing that it assumes the separation of the two states Israel and Judah.[42] As a result of the work of this "collector" the originally independent, primarily Benjaminite traditions became the history of the all-Israelite conquest, and Joshua was introduced into the story. Joshua did not appear in the original Benjaminite traditions, Noth argues, for, as the report of his burial place indicates (Josh. 24:29, 30), he was an Ephraimite hero.[43] Noth is reluctant to specify in detail just which verses in the story should be attributed to the work of his *Sammler* and which elements were received from oral or earlier written tradition. He does suggest, however, that the *Sammler*'s work is visible in certain transitional passages and in the inclusion of the stories of events which took place outside of Benjaminite territory (5:1; 6:27; 9:3, 4a; 10:2, 5, 40–42; 11:1, 2, 16–20).[44] Primarily on the basis of Josh. 10; 11:2, 16, 19, Noth concludes that the *Sammler*'s range of vision was Judean,[45] but his work is not to be associated with the older sources of the Pentateuch. These sources (J and E) led up to an account of the conquest by all the tribes from the east, but that account was dropped in the final editing of the Pentateuch.[46]

Mowinckel, on the other hand, sets out to uncover any traces which may remain of the J version of the conquest, arguing that the Yahwist must have written such an account since both the promises to the patriarchs and the report of the conquest of Trans-Jordan in J lead up to the conquest of west Jordan.[47] He finds such traces above all in Judges 1 and in some fragments in Joshua 2–11 and 24 which can be connected with Num. 32:32–42(J).[48] Viewing these traces as a whole, he concludes that J did not present a history of the conquest as such but rather a report of the *results* of the taking of the land and some anecdotes about the taking of certain cities.[49] The author of the pre-Deuteronomistic

history of the conquest (Joshua 2–11, 24; Judges 1) therefore was not the Yahwist, but a later redactor who used the J account as well as other traditions. Mowinckel identifies this stage of the history of traditions as J^v. Its point of view is actually nearer that of Dtr. than that of J.[50] Noth's date (approximately 900 B.C.) for the pre-Deuteronomistic redaction can be considered at best a *terminus post quem*.[51] Mowinckel agrees with Noth that the individual stories within this work were the independent local etiological traditions of the various tribes and originally had nothing to do with the conquest or with Joshua but were only secondarily adapted to the idea of an all-Israelite conquest under Joshua.[52]

Mowinckel holds open the possibility that the Rahab story as one version of the taking of Jericho originally stemmed from J. But he does argue that Josh. 2:1 is an unlikely beginning for a literary work, and therefore assumed an earlier chapter. That earlier chapter is to be found in Numbers 32.[53] At this point we may add a further piece of evidence which may indicate connections between the pre-Deuteronomistic account of the conquest and the older pentateuchal sources. We observed that Josh. 2:1 gives as the point of departure for the conquest of west Jordan a location not mentioned in the Deuteronomistic account: Shittim. Shittim is specified as the last Trans-Jordanian stopping place in Num. 25:1, which is probably J. A variation of the name (Abel Shittim) also occurs as the last point in the later list of the wilderness stopping places in Num. 33:49. Josh. 2:1 therefore continues the story of the older sources or at least assumes that version of the wilderness wandering and conquest of Trans-Jordan.

In spite of this additional bit of evidence, however, the presence of J and therefore of a source J^v in the conquest traditions is yet to be established satisfactorily. In order to attribute given units to a particular document one must be able to show the precise literary affinities between those units and the document. Mowinckel's conclusions are based primarily on links between the *content* of the pentateuchal sources and certain parts of the conquest traditions. His evidence has at least shown that the oldest *traditions* of the

42. Noth, *Josua*, pp. 12–13.
43. Noth, *History*, p. 93, and *Josua*, p. 12.
44. Noth, *Josua*, pp. 12–13.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
46. Noth, *History*, p. 73.
47. Mowinckel, *Tetrateuch—Pentateuch—Hexateuch*, pp. 9–16.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 14–16, 49.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 14–16, 50.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

Pentateuch did not stop with the account of the taking of Trans-Jordan but also told of the conquest of east Jordan. Since the materials which Mowinckel attributes to the Yahwist are so fragmentary and lack the specific stylistic characteristics of that redactor they could just as well stem from the older traditions upon which J itself depended.

Furthermore, the evidence for dating the pre-Deuteronomistic redaction of the conquest traditions is meagre indeed, and that question is best left open. It is impossible to determine whether or not the figure of Joshua was first introduced into the account by this redactor. In some of the stories—including Joshua 2—Joshua does not appear to be an essential or necessarily original element. But it is highly unlikely that the name and the activities of Joshua would have been created by a writer who at other points depends so heavily upon traditional material. Further study of the individual stories may be able to establish more concerning the history of the Joshua tradition.

But some positive results have been achieved. It now appears clear that there was indeed a written version of the conquest of east Jordan which preceded the Deuteronomistic history. That work was a redaction of older traditions into a more-or-less consistent account of a military conquest by the united Israelite tribes acting under Joshua. It was based in part on the older history of salvation (pentateuchal) traditions, from which it derived the general sequence of events, and in part on individual tribal traditions, particularly those of the tribe of Benjamin. Above all, that redaction assumed the conception of the holy war, and lived on soil which supported the holy war traditions. This conception of the conquest was no doubt inherited along with many other traditions, since it is assumed in most of the individual stories, including the Rahab saga and the account of the Gibeonite deception (Josh. 9:3–27). It is pointless to explain why particular families or tribes were spared unless it is taken for granted—as in the idea of the holy war—that all the enemies were to be killed.

The point of view of this redactor is indeed, as Mowinckel has observed,[54] near that of the Deuteronomistic historian. This is so because the historian has not basically altered the older account of the conquest but only emphasized certain points, framed that account into his work, and added some general remarks which had the effect of stressing the completeness of the action under Joshua. Another link is the conception of the holy war common to both the Deuteronomistic and the earlier redactors.

The Rahab Story in the Oral Tradition

The question of the oral prehistory of the Rahab saga now lies before us. Is it possible to reconstruct the older oral traditions which the pre-Deuteronomistic redactor had at his disposal? A number of factors indicate that the story once existed in the oral tradition; however, that evidence allows us to draw only very general and tentative conclusions concerning the shape of the story before it became a part of our pre-Deuteronomistic redactor's history of the conquest.

The evidence indicates, first of all, that the Rahab story once existed independently of the story of the destruction of Jericho now preserved in Joshua 6. Some of that evidence has been mentioned above (pp. 74 ff.). In terms of genre, style, and mood, the two stories are quite different.[55] Chapter 2 is basically a more-or-less "profane" anecdotal saga. Except for the Deuteronomistic additions and the observations concerning the fear which has gripped the inhabitants of Canaan (vv. 9a, 10a, 11a, 24a), the story proceeds without theological or cultic overtones. It deals with ordinary human beings and ordinary events. Chapter 6, on the other hand, has distinctively legendary features. The miraculous destruction of the walls is accompanied by actions of a cultic nature, and Yahweh is the actor in the drama.

Furthermore, the two stories in their present context lead up to two different etiological conclusions: the explanation of the house of Rahab and the explanation of the ruins of Jericho. And in the combination of the two stories some incoherence has appeared. The Rahab saga states that the harlot lived in a house in the walls, but according to chapter 6 those same walls were destroyed. In

54. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

55. Möhlenbrink, pp. 258 ff.

addition, the motif of the cord in Rahab's window (2:18) is not resumed in the account of the fate of the harlot and her family.[56] There is, at the very least, a gap or an incomplete transition between the stories which indicates their original independence. The *specific* links between the two are confined to the epilogue in chapter 6.

Some commentators have gone further to suggest that chapters 2 and 6 preserve what originally were two different versions of the taking of Jericho. One account originally told how the city was taken through the treason of Rahab and the other reported the miracle.[57] Such explanations must posit a part of the Rahab saga which once told how Rahab let the Israelites in to destroy the city.[58] This interpretation rests upon the assumption that the mission of the spies was the enlistment of a fifth column. But such a mission is neither assumed nor implied in the present story. The spies were sent out to "view the land" and returned with the report that Yahweh had given it into Israel's hand. Whether or not the Rahab saga once told how the city of Jericho was taken through the harlot's treason must therefore remain a matter of conjecture.

Secondly, the analysis of the structure of chapter 2 itself has shown that the story originally circulated in the oral tradition, and perhaps in more than one form. The general unevenness of the style, the tensions between the narrative framework and the conversation scenes, and the inconsistencies of the narrative suggest both oral transmission and combination of traditions.

But it is one thing to conclude that an oral tradition or traditions lie behind the present story and another to reconstruct the oral stage or stages. However, several reconstructions have been offered, most of them describing the original story as an etiological tale of one kind or another. Hölscher argued that the old story concluded with the report that the family of Rahab was saved from the blood-bath and remained in Jericho as cultic prostitutes at a sanctuary there. The story was thus an etiology explaining how the Israelites took over a cultic institution from the Canaanites.[59] Hölscher's

56. Noth, *Josua*, p. 31.

57. Mowinckel, *Tetrateuch—Pentateuch—Hexateuch*, p. 42; Hertzberg, pp. 21–22; Möhlenbrink, p. 258; Hölscher, p. 54.

58. Cf. Möhlenbrink, p. 258; Noth, *Josua*, p. 22; and F.-M. Abel, "Les stratagèmes dans le livre de Josué," *RB*, 56 (1949), 322 ff.

59. Hölscher, pp. 56 ff. Cf. also Mowinckel, *Tetrateuch—Pentateuch—Hexateuch*, p. 13.

conclusions, however, depend upon some (late) Greek parallels and a number of dubious assumptions, namely, that Rahab helped the Israelites take the city, that there was a sanctuary at Jericho in Israelite times, and that Israelites in the region accepted cultic prostitution.

Others have argued that the original tradition explained the presence of a tribe or clan, "the house of Rahab," in Israel,[60] some suggesting that Rahab—and other Canaanites—were treated as proselytes.[61] Noth is among those who have argued that the original substratum of the stories in Joshua 2–6 is a series of originally Benjaminite etiological traditions.[62] In the combination of the story of Rahab with the story of the fall of the walls of Jericho, he suggests, several features of the original story have fallen out, including the report of Rahab's help in the taking of the city. The earliest tradition transmitted the story in order to explain the existence of the Canaanite clan within Israel.[63]

But these reconstructions—and even the conclusion that the original tradition was an etiology of one kind or another—must remain highly conjectural. Noth himself has observed concerning the Rahab story that how far the individual lines of this story were etiologically grounded is not to be determined with certainty.[64] The most obvious indication of the etiological saga is the concluding formula. But the formula which concludes this particular story (6:25) depends upon the combination of two traditions, the Rahab saga and the story of the miraculous fall of the walls of the city. This particular etiological formula therefore belongs at least to the stage at which the two traditions had been combined, and very likely even to the stage of the pre-Deuteronomistic redactor. Supporting these observations is Child's conclusion that Josh. 6:25 is not even a genuine etiological formula which clearly draws the relationship between cause and effect.[65] Therefore the etiological conclusion is secondarily attached to the combined traditions, and any reconstruction of the original independent Rahab story as etiological must posit yet another earlier version of the conclusion.

60. Hertzberg, pp. 20 ff.
61. Abel, pp. 327 ff.
62. Noth, *Josua*, pp. 11 ff., and *History*, p. 93.
63. Cf. Noth, *Josua*, pp. 22 ff.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
65. Childs, p. 286.

The conclusions which Long has drawn from his study of etio-
logical formulas, then, are sustained by our study of this particular
story. The story has some obvious though secondary etiological
features, but one must be cautious about generalizations concern-
ing the motive which "created" the story. No doubt some stories
did arise as popular answers to questions about existing phenomena.
This one probably did not. The pre-Deuteronomistic editor used
it because it was a part of the tradition which he received. It is
likely that he interpreted it in part etiologically because he saw its
bearing on a contemporary phenomenon.