

# The Intertextual Violence of God: The Story of Achan and the Story of Ananias and Sapphira (Joshua 7 and Acts 5:1–11)

**ABSTRACT:** This article explores the intertextual intersection of the story of the destruction of Achan and his family in Joshua 7 with the narrative about Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. After establishing the clear intertextual link between these stories, the article explores the way in which each text portrays God, finding in them striking similarities, and thus suggesting that Acts' view of God is not dissimilar from that of the author or final editor of the narrative in Joshua. The methodology employed is close reading of the text in search of clear intertextual links and then theological reflection on the presentation of God and God's violence in each text. While the author recognizes that these two stories are only a small sampling of the entire biblical corpus, they reveal that the Joshua narrative and the Acts narrative share the same theological and conceptual world regarding their understanding of God.

**KEYWORDS:** Achan, Ananias and Sapphira, Theology: Views of God, Violence of God, Punishment, Herem, Intertextuality, Joshua, Luke-Acts

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## Introduction

The story of Ananias and Sapphira occupies a strange and unexpected place in Luke's narration in the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>1</sup> After commenting on the communal life of the Jerusalem church (Acts 4:32–35), Luke<sup>2</sup> presents Barnabas as a positive example of selling property and giving the proceeds to the church (4:36–37). Then comes the negative example of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1–11).<sup>3</sup> God's response to the deception of the couple seems excessive and unexpected in Luke's narrative, in which God's forgiveness is being offered freely to the people of Israel and the nations (see, e.g., Acts 13:38–39). Even Simon the Sorcerer gets off easier for trying to buy the Holy Spirit than Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> The narrative about Ananias and Sapphira has a certain—dare I say it—Old Testament-esque

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<sup>1</sup> To be asked to contribute to the inaugural edition of the *Journal of the Study of Bible and Violence* is a great honour. I would like to thank Ashley Hibbard and Helen Paynter for this opportunity. Also I would like to acknowledge the editorial work of my assistant, Shannon Gugyel.

<sup>2</sup> "Luke" is used to refer to the implied author with no intention of designating the historical author of the material known as Luke-Acts. The exact identification of the author is not pertinent to the case being put forward in this article.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the "Acts of the Apostles,"* tr. Ken McKinney, Gregory J. Laughery, and Richard Bauckham, SNTS Monograph Series 121 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 155, calls this the "most tragic episode in the book of Acts." Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 213, 218–19, observes that this is the first story in Luke-Acts of a "punitive or rule miracle" (or violation miracle), following G. Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> See Hyung Dae Park, *Finding Herem? A Study of Luke-Acts in the Light of Herem*, Library of New Testament Studies 357 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2007), 141, for a comparison between Simon and Ananias and Sapphira.

quality to it.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, this story echoes that of Achan in Josh 7.<sup>6</sup> This Achan presumably stole “booty” from Jericho which had been placed “under the ban” or declared *herem* (חרם, ἀναθέμα in the LXX), and thus declared to belong to the Lord exclusively. Both the similarities and the differences between these stories invite closer scrutiny, as does the level of underlying intertextual dependence that the Lukan narrative appears to have on the Achan narrative.

Appropriate to the inaugural edition of the *Journal of the Study of Bible and Violence*, these stories speak to the theologically most challenging expression of violence in the Bible, namely, God’s violence.<sup>7</sup> If Luke’s dependence on the Achan narrative for his telling of the Ananias and Sapphira story can be firmly

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<sup>5</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 102, states, “The story of Ananias is to the book of Acts what the story of Achan is to the book of Joshua.” Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia 65 (Minneapolis: Fortress 2009), 165, adds, “The story must be ranked among the most difficult for modern readers of Acts. It portrays Peter as a man of supernatural insight who is able to pronounce effective curses upon sinners, just like Paul in 13:8–11. The story appears to present the working of the Spirit in almost magical fashion. Neither Ananias nor Sapphira is apparently offered any chance of repentance, and the way in which the former was buried without his wife’s knowledge sounds heartless, to say nothing of being improbable.” [Richard I. Pervo remains a notable commentator on Acts, though his reputation was marred by his conviction in 2001 for the possession and distribution of child pornography.]

<sup>6</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Acts*, New Cambridge Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 205, makes passing reference to the connection between the narratives. In his magisterial *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 2.1184–5, Keener gives a fuller description of the Lukan dependence on the Joshua narrative. The fullest recent exploration of the intertextual relationship appears to be Hyung Dae Park, “The Case of Ananias and Sapphira from point of view of *Herem* (Acts 5:1–11): Correlation between Joshua 7:1–26 and the text of Acts 5:1–11” (“헤렘의 관점에서 본 아나니아와 삽비라 사건 (행 5:1-11): 여호수아 7:1-26 과 사도행전 5:1-11 의 본문 간 상관”), *Canon & Culture* 1 no. 2 (2007): 197–238. For the fuller context of Park’s research, see idem., *Finding Herem? A Study of Luke-Acts in the Light of Herem*, Library of New Testament Studies 357 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2007). I. Howard Marshall, “Acts,” in G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), s.v., Acts 5:1–11, claims that the story of Ananias and Sapphira shares a “structural parallel” with the story of Achan but offers no analysis. Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 214, points to the death of the priests Nadab and Abihu as another OT story that might have informed Luke’s telling of the fate of Ananias and Sapphira. However, that exploration is beyond the scope of the current paper. For another recent reading of the Achan narrative, see Rachel M. Billings, *Israel Serve the Lord: The Book of Joshua as Paradoxical Portrait of Faithful Israel* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 44–52; and Joshua Berman, “The Making of the Sin of Achan (Joshua 7),” *Biblical Interpretation* 22 (2014): 115–31.

<sup>7</sup> Thus, Brandon D. Crowe in his recent study of Jesus’s resurrection in Acts see this as an inverted resurrection story where lying to the Spirit of God results in removal of breath (ἐκψύχω) or death in contrast to the Spirit of God who brings new life. See Brandon D. Crowe, *The Hope of Israel: The Resurrection of Christ in the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020), 100.

established, the literary borrowing raises the possibility that the view of God, or theology of God, in each text is potentially the same.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, Luke perhaps shares a theology, or understanding of God, similar to that of the author of Joshua. If true, this challenges the notion that one can find only the God of love when reading the NT and only the God of wrath when reading the OT; both these are caricatures of any full biblical theology of God.

This article, consequently, engages these two stories as a vehicle for understanding a theology in which God extends grace to people yet is open to destroying those people under certain circumstances. To that end, I first want to establish the intertextual linkages between the Ananias and Sapphira narrative in Acts and the Achan narrative in the book of Joshua.<sup>9</sup> Once this linkage is confirmed, I will turn to the nature of God as presumed in each story and explore whether the same or a different understanding of God emerges in Luke's understanding of God's violence. While other stories with possible intertextual links will be touched on, this paper focuses narrowly on the two primary texts, the story of Achan and the story of Ananias and Sapphira. This researcher recognizes these two stories provide insufficient data for constituting a biblical theology of God. Consequently, this paper seeks to make only a small, but important, contribution to the conversation about the study of God and violence in the Bible.

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<sup>8</sup> The presentation of God in Luke-Acts would not have been amenable to Marcion, who so wanted the God of Jesus to be different from the God presented in the Hebrew Bible. See Joseph B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), esp., 31–36. See Epiphanius, *Pan.* 42 (see Frank Williams [tr.], *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies [Leiden: Brill, 2009], 1.294–364).

<sup>9</sup> Important to any discussion of biblical intertextuality is Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). In this work, Hays offers some criteria for judging echoes of earlier works. He formulates seven tests for evaluating for the presence of “echoes.” Briefly, (1) was the proposed source available to the author/original readers? (2) How loud is the volume of the original text? (3) How often does the source text recur in the receptor text? (4) Does the echo cohere thematically with the theme of the receptor text? (5) Is it historically plausible that the author meant to use the echo and would his or her audience hear it? (6) In the history of interpretation, have other readers caught this echo? And (7) Does the echo produce for the reader a satisfying account of the effect of the intertextual relation?

## Intertextual Links between Achan and Ananias/Sapphira

Hyung Dae Park is perhaps the most recent scholar to deal extensively with the relationship of the Achan narrative to the narrative about Ananias and Sapphira. Consequently, his study serves as a starting point and a foil against which to argue my case in the present study.<sup>10</sup> Park's research sought to find the concept of *herem*, or the ban, either explicitly or implicitly, in Luke-Acts.<sup>11</sup> Park accepted M. Greenberg's definition of **הרם** as "the status of that which is separated from common use or contact either because it is proscribed as an abomination to God or because it is consecrated to him." Previously Keil and Delitzsch (K&D) had defined the term as "that which is taken away from use and abuse on the part of men, and surrendered to God in an irrevocable and unredeemable manner, viz. human beings by being put to death, cattle and inanimate objects by being either given up to the sanctuary for ever or destroyed for the glory of the Lord."<sup>12</sup> More recently, John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton, concurring with Greenberg and K&D, stressed that the word does not mean "destined to be destroyed," as in some English Bible translations, but rather "to be removed from human use," which sometimes involved destruction to guarantee that outcome.<sup>13</sup>

Accordingly, the story of Ananias and Sapphira provides Park with his strongest example precisely because the narrative is so reminiscent of the

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<sup>10</sup> See *Finding Herem*, esp., 20, 132–43. F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 132, suggested that a "study of the conscious or unconscious parallels between Josh. and Ac. would be rewarding."

<sup>11</sup> Lev 27:28–29 may have some bearing on how one should understand these stories: "Nothing that a person owns that has been devoted to destruction for the LORD, be it human or animal, or inherited landholding, may be sold or redeemed; every devoted thing is most holy to the LORD. No human beings who have been devoted to destruction can be ransomed; they shall be put to death." See also Deut 20:10–18.

<sup>12</sup> M. Greenberg, "HEREM" in *EncJud* 8.344–55; K&D 1.485; See *Finding Herem*, 2.

<sup>13</sup> John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton, *The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest: Covenant, Retribution, and the Fate of the Canaanites* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2017), 169–78.

Achan narrative.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, Park's exploration of the intertextual relationship between these narratives informs my close reading of both texts.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, my case relies more on intertextual dependency—and the role of God and God's agents—than on the identification of **הרם** in Luke-Acts, which does appear to underlie the Ananias and Sapphira narrative.<sup>16</sup>

### Intertextual Differences

Park quickly dismissed Trocmé's claim that **הרם** involves prohibition and excludes a voluntary gift, because Park is certain that the Acts narrative is an example of a **הרם** story.<sup>17</sup> But even if it is not, we are safe to classify the property/funds as an intertextual link between the narratives since, in both stories, the property is considered dedicated to God. Yet, the stories are not altogether parallel and have some notable differences. Beverly Gaventa, for instance, notes the following differences between the stories: 1) Achan's *secret* action brings defeat to Israel; 2) Achan confesses when confronted; 3) all of Israel is indicted for Achan's sin (Josh 7:1, 11–13) and also participated in the destruction of Achan's family and property.<sup>18</sup> Conversely, in the Acts narrative, 4) Ananias and Sapphira's pledge appears to be a public matter; 5) any danger that their deception posed for the community is not clear; 6) the couple died, and community involvement consisted only of the young men who carry away the corpses; 7) and, finally, God brings death to the couple through Peter's prophetic word.<sup>19</sup>

Park attempts unsuccessfully to reduce the differences between the

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<sup>14</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 111, is uncomfortable with the idea of Luke's wholesale use of the Achan narrative and prefers to think of Luke's "consciousness of the typological resemblance" between the stories. See on this point, J. Albert Harrill, "Divine Judgement against Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11): A Stock Scene of Perjury and Death," *JBL* 130, no. 2 (2011): 352–53.

<sup>15</sup> Marshall, "Acts," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 554, sees structural parallelism between the stories.

<sup>16</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 214.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 132. Park is interacting here with E. Trocmé, *Le "Livre des Acts" et l'Histoire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957); Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 91–92.

<sup>18</sup> Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Acts*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 103. See also, on this point, Berman, "The Making of the Sin of Achan (Joshua 7)," 115–31.

<sup>19</sup> See Johnson, *Acts*, 92.

narratives to two matters. First, Joshua had failed to recognize Achan's, and thus Israel's, sin while Peter was aware of the couple's deception. Second, the scope of the punishment is more severe in the case of Achan because Achan, his family, and his property are destroyed, not to mention the thirty-six Israelites who died previously.<sup>20</sup> The intertextual density between these stories, however, is thicker than Park's reductionistic parallels. Yet another difference is that Achan's wife is not even mentioned,<sup>21</sup> though his sons and daughters are (Josh 7:24), while, in Acts, Sapphira speaks with her own voice and has the opportunity to stand apart from her husband.<sup>22</sup> Despite these differences, Luke Timothy Johnson correctly asserts, "The detailed allusions and structural similarities do suggest... that Luke used the story of Achan as a rough model for his own."<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, Park correctly asserts that the differences between Joshua 7 and Acts 5.1–10 are not enough to rule out intertextual dependency, because the similarities between the texts "are greater than scholars have been

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<sup>20</sup> Park, *Finding Herem*, 132–35, esp., 134. Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 237–39, comments, "This story seems an exact parallel of Achan's..." F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, *The Beginning of Christianity: The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 4.50–54, say, "It is possible that the choice of ἐνοσφίσατο was influenced by a recollection of the incident of Achan, for in each story there was the idea of property 'consecrated.' Achan took the spoils of Jericho dedicated to Jehovah, Ananias retained private property dedicated to the Christian community. The word would therefore seem to imply that Ananias stole money which did not belong to him, or, in other words, that he had no right to keep any part of his property. No other explanation is possible in view of the evidence as to its use." David J. Williams, *Acts*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 96, adds, "The rarity of the word ... suggests that Luke deliberately drew on the language of the Old Testament passage to point his readers to the comparison." Robert Alter, *Ancient Israel, The Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2013), 35n1, comments, "This conjunction of subjects intimate why, in the hard retribution of this episode, Achan must be extirpated; his violation of the ban imparts guilt, as though by contagion, to the whole people..."

<sup>21</sup> Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, WBC 7 (Waco: Word, 1983), 86.

<sup>22</sup> Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 2.1186, discusses the first-century background for husbands and wives' co-owning property. Willie Jennings, *Acts: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 53–54, over-extrapolates from the text: "It is precisely as a couple that they planned their deception. It was precisely as a couple that they engaged in their economic calculations, and it was precisely as a couple that Satan filled their hearts and they lied to the Holy Spirit (v. 3). The couple agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test (v. 9). This is not the first couple to test God. Indeed from the first couple made one flesh by God, God has had to contend against its plans that would resist the divine will." The demise of the sovereignty of the "couple" does not appear to be Luke's concern at any point in the text of Luke-Acts.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 91–92.

used to thinking.<sup>24</sup> To the similarities, or intertextual links, we now turn.

### Intertextual Connections

The differences between the narratives do not nullify the claim that Luke used the Achan narrative as a grid or paradigm for his intertextual retelling of the Ananias and Sapphira account. It is often noted by commentators that the two accounts share the key word *νοσφιζω* (Acts 5:2, 3 and Josh 7:1 LXX), which denotes scheming to skim proceeds to benefit oneself, or, simply, misappropriation.<sup>25</sup> This word reappears elsewhere in the LXX only at 2 Macc 4:32, in another story of misappropriation.<sup>26</sup> In the New Testament, the word occurs only once more, in Titus 2:10, where slaves are commanded not to *steal* from their masters. The word, therefore, is rare in biblical usage, but it is well-documented in classical Greek literature.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Luke's use of the term, if the intertextual connection can be verified, would indicate that he believes Ananias and Sapphira are guilty of the same offence Achan had committed. A closer analysis, moreover, reveals that Luke's dependence on the Joshua narrative is far deeper than merely this single word. In what follows, I point out all the commonalities I found in my close reading of each narrative, using Park's study as the tour guide to work my way through them.

As noted, the two stories involve the inappropriate possession of property (*κτῆμα* in Acts) given to God; thus, as Park notes, both stories, in that sense,

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<sup>24</sup> Park, *Finding Herem*, 135. In this paper, other possible intertextual sources for the Ananias and Sapphira narratives, such as Lev 10:1–6, 1 Kgs 14:1–18; 1 QS 6, 13–25; and Sus 45, 52–59, will not be explored. On these, see idem., *Finding Herem*, 138–41. Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 214, sees a strong connection with Lev 10:1–6 in the death of Nadab and Abihu.

<sup>25</sup> I. Howard Marshall, “Acts,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 554, wrongly, as this paper will demonstrate, suggests that the shared word is the only explicit connection between the narratives. Park, *Finding Herem*, 132.

<sup>26</sup> In this account, Menelaus *stole* some of the golden temple vessels and gave them to another while selling other vessels to Tyre and other nearby cities.

<sup>27</sup> BDAG, s.v., *νοσφιζω*; LSJ, s.v. *νοσφιζομαι*; Franco Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), s.v., *νοσφιζω*. Barclay M. Newman, and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*, UBS Translator's Handbooks (New York: United Bible Societies, 1972), s. v. Acts 5:2, where they note, “In Hellenistic Greek this verb is commonly used of money taken secretly from a quantity belonging to a group of people.” Alexander Campbell, *Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Thomas Holman, 1858), 30, observed, “This is a complex sin. It was not simply keeping back, but *feloniously* keeping back with *intent to conceal*, associated with deliberate lying.”

share the concept of  $\alpha\nu\alpha\theta\acute{\epsilon}\mu\alpha$ .<sup>28</sup> Ananias and Sapphira's pledge to give all their proceeds from the sale of their property is not explicit but seems warranted from Peter's comment about Ananias's freedom to use the proceeds as he wanted while the funds still belonged to him, and Peter's question to Sapphira about the amount for which the property sold (Acts 5:3–8).<sup>29</sup> In both stories, then, we have the "inappropriate treatment of what belongs to the Lord," indicated by the gifts being laid at the apostles' feet.<sup>30</sup>

Astonishment at the outrageousness of the sin is acknowledged in each story. When Joshua confronts Achan, he asks, "Tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me" ( $\tau\acute{\iota}\ \acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{o}\iota\eta\sigma\alpha\varsigma,\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \mu\grave{\eta}\ \kappa\rho\upsilon\psi\eta\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\pi\ \acute{\epsilon}\mu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ; Josh 7:19). This corresponds to Peter's question, "What made you think of doing such a thing?" ( $\tau\acute{\iota}\ \acute{\omicron}\tau\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\theta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\grave{\eta}\ \kappa\alpha\rho\delta\iota\alpha\ \sigma\omicron\upsilon\ \tau\acute{o}\ \pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\lambda\mu\alpha\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$ ; Acts 5:4) also resembles Achan's "having done an outrageous thing in Israel" ( $\text{עָשָׂה נְבִלָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל}$ ). Joshua chastises Achan: "Why did you bring trouble on us? The Lord is bringing trouble on you today" ( $\text{דָּעַכְרָתְנוּ יַעֲרָרָךְ}$ ; Josh 7:25). Luke, when he composed his narrative, perhaps pondered God's words to Joshua, "Therefore the Israelites are unable to stand before their enemies; they turn their backs to their enemies, because they have become a thing devoted for destruction [ $\text{כִּי הָיוּ לְחָרָם}$ ] themselves. I will be with you no more unless you destroy the devoted things from among you" (Josh 7:12). In this case, it is as if contamination resulting from Achan's actions permeated the whole nation. This reading of the text, then, suggests the story is a matter of defilement and holiness,<sup>31</sup> rather than offense and punishment. This understanding, too, makes more sense of the narrative about Ananias and Sapphira.

Each story involves deception and lying. Achan allowed the process of finding the culprit to play out until he was identified (Josh 7:14–18); he could

<sup>28</sup> Contra David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 209.

<sup>29</sup> Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 48–49, comment, "This is a high-context story that presupposes that Ananias and Sapphira had promised or vowed to God to give the proceeds of the sale of their land to the Jerusalem Jesus group."

<sup>30</sup> Park, *Finding Herem*, 137.

<sup>31</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Acts*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 207; Boling, *Joshua*, 228, notes that this story is about "a serious problem of physical contamination and disease which becomes possible through the offense of Achan."

have confessed before he was chosen.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, and using a different word, Achan affirms that he had taken “spoils” (אֶשְׁלָל/πρρονομή, not חרם/ἀναθέμα, Josh 7:21).<sup>33</sup> Spoils belong to the people; חרם belongs to the Lord.

When the Lord informed Joshua of the infraction, he stated, “Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I imposed on them [גם עָבְרוּ] אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אוֹתָם [גם] [גם כְּחָשִׁי]; they have stolen [גם גָּנְבוּ], they acted deceitfully [גם כְּחָשִׁי], and they put them among their own belongings [Josh 7:11; וְגַם שָׂמוּ בְכֻלֵּיהֶם].” The LXX simplifies these parallel phrases to και κλέψαντες ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀναθέματος ἐνέβαλον εἰς τὰ σακεύη αὐτῶν, thus presenting theft as the primary sin. Interestingly, the quadrilateral of breaking covenant, taking, stealing and acting deceitfully fits well as a summary of what Ananias and Sapphira did as well.<sup>35</sup> However, in what sense did Ananias and Sapphira break covenant with God and/or with God’s people?

The answer to this question arises from Luke’s larger narrative strategy around the restoration of Israel.<sup>36</sup> At the last supper, Jesus announced, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20). The word “new” echoes Jeremiah 31:31 (38:31 in the LXX), which promised a day when God would make a new covenant with Israel and Judah. Consequently, Luke sees the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost as pivotal to the inauguration of this “new” covenant in the formation of a

<sup>32</sup> Park, *Finding Herem*, 133; M.H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 128. Interestingly, Luke also has narratives involving the casting of lots, Zachariah (Luke 1:9), the dividing of Jesus’s garments (Luke 23:34), and the choosing of Judas’s replacement (Acts 1:26).

<sup>33</sup> See discussion on this point in Park, *Finding Herem*, 133; L. Daniel Hawk, *Joshua, Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 120–21; see also, Robert G. Boling, *Joshua*, Anchor Bible Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 227n21, on Achan’s word choice.

<sup>34</sup> The Hebrew word translated “transgressed” is a delightful wordplay. The word occurred often in the earlier chapters of Joshua in speaking of how the people “crossed over” the Jordan River. See Josh. 4:1, 3, 5, 7–8, 10–13, 22–23; 5:1; 6:7–8.

<sup>35</sup> For a comparison between the MT and the LXX, see J. Alberto Soggin, *Joshua*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 92–96; and Robert G. Boling, *Joshua*, Anchor Bible Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 218–20.

<sup>36</sup> Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts*, 54–55, sees this story in the context of a larger narrative pattern: harmony (Acts 4:32–37), threat (5:1–2), resolution (5:3–10), and restoration (5:11); Tyson finds this pattern several times in Acts.

“renewed” people.

One activity that characterized this renewed people is their care for one another. Luke summarized the new life of this community, “All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need” (Acts 2:44–45).<sup>37</sup> Again, Luke reports, “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.” Then he adds, “And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need” (Acts 4:33–35).<sup>38</sup> For Luke, this is how life together should look, and did look, especially, in the nascent Christian community. If not a covenant requirement, the expectation to share one’s excess with others in need had strong precedent in Luke’s understanding of reconstituted Israel.<sup>39</sup> For Luke, the church continues the story of faithful Israel, and is the people thus in covenant with and accountable to the God of Israel.<sup>40</sup>

Luke offers two examples immediately following his idyllic vision of the early Christian community, as we have noted. Barnabas is held before the

<sup>37</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Acts*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 170, 173–77, 206. Keener notes that the earliest church in Acts did not eliminate private property, but instead “members sold property to help other member *as any had need*”; moreover, their “resources do not become community property, but are designated for the poor...” (175).

<sup>38</sup> Not to be missed in the story of Ananias and Sapphira is that gifts were laid at the apostles’ feet (Acts 5:2) and Sapphira fell at Peter’s feet when she died (Acts 5:10). See, on this point, Park, *Finding Herem*, 136.

<sup>39</sup> M. H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 119 n. 1, notes, “The Lord, who ‘gives’ the promised land to his people, and who has just furnished a striking instance of this in the capture of Jericho, demands of his people loyalty to the covenant he has made with them. When the covenant is violated (see [Josh 7] v. 11), Israel receives a setback before Ai, God’s wrath blazes, and his pardon must be gained. Only then will Israel again be assured of victory (8:1).” Is this what Luke is thinking?

<sup>40</sup> See this theme explored in Donald Juel, *Luke-Acts: The Promise of History* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983); Jacob Jervell, *The Unknown Paul: Essay on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984); Jack T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Joseph B. Tyson (ed.), *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988); and David P. Moessner, *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel: Luke’s Narrative Claim Upon Israel’s Legacy*, Luke the Interpreter of Israel 1 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999).

readers as a positive example of covenantal communal living (Acts 4:36–37), and immediately following this brief narrative notice, Luke offers his negative example, which, of course, is Ananias and Sapphira.<sup>41</sup> Given how Luke has worked the notion of communal living into his narrative, Ananias and Sapphira’s infraction would for him be equivalent to breaking the covenant God has made with Israel and, thus, could bring the whole community under judgment if not addressed.

Other similarities include two occasions of death for each infraction. In the book of Joshua, thirty-six die for Achan’s sin in the defeat at Ai, then Achan and his family die after he is discovered. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, likewise, the husband dies first, then sometime later, his wife. Both stories, in this way, involve an excommunication or cutting off from both God and, concomitantly, God’s people.<sup>42</sup> In the Achan story, Kaminsky sees temporary excommunication of all of Israel until the contamination of Achan is fully removed from the camp.<sup>43</sup> Park’s view that in Luke’s retelling Ananias represents Israel while Sapphira parallels Achan is unjustified. Nonetheless, Park is correct in seeing that, in both cases, “punishments are initiated by God.”<sup>44</sup> I would add that in both stories, breaking faith with God is the grounds for both excommunication and executions.

Fear was the response of the people to the destruction of Achan and his family, as well as the spontaneous deaths of Ananias and Sapphira. This fear is implied in Josh 8:1 when the Lord tells Joshua not to fear after the defeat at Ai and subsequent destruction of Achan. After the account of the defeat in Ai, Josh 7:5 reads, “The hearts of the people melted and turned to water” (καὶ

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<sup>41</sup> Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke–Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 278–79.

<sup>42</sup> For Park, Acts 5:7–11 parallels Josh 7:16–26, see *Finding Herem*, 132–33; Johnson, *Acts*, 92. J. A. Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament*, trans. M. E. Bengel & J. C. F. Steudel, ed. A. R. Fausset (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, orig. 1860), 2.556, commented, “The former, however, in the Old Testament, according to the direction of God, was killed by the hand of men; the latter, in the New Testament, by the Divine hand, at the word of the apostle.”

<sup>43</sup> J.S. Kaminsky, “Joshua 7: A Reassessment of Israelite Conceptions of Corporate Punishment,” in *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström*, ed. S. W. Hollway and L. K. Handy, JSOTSup 190 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 339, 343, as cited by Park, *Finding Herem*, 134.

<sup>44</sup> Park, *Finding Herem*, 135; Josephus makes the parallel stronger by recounting in *Antiq.* 5.1.14 that Achan was “buried in the night in a disgraceful manner” (ἐν νυκτὶ ταφῆς ἀτίμου καὶ καταδίκῃ προεπούσης τυγχάνει).

ἐπτοήθη ἡ καρδία τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ ἐγένετο ὡσπερ ὕδωρ). When Ananias died, Acts 5:5 says, “And great fear seized all who heard what happened” (καὶ ἐγένετο φόβος μέγας ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας), which is echoed in 5:11: “Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events” (καὶ ἐγένετο φόβος μέγας ἐφ’ ὅλην τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας ταῦτα). While the language is not paralleled, the thoughts certainly are.<sup>45</sup> In both stories, resolution occurs, and the community of God moves forward (Josh 8; Acts 5:12).<sup>46</sup>

Both stories comment on the fame of the protagonists, Joshua and Peter. Just before the Achan narrative, after the victory at Jericho, the text says, “So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was in all the land” (Josh 6:27). In Acts, after the story of Ananias and Sapphira, the text states that the apostles “were highly regarded by the people” (Acts 5:13). In the Achan story, even the damage done to God’s reputation or name is a concern (Josh 7:9).<sup>47</sup> Acts often speaks of the “name” of Jesus as the means and basis of God’s mission.<sup>48</sup>

## Spreading the Intertextual Web

We would be amiss if we did not glance at the other stories which have been proposed as potential intertextual grist for the story of Ananias and Sapphira. One such story is that of the destruction of the sons of Aaron in Lev 10.

### Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1–5)

Park eliminates the gruesome deaths of the priests Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, as a potential intertextual backdrop for the story of Ananias and Sapphira because he is looking for stories involving אֱהָה, and the story of Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1–5) does not seem to include the concept.<sup>49</sup> However, this

<sup>45</sup> In the better MSS, this is the first time the word “church” is used for God’s people in Acts. In Acts 2:47, the word “church” (ἐκκλησία) occurs as τὴ ἐκκλησία in 08 014<sup>sup</sup>1 025 044 049 056 1 33 69 88 226 323 330 440 547 614 618 927 1241 1245 1270 1505 1611 1646 1828 1837 1854 2147 2344 2412 2492; τὴ ἐκκλησία ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ in 35 945 1739 1891; ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ in 104 1243; and ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ in 2495; but it is not present in the following important MSS: P<sup>74</sup>vid 01 02 03 04 81 1175.

<sup>46</sup> Park, *Finding Herem*, 133–34.

<sup>47</sup> Butler, *Joshua*, 84–85; Woudstra, *Joshua*, 125.

<sup>48</sup> Acts 2:38; 3:6, 16; 4:10, 18, 30; 5:40; 8:12, 16; 9:27; 10:48; 15:26; 16:18; 19:5, 13, 17; 21:13; 25:19; 26:9.

<sup>49</sup> On this text, see John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC 4 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 126–39.

reason alone would not disqualify it from the intertextual background for either the story of Achan or for Ananias and Sapphira. Several scholars have made the connection.<sup>50</sup> For example, Derrett noticed that the quick burials without ceremony is a possible intertextual link between Lev 10 and Acts 5.<sup>51</sup> Weiser also links the stories because they both include unusual deaths.<sup>52</sup>

A commonality among all our stories includes people behaving wrongly and being fatally punished for their infractions. In the case of the priests, they are agents of God; in the case of the other two stories, agents of God are present at the deaths. Thus, Aaron's sons "died before the Lord" (Lev 10:2; Josh 7:23), while Achan, and then Ananias and Sapphira, died before the Lord's agents (Joshua and Peter). In the case of the priests, two second cousins (young men?) are called upon to remove the bodies (Lev 10:4–5), while in the Ananias and Sapphira story some young men are called upon to perform the burials of the couple (Acts 5:6, 9). Therefore, while the intertextual ties are not as strong as the connections between Josh 7 and Acts 5:1–10, a general commonality is that God's holiness has been contaminated or violated.

Of significance for the current study is that God's behaviour in all these stories is strikingly similar. God, when holiness is at stake, can kill or destroy those who have performed the defilement. Hence, though the narrative around Nadab and Abihu is not so directly connected to Achan or to Ananias and Sapphira, the narrative does provide background for understanding the other stories. Particularly important is that God, in each of these stories, has high expectations and will render severe punishment when those expectations are violated. If nothing else, in the story of the punishment of the priests, we find God's direct punishment of the miscreants.

### **Jeroboam's Son (1 Kings 14:1–18)**

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<sup>50</sup> See also C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994, 1998), 262.

<sup>51</sup> J. D. M. Derrett, *Ananias, Sapphira, and the Right of Property*, Studies in the New Testament 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 201, cited in Park, *Finding Herem*, 138. See also Witherington, *Acts*, 214, 217.

<sup>52</sup> A. Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte: kapitel 1–12*, Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-kanmentar 5/1 (Gütersloh: Echter, 1981), 140, also cited in Park, *Finding Herem*, 138. See also Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 319.

Another story in which intertextual possibilities for the Ananias and Sapphira story have been suggested is 1 Kings 14:1–18.<sup>53</sup> This text tells of King Jeroboam's son, Abijah, who becomes ill. Jeroboam sends his disguised wife to consult the prophet Ahijah. When she arrives at the prophet's abode, Ahijah prophetically condemns Jeroboam (14:7–9). The prophet next pronounces disaster on and the cutting off of Jeroboam's progeny (14:10–11). While this story shares elements with the Achan narrative, as well as with that of Ananias and Sapphira, the commonplace nature of the language provides no strong connection with our stories, except at the end of the narrative. The prophet tells the woman to return home, but that when she sets foot in the city, her son will die (14:12, 17), a statement that is echoed in the death of Sapphira. And as prophesied, the nation of Israel mourned his passing and buried him (14:13, 18). Interestingly, it appears that the LXX did not transmit this story, which raises the possibility that it was not readily available for Luke to use, since he favours the LXX. Nevertheless, the behaviour of God here is consistent with our other stories.

### **Susanna (Daniel 13:52–62 LXX)**

Another interesting possibility for intertextual connection is the story of Susanna 52–62 (from chapter 13 of the Greek version of Daniel).<sup>54</sup> In this narrative, Susanna is falsely accused of sexual immorality by two lustful Jewish elders. When her case is tried, Daniel is present and cries out, “I want no part in shedding this woman's blood!” (46). Daniel has the accusers separated and in turn castigates each of them before asking them under which tree Susanna's supposed indiscretion happened. They answer differently, thus revealing that they were lying. Daniel renders judgement in the case of the first elder: “Very well! This lie has cost you your head, for the angel of God has received the sentence from God and will immediately cut (σχίσει, a wordplay on the name of the tree σχῖνον) you in two” (55). The indictment of the second is similar, ending with “for the angel of God is waiting with his sword to split (καταπίσσει, a wordplay on the name of the tree πῦρον) you in two, so as to destroy you both.” The people put the elders to death in accordance with the law of Moses;

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<sup>53</sup> Park, *Finding Herem*, 138.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

thus, the judgement of God's angel was carried out by the people. The Old Greek version of the story offers an alternative ending which makes this narrative more like the others: "And [the people] silenced [the elders] and took them away and threw them into a ravine. Then the angel of the Lord threw fire in their midst. And guiltless blood was saved that day" (v. 61).<sup>55</sup>

While there is some commonality between this story and those of Achan and Ananias and Sapphira, intertextual interdependence is hard to substantiate in any direction. But God's work in judging God's people remains consistent across all these narratives.

## Intertextual Summary of Achan and Ananias/Sapphira

Certainly, other intertextual connections with Luke's story are possible. The stories of the death of Nadab and Abihu, the death of Abijah, or the elders who accused Susanna have some similarities with the sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira.<sup>56</sup> However, the quality of the connections between the Achan narrative and that of Ananias and Sapphira firmly support the view that Luke had in mind the Achan narrative as he composed his account of Ananias and Sapphira. Furthermore, Luke, it would seem, expected his readers to pick up on intertextual clues. This being the case, one could reasonably make a connection between the God of Achan and the God of Ananias and Sapphira. Moreover, Luke's conception of God appears to be consistent with, and a continuation of, the understanding of God revealed in the OT (particularly in the LXX that Luke is using). If Luke essentially shares the Hebrew Bible's vision of God, what can we say about God's violence as enacted in the Achan story and the Ananias and Sapphira story?

At the end of the book of Joshua, Achan is recalled in harsh terms: "Did

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<sup>55</sup> See for the English translation, Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (eds.), *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 990. The Greek reads: *καὶ ἐφίμωσαν αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐξαγαγόντες ἐρριψαν εἰς φάραγγα· τότε ὁ ἄγγελος κυρίου ἐρριψε πῦρ διὰ μέσου αὐτῶν. καὶ ἐσώθη αἷμα ἀνάιτιον ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ.*

<sup>56</sup> Park, *Finding Herem*, 138, who also explores possible intertextual relationships with 1QS 6, 13–35 and Susanna 45:52–59.

not Achan son of Zerah break faith in the matter of the devoted things, and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel? And he did not perish alone for his iniquity!” (Josh 22:20). The Chronicler, likewise, remembered Achan by the place named Achar (which means “trouble” in Hebrew) because he “brought trouble [עָכַר] on Israel by violating the ban on taking devoted things (מְעַל)”) (1 Chron 2:7).<sup>57</sup> The tale of Achan is one of several etiological stories used in Joshua to explain geography and memorials; it explained the origin of the Valley of Achor.<sup>58</sup> Luke, on the other hand, is not telling the story of Ananias and Sapphira as a means of explaining any specific location. Rather, Luke’s story tells of God’s preemptive strike before Ananias and Sapphira could bring trouble to the people of Israel. Luke is clear that Peter understands their sin to involve Satan’s filling Ananias’s heart and that Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit, and later, tested the Spirit of the Lord (Acts 5:3–4, 9). The ominous last words of Luke in this passage were that the men who had buried Sapphira’s husband now carried her to be buried beside him.<sup>59</sup> Ultimately, then, the intertextual links between the two passages reveal a very similar understanding of God.

## Conclusion: The God of Achan and of Ananias and Sapphira

Regarding the nature of God in these two narratives, one is struck by how the God of the Achan story is very much the God portrayed in the story of Ananias and Sapphira. The authors of Joshua and Acts share a common understanding of how God works in the world. Although God is often perceived, at least in popular thought, to be very different in the Old and New Testaments, a closer

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<sup>57</sup> Woudstra, *Joshua*, 121, writes, “Achan’s sin aroused God’s wrath...”

<sup>58</sup> Michael D. Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 194–96; Barry Bandstra, *Reading the Old Testament: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 4th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2009), 209–10; Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, Word Biblical Commentary 7 (Waco: Word, 1983), 81–82. See also Soggin, *Joshua*, 98–103.

<sup>59</sup> François Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-five Years of Research (1950–2005)*, 2nd ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 426–27, deals with the story of Ananias and Sapphira under the heading of “Discipline” in the chapter on “The Church.” In this regard, he noted the works of Menoud (1950), Schmitt (1957) and P. B. Brown (1970). For bibliography for these works, see Bovon, *Luke the Theologian*, 329–48.

examination of each narrative reveals, biblically speaking, quite the opposite.

In both stories, the narrator is aware of the surreptitious action of the principal antagonists. One stole what belonged to God and laid the rest at the apostle's feet; the other stole what belonged to God and hid it in his tent from the community. The use of the shared word *νοσφιζω* (Acts 5:2, 3 and Josh 7:1 LXX) supports the notion that each antagonist committed the same treachery. In these stories, God's agent is responsible for delivering the indictment. Peter called out the guilty in Acts; Joshua led the process that identified the guilty in the Achan story. The agent of God confronts the miscreants in both narratives. Peter is clear that Ananias has lied to God;<sup>60</sup> Joshua is equally clear that Achan has brought trouble on the people of God and that God will deal with it. In the case of Ananias, he drops dead; in the case of Achan, the people of God stone him and destroy all he possessed. Similarly, the sins of the thieves are exposed to the whole community.

Again, as explored above, there are some differences between the narratives, but a key common denominator between them is God. God is the same. As Witherington notes, "Luke's view is that the God of the Hebrew Scriptures is the same God Jesus and the disciples served, and so one should expect continuity of character and action."<sup>61</sup> The intertextual links between the stories only strengthen this impression.

This continuity between the presentation of God in the Hebrew Bible as compared to the God of Jesus and Paul was a concern in the early church and is today a frustration for some Western Christians who would like to exclude wrath from the nature of God. Fueled by his reading of Paul, Marcion found the God of the Hebrew Scriptures irreconcilable with the God found in the Gospels and the writings of Paul. According to Harnack, Marcion saw "on one side malicious, petty, and cruel punitive correctness, and on the other merciful

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<sup>60</sup> J. W. McGarvey, *A Commentary on Acts of the Apostles* (Lexington: Transylvania Printing and Publishing, 1872), 68, commented, "There is no evidence that Peter had any will of his own in this matter; but it was an act of divine power exerted independent of the apostolic agency. The responsibility, therefore, attached not to Peter as an officer of the Church, but to God as the moral governor of the world."

<sup>61</sup> Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 214.

love.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, as Tyson notes, Marcion made a total separation of the God of Jesus and Paul from the God revealed in the Hebrew Bible. For Marcion, according to his reading of Luke’s Gospel, this God did not appear until the fifteenth year of Tiberius. Thus, with Marcion, no connection between Jesus and the Hebrew Bible could have existed.<sup>63</sup>

However, the canonical presentation of God does not submit to such a simple solution. The church and others have contrived the difference (which, from a canonical point of view, is a false dichotomy, a bitheism) between the wrathful God of the Law and the benevolent God of Jesus and Paul. To the contrary, Luke’s presentation of God transmits the same view of God that one finds in the book of Joshua (with a similar concern for **הרם**, if Park is correct). Whatever we do with the violence of God, we cannot divorce the Hebrew Scriptures from the Greek New Testament as if they portray two different gods. Nor, I would suggest, can one simply jettison the stories of God’s violence that one does not like. Stories of both grace and violence are contained in the same biblical canon, and sometimes these elements are intermingled to the extent that one cannot have one without the other.<sup>64</sup>

In summary, this article set out to engage with two stories in order to clarify the theology of a God who extends grace to people yet is open to destroying those people when they offend. To that end the intertextual linkage between Josh 7 and Acts 5 was shown to be strong and undeniable. With this linkage in place, the exploration turned to the nature of God revealed within those two texts, especially in light of their intertextual connections. Again, I acknowledge that these two stories are insufficient for constituting a biblical theology of God, but some tentative conclusions can be drawn.

First, if one hopes to find a “different” God portrayed in Acts from the one portrayed in Joshua, one will be disappointed. When people take that which has been dedicated to God, God can be just as severe in the New Testament

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<sup>62</sup> Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God*, tr. John E. Steely and Lyle D. Bierman (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1990), 21, as cited by Joseph B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts: A Defining Struggle* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 31.

<sup>63</sup> Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts*, 31–49.

<sup>64</sup> A classic statement on this perspective would be Ronald. M. Hals, *Grace and Faith in the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980).

as he was in the story of Achan. For Christians today, it means that God can exact temporal punishment on his people if God so desires.<sup>65</sup> Second, if Achan, and later Ananias and Sapphira, violated the community of God and in some way made the people complicit in their transgression, then one can reason that the violation of the community remains a serious offence to the God of Israel and the church. Conversely, this God, who punished Achan and then Ananias and Sapphira, also protected the people around them. Thus, these are stories not merely of destruction but also of preservation, or as we would say, of salvation. Finally, one should not overdraw the malevolence of God in the Hebrew Bible or the benevolence of God in the Greek New Testament, so as to set their portrayals of God in opposition. We can be sure that for Luke, the God of the Achan story is the same God who appears in his account of Ananias and Sapphira.

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<sup>65</sup> As seems assumed in Paul's instructions to the Corinthians around the proper demeanor for sharing the Eucharist (see 1 Cor 11:27, e.g.).

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