Een ban om te mijden. Bouwstenen voor een bijbels-theologische verkenning
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SUMMARY

This thesis concentrates primarily on the function of the concept of מְרָע in Josh 7. Secondly it asks after the significance of that specific chapter in relation to the conceptualization and function of the concept of מְרָע in the narrative of the Old Testament. In order to do so, the מְרָע-references in the Old Testament are examined in their canonical chronology. This thesis does not ask after the historical origin and growth of the concept (diachronic reading), nor does it try to reconstruct this process.

The first chapter of this thesis briefly reviews the diachronic discussion on Josh 7 and continues with a more elaborate synchronic review of the chapter. The final form of Josh 7 offers a conditional interpretation of the covenant with YHWH. The success of the conquest of the Promised Land is made dependent on the obedience of the people to the מְרָע. The double accusation in the exposition Josh 7, 1 is essential to the story-line. Both the Israelites and Achan are accused of a violation of מְרָע, which enrages YHWH. From that moment on, the story evolves around the unawareness of the Israelites. They are unaware of Achan’s violation, and exactly that unawareness forms the core of their own violation of מְרָע. And in violating the מְרָע, they themselves have become מְרָע.

In the narrative of Josh 7 the antithesis between YHWH and all his promises (the land!), and the status of מְרָע becomes clear. The defeat at Ai is a foretaste of how things are about to change for the people of Israel now that they have chosen מְרָע instead of YHWH. YHWH himself explains the situation to the people and shows them the only way out: sanctification to restore the holiness of the people of YHWH and to remove the מְרָע out of their midst. YHWH and מְרָע are incompatible. As soon as the people become aware of their condition, they are able to restore it. Achan is pointed out and confesses. After the public display of the evidence the whole of the people of Israel lead him out of the camp to execute him. Nothing of מְרָע remains. The people of Israel belong to YHWH once more.

The narrative of Josh 7 needs to be understood as an illustration of precisely the problem it demonstrates. It subtly plays with the extra knowledge the reader has (due to the exposition) in contrast to the initial unawareness of the people in the story. Instead of repeating yet another warning against the violation of מְרָע, it just shows, not just the consequences, but the alluring way מְרָע works too. The narrative of Josh 7 in itself forms an illustration of
this subtle, alluring מוד, as well as the consequences of the condition מוד. In that way Josh 7 forms an intense warning against any violation of מוד. The second chapter discusses the concept of the corporate personality as once introduced to the exegesis of Josh 7 by H. Wheeler Robinson. The concept of corporate personality offers a solution to the uneasiness caused by the idea that the people of Israel suffered from the crime of Achan. Although more contemporary versions (and critiques) of this concept by Porter and Kaminsky differ hugely from the original concept, still some variation or other of the concept of 'corporate personality/responsibility' is maintained by most commentaries. It is shown that the concept doesn't apply to Josh. 7. In discussing the many variations of the concept, a shift from the concept of the corporate personality towards the (alleged) contagious qualities of מוד in the interpretation of Josh 7 was recognized. This interpretation however, proved to be as problematic as the concept of the corporate personality. Both concepts offer a solution to a problem that does not exist. The narrative of Josh 7 consciously uses the double accusation to display the concept of מוד and its consequences. The uneasiness is part of the warning, not a problem that needs to be explained away.

The core message of Josh 7 obviously concerns מוד, so the next chapters concentrate on this concept. The third chapter gives an overview of the history of research on the concept of מוד in the Old Testament. The hypotheses of Brekelmans, Lohfink, Stern and Niditch are discussed, as are some minor contributors. Following that, all מוד-references in the Old Testament are discussed in the fourth chapter. This chapter describes the growth of the concept and image of מוד in the chronology of the canon of the Old Testament.

An analysis of this concept and its function is given in chapter five. According to context and interest, ten categories of מוד-references are recognized and defined. It is shown that the image of מוד slowly builds up to Deuteronomy and shatters again after the book of Joshua. The little shards of מוד-imagery still maintain some coherence however, which is due to the interpretation of מוד given by Josh. 7. Between Deuteronomy and the end of the book of Joshua מוד transforms from a measure of protection against idolatry into an ordinance of faithfulness and obedience to YHWH. A correct application of מוד becomes the condition for a successful conquest of the land. It is the story of Josh 7 in particular which introduces this transformation, and which so convincingly illustrates its harsh consequences. The remaining מוד-references in the book of Joshua are pre-obsessed with proving that the מוד was maintained