

## *Allusions to the Levitical Leprosy Laws in the Jericho Narratives (Joshua 2 and 6)*

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*This article explores one particular case in which a narrative of the Old Testament historical books references laws within the legal code of Israel. The particular manner of intertextual relationship in question is that of allusion rather than direct citation. Following a discussion of how the Deuteronomic History was familiar with contents of the Priestly Code, it is here argued that in composing his account of the spying out of Jericho and its subsequent overthrow, the author of the book of Joshua was looking to the levitical laws regarding leprosy to help enhance his narrative in a meaningful way. All three categories of leprous infection (of a person, a house, and a garment) dealt with in the law have their counterparts in the historical account. When viewed against the backdrop of the Hebrews occupying a land inhabited by Canaanites, each of the three cases delivers an appropriate message to Israel.*

KEYWORDS: *leprosy, Jericho, Rahab, Deuteronomic History, Leviticus, Priestly Code, allusion, intertextuality*

### KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAW IN THE DEUTERONOMIC HISTORY

That the books of the Deuteronomic History should make reference to laws within the Deuteronomic code is a fact that requires no substantiation. The whole point of the designation lies in the foundation of the historical books in question upon that body of legal material. At times the manner of reference is obvious, as in the case of the injunction to conduct a ceremony of blessings and curses at the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim (Deut 11:29; 27:12–13; cf. Josh 8:30–35). Occasionally, however, the manner of reference is more allusive. It is demonstrable that the two accounts of Joshua hanging various Canaanite kings on trees

until the evening (Josh 8:29; 10:26) alludes to the law found in Deut 21:22–23.<sup>1</sup> Further, the narrative relating Israel’s request for a king from the prophet Samuel (1 Sam 8:4–20) can be seen to allude to the law occurring in Deut 21:14–17.<sup>2</sup>

Attention is less frequently drawn to the fact that the Deuteronomic History also shows familiarity with events and even laws appearing in the other parts of the Pentateuch outside of Deuteronomy. The writers of the history show an obvious general acquaintance with the roles of the priests (Josh 6:4) and Levites (Josh 21:1), the tabernacle (Josh 22:19), the ark of the covenant (Judg 20:27), lampstand (1 Sam 3:3), ephod (1 Sam 2:28), as well as the Urim and Thummim (1 Sam 28:6). Yet in addition to this general knowledge of such matters, certain passages reveal a close familiarity with more precise details, as shall be demonstrated.

In certain instances the connection between the history and the law seems to be conclusive from the wording used, as in the matter relating to the daughters of Zelophedad, where almost exact repetition occurs (Josh 17.3; cf. Num 26.33). The same would apply to Samson’s status as a Nazirite, where the book of Judges (13:5–7) betrays knowledge of the vow recorded in Numbers (6:1–8). Together with the use of the actual term “Nazirite” (נזיר), the prohibitions regarding the consumption of alcohol (יין ושכר in both cases), and the cutting of hair (“no razor shall pass/come upon his head”) argue for interdependence.

Of greater relevance for our present purposes is the evidence that points to knowledge of certain aspects of the levitical legislation on the part of those who wrote the history. A close study shows that this is the inescapable conclusion. And it is even sometimes seen to be that where a corresponding law exists within Deuteronomy, the form of the reference in the history at the verbal level relates more closely to that found in Leviticus. This is so, for example, with the prohibition against consuming blood. The laws concerning this are alluded to in 1 Sam 14:32–34, recording the occasion when, during the pursuit of their enemies, the men of Israel stopped to feed on meat containing blood. Deuteronomy forbids such a practice (12:15–25; 15:22–23). Yet, a study of the language employed in the Samuel account shows that the author’s wording exhibits greater similarity to the prohibition in its levitical form (Lev 17:10–14; 19:26). There are several linguistic details that put this beyond

1. Cf. David M. Howard, *Joshua: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (NAC 5; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 211.

2. Cf. Robert P. Gordon, *1 and 2 Samuel: A Commentary* (LBI; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 110.

doubt. First, the verbal phrase “eat with the blood,” occurring twice in the narrative (1 Sam 14:32, ויאכל העם על־הדם; v. 33, לאכל על־הדם), is that appearing in Leviticus (19:26, לא תאכלו על־הדם) and not at all in Deuteronomy. Second, the verb for slaughtering the animals is שחט, found three times in the narrative (1 Sam 14:32, וישחטו; v. 34, וישחטתם, וישחטו), and twice in the relevant levitical prohibition (Lev 17:3, ישחט). This particular verb does not appear even once in Deuteronomy, not just in the blood laws, but anywhere in the entire book. Third, the specific animals mentioned in the context are “ox or sheep” (1 Sam 14:34), which corresponds closely to “ox, lamb, or goat” of the levitical law (Lev 17:3). The animals in both the Deuteronomic versions of the law, however, are the “gazelle and the deer” (Deut 12:15, 22; 15:22).

A similar phenomenon is observable in Saul’s prohibition of mediums and spiritists. This is mentioned twice and in both cases the form and order of terms is האבות then הידענים (1 Sam 28:3, 9). The use of two plural nouns and the order are identical to what is found in the two laws in Leviticus (19:31; 20:6). In both the narrative and the levitical injunctions, these two are the only types of offender listed. In Deuteronomy, however, the law is somewhat different. Besides using singular nominal phrases, the two corresponding persons are merely part of a much longer list of those prohibited: “There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who consults the dead” (Deut 18:10–11). More than this, here in Hebrew the phrase “medium, or a spiritist” is in fact a circumlocution, שאל אור וידעני, that is, one “who consults ghosts or spirits” (NRSV). So again, in a range of details we find that the historical book more closely echoes the form of the law in Leviticus.

Further evidence of a similar nature could be adduced from the purification of Bathsheba, where the phrase “consecrating herself from her uncleanness” (2 Sam 11:4) is evidently levitical in character, as Leviticus (16:19) contains the only other use of the phrase in the whole of Hebrew scripture. Likewise, the cleansing of Naaman the leper involves him having to wash himself in the Jordan seven times. It is surely not merely a coincidence that the levitical leprosy laws include the sprinkling of the one with leprosy seven times with water and blood as part of the cleansing ritual (Lev 14:7)

The purpose of this paper is not to offer an account for the dependence shown above. Suffice it to say that a variety of explanations present themselves. First, both the historical books and the priestly material may have reached their final form around the same period, which some would claim to be the exilic or postexilic, and the allusions

to the priestly legislation may have been introduced into the history by the latter's final redactor(s). Second, while the historical writings may be of a significantly earlier date than the final encoding of the priestly, a certain amount of the latter was already partially in circulation, possibly in oral form, or in shorter documents that would later form a source basis for the code. A third alternative is the traditional view regarding the books attributed to Moses, which is that the composition of these predated that of the historical books.

Whichever of the foregoing explanations is adopted, each allows the possible scenario in which we may encounter a narrative within the Deuteronomic History that echoes one of the levitical laws. Whether at that time the content of the law was accessible only orally, or through fragmentary sources, or through a complete written code of earlier or contemporary date, the fact evidently remains that it was accessible.

In what follows certain details appearing in the passages of the book of Joshua relating to the fall of Jericho are identified as establishing a previously undetected connection with the levitical laws dealing with leprosy (Lev 13–14). This is an instance in which the historical book, rather than cite, refers to the legal material in a more subtle manner by way of allusions of a linguistic and thematic nature.

#### THE LEVITICAL LAWS REGARDING LEPROSY

The instructions found in Lev 13–14 are lengthy and complex. It is not my intention to unravel the numerous details given there. This would be quite unnecessary since these laws are not being applied to the situation occurring in Joshua, but rather literary allusions are being created. Here it will suffice only to provide an outline and summary of the laws, and to highlight a number of specific features.

The two chapters present procedures relating to certain infections that affect not only humans, but inanimate objects also. The precise nature of the various conditions being described is not easy to establish in each case. There are commentaries that offer substantial discussion of such matters, to which the reader may resort.<sup>3</sup> All that will be noted here is that the same general Hebrew term (צִרְעָתָא) is used throughout, regardless of who or what it actually is that suffers from the condition (e.g., 13:2; 14:7, 34). This term has traditionally been rendered "leprosy." While it may seem incongruous to modern medical science for the same diagnosis to be applied to both persons and objects, that is how

3. E.g., Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 194–97.

the Hebrews used the term. As the present article does not require an exact understanding of any of the conditions involved, I will simply follow the Hebrew practice and refer to each of its particular manifestations as “leprosy.”

This part of Leviticus contains four basic literary units that deal with the identification of leprosy and related diseases and the consequent procedures with respect to three distinct categories:

- (1) Regulations regarding an infected person (13:1–46; 14:1–32).
- (2) Regulations regarding an infected fabric (13:47–59).
- (3) Regulations regarding an infected house (14:33–53).

Whereas the instructions regarding fabrics and houses include all the various elements in a single block of text, in the case of persons the cleansing ceremony is treated separately (14:1–32). In each instance the possibility is allowed that the infection may cease, though in none of the three cases is an explanation given as to how this may occur. Should the disease remain, the consequence is continued separation for a person (13:46), burning for a fabric (13:52, 57), and the pulling down of the infected house (14:45).

There are two further details to which attention ought to be drawn. The first of these is the leading role of the priests. The application of the various regulations falls wholly to the direction of a priest (referred to more than 70 times in the two chapters). This fact, and the lack of mention of any doctor or healing methods, suggests the basis of the laws lies in ceremonial factors rather than medical. It does not appear that the treatment and care of lepers is primarily in view, though these were no doubt a matter for social concern in ancient Israel. Rather it is the state of cleanness and uncleanness caused by such conditions and how reinstatement to the former may be obtained that is of principal importance.<sup>4</sup>

Second, there is the marked use of time phrases involved in the different procedures. To be more precise, there is one single time reference that is repeated at regular intervals, which is that of seven days (18 times in total—13:4, 5, 6, 21, 22, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, 50, 51, 54; 14:8, 9, 38, 39). Besides these more prominent features, other lesser details occurring in these laws will receive attention as we proceed.

4. Cf. *ibid.*, 203.

## THE LEPROUS HOUSE

From a close reading of the Jericho narratives in the book of Joshua it becomes evident that the author was making deliberate allusion to the above laws. To his mind a manner of analogy existed, in the first instance, between the city in question and the leprous house treated in those laws.

The two relevant historical narratives are found in Josh 2:1–24 and 6:1–27. While not forming a consecutive account in that the crossing of the Jordan intervenes, the two are obviously thematically related. In the earlier of the narratives the city is spied out, in the later it is destroyed. In the former a promise is made to Rahab and her family, in the latter they are delivered from the city according to that same promise.

It is in connection with the opening of the second narrative that one of the more obvious allusions to the leprosy laws occurs. This passage begins with the statement: “Now Jericho was firmly shut up [סגרת ומסגרת] because of the Israelites; no one went out and no one came in” (6:1). The double use of the verb סגר is striking. This same verb is also prominent in Lev 13–14, where it occurs eleven times (13:4, 5, 11, 21, 26, 31, 33, 50, 54; 14:38, 46). There it is used for the act of separating an infected person (e.g., 13:4), or, more significantly, for shutting up an infected house (14:38). The basic meaning of the verb is simply “to shut,” yet in the context of leprosy it takes on the more technical sense of “isolate” or “segregate.” Interestingly, in the literary arrangement of the Hexateuch, the sole occurrences of this particular verb between the regulations of Lev 13–14 and the book of Joshua is in Num 12, also dealing with the subject matter of leprosy, this time pertaining to Miriam who had been afflicted with the disease (vv. 14, 15). סגר is a word then that could readily acquire connotations of leprosy.

How can we be certain that the usage in Josh 6:1 is allusive and not merely coincidental? Other considerations place the deliberateness beyond question. The infected house that is “shut up” in Lev 14 has undergone previous examination. A priest had been called that “he should come [יבא] to view [לראות] the house” (14:36; cf. v. 37, וראה, v. 44, וראה . . . ובא). In the first of the two narratives in Joshua the two spies are instructed by their leader to “Go, view [ראו] the land” (2:1). Shortly after their arrival in Jericho it becomes known to the men of the city that the two had “come [באו] to spy out the land” (2:2, 3).<sup>5</sup> It is subsequent to this prior coming and viewing in both contexts that leads to the place

5. In each text, therefore, we find a verb of seeing or viewing adjoined to a verb of motion.

being shut up.

The connection is further established through the presence of a seven-day period in each instance. Lev 14:38 immediately qualifies the acting of shutting up the house with the temporal phrase “for seven days.” The statement in Josh 6:1 about Jericho being shut is immediately followed by the instructions of God to Joshua concerning a seven-day period (vv. 2–5), during which, by inference, the city will remain in its shut-up condition. This seven-day period, the prominence of which in the leprosy laws was noted above, is mentioned again in vv. 15–16. Ostensibly the whole affair respecting Israel before Jericho was structured around this particular span of time.

Alongside the seven-day period we find in both texts an action performed seven times. The purification ritual for the infected house involves it being sprinkled with sacrificial blood “seven times [שבע פעמים]” (Lev 14:51), a phrase appearing in other leprosy rituals (14:7, 16, 29). At Jericho the Israelites are instructed to march around the city “seven times [שבע פעמים]” (Josh 6:4). The priests are, moreover, mentioned in both these verses, and are key participants in Joshua 6 generally (nine times—vv. 4 [twice], 6 [twice], 8, 9, 12, 13, 16), as they are in Lev 13–14. As regards the infected house, the direction of the priest leads to its stones being dismantled (Lev 14:40–45). At Jericho it is a distinctive trumpet-blast by the priests (Josh 6:4–5) that initiates the collapse of the city.

Additionally, there are other less noticeable points of contact. We find that regarding the leprous house “one who enters [והבא] . . . shall be unclean” (14:46). With regard to Jericho, Josh 6:1 declares that “there was no one entering [ואין בא].” While not identical, there is a clear conceptual interrelation in that both concern restrictions upon entering the place in question. Also, the “wall” of the structure is in each case given its own particular mention. In Lev 14 the walls of the house receive the priest’s closest attention (vv. 37, 39) to see if there is any trace of the disease “in the walls” (בקירת). In the Jericho narrative, Rahab and her family, who offered shelter to the spies, live “in the wall” (בקיר). In both places we find the same Hebrew term, 2:15 being the sole occurrence of the word קיר in the entire book of Joshua.

Another more apparent conceptual feature shared by both texts is the ultimate destruction of the edifice in question. If the disease with which the house is contaminated persists, then “the house shall be pulled down, its stones, its timber, and all the plaster of the house” (Lev 14:45). In the case of Jericho, the walls collapse and the city is destroyed (Josh 6:20–21, 24). The ruins of the infected house are deposited in an unclean place (Lev 14:45), while a curse is uttered over the ruins of Jericho (Josh 6:26).

One final detail in this connection is the manner in which the law concerning “leprosy” within a house is introduced. This section begins with the words, “When you enter [תבאו] the land [ארץ] of Canaan, which I am giving you [אתן לכם] . . .” (Lev 14:34). By this means the matter concerning such a house is distinctly set within the context of the land promised as a possession. The same obviously holds true for the events at Jericho. Israel is expressly told, “you will cross the Jordan here to enter [לבוא] and take possession of the land [הארץ] the LORD your God is giving you [אתן לכם] . . .” (Josh 1:11). The similarity of words and ideas is self evident, and it is just a few sentences later than the first part of the Jericho narrative commences (Josh 2:1). Both the law and the narrative are, therefore, placed within a similar geographical setting, namely the land which is being given to Israel as a possession.

Taken together the number and nature of the foregoing correspondences between the two loci suggest that the author of one was purposely creating allusions to the other. Such a conclusion is supported by other considerations to follow.

#### THE LEPROUS PERSON

Much of the levitical legislation regarding leprosy involves the disease affecting people. The diagnosis is treated extensively in Lev 13:1–46, and the associated purification rituals are in 14:1–32. Just as the author of Joshua established connections between the law of the leprous house and the events at the fall of Jericho, so too similar correspondences are to be detected between the laws relating to leprosy within people and the person of Rahab and her family. Here the connections are perhaps less prominent, suggesting that this is a subsidiary theme in the author’s concerns, though nevertheless undoubtedly present.

To begin, we observe that according to the law of Lev 14, any person who enters, sleeps, or eats in the infected house is regarded as unclean (vv. 46–47). In such cases the uncleanness may be removed by a simple act of washing. Accepting that Jericho is being portrayed in the author’s mind as a place diseased with leprosy, then into this category fall the two Hebrew spies who stayed overnight in the city. While the law includes those who “enter the house [והבא אליהבית],” the Jericho narrative informs us (Josh 2:1) that the spies “entered the house [ויבאו בית]” of a woman in the city, a fact reiterated two verses later (v. 3, באו לביתך). If the analogy of the leprosy laws is applied, these men did not, so to speak, contract the disease, but did suffer from ritual uncleanness as a result, until they had undergone the washing in water. It is significant in this context that these two men, after leaving Jericho, are said to have crossed

the Jordan (Josh 2:23)<sup>6</sup> before returning to the camp of Israel. Thus, in the narrative account, the ceremonial requirement has, in a sense, been satisfied.

With respect to Rahab and those residing in her house the situation is different. These were not merely temporary visitors to Jericho but native inhabitants. To the thinking of the author, therefore, these people were not merely rendered unclean by dwelling in the city but had equally contracted the same disease. Rahab was said to have been “living in the wall” (Josh 2:15), which according to Leviticus was a part of the house that was affected and needed treatment.

The levitical laws allow that in certain cases those suffering from leprosy could, by some unspecified means, be cured of the disease and their bodies restored to full health. In these instances a particular ritual of purification had to be enacted. This is described in some detail in Lev 14. There is reason to believe, through a number of allusions woven into his narrative, that the author of the book of Joshua saw Rahab, along with those in her household, in terms of a leper who had been cured of leprosy. It should be stressed that these are by nature only allusions to the practices performed in the case of leprosy. It is by no means intended that the rituals themselves were carried out wholly or in part, nor that the points of correspondence occur in the same order as found in the levitical text. Through the literary device of allusion, the author establishes connotation, which then in turn colors and enriches his narrative.

The central part of the purification ritual to be performed for the person in whom the infection has ceased is as follows:

And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in an earthen vessel. As for the living [החיה] bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet [שני] and the hyssop [האזב], and dip them and the living [החיה] bird in the blood of the bird killed over the fresh water. And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean. (Lev 14:5–7)

Though the precise details regarding their use are lacking, scarlet and hyssop are essential components of the rite. The latter would have taken the form of a bunch of twigs from a particular plant which was especially employed in cleansing rituals. The former is described by

6. The verb *ויעברו* alone plainly denotes the crossing, or fording, of the river, as noted in Adolph Harstad, *Joshua* (CC; Saint Louis: Concordia, 2004), 145, “The implied direct object of this verb is the Jordan River, as is made clear by the use of this verb in 1:2, 14.” Cf. also NIV, “forded the river” and NLT, “crossed the Jordan River.”

modern translators as “scarlet string” (NASB) or “scarlet yarn” (NIV). According to rabbinic interpretations, this was tied to one of the birds, the one that was to be preserved alive.<sup>7</sup>

Here it is argued that this cleansing ritual is alluded to in the Jericho narratives in connection with Rahab, the woman who had assisted the Israelite spies. In return for the kindness that she had shown them, Rahab asked, “Give me a sign of good faith that you will preserve alive [ההיהם] my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them” (Josh 2:12–13). The two men promise that this will be so (v. 14). When the city eventually falls, the promise is fulfilled, as Joshua declares, “Only Rahab the harlot shall live [תחיה], she and all who are with her in the house” (6:17; cf. v. 25, תחיה). So this woman and her family are allowed to “live,” and so in a way are comparable to the bird that is not slaughtered but kept alive.

In the narrative the distinguishing mark that sets Rahab and her family apart from the other inhabitants of Jericho is the cord of scarlet (השני) that she is directed to attach to the window of her house (Josh 2:18, 21). This corresponds to the piece of scarlet yarn which, according to a widely accepted interpretation, was attached to the bird that would remain alive. That such a conclusion is not stretching the imagination can be deduced from the parallels, noted in a previous article, between the deliverance of Rahab from Jericho and the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt in the exodus.<sup>8</sup> Whereas the one attaches a scarlet cord to the window, the other applies blood with hyssop to the doorposts (Exod 12:22). Hyssop is, of course, the other element, together with the blood, which forms a part of the cleansing ritual prescribed in Lev 14.<sup>9</sup> Blood also receives a mention in the Jericho account, where Rahab is warned,

7. Such an understanding is found, for example, in Maimonides’s extensive treatment *On Leprosy*. Here he writes: “He [the priest] bound together the hyssop and the cedar; with the scarlet wool wound up lengthwise, and about them he put the tops of the wings and tips of the tail of the living bird, and dipped the four in the water and blood that were in the vessel” (cited in Henry Ainsworth, *Annotations on the Pentateuch and the Psalms*, vol. 1 [Edinburgh: Blackie & Sons, 1843], 551). Not all rabbinic sources accept this interpretation. Nevertheless, if not directly attached to the bird, there can be no doubt that the scarlet material and the bird are very closely associated in the ritual seeing that, according to Lev 14:6 itself, they are dipped into the blood of the slain bird simultaneously.

8. See Nicholas P. Lunn, “The Deliverance of Rahab (Joshua 2, 6) as the Gentile Exodus” *TynB* 65 (2014), 11–19.

9. Abraham ibn Ezra observes the connection between the purification of the leper and the Passover. See H. Norman Strickman and Arthur M. Silver, *Ibn Ezra’s Commentary on the Pentateuch: Leviticus* (New York: Menorah, 2004), 105.

“If anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood will be on his own head” (Josh 2:19), that is to say, that person will no longer be like the bird kept alive, but that whose blood is shed. The two parallel events, therefore, bring together the various components of the levitical rite.

Another probable allusion is the fact that Rahab and her family are initially placed “outside the camp [מחוץ למחנה] of Israel” (Josh 6:23). Here is a distinct echo of the leprosy laws where the one infected must remain “outside the camp [מחוץ למחנה]” for a specific period (Lev 13:46; 14:3). Following this Rahab and her kin are evidently permitted to “live in the midst of Israel” (Josh 6:25), just as the purified leper may come into the camp (Lev 14:8).

There is another possible, more distant and more curious, point of contact between Rahab and the leper as depicted in Leviticus. As an indication of their diseased condition the person afflicted with leprosy was obligated (Lev 13:45) to let the hair of his or her head to “be unkempt” (NIV) or “hang loose” (NLT). The Hebrew clause here וראשו יהיה פרוע, translated in the LXX as καὶ ἡ κεφαλὴ αὐτοῦ ἀκατακάλυπτος, literally means “and his head [will be] uncovered.” What is significant about this is that such a state with regard to the hair is also that associated with an immoral woman. In the case of the suspected adulteress, part of the instruction for the priest is ופרע את־ראש האשה (Num 5:18), rendered as καὶ ἀποκαλύψει τὴν κεφαλὴν τῆς γυναικὸς, “and he will uncover the head of the woman.”<sup>10</sup> In the Joshua narrative, of course, Rahab is identified as a זונה (Josh 2:1; 6:17, 25; LXX: πόρνη), which most naturally bears the meaning of “sexually immoral woman,” whether a “prostitute” (see Gen 34:31; 38:15) or “adulteress” (see Hos 2:4; 3:1).<sup>11</sup> The hair, therefore, at least by implication, may establish a further point of contact at the conceptual level between the two texts—the leper and immoral women were both associated with the same particular condition of hair, whether dishevelled, loose, or exposed, according to how the terms are understood.

10. Behind the New Testament discussion of women covering their heads (1 Cor 11) there seems to be the same idea that woman with uncovered heads are indicating their immoral status. Note especially v. 5, “But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered [ἀκατακάλυπτος τῆ κεφαλῆ] dishonours her head,” (cf. v. 13, and the similarity of language to the LXX renderings above).

11. In the New Testament Heb 11:31 and Jas 2:25 retain the usual understanding of this term. For a discussion of the Hebrew word זונה and the possible alternative meaning “innkeeper,” see Harstad, *Joshua*, 108.

## THE LEPROUS GARMENT

Lastly, and more briefly, we consider the third element of the leprosy law, which concerns the infection of various kinds of fabric, including wool, cotton, and leather (Lev 13:47–58). There is nothing in Josh 2 or 6 that appears to correspond with this. We do note, however, that Joshua commands the Israelites to refrain from taking various items from the city which are to be regarded as devoted to the Lord (Josh 6:19, 24). This sets the scene for what follows in the next chapter, in which the Israelites are evidently still located at Jericho (7:2). There we read that a Hebrew named Achan did in fact take certain things out of Jericho, contrary to the divine command (7:1). Later Achan admits that he had taken a garment from Shinar as well as amounts of silver and gold (v. 21).

Without doubt the first of the plundered items would be covered by the leprosy laws, since they state “When a garment has a mark of leprosy in it, whether it is a woollen garment or a linen garment, whether in warp or woof, of linen or of wool, whether in leather or in any article made of leather . . .” (Lev 13:47–48). Here we see both an analogy and a contrast with what has been earlier argued concerning the city and Rahab. Since the city is, by connotation, treated as a leprous house and broken down, and since Rahab and her family are regarded as lepers who undergo a manner of purification before being brought in among the people of Israel, it may reasonably be considered that the garment wrongfully taken by Achan falls under the category of a garment infected with the same disease. Yet in this case the outcome is different. Achan brings the infected item into his own tent, an act which has serious consequences for his own household and the whole of Israel, as chapter 7 makes apparent. Whereas Israel had brought about the downfall of a city of Canaan, an object removed from that city and brought into their camp leads to the defeat of Israel.<sup>12</sup>

According to the levitical law, an item of clothing that has become infected must be destroyed by fire. The prescription states that the officiating priest “shall burn the garment, whether the warp or the woof, in wool or in linen, or any article of leather which has the infection in it, for it is malignant leprosy; it shall be burned in the fire [בְּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרֹף]”

12. That the narrator is here intentionally creating a parallel between Rahab and Achan has been advocated in a convincing study by Frank Spina (*The Faith of the Outsider: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story* [Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2005], 52–71). Among the more notable of the corresponding elements is the fact that Rahab “hid” the spies coming to Jericho (Josh 2:6) and was delivered, whereas Achan “hid” the items removed from Jericho (7:21, 22) and perished. In each instance the same Hebrew verb (חָבַא) is employed, establishing a clear link between the two.

(Lev 13:52). Only fire could, it would seem, remove the infection. It is surely no coincidence that this is the very same fate shared by Achan and his family, the burning of offenders then being an extremely rare practice in Israel. Joshua 7:25 tells us that once the plundered items were discovered, he was taken with his family “And all Israel stoned them with stones, and they burned them with fire [וישרפו . . . באש].” Achan and his household, therefore, having taken into his tent the forbidden items corresponding to the infected items of the leprosy law, has now contracted the same disease, so to speak, and so suffers the same fate as the leprous garment.<sup>13</sup>

### CONCLUSION

The foregoing article has detected a number of allusions in the Jericho narratives to the levitical laws concerning leprosy. It is argued that this was a deliberate literary device on the part of the author. The purposeful nature is suggested by the fact that the allusions relate to three particular entities—a walled construction (house/city), a person (Rahab), and a garment (a garment of Shinar). These three, and these three exclusively, are treated in the leprosy laws of Lev 13–14. The deliberateness is further corroborated by the repetition of key words, phrases, and concepts in both contexts, in connection with all three of the foregoing entities.

In sum, through the subtle use of these allusions the writer of the book of Joshua is portraying the city of Jericho as a leprous house. It has been examined and warrants the dismantling specified by the levitical law. Though an inhabitant of the city, and therefore infected with the same disease, Rahab undergoes a manner of purification, no doubt by her faith in the God of Israel, and she and her family after a period of exclusion are joined to Israel. Conversely, Achan, an Israelite, removes forbidden items, including a special garment, from within the city and places them in his tent. Both he and his family may thus be viewed as contracting the same disease that had infected Jericho and Rahab before her cleansing. Achan and all that belongs to him suffers the burning by

13. There is a possible further link between Leviticus and the Achan incident. The term rendered as “malignant” in Lev 13:52 above is the Hebrew *ממארת*, which is of uncertain meaning. The fact is, however, that the rabbis traditionally associate it with the noun *מארה*, meaning “curse” (cf. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB3; New York: Doubleday, 1991], 811). In Josh 7, the term *חרם* also has connotations of something cursed, and is translated as such in the LXX (*ἀνάθεμα*) as well as some modern English versions (NKJV, “accursed things”; NJB, “under the curse of destruction”). Thus in the two texts there is the destruction by fire of that which is, in a manner, “cursed.”

fire prescribed by Leviticus for the infected garment. The whole thus presents a consistency in the manner of allusion, which again argues for its purposeful design.<sup>14</sup>

The intention of the author through the means discussed can be plausibly surmised. In depicting Jericho, the first city of the promised land to be encountered, in this particular manner, the need is impressed upon the people of Israel for the wholesale eradication of the original occupants. They are seen as infected with a dangerous disease, one that is spiritual rather than physical. Implicit also is the severe warning, expressed through what happened to Achan, about contact with the Canaanites.<sup>15</sup> This is equally applicable to later generations of Israelites, when there still remained numerous Canaanite settlements among the twelve tribes, as much as to the generation of the conquest. Besides instruction and warning for Israel, the same allusions offer a degree of hope for the Canaanites themselves. While their utter destruction is divinely commanded, the possibility exists for cleansing, forsaking the practices of Canaan for the hope of Israel (cf. Josh 2:9–11), as illustrated through the deliverance of Rahab and her family.

14. Such an allusive form of reference as proposed here would be similar to the better known and oft-cited case concerning the Levite and his concubine found in Judg 19. Here the text contains distinct echoes of the Sodom narrative in Gen 19. The connotation established by means of this allusion is evidently that one of the towns of Israel, namely Gibeah, had lapsed into the same moral degradation as had been found in pagan Sodom. See, for example, Tammi J. Schneider, *Judges* (BO; Collegeville: Liturgical, 1999), 260–62.

15. It is of some interest to note that the three different kinds of objects taken by Achan—silver, gold, a garment—appear together in Gen 24:53 (“articles of silver and articles of gold, and garments”) in a context having unmistakable marital overtones, where they appear to form all or part of the bride-price for Rebekah. By implication Achan, in receiving these same valuable items from Jericho is in a figure showing his willingness to enter into union with the inhabitants of the land.