

## The Significance of **הוֹדָה** in the Book of Joshua: A Theological Examination

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### Abstract

This paper undertakes a comprehensive exploration of the term "הוֹדָה" in the Book of Joshua, delving into two pivotal passages: Joshua 5:13-15 and Joshua 23. The study employs exegetical approaches, incorporating historical, literary, lexical, and syntactical analyses, to elucidate the theological implications inherent in the utilization of this term. In Joshua 5:13-15, the encounter between Joshua and the commander of the army of the Lord serves as a climactic moment in the narrative, symbolizing the apex of Israel's worship during their entry into the Promised Land. The theological implications drawn from Joshua's worship experience serve as foundational principles that guide and inform the nature and essence of Biblical worship, highlighting its responsive, transformative, and reverential dimensions. On the other hand, the theological implications drawn from Joshua's farewell address highlight Biblical worship as a responsive act grounded in God's faithfulness, connected to the covenantal relationship, and exclusively directed towards God. The avoidance of evil associations, close relationship with God, and the ongoing cultivation of love emerge as essential components of meaningful Biblical worship.

**Keywords:** *worship, prostration, the book of Joshua, covenant, exegesis*

### Introduction

The Book of Joshua narrates the conquest of the Promised Land, Canaan, by the children of Israel. This conquest, however, is intricately interwoven with the divine covenant established between God and His people. It is imperative to underscore the inseparability of the conquest and the covenant, as they constitute integral components of the narrative. At the core of this covenant lies the theme of worship, a pivotal aspect emphasized by Howard in recognizing the Book of Joshua's theological underpinnings. Howard astutely identifies the purity of worship as a salient theme within the text.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Howard gives a list of four theological themes of the Book of Joshua: Land, rest, covenant, and purity of worship. David M. Howard, Jr, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993), 93.

Maintaining the integrity of worship, characterized by unwavering fidelity to the true worship of the true God, emerges as a key determinant of the Israelites' loyalty to their covenant with God. This allegiance, in turn, assures them of the fulfillment of the covenant's promise—a reward in the form of the coveted land. Consequently, the recurrence of the Hebrew term "חרה" assumes significance at both the commencement and culmination of the conquest. The deliberate placement of this term underscores its thematic relevance, encapsulating the essence of genuine worship as an enduring motif throughout the Book of Joshua. This paper endeavors to explore the term "חרה" in the Book of Joshua, aiming to elucidate its theological implications concerning the overarching theme of biblical worship.

### Method

This article adopts an exegetical methodology to examine the occurrences of the term "חרה" within the book of Joshua. The analytical framework encompasses: (1) An exploration of the historical and geographical contexts; (2) Examination of the literary context; (3) Conducting a lexical and syntactical analysis; and (4) Delving into the theological implications arising from the studied passages.<sup>2</sup>

### Discussion

#### The Semantics of חרה in Ancient Hebrew: An Etymological Exploration

Prior to engaging in the analysis of the term "חרה" in the book of Joshua, it is advantageous to provide a succinct overview of the meaning and usage of this word in the Old Testament. The Hebrew term חרה appears “exclusively in the Eshtaphal stem, hishtaḥawâ,” with the meaning “to prostrate oneself”; ‘to worship.’”<sup>3</sup> It is also crucial to acknowledge that the act of prostration was a prevalent custom in the Ancient Near Eastern world. Yamauchi emphasizes its widespread use as an act of submission before a superior, citing instances from the Amarna letters as follows:

Prostration was quite common as an act of submission before a superior. Vassals in the Amarna letters write, “At the feet of the king... seven times, seven times I fall, forwards and backwards.” (Cf. ANEP, fig 5.) Jehu or his servant bows down on his knees with his forehead touching the ground before Shalmaneser III on the Black Obelisk (cf. ANEP, fig. 351).<sup>4</sup>

Preuss further contributes to this understanding, noting that in Egyptian culture,

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<sup>2</sup> See Douglas K. Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, Fifth ed (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2022). Walter C. Kaiser, “The Meaning of Meaning,” in *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, Walter C. Kaiser and Moises Silva (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 35.

<sup>3</sup> Edwin Yamauchi, “חרה” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1: 619.

<sup>4</sup> Yamauchi, 619.

"kissing the ground" was commonplace, and obeisance formed an integral part of daily rituals before statues of gods. However, he observes that Mesopotamia exhibited less frequent obeisance compared to Egypt.<sup>5</sup>

The verb חוה often co-occurs with נפל, signifying that the action of bowing down involves physical contact with the ground. Additionally, it is found in conjunction with אמר, denoting "to utter, to say, to declare." This association underscores that the physical act of bowing down is not merely a ritualistic motion but a profound expression of mental attitudes of reverence and submission. Consequently, it was customary to accompany this physical gesture with declarations that articulated the worshiper's internal disposition.

### חוה in the Book of Joshua

The lexeme חוה is featured three times in the Book of Joshua. As highlighted previously, the strategic positioning of this term holds particular significance, occurring prominently at the initiation and culmination of the conquest. The following analysis aims to delve into these occurrences, providing a closer study to unveil the theological implications inherent in the utilization of this word.

#### חוה in Joshua 5:13-15

In Joshua 5:13-15, the prominent leader, Joshua, experienced a profound encounter with "the commander of the army of the Lord." In response to this divine revelation, Joshua engaged in an act of worship and complete surrender. To comprehend the depth of this episode, it is imperative to delve into the historical and literary context encapsulated within the passage.

**Historical and Geographical Context.** The historical and geographical backdrop of this narrative holds paramount significance. Subsequent to Joshua assuming a leadership role, God underscored His presence among the Israelites through the miraculous drying up of the Jordan River (Josh 3-4). Following this extraordinary event, the people, demonstrating their commitment, renewed their covenant with God (5: 1-12). Emboldened by the manifestation of divine intervention and the people's readiness for the impending conquest, Joshua proceeded to survey the formidable walls of Jericho. It is within this context that he encountered "the commander of the army of the Lord."<sup>6</sup> E.

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<sup>5</sup> Preuss, "חוה," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G.J. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. By David E. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 4: 250.

<sup>6</sup> Hess calls to the reader's attention other similar Divine human encounters when he writes: "The strange confrontation of 5: 13-15 resembles that between Jacob and the man of God at Peniel (Gn. 32: 22-32) and that between Moses and the burning bush (Ex. 3:1-4:17). In each case, the human protagonist encounters a divine messenger before facing a life-and-death conflict, but there is a significant difference with Joshua. Unlike the other two figures, Joshua does not wrestle or argue with the messenger." Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction & Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 126.

John Hamlin aptly observes:

We see Joshua alone at evening, like Jacob on banks of the Jabbok River (Gen. 32: 22). The sun was setting over the highlands of Canaan, to which the people must go. Meanwhile the moon was rising over the hills of Moab, from which they had come a few days earlier.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, discerning from the historical and geographical contexts, the meeting between Joshua and the commander of the army of the Lord unfolded at a critical juncture and a strategically significant location. This convergence transpired precisely when the commencement of the conquest was imminent, occurring at the very site designated for the initiation of this historic undertaking.<sup>8</sup>

**Literary Context.** In terms of literary structure, the Book of Joshua can be divided into two principal sections: the conquest of Canaan (chapters 1-12) and the allotment of Canaan (chapters 13-24). Dorsey's insightful analysis reveals a chiasmic structure in the first eight chapters, where key elements are symmetrically arranged:

- a opening focus on “Book of the Law of Moses” (1:1-8)
- b encouragement from a believing Canaanite: Rahab hides spies (2: 1-24)
- c Jordan “stands up”! Yahweh miraculously enables Israel to cross the Jordan to enter Canaan (3:1-4:24)
- d CENTER: Israel Worships Yahweh in promised land (5: 1-15)
- c’ Jericho falls down! Yahweh miraculously enables Israel to cross over walls to enter and conquer Jericho (6:1-27)
- b’ discouragement from a faithless Israelite: Achan hides plunder (7:1-8: 29)
- a’ closing focus on “Book of the Law of Moses” (8:30-35)<sup>9</sup>

According to this structure, both the collective worship experiences of the people and the individual worship of their leader, Joshua, occupy the central position in the narrative of conquest. A deeper examination of the literary structure of the pivotal Chapter 5 reveals that its concluding verses (vv. 13-15) represent the zenith of the central theme. In this chapter, the people undergo the rite of circumcision, symbolizing the removal of their perceived contamination from their exodus out of Egypt. Subsequently, they commemorate the Passover feast, a ritual commemorating God's deliverance from slavery.

However, the third element in this sequence elevates the presence of God to an unparalleled proximity to Joshua. This culminates in a climax as Joshua prostrate in an act of worship before the commander of the army of the Lord. Thus, if worship is the overarching theme of this section (chapters 1-8), it is crucial to underscore that Joshua's worshipful act before the divine commander represents its climax and serves as a pivotal

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<sup>7</sup> E. John Hamlin, *Inheriting the Land: A Commentary on the Book of Joshua*, *International Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 40.

<sup>8</sup> J. Gordon Harris observes the fact that the description of the location for this Divine encounter as “by Jericho” is literally “in Jericho”. J. Gordon Harris, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, *New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2000), 42.

<sup>9</sup> David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 1999), 91.

moment within the broader narrative structure.

Moreover, an additional structural analysis of the pericope Joshua 5:13-15 reveals a chiasmic arrangement, characterized by a symmetrical pattern of elements:

Introduction: Observation, "Joshua looked up and saw"

A: Joshua asked the commander - A question of suspicion

B: The commander answered - Self-disclosure

CENTER: Joshua fell on the ground and worshiped

A': Joshua asked the commander - A question of submission

B': The commander answered - Further disclosure

Conclusion: Obedience, "Joshua did as commanded."

This structural examination of the passage underscores that Joshua's act of worship assumes a central position within the broader context of the Israelites' entrance into the Promised Land. The chiasmic structure delineates the progression from observation through suspicion, self-disclosure, worship, and submission to further disclosure, culminating in obedient action. Significantly, the central axis is occupied by Joshua's profound act of worship, accentuating its importance within the narrative framework. Thus, within the section detailing the Israelites' entry into the Promised Land, Joshua's worship stands as the focal point among all central elements.

**Lexical and syntactical analysis.** It is essential to draw attention to the terminology employed to characterize the divine being encountered by Joshua in this passage. Initially, the person is referred to as אִישׁ, translated as "man." However, upon self-introduction, the being identifies with the title שַׂר־צְבָאֵה־יְהוָה, a designation not repeated elsewhere in scripture in precisely the same form. Nevertheless, the title שַׂר־צְבָאֵה, translated as "the captain of the host,"<sup>10</sup> is attributed to various warriors in different biblical passages. The closest semblance occurs in Daniel 8:11, where the reference is made to God himself.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, it is conceivable to infer that this being is none other than divine.<sup>12</sup>

Equally noteworthy are the terms delineating Joshua's response in the passage, which can be understood as twofold: 1) prostrating in worship, and 2) removing his sandals. The debate surrounding whether Joshua's act of bowing down constitutes an act of worship or merely a "collapse in obeisance"<sup>13</sup> has been a subject of scholarly discourse.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Jdg 4:7; 1 Sam 12: 9; 2 Sam 2:8; 2 Sam 10: 16; 2 Sam 19: 14; 1 Ki 2:32; 1 King 16: 16; 2 Ki 5:1; 1 Ch 19:16.

<sup>11</sup> Yaacov Azuelos claims from his analysis of the *Targum Jonathan* of Joshua that the angel is Michael. "The 'angel sent from before the Lord' in Targum Joshua 5,14" *Biblica*, 96.2 9 (2015), 161, 178.

<sup>12</sup> Concurring with this thought Hess gives three lines of evidence: "Three points suggest that this is a manifestation of the divine presence, and therefore more than an angelic visitation. Firstly, Joshua worships the figure who accepts his worship. In the light of the covenantal requirements that only the Lord God should be worshipped (cf. Ex. 20 and Dt. 5-8), there can be no doubt who this is. Secondly, the holiness is a manifestation of the divine presence throughout the Bible. Finally, the Continuation of the narrative in chapter 6 blends the figure of the commander of *the army of the LORD* with God himself." Hess, 127.

<sup>13</sup> Robert B. Coote, *The Book of Joshua, The New Interpreters' Bible*, 12 vols.. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998) 2:612.

Boise staunchly asserts that Joshua's action was a genuine act of worship: “The story ends with Joshua bowing before this commander. No doubt Joshua at first thought this unexpected individual to be what he appeared to be—a man and a soldier. But after he had identified himself, Joshua knew him to be very God of very God and so fell down and worshiped him.”<sup>14</sup>

Conversely, Donald H. Madvig contends that Joshua's prostration might have been a customary act of obeisance rather than a recognition of a supernatural being:

“Though ‘Joshua fell facedown,’ we cannot be sure that he realized that he was in the presence of a supernatural being. In that culture persons would prostrate themselves before anyone in authority. Moreover, when Joshua said ‘Lord,’ he used the Hebrew word ‘adoni, which was used to address human beings.’<sup>15</sup>

In attempting to reconcile these perspectives, Howard proposes a middle ground. He asserts that regardless of whether Joshua's act was construed as worship or obeisance, it is evident that he recognized the extraordinary nature of the being present, as indicated by his act of prostration. Importantly, Joshua refrained from further pursuing inquiries about the being's loyalties.<sup>16</sup> It is an incontrovertible reality that upon hearing the title of the entity with whom Joshua came into contact, he unequivocally recognized that he stood in the presence of the “commander of the army of the Lord.” To fully appreciate Joshua's reaction, one must consider his extensive experience as Moses's assistant, which included being privy to divine revelations on multiple occasions. Moreover, Joshua had commenced receiving direct messages from God as documented in Joshua 1. Although the initial appearance of the divine being was veiled, lacking any overtly distinctive features that set him apart from an ordinary man, Joshua's immediate descent to the ground in worship upon learning the commander's title underscores the profound impact of this revelation.

The nature of Joshua's question while prostrate further reveals his comprehension of the commander's role. While he refrained from employing the familiar divine names found in Scripture, the very formulation of his query manifests a profound submission, affirming that Joshua did not regard this “commander” as a mere dignitary but positioned himself as a willing servant ready to carry out any directive issued. Also, the depiction of Joshua's act of worship is particularly noteworthy. The text does not merely state that Joshua fell down; rather, it specifies the direction—facedown, offering a nuanced portrayal of prostration. This emphasis on **וַיִּשְׁתָּחֲוֶהוּ** (And he prostrated) becomes pivotal for the thematic focus of this paper.

Furthermore, Joshua's symbolic act of removing his sandal constitutes another significant response following his worship of the divine. This gesture is interpreted as a voluntary acknowledgment by Joshua that the forthcoming battle and the entire conquest of Canaan belonged to God; Joshua considered himself merely as God's servant in the divine conflict. The deliberate removal of the sandal becomes emblematic of Joshua's

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<sup>14</sup>James Montgomery Boise, *Joshua*, Originally Published: Old Tappan, N.J. : F.H. Revell, c1989. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 48.

<sup>15</sup> Donald H. Madvig, *Joshua, The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelin, editor, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992) 3: 276.

<sup>16</sup> David Howard, *Joshua, The New American Commentary*, (Nashville: TN: Boradman & Holman), 158.

humble acceptance of his subordinate role in the overarching divine plan.

**Theological Implications.** The worship encounter of Joshua, the leader of Israel, as depicted in this passage, illuminates several foundational principles of Biblical worship:

1. **Biblical Worship as a Response to Divine Revelation:** The episode underscores that Biblical worship is intrinsically tied to the unveiling of the divine. Joshua's immediate descent into worship upon learning the title of the divine being he encountered emphasizes that authentic worship is a responsive act triggered by the disclosure of the divine presence.<sup>17</sup>
2. **Biblical Worship as Recognition of God's Greatness and Human Insignificance:** Joshua's worship serves as a manifestation of two intertwined aspects: the acknowledgment of God's unparalleled greatness and the simultaneous recognition of one's own insignificance. This principle underscores that genuine worship involves both the exaltation of God and the humble recognition of human frailty.
3. **Biblical Worship Facilitating Reception of Divine Words:** The passage suggests that engaging in Biblical worship positions an individual to be receptive to the words of the Divine. By bowing down in worship, Joshua symbolizes not only reverence but also a posture of attentiveness, highlighting that worship is a conduit for receiving and comprehending divine communication.
4. **Biblical Worship Marked by Submission and Willing Servitude:** The worshipful response of Joshua underscores that Biblical worship is characterized by a spirit of submission and a voluntary willingness to serve the Lord. In his act of prostration and the subsequent removal of his sandal, Joshua exemplifies a humble readiness to submit to divine authority and carry out the commands of the Lord.
5. **Biblical Worship Leading to Removal of Incompatibilities with God's Presence:** The narrative suggests that genuine worship necessitates a purification process. Joshua's removal of his sandal symbolizes the removal of anything incompatible with the presence of God. This principle emphasizes that Biblical worship has a transformative impact, prompting believers to eliminate elements inconsistent with God's holiness from their lives.

In conclusion, the theological implications drawn from Joshua's worship experience serve as foundational principles that guide and inform the nature and essence of Biblical worship, highlighting its responsive, transformative, and reverential dimensions.

### חוה in Joshua 23

In the Book of Joshua, Chapter 23 marks a pivotal moment as Joshua delivers the first of his two farewell addresses to the Israelites. It is within this context that we encounter the other two occurrences of the word חוה. An exploration of the historical and

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<sup>17</sup> Constance M. Cherry aptly puts this as one of the foundational biblical principles for worship: "Worship is patterned in Revelation and Response.... This engagement of revelation/response forms the core of Christian worship." *The Worship Architect: A blue print for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2010), 8.

literary contexts of this chapter, along with a lexical analysis of key words, is presented below. Furthermore, through this investigative approach, the passage's nuanced contributions to the theology of biblical worship are pinpointed and expounded upon.

**Historical Context.** The narrative in Joshua 23 unfolds without specifying the temporal or geographical details of the recorded incident. It opens with a declaration that Israel had long been settled, and Joshua, now advanced in age, delivered a crucial address. Although the exact location is not explicitly mentioned, E. John Hamlin suggests Shechem as a plausible setting.

The location of the assembly at which Joshua delivers his farewell address is not expressly stated. Since the assembly in ch. 24 is located at Shechem, we may assume that ch. 23 stands in continuity with chs. 18-22, where the action is all centered at Shiloh. It is at the administrative center of the tribal league that the farewell address is given.<sup>18</sup>

Recognizing the need for Joshua to impart his final statement and testament due to his advanced age, Chapter 23 serves as an admonishment to the people, complementing Chapter 24, which portrays Joshua's role in their covenant renewal with God.<sup>19</sup>

**Literary Context.** Joshua 23 is situated within the broader context of the Book, specifically in the concluding section addressing the allotment of the land of Canaan (chapters 13-24).<sup>20</sup> Trent C. Butler contextualizes Joshua 23 as a pivotal chapter when he writes,

Joshua 23 is thus a centerpiece, taking up the themes stretching from Sinai onward and casting their light into the period of the judges, into the divided monarchy and finally into the Babylonian Exile. As such Joshua 23 is the theological explanation of the history of Israel herself.<sup>21</sup>

The structural outline of the chapter reveals a deliberate repetition of main ideas for emphasis, structured in an A-B pattern:

- A Faithfulness demonstrated by the Lord (v. 3-5)
- B Faithfulness required of the People (6-8)
- A<sup>1</sup> Faithfulness demonstrated by the Lord (9-10)
- B<sup>1</sup> Faithfulness required of the People (11-13)
- A<sup>2</sup> Faithfulness demonstrated by the Lord (14)
- B<sup>2</sup> Faithfulness required of the people (15-16)

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<sup>18</sup> Hamlin, 179.

<sup>19</sup> Roy Adams portrays the condition of Joshua, "Some 25 years have now passed [after the conquest]. The war is over. The new nation is at peace. And their lionhearted leader, now feeble, is ready to lay down his heavy mantle." Roy Adams, *Crossing Jordan: Joshua, Holy War, and God's Unfailing Promises* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 189.

<sup>20</sup> Dorsey gives a chiasmic structure for this section, in which Josh 13:1-7 parallels with Joshua 23:1-24:33). In both sections Joshua was depicted as advancing in years and also the land that still remains to be possessed is pointed out. Dorsey, 94.

<sup>21</sup> Trent C. Butler, *Joshua: Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983), 7: 254.

This structural framework highlights two salient aspects: the consistent demonstration of God's faithfulness in fighting for His people and aiding in the possession of the promised land, and the reciprocal faithfulness demanded of the people. Joshua articulates negative commands, instructing against intermingling with other nations, mentioning their gods, swearing by them, serving them, and bowing down to them. Conversely, positive commands include adherence to the Book of the Law of Moses, holding fast to the Lord, self-reflection, and the cultivation of love for the Lord.

A noteworthy observation is Joshua's consistent presentation of God's faithfulness as a prelude to requiring fidelity from the people. The divine faithfulness serves as the foundational source for the expected allegiance of the Israelites. In conclusion, the exploration of Joshua 23 within its historical and literary contexts reveals a rich tapestry of theological significance, emphasizing the interplay between divine and human faithfulness in the historical trajectory of Israel.

**Lexical and Syntactical Analysis.** In delving into the theme of worship within Joshua 23, a meticulous examination of verses 7 and 16 is imperative. The subsequent analysis offers a lexical and syntactical exploration of these verses to illuminate their significance.

**Verse 7:** This verse issues a negative command amid positive commands (vv. 6, 8). Joshua prohibits five actions, utilizing the negative particle before an imperfect verb in four instances: (1) "do not invoke (לא־תִּזְכְּרוּ) their god," (2) "do not swear by them. (3) ", (לא תִּשָּׁבְעוּ), "do not serve them (לא תַעֲבֹדוּם)," and (4) "do not bow down to them (לא תִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ)." The usage of the negative particle with imperfect verbs indicates an "absolute or permanent prohibition."<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, there exists a progression of thought in these prohibitions, with each act leading to the next, culminating in a climax. Initially perceived as simple social interactions ("going into them"), these actions progressively escalate to a point of supreme religious allegiance, depicted as prostration before foreign deities.

**Verse 16:** This verse revisits two prohibitions from Verse 7—serving other gods and bowing down to them—characterizing them as covenant transgressions with severe consequences, including separation from the Lord. Notably, the act of bowing down (חוה) is positioned at the end of both lists, symbolizing the pinnacle of devotion that individuals could offer to alternate deities. John Hamlin remarks, "The Hebrew verb translated 'worship' means to prostrate the whole body before the deity. It is the final act of alienation from the only true object of worship."<sup>23</sup> Additionally, Michael Howard sheds light on the severe repercussions of deviating from exclusive allegiance to the true God, emphasizing its historical recurrence as a significant challenge for Israel throughout various eras.<sup>24</sup>

In this context, Joshua's reiterated warning against serving and bowing down to any deity

<sup>22</sup> The negative particle 'al is used with an imperfect verb to express an immediate, specific, and non-durative prohibition. Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007),170.

<sup>23</sup> Hamil, 184.

<sup>24</sup>Howard, *The New American Commentary*, 421-422.

other than YHWH is not arbitrary. The historical trajectory of Israel, exemplified by the division of the Davidic Kingdom (1 Kings 11) and the subsequent falls of the Northern (2 King 17: 7-23) and Southern Kingdoms (2 King 21; 24:3-4), underscores the profound consequences of forsaking the worship of the one true God.

In conclusion, this lexical and syntactical analysis elucidates the progression of thought in the prohibitions outlined by Joshua, emphasizing the gravity of deviating from the exclusive worship of YHWH and the enduring historical ramifications of such transgressions.

**Theological Implications.** The farewell address delivered by Joshua in Chapter 23 provides profound insights into the theological underpinnings of the theme of Biblical worship. Within this theological framework, the following principles can be discerned:

1. **Biblical Worship as a Response to God's Faithfulness:** The thematic core of Joshua's discourse centers on the recurring motif of God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promises. It becomes evident that Biblical worship is intrinsically tied to a responsive acknowledgment of God's unwavering faithfulness. Only after painting this vivid portrait of God's fidelity does Joshua call upon Israel to reciprocate with faithfulness in their worship.
2. **Biblical Worship and Covenantal Relationship:** The essence of Biblical worship is deeply rooted in the covenantal relationship between God and His people. The act of bowing down and offering oneself in service becomes a tangible demonstration of complete allegiance to God's covenant. In this sense, Biblical worship is an embodiment of the covenantal bond between the worshiper and the divine.
3. **Exclusive Object of Biblical Worship:** A fundamental tenet of Biblical worship is its singular focus on God as the exclusive object. The reiterated warnings against sharing worship with other deities underscore the exclusive devotion demanded by true worship.
4. **Avoidance of Evil Associations in Biblical Worship:** To maintain fidelity to Biblical worship, one must exercise caution against any associations that have the potential to entangle lives with the worship of other gods. The gradual progression from association to prostration, as articulated in Joshua 23:6, emphasizes the critical importance of vigilant avoidance, emphasizing that such deviations may evolve over time if the path of repentance is not pursued.
5. **Close Relationship as the Foundation of Biblical Worship:** Meaningful acts of prostration (חוה) and worship find their roots in holding fast to the Lord (v. 8) and diligently cultivating a deep love for the Lord (v. 11). These requirements can be distilled into the imperative of maintaining a close relationship with God. Authentic worship gestures emanate from such a relationship, and its strength is perpetuated as individuals continue to engage in this reverential worship directed solely to God.

In sum, the theological exploration of Biblical worship, as gleaned from Joshua's farewell address, reveals a tapestry woven with the threads of God's faithfulness, covenantal commitment, exclusivity of devotion, vigilant avoidance of idolatrous

influences, and the foundational importance of a close and ongoing relationship with the divine.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of the term "חוה" in the Book of Joshua, specifically within the passages of Joshua 5:13-15 and Joshua 23, exhibits a rich theological significance. The first encounter in Joshua 5:13-15, where Joshua prostrates before the commander of the army of the Lord, serves as a pivotal moment in the broader narrative structure, embodying the apex of the Israelites' worship experience during their entry into the Promised Land. The theological implications derived from this worship encounter unveil foundational principles of Biblical worship, emphasizing its responsive nature to divine revelation, the acknowledgment of God's greatness, and the simultaneous recognition of human insignificance. Furthermore, the passage highlights the facilitation of divine communication through worship, the manifestation of submission and willing servitude, and the transformative impact leading to the removal of incompatibilities with God's presence.

Moving to Joshua 23, the first of Joshua's farewell addresses, historical and literary contexts provide a backdrop to the thematic exploration of faithfulness, both divine and human. A lexical and syntactical analysis of verses 7 and 16 emphasizes the gravity of Joshua's prohibitions, delineating the progression of thought from social interactions to the supreme act of prostration before foreign deities. The repetition of warnings against serving and bowing down to other gods underscores the enduring consequences of forsaking exclusive worship of YHWH. The theological implications drawn from Joshua's farewell address underscore Biblical worship as a responsive act grounded in God's faithfulness, intimately connected to the covenantal relationship, and exclusively directed towards God. The avoidance of evil associations, close relationship with God, and the ongoing cultivation of love emerge as essential components of meaningful Biblical worship.

In summary, the analysis of "חוה" in the Book of Joshua brings to light the central theme of God's faithfulness, prompting a reciprocal human faithfulness expressed through worship. Integral theological themes, including the significance of the land, covenant, and holiness, are intricately interwoven into the fabric of worship. Through the act of worshipping the Lord, the people respond to God's holiness, uphold their covenantal relationship with Him, and stand to reap the blessings of the land promised by God.

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