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Determining Implied Instructions in Joshua 3 and 7: A Contextual Hermeneutic of Consecration Activities

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Abstract

Commands directed toward individuals and groups to consecrate themselves occur with highest concentration in the Pentateuch. However, there is a variety of instructions which occasionally accompany these mandates, leading to a lack of clarity about the process of consecration and how those commands are fulfilled. This ambiguity is especially notable in encountering very blanket commands as in the narrative texts of Joshua 3:5 and 7:13, where no additional ritual instructions are provided alongside the consecration imperatives nor revealed in the ensuing stories. By examining selected Pentateuchal instances of consecration (especially of persons), evaluating the links between passages and the paradigmatic nature of occurrences in Exodus 19 and 29, and considering the broader ancient West Asian context of consecration activities, this paper will offer a hermeneutic to facilitate determining what instructions, if any, may be implied when the commands to consecrate oneself or others are issued in a narrative context.

1. Introduction

Twice in the book of Joshua we encounter the imperative 'consecrate yourselves' – once in 3:5, prior to the people crossing the Jordan, and then again in 7:13, as a prelude to the ceremony in which the one who has taken things under the ban (Achan) will be identified and punished. However, neither in the initial mandate nor in the ensuing narratives is there a description of how the people went about fulfilling this command.[1] What rituals did they have to engage in,

1. Similar language, with lack of detail both in the mandate and the ensuing narratives, is also found in Num 11:18; 1 Sam 16:5; 1 Chr 15:12; 2 Chr 29:5.

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what practices did they have to undertake, what prohibitions did they have to abide by in order to fulfil this directive?

Within the Hebrew Bible, the Pentateuch contains the greatest number[2] and variety of consecratory[3] vignettes. Many of these appear in legal, procedural, or expository discourse, as in the instructions found in Exodus 29 concerning the ordination of Aaron and his sons for the priesthood. Others occasionally appear in narrative,[4] most famously at the foot of Sinai in Exodus 19, prior to the giving of the law. Across the episodes, a variety of objects are consecrated, using various media, and within diverse circumstances (as will be surveyed below).

In reading one of the blanket consecration commands such as those found in Joshua, the question thus arises, can we know what instructions were implied, and thus what activities were carried out, in the issuing of a mandate for consecration? Are we as readers meant to have a particular picture in mind of the fulfilment process, perhaps one rooted in ancient West Asian[5] practices or in biblical paradigms, that would fill in the narratival gaps? As E. Randolph Richards notes,[6] communication always occurs against a backdrop of unspoken common knowledge, and as we seek to interpret a text and navigate its ambiguities, there is a risk of both inventing unicorns (phenomena which are not real/really there)[7] and overlooking elephants (things which are blatantly obvious, at least to some observers).

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2. Jackie A. Naudé, 'קָדַשׁ', *NIDOTTE* 3: 877–887 (here 878).

3. Throughout this article, I will primarily use the language of 'consecration' rather than 'sanctification' or (as a state) 'holiness' (all of which could be rendered from the same Hebrew root, קדשׁ, *q-d-sh*) in order to attempt to alleviate unhelpful entanglements with theological notions surrounding these other terms. This article is concerned with narrative interpretation informed by close reading of the text and appreciation of cultural background, rather than developing or refining a biblical–theological framework.

4. Such as Lev 8.

5. Thanks to Jerry Hwang for introducing me to this replacement for the traditional label of ancient Near Eastern (ANE). Jerry Hwang, '"Learn Not the Way of the Heathen": Orientalism in Old Testament Scholarship' (paper presented at the Tyndale Fellowship Old Testament Study Group, High Leigh, July 2023), 4.

6. E. Randolph Richards, 'Chupacabras and Elephants in the Room: The Perils and Blessings of "Cultural Readings" of a Biblical Text', (paper presented at the Tyndale Fellowship Old Testament Study Group, High Leigh, July 2023).

7. Richards's original image of that which is merely imagined, rather than authentically present, in a text utilised the 'chupacabra', a mythical South American creature, which has been substituted with the unicorn in this article to connect with a wider readership. The elephant image comes from the idiom 'the elephant in the

This article will seek to offer a contextualised hermeneutical perspective for determining the nature of implied consecration instructions. Following Richards's advice,[8] we will engage this pursuit through study of the cultural milieu as well as by surveying the Pentateuchal material. In so doing, an effort will be made to establish an outline of the rite of consecration in biblical Israel and to identify to what extent this activity was regimented or variegated, and how that might bear upon our reception of narratives and our ability to fill in the gaps.

2. A Survey of Consecration in the Pentateuch

Among the three dozen or so consecration vignettes in the Pentateuch, a great variety of circumstances are presented. Disparate objects are consecrated – the tent of meeting, the altar, and their implements – as are particular times like the Jubilee and the Sabbath. So are various animals and offerings, and also people, including individuals (Aaron, Nazirites, firstborn) and groups (especially priests), and occasionally the entire nation of Israel.[9] Where details are provided as to the consecratory activities to be undertaken, a similarly wide menu is presented: sometimes they involve water, sometimes oil, sometimes fire, sometimes blood; sometimes bathing, washing or changing clothing are included; sometimes there is abstention from alcohol or sexual intercourse, and so on. Even in narrowing down to the examination of texts involving the consecration of humans, there are different situations of communication ranging from YHWH himself effecting the consecration,[10] to ordering Moses to consecrate,[11] to instead specifying that Moses is to communicate to others that they are to do the consecrating themselves.[12] At this point, it is already evident

room' – something which is indeed present and should be obvious, yet somehow gets overlooked or ignored.

8. Richards, 'Chupacabras and Elephants', 5.

9. Beyond the Pentateuch, we find other objects being consecrated, including cities of refuge (Josh 20), the Temple (1 Kgs 8–9), wars (Joel 4:9; Mic 3:5), grown children (Job 1), gates and walls (Neh 3).

10. For YHWH as consecratory agent, see Gen 2:3; Exod 20:11; 31:13; Lev 20:8; 21:8,15,23; 22:9,16,32; Num 3:13.

11. For Moses commissioned as consecratory agent, see Exod 13:2; 28:41; 30:29-30; 40:9-13; Lev 8:10-12; Num 20:12.

12. For Moses as mediating the consecration command to others, see Exod 20:8; Lev 11:44; 16:19; 20:7; 21:8; 22:2-3; 25:10; 27:14-26; Num 6:11; 11:18; Deut 15:19. There is also the additionally odd, passive cases in Lev 6:11 [English 6:18]; 10:3; 22:32.

that there is no strict narratival formula for introducing a consecratory 'type-scene' of persons (à la Robert Alter).[13]

Although formulas do not seem to exist, there are elements which are often enough repeated across a variety of consecratory vignettes. Consecration is regularly connected with sacrifice, whether the implements of sacrifice, or preparatory to one's performance or participation in a sacrifice (occasionally for one's own atonement).[14] Consecration is also often connected with a proclamation, accompanied by instructions to 'say' to others,[15] or in the anticipation of a forthcoming spectacle, implying that consecration is a public matter. There is frequently a time element involved in consecration, either in outlining various activities to take place across a sequence of days (e.g. the ordination of priests),[16] or with the prospect that soon – in a day or two – there will be an occurrence of significance which necessitates the consecration.[17] Within this chronological framework, it is noted that some consecratory activities are intended to establish a permanent or long-lasting status (e.g. ministering within the priesthood), whereas others anticipate only remaining valid or necessary for a particular or limited time (e.g. to experience divine activity or theophany).

Perhaps one of the most universal elements is some notion of washing. Whether in terms of sprinkling or bathing, and looking at both human and non-human objects, washing – most often with water, though not exclusively so – is one of the main points of contact between the consecratory practices of Israel and broader ancient West Asia, as will be seen below. Thus, we turn our attention to considering the association between consecration and purification (or cleansing) and survey this connection across the cultural milieu.

13. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, rev. and updated ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 55–78.

14. Many of the Pentateuchal references are included in the preceding footnotes (other than general notions of Aaron and his sons engaging in priestly ministry, which likely includes sacrifice). But see especially the human references in Lev 8:34; 21:8; 1 Sam 16:5; 2 Chr 29:34; 30:15,17-19; Ezra 6:20-21. See also the locative reference in 1 Kgs 8:64.

15. This often occurs in the cases of the above listed mediated instructions by Moses to others (footnote 12).

16. Exod 29; Lev 8. See below. If instances of purification, rather than consecration per se, are included, then many are the references which include a time element (e.g. 'until evening' as in Lev 15:16-19).

17. Hamilton identifies just four texts which link consecration to today/tomorrow language: Exod 19; Num 11:18; Josh 3:5; 7:13. Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 307.

3. The Association Between Consecration and Purification

It has been regularly acknowledged that there is a matrix of interrelationships between two axes within the Hebrew Bible, the first axis of contrasts being common–holy (or consecrated) and the second being clean–unclean.[18] While common objects can be either clean or unclean, there is a necessary connection between holy and clean; it is not possible for something (or someone) to be holy and yet unclean.[19] Thus, in order to understand the picture or process of consecration, it is necessary to have regard for the quality, and process, of cleansing.[20]

Concern for being clean is often positioned in a slightly broader sense as a concern for purity,[21] as two spheres of contamination are considered: moral and material. In order to be pure, an object (specifically, a person, if we are considering moral purity)[22] must be cleansed of any contamination in both of

18. Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 19, https://doi.org/10.5040/bci-00a7; David P. Wright, 'Holiness (Old Testament)', *ABD* 3:234, https://doi.org/10.5040/9780300261899-0327; John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC 4 (Waco, TX: Word, 2000), lviii–lx; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 46, https://doi.org/10.5040/9780300261110.

19. Helmer Ringgren, 'קדשׁ', TDOT 12: 521–545 (here 527). See also Lev 16:19; 22:3. Although it could be posited that Lev 21:3,6 taken together present a scenario where the priest – who is consecrated/holy – is at the same time also defiled (impure, unclean), we would argue that a more consistent view would be that the priestly consecration (achieved as a 'permanent' state) is temporarily suspended while impure, and could thus be restored via whatever purificatory rite was necessary to remedy the impurity. This is perhaps the scenario in view in 2 Chr 29:34; the priests' state of consecration had been suspended, perhaps due to some impurity, and they were thus not fit to participate in sacrifices until they had been purified. While retaining the office of priest, they could not function as such because they could not be both holy and impure at the same time.

20. See Gammie's classic critique of Rudolph Otto's work in *The Idea of the Holy* (1928). Gammie posits that Otto inadequately deals with the notion that the holy calls for purity and cleanness. John G. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 7.

21. Wenham, *Leviticus*, 20.

22. See for example Lev 20:7-8, which links keeping YHWH's statutes with a consecrated status, and a dual agency of the person themselves, as well as YHWH, effecting that status. See also Bryan D. Bibb, 'Blood, Death, and the Holy in the Leviticus Narrative', in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative,* ed. Danna Nolan Fewell, Oxford Handbooks Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 143, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199967728.013.10; David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Leicester: Apollos, 1995), 24.

these regards.[23] This purity is required for both entrance into, and maintenance of, a state of consecration.[24]

With the more concrete of the two spheres being concern for material cleanness, it is perhaps unsurprising that the notion of washing became both a literal and metaphorical remedy for contamination and the achievement of purity.[25] Indeed, texts abound in the book of Leviticus which mandate the physical cleansing of objects to remove impurity,[26] as well as the metaphorical description of washing oneself in order to remove moral impurity (sin, guilt, etc.).[27] As a cultic rite, washing one's person with water goes beyond merely removing physical uncleanness.[28]

Surveying ritual texts from across ancient West Asia reveals a similar connection between consecratory activities and a prior concern for purity as achieved by washing. A Hittite document regarding establishing a new temple[29] makes use of waters of purification and uses a mixture of water and oil to wash

23. Nihan argues against Klawans's classic model of separation of ritual and moral impurity systems, seeing instead that the comprehensive system of purification in Leviticus brings these two together under a single concern for pollution. Christophe Nihan, 'Forms and Functions of Purity in Leviticus', in *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions in the Ancient Mediterranean World and Ancient Judaism*, ed. Christian Frevel and Christophe Nihan, Dynamics in the History of Religion 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 348–349, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004232297_012.

24. Levine sees the Hebrew verb קדשׁ (*q-d-sh*) as indicating the retention of the state of holiness, and not just the transition from not-holy to holy (Baruch A. Levine, 'The Language of Holiness: Perceptions of the Sacred in the Hebrew Bible', in *In Pursuit of Meaning: Collected Studies of Baruch A. Levine*, ed. Andrew D. Gross (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 325, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781575066387-023).

25. Michaël Guichard and Lionel Marti, 'Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Paleo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian Periods', in *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions in the Ancient Mediterranean World and Ancient Judaism*, ed. Christian Frevel and Christophe Nihan, Dynamics in the History of Religion 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 51, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004232297_003.

26. Examples include clothing (Lev 13:6,34; 15:17), houses (Lev 14:36-53), and various implements or fabrics (Lev 6:28; 13:55; 15:12).

27. See for example Isa 1:16; Jer 2:22; Ps 73:13. Note also 1 Cor 6:11; Rev 22:14-15. Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 53. Additionally, see the similar understanding at Qumran, as outlined by Ringgren in Ian Werrett, 'The Evolution of Purity at Qumran', in *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions in the Ancient Mediterranean World and Ancient Judaism*, ed. Christian Frevel and Christophe Nihan, Dynamics in the History of Religion 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 498, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004232297_018.

28. Leland Ryken et al., eds, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 927.

29. 'Establishing a New Temple for the Goddess of the Night', trans. Billie Jean Collins (*COS* 1.70:173-177). See especially §§12, 18, 23-25, 30.

the walls in order to make them pure. Additionally, part of the ritual takes place at a river, and there is also a specification of particular garments needed and a timing of several days.

Another Hittite document – 'Instructions to Priests and Temple Officials'[30] – specifies that the bakers of the sacred bread and their clothes must be washed and clean, and that other kitchen attendants must likewise be purified. If any of the constituents have sexual intercourse, they must bathe before engaging in ritual duties, on pain of death.

A Hittite 'Festival to the Warrior-God'[31] contains an almost comical amount of hand washing and wiping by the king and queen,[32] as they perform these actions prior to handling several different ritual objects (a golden lance, a cup, and even other purificatory instruments), seemingly one after another.[33] This highly regimented ritual also includes provision for the king to engage in circumambulation of the precinct. Strikingly, and in contrast to the rigorous washing instructions, this activity is left completely to the discretion of the monarch both in whether and how it might occur.[34] Such a statement reveals that, amidst what would otherwise seem a minutely specified ritual, there is nevertheless some personal determination about how one engages in this rite. This portends other variability and flexibility that will be observed in our analysis of Hebrew consecration rituals below.

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30. 'Instructions to Priests and Temple Officials', trans. Gregory McMahon (*COS* 1.83:217-221). See especially §2 (i 14-33), §14 (iii 55-83), and §10 (ii 73–iii 20).

31. *ANET* 358-361. See especially §ii, lines 15-35; §iii, line 40; §iv, lines 1-4; §vi, lines 15-24. See also 'Der 16. Tag des AN.TAḪ.ŠUM-Festes (Auszug)', trans. Jörg Klinger (*TUAT* 4: 196–202), https://doi.org/10.14315/9783641219901.

32. Guichard and Marti note that lustration rituals generally are covered under the notion of 'cleaning of hand'. Guichard and Marti, 'Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia', 71, 77. Interestingly, they also note the necessity of purifying the mouth as it is the means of communication with the gods. This may tie in with our thoughts on proclamation as an aspect of consecration, below. Guichard and Marti, 'Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia', 80, 82. Indeed, Levine sees great significance in the power of the word in the BH process of consecration. Levine, 'The Language of Holiness', 327. See also Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 19.

33. A similar dynamic appears in the Hittite ritual against impotence, in which the sacrificer takes a bath before walking behind the offerings, and then takes another bath (perhaps upon arrival at the sacrificial site). See *ANET* 349–350, lines 14-15 or Harry A. Hoffner, Jr, 'Paskuwatti's Ritual against Sexual Impotence (CTH 406)', *Aula Orientalis* 5 (1987): 277 §3.

34. See §i, lines 5-10.

In the Ugaritic 'Story of King Keret' (The Kirta Epic),[35] his beseeching of the god El for a son is to be achieved through both sacrifice and a military campaign. Notably, the sacrifice is preceded by washing himself, specifically, the entirety of his hands, elbows, fingers, and shoulders, and also applying rouge (red ochre?) as part of the preparation.

Akkadian rituals show a similar penchant for washing.[36] In one ritual practiced at Uruk,[37] water for handwashing is even required not just for the priest, but for the gods (referred to as 'stars') and the planets,[38] that is, the heavenly bodies which appear in the night sky at the time of the ritual. The 'Temple Program for New Year's Festivals at Babylon'[39] leads priests into a daily regimen of early morning bathing, which eventually leads to multiple temple purifications, primarily using water, but also cedar resin.

A portion of the Babylonian Atrahasis epic the 'Creation of Man by the Mother Goddess'[40] describes a purification bath for the gods on three separate days in the month, in which the purificatory agent is the flesh and blood of a slain god. Here we see a mixture of the notions of purification coupled with sacrifice.

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35. CTA 14/KTU 1.14.ii as found in Nicolas Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 2nd ed., BibSem 53 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 186. Keret is elsewhere known as Kirta. Note especially column ii, lines 62-79, as found in 'The Kirta Epic', trans. Dennis Pardee (*COS* 1.102:333-342), 334.

36. Levine, 'The Language of Holiness', 322–323.

37. *ANET* 338–339, or see 'A nocturnal festival in the Rēš-temple' in Marc J. H. Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon: The Temple Ritual Texts as Evidence for Hellenistic Cult Practises*, CM 25 (Leiden: Brill-Styx, 2004), 247–248, lines 18,24,32, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047412335.

38. Guichard and Marti note that the gods require these purification rites in order to enter their sanctuaries. Thus, we get a picture of purification needed, even apart from the cleansing of sin or moral transgression, but rather as necessarily preparatory. Guichard and Marti, 'Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia', 73; Christian Frevel, 'Purity Conceptions in the Book of Numbers in Context', in *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions in the Ancient Mediterranean World and Ancient Judaism*, ed. Christian Frevel and Christophe Nihan, Dynamics in the History of Religion 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 374, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004232297_013.

39. *ANET* 331–334, or Céline Debourse, *Of Priests and Kings: The Babylonian New Year Festival in the Last Age of Cuneiform Culture*, CHANE 127 (Leiden: Brill, 2022), https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004513037, 101 (line 2), 105 (line 158), 149 (lines 340-342), 151 (lines 344-350).

40. *ANET* 99–100, or Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*, 3rd ed., Archaeology, History, Literature (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2005), 235 (lines 206-209), 246 (lines 33-34).

Having conducted his own in-depth study, Jacob Milgrom readily concludes that washing for purification of people and objects was mandatory for all those participating in Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Hittite, and Greek rites.[41] Thus, from the picture we obtain of the cultural milieu, we can confidently affirm that an occasion of consecration in the Hebrew Bible would necessarily surface a concern for purity, and that this would be achieved, in part, by washing with water, both the body and the clothing of the participant(s).[42] As preparatory and precautionary,[43] purification would be undertaken in order to ensure the state of cleanness which would then permit the possibility of consecration.

consecration (requires) → purification (achieved by) → washing

In broader terms, we can also posit that consecration occurs as a result of one's conscious act.[44] While a third party, such as Moses or Joshua, can be ordered to consecrate others – and they could conceivably be the agent of washing someone else's clothes or even their body (as in Lev 8:6) – no one else can be responsible for the requisite moral cleanness (obedience to YHWH)[45] nor for the maintenance of the purified state in order to preserve the consecration. That preservation is achieved by separation and abstention from persons, circumstances, and activities which could render the requisite state of purity (moral and material) impossible to sustain.

consecrated (constitutes) → separation (maintained by) → abstention

Thus, once in the consecrated state, there is the implementation of interdicts which are necessary outworkings of the reality of that consecration, rather than serving as the instruments for effecting it.[46] We see this case in the narrative of Exodus 19, to which we now turn.

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41. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 959–963.

42. Under a concern for material purity, it would make little sense to wash one's body but not one's clothes, or vice-versa, except if the clothing itself is (ex)changed, as the physical contamination would simply re-contaminate the one cleansed item (the body or the clothes). Thus, we can also confidently presume that an explicit instruction to wash one (the body or the clothes) implies the washing of the other as well. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 306.

43. There is at least one Hittite text, a 'Ritual for the Purification of God and Man', which involves a curse of uncleanliness entering the temple. *ANET* 346, lines 15-25. See also José Virgilio Garcia Trabazo, *Textos Religiosos Hititas: Mitos, Plegarias y Rituales* (Madrid: Trotta Editorial, 2002), beginning at p. 557.

44. Levine, 'The Language of Holiness', 326.

45. Wenham, *Leviticus*, 23.

46. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 347, 465. Citations refer to the Eerdmans

4. Refining Our Perspective: Closer Looks at Exodus 19 and 29

Within the previously explored Pentateuchal trends and the cultural background of ancient West Asia, let us look more closely at Hebrew Bible texts, which are remarkable in the amount of detail they do offer regarding consecratory practices. If these texts can be viewed as somewhat paradigmatic within the Hebrew Bible, then their portrayals of consecration may help, and even be intended, to shed light on less explicit texts.

Within the history of Israel, the scene at Sinai in Exodus 19 is perhaps one text that can readily be accepted as paradigmatic. The events here are repeatedly referred to elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, and the overall encounter is certainly a fundamental part of the national experience and consciousness. If any text may be expected to offer insight into nondescript consecratory vignettes, Exodus 19 must be considered as one such candidate.[47]

Within this text, we note the following elements related to the consecratory mandate.[48]

1. The affirmation to obedience in v. 8 addresses moral purity.[49]
2. The forthcoming divine encounter revealed in v. 9 establishes the need for the people to be consecrated.
3. The instructions to Moses in v. 10 are for him to consecrate the people.[50]
4. There are two facets of time elements also given in vv. 10-11: that the consecration should take two days ('today and tomorrow'), and the theophany will occur on the third day.

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edition.

47. Indeed, the language of constituting the people as YHWH's possession, priestly kingdom, and holy (קָדוֹשׁ *qadosh*) nation (vv. 5-6), along with the oath of obedience (v. 8), and the expectation of lasting belief (v. 9) all point to the abiding significance of this passage in Israel's mindset and frame of reference in its engagement with YHWH. Milgrom refers to this scene at Sinai as the *locus classicus* of ritual ablution. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 965. See also Peterson (*Possessed by God*, 20) who states that the Sinai ritual was meant to sustain Israel's ongoing status as a holy nation.

48. Durham asserts that not all that the consecration implies is specified. On the other hand, Garrett asserts that the clauses in 19:10d,11a,12a indicate how the sanctification is achieved. John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 264; Duane A. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 455 n. 102.

49. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr, 'Exodus', in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 418.

50. Hamilton (*Exodus*, 306) rejects the idea that Moses (or Joshua or Job) could consecrate others; he posits they could only instruct others how to make themselves holy, for example by washing their clothes. But for other thoughts on multiple agency in Mesopotamia, see Guichard and Marti, 'Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia', 68.

5. The people are specified in v. 10 as the ones to wash their own garments.[51]
6. Another timing element is given in v. 13, in which the long blast of the horn[52] finally permits going up the mountain.[53]

Following this scene of instructions from YHWH to Moses, we have a brief ensuing fulfilment narrative in verses 14-15. Specified here are the following:

1. Moses went to the people and consecrated them (exactly as YHWH instructed).[54]
2. The people washed their garments (exactly as YHWH instructed).
3. Moses makes a proclamation concerning the forthcoming timing of the third day (not specified in the instructions).
4. Moses enjoins them not to approach a woman[55] (also not specified in the instructions).

Thus, all the instructions that were mandated were explicitly fulfilled – Moses's agency, the people washing their garments, and the timing elements – with the additions of the injunctions in verse 15 not to approach a woman[56] and Moses's proclamation concerning the timing of the third day. This declaration was not specifically mandated by YHWH, but was likely presumed necessary in YHWH's blanket command to consecrate the people. As consecration is not merely an end in itself, but rather a person or item is consecrated *to* a specific purpose,[57] revealing and declaring this purpose is a necessary element of that

51. Hamilton (*Exodus*, 295) attempts to make a case that in view here is particularly Egyptian clothing which needs to be laundered before the people engage in YHWH-activity. While the text does not seem to make any indications toward this concern, if he is correct, it would further support the paradigmatic nature of the Sinai scene, if it indeed becomes standard practice to launder one's clothes for consecration even when there are no longer any Egyptian garments in Israelite wardrobes.

52. This is fulfilled, though using different language (trumpet; שׁוֹפָר *shofar*), in vv. 16,19; 20:18.

53. Also, in regard to the precinct around the mountain (v. 12), it is noted that any violators are to be punitively killed at a distance (by stoning or shooting; v. 13), ostensibly in order to maintain the consecrated state of the rest of the people, who must not touch one who has become impure by violating YHWH's mandate.

54. Apparently, this could not be done in absentia, but had to take place in the presence of/with the people. Also, it is assumed that the consecration took place over the two days ('today and tomorrow') as instructed, as the narrative continues on the third day in v. 16.

55. See also 1 Sam 21:4-5.

56. Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 369; T. Desmond Alexander, *Exodus*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary 2 (London: Apollos, 2017), 371–372.

57. Naudé, *NIDOTTE* 3:885. Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 464; A. Graeme Auld, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*, The Daily Study Bible Old Testament (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1987),

consecration. This purpose is what separates, for example, ritual washing from normal bathing.[58]

Already then, in this passage, we see that, even without specificity in the mandate, certain elements are understood and may nevertheless be implemented, as with Moses's proclamation to the people. However, our narrative interpretation will ultimately be interested, not merely in what *could* be said by way of elucidating implied instructions, but what the text may be *expecting* readers to fill in.

We note also the sense of dual agency involved in this pericope, as Moses is told to consecrate the people,[59] but they also have an active role in participating in that consecration (through the washing of their clothes), as well as the maintenance of their status (by not approaching a woman).[60] And, in light of the proclivities observed across the cultural milieu, we note that washing of garments was specified both in the mandate and in the fulfilment,[61] making this element extremely clear within the consecratory process.

Given the relative rarity of consecratory specificity or embellishment in narrative texts, we here briefly consider a procedural text: the consecration of Aaron and his sons for priestly ministry.

Exodus 29 designates the following elements for this consecration activity:[62]

1. Dual agency (both Moses, v. 1, and YHWH, v. 44; with Aaron and his sons also actively engaged, particularly in eating the offerings, vv. 32-33, and laying hands upon the sacrifices, vv. 10,19,24)[63]
2. Specification of purpose of the consecration (to minister as priests; vv. 1,44)[64]

89; David Witthoff, ed., *Lexham Cultural Ontology Glossary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014), s.v. 'consecration'.

58. See also Guichard and Marti, 'Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia', 48.

59. On Moses as actor, not simply giving orders, see Noel D. Osborn and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1999), 456–457.

60. Alexander, *Exodus*, 371–372.

61. R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 154.

62. Note that the only fulfilment narrative of this mandate in Exodus is the simple statement in Exod 40:16. A more extended narrative fulfilment is provided in Lev 8, in which perhaps the most substantial difference is that Aaron and his sons are accorded clearer agency than in the initial mandate; see Lev 8:36.

63. Guichard and Marti note gods operating as both the actors and guarantors of purification. Guichard and Marti, 'Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia', 72. Wenham similarly notes YHWH's role as actor alongside of human engagement (Wenham, *Leviticus*, 22; Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 19). Sirach 45:15 makes Moses's agency very explicit.

64. See also Exod 30:30; 40:13,15.

3. Sacrifices/offerings (including the preparation/purification/consecration of the altar; vv. 1,10-20,22-28,31-34,36)[65]
4. Bathing (v. 4)[66]
5. Change of clothing (vv. 5-6,8-9,21,29)
6. Application of anointing oil (v. 7)[67]
7. Time (seven days' process, vv. 35,37, see also Lev 8:33,35; with permanent effect, vv. 9,28,30)[68]

It can be observed that this is a highly specialised rite, abundant in detail and perhaps unique in its application, not unlike the scene in Exodus 19 which is similarly specialised, detailed, and unique. Nevertheless, other texts in Leviticus (and elsewhere in ancient West Asia)[69] begin to show a democratisation of certain elements of priestly purity being applied to non-priests and in more

65. According to Lev 8:34, some of this activity is for the purposes of atoning for Aaron and his sons, thus attending to the notion of moral purification. Also, Lev 8:1,14 specifies the offering of the bull as a sin offering.

66. Notably, the washing of Moses *and* Aaron is given special attention once the Tabernacle is erected; see Exod 40:30-32. Guichard and Marti note the characteristic element of Mesopotamian chapels containing a pool or waterhole, and that ritual bathing from a bucket was necessary before any participation in the cult. Guichard and Marti, 'Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia', 70, 77.

67. Guichard and Marti note the use of oil for purification in Mesopotamian rituals. Guichard and Marti, 'Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia', 70. Quack observes a variety of common purificatory substances, including water, often with natron dissolved in it, and use of incense in fumigation (Joachim Friedrich Quack, 'Conceptions of Purity in Egyptian Religion', in *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions in the Ancient Mediterranean World and Ancient Judaism*, ed. Christian Frevel and Christophe Nihan, Dynamics in the History of Religion 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 118, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004232297_004).

68. The reconsecration (purification) of priests is, however, an ongoing concern, as 2 Chr 29–30 make clear.

69. See comments about the *Bīt rimki* ritual applying to both kings and commoners. Guichard and Marti, 'Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia', 102.

regular occurrences.[70] This bent toward the democratisation of purity continues in the ethos of the Qumran community, as the Dead Sea Scrolls convey.[71]

This exploration of various ancient Israelite practices thus reveals for us the paradigmatic nature of the Sinai and priesthood consecration rituals. These particular events established a ritual for the achievement of consecration which became nationalised, as the concern for purity as intrinsic to consecration was indeed more widely applicable across the population.

5. Consecration: A Hermeneutical Perspective

At this point, we can now formulate our hermeneutical perspective in encountering consecration texts. As informed readers, we can bring some clarity to what is likely taking place in the gaps. In looking at the paradigmatic biblical texts of Exodus 19 and 29 (supported by material in Leviticus), along with the commonalities with ancient West Asian ritual and cultic material, there are several elements which are regularly connected with consecration of persons and thus reasonably stand at the background of related rituals.[72] We offer the following five-point menu of consecration elements:

1. Proclamation of the purpose or occasion of consecration and/or making the consecrated status known indicates this public rite.[73] The following activities, especially purificatory washing, must be demarcated from other mundane occasions. Furthermore, it is essential that one is consecrated to or for a

70. Jürgen K. Zangenberg, 'Pure Stone: Archaeological Evidence for Jewish Purity Practices in Late Second Temple Judaism (Miqwa'ot and Stone Vessels)', in *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions in the Ancient Mediterranean World and Ancient Judaism*, ed. Christian Frevel and Christophe Nihan, Dynamics in the History of Religion 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 552, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004232297_020. See also the Theodotos Inscription (*Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae* 1.9), which mentions the presence of baths in a synagogue, thus certainly not restricted to priestly purity. 2 Macc 12:38 connects purification with regular sabbath keeping for Judas and his army. Jdt 16:18 indicates the people were purified prior to offering sacrifices and votive gifts to God. Jubilees 49:9 specifies that if a man is purified and available and does not observe the Passover, he heaps sin upon himself.

71. Scroll 1QS is the most prominent in this regard. See especially columns III, V, VII, IX.

72. Guichard and Marti, 'Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia', 81, lays out a full ritual scheme of washing, anointing, and clothing.

73. Several authors observe that consecration should indicate something observable about the holy status. This could be indicated by particular (or particularly clean) clothes, but it may instead be the case that the status is clearly known or acknowledged by the community, rather than materially distinct. See Levine, 'The Language of Holiness', 329; Frevel, 'Purity Conceptions in Numbers', 377.

particular activity; one cannot merely exist in a state of consecration as its own end.

2. Washing, most often at least through the use of water, of the body and clothes, is necessary to enter the consecrated state.[74] This process is undertaken for both material and metaphorical purification purposes, and is frequently an initial element in a consecration ritual.
3. Sacrificing is frequently tied to consecration, either for one's atonement (addressing the moral purity concern), or it may be that forthcoming participation in sacrificial activities is the motivating factor prompting the need for consecration. There is care to ensure obedience in the performance of sacrifice, the right approach to the deity, and the maintenance of one's sanctified state through ritual obedience.
4. Time elements are often communicated, either concerning the performance of purification and consecration activities (including when the consecrated state officially commences) or concerning their length of validity, prompted by a forthcoming occasion (such as a theophany or miracle) or the permanence of a particular role (such as priesthood).
5. Agency is a multifaceted dynamic, with the deity ultimately sitting behind these rituals and necessarily validating any consecratory activity, and with a mediator potentially involved in any of the other elements of proclamation, washing, or sacrifice.

Following on from these core elements which effect the consecration, any number of other interdicts may be abided. These additional activities or abstentions serve to ensure maintenance of the moral and material purity which has been established by the consecratory activity and which brings about the state of being clean that is necessary for the continuance of the state of being consecrated.[75]

With this list in mind, we now concern ourselves with how it is utilised: *passively* or *prominently*. We should *passively* carry along these elements in our minds when approaching a consecration text, confident that these various concerns of proclamation, purification, and time are attended to even when not explicitly mandated. Yet, we must nevertheless be careful to consider whether any of these elements are particularly weighted by the narrative itself when not stated. While we may assume the enactment of these activities, it would be unfaithful to a literary reading of the text to make much of any particular element, to give it *prominence*, if there are no narrative clues to necessitate

74. Washing of clothes may instead be rendered by changing into other clean garments.

75. Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 465.

doing so. The narrative itself must be established as our immediate and most weighty context, even with the broader picture of Israelite and ancient West Asian consecration now also available to us. By way of case studies, we turn to the non-specific consecration mandates in Joshua 3 and 7, and evaluate whether there are narratival pointers toward any of these consecratory elements which would justify a *prominent*, rather than *passive*, gap-filling on our part as readers.

6. The Hermeneutic Applied: Joshua 3

A literary reading of the narrative of the Israelites miraculously crossing the Jordan in Joshua 3 may lead to noting several of its characteristics.

1. There is a substantial portion of the material given to dialogue (vv. 3-13).
2. Priests are among the most frequently referenced constituents (vv. 3,6,8,13,14,15,17).
3. There are several mentions of time (vv. 1,2,5,7)[76] which perhaps generate a somewhat confused timeline – as the indication of events occurring 'tomorrow' (v. 5) is hard to distinguish from them happening the very same day (v. 7).
4. Mandates and proclamations are made through various agents: the officers to the people (vv. 3-4), Joshua to the people (vv. 5,9-13), Joshua to the priests (v. 6), and YHWH to Joshua (vv. 7-8), which includes a mandate to be passed along by him to the priests.[77]

Reading this narrative against the background of the menu of consecration elements we have previously identified, there are three explicit and two implicit elements that we might consider. Explicitly, the elements which are contained in the consecration mandate of verse 5 address items on our menu: a proclamation of purpose ('for YHWH will do wonders among you') and a concern for time (that this event will occur tomorrow). Indeed, the dialogic element in this pericope is prominent, as the variety of communication partners listed above attests to. This is a very public event. Further, multiple layers of agency are engaged, as Joshua commands, the people are to consecrate themselves (v. 5), and YHWH exalts (v. 7). Indeed, Joshua even seems to exceed or extend YHWH's mandate to 'command the priests' (v. 8) in immediately summoning

76. These are supplemented by the grammatical temporal indicators which seem present in vv. 13,14,15,17. See NASB95 renderings of 'when' and 'until' for the various Hebrew prepositions present in these verses.

77. The fulfilment of which is not specified in the text, though may be assumed in the account of the priests' activities, especially as related in vv. 15,17. On the dynamic of communicating and fulfilling God's commands, see Robert Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges*, 1st Midland book ed., ISBL (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 104.

the nation (v. 9) to receive instructions, potentially democratising some of the agency and activities in this episode. The concern for time is likewise prevalent in the pericope, even if somewhat ambiguous, as mentioned above.[78]

With regards to implicit elements, we note that there is no specific mention of sacrifice, nor of washing. However, there is frequent reference to priests, characters who can hardly be regarded without some attention to their sacrificial responsibilities. Likewise, there is no mention of bathing, washing, or clothing, yet there is prominent water activity in this narrative as the waters of the Jordan heap up (vv. 13,15-16).

What surfaces is the possibility to read Joshua 3 as a broad, metaphorical consecration narrative, which itself contains a literal consecratory mandate (in v. 5). *Passively* carrying all of our consecration background into this text, and combining the explicit and implicit factors above, may lead us to turn instead to giving *prominent* consideration to all of our identified elements. Such a reading could result in seeing the people as being metaphorically washed in passing through the Jordan,[79] brought across as a priestly people who will be qualified to offer and participate in sacrifice (as will happen in 5:10),[80] after they have been set apart for the requisite amount of time (three days, v. 2), and as a result of YHWH's agency (vv. 7,10,13).

As attractive as such a reading may be, in returning to the interpretive metaphors inspired by Richards,[81] we note that this potential 'unicorn' sighting may lead to missing a significant 'elephant'. The narrative weight itself points to one consecratory element in particular: time. It is 'tomorrow' alone which is specified in the consecration mandate, and while lacking a fulfilment narrative concerning how the people consecrated themselves, YHWH himself takes up the concern of time in his own proclamation of v. 7 ('this day'). Given that

78. Why does it matter that Joshua arose early (v. 1) if the people were not going to do anything for three days (v. 2; cf. 1:11)? As mentioned, how does the time lapse from pronouncement (v. 5) to activity (v. 7)? So too, Robert Alter mentions that the syntax of the conclusion is not normal prose/syntax in the relation of narrative activity (i.e. not formed by a sustained *wayyiqtol* chain), further presenting a peculiar (climactic) progression of time. Robert Alter, *Ancient Israel: The Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013), 20 n. 14-16. Polzin notes and summarises some of the chronological concerns (especially in relation to Josh 4 and questions of redaction history). Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist*, 91–92, 94–95.

79. See, for instance, Origen's comments likening this scene to baptism (*Comm. Jo.* 6.26 and *Hom. Jos.* 4.2).

80. See 1 Esdras 7:10-13 in which those returned from exile celebrate the Passover, but only the priests and Levites are purified, and explicitly not the laity.

81. See footnote 7.

the people had already lodged by the river for three days (v. 2), waiting an additional day for consecration would seem to thwart the timeline presented in Joshua 1:11.

However, rather than upsetting the predicted timeline, the act of consecration in Joshua 3:5 instead is presented as intrinsic to the act of YHWH bringing his people into the land, rather than a delay of it. There is an emphasis on the activity and prerogative of YHWH in bringing about his purposes and fulfilling his word, rather than an emphasis on the agency of the people (or even Joshua) to bring it about. So, while it may be the case that the people washed their clothes while lodging near the river, and while they may have otherwise ensured their moral and material purity, as readers we would seem most directed to give prominence solely to the time element of consecration, and thus be led to reflection upon YHWH's agency in this consecratory exercise. Perhaps the consecration mandate in this text is not so nondescript as originally presumed, and thus the gap for us to fill as readers is less extensive than originally thought, occupied as it is in part, by the 'elephant' of time. Indeed, to diagnose hermeneutical near-sightedness in this regard, it may well be that a cultural bent towards task and achievement focus led to initially overlooking the event orientation[82] present in the text, prematurely concluding that, without a robust list of to-do items, the consecratory mandate presented here was therefore 'nondescript', as labelled above.

7. The Hermeneutic Applied: Joshua 7

We turn now to a briefer examination of the similar text in Joshua 7, where the consecration mandate appears in YHWH's dialogue with Joshua as the issue of *herem* (ban) violation in the camp must be rooted out. As in Joshua 3, there are a number of explicit and implicit elements from our consecratory menu. Explicit in the mandate is multiple agency concerns, as YHWH tells Joshua to consecrate the people and orders him to proclaim to the people that they are to consecrate themselves (v. 13). This occurs alongside YHWH's own agency in the matter being also abundantly clear ('the LORD takes' appears three times in v. 14). There is a proclamation of purpose as well, as the presence of *herem* items must be dealt with (v. 13), and there will be a process of identifying the culprit (v. 14). Finally, there is a mention of time, as the consecration is twice said to be related to events in the morning (vv. 14,16) of tomorrow (v. 13).

82. See the Basic Values model for articulating cultural distinctives as presented in Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: A Model for Effective Personal Relationships*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016).

The other two elements – sacrifice and clothing/washing – are again only implicit in the mandate. However, as with Joshua 3, there are elements in the surrounding narrative which may evoke the consideration of both. The pericope ends with a scene resembling a sacrifice, as Achan (who is identified through a priestly lot-taking ritual),[83] his family, and his possessions (which were first poured out for YHWH in his presence; v. 23)[84] are burned and/or stoned in order to placate YHWH's anger (vv. 1,25-26) over this violation of the covenant (vv. 11,15).[85]

The notion of clothing and purity is also abundant surrounding the consecration mandate. There is an overt acknowledgement that moral impurity (sin against YHWH) must be dealt with (vv. 1,11,15,20). While other cleansing or water imagery is largely absent (other than the notion of 'pouring' in v. 23, which is associated with the use of both oil and blood in purification rituals in Leviticus 8 and elsewhere),[86] clothing appears prominently in both halves of this chapter, as Joshua tears his garment upon hearing the report of the failed attempt at Ai (v. 6), and Achan confesses that it was a mantle which inspired his coveting and taking (vv. 21,24).

Similarly to Joshua 3, these implicit elements might lead us to construe the whole of Joshua 7 as a metaphorical consecratory narrative, again with a literal consecration mandate embedded within it at v. 13. Should we take the

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83. Pekka Pitkänen, *Joshua*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary 6 (Nottingham: Apollos, 2010), 178; Richard D. Nelson, *Joshua: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 105.

84. Some have posited that the אַדֶּרֶת (*adderet* – mantle) likely contained Babylonian cultic symbols, thus perhaps also importing some facet of priestly (albeit pagan) imagery. See for example Walter Dietrich, 'Achans Diebstahl (Jos 7). Eine Kriminalgeschichte aus frühpersischer Zeit', in *Sieben Augen auf einem Stein (Sach 3,9): Studien zur Literatur des Zweiten Tempels: Festschrift für Ina Willi-Plein zum 65 Geburtstag* (Neukirchen: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2007), 65; Ronald E. Clements, 'Achan's Sin: Warfare and Holiness', in *Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right?: Studies on the Nature of God in Tribute to James L. Crenshaw*, ed. David Penchansky and Paul L. Redditt (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 117, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781575065212-013.

85. It has also been observed that the use of the Hebrew term מַעַל (*maal* – violation) in 7:1 constructs a priestly theological framework, which could further support this attention to priesthood, sacrifice, and moral purity; Robert L. Hubbard Jr, *Joshua*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 221; Auld, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*, 51.

86. David M. Howard, *Joshua*, NAC 5 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 197–198. It is also routinely applied to casting/pouring molten metal for the purposes of constructing YHWH's sanctuary, etc. Sacrificial imagery is included in this same verb יצק (*y-ts-q* – pour) being utilised in 1 Kgs 18 when Elijah has his offering poured over with water.

surrounding imagery related to sacrifice and clothing as an occasion for us to give prominence to these likely elements of the consecration ritual? Should we endeavour to picture the entire nation having to change its clothes, even as Achan is divested of his inappropriate garment? As with Joshua 3, the best interpretive answer would seem to be 'no'. Once again, we find that the mandate is perhaps more specific than first presumed within an activity-orientated cultural myopia, and thus the interpretive gap not quite so extensive. It therefore seems most suitable to give narrative weight to the elements which are in fact specified. Here too, we find time to be the most heavily emphasised element in the consecration mandate itself.

Although there is some sense of urgency for resolution related in the narrative – conveyed through the curses of vv. 12-13, the repeated imperatives to 'rise up' (vv. 10,13),[87] and the early morning start (v. 16) – it is noted that the culprit is not immediately identified nor are the *herem* items immediately removed. Rather, there is a necessary delay as the activity of consecration occurs.[88] Although this activity seems narratively skipped over,[89] it nonetheless is mentioned, and the requisite time is instituted (much more clearly than in Joshua 3). Once again, despite the significance of the occasion and desperation of the situation, things will be done YHWH's way.[90] It will not ultimately, nor

87. Similarly, Dallaire sees an inceptive meaning here, and suggests 'get busy consecrating the people' (Hélène Dallaire, 'Joshua', in *Numbers–Ruth*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed., The Expositor's Bible Commentary 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 905).

88. Some have posited this delay is narratively supplied to give Achan the chance to confess and/or to highlight the guilt of his activity of hiding his sin and not confessing earlier. However, there is nothing in the narrative to imply this purpose, and Achan's forthcoming confession the following day (vv. 20-21) hardly seems to indicate that he was interested in holding back on the truth as long as possible. See Nicolai Winther-Nielsen, *A Functional Discourse Grammar of Joshua: A Computer-Assisted Rhetorical Structure Analysis*, ConBOT 40 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995), 221 and n. 26.

89. David G. Firth, *Joshua*, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2021), 152. Hawk offers that the narrative is focused on swiftly eliminating the non-Israelite presence in the camp, and indeed the pace of the pericope is rapid at this point. However, it remains that the reality painted within the narrative is rather one of some (necessary) delay. Indeed, Clements asserts that, had God acted promptly in dealing with the infraction, the thirty-six soldiers would not have died (Josh 7:5). The necessity of this delay, owing to the need for consecration, in contrast to the weight of sin and its punishment, underscores the importance of the consecrated status in preparing to encounter and experience YHWH. See L. Daniel Hawk, *Joshua*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 119; Clements, 'Achan's Sin', 115.

90. Mitchell affirms that the time delay reveals YHWH's control of the situation. Gordon Mitchell, *Together in the Land: A Reading of the Book of Joshua*, JSOTSup 134

solely, be on Joshua or Israel to remedy the situation via its own activities, but rather the engagement and restoration of relationship between YHWH and his people will be done, as always, on his own terms and according to his own timing.

8. Conclusion

This study has enabled us to develop a clear picture of the menu of elements which underpin the concerns and practice of consecration. Proclamation, washing, sacrifice, time, and agency concerns stand behind the practices of consecration for ancient Israelites and their West Asian neighbours. Thus, when a consecratory mandate is not specific, we can confidently presume that these elements would be attended to, even if that attendance may occur with a variegated set of practices.[91] As we passively carry this information into our reading, we gain an informed picture of what likely happened in response to such a mandate.

However, as we consider the hermeneutical application of this information to consecration texts, especially where specificity is initially deemed rather limited concerning the activities to undertake, we must exercise caution in giving prominence where the narrative itself does not seem to highlight a particular element. Knowing what *could* be selected is necessary if we are to rightly evaluate any possible narratival clues which would invite and expect us to give prominence to a consecratory element in a given context. We have a menu of consecration ingredients at the ready, but we must allow the narrative itself to select which elements to bring to the fore in our reading and interpretation. Similarly, we must also allow the narrative to define the size of the gap which we as readers are being called upon to fill with these elements. Undertaking this evaluation responsibly should facilitate our avoidance of the unicorn of hasty undue prominence, so that we do not overlook the textual elephants, those items which actually have been specified and where prominence is narratively expected and invited.

Our considerations of the two Joshua texts have given us opportunities both to enrich and to warn ourselves as we apply such a hermeneutic to determine the possibility of implied instructions. We must be mindful of cultural filters which may limit our acceptance of the textual data that is actually present

(Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 71. The supremacy of YHWH's prerogative over Joshua/Israel's is evident militarily (7:1-6 cf. 8:1), judicially (7:13), economically (cf. Josh 6 and 8, in regards to prohibition or permission of plunder), and diplomatically (Josh 9, especially v. 14, cf. 11:19-20).

91. Zangenberg, 'Pure Stone', 569.

and lead us too hastily to presuming a larger narrative gap, and concluding a necessity for our own ascriptions of prominence, than actually exists.

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