

Transforming historical to personal nostalgia: A God's way in empowering Joshua's leadership



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One of the most prominent themes in the Book of Joshua is leadership. However, the process through which God moulded Joshua and the role Joshua played in ultimately becoming a remarkably resilient leader is hardly discussed. In our opinion, nostalgia about God is the key to Joshua's resilience. Although nostalgia, functioning as an inner resource that fosters hope within individuals, has been extensively studied and empirically validated in psychology, its role in shaping and portraying the factors contributing to the resilience of a new leader, as depicted in the Book of Joshua, has remained largely unexplored. Intriguingly, the nostalgia about God is an inclusive framework that encapsulates the entire book (Jos 1:2–5 and 24:25–27). To further reinforce Joshua, the narrative is replete with instances where God transforms historical nostalgia about Himself into personal nostalgia. This personal nostalgia empowers Joshua to lead with unwavering strength.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: Drawing on the psychological concept of nostalgia, this article examines how God empowered Joshua as a new leader. Thus, theoretically, this article proposes a new perspective for reading the Book of Joshua. Still, practically, it can also serve as a model for anyone who wants to shape strong individuals or leaders in the future.

Keywords: Joshua; leader; nostalgia; *poiesis*; strength.

Introduction

Joshua is a pivotal figure in the history of Israel, entrusted with the monumental task of succeeding Moses, a great and charismatic leader of Israel. The closing verses of Deuteronomy emphasise that no prophet has arisen in Israel like Moses, who personally knew the Lord as closely as he did (Dt 34:10–12). Moses spent the first 40 years of his life in Pharaoh's palace, receiving the finest education and training Egypt had to offer. This great figure was succeeded by Joshua, who was tasked with fulfilling God's promise to lead His people into the Promised Land. Joshua is often referred to as 'the young apprentice and successor to Moses' (Younger 2003:174). This task was immensely challenging, if not nearly impossible.

When Moses was still alive, Joshua and 11 other leaders were assigned to scout the Promised Land (cf. Nm 13:4–16). Upon completing his mission, Joshua (and Caleb) displayed his conviction that God would be with the Israelites as they entered the land (14:6–9). However, this was based on the understanding that Moses would lead the Israelites. Joshua's memories of how God was always personally present with Moses, particularly when Joshua was appointed to lead the battle against Amalek (Ex 17:8–16), were undoubtedly impactful. But it was a different matter when Moses was no longer present. As such, it is not an exaggeration when Harris et al. assert that 'Joshua, the assistant of Moses, no doubt faces a crisis of confidence upon succeeding the great Moses' (Harris et al. 2000:10). The portrayal of the crisis is also reflected in Woudstra's paraphrasing of God's repeated calling of Joshua (Jos 1:5, 9) as, 'Do not tremble, neither be dismayed' (Woudstra 1981:64). The crisis that Joshua experienced is further evidenced by the process of crossing the Jordan River, as noted by Josephus: 'Now while Joshua, the commander, was in fear about their passing over Jordan, ...' (*Ant.* 5.16). Yet, in the end, Joshua completed his mission, and the life of the Israelites during Joshua's time, and even for some time after his death, was considered highly pleasing to God (cf. Jos 24:31). In many respects, Joshua was even directly equated with Moses (Butler 1983:282–283).

Therefore, it is no exaggeration to conclude that 'leadership' is one of the theological themes of the book (Harris et al. 2000:10–11). The leadership of Joshua is one of Josephus's primary interests (cf. Feldman 1989). In his writings, Josephus mentions Joshua's name 68 times: 67 times in the

Antiquities of the Jews (Ant.) and once in the *Jewish War (Jwr.)*. Joshua's leadership has even inspired a method and leadership training curriculum known as *Joshua's Men* (Grove 2011; Reiland 2006). The leadership of Joshua has been extensively studied, leading to numerous publications.

However, studies on Joshua's leadership typically focus on the process of his selection, personal qualities, leadership and strategies, which are ultimately the most decisive factors in his success (cf. Kolawole 2021; McCarthy 1972). Josephus viewed it in the same way. According to Feldman, Josephus identified five leadership qualities in Joshua. After Joshua's death, Feldman observed that Josephus again summarised Joshua's four qualities. Combining these two accounts, Feldman asserts, 'If we combine these two accounts, we see that Josephus stressed in Joshua the qualities of wisdom, eloquence, courage, endurance, flexibility, and piety' (Feldman 1989:351–352). Other studies on Joshua have compared the leadership of Joshua to that of Jesus (Štrba 2014), while some have paralleled Joshua's leadership qualifications with those of the prophets in the Pentateuch (Routley 2022).

Meanwhile, Oprean has indeed highlighted the leadership of Joshua, emphasising the process of discipleship that made him a leader with the necessary qualifications (Oprean 2023). Oprean illustrates the transformation process within Joshua, moulding him into a spiritually mature person. Thus, it is concluded that the book begins with a depiction of Joshua as the assistant of Moses (Jos 1:1) and ends with Joshua as the servant of the Lord (Jos 24:29) (Oprean 2023:180). The crux of our study shares similarities with Oprean's work, particularly concerning the process that shaped Joshua's maturity. However, the fundamental factors that contributed to Joshua's maturity, resilience and the various qualities mentioned earlier have not been thoroughly explored. Therefore, an often overlooked but critical component of Joshua's qualities lies in his ability to draw on the past, particularly through the power of nostalgia about God.

Literally, the concept of nostalgia emerges as a central theme that encapsulates this book. The book opens with a nostalgic reflection on how God was with Moses (Jos 1:2–5) and concludes with an effort to ensure that what God had done for the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua would serve as a nostalgia that strengthens them, symbolised by the stone memorial as a reminder (Jos 24:25–27). Thus, nostalgia forms an *inclusio* within the book.

The historical significance and positive impact of nostalgia on individuals experiencing life crises have been extensively discussed in various writings (Andangsari, Surbakti & Sinambela 2023; Surbakti & Andangsari 2022, 2023). In several studies, nostalgia has been concluded as a factor that has great potential within individuals, serving as a valuable resource during various life crises. At least two types of nostalgia have been identified, namely *personal nostalgia* and *historical nostalgia* (cf. Marchegiani & Phau 2013:24). *Personal nostalgia* refers to the individual's memories of past experiences they have personally lived through.

Meanwhile, *historical nostalgia* pertains to memories that the individuals do not directly experience. Although individuals do not experience the memories personally, these memories can be recalled and passed down through generations, often subject to varying interpretations.

If one were to choose, which type of nostalgia has the greatest potential to rekindle strength? The answer would certainly be *personal nostalgia*. If so, can historical nostalgia be transformed into personal nostalgia? In the case of transforming historical nostalgia about God to personal nostalgia within Joshua, what did God do to him? And what actions did Joshua perform to effect the transformation?

Through this article, we invite readers to discover the answers. As an initial hypothesis, we posit that the resilience of Joshua's leadership lies in how God transformed historical nostalgia about God into personal nostalgia. The transformation is what enabled the leadership of Joshua to be as resiliently strong as, if not comparably stronger than, that of the great leader of the Israelites, Moses.

To prove this hypothesis, we begin by reviewing nostalgia and its positive effects through several empirical psychological studies. Next, we present a concept in which *poiesis* as a way of life is what enabled Joshua to experience the transformation within himself. We then show that a series of miraculous stories in this book are God's way of transforming historical nostalgia – past events that God did for Moses and the ancestors of Israel – into personal nostalgia, an experience that Joshua himself experienced. Throughout these miraculous stories, Joshua's role is also clearly evident: faithfully doing all of God's commands – *poiesis*.

Nostalgia and its effects

The word 'nostalgia' comes from two syllables: *nostos* [returning home] and *algos* [suffering] (Hepper et al. 2012:102; Sedikides & Wildschut 2020:2). Thus, nostalgia is defined as an affliction caused by homesickness. Nostalgia, as a medical term, was first coined in 1688 by Johannes Hofer (Routledge et al. 2013:808; Sedikides & Wildschut 2018:48). From then on, nostalgia was declared a '*cerebral disease*'. In the 19th century, the medical world's view on nostalgia began to change, and it was no longer seen as a *cerebral disease* (Routledge et al. 2013:808). However, it is still considered a neurological abnormality that is similar to depression (Surbakti & Andangsari 2023:3). In the last two decades, there have been many empirical studies in the field of psychology to prove that nostalgia is not a mental illness. Instead, nostalgia has been concluded to be an important element of mental health. The following studies are presented.

In an empirical study, a group of research subjects was asked to write their nostalgic narratives. Two of the four conclusions were: Firstly, the primary object of nostalgia is memories of people (person) (cf. Routledge et al. 2013:809) – or a personified entity that in this study focuses on God – and the next is about events that are also related to people

(Routledge et al. 2013:809). Secondly, the effects of nostalgia can be positive or negative, but the majority of the effects are positive (Routledge et al. 2013:809).

Furthermore, to reinforce the conclusions regarding the function and effects of nostalgia, we also present the results of empirical research in various places with research subjects from different cultural backgrounds, professions and ages:

- The effects of nostalgia are stronger when a person feels threatened in their existence (Juhl et al. 2010:313).
- Nostalgia that is stimulated or activated affects social relationships, self-esteem and optimism (Cheung, Sedikides & Wildschut 2016:284–285).
- Nostalgia is considered a coping strategy for lonely people who need social support (Zhou et al. 2008: 1026–1028).
- Nostalgia leads to greater optimism, especially in people who listen to nostalgic songs. Nostalgia also has an effect on optimism through the intermediary of self-esteem (Cheung et al. 2013:1488–1489).
- Nostalgia has the effect of reducing stress levels in people who have a low meaning of life (Routledge et al. 2011:646–647).
- Nostalgia generally arises when people experience loneliness and negative emotions (Andangsari et al. 2023; Routledge et al. 2013:809; Surbakti & Andangsari 2022:2; Wildschut, Sedikides & Cordaro 2011:71–73).
- Nostalgia also has the power to evoke hope (Andangsari et al. 2023). During the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, empirical research demonstrated that nostalgia could foster a sense of hope (Counted et al. 2022:74; Putri et al. 2023; Yıldırım & Arslan 2020).

Thus, the argument that nostalgia contains potential *inner resources* (internal strength) stored within humans becomes increasingly clear. This internal strength becomes a kind of ammunition reserve that is ready to be used at any given time. The reserve ammunition will become a real force after being stimulated with various strategies. Crises in life are a kind of enemy attack on a person. The amount of ammunition reserves and the skills to manage them will, of course, determine the success of any person facing a crisis in their life.

Nostalgia in the interpretation of biblical texts

The use of a nostalgic perspective in understanding biblical texts has not been very popular. However, the use of the past experiences of believers to encourage or remind their readers of God's work for His people is often used by the writers of the books of the Bible. That is why the use of the past idea, both explicitly (Ex 7:17–19; 9:6ff; 32:7, etc.) and implicitly (Mt 18:2¹; Mt 22:32²), is relatively abundant in the Bible. In addition to using the future, biblical writers also seem to use the past as a pastoral approach to encourage, motivate and

1. 'The use of the little child in Matthew 18:2 reminds the disciples of their childhood (past event)' (Sinambela et al. 2021).

2. 'The use of God's name alongside that of the ancestors (*ho theos ton pateron*) refers not only to God but also to the example of the ancestors. With this idea, the mention of God in this way invites the readers of Matthew's Gospel to remember the legacy of their ancestors (past event)' (Surbakti & Andangsari 2022).

build hope in their readers (Andangsari et al. 2023:6; Surbakti & Andangsari 2022:1). The book of Joshua, as one of the historical books, for example, does not merely present the history of Israel's ancestors. Through the book, there is a message to be conveyed to its readers, namely the strengthening of faith and obedience to God (cf. Harris et al. 2000:xxxix, xlii). From this perspective, several accounts of the history of God's intervention in the lives of Israel's ancestors in the past presented in this book are intended to strengthen its readers in their respective social contexts. Therefore, as part of strengthening their faith and identity, the parents of the Israelites utilised the historical experiences of their ancestors when educating their children (Boling & Wright 1982:3). Such past experiences were not only recited and quoted repeatedly but also sung in worship. However, the term nostalgia, which is also a past experience, has not been used. This is not surprising because, until the 19th century, nostalgia as a medical term was still considered a mental illness and even a *cerebral disease* (Routledge et al. 2013:808). At least, it was still considered something abnormal related to nerves or some kind of depression.

The works of Israel's God as historical nostalgia in the leadership succession

Joshua 1:1–9 recounts the leadership succession within the nation of Israel, transitioning from Moses to Joshua. Previously, in Deuteronomy 31:7–8, Moses had publicly declared Joshua as his successor before the people of Israel. Drawing from his own familiar experiences and knowledge of the God of Israel, Moses assured Joshua of God's divine support and not to fear, emphasising that the God of Israel would accompany him in fulfilling his duties (cf. Dt 31:7–8). Joshua was undoubtedly aware of the promises made by the God of Israel to his ancestors, although he did not personally witness the events surrounding those promises.

The Lord's words in Joshua 1:5 largely represent *historical nostalgia* for Joshua. He certainly knew how Moses was used by God. Joshua most likely had been aware of the numerous miraculous signs that convinced Moses of the immense power of God and His unwavering presence. The story of God's intervention in Moses' life from his birth, through his calling and commissioning by God, to his successful leadership in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt – was well known to Joshua. Yet, all of this remained within the realm of *historical nostalgia* for him.

When God called Joshua to succeed Moses, God made a series of divine promises to Joshua. For instance, 'Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses' (Jos 1:3). It is highly likely that Moses believed with certainty that God could fulfil these promises because Moses had personally witnessed the mighty power of the God of Israel – it means Moses had *personal nostalgia* regarding the God of Israel. However, these events still existed as *historical nostalgia* for Joshua. Therefore, Joshua's conviction was not as firm as that of Moses yet. As it was still a *historical nostalgia*, Joshua's belief in God's promise was not

as strong as Moses. However, when these concerns (*historical nostalgia*) about the God of Israel transform into *personal nostalgia*, it is undeniable that their potential power will be greatly amplified. The question then remains: What is the key to this transformation?

Poiesis is the key to building personal nostalgia

Nostalgia (the past) as a pastoral approach has been used in several studies of the Gospel of Matthew (Sinambela, Surbakti & Andangsari 2021; Surbakti & Andangsari 2022, 2023). One of which is the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt7:24–27) (Surbakti & Andangsari 2023). In the text, it is the doing or not doing of Jesus' words that makes one firm in the face of various crises in life. The Greek word used for 'doing' is 'ποιεῖν' (*poiein*). This word is frequently translated as 'to make' as well. Doing (*poiein*) the will of God or the teachings of Jesus is a fundamental idea in Matthew's Gospel (cf. Hagner 2008:178).

Long before Jesus, the *poiesis* (*poiein*) way of life was understood as a way of life that can produce knowledge or understanding. According to Aristotle, three human activities can produce knowledge or understanding, namely: *Theoria* [contemplation], *praxis* [action] and *poiesis* [making] (Groome 1980:153, 156; Volanen 2012:53). In Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle distinguishes *praxis* and *poiesis*:

[A]ction and making are different kinds of things, since making aims at an end distinct from the act of making, whereas in doing, the end cannot be other than the act itself. (NE. 1140b 1–5)

As in Matthew 7:24–27, Aristotle also uses the analogy of building a house when distinguishing *praxis* and *poiesis*, '[...] the house and the builder have nothing in common, but the art of the builder is for the sake of the house' (Pol 1328a 27–35). The end of the *poiesis* way of life is the product of an activity rather than the activity itself (Bernasconi 1986). What, then, is the product of the *poiesis* way of life that Jesus emphasises in the closing of the Sermon on the Mount? It is explicitly seen in the text that houses are not destroyed when hit by various violent natural phenomena. What does that mean?

It has been widely concluded that the main theme of Matthew's Gospel is 'God with Us' (cf. Davies & Allison 1997:688; France 1985:48; Kupp 1996:17–20; Menken 2004:29). Therefore, '*poiein*' – or doing God's commands or the teachings of Jesus – is the most effective way to achieve this rhetorical goal. Thus, the product of the *poiesis* way of life is the knowledge that God is indeed with human beings. In the future, the knowledge or understanding of God becomes a *personal nostalgia* that will be very useful when someone faces a crisis in their life. That is why we associate the demand to do the words of Jesus (*poiesis*) in Matthew 7:24–27 with personal nostalgia of God, that God is always present in their lives. This personal nostalgia then becomes the inner resource that keeps the house – that is, the disciples – from collapsing

when natural phenomena, such as challenges or crises in life, strike them (Surbakti & Andangsari 2023:6).

God transforms historical nostalgia into personal nostalgia

Previously, after Moses personally summoned Joshua in Deuteronomy 31:7–8 to declare him as a successor, Joshua 1:1–9 narrates how God personally confirmed His calling and presence with Joshua. God not only reaffirmed His presence but also repeatedly assured Joshua that He would accompany him just as He had accompanied Moses. This reassurance is emphasised in Joshua 1:5, 9. The repetition is not without significance. God's deep love for Joshua and His people is evident, but the burden of Joshua's task was so heavy that he inevitably experienced a life crisis (cf. Woudstra 1981:64). Joshua's mission required courage and steadfastness, which is why God reiterated and asserted that He would always be present with Joshua. Harris et al. insightfully note that '[...] The presence of God is the greatest weapon of a chosen servant ... It is the final solution for fear and pressures' (Harris et al. 2000:19). We concur with the notion that the presence of God is a potent ammunition for anyone experiencing a crisis in their life. However, what is much more important is how one can truly feel and experience God's genuine presence and guidance. Experiencing God in this manner is what we refer to as *personal nostalgia* about God in the future.

Could Joshua be convinced by God that He would accompany him? How did God assure Joshua? Fascinatingly, as the story unfolds, God indeed fulfilled His promise to Joshua as God proved His presence. While initially only a promise reinforced by several *historical nostalgia*, it became more concrete as the narrative progressed, eventually transforming into *personal nostalgia*. When Joshua personally experienced what his ancestors had experienced, it was then that the *historical nostalgia* about the God of Israel became *personal nostalgia*.

Experiencing God in the story of Rahab and the spies

Armed with the promise of God's presence (*historical nostalgia*), Joshua's first step before entering Jericho was to assess the situation he was facing. He prepared two spies to cross the Jordan River and enter Jericho. Shortly, the spies arrived at the house of a prostitute named Rahab. It turned out that the presence and mission of Joshua's envoys were discovered by the people of Jericho and reported to the king. The king of Jericho subsequently sent men to Rahab, demanding that she hand over the spies.

Miraculously, Rahab recognised the identity of the two spies and their purpose in coming to Jericho. Rahab was even aware of the God of Israel and how He was with the people of Israel (Jos 2:9–11). Rahab harboured *historical nostalgia* about the God of Israel. Rahab was undeniably in a crisis herself. Rahab's decision to hide the spies was perilous. She could have been accused of defying the king of Jericho's decree.

She could even be labelled a traitor for concealing dangerous enemies. Next, in Joshua 2:4–6, Rahab made a remarkably bold declaration. It was the *historical nostalgia* about the God of Israel that emboldened Rahab to act. This same *historical nostalgia* was also what fuelled Rahab's hope for salvation for herself and her family (cf. Jos 2:12–13).

Long story short, through Rahab's help and courage, the two spies safely returned to Shittim and reported to Joshua. During their meeting, the spies recounted in detail the situation in Jericho and the miraculous events they had witnessed (Jos 2:23). These miraculous events caused the *historical nostalgia* of the God of Israel to evolve into *personal nostalgia* in the future. This *personal nostalgia* experienced firsthand by the two spies he sent strengthened Joshua and the Israelites, empowering them to face the crises ahead with renewed hope for the future. This is evident in the closing of this chapter (cf. Jos 2:24).

Traversing into the era of the NT, the story of Rahab continues to be interpreted as a testament to the providence of God.³ The name of this prostitute is even included in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Mt 1:5). As the main theme of this Gospel, several women mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus are also understood as affirmations of the 'God with Us' theme, including the story of Rahab.⁴

Experiencing God while crossing the Jordan river

Following the extraordinary events described earlier, Joshua grew increasingly confident in God's promises and more fervently committed to doing God's commands (*poiesis*). The fear noted by Josephus (cf. *Ant.* 5:16) had now vanished. True to God's promise, when the ark of God was lifted and the priests carrying the ark stepped into the Jordan, the waters from upstream stopped flowing and formed a dam-like wall (Jos 3:13b, 15–16). This miraculous event made part of the river dry, creating a passage through the riverbed. The entire nation of Israel then followed the priests who carried the ark, crossing the Jordan on dry ground (Jos 3:16c–17).

Notably, this event evokes *historical nostalgia* reminiscent of the parting of the Red Sea during Moses' time, which has now transformed into a *personal nostalgia* for all the Israelites who did not experience it with Moses. However, Joshua's faithfulness in doing God's commands (*poiesis*) led him to experience what Moses had experienced when he led the Israelites across the Red Sea, which ultimately had the potential to become personal nostalgia about God for Joshua in the future. With this renewed, high confidence, Joshua proclaimed the presence of the God of Israel (Jos 3:10–11).

³Matthew's unusual insertion of the five women in the genealogy, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, the wife of Uriah and Mary, the mother of Jesus (1.3, 5, 7, 16), provides an example of how he uses names to evoke particular instances of God's saving intervention' (Hannan 2006:22).

⁴Matthew, however, also uses the women in the genealogy to tell us something important about the nature of God's sovereignty. God's dynamic intervention in human affairs, as sovereign ruler, is consistently marked by compassion for the weak and the vulnerable and those, who because of gender, position or societal mores have access to processes of justice' (Hannan 2006:26).

Experiencing God while entering Jericho

Once Joshua and all the Israelites had successfully crossed the Jordan River, their next challenge was to enter the fortified city of Jericho. The city was portrayed as being protected by mighty heroes and warriors (Jos 6:2). Moreover, Jericho was described as having gates and city walls (Jos 6:1).

Indeed, the miraculous event of crossing the Jordan had already made the kings surrounding the Canaanite regions fearful and trembling. They were even described as losing heart and courage at the thought of an Israelite attack (Jos 5:1). At this point, it might have seemed easy for Joshua to conquer Jericho. However, entering the city of Jericho with its fortified city walls was an entirely different matter. Before delving into the story of the struggle to enter the city of Jericho, we would like to review another intriguing narrative about *personal nostalgia* in Joshua⁵.

After crossing the Jordan River, the Israelites camped for some time at Gilgal (Jos 5:10). They also celebrated the Passover at Gilgal before attempting to enter Jericho. It is also mentioned that after the Passover celebration, the manna that had sustained them for so long ceased to fall (Jos 5:12). This was surely not because God had stopped caring for them but rather because God wanted to build *personal nostalgia*. Joshua 5:11–12 mentioned that the Israelites ate from the produce of Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey. Long before this, God had promised Moses that He would bring the Israelites to a land flowing with milk and honey – the Promised Land (Ex 3:8, 17; 13:5; 33:1–3). Now this promise has been fulfilled. Once again, they now experienced the promise of the God of Israel personally.

Next, when they were about to enter Jericho, he saw a man standing before him with a drawn sword (Jos 5:13). He refers to himself as the commander of the army of the LORD (Jos 5:14). It was unimaginable that the commander of the Lord's army did not precede them into Jericho. Without this divine intervention, there would likely have been a great battle, and the Israelites would likely have suffered many casualties. Here we can see the richness and depth of Joshua's and the Israelites' *personal nostalgia* about God. What was Joshua's response to this increasingly more profound potential *personal nostalgia*? He fell face down in worship (Jos 5:14).

Furthermore, the moment of *personal nostalgia* occurred again when the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy' (Jos 5:15). The moment of Joshua's *personal nostalgia* about God was not only increased in number, but its significance also grew. Similar to combat ammunition, Joshua now not only had ample ammunition but also the quantity and quality of his spiritual weapons were getting higher. If previously the God of Israel promised that He would be with Joshua as He was with Moses, now Joshua experienced what Moses had experienced – meeting the God of Israel on holy ground. Hence, Joshua was instructed to remove his sandals, just as Moses had done when

encountering the burning bush (cf. Ex 3:4–5). So, the book not only illustrates the transformation from *historical nostalgia* into *personal nostalgia* about God, but it also shows the emergence of new *personal nostalgia* about God.

Experiencing God in the fall of Jericho's walls

Joshua did not doubt the promise of God, especially after a series of '*personal nostalgia*'. Therefore, when God asked Joshua to march around and encircle the city walls once daily and seven times on the 7th day (Jos 6:3–4), Joshua was obedient and faithfully followed God's command (*poiesis*). On the 7th day after going around the city walls seven times, the walls collapsed, and they entered the city (cf. Jos 6:20). Joshua and the Israelites once again had an experience of God's presence that would become profound *personal nostalgia*.

Further, upon entering the city, they encountered an enemy whose morale had already crumbled and had been mentally weakened due to their awareness that the mighty God of Israel was with Joshua (cf. Jos 5:1). Joshua and his troops successfully managed to crush the inhabitants and took control of Jericho, precisely as God had promised. Again, this event evoked the powerful *personal nostalgia* for Joshua and even *historical nostalgia* for future generations of Israelites and even for other nations (cf. Jos 6:27).

Obedience and faithfulness lead to *personal nostalgia*

All instances of 'Experiencing God' (knowing God or understanding God) mentioned earlier began with a command of God. When God ultimately called and commissioned Joshua to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, Joshua is said to have experienced a crisis in his life. He was, to some extent, aware of the nature of his people as well. He also knew that the promised land of Canaan was now inhabited by others, making it far from easy to enter the land, let alone occupy it. Indeed, Joshua had heard many stories about the might of God and His provision for the Israelites. He also knew that God would always keep His promises. But all this was still not enough to overcome the crisis in his life as the new leader of Israel. If God had done His part, then what was Joshua's part? The answer is Joshua's obedience and faithfulness in carrying out what God commanded (*poiesis*).

Joshua 24: Concluding the Book by the construction of *historical nostalgia's* stimulus

The Book of Joshua is particularly intriguing as it begins with an attempt to show *nostalgia* and ends with *nostalgia*. While earlier narratives have shown how God transformed various instances of *historical nostalgia* into *personal nostalgia* for Joshua and the Israelites he led, the concluding section of this book (Jos 24) depicts Joshua once again fostering *historical*

nostalgia for the Israelites by establishing the sacred site of the Lord in Shechem, beneath the large tree (24:26). For the Israelites, this event had not only theological but also psychological (the human psyche) dimensions (DeGear 2015:209, 213). Joshua delivered a clear statement that vividly reflects the concept of *nostalgia* he intended to create (cf. 24:27). This sacred site was not only meant to serve as a reminder for Joshua's generation and the elders of the Israelites present at the time but was also intended to become a stimulus of *historical nostalgia* for the generations that followed.

The effort to construct *historical nostalgia's* stimulus was not isolated. There were earlier attempts to achieve the same. Before entering the city of Jericho, one such effort is described in Joshua 4, where God sought to build a stimulus of *historical nostalgia* for the descendants of Israel who had not witnessed the miraculous events at the Jordan River. God instructed Joshua to select 12 men (4:2). Each of these men was asked to take stones from the Jordan River (4:5, 8), which were then arranged in a particular formation. The purpose of this arrangement was explicitly stated as a memorial for the descendants of Israel (cf. 4:6–7, 21–24).

Through Joshua and the 12 men, God established something that would later become the stimulus of *historical nostalgia* for the descendants and future generations of Israel. These memorial stones would ensure that this miraculous story would be entrenched forever, passed down through generations. This memory would not only serve as a reminder for the Israelites but also other nations (4:24). Rahab of Jericho exemplifies the fulfilment of God's mission to other nations, as the story of Moses parting the Red Sea is highlighted as a significant event (2:10). The book also shows that the memorial stones were placed in Gilgal (4:20) and in the middle of the Jordan River (4:9), which another effort can be found in Joshua 7:26.

It is evident that the purpose of the *nostalgia* about God, specifically *personal nostalgia* about the God of Israel, was to serve as a reminder and preparation for the Israelites to face several crises they would face in their lives in the future. These crises included both suffering and the temptation of a comfortable life that might lead them away from God's will. By rekindling the memories of all that God had done for them and their ancestors, it was hoped that the Israelites and their descendants would remain steadfast in their faith and not turn away from their God. In the closing section of the book, the effect of *nostalgia* about God is shown by the author to illustrate how the memory of all God's works for the Israelites truly strengthened the Israelites (cf. Jos 24:31).

Conclusion

Nostalgia serves as an *inner resource* within human nature, and as such, it is indispensable for a leader. Of the two types of *nostalgia*, the potential of *personal nostalgia* becoming internal power far surpasses the potential of *historical nostalgia*. As demonstrated in the preceding discussion,

the ancestors of Israel consistently maintained *historical nostalgia* about their God throughout their daily lives and existence as a nation. The various manifestations of God's love and might were passed down through generations. Several reminders, such as monuments at specific locations, were part of the effort to create and preserve *historical nostalgia* for future generations.

However, in the context of Joshua's role as the new leader of Israel and guiding the nation into the Promised Land, the force of *historical nostalgia* alone was insufficient. Joshua required a more potent force. This is why the book presents a series of miraculous events that can be understood as God's method of transforming *historical nostalgia* about the God of Israel into *personal nostalgia*. The role of Joshua was to faithfully and obediently follow the commands of God (*poiesis*). Obedience and faithfulness in doing God's commandments are the keys to converting *historical nostalgia* about God into future *personal nostalgia*.

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Authors' contributions

P.H.S. contributed by reviewing various interpretations of the Book of Joshua and other books mentioned in this study. E.W.A., as a researcher in the field of psychology, contributed by researching several literatures related to empirical and theoretical studies on nostalgia in psychology. P.H.S. then used the results of E.W.A.'s research and interpretation to read the Book of Joshua. In addition, P.H.S. and E.W.A. also contributed to the writing of the manuscript and reviewed the manuscript that had been written.

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Data availability

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