

JOSHUA AND LONERGAN MEET Transcendental Precepts and Ethics in the Book of Joshua

Marie-France Dion and Christine Jamieson

Volume 75, Number 1, January–April 2023

Lonergan, Ethics and the Bible
Lonergan, l'éthique et la Bible

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1094627ar>
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1094627ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Collège universitaire dominicain, Ottawa

ISSN

0316-5345 (print)
2562-9905 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Dion, M.-F. & Jamieson, C. (2023). JOSHUA AND LONERGAN MEET: Transcendental Precepts and Ethics in the Book of Joshua. *Science et Esprit*, 75(1), 95–107. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1094627ar>

Article abstract

This article examines Joshua, chapter one, in light of Lonergan's transcendental precepts. An ethicist and an exegete team up and investigate how ethical deliberation, on the one hand, and living 'according to the word of God' or 'doing the Torah,' on the other, share a remarkably similar process for a common purpose.

JOSHUA AND LONERGAN MEET Transcendental Precepts and Ethics in the Book of Joshua

MARIE-FRANCE DION
CHRISTINE JAMIESON

To complete the series of articles presented in this volume of *Science et Esprit*, we would like to offer this paper as an illustration of some of the proposed projects in the preceding articles.

Patrick Byrne's article discusses the difference between an ethics of the law and the ethics of discernment. This distinction is crucial when Christians or Jews are willing to live their lives according to Scripture. One of the dangers in using the Bible for ethical reflection is to reduce the understanding of ethics to norms and models, searching the Bible for moral examples and guidelines to follow or examples of why something should be held in contempt. Proof texting using biblical texts does not suffice to justify decisions and actions. It reduces the Bible to a legalistic document that has little to do with a God-Human relationship or with ethics. Kenneth Melchin mentions in his article that people do experience encounters with God, "transformative experiences that set in motion a path that can and should lead towards changing our ways of valuing." This is precisely the journey outlined in the Book of Joshua that moves Yahweh and the community from intent to accomplishment, a pathway that changes lives. Yet, the Book of Joshua represents probably the greatest challenge in understanding ethics in the Old Testament. Similar difficulties face systematic theologians when interpreting church statements in light of what we know and in giving meaning to these in a new context. Jeremy Wilkins' article reads like a living document where principles from Joshua are actively in motion. The shift in thinking from metaphysics to intentionality, and namely the focus on intentionality is essential and the reading key in Joshua, chapter one, to understand not only the first chapter, but also the whole book of Joshua. Ian Henderson also draws on Lonergan's concept of intentionality in helping to advance research on the historical Jesus seminar. Interestingly, it is this very idea of intentionality that plays out in Joshua, chapter one, to enable a relationship between Yahweh, Joshua, and the community.

Finally, Jim Kanaris' article explains the necessity to shift the very foundation of how we proceed to understand and argues for the validity of subjectivity. The community in Joshua, is brought to a self-awareness that itemizes their many concerns and brings them to realize the core of who they are and why they are who they are.

In this article, an ethicist (Christine Jamieson) and an Old Testament scholar (Marie-France Dion) team up and investigate how ethics and living 'according to the word of God' or 'doing the Torah' involves the Lonerganian notions discussed in the preceding articles. The purpose of this article is to 'legitimize' contextual interpretations and underline the biblical injunction that interpretation is the key to actualizing the word of Yahweh by discerning how to 'do all the Torah' in the concrete, that is, in an actual situation located in time and space. This discernment is, by nature, ethical. We begin by first defining ethics from an ethicist's perspective to avoid some of the pitfalls mentioned by Gustafson in his article titled, "The Place of Scripture in Christian Ethics: A Methodological Study"¹ and, we examine the process of ethical deliberation. Following this, we analyse the text of Joshua, chapter one, which mentions 'doing all the Torah' and see how it proposes to deal with decisive moments or ethical issues.

Ethics: definition, aim and process

Ethics needs to be understood not as something abstract or static, but rather as a concrete and dynamic activity that involves each one of us in a process that moves us from a current and very real problem or question to an eventual resolution or answer². While there are specific concerns and challenges in particular situations, the actual process of ethical deliberation is common to all. The process encompasses the effort to answer the very common, concrete question "What should I do?" Essentially, ethics is concerned with knowing and doing what is good. What is good has to do with what promotes human flourishing. We see, then, that ethics is primarily concerned with the future. It is concerned with the promotion of progress and resistance of decline or deterioration. This promotion of progress and resistance of decline is guided

1. James A. Gustafson commented about the lack of collaboration between biblical scholars and ethicists: "The Place of Scripture in Christian Ethics: A Methodological Study," *Interpretation*, 24 (1970), p. 430. Since this publication, however, much work has been done on the subject of Ethics and the Old Testament. See for example: John BARTON, *Understanding Old Testament Ethics. Approaches and Explorations*, Louisville KY, Westminster – John Knox Press, 2003.

2. This understanding of ethics draws on Bernard J. F. LONERGAN, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, New York NY, Philosophical Library Inc, 1970, pp. 595-633; Bernard J. F. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1971, pp. 3-56; and Kenneth MELCHIN, *Living with Other People: An Introduction to Christian Ethics Based on Bernard Lonergan*, Collegeville MN, The Liturgical Press, 1998.

by operative values.³ In some situations, the operative values may be contradicting and so require a shift to a “higher” level beyond the impasse of the values in tension. A second important aspect of ethics is that it is social in orientation. While the concern in ethical deliberation might be a particular individual in a particular situation, it is clear that the welfare of the individual is intricately linked to social realities the definition of which depends on the concrete situations.

Because we respond to our world, there is a connection between the event or situation (the concrete situation that prompts us to ask, “What should I do?”) and ourselves as we engage in the process of trying to figure out what we ought to do here and now. So, ethics involves a relationship between moral knowledge and the moral person. Bernard Lonergan identifies operations in which human beings engage in order to come to know what is true and what is valuable. When we speak of moral foundations, or the foundation of ethics, it is not authority, tradition, the law, theories, or religion that is the foundation; rather it is *the moral operations themselves*. Moral foundations are human beings engaged in the moral operations in an effort to discern what one ought to do in a concrete situation. Our effort to be attentive to our experience of the concrete situation, intelligent in exploring relevant possible understandings of the situation, reasonable in our judgement of how correct or accurate our understanding of the situation is, and responsible in deciding what to do and following through with our decision constitute us as moral persons. It constitutes being true to ourselves, following our conscience, and so, being authentic. But ethics is not just an autonomous, individual thing. Rather, ethics needs to be understood socially. To do this, we must understand the social structures that are implicated in our actions. They are the social structures that make up the different realities of which we are part – families, cultures, universities, clubs, our workplace, etc. We consider the “components” of social structures in order to understand what makes these social structures work well and what makes them break down. We need to understand the impact of our actions on a flourishing social structure in order to grasp whether our actions promote progress or decline. At times, the social structures themselves are corrupt and need changing. We need to keep that in mind too when we engage in moral deliberation. In the end, as Kenneth Melchin points out, moral knowledge always aims at understanding what enriches our living together and what destroys it.⁴

3. “Operative values” refer to the underlying or main values that guide us when we are engaged in decision-making.

4. Kenneth R. MELCHIN, *Living with Other People*, pp. 42-43.

Drawing on Lonergan, Melchin explains the process well when he identifies five stages to ethical deliberation.⁵ He breaks this down into “fact” questions and “act” questions. Fact questions involve identifying the problem or issue that raises ethical questions. One must first pay attention to as much detail as necessary to understand the problem or issue correctly. In other words, one needs to pay attention to and ask questions about one’s experience. This necessarily leads to ensuring one has understood the experience correctly. What exactly is the problem? What exactly are the different dimensions of the problem that shed light on the ethical dilemma? This process of exploring one’s experience to understand it and then ensuring one’s understanding of it is correct constitutes the second and third stages of ethical deliberation and serves to make clear the “facts” of the concrete situation. Thus, “fact” questions enable one to identify what exactly one is dealing with in this concrete situation. It establishes the facts. Yet, ethical deliberation is not just about facts. The facts of a situation are laid bare for the purposes of deliberating on what must be done. One is pressed to make a decision about what one must do in face of a specific situation. Identifying the facts correctly paves the way to making a decision that is grounded on solid reasoning because all the relevant facts have been taken into consideration. So, given the state of the situation (which we have come to know through correctly understanding all the relevant data) we shift to asking “act” questions. What should I (we) do? What is being asked of me or us in this concrete situation? What do I or we draw on to inform the decision that must be made about moving forward? These are “act” questions. They rely on a correct grasp of the concrete dilemma at hand. The facts of the situation inform the specific acts that one must do in order to act ethically, in order to do what is truly worthwhile, what is truly good. So, the “act” questions build on the “fact” questions. The “fact” questions might be articulated as “what is it?” and “is my understanding accurate?” The “act” questions might be articulated as “what should I do?” and “Is this the right thing to do?” Finally, identifying the facts and the correct actions is not the whole story. It is possible to come to the point of knowing exactly the right thing to do and yet not do it. Things get in the way; for example, it is not in my interest to do the right thing or, the right thing will hurt my group too much. On the other hand, despite conflicting interests, one does do what one has identified is the right thing. The important point here is that it is not guaranteed. Just because one has identified the correct action, does not mean one will do it, it does not mean one will follow one’s conscience.

Above, we have identified a process of ethical deliberation based on the cognitive structure of human beings as Lonergan explains it. Human beings

5. This section is based on Kenneth R. MELCHIN, *Living with Other People*, chapter one, pp. 17-35.

come to know their world through understanding their experience correctly. They come to know what they ought to do through discerning the right thing in a concrete situation and then actually doing it. In the next section of the paper, we examine chapter one of the Book of Joshua. We explore this chapter to demonstrate how there is a strong case to be made for positing the promotion of ethical deliberation operative in the book of Joshua similar to that described by Lonergan and, drawing on Lonergan, by Melchin. Chapter one of Joshua seems to suggest a fluid and dynamic approach to ethical deliberation that shares components with the dynamic process described here.

It is important to note right at the outset that chapter one of Joshua insists on the necessity of actualizing the Torah for God's presence to be manifest among the people. But this is only possible through a process that considers the particular, the present as well as the future. It considers the past and makes it resourceful for a new context. 'Doing the Torah' is transcending time and space to make the word of God alive.

Scripture scholars have long recognized a host of anomalies throughout the book of Joshua regarding what it means to "apply the law." The account of Rahab in chapter two evokes the archetype of the stranger whom Israel must at all costs avoid (prostitute, woman, Canaanite). It challenges preconceptions and prejudices. And if it were only a question of the application of a code of law, Rahab and her family would have been destroyed (Dt 7:1-2; 20,17-18). However, an attentiveness to experience, a careful understanding of the situation, a discernment that considers Israel's core values shifts a purely legalistic application of the Law to the 'doing of ALL the Torah.' The 'All' precludes a simple application of a code of law.⁶ Chapter one is also illustrated in many of the stories in the book of Joshua. Akan's infidelity, in chapter seven, emphasizes the impact that decisions and actions have on the community – hence the need for discernment that can only come through a careful study of the Torah in light of every situation. The Covenant with the Gibeonites, in chapter nine, is an example of a hasty decision without any discernment. The people of Gibeon deceive the Israelites into making a covenant with them and this subsequently engages the community in war against a coalition of five kings (chapter 10). Moreover, the reproach made to the Israelites saying they had not consulted Yahweh (9,14b) alludes, most probably, to Joshua, chapter one. Israel could not obtain insight into the situation because they had not been attentive, intelligent, and reasonable. Thus, they acted irresponsibly. These accounts illustrate how discernment and insight obtained by means of the

6. It seems to us that this is what Jesus is saying in the Sermon on the mount (Mt 5:17-48). There is the spirit or heart of the law and then there is the law set in stone. In Matthew's account of the lineage of Jesus, Rehab is presented as Jesus' great grandmother (Mt 1:5). It is interesting to note that if Israel had applied the code of law, Rehab could not have produced a lineage that gave to the world the Messiah, the Christ.

study of the Torah is necessary for its actualization and to ensure the divine assistance which confers to the people its identity as people of Yahweh. These ideas are worked through in what follows.

Joshua and the Transcendental Precepts

The book of Joshua begins the literary corpus of the Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH), also known as the former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings). The first chapter of Joshua acts as a key to interpreting the stories of the following chapters and, one could argue, to the entire DH as well. It procures the meaning of ‘doing all the Torah’, the process and the goal. It is not clear, in Joshua, if the term Torah (vv. 7b and 8a) refers to the whole of the Pentateuch or only to the book of Deuteronomy, since the quotes all come from the latter. As argued elsewhere, “the ambiguity is perhaps intentional. The writer may have wanted to attribute to the Torah (Pentateuch) a mosaic authenticity”⁷. Especially since the text of Joshua repeatedly insists on the Mosaic authenticity of the Torah (vv. 3b.7b.8ac.13a.14a.15bd). Whatever the case may be, doing the Torah involves shifting from a static observance and understanding of the law to a more dynamic moral operation that considers the specific situation, embraces progress and the future of the community. How this has been understood has been the source of many biblical and philosophical studies. Here we will concentrate on Bernard Lonergan’s cognitional theory as a means of unpacking the meaning of “doing the Torah.”

Lonergan identifies four levels of consciousness comprised in the acts of knowing and doing:

[...] experience of data, understanding the data, judgment that one’s understanding is correct, and decision to act on the resulting knowledge. These are referred to as levels of *self-transcendence*, meaning that they are the principal set of operations by which we transcend the solitary self and deal with the world beyond ourselves through our wonder and care.⁸

Although the author does not present it in a systematic way, it is possible to trace the process of thinking in which the writer of Joshua engages to propose a solution to the community in difficulty.

7. Marie-France DION, «L’intelligence intuitive pour vivre selon la Torah. Jos 1 comme relecture et réécriture identitaires du Deutéronome», in André GAGNÉ, Alain GIGNAC et Gerbern OEGEMA (eds.), *Constructing Religious Identities during the Second Temple Period / Constructions des identités religieuses à l’époque du Second Temple*, Leuven, Peeters, 2016, p. 52. That article discusses the vocabulary used, the exegetical methods used by ancient Scribes and argues for a post-exilic dating of the text. This may be the reason it was important to legitimize the Torah as a whole.

8. “Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984)” in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. A Peer-reviewed Academic Resource*, <https://iep.utm.edu/lonergan/#:~:text=Lonergan%20names%20these%20four%20innate,Be%20reasonable%2C%20and%20Be%20responsible>. Accessed June 3, 2022.

The narrative alludes to the many concerns threatening the identity and existence of the community and all these boil down to one main issue, namely the presence and assistance of Yahweh with the community. But this point is almost overshadowed by the community's concern over the death of its leader Moses, mentioned twice in just two verses (vv. 1-2), and the threat to the promise of the land (v. 6). In order for the community to move from peril to progress, the writer for the text of Joshua, chapter one, brings his audience/reader to two realizations: 1) the need to discern and focus on the real issue – that of ensuring the presence of Yahweh with the community, and 2) the law and traditions are not static and need to be interpreted to actualize them for the present concerns (i.e., contextualized).

Be Attentive (to experience, to the data)

The author of the text sorts through all the difficulties experienced by the people to identify the essential problem and fears which, once understood, can help in finding possible solutions. The problems are multiple; the death of Moses (vv. 1-2) resulting in the loss of leadership and threat to the promise (v. 6); the text also alludes to the disorganization of the social structure implied in the need to organize the community, and the lack of solidarity also indicated by the injunction to help their brethren (vv. 12-15). Their fears are also recognized by the injunction to be courageous, mentioned four times (vv. 6.7.9.16), the instruction not to fear (v. 9b) along with the reassurance of Yahweh's presence (v. 9d). The fear of losing their identity is inferred by tracing all the promises and the law to Moses (vv. 3.5.7.14.15.17) as if the death of Moses means the end of a people. The true issue is almost overshadowed by all these concerns. In verses 5b to 9c, there is a shift from what seems like unrelated disparate difficulties to focus on the root concern which is their identity as people of God and their relationship with this God. Before working out a solution, however, there is a serious challenge that the writer is aware of but that the community may not have identified as a complication – namely, understanding the role and place of the law and of the mosaic tradition. For this community, the law and traditions are stuck in the past. The community is firmly attached to its past and its survival is dependent on their understanding of the laws and traditions, again, an understanding that is trapped in the past. For there to be any progress, there needs to be a shift in understanding.

Be Intelligent

The proposed shift, however, first needs to be validated and legitimized to the community to whom it is proposed. The writer does this by turning attention to the mosaic tradition which is the very foundation of their identity. Attention

is also paid to the community's social organization, namely the type of governing and the role of Moses, followed by that of Joshua. This is the reason for the many quotes of Deuteronomy.⁹ The Deuteronomic material used, however, is presented in a different order than what is found in the book of Deuteronomy and some of the quotes are slightly modified but the nuances are significant¹⁰. The resulting text, which is put in the mouth of Yahweh, is said to be the words of Moses (v. 7). So, the text of Joshua, chapter one, is doubly validated: it bears the authority of the mosaic tradition and is the word of Yahweh. We could add that this validation suggests the wording reflects the intentionality behind the text, a theme taken up again in the Sermon on the mount (Mt 5) when Jesus opposes the written law with the spirit (intentionality) of the law.¹¹ In Joshua, as in the New Testament, importance is given to the *intention* of the law.

This is the reason why Joshua is instructed to 'think, ponder, consider' the book of the law. The verb *hāga* (Jos 1:8), often translated in English by the verb "to meditate" or "to mutter," is better understood here with the sense of "to ponder, to think, to consider." This is so especially in this context where the reader is led to a deeper understanding of the Torah that necessitates a reinterpretation in light of a new and/or specific situation. It is with this sense, that the Septuagint (LXX) understood the term and translated the verb as *meletao* (to study, to reflect). The text presents two consequences to the verb *hāga* "thinking, reflecting, considering, pondering" (v.8de) and each is introduced by the adverb *āz*, "then." The first uses the verb *tsālach* meaning to be successful or to be prosperous (v. 7d) "then you will be successful." The second consequence is expressed using the verb *sācal* 'gaining insight' (v.8)¹². Here the effort of concentration results in "gaining insight." According to what has been said above, thinking (*hāga*) or the effort of concentration will promote the acquisition of insight (*sācal*). Studying the Torah will provide Joshua with that explanatory internal organization that suddenly and unexpectedly springs to mind and guides him wherever he goes¹³. Verse 7cd suggests a notion of intentionality as described by Lonergan¹⁴. The protasis and apodosis of verse 7c and 7d: "do not turn away from it to the right or to the left in order to obtain insight wherever you go" insists on self-awareness in the determination to do "all the Torah" and "wherever you will go" includes unprecedented situations. In short, verses 7-8 are an appeal to consider the Torah at all times: "night

9. Dt 11:24-25; 1:7; 3:28; 31:7-8,23c; 5:12; 29:8; 6:6; 17:18; 31:7,23; 1:21,29; 7:21; 20:15; 31:6.

10. Modifications and their implications are presented in detail in Marie-France DION, *Constructing Religious Identities*, pp. 41-45.

11. "You have heard [...] but I tell you" Mt 5:21,27 etc.

12. For a detailed study on the translation of the verb *sācal* see Marie-France DION, *Constructing Religious Identities*, pp. 47-50.

13. For an explanation of this, see the "Preface" in Bernard J. F. LONERGAN, *Insight*, and Chapter one of Bernard J. F. LONERGAN, *Method*.

14. See Chapter one of Bernard J. F. LONERGAN, *Method*.

and day,” and in all places: “wherever you go.” The grammatical construction *weQatal* (*wehāga*) preceded by the imperative, in verse 8, gives it a causative value, and thus explains the means by which the book of the law will not stray from his mouth.¹⁵ This causative value should be reflected in the translation of the text: “This book of Torah will not stray from your mouth since/because you will study it night and day.” Contrarily to Moses, who passed away, the Torah transcends time (v. 8b – night and day) and space (v. 7d – wherever you go) and is capable of predisposing one to insights. This pericope (vv. 5-9c) interprets the Mosaic law in a new context to explain to the people how Yahweh can be with them. In fact, the writer makes use of a literary device to illustrate the shift that Joshua and the community must make for Yahweh to be with them as he was with Moses.

Two similar clauses that pertain to the divine assistance frame the text of a concentric structure¹⁶ that has in its middle, its focal point, the role of the Torah and gaining insights. This framework shows the desire or intent of Yahweh to be with Joshua (v. 5b) but not yet its fulfillment. The latter is to be found in the second clause used to frame the concentric structure (v. 9c). This passage is crucial in understanding how to move from intent to accomplishment.

A As I was with Moses, I intend to be with you (v. 5b)

↓

A' For Yahweh your God is with you wherever you go (v. 9c)

The mention of the divine presence in verses 5b and 9c is a quote from Deuteronomy (Dt 31:8,23c). The grammatical structure of the quote, however, is modified in v. 5b to give it a volitional nuance¹⁷. So instead of reading “I

15. For the causative value of *weQatal*, see Alviero NICCACCÌ, *The Syntax of the Hebrew Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose* (JSOTSup, 86), Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1990, (n. 5), pp. 88-89 – his example in 1 Kings 22,15b.

16. The concentric structure reproduced from Marie-France DION, *Constructing Religious Identities*, p. 44.

A Assistance divine (vouloir être avec) (v. 5b)

B Assurance de YHWH (v. 5c)

C *sois ferme et courageux*, (v. 6a)

D *car (raison de l'injonction)* (v. 6b)

E *Faire la loi partout* (v. 7a-c)

F *afin d'obtenir l'intelligibilité partout où tu iras*. (v. 7d)

E' *Faire la Loi en tout temps* (v. 8a-b)

F' *afin de veiller à agir selon tout ce qui est écrit* (v. 8c)

D' *car (raison de l'injonction)* (v. 8de).

C' *sois ferme et courageux*». (v. 9a)

B' Réponse à l'assurance de YHWH (v. 9b)

A Assistance de YHWH (être avec) (v. 9c)

17. In the text of Jos 1:5b, the mention of divine assistance is made by means of a grammatical construction with *Yiqtol* in first position and this is to underline the volitive nuance mode of the clause. See: Alviero NICCACCÌ, *The Syntax of the Hebrew Verb*, pp. 88-95.

will be with you” it reads “I intend (wish/want) to be with you”¹⁸ emphasizing the volitive mode of the proposition relating to the divine assistance. In the texts of Deuteronomy (Dt 31:8.23c), the grammatical construction renders an indicative future without this volitional nuance and is rendered as “I will be with you.”¹⁹ This is not the case, however, in Joshua 1:5b. The grammatical construction emphasizes Yahweh’s intention to be with Joshua, but not its fulfillment. Divine assistance is mentioned once again in v. 9c and, this time, in a simple nominal clause that translates into a present tense “for with you (is) Yahweh your God.” The framing of the concentric structure therefore shows a passage, between wanting to “be with” and its realization “I am with.” This framework draws attention to the purpose of the concentric structure which has the Torah in its middle and underscores the essential value to Israel, that is, its relationship to Yahweh and his presence amongst his people. Although the people were concerned about not having the divine assistance when Moses died, their main worry was about the promise of the land; the promise begins the chapter and is mentioned six times in as many verses. In verses 5d to 9c, however, the land is relegated to the margins and the focus is on the Torah as the means for Yahweh to be with the community.

The passage from intention to realization is done by means of a reinterpretation of the mosaic tradition exercised by Yahweh himself. This interpretation is done through the modification of the grammatical structure (as seen above), but also by means of a recontextualization of the injunction to be “firm and courageous,” which again is a quote from Deuteronomy, here repeated three times (vv. 6,7,9). The virtues in Deuteronomy were required for a military confrontation, but here, they are recontextualized and now relate to Joshua’s relationship to the Torah, more precisely to the interpretation of the Torah, to do all the Torah.

The setting in this story, the structure of the text – particularly the pericope of verses 5b to 9c, and the vocabulary show the main problems for Israel and the way forward. The path forward is in the assurance of Yahweh’s presence. He was with Moses, He wants to be with Joshua and the path from intent to realization is through the actualization of the Torah, that is contextualizing

18. For a detailed study on grammatical structures and volitional forms see: Robert DAVID, «L’analyse syntaxique, outil pour la traduction Biblique: le cas des cohortatifs», in Robert DAVID – Manuel JINBACHIAN, *Traduire la Bible hébraïque. De la Septante à la Nouvelle Bible Segond* (Sciences bibliques, 15), Montréal, Médiaspaul, 2005, pp. 275-318.

19. In the texts of Deuteronomy (Dt 31:8.23c), the grammatical construction is done by means of an X-Yiqtol construction, that is to say that the verb in the imperfect is preceded by the personal pronoun (‘He, he will be with you’ or ‘me, I will be with you’ v. 23) and is thus translated as an indicative future which does make it sound like a promise. And this is how it appears everywhere else except for in Jos 1:5b; 3:7 and in Ex 3:14, where the Yiqtol verb form is first in the clause and is then volitional, or when it is a weYiqtol construction that follows an imperative in which case it is a continuation form.

the Torah and making it relevant for this community that has now lost its leader Moses.

So, thus far, in Lonergan's terms we have moved from being attentive to the experience to being intelligent in understanding the issues at stake and identifying the most pressing need – Yahweh's presence amongst the people. The third phase of Lonergan's empirical method pertains to the validity of the path forward identified in the concentric structure. Can Yahweh be with Joshua and the people despite the death of Moses who was the intermediary between Yahweh and the people? Are the words of Yahweh spoken to Moses still valid? The discourse of Joshua to the people will help answer these questions of judgement.

Being Reasonable - Judging

In verses 10-15, Joshua takes charge of the people as Yahweh commanded and speaks to the people. Throughout both Yahweh's discourse to Joshua and Joshua's discourse to the people, allusions to the Torah or to the words of Moses emphasize the mosaic authenticity of the Torah (vv. 3b, 7b, 8a and c, 13a, 14a, 15b and d). Thus, Yahweh and Joshua are not denying the past, they are acknowledging the authoritative stance of the mosaic tradition. Both speeches (Yahweh's in verses 5b to 9 and Joshua's in verses 10-15) affirm the continuing validity of the words spoken to Moses. But the transcending nature of the Torah is only made possible through reinterpretation that is meant to actualize it in every generation. 'Doing' the Torah is actualizing the Torah. Actualizing the Torah is understanding it within a new context. The speeches subtly remind Israel (and us) that Yahweh's presence is not circumscribed to a piece of land. In fact, in Yahweh's speech the concern is not the land, but his presence amongst his people. The survival as a distinct people is contingent on this transcending truth. The promise of the land is a benefit, but the land in and of itself does not ensure the presence of Yahweh. Moses himself does not ensure this presence. When Yahweh makes his speech, Moses is dead. Yahweh's presence is manifested by 'doing the Torah' which requires this effort of concentration in understanding the Torah in unprecedented circumstances. In light of what has been said above, 'to do' according to all of the Torah' is not to abide by-laws, traditions, or even a code of covenant. This may seem contradictory since the text insists on 'doing the law.' The key word is the verb 'to do.' To act according to the whole Torah is to interpret in order to update it in a specific context. It is to take particular situations into account and to be attentive, intelligent, and reasonable in judging the validity of our understanding. To do according to ALL the law means also to complete the process, this means action.

Be Responsible - Act

The people's response to Joshua in the last speech repeats the conditional elements of Yahweh's speech to Joshua that we saw above. The people will obey Joshua and support him in everything he says on two conditions:

Only may Yahweh your God be with you as he was with Moses (v. 17).

Only be strong and courageous (v. 8).

Before discussing in more detail the fourth level of Lonergan's cognitive process, a word should be said about the quadruple quote taken from Deuteronomy (31:7.23): "Be firm and courageous." This insistence has led exegetes to suspect one or more editorial layers of Joshua, chapter one, or to see in this repetition a figure of speech serving as a leitmotif.²⁰ These repetitions, however, seem rather to draw attention to present circumstances and the fear of moving forward. They draw attention to the fear of letting go of biases and false securities. Let us remember that for Israel, interpreting texts was adapting them to new circumstances. This could mean to reconsider previous understandings or interpretations and to seek the true values. We have seen that by means of a literary structure, of a recontextualization and of modifications made to the quoted Deuteronomic texts, Yahweh rectifies for Joshua the basis of Israel's identity and survival – which is not the land, not even the mosaic tradition (as understood by the people then) but by Yahweh's presence made possible through an actualization of the Torah which involves a commitment to being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. The sphere of activity in which firmness and courage are exercised is thus modified. These virtues 'be strong and courageous' which in Deuteronomy were required for a military confrontation now relate to Joshua's relationship to the Torah, more precisely to the interpretation of the Torah done by means of a recontextualization. One could say that being a people of God, whether Christian, Jewish, or other, requires courage.

Conclusion

Reflecting on Patrick Byrne's article, the distinction between an ethics of the law and the ethics of discernment is remarkably illustrated in this first chapter of the book of Joshua. The interpretation of "doing all the Torah" as presented above, opens up Scripture in such a manner that it reveals a dynamic correspondence between the text and the reader. The text, in what

20. Thomas RÖMER, «Josué, lecteur de la Torah (Jos 1,8)», in Klaus Dietrich SCHUNCK et Matthias AUGUSTIN (eds.), *Lasset uns Brücken Bauen. Collected Communications to the XVth Congress of the Organization for the Study of the Old Testament*, 1995, Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 1998, pp. 117-124.

has been suggested as a valid interpretation, offers a dynamic presentation of what interpreting and doing the Torah means. The dynamic structure that is indicated in the text corresponds to the dynamic structure of the human person as Lonergan has so clearly articulated it and what was outlined in the beginning of this paper. The encounter between the reader and the text shifts both out of a passive receptive mode where the text purportedly communicates good action as simply following the law and the reader supposedly is to follow without thought or reflection. It is a shift toward following the “living word” that guides us into an unknown future and encourages us to be “strong and courageous.” It is a transformative experience, in the sense that Kenneth Melchin means, where prior ways of valuing recede into the background and new ways of valuing emerge to light our discernment process and guide us on our journey. The text informs us that interpretation itself requires one to be “strong and courageous.” This is especially so when one’s interpretation yields uncommon results, results that could change a community’s self-identity and their sense of the trajectory of their journey.

*Department of Theological Studies
Concordia University*

SUMMARY

This article examines Joshua, chapter one, in light of Lonergan’s transcendental precepts. An ethicist and an exegete team up and investigate how ethical deliberation, on the one hand, and living ‘according to the word of God’ or ‘doing the Torah,’ on the other, share a remarkably similar process for a common purpose.

SOMMAIRE

Cet article effectue une lecture du chapitre 1 du livre de Josué à la lumière des « préceptes transcendants » de Lonergan. Une éthicienne et une exégète s’associent pour vérifier comment l’instance de délibération, d’une part, et l’expérience vécue « selon la parole de Dieu » ou « l’accomplissement de la Torah », d’autre part, partagent une démarche semblable dans la poursuite d’une finalité commune.