

Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18^{iv} and Psalm 34:15-22^v

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, “Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.”

^{iv} About Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18

The pass of Shechem (Hebrew, shoulders) is in the northern hill country of Israel, situated between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. It became an important cultic center during the period of the tribal confederacy (c. 1200-1000 BCE) before the beginning of the centralization of worship at Jerusalem under the monarchy. Now the generation that has come into the promised land enters into a covenant with the Lord similar to that into which their ancestors entered at Sinai (Exodus 24:7-18, 34:27-28).

The ceremony reported here may have been an annual renewal of the covenant. It follows the form of ancient Hittite political treaties (covenants among nations) of that time. Elements of such treaties were: a preamble (24:2a), a summary of historical relationships (24:2-13), the stipulations (24:14, 25), the recording of the treaty in written form (24:26) and the invocation of witnesses (24:22, 27).

The recitation of God’s act of salvation forms the historical creed of the Israelites (Deuteronomy 6:20-25). It is followed by the presentation of a choice, the response of commitment and the enumeration of requirements. Early monotheism was not a metaphysical

denial of the possibility of more than one god—“there is only one God”—but rather a moral decision of commitment to serve one particular god—“there is only one God for us”(Genesis 35:2-4)—in response to God’s prior choice of the people (Exodus 19:3-6).

√ Psalm 34:15-22√

The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, *
and his ears are open to their cry.
The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, *
to root out the remembrance of them from the earth.
The righteous cry, and the LORD hears them *
and delivers them from all their troubles.
The LORD is near to the brokenhearted *
and will save those whose spirits are crushed.
Many are the troubles of the righteous, *
but the LORD will deliver him out of them all.
He will keep safe all his bones; *
not one of them shall be broken.
Evil shall slay the wicked, *
and those who hate the righteous will be punished.
The LORD ransoms the life of his servants, *
and none will be punished who trust in him.