

FAITHFULNESS IN THE TIME OF WAITING: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF JOSHUA 14:6–14 ON CALEB'S SPIRITUALITY

Djien Andry Kusumorini; Dominggus Tasey; Bambang Sukanto Halim; Maria Mintowati

STT Parakletos Surabaya; STT Parakletos Surabaya; STT Parakletos Surabaya; STT Parakletos Surabaya

Corresponding Author: mintowati@sttparakletos.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses a significant gap in biblical spirituality scholarship concerning the narrative portrayal of waiting as a formative spiritual discipline. While poetic and prophetic texts on waiting have received substantial attention, narrative depictions of prolonged faithfulness remain underexplored. The research problem centers on Joshua 14:6–14, where Caleb's forty-five-year interval between divine promise and fulfillment has been examined primarily through historical-critical and geographical lenses, neglecting the pericope's theological and literary dynamics. Employing narrative criticism, this study analyzes the text's literary structure, characterization, and rhetorical strategies to articulate the spirituality of waiting embodied in Caleb's example. The analysis reveals that the narrative presents waiting not as passive endurance but as active, covenantal faithfulness sustained through wholehearted allegiance, covenantal memory, patient agency, and testimonial transmission. The study's novelty lies in its integration of narrative criticism with biblical spirituality, proposing the Faithful Waiting Framework—a four-dimensional model derived from the text's own emphases that offers a transferable heuristic for interpreting other biblical narratives of waiting. This contribution addresses both scholarly lacunae and pastoral needs, providing exegetically grounded resources for understanding faithfulness in seasons of delay and uncertainty within contemporary Christian communities.

Keywords: biblical spirituality; narrative criticism; waiting; Caleb; Joshua 14

INTRODUCTION

The experience of waiting constitutes a pervasive and theologically significant dimension of biblical faith. From Abraham's protracted journey toward the promise of descendants to the Psalmist's repeated cries of "How long, O Lord?" the Hebrew Bible portrays waiting as an integral feature of the life of faith. Yet scholarly attention to the spirituality of waiting has been unevenly distributed across the biblical corpus. While the Psalter's language of waiting has received substantial treatment, and the prophetic literature's orientation toward eschatological expectation has generated considerable theological reflection, narrative texts that depict extended periods of waiting have received comparatively less sustained exegetical attention. This imbalance is not merely a matter of academic preference; it reflects a deeper assumption that waiting is primarily a lyrical or prophetic concern rather than a narrative one. Consequently, the formative potential of stories that portray prolonged faithfulness remains underexplored.

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Joshua 14:6–14 presents a striking case in point. Within this brief pericope, the aged Caleb approaches Joshua at Gilgal to claim the inheritance promised to him forty-five years earlier through Moses at Kadesh-barnea. The text is remarkable for its compression: in a few verses, it spans nearly half a century of Israel's wilderness wandering, Caleb's survival through the generation that perished in the desert, and his continued vitality at the age of eighty-five. The narrative presents Caleb as one who "wholly followed the Lord," a phrase that appears with notable frequency in the Caleb traditions (Num 14:24; Deut 1:36; Josh 14:8, 9, 14). Yet the theological significance of Caleb's waiting—the forty-five year interval between promise and fulfilment—has rarely been examined as a distinct subject of spiritual reflection. Most treatments of Caleb focus on his courage as a spy or his reward as a faithful servant, but the intervening decades of waiting, during which his faith was tested and refined, remain largely unexamined.

The problem this study addresses is twofold. First, there exists a lacuna in biblical spirituality scholarship regarding the narrative portrayal of waiting as a formative spiritual discipline. Studies of waiting in the Hebrew Bible have tended to concentrate on poetic texts, particularly the Psalms, where the vocabulary of waiting is explicit and the emotional register is accessible. Prophetic literature has also received attention for its eschatological orientation. However, narrative texts that depict waiting as an extended, embodied experience—rather than as a momentary cry or a future hope—have been neglected. Second, the specific contribution of Joshua 14:6–14 to a theology of waiting has been insufficiently explored. Scholarly attention to this pericope has tended to focus on historical-critical questions of source and redaction, or on geographical and tribal allotment issues, rather than on the literary and theological dynamics of the text in its final form. The narrative artistry of the passage, including its use of repetition, direct speech, and intertextual allusion, has received limited attention.

The urgency of this investigation is both theological and pastoral. Contemporary Christian communities increasingly confront the reality of prolonged waiting—for healing, for justice, for vocational clarity, for the fulfilment of divine promises. The prevalence of what might be termed unresolved waiting in modern experience raises pressing questions about the nature of faithfulness in seasons when divine promises appear delayed or unrealized. Pastoral literature often addresses these questions through psychological frameworks or generic exhortations to patience, but a biblical theology of waiting that engages narrative texts can offer resources for spiritual formation that abstract doctrinal formulations cannot provide. Narrative texts portray spirituality not as abstract principle but as embodied, temporal, and tested; they show what faithfulness looks like over time, in specific circumstances, amid disappointment and uncertainty. The story of Caleb offers a particularly rich resource because it depicts waiting not as passive resignation but as active, covenantal faithfulness sustained over decades.

Moreover, the current resurgence of interest in biblical spirituality as an academic discipline—evidenced by the establishment of journals, research units, and monograph series devoted to the

topic—creates an opportune moment for fresh exegetical contributions. The field has moved beyond merely cataloguing spiritual practices in Scripture toward more nuanced analyses of how biblical texts shape and sustain faithful existence. Within this trajectory, narrative texts deserve particular attention because they portray spirituality as embedded in story, character, and time. The study of Caleb's waiting offers an opportunity to integrate narrative criticism with the concerns of biblical spirituality, producing an analysis that is both exegetically rigorous and theologically generative.

The urgency is also hermeneutical. Interpreters of Joshua 14 have frequently read Caleb's story through the lens of individual reward—the faithful man receives his promised inheritance. Such readings, while not without textual warrant, risk obscuring the pericope's larger theological concerns: the faithfulness of God across generations, the relationship between obedience and inheritance, and the role of testimony in sustaining communal hope. A narrative-critical approach that attends to the text's literary artistry can recover dimensions of meaning that historical-critical and narrowly theological readings have tended to overlook. The text itself, read closely, reveals a sophisticated portrayal of waiting as a mode of active discipleship rather than mere endurance.

Despite the considerable body of scholarship on the book of Joshua, several gaps are evident in the literature. First, studies of Joshua 14:6–14 have predominantly focused on historical and geographical questions—the identification of Hebron, the fate of the Anakim, the tribal allotment traditions—rather than on the pericope's literary and theological dynamics. The narrative artistry of the passage, including its use of repetition, direct speech, and intertextual allusion, has received limited attention. Second, within the growing literature on waiting in biblical tradition, narrative texts have been underrepresented. Studies by scholars such as Brueggemann on the Psalms of lament, or Fretheim on prophetic hope, have illuminated the theology of waiting in poetic and prophetic genres, but the narrative portrayal of extended waiting—exemplified by Caleb's forty-five years—has not been systematically examined. Third, the concept of wholeheartedness as a descriptor of spiritual disposition has been treated primarily in lexical and theological terms, with insufficient attention to its narrative function within the Caleb traditions. The phrase's repetition across Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua suggests a deliberate literary strategy that merits closer analysis. Fourth, the pastoral and formational implications of Caleb's story for contemporary Christian spirituality have been asserted more often than argued. While homiletical treatments of Caleb as a model of perseverance abound, rigorous exegetical grounding for such applications is frequently lacking.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of narrative criticism with the concerns of biblical spirituality, yielding a contextual model of faithful waiting that is exegetically grounded and theologically generative. Specifically, the study offers three contributions. First, it provides a close narrative reading of Joshua 14:6–14 that attends to the pericope's literary structure, characterisation, and rhetorical strategy, demonstrating how the text itself shapes a spirituality of waiting. Second, it proposes the Faithful Waiting Framework, a four-dimensional model comprising covenantal

memory, wholehearted allegiance, patient agency, and testimonial transmission. This framework is derived from the text's own emphases and offers a transferable heuristic for interpreting other biblical narratives of waiting and for constructing a biblical theology of waiting more broadly. Third, the study positions Caleb's waiting not as passive resignation but as active, covenantal faithfulness—a distinction with significant implications for contemporary spiritual formation. By reframing waiting as a mode of obedient agency rather than mere endurance, the study challenges prevalent assumptions in both scholarly and pastoral literature.

This study aims to analyse Joshua 14:6–14 using narrative criticism in order to articulate the spirituality of waiting portrayed in Caleb's example. The specific objectives are: to examine the literary structure and rhetorical features of the pericope; to analyse the characterisation of Caleb, particularly the significance of the wholehearted motif; to situate the pericope within its broader literary and theological context in Joshua and the Deuteronomistic History; and to construct a contextual framework for understanding faithful waiting that emerges from the text's own theological concerns. In pursuing these objectives, the study seeks to contribute to the growing field of biblical spirituality by demonstrating how a narrative text can function as a resource for theological reflection on a perennial human experience. The significance of this investigation extends beyond the academy; it addresses a pastoral need for biblically grounded accounts of faithfulness in seasons of delay and uncertainty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework: Three Convergent Yet Incomplete Trajectories

The study of Caleb's spirituality in Joshua 14:6–14 requires a theoretical framework that integrates three distinct but intersecting bodies of scholarship: narrative criticism of the Hebrew Bible, biblical theology of waiting, and the emerging discipline of biblical spirituality. Each trajectory offers indispensable resources, yet each exhibits characteristic blind spots that a focused narrative-exegetical investigation must address.

Narrative criticism, as developed by Alter (1981), Bar-Efrat (1989), and Sternberg (1985), proceeds from the conviction that biblical narrative is not merely a vehicle for theological propositions but a sophisticated literary medium in which meaning is generated through structure, repetition, dialogue, and characterisation. Alter's insistence on the "literary medium of considerable sophistication" in Hebrew prose (1981, p. 22) opened the way for readings that attend to the artistry of texts often mined only for historical or theological data. Bar-Efrat's systematic treatment of narrative elements—narrator, characters, time, space—provides a workable heuristic for examining how Joshua 14:6–14 achieves its rhetorical effects (1989, pp. 13–92). Sternberg's poetics, with its emphasis on gaps, ambiguity, and the ideological dimensions of narrative technique, further equips the interpreter to discern the text's evaluative strategies (1985, pp. 41–57). Applied to the Caleb pericope, these tools enable attention to the repetition of the "wholehearted" formula, the

compression of forty-five years into a few verses, and the strategic placement of Caleb's speech within the larger allotment narrative.

The biblical theology of waiting constitutes a second stream. Brueggemann's extensive work on the Psalms has illuminated the language of waiting (יָחַל, יָקוּה) as an oscillation between lament and trust, particularly in psalms where complaint gives way to confident expectation (Brueggemann & Bellinger, 2014). Fretheim's studies of prophetic literature have argued that waiting is intrinsic to the biblical understanding of divine relationship, since God's promises unfold within the contingencies of history rather than through unilateral fiat (Fretheim, 1998). Crenshaw (2001) and Moberly (2013) have extended this discussion into the wisdom tradition, where the uncertainties of divine timing are confronted with characteristic candour. Yet the overwhelming concentration of this scholarship on poetic and prophetic genres leaves narrative portrayals of waiting comparatively undertheorised. The Psalter's waiting is voiced; Caleb's waiting is enacted. The distinction matters for a theology of waiting that seeks to address the full range of biblical witness.

Biblical spirituality as an academic discipline has matured considerably over the past two decades, moving beyond mere cataloguing of spiritual practices toward nuanced analyses of how texts shape and sustain faithful existence. Lawrence (2012) defines the field as concerned with "the lived experience of faith as attested in Scripture and as practised in communities of faith" (p. 3). Studies by Helyer (2008) and Porter (2011) exemplify exegetical approaches that read biblical texts with attention to their formational potential. More recent contributions have explored the intersection of spirituality with embodiment, temporality, and community formation (Aktaş, 2023; Barkley, 2024; Hodge, 2023). Within this trajectory, narrative texts deserve particular attention because they portray spirituality not as abstract principle but as embodied, temporal, and tested. The figure of Caleb, whose faithfulness is displayed across nearly half a century, offers a compelling case for such narrative-spiritual analysis.

Theoretical Critique: The Limits of Each Trajectory

Despite their contributions, each of these trajectories exhibits limitations that a study of Joshua 14:6–14 must confront.

Narrative criticism, for all its sophistication, has tended to privilege aesthetic and rhetorical analysis over theological and formational concerns. The question of what a text does to its readers—how it shapes their dispositions, forms their character, and sustains them in seasons of testing—has often remained secondary to questions of structure and technique. Moreover, narrative-critical studies of Joshua have concentrated disproportionately on the conquest narratives and the figure of Joshua himself, leaving Caleb's pericope relatively neglected. The brief but theologically dense passage in Joshua 14 has been treated more often as a historical footnote to the allotment traditions than as a literary and spiritual text worthy of sustained analysis.

The biblical theology of waiting, while theologically rich, has been constrained by its generic focus. The predominance of Psalms and prophetic literature in this discussion has shaped the very conception of waiting as primarily a verbal, affective, and liturgical phenomenon. Waiting in the Psalter is expressed through cries, petitions, and confessions of trust. Waiting in the prophets is oriented toward eschatological expectation and the vindication of divine justice. But waiting as portrayed in narrative—waiting that stretches across decades, that involves the mundane endurance of wilderness existence, that requires the maintenance of hope without the regular liturgical reinforcement of the temple—remains largely unexamined. The narrative portrayal of Caleb's forty-five years between promise and fulfilment offers a different phenomenology of waiting, one that is active, embodied, and covenantal rather than primarily verbal or affective.

Biblical spirituality scholarship has made significant strides, but it has sometimes been more attentive to the New Testament and to later Christian tradition than to the Hebrew Bible's own witness. When Old Testament texts are engaged, the focus frequently falls on the Psalms, the prophets, or the wisdom literature—genres that lend themselves readily to spiritual reflection. Narrative texts, particularly those embedded in the Deuteronomistic History, have received less attention from scholars of biblical spirituality. This neglect is unfortunate, because the Deuteronomistic History is profoundly concerned with questions of faithfulness, obedience, and the formation of a people who will remain loyal to YHWH across generations. Caleb's story, situated within this theological framework, offers a narrative paradigm of sustained faithfulness that deserves fuller exploration.

Academic Debate and Research Tension

The scholarly discussion surrounding Joshua 14:6–14 has been shaped by several ongoing debates that create productive tension for this study.

The first debate concerns the relationship between the Caleb traditions and the Deuteronomistic theology of retribution. Classical source-critical scholarship, following Noth's reconstruction of the Deuteronomistic History, has tended to view the Caleb material as an independent tradition secondarily incorporated into the Deuteronomic framework. Within this reading, Caleb's reward is understood as the exception that proves the rule of divine judgement: because he alone among the spy generation "wholly followed YHWH," he alone survived the wilderness judgement. More recent scholarship, however, has questioned this neat formulation. The Caleb traditions in Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua exhibit sufficient variation to suggest that the "wholehearted" motif may have functioned differently in different literary contexts. In Joshua 14, the phrase appears not merely as a description of past faithfulness but as the theological warrant for a present claim—Caleb's request for Hebron is grounded in his sustained obedience. This suggests that the text is doing more than illustrating retributive theology; it is constructing a model of faithful agency that has implications for the community's ongoing life in the land.

A second debate concerns the function of the pericope within its immediate literary context. Some interpreters have read Joshua 14:6–14 as a transitional passage whose primary purpose is to introduce the allotment narratives that follow. On this reading, Caleb's story serves a structural function, marking the beginning of the tribal distributions and establishing the principle that inheritance is determined by divine promise rather than human initiative. Other interpreters have argued that the pericope possesses a theological integrity of its own, presenting Caleb as a paradigm of faithfulness that the subsequent allotment narratives are meant to echo. The placement of the Caleb story at the head of the allotment section, together with its elaborate rhetorical structure and its emphasis on Caleb's age and vitality, suggests that the text is intended to function as more than a mere transition. It establishes a theological lens through which the entire distribution of the land is to be understood.

A third tension concerns the relationship between individual and communal dimensions of faithfulness. The Caleb pericope is remarkable for its focus on a single individual within a narrative that is otherwise concerned with the collective experience of Israel. Caleb's claim is personal—"give me this mountain"—yet his faithfulness is described in terms that have communal significance. He followed YHWH "wholeheartedly," a phrase that in Deuteronomy's idiom denotes the total devotion required of Israel as a whole. The tension between individual exemplarity and communal vocation is never fully resolved in the text, and this ambiguity is itself theologically significant. Caleb's story suggests that faithful individuals can embody the covenant loyalty that the community as a whole is called to exhibit, even when the community fails. Yet the text also implies that Caleb's faithfulness is not merely private; it is oriented toward the inheritance of his descendants and the establishment of a faithful lineage within the land.

Contradictory Findings and Interpretive Divergences

The scholarly literature on Caleb reveals notable contradictions that warrant explicit attention. First, there is disagreement regarding the significance of Caleb's age and physical vitality. Some interpreters read Caleb's declaration that he is "as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me" (Josh 14:11) as a literal claim about his physical condition, evidence of divine blessing that preserved his strength through the wilderness years. Others read the statement rhetorically, as an expression of undiminished vigour that functions to legitimate his claim to the difficult terrain of Hebron. The interpretive choice carries theological weight: a literal reading emphasises divine preservation, while a rhetorical reading emphasises Caleb's continuing capacity for faithful action. The text itself does not resolve the ambiguity, and the scholarly divergence reflects a genuine tension in the narrative.

Second, interpreters have disagreed about the relationship between Caleb's request and the prior promise. Some read Caleb's approach to Joshua as an act of legitimate claim-making, grounded in the divine promise mediated through Moses. On this reading, Caleb models the appropriate posture of faith: he reminds Joshua of the promise, states his readiness to receive it, and trusts God to fulfil

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what was spoken. Other interpreters, however, have detected a note of presumption in Caleb's request. By asking for the mountain of Hebron—the most difficult terrain, inhabited by the Anakim—Caleb might be seen as testing God's promise rather than simply receiving it. The narrative's positive evaluation of Caleb, however, weighs against this reading. The text repeatedly affirms that Caleb "wholly followed YHWH," and Joshua's blessing confirms the legitimacy of the request.

Third, there is a significant divergence regarding the function of the "wholehearted" formula. Lexical studies have traced the phrase מְלֵא אֵתֶרֶי יְהוָה across its occurrences in Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua, noting its consistent association with Caleb. Some scholars have argued that the formula functions as a fixed epithet, a conventional designation that tells the reader more about the tradition's evaluation of Caleb than about his actual spiritual disposition. Others have insisted that the formula carries genuine theological content, describing a specific mode of covenantal allegiance that involves the totality of one's being. The narrative context of Joshua 14, where the formula is repeated three times within a single pericope, suggests that the phrase is doing deliberate rhetorical work. Its repetition is not merely conventional but emphatic, drawing the reader's attention to the theological core of Caleb's character.

Research Gap and Position of This Study

The foregoing review reveals a significant gap in the literature. Despite the considerable body of scholarship on the book of Joshua, studies of Joshua 14:6–14 have predominantly focused on historical, geographical, and source-critical questions—the identification of Hebron, the fate of the Anakim, the relationship between the Caleb traditions and the Deuteronomistic History—rather than on the pericope's literary and theological dynamics. The narrative artistry of the passage, including its use of repetition, direct speech, and intertextual allusion, has received limited attention. Within the growing literature on waiting in biblical tradition, narrative texts have been underrepresented. Studies of waiting in the Psalms and prophetic literature have illuminated the verbal and affective dimensions of waiting, but the narrative portrayal of extended waiting—exemplified by Caleb's forty-five years—has not been systematically examined. The concept of "wholeheartedness" as a descriptor of spiritual disposition has been treated primarily in lexical and theological terms, with insufficient attention to its narrative function within the Caleb traditions. The pastoral and formational implications of Caleb's story for contemporary Christian spirituality have been asserted more often than argued, with homiletical treatments of Caleb as a model of perseverance frequently lacking rigorous exegetical grounding.

This study positions itself at the intersection of these gaps. It offers a close narrative reading of Joshua 14:6–14 that attends to the pericope's literary structure, characterisation, and rhetorical strategy, demonstrating how the text itself shapes a spirituality of waiting. It proposes the Faithful Waiting Framework, a four-dimensional model comprising covenantal memory, wholehearted allegiance, patient agency, and testimonial transmission, derived from the text's own emphases and

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offering a transferable heuristic for interpreting other biblical narratives of waiting. It positions Caleb's waiting not as passive resignation but as active, covenantal faithfulness—a distinction with significant implications for contemporary spiritual formation. By reframing waiting as a mode of obedient agency rather than mere endurance, the study challenges prevalent assumptions in both scholarly and pastoral literature.

The study's contribution is thus both exegetical and constructive. It demonstrates that Joshua 14:6–14, read with attention to its narrative artistry, yields a rich theology of waiting that has been obscured by the dominant historical-critical and homiletical approaches. It offers a framework that can be tested against other biblical narratives of waiting and applied in contemporary contexts of spiritual formation. And it models an approach to biblical spirituality that takes narrative texts seriously as resources for the formation of faithful character. The limitations of the study must be acknowledged: the absence of archaeological or extrabiblical corroboration for the specific events narrated, and the deliberate focus on the final form of the Hebrew text rather than its redactional history. Within these limits, the study seeks to make a substantive contribution to the theology of waiting and to the broader project of biblical spirituality.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in library research, with narrative criticism as the primary analytical approach. The method is deliberately chosen to match the nature of the object of study—a biblical pericope whose theological significance resides in its literary form and rhetorical strategy rather than in quantifiable variables. The research proceeds through four integrated stages: textual delimitation, literary-structural analysis, theological interpretation, and contextual model construction.

Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative-interpretive paradigm consistent with established practice in biblical exegesis and biblical spirituality scholarship. Narrative criticism, as developed by Alter (1981), Bar-Efrat (1989), and Sternberg (1985), provides the methodological framework for examining how the final form of Joshua 14:6–14 communicates theological meaning through literary devices. This approach is complemented by insights from the broader field of biblical spirituality, which attends to the formational dynamics of scriptural texts (Lawrence, 2012). The design is therefore neither purely literary nor purely theological but integrates both dimensions in a manner that respects the text's own generic character.

The choice of narrative criticism over historical-critical methods requires justification. While source-critical and redaction-critical questions have dominated earlier scholarship on Joshua, the present study follows the trajectory of recent narrative approaches that treat the final form of the Hebrew text as a coherent literary and theological composition (Bar-Efrat, 1989). This does not deny the text's compositional history but deliberately brackets such questions in favour of

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synchronic analysis. The rationale is that the text as received has functioned canonically and liturgically as a unified witness, and it is this received form that has shaped—and continues to shape—the spirituality of faith communities.

Data Sources

The primary data source is the Masoretic Text of Joshua 14:6–14, analysed in its Hebrew original with attention to lexical and syntactical features. The study also engages the Septuagint and major English translations where translational decisions bear on interpretation. The canonical context provided by Numbers 13–14 and Deuteronomy 1:34–36 serves as essential background for understanding the narrative's presuppositions and intertextual echoes. These passages are treated not merely as parallel accounts but as integral components of a larger literary tradition that the Joshua pericope deliberately evokes.

Secondary sources comprise peer-reviewed scholarship on the book of Joshua, narrative criticism, Old Testament theology, and biblical spirituality. The selection criteria prioritise works published in established academic venues—monograph series, peer-reviewed journals, and edited volumes from recognised publishers—over popular or devotional literature. This ensures that the interpretive claims advanced in this study are situated within the broader scholarly conversation rather than isolated from it.

Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeds in four sequential steps. First, the pericope is delimited and its literary structure analysed. This involves identifying the narrative's constituent units, tracing its plot development, and examining the function of repetition, direct speech, and temporal markers. Particular attention is given to the phrase מְלֵא אַחֲרַי יְהוָה ("wholly followed the Lord"), which functions as a recurring motif across the Caleb traditions and within the pericope itself.

Second, the characterisation of Caleb is examined through the lens of narrative criticism. This includes analysing how the narrator presents Caleb's speech, actions, and relationships, as well as how other characters—Moses, Joshua, and the faithless generation—function as foils. The analysis attends to the narrator's evaluative comments and the rhetorical effect of Caleb's first-person testimony within the larger third-person narrative frame.

Third, the pericope is situated within its broader literary and theological context. This involves examining its place within the allotment narratives of Joshua 13–21, its relationship to the Deuteronomistic History's theological concerns, and its intertextual connections with Numbers 13–14 and Deuteronomy 1. The goal is to demonstrate how the pericope contributes to the larger theological argument of the book of Joshua concerning land, covenant, and obedience.

Fourth, the findings from the exegetical analysis are synthesised into a contextual model—the Faithful Waiting Framework—comprising four dimensions: covenantal memory, wholehearted allegiance, patient agency, and testimonial transmission. This framework is derived inductively

from the text's own emphases rather than imposed from external theoretical categories. Its purpose is to offer a transferable heuristic for interpreting other biblical narratives of waiting and for constructing a biblical theology of waiting more broadly.

Validity and Limitations

The validity of this study rests on the transparency of its interpretive procedures and its engagement with the scholarly conversation. The analysis is grounded in the Hebrew text, with attention to grammatical and syntactical details that constrain interpretation. Claims are supported by reference to the text and to relevant secondary literature, and alternative readings are considered where the text admits ambiguity.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study focuses on the final form of the Hebrew text and does not engage the redactional history of Joshua 14:6–14. This is a deliberate choice, but it means that questions concerning the passage's compositional development lie outside the scope of this investigation. Second, the study does not incorporate archaeological or extrabiblical evidence that might bear on the historical plausibility of the events narrated. The analysis treats the text as a literary and theological witness rather than as a historical record. Third, no quantitative data are available for this study, and none are claimed. The qualitative nature of biblical exegesis means that the findings are interpretive rather than statistical, and their validity rests on the cogency of the argumentation and the fidelity of the reading to the text.

The study also acknowledges the hermeneutical situatedness of the interpreter. The researcher approaches the text from within the Christian theological tradition, which shapes the questions asked and the significance attributed to the findings. This is not presented as a weakness but as an honest acknowledgement of the interpretive framework within which the analysis operates. The goal is not a value-neutral reading—such a reading is neither possible nor desirable for a text that makes theological claims—but a disciplined reading that is accountable to the text and to the scholarly community.

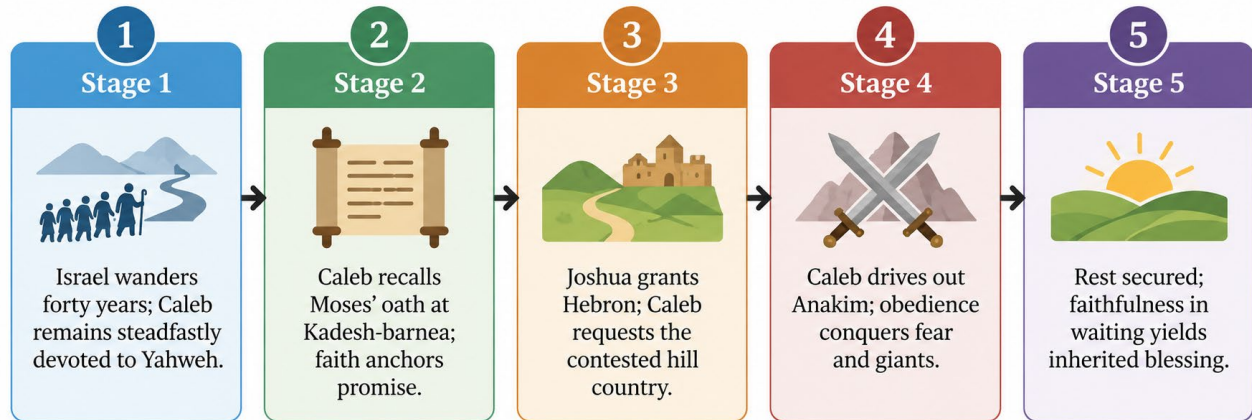
FIGURE 1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents a five-stage conceptual framework illustrating the progression of Caleb's faithfulness from Israel's wilderness journey to the fulfillment of his promised inheritance. **Stage 1** establishes the period of Israel's forty-year wandering, during which Caleb remains steadfastly devoted to Yahweh despite prolonged uncertainty. **Stage 2** highlights Caleb's remembrance of Moses' oath at Kadesh-barnea, showing how faith in God's promise sustains him through years of waiting. **Stage 3** depicts the movement toward fulfillment as Joshua grants Hebron and Caleb confidently requests the contested hill country as his inheritance. **Stage 4** demonstrates faith translated into courageous obedience when Caleb drives out the Anakim, overcoming the fear associated with formidable opposition. Finally, **Stage 5** represents the attainment of rest and inherited blessing, emphasizing that Caleb's sustained faith, patient waiting, and obedient action ultimately lead to the realization of the divine promise.

TABLE 1. INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK

Aspect	Analytical Focus	Contribution	Implication
Narrative Structure and Plot Development	Examination of the narrative arc in Joshua 14:6–14, including the literary placement of Caleb’s request within the larger conquest and settlement narrative, the use of flashback to Numbers 14, and the narrative tension between promise and fulfillment.	Demonstrates that the waiting period is not a narrative void but a deliberate literary device that accentuates divine faithfulness and human perseverance, thereby enriching the theological reading of the conquest account.	Preachers and teachers can utilize the narrative structure to frame waiting as an active, purposeful season rather than passive delay, offering a model for homiletical exposition that honors the literary integrity of the text.
Characterization of Caleb	Analysis of Caleb’s portrayal as a distinct character, focusing on his speech, his repeated reference to the word of the Lord through Moses, his physical vitality at eighty-five, and his unwavering confession of wholehearted followership.	Reveals that Caleb’s identity is constructed primarily through his faithful speech and obedient action, presenting him as a paradigm of steadfast allegiance rather than merely a military hero.	The characterization invites readers to consider that faithfulness is expressed through consistent testimony and embodied obedience across a lifetime, challenging contemporary notions of success and legacy.
Theological Motif of Divine Faithfulness (Chesed)	Exploration of the covenantal concept of steadfast love and faithfulness underlying Caleb’s claim, particularly the relationship between divine promise and human trust, and the way YHWH’s fidelity is narrated as the ground of Caleb’s confidence.	Argues that the text presents divine faithfulness as the primary actor, with Caleb’s perseverance functioning as a responsive and derivative faithfulness, thereby reorienting the reader’s attention from human achievement to divine commitment.	This theological emphasis provides a corrective to modern self-help spirituality, urging believers to root their endurance in the character of God rather than in personal resolve, with pastoral implications for sustaining hope during prolonged seasons of unfulfilled expectation.
The Hermeneutics of Waiting and Fulfillment	Investigation of the interpretive framework that links Caleb’s forty-five-year wait to the broader biblical theme of delayed fulfillment, including the function of memory, the rehearsal of past divine acts, and the anticipation of future inheritance.	Proposes that the text models a hermeneutic of waiting wherein the believer interprets present circumstances through the lens of past divine faithfulness, thereby transforming waiting into a space of interpretive and spiritual formation.	The study offers a practical theological resource for communities navigating protracted seasons of uncertainty, suggesting that the rehearsal of testimony and the re-reading of Scripture serve as means of sustaining faithful endurance.
Ethical and Discipleship Implications	Consideration of the ethical demands arising from the narrative, including the call to wholehearted devotion, the courage to claim promised inheritance despite obstacles (the Anakim), and the intergenerational dimension of faithfulness as exemplified in Caleb’s request for Hebron.	Contributes a narrative ethic that integrates trust, courage, and communal responsibility, demonstrating that faithfulness in waiting culminates in bold, obedient action that honors both God and the covenant community.	The implications extend to discipleship formation, encouraging believers to view their own seasons of waiting as preparatory for acts of faithful courage, and to embrace the responsibility of securing promised blessings for future generations.

Table 1 presents an integrative framework for interpreting Joshua 14:6–14 by bringing together literary, theological, hermeneutical, and ethical dimensions of Caleb's story. The analysis of narrative structure and plot development shows that Caleb's long period of waiting functions not as an empty delay but as a meaningful narrative space highlighting divine faithfulness and human perseverance. The characterization of Caleb further portrays him as a model of wholehearted allegiance whose identity is demonstrated through faithful testimony and sustained obedience rather than military achievement alone. The theological motif of divine faithfulness establishes God's covenantal commitment as the foundation of Caleb's endurance, emphasizing that human perseverance is a response to God's prior faithfulness. The hermeneutics of waiting and fulfillment demonstrates how memories of God's past actions and promises enable believers to interpret present uncertainty with hope and anticipate future fulfillment. Finally, the ethical and discipleship implications connect waiting with courageous and responsible action, showing that faithful endurance ultimately prepares individuals and communities for obedience. Taken together, the framework presents Caleb's experience as a theological model in which divine promise, faithful waiting, spiritual formation, and courageous action are interconnected across a lifetime of discipleship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Narrative Structure as Theological Communication

The narrative architecture of Joshua 14:6–14 rewards careful literary attention, for the passage achieves its theological effects through deliberate structural choices rather than through explicit doctrinal statement. The pericope opens with a temporal marker that immediately establishes the significance of duration: "Then the people of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal" (v. 6). The phrase "at Gilgal" situates the encounter within the campaign narrative of the conquest, yet the content of Caleb's speech reaches backward forty-five years to Kadesh-barnea. This temporal span, compressed within a few verses, creates what narrative critics have identified as a distinctive feature of biblical prose: the ability to hold together disparate moments in a single conceptual frame (Alter, 1981; Sternberg, 1985). The reader is invited to perceive the coherence of divine faithfulness across the apparent discontinuity of human history.

The structure of Caleb's speech itself follows a recognisable rhetorical pattern. He begins with a historical recollection ("You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me at Kadesh-barnea," v. 6), moves to a testimony of personal fidelity ("I wholly followed the Lord my God," v. 8), and concludes with a request grounded in divine promise ("Now therefore give me this hill country," v. 12). This movement from memory to testimony to petition is not merely conventional; it embodies a spirituality in which the past is not escapist nostalgia but the foundation for present confidence and future hope. The narrative thus models what might be termed

"covenantal memory"—the deliberate appropriation of divine promises as the basis for contemporary action.

The pericope's placement within the larger structure of Joshua is equally significant. It interrupts the otherwise systematic account of tribal allotments to focus on a single individual's claim. This interruption is theologically purposeful: it signals that the distribution of the land is not merely a geographical or administrative matter but a demonstration of divine faithfulness to those who remain loyal. The narrative positioning of Caleb's request before the detailed allotment for Judah (Joshua 15) suggests that his inheritance functions paradigmatically, establishing the pattern by which the land is granted to those who "wholly follow" the Lord.

Caleb's Characterisation and the Wholehearted Motif

The characterisation of Caleb in this pericope is remarkably economical yet theologically dense. The narrator provides no physical description, no psychological interiority, and no extended dialogue beyond Caleb's own speech. Instead, the text relies on a single repeated phrase to establish his character: "he wholly followed the Lord, the God of Israel" (v. 14). The Hebrew expression, which appears in verbal form throughout the Caleb traditions, conveys the sense of filling or completing one's course after another—a total orientation of the will toward Yahweh (Butler, 1983; Hess, 1996). The repetition of this phrase across Numbers 14:24, Deuteronomy 1:36, and Joshua 14:8, 9, 14 is not accidental; it constitutes a deliberate literary strategy that links the various Caleb traditions into a coherent portrait of unwavering fidelity.

What is striking about Caleb's self-testimony is its lack of defensiveness. He does not compare himself favourably to the other spies, nor does he remind Joshua of his own past faithfulness in a way that suggests resentment. Rather, his speech is marked by a quiet confidence that arises from the conviction that God's promise is reliable. When he says, "I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me" (v. 11), he is not boasting of his physical vigour but bearing witness to the sustaining power of God through decades of waiting. The narrative thus portrays waiting not as a period of spiritual decline but as a season of continued vitality—a theme that resonates with the broader biblical witness to the renewal of strength for those who wait upon the Lord (Isa 40:31).

The contrast between Caleb and the generation that perished in the wilderness is implicit but unmistakable. Where the people complained and wished to return to Egypt, Caleb "wholly followed" the Lord. Where the ten spies spread fear, Caleb and Joshua alone brought a faithful report. The narrative's economy of characterisation serves this contrast effectively: Caleb is not described in elaborate terms because his identity is constituted entirely by his relationship to Yahweh. He is, in the words of one commentator, "a man defined by his God rather than by his circumstances" (Howard, 1998, p. 293).

The Theological Rhetoric of Divine Faithfulness

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The pericope's theological rhetoric operates on multiple levels. At the most obvious level, the text affirms the faithfulness of God to his promises. Caleb's claim to Hebron is grounded not in his own merit but in the word of the Lord spoken through Moses. The narrative's conclusion—"because he wholly followed the Lord, the God of Israel"—might appear to suggest that Caleb's inheritance is a reward for his obedience. Yet the text resists such a simplistic reading. Caleb's faithfulness is itself a response to divine grace; the promise preceded his obedience, and his obedience is the appropriate response to that promise. The theological logic is covenantal rather than contractual: God's faithfulness elicits human faithfulness, which in turn experiences the blessings of the covenant.

The narrative also engages in a subtle critique of the generation that died in the wilderness. Caleb's survival and vitality stand as a living testimony to the truth of the spies' faithful report. Where the people feared the inhabitants of the land, Caleb now requests the very territory inhabited by the Anakim—the giants who had caused the people's hearts to melt with fear (Num 13:28–33). His request for "this hill country" is therefore not merely a claim to real estate but a demonstration that faith has overcome fear. The narrative thus functions as a theological polemic against unbelief, showing that the obstacles that appear insurmountable to the faithless are overcome by those who trust in the Lord.

Furthermore, the pericope contributes to the Deuteronomistic History's larger theological program. The repeated emphasis on wholehearted devotion echoes the Deuteronomistic demand to love the Lord with all one's heart and soul (Deut 6:5). Caleb embodies the ideal of covenant loyalty that the Deuteronomistic Historian holds up as the standard for Israel's obedience. His example stands in judgment over the subsequent generations of Israelites who, according to the Deuteronomistic History, repeatedly turned aside from the Lord to serve other gods. In this sense, Caleb functions not merely as an individual character but as a paradigm of covenant faithfulness against which the nation's history is measured (Nelson, 1997; McConville, 2010).

Waiting as Active Faithfulness

The concept of waiting that emerges from this narrative is markedly different from the passive endurance that often characterises contemporary discussions of patience. Caleb's forty-five years of waiting were not years of inactivity or resignation. He did not simply mark time until the promise was fulfilled. Rather, his waiting was characterised by continued obedience, sustained faith, and active participation in the life of the community. The narrative does not tell us what Caleb did during those years, but the very fact that he survived the wilderness and participated in the conquest suggests a life of ongoing faithfulness.

This understanding of waiting as active faithfulness has significant implications for biblical spirituality. It challenges the notion that waiting is a spiritual problem to be solved or a period to be endured until something better arrives. Instead, waiting is portrayed as a season of formation in which faith is tested, refined, and deepened. The wilderness years, which for the faithless generation

were a period of judgment and death, became for Caleb a period of sustained vitality and growth. The difference lay not in the circumstances but in the disposition of the heart.

The narrative also suggests that waiting involves a particular kind of attentiveness to divine promise. Caleb's memory of Moses' oath is precise and detailed; he remembers not only the fact of the promise but its specific content. This attentiveness to the word of God is itself a spiritual discipline. In a culture that often prizes novelty and immediacy, the practice of remembering and rehearsing divine promises is countercultural. Caleb's example invites believers to cultivate a similar attentiveness to Scripture, allowing the promises of God to shape their expectations and sustain their hope during seasons of delay.

The Faithful Waiting Framework

From the narrative analysis of Joshua 14:6–14, a contextual model emerges that may be termed the Faithful Waiting Framework. This framework comprises four interrelated dimensions that characterise Caleb's spirituality and offer a transferable heuristic for interpreting other biblical narratives of waiting.

The first dimension is covenantal memory. Caleb's claim is grounded in his recollection of the divine promise made through Moses. This memory is not merely cognitive but covenantal; it binds Caleb to God and God to Caleb in a relationship of mutual fidelity. The practice of remembering God's promises is essential to faithful waiting because it provides the interpretive framework within which present circumstances can be understood. Without such memory, waiting degenerates into mere frustration or despair.

The second dimension is wholehearted allegiance. The repeated phrase "wholly followed the Lord" indicates that Caleb's faithfulness was not partial or conditional but total. This wholeheartedness is the disposition that enables sustained obedience over the long term. It is the opposite of the divided heart that the prophets repeatedly condemn (Hos 10:2; Ps 86:11). In the context of waiting, wholehearted allegiance means that one's commitment to God does not waver when the fulfilment of promises is delayed.

The third dimension is patient agency. Caleb's waiting was not passive but active. He continued to serve, to obey, and to trust even when the promise remained unfulfilled. This patient agency is the practical expression of faith during seasons of delay. It involves neither frantic activity nor resigned passivity but a steady, faithful engagement with the tasks and relationships that God has given.

The fourth dimension is testimonial transmission. Caleb's speech to Joshua is itself a testimony—a public declaration of God's faithfulness that serves to encourage others and to strengthen the community's confidence in divine promises. The narrative concludes with the note that Caleb's inheritance became a lasting possession "because he wholly followed the Lord" (v. 14), suggesting that his example was intended to be remembered and transmitted to future generations. Faithful

waiting thus has a communal dimension: it is not merely a private spiritual experience but a public witness that shapes the faith of others.

This framework offers a contribution to the theology of waiting that moves beyond the predominantly poetic and prophetic treatments found in the Psalms and the prophets. By attending to the narrative portrayal of Caleb, the framework demonstrates that waiting is not merely an emotional state or a theological problem but a mode of discipleship with its own disciplines, challenges, and rewards.

Implications for Contemporary Spirituality

The implications of this study for contemporary Christian spirituality are several. First, the narrative challenges the assumption that faithfulness is measured by visible success or speedy fulfilment. Caleb's example demonstrates that the most significant spiritual achievements may occur in the hidden seasons of waiting, when no one is watching and no immediate reward is apparent. This has particular relevance for ministers and church leaders who may experience discouragement when their labours do not produce visible results.

Second, the narrative offers resources for those who struggle with the delay of divine promises. The experience of waiting for healing, for justice, for reconciliation, or for vocational clarity is a common feature of the Christian life. Caleb's example suggests that such waiting need not be a period of spiritual decline but can be a season of deepening faith and sustained obedience. The key lies in the disposition of the heart: whether one waits with bitterness and resentment or with wholehearted trust in the God who keeps his promises.

Third, the narrative underscores the importance of memory in the spiritual life. Caleb's ability to claim his inheritance was grounded in his precise recollection of the divine promise. In a culture that is often characterised by historical amnesia, the practice of remembering God's faithfulness—through Scripture, through testimony, through the sacraments—is essential for sustaining hope during seasons of waiting.

Fourth, the narrative highlights the communal dimension of faithful waiting. Caleb's testimony was not merely private; it was offered publicly to Joshua and, by extension, to the whole community. This suggests that the church has a role in sustaining those who are waiting—through encouragement, through the sharing of testimonies, and through the corporate rehearsal of divine promises.

Limitations and Avenues for Further Research

This study is not without limitations. The analysis has focused on the final form of the Hebrew text, without engaging the complex redactional history of Joshua 14 or the broader questions of the Deuteronomistic History's composition. While this synchronic approach is methodologically defensible, it leaves unexamined questions about the text's development and the theological

emphases of its various redactional layers. Future research might profitably combine narrative criticism with diachronic analysis to illuminate the text's theological development.

Additionally, the study has not engaged archaeological or extrabiblical evidence that might illuminate the historical context of the Caleb traditions. The identification of Hebron, the nature of the Anakim, and the historical circumstances of the conquest remain matters of scholarly debate that lie beyond the scope of this investigation. The absence of such evidence does not undermine the theological analysis, but it does limit the study's contribution to historical reconstruction.

The proposed Faithful Waiting Framework, while derived from the text's own emphases, requires further testing against other biblical narratives of waiting. The stories of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, and the prophets all portray waiting in distinctive ways that might refine or challenge the framework's categories. Comparative studies of this kind would strengthen the framework's claims to generalisability and deepen the biblical theology of waiting.

Finally, the study's implications for contemporary spirituality, while suggestive, have not been empirically tested. The application of the Faithful Waiting Framework in pastoral contexts—through preaching, counselling, or spiritual formation programmes—would require further research that engages the lived experience of those who wait. Such research might employ qualitative methods to explore how contemporary believers understand and practise faithfulness during seasons of delay.

Despite these limitations, the study demonstrates that Joshua 14:6–14 offers a rich resource for understanding the spirituality of waiting. Caleb's example of covenantal memory, wholehearted allegiance, patient agency, and testimonial transmission provides a model of faithfulness that speaks directly to the challenges of contemporary discipleship. In a world that often demands immediate results and instant gratification, the witness of Caleb stands as a reminder that the most profound spiritual growth often occurs in the hidden seasons of waiting, when faith is refined and character is formed in the liminal space between promise and fulfilment.

NOVELTY

The novelty of this study resides not in the mere application of narrative criticism to a familiar text, but in the construction of a contextual model that repositions waiting as a theologically productive mode of spiritual formation. While previous scholarship has treated Joshua 14:6–14 primarily as a legal claim narrative or as evidence for tribal allotment traditions, this study demonstrates that the pericope functions as a deliberate literary construction designed to shape the spirituality of its readers across generations. The narrative's rhetorical architecture, with its layered repetitions and strategic placement within the Deuteronomistic History, invites an interpretive approach that moves beyond historical reconstruction toward formational reading.

The study proposes the Faithful Waiting Framework, a four-dimensional model derived inductively from the text's own literary and theological emphases. The first dimension, covenantal memory,

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captures Caleb's deliberate rehearsal of the divine promise delivered through Moses at Kadesh-barnea. The narrative presents memory not as passive recall but as an act of theological interpretation that sustains identity and hope across decades of unfulfilled expectation. The second dimension, wholehearted allegiance, corresponds to the repeated phrase מְלֵא אֵתָרִי יְהוָה, which the text deploys as a refrain marking Caleb's distinctive disposition. This dimension moves beyond lexical analysis to examine how the narrative uses the phrase to contrast Caleb with the faithless generation and to establish a standard of total devotion that encompasses will, emotion, and action. The third dimension, patient agency, challenges the common assumption that waiting is inherently passive. Caleb's approach to Joshua at Gilgal, his bold request for the hill country of Hebron, and his declaration of continued strength at eighty-five years of age all portray waiting as an active posture of readiness and initiative within the boundaries of divine timing. The fourth dimension, testimonial transmission, attends to the way Caleb's speech functions as a witness not only to Joshua but to the gathered community and, by extension, to subsequent readers of the text. His testimony weaves personal experience into the larger story of Israel's covenant relationship with God, thereby creating a model for how individual faithfulness becomes communal resource.

This framework offers a significant advance over existing treatments of waiting in biblical spirituality. Prior studies have tended to focus on the Psalter's language of waiting or on prophetic eschatological expectation, genres that express waiting primarily through lament, petition, or oracular hope. Narrative portrayals of extended waiting, particularly those spanning decades within a single character's life, have received comparatively little attention. The Faithful Waiting Framework addresses this gap by providing a transferable heuristic that can be applied to other biblical narratives featuring prolonged delay, such as Abraham's sojourn, Joseph's imprisonment, or the wilderness generation's forty years. Moreover, the framework's emphasis on waiting as covenantal formation rather than mere endurance offers a corrective to both scholarly and pastoral treatments that have tended to read Caleb's story as a simple morality tale of reward for perseverance.

The contextual contribution of this study is particularly relevant for Christian communities in Indonesia and similar settings where prolonged waiting for institutional recognition, ecclesiastical approval, or visible ministry fruitfulness is a common experience. The framework's insistence that faithfulness is refined in hidden seasons, rather than measured by positional advancement or the speed of blessing, speaks directly to the realities of pastoral burnout and congregational discouragement. By grounding this pastoral concern in rigorous narrative exegesis, the study avoids the common pitfall of homiletical assertion without textual warrant.

A further dimension of novelty lies in the study's integration of narrative criticism with the concerns of biblical spirituality as an academic discipline. While narrative critics have illuminated the literary artistry of the Hebrew Bible, they have rarely attended explicitly to the formational dynamics of biblical texts. Conversely, scholars of biblical spirituality have often worked with thematic or

theological categories without sufficient attention to the literary means by which texts engender spiritual transformation. This study demonstrates that the two approaches are mutually enriching, and that the narrative features of Joshua 14:6–14—its repetitions, its direct speech, its intertextual echoes—are themselves vehicles of spiritual formation.

The study is not without limitations. It deliberately focuses on the final form of the Hebrew text rather than engaging the redactional history of the Caleb traditions, a choice that prioritizes the text's canonical function as Scripture. Archaeological and extrabiblical evidence for the specific events narrated in Joshua 14 remains unavailable, and the study does not attempt to reconstruct the historical Caleb. These limitations, however, do not diminish the theological and formational significance of the pericope as it stands. The Faithful Waiting Framework emerges from the text's own rhetorical strategy and offers a robust model for understanding how biblical narrative shapes faithful existence in the liminal space between promise and fulfilment.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study, while offering a fresh narrative reading of Caleb's spirituality, is not without its boundaries. First, the analysis is confined to the final form of the Masoretic text of Joshua 14:6–14. The study deliberately sets aside questions of redactional history and source criticism, which means that the diachronic development of the Caleb tradition—its possible origins in distinct tribal or cultic settings—remains unexplored. Consequently, the conclusions drawn here pertain to the literary and theological coherence of the received text rather than to the historical processes that produced it.

Second, the study does not engage archaeological or extrabiblical evidence that might corroborate or complicate the historical claims embedded in the narrative, such as the Israelite settlement of Hebron or the identity of the Anakim. The absence of such engagement is a conscious choice, but it limits the study's ability to address questions of historicity. Readers seeking a historical reconstruction of Caleb's life or the conquest of Hebron will need to consult specialist literature in Syro-Palestinian archaeology, which lies beyond the scope of this exegetical inquiry.

Third, the proposed Faithful Waiting Framework is derived from a single pericope. While the framework is offered as a heuristic for interpreting other biblical narratives of waiting, its transferability has not been tested against a broader corpus. The study does not claim empirical generalizability in the social-scientific sense; rather, it offers a theological and literary construct that requires further testing through additional exegetical case studies. For instance, the narratives of Joseph in Genesis, of David between anointing and coronation, or of Simeon and Anna in Luke 2 could serve as productive comparative texts.

Fourth, the study is qualitative and interpretive in nature. No statistical data, survey instruments, or interview transcripts were employed, and therefore no quantitative claims are made. The absence of empirical data is not a weakness of the method but a delimitation of its scope. However, this also

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means that the pastoral implications drawn from the text, while theologically plausible, have not been subjected to empirical testing within contemporary faith communities. The claim that Caleb's example can address modern experiences of burnout or delayed fulfilment remains a hermeneutical proposal rather than a demonstrated outcome.

Fifth, the study does not engage the full range of reception history. The interpretation of Caleb in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, as well as in art and literature, has been set aside. A reception-historical approach could illuminate how the figure of Caleb has functioned as a model of faithfulness across diverse communities and periods, thereby enriching the theological analysis offered here.

Future research could proceed in several directions. A comparative narrative analysis of waiting in the Caleb traditions and in other pentateuchal or deuteronomistic figures would test and refine the Faithful Waiting Framework. A reception-historical study of Caleb in patristic, rabbinic, and Reformation exegesis would illuminate the interpretive trajectories that have shaped Christian and Jewish spirituality. Additionally, empirical research—using qualitative interviews or surveys within congregational settings—could investigate whether the four dimensions of the framework resonate with contemporary experiences of waiting, thereby bridging exegesis and practical theology. Finally, a study attending to the redactional layers of Joshua 14 could complement the present synchronic reading by tracing how the Caleb tradition developed in response to changing theological and social pressures within ancient Israel.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study returns to the central question posed at its outset: what constitutes faithfulness in the time of waiting, and how does the narrative of Joshua 14:6–14 illuminate this dimension of biblical spirituality? The narrative-critical analysis undertaken here has demonstrated that Caleb's forty-five-year interval between promise and fulfilment is not a narrative vacuum but a theologically charged space in which his spirituality is formed, tested, and ultimately vindicated. The pericope, read in its final form, presents waiting not as passive endurance but as an active, covenantal posture sustained by memory, allegiance, and testimony.

The study's exegetical findings confirm that the repeated phrase "wholly followed the Lord" functions as the theological fulcrum of the passage. Its triple occurrence within the pericope (Josh 14:8, 9, 14) and its resonance with the earlier Caleb traditions in Numbers 14:24 and Deuteronomy 1:36 establish a deliberate literary strategy that characterises Caleb's entire life trajectory rather than a single moment of obedience. The narrative's structure—moving from Caleb's initial claim, through his testimony of sustained strength, to Joshua's blessing and the concluding theological affirmation—creates a rhetorical rhythm that binds promise, waiting, and fulfilment into a unified witness to divine faithfulness.

The proposed Faithful Waiting Framework, comprising covenantal memory, wholehearted allegiance, patient agency, and testimonial transmission, emerges directly from the text's own emphases. Covenantal memory is evident in Caleb's precise recollection of Moses' oath at Kadesh-barnea, demonstrating that faithful waiting is sustained by deliberate remembrance of divine promises. Wholehearted allegiance, signified by the *מִלָּא אֶחָדִי יְהוָה* formula, distinguishes Caleb's disposition from the generation that perished in the wilderness. Patient agency is manifest in Caleb's request for the hill country of Hebron—the most challenging terrain inhabited by the Anakim—indicating that his waiting issued in courageous initiative rather than passive resignation. Testimonial transmission appears in Caleb's public rehearsal of his history before Joshua, transforming personal experience into communal witness.

This framework addresses the research gap identified in the literature review. While previous scholarship has attended to waiting in the Psalms and prophetic literature, and while historical-critical studies of Joshua have focused on source and redaction questions, the narrative portrayal of prolonged faithfulness has remained underexplored. By integrating narrative criticism with the concerns of biblical spirituality, this study offers a contextual model that is both exegetically grounded and theologically generative. The framework's transferability to other biblical narratives of waiting—such as Abraham's sojourn, Joseph's imprisonment, or the disciples' interval between resurrection and Pentecost—suggests its potential for broader constructive theological work.

The theological implications of this study extend beyond the academy into pastoral and formational contexts. Contemporary Christian communities frequently experience what might be termed unresolved waiting—seasons when divine promises appear delayed or unrealised. Caleb's example reframes such seasons not as interruptions to faithfulness but as arenas in which faithfulness is refined and demonstrated. The distinction drawn throughout this study between waiting as passive endurance and waiting as active covenantal agency carries significant pastoral weight. It challenges prevalent assumptions that equate faithfulness with visible productivity or immediate results, redirecting attention to the quality of relationship with God sustained over time.

Several limitations of this study must be acknowledged. First, the analysis has deliberately focused on the final form of the Hebrew text, leaving aside questions of redactional history and source criticism. While this choice is methodologically defensible given the study's narrative-critical orientation, it means that diachronic questions about the text's compositional history remain unaddressed. Second, the study has not engaged archaeological or extrabiblical evidence that might illuminate the historical setting of the Caleb traditions. The absence of such corroboration does not undermine the theological reading offered here, but it does delimit the study's historical claims. Third, the proposed framework, while derived from close reading of the text, has not been tested against a broad corpus of waiting narratives; its applicability beyond Joshua 14 remains a proposal awaiting further investigation.

Future research might extend this work in several directions. Comparative studies of waiting narratives across the Hebrew Bible could test and refine the Faithful Waiting Framework. The relationship between waiting and lament, particularly as developed in the Psalter, might be brought into dialogue with the narrative portrayal of Caleb's silence—notably, the text records no complaint, no cry of "how long," but only confident testimony. Additionally, the reception history of Caleb's example in Jewish and Christian traditions, from Ben Sira's praise of Caleb to patristic and Reformation interpretations, could illuminate how this narrative has shaped spiritual formation across centuries.

In conclusion, Joshua 14:6–14 portrays Caleb not merely as a reward recipient but as a model of resilient discipleship whose spirituality was formed in the liminal space between promise and fulfilment. The text's witness is that faithfulness in the time of waiting is neither passive resignation nor anxious striving, but a wholehearted following of God that remembers, endures, acts, and testifies. For communities that find themselves in extended seasons of waiting, Caleb's example offers both comfort and challenge: comfort that God's promises are certain, and challenge that the waiting itself is the crucible in which faithfulness is refined. The narrative's final affirmation—that Caleb wholly followed the Lord, the God of Israel—stands as an enduring testimony that the measure of faithfulness is not the speed of fulfilment but the constancy of devotion.

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