

E.E. Meyer
University of Pretoria,
South Africa.

E-mail:
sias.meyer@up.ac.za

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THE תָּרַם IN JOSHUA 6 AND 7, INFLUENCED BY P?

ABSTRACT

The article engages with the old question of Priestly influence in the book of Joshua and is, to a large extent, a response to Dozeman's most recent commentary on Joshua 1-12. The article focusses specifically on the תָּרַם and argues that there are more intertextual links between the understanding of תָּרַם in Joshua 6 and 7 and texts from Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets than with Priestly texts.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article addresses a very old question, namely whether there is any evidence of P or Priestly influence in chapters 6 and 7 of the Book of Joshua. In Dozeman's (2015) recent commentary, the answer to the question is a clear "yes". His argument has many facets to it, one of which will be the focus of this article, namely the meaning of תָּרַם in Joshua 6 and 7. In his argument, "P" is used rather loosely.¹ In this article, a brief overview of the occurrence of the root תָּרַם is followed by a summary of Dozeman's position on how the understanding of תָּרַם in Joshua

1 Under "P literature", Dozeman seems to understand many other texts that could be regarded as post-P or even post-H. For instance, Dozeman (2015:57) would discuss Leviticus 27 under "P literature", but this chapter is usually regarded as one of the last added to the book of Leviticus, even after the Holiness Code (H). See, for instance, the work of Nihan (2007:552). Dozeman is not totally inaccurate when he refers to "P literature", since scholars such as Nihan would regard these later chapters as added by later generations of priests.

6 and 7 has been influenced by Priestly understandings of the term. This leads to the larger and rather complicated debate on making sense of תָּרַם, in which I will draw on older (Brekelmans) and more recent (Versluis; De Prenter) studies of תָּרַם. I will also address two other issues, namely whether (the non-Priestly) תָּרַם could be regarded as a sacrifice and the problem of the two opposite meanings of תָּרַם. I will also examine other texts from Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets, but not all occurrences of the term.² Ultimately, I will argue that Dozeman is (mostly) wrong about תָּרַם in Joshua 6 and 7 being influenced by Priestly ideas.

In the book of Joshua, there is a difference between the distribution of the noun and the verb. The noun, which has traditionally been translated as “ban”,³ occurs thirteen times in the book, with twelve of these in chapters 6 and 7, and is thus clearly concentrated in these chapters.⁴ In one instance (22:20) where the noun is found outside of these two chapters, it actually refers back to the story of Achan in chapter 7. The verb is found only in chapter 6 and not in chapter 7; however, it is more prevalent in chapters 10 and 11.⁵ It is always in the Hiphil.

2. תָּרַם AS A COMBINATION OF P AND D

Dozeman (2015:54-69) argues that the תָּרַם in the Book of Joshua is a mixture of תָּרַם from Deuteronomy and תָּרַם from Priestly texts.⁶

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- 2 Strangely enough, תָּרַם is the last Hebrew word in the Protestant Old Testament and the *Corpus Propheticum* (in the Hebrew Bible), which takes us to the expertise of Fanie Snyman, namely Malachi. This article is presented as a token of appreciation for his academic contribution to the study of the Old Testament and the training of ministers. In his discussion of the “ban”, Snyman (2015:181) argues that this “ominous end” is a strategy of Yahweh to convince his hearers to rather pursue reconciliation between fathers and sons. A further avenue to explore would be whether the understanding of תָּרַם in this verse is closer to either P or D. I would guess the latter. The fact that Horeb is mentioned in Malachi 3:22 as in Deuteronomy would support such a guess. Still, in my opinion, to conclude a prophetic book with this word feels rather daunting.
- 3 For a brief overview of how many modern European languages used a term that was originally used for excommunication out of the synagogue in the Middle Ages, see Brekelmans (1959:44) or Fritz (1994:72).
- 4 Joshua 6:17, 18 (thrice); 7:1 (twice), 11, 12 (twice), 13 (twice), 15; 22:20.
- 5 Joshua 2:10; 6:18, 21, 26; 10:1, 28, 35, 37, 39, 40; 11:11, 12, 20, 21.
- 6 The noun occurs in Leviticus 27:21, 28 (twice), 29 and in Deuteronomy 7:26 (twice); 13:18. The verb occurs in Leviticus 27:28 and 29 and in Deuteronomy 2:34; 3:6 (twice); 7:2 (twice); 13:16; 20:17 (twice). These are all in the Hiphil, with the exception of Leviticus 27:29, which is in the Hophal.

Drawing on the work of Stern (1991:89-122) and Weinfeld (1972a), Dozeman (2015:56-57) presents Deuteronomy's understanding of the ban by referring to texts such as Deuteronomy 7:2 and 26, and 13:18. In Deuteronomy, תָּרָם is war booty, which, according to Dozeman, is equivalent to תּוֹעֵבָה, or abhorrent. Yet it is argued that תָּרָם itself does not have the power to contaminate, but the "power of the devoted object to contaminate" lies with the "desire of the people" and not within the object itself.

Deuteronomy 7:26 (BHS)	Deuteronomy 7:26 (NRSV)
26 וְלֹא-תָבִיא תּוֹעֵבָה אֶל-בֵּיתְךָ וְהָיִיתָ תָּרָם כְּמִהוּ שֶׁקָּיִן תִּשְׁקָצְנֵנּוּ וְתַעֲבֹו הַתְּעֻבָּנוּ כִּי-תָרָם הוּא: פ	26 Do not bring an abhorrent thing into your house, or you will be set apart for destruction like it. You must utterly detest and abhor it, for it is set apart for destruction.

It appears that Dozeman forgets to mention that the previous verse does, in fact, refer to the "images of their gods" (פְּסִלֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם) and the silver and gold on them which are supposed to be burned. This gold and silver can ensnare (Nifal of יָקַשׁ) the addressee. Otto (2012:880) argues that תּוֹעֵבָה "dient im Deuteronomium zur Bezeichnung kultischer und ethischer Abgrenzung".⁷ It seems that the thing associated with the other gods and the act of bringing that into one's house, the act of crossing the boundary, is abhorrent. This is the only instance where תָּרָם and תּוֹעֵבָה are used in the same verse. It is not clear to me that what is תָּרָם is, by definition, תּוֹעֵבָה. The two words are also used in close proximity in Deuteronomy 13 (vv. 15, 16), where it is even clearer that תּוֹעֵבָה refers to worshipping other gods and the תָּרָם mentioned in verse 16 is the result of that, or more accurately the response to that. It appears that it is appropriate to turn something that is תּוֹעֵבָה into תָּרָם, or to treat it as תָּרָם. In addition, it is clear to Dozeman (2015:57) that, in texts such as Deuteronomy 7:26 and 13:18, there is an element of "religious exclusion", since these texts encourage a negative "attitude toward the indigenous nations"; he seems to be right in this regard. Furthermore, Dozeman (2015:57) argues that,

[e]ven though the ban is a divine command, its execution is not a sacred action, nor do people under the ban belong to the Deity, making their deaths sacrifices to Yahweh.

This is thus his understanding of the תָּרָם in the book of Deuteronomy. According to Dozeman, תָּרָם semantically belongs to an opposite domain to Yahweh; it is תּוֹעֵבָה and may, therefore, not be brought into the camp. It

7 Serves in Deuteronomy as designation of cultic and ethical demarcation.

is unholy or profane, and Dozeman is clear that it is not a sacrifice. We will not enter the larger debate on the meaning of תָּרַם.

3. THE MEANING OF תָּרַם

Traditionally, scholars have distinguished between a war תָּרַם and a peace תָּרַם. Stern's (1991) book is a good example of this. Most of the examples of תָּרַם in the Hebrew Bible are of the war תָּרַם, including the ones in Deuteronomy, as mentioned by Dozeman. The examples of peace תָּרַם discussed by Stern (1991:125-135), for instance, are the ones Dozeman attributes to P and calls the "cultic" תָּרַם. Stern (1991:125-126) understands this development into the peace תָּרַם as follows:

In the writings of the priests (including Ezekiel) we find the תָּרַם in a peaceful, cultic setting, nestling amid the minutiae of the cultic regulations. The war-תָּרַם has been somewhat "civilianized," and it has been reduced to a technical term among other technical terms. ... The תָּרַם still reflects its etymology as a form of separation, inviolability, and holiness. The element of destruction is still present.

Earlier scholars such as Brekelmans (1959:163-170) and Lohfink (1982:207-209) also made this distinction.⁸ For Brekelmans (1959:47-48), the original form of תָּרַם was a noun expressing a characteristic ("een eigenschap") which he calls a "nomen qualitatis". It only later developed into a "nomen concretum", a noun describing the thing that takes on the characteristic. The verb later develops from these meanings and simply describes how something becomes תָּרַם. According to Brekelmans (1959:52), there are at least three different meanings under the broader umbrella of the war תָּרַם, of which the oldest one has a "religious" meaning.⁹

For Dozeman, the תָּרַם in Priestly literature is vastly different from the תָּרַם in Deuteronomy. Allegedly, in Deuteronomy, תָּרַם is unholy or profane, or תוֹעֵבָה. In Priestly literature, the meaning of תָּרַם tends to go the other way, namely closer to holiness itself. Dozeman (2015:57) starts by referring

8 The best overview of the contributions of Brekelmans, Lohfink and Stern is found in Van der Molen (2008:108-123). She shows how all three offer similar arguments and disagree on smaller issues. Both Brekelmans (1959:163-165) and Lohfink (1982:207-208) are of the opinion that there is a third kind of תָּרַם, found in Exodus 22:19, namely תָּרַם as punishment. These would be the instances where the verb is found in the Hophal.

9 Texts associated with this oldest meaning of the war תָּרַם include Numbers 21:2-3; Joshua 6:21; 1 Samuel 15:3, 8, 9 (twice), 15, 18, 20.

to Ezekiel 44:29 and Leviticus 27:21, 28 and 29.¹⁰ It is clear to him that, in these instances, תָּרַם is a case of sacrifice. The five instances of תָּרַם in Leviticus 27 also show that תָּרַם now becomes something that belongs to Yahweh and is most holy (קֹדֶשׁ-קֹדְשִׁים). Something is transferred from the profane to the sacred world by means of a sacrifice.

The Priestly teaching of the ban is thoroughly grounded in cultic language, in which people or objects under the ban are transferred to the realm of the Deity, designated by the phrase “to Yahweh” (Dozeman 2015:57).

One should thus note that, for Dozeman, the תָּרַם in Deuteronomy does not belong to YHWH, unlike the תָּרַם in Leviticus. The latter is semantically related to the field of holiness and the former the exact opposite. Dozeman (2015:58) then spells out three differences between P and D with regard to תָּרַם.

1. There is no war setting in P and war is never holy in P, but it leads to soldiers becoming unclean. Dozeman uses Numbers 31:19-24 to argue this point. A war camp can never be holy for P as it is in Deuteronomy.
2. The Hebrew phrase ליהוה is unique to Priestly texts and refers to the transfer of an object from the profane to the sacred realm. I will also show that this argument is simply not true.
3. In P, the תָּרַם objects become holy and, in D, they become תּוֹעֵבָה, thus the opposite of holy. Yet, in both instances, they need to be shunned or separated from the people, but the shunning occurs in two different directions. For Deuteronomy, תָּרַם is apparently far away from God and, therefore, needs to be shunned. For P, תָּרַם enters the sphere of God and, therefore, needs to be shunned. I noted earlier that this interpretation of Deuteronomy 7:26 is not the only possible one.

For Dozeman’s extensive argument, it is important to show these differences, since he wants to argue that Joshua is familiar with both traditions and tries to combine the two. The book of Joshua, like Deuteronomy, associates תָּרַם with war, but, unlike Deuteronomy, does not regard it as תּוֹעֵבָה. It is indeed so that תּוֹעֵבָה never occurs in the Book of Joshua.¹¹ On the one hand, תָּרַם in Joshua thus overlaps, to some extent, with תָּרַם in Deuteronomy, namely the association with war and destruction. On the other hand, the same could be said about תָּרַם in Joshua and P. There is some overlap, but how much exactly? In Joshua 6:17, Joshua dedicates the city and all that is in it

10 Stern (1991:133-134) would add Numbers 18:14.

11 It was used only once in Deuteronomy with reference to תָּרַם

to the Lord. For Dozeman, the link with P is this לִיהוָה and he understands it as changing the meaning of תָּרַם to a sacrificial term. לִיהוָה is also used in Leviticus 27, where it clearly accompanies a sacrificial term. Dozeman (2015:59) then sums up his argument as follows:

The book of Joshua combines warfare and sacrifice into an ideology of holy war that represents a new teaching that is different from Deuteronomy and the P literature. ... The ideology of the ban is that war is not for the purpose of conquest, but of extermination; it is an act of sacrifice “to Yahweh” that is intended to bring peace to the land (Josh 11:23).

It is worth noting that Dozeman describes תָּרַם in the Book of Joshua as a kind of sacrifice. This is supposedly a uniquely priestly understanding of תָּרַם. I will now discuss whether a תָּרַם is a kind of sacrifice. This question is not so much about תָּרַם in Priestly texts, but about תָּרַם in war texts from Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets. If there is already an element of sacrifice to תָּרַם in these texts, it would weaken Dozeman’s argument that this element of sacrifice derives from Priestly texts.

4. A SACRIFICE OR NOT (IN DEUTERONOMY AND THE FORMER PROPHETS)?

There are obviously at least two schools of thought on this issue. On the one hand, scholars such as Stern (1991:173-174), Nelson (1997a:48) and Hieke (2014:1127) would, along with Dozeman, vehemently deny any overlap between a תָּרַם and a sacrifice. On the other hand, Weinfeld (1972b:133-134), Milgrom (2001), Tatlock (2006) and Niditch (1993) all surmise that there is some element of sacrifice in the תָּרַם. In many of these debates, the narrative in 1 Samuel 15 often plays a role and verses 20 to 21 are often cited. This is Saul’s response to Samuel’s claim that he was disobedient:¹²

12 According to the table, Dozeman (2015:55) sums up all of the different occurrences of הָרַם in the OT; he understands the example from verse 20 as a case of the war תָּרַם and the one in verse 21 as a cultic תָּרַם. Since his commentary is not on 1 Samuel, he never explains his understanding of these different meanings in the same chapter.

1 Samuel 15:20-21 (BHS)	1 Samuel 15:20-21 (NRSV)
<p>20 וַיֹּאמֶר שָׂאוּל אֶל־שְׂמוּאֵל אֲשֶׁר שְׁמַעְתִּי בְקוֹל יְהוָה וְאַלֹּד בְּדַרְדָּר אֲשֶׁר־שִׁלַּחְנִי יְהוָה וְאַבִּיא אֶת־אַגַּג מֶלֶךְ עַמְלֵק וְאֶת־עַמְלֵק הַחֲרָמְתִּי:</p> <p>21 וַיִּקַּח הָעָם מֵהַשָּׁלַל צֹאן וּבָקָר רַאשֵׁי הַחֲרָם לְזִבְחַת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּגִלְגָּל:</p>	<p>20 Saul said to Samuel, “I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.</p> <p>21 But from the spoil the people took sheep and cattle, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal.”</p>

A great deal has been said about this text and, strangely enough, arguments such as that there is no sacrifice in this text often seem to overlap with the views of interpreters who are more sympathetic to Samuel than to Saul. Thus, Stern (1991:173-174) does not believe that Saul’s excuse that they will sacrifice the best for YHWH (לַיהוָה) is sincere, but rather a cover-up of his greed. Saul is understood to be greedy, like Achan in Joshua 7. Similarly, in his discussion of תָּרַם in Deuteronomy, Nelson (1997a:47-48) does not want to acknowledge that תָּרַם has anything to do with a sacrifice, since no altar or shrine was involved:

The foundational notion in sacrifice is a transfer in ownership from human possession to divine possession. But for the animals and humans involved, *herem* entailed no transfer to the heavenly world by means of burning. What was *herem* was killed or destroyed in order to render it unusable to humans, not to transfer its ownership. ... The logic of *herem* meant that no sacrificial transfer could be conceived of, because anything in the *herem* state was already in the possession of Yahweh as spoil of war or by some other means.¹³

In response to Nelson, Tatlock (2006:173) pointed out that this definition of sacrifice is very close to Nelson’s definition of what a תָּרַם is. Nelson (1997a:44-45) describes the verb as “to transfer an entity into the *herem* state” and the noun as “the state of inalienable Yahweh ownership”. Thus, both definitions of the verbs for תָּרַם and sacrifice have “transfer” as the operative word. One also wonders why Nelson would argue that the purpose of תָּרַם was to “render it unusable for humans?” Is this purpose ever stated? Not as far as I can see. It is clear that everything described as תָּרַם was destroyed.

Yet to be totally destroyed does not disqualify something from being a sacrifice. On the contrary. The עֹלָה of Leviticus 1 is totally burned. Even if it is utterly destroyed, this has nothing to do with keeping it out of human hands; instead, it “represents the purist form of divine service”

13 For a similar argument, see Hieke (2014:1127).

(Watts 2013:171). A fascinating question would be: When exactly does the עלה of Leviticus 1 become the possession of YHWH? When the person presents it (v. 2), or puts his hands on it (v. 3), or when it is burned (v. 9)? One could ask: When does the תָּרָם become the possession of YHWH, in Joshua 6, for instance? When does the actual “transfer” take place? When Joshua declares it so in verse 17? When the declaration is executed in verse 21? If it is the latter, then Saul might have had a point. He would still have been in compliance when he killed the king later (Collins 2004:224). He has simply not yet concluded the act of תָּרָם. I do not think, however, that these texts can really answer these questions. One should also note that, although Nelson agrees with Dozeman that תָּרָם in texts from Deuteronomy is not a sacrifice, Nelson believes that תָּרָם belongs to God. Dozeman would not agree with this; a תָּרָם is תּוֹעֵבָה and cannot belong to God.

Another sacrifice that would complicate matters is the בָּכוֹר sacrifice in Leviticus 27, for instance. Verse 26 clearly states that the בָּכוֹר already belongs to YHWH and cannot be dedicated (Hiphil of קָדַשׁ) to him. By Nelson’s logic, this would disqualify the בָּכוֹר from being described as a sacrifice. Yet, in Numbers 18, it is clear that a בָּכוֹר is indeed a sacrifice. In verses 17 and 18, the בָּכוֹר ritual is described in terms reminiscent of some of the sacrifices found in Leviticus 1-7, with blood dashed and the same גִּיחַת גִּיחַת that lingers (see Meyer 2017:141). The fact that something belongs to YHWH does not disqualify it from being regarded as a sacrifice. One could again ask: When does the בָּכוֹר become the possession of YHWH? At birth, or when killed? The text does not provide an answer.

To return to 1 Samuel 15, I find myself agreeing with scholars such as Tatlock (2011:42) and Milgrom (2001:2420-2421) that at least Saul thought that the תָּרָם and indeed the war תָּרָם was something that overlapped with a sacrifice. Note also Saul’s words quoted earlier that he took from the best of the תָּרָם to sacrifice לַיהוָה. My point is that, even if תָּרָם has some kind of sacrificial meaning in Joshua 6 expressed by לַיהוָה, the authors of Joshua 6 could have adopted this idea not only from Leviticus 27. It is not a uniquely priestly idea. The idea of sacrifice might already have been present in the war תָּרָם, as in Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets. Many scholars also point out that, when Samuel eventually kills the king in verse 33, it is before Yahweh (לִפְנֵי יְהוָה); this sounds like a sacrifice, since Gilgal was a cultic site (Milgrom 2001:2420; Tatlock 2011:42; Niditch 1993:62).

Other texts used by scholars such as Niditch (1993:63) and Tatlock (2011:43) include Deuteronomy 13:16-17, where the term קָבָל

(another version of burnt offering) is used.¹⁴ The issue in this chapter is, in fact, an Israelite city that has started to worship other gods.

Deuteronomy 13:16-17 (BHS)	Deuteronomy 13:15-16 (NRSV)
<p>16 הָרַס אֶתְּהָא וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֵׁר־בָּהּ וְאֶת־בְּהֵמָתָהּ לְפִי־חָרֵב:</p> <p>17 וְאֶת־כָּל־שְׁלָלָהּ תִּקְבֹּץ אֶל־תוֹד רְחֹבָהּ וְשָׂרְפָתָהּ בְּאֵשׁ אֶת־הָעִיר וְאֶת־כָּל־שְׁלָלָהּ כָּל־לַיְלָה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהָיְתָה תֵּל עוֹלָם לֹא תִבְנֶה עוֹד:</p>	<p>15 you shall put the inhabitants of that town to the sword, utterly destroying it and everything in it—even putting its livestock to the sword.</p> <p>16 All of its spoil you shall gather into its public square; then burn the town and all its spoil with fire, as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God. It shall remain a perpetual ruin, never to be rebuilt.</p>

This כָּלִיל is also followed by לַיהוָה, the term which Dozeman regards as Priestly. In short, to argue that the תָּרַם has a sacrificial meaning in Joshua 6 does not mean that there has to be a reception or reinterpretation of Priestly ideas.¹⁵ These ideas could have come from other places, and לַיהוָה is certainly not a uniquely Priestly expression, since both texts use the expression in close proximity to the תָּרַם. I am of the opinion that a sacrificial meaning was already present in some portrayals of the war תָּרַם, including the texts from Deuteronomy; it is not a uniquely priestly idea.

5. HOLY AND DESTRUCTIVE, ALL AT ONCE

Another issue with regard to the interpretation of תָּרַם, to which I referred earlier, is the debate about the two opposite meanings of תָּרַם as both תוֹעֵבָה and holy. This is one of the cornerstones of Dozeman's argument, which he aligns with diachronic arguments (D and P) and which I have questioned earlier. Thus, Versluis (2016:234-237) finds it difficult to believe that the same word could have such different meanings belonging to different semantic domains. One should note that Versluis never equates תָּרַם with תוֹעֵבָה, but that he consistently mentions destruction. Holiness and destruction have in common the ability to contaminate. Dozeman would want to disagree with this, since he is of the opinion that it only applies

14 See Clines (1998:425) or Tatlock (2011:43).

15 Nelson (1997a:47) argues that the use of כָּלִיל in this text "is clearly intended as a metaphor", an image "illustrating the frenzied attack of Yahweh's sword". See the response from Tatlock (2011:43-44). In the most recent commentary on Deuteronomy, Otto (2016:1265) understands this verse to mean that the city becomes a sacrifice to YHWH. Yet, for him, it should be read in a post-exilic context and is, in fact, a subtle reference to what happened to Jerusalem.

to the cultic תָּרַם. Versluis' (2016:237) solution is to attribute different meanings and semantic domains to the verb and the noun:

Thus, the meaning of the verb תָּרַם almost always belongs to the semantic domain of destruction and devastation; the noun belongs to the domain of the sacred, indicating a certain sacral status of person or objects.

Versluis (2016:237) bases his understanding of the verb on the fact that it is usually not used with לִיהוּהוּ, with the main exceptions being Leviticus 27:28 and Micha 4:13. This explains the “almost” in the above quote. This is, for instance, one of the differences he identifies between the use of the verb in the OT and in the Mesha Inscription, where it is used with the complement “for Ashtar Kemosh” (לְעִשְׁתָּרְכִּמֹשׁ) (Versluis 2016:241).¹⁶ The two semantic domains are often combined when verb and noun are used together. In this instance, Versluis (2016:236) mentions Joshua 6:17¹⁷ and 1 Samuel 15:21. I did mention the latter text earlier in the discussion of תָּרַם as a possible sacrifice. It is worth noting that the noun is used in 1 Samuel 15:21 and the verb in the previous verse. With regard to Joshua 6 and 7, I pointed out earlier that the verb is found only in chapter 6, with the noun occurring in both chapters. Could one thus argue that all of the examples of the verb belong to the semantic field of destruction and all of the nouns to the semantic field of holiness? Unfortunately, it is not that simple. In addition, the fact that, at times, the “holy” meaning and the “destructive” meaning can be combined in the same verse by means of the verb and the noun seems to undermine Versluis' argument.

De Prenter (2012) presents another way of explaining the two different semantic fields, using insights from cognitive linguistics to explain the polysemous meaning of תָּרַם. De Prenter (2012:474-475) is familiar with the work of Brekelmans, Lohfink and Stern and their basic diachronic argument that the term developed from a war תָּרַם to a peace תָּרַם. This coincides with a range of meanings from destruction to holiness. De Prenter (2012:477) makes use of prototype theory to explain how two meanings are possible for the same word. Her basic argument is that תָּרַם is a “taboo concept” (De Prenter 2012:479). This is *contra* Stern (1991:224-225):

16 As pointed out by Brekelmans (1959:51).

17 Versluis is referring to the verse in English translations. In the BHS, verse 18, the addressees are the subject of the verb in the Hiphil. One could simply translate the verb, in this instance, as “become תָּרַם”, although a Hophal would have made more sense. As mentioned earlier, Brekelmans (1959:52) would regard these two examples as having the original religious meaning.

I therefore argue that the “*Grundbedeutung*” or “abstract core meaning” of תָּרַם is taboo, forbidden, prohibited. Two distinct senses are included in the *Grundbedeutung* of the term: something can be taboo because it belongs to the category of holiness or to the category of defilement. Depending on the context, the meaning of תָּרַם overlaps with קִדַּשׁ and טָהַר or with הִלֵּל or טָמֵא.

Unlike Versluis, De Prenter does not make the distinction between verb and noun, but argues that both verb and noun can mean both. De Prenter (2012:482) is also much closer to Dozeman in arguing that the negative meaning of תָּרַם is related to תְּוֹעֵבָה and other terms such as הִלֵּל and אָמַא. She argues that the first two occurrences of the noun in Joshua 7 (vv. 1 and 11) are an example of the “holiness” meaning:

Joshua 7:1 and 11 (BHS)	Joshua 7:1 and 11 (NRSV)
<p>1 וַיִּמְעָלוּ בְּגֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעַל בְּתָרַם וַיִּקַּח עֶבְדֹן בֶּן־כַּרְמִי בֶן־זַבְדִּי בֶן־זֶרַח לְמִטָּה יְהוּדָה מִן־הַתָּרַם וַיַּחֲרֹאֲף יְהוָה בְּבִגְדֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:</p>	<p>1 But the Israelites broke faith in regard to the devoted things: Achan son of Carmi son of Zabdi son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things; and the anger of the LORD burned against the Israelites.</p>
<p>11 חָטָא יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגַם עָבְרוּ אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אוֹתָם וְגַם לָקְחוּ מִן־הַתָּרַם וְגַם גָּנְבוּ וְגַם כִּחְשׂוּ וְגַם שָׂמוּ בְּכַלֵּיהֶם:</p>	<p>11 Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I imposed on them. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have acted deceitfully, and they have put them among their own belongings.</p>

It is worth noting that the translation of the NRSV agrees with De Prenter’s interpretation, but, at first glance, her argument seems slightly forced. There is no mention of any other words from the semantic domain of holiness, as one would find in Leviticus 27:28, or of לִיהוָה if we take Dozeman’s argument seriously. That would at least imply that תָּרַם belongs to the realm of YHWH. De Prenter (2012:486) argues that, according to Joshua 7:21, Achan did, in fact, take silver and gold. This reminds us of 6:19, where silver, gold, bronze and iron are mentioned and declared holy. De Prenter (2012:486) then concludes that

Joshua 7:1.11 are conceptually related to the Priestly texts I discussed earlier in which the noun תָּרַם also refers to consecrated objects.

Her arguments could thus be used to support, at least partially, Dozeman’s basic argument.¹⁸ It should be clear though that both attempts

18 Dozeman (2015:144) mentions this essay by De Prenter in his bibliography, but never engages with her work.

by Versluis and De Prenter to account for different meanings have contradictory results. For De Prenter, only the first two nouns of chapter 7 refer to holiness. For Versluis, all of them do. In the last section of this article, I will attempt to integrate all of the above ideas into a coherent reading of תָּרַם in Joshua 6 and 7.

6. DISCUSSION OF תָּרַם IN JOSHUA 6 AND 7 AND THE QUEST FOR PRIESTLY IDEAS

The noun and the verb occur in close proximity in Joshua 6 only in the following verses:

Joshua 6:17-19 (BHS)	Joshua 6:17-19 (NRSV)
<p>17 וְהִיְתָה הָעִיר תָּרַם הִיא וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּהּ לַיהוָה רַק רָהַב הַזֹּזָה תַּחִּיהָ הִיא וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר אִתָּהּ בְּבָיִת כִּי הִחְבְּאֶתָּה אֶת־הַמְּלָאכִים אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְנוּ: 18 וּרְקֵ־אֶתֶּם שְׁמְרוּ מִן־הַתָּרַם פֶּן־תִּתְרַמְּוּ וּלְקַחְתֶּם מִן־הַתָּרַם וּשְׁמַתֶּם אֶת־מַחְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְתָרַם וְעִבְרַתֶם אוֹתוֹ: 19 וְכֹלן בְּסֶף זָהָב וְכֹלֵי נְחֹשֶׁת וּבַרְזֶל קֹדֶשׁ הוּא לַיהוָה אוֹצֵר יְהוָה יְבוֹא:</p>	<p>17 The city and all that is in it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers we sent. 18 As for you, keep away from the things devoted to destruction, so as not to covet and take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel an object for destruction, bringing trouble upon it. 19 But all silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are sacred to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD.”</p>

In verse 17, it is clear that the city will become תָּרַם and everything in it shall “be for YHWH”, with the exception of Rahab and her house. Verse 18 warns that the addressees should keep away from the תָּרַם, otherwise they themselves will become תָּרַם. In my opinion, this verse implies some kind of contamination, similar to that in Deuteronomy 7:26. It is also the only instance in Joshua 6 and 7 where the verb occurs. According to Versluis, these nouns should all have the meaning of the “sacred”, but for De Prenter they belong to the category of defilement. The two arguments lead to opposing results. The vast majority of commentators accept that what we have in verse 19 also refers to the תָּרַם, but that is not so apparent.¹⁹

19 See English commentators such as Nelson (1997b:94), Butler (2014:377) or McConville & Williams (2010:34). German scholars usually offer a diachronic solution. Fritz (1994:73) views this verse as part of an additional layer, which offers a “Neuinterpretation” of תָּרַם, although, to complicate matters, verses 17 and 18 belong to the same layer. Fritz does not really perceive the tension. Knauf (2008:72) understands this verse to answer a question left unanswered

The word is never used; instead, the four kinds of metal are called holy (קֹדֶשׁ); they are also “for YHWH” and are, more specifically, destined for the treasury. The question arises as to whether these metals are הַרְמָה or not? Is holy thus a different category? Is what we have in verse 19 a higher category than what we have in verse 17, something which does not get destroyed, but is kept? It could very well be.

With regard to Joshua 7, the noun is found in verses 1, 11, 12, 13 and 15. The first two verses are found in the table above where De Prenter’s work is discussed. She is of the opinion that these two are examples of where הַרְמָה would mean holy and, in her argument, she links these examples via 7:21 to 6:19 and the metals found there. הַרְמָה occurs in the following verses:

Joshua 7:12-13 and 15 (BHS)	Joshua 7:12-13 and 15 (NRSV)
<p>12 וְלֹא יָבִיאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְקוֹם לִפְנֵי אֲבִיבָהֶם עֶרְוָה יִפְגּוּ לִפְנֵי אֲבִיבָהֶם כִּי הָיוּ לְהַרְמָה לֹא אוֹסִיף לְהֵיוֹת עִמָּכֶם אִם לֹא תִשְׁמָדוּ הַהַרְמָה מִקִּרְבְּכֶם:</p> <p>13 קָם קֹדֶשׁ אֶת־הָעָם וְאֶת־הַתְּקֹדֶשׁ לְמַחֵר כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַרְמָה בְּקִרְבְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא תוֹכֵל לְקוֹם לִפְנֵי אֲבִיבָה עַד־הִסְרִיכֶם הַהַרְמָה מִקִּרְבְּכֶם:</p> <p>15 וְהָיָה הַנִּלְכָּד בְּהַרְמָה יִשְׂרָף בְּאֵשׁ אֹתוֹ וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֵׁרֵלּוֹ כִּי עָבַר אֶת־בְּרִית יְהוָה וְכִי־עָשָׂה נְבִלָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:</p>	<p>12 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 themselves. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you.</p> <p>13 Proceed to sanctify the people, and say, “Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘There are devoted things among you, O Israel; you will be unable to stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you.’”</p> <p>15 And the one who is taken as having the devoted things shall be burned with fire, together with all that he has, for having transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and for having done an outrageous thing in Israel.”</p>

It appears that verses 12 and 13 support the reading in 6:18 that the הַרְמָה is contaminating, and that they have thus become הַרְמָה themselves (McConville & Williams 2012:39; Rösel 2011:117). Verse 15 also reminds us of the previously discussed Deuteronomy 13:16, where everything is burned with fire (there וְשִׂרְפָתָּ בְּאֵשׁ, here יִשְׂרָף בְּאֵשׁ) (Dozeman 2015:360). In

by Numbers 31:22-23: What should happen to precious metals after they have been cleansed by fire? For Knauf, this verse is clearly a supplement. Van der Molen (2008:162) is one of the few scholars who believes that verse 19 refers to something else (see n. 524). Rösel (2011:102) argues that the metals are not part of the ban, but are consecrated, meaning something other than the ban, in other words, not being destroyed.

verse 15, the word נִבְלָה is used to describe the bad thing that was done to Israel. This expression

is not especially related to the ban but is used mostly for grave crimes in the sexual sphere that endanger the community (Rösel 2011:115).

Verse 13 also makes it clear that the people can only be sanctified by removing the תָּרָם from their midst. According to Dozeman, this cannot be a priestly idea, since the war camp can never be holy. In his commentary on Deuteronomy 7, Otto (2012:880) argues that the motives to acquire gold and silver, as mentioned in 7:21, also occur in Deuteronomy 7:25 and not only in Joshua 6:19:

Mit den Motiven von Gold und Silber wird eine Verbindung zwischen Dtn 7, dem Dekalog und Jos 6-7 hergestellt. Gold und Silber der Stadt Jericho seien für YHWH "geweiht".²⁰

The point is that much of the story of Joshua 6 and 7 has far more intertextual links with texts from Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets than with texts from Priestly literature.

7. CONCLUSION

I have endeavoured to argue that the תָּרָם, as found in Joshua 6 and 7, shows hardly any sign of being influenced by Priestly understandings of the term. If there is an element of sacrifice present in Joshua 6 and 7, then it is also present in both Deuteronomy 13 and 1 Samuel 15, where the expression ליהוה also occurs. I have also attempted to show that the direct link between תָּרָם and תּוֹעֵבָה is based only on Deuteronomy 7:26 and that there are other ways of interpreting that text. In short, there seems to me to be more of an intertextual link between תָּרָם in Joshua 6 and 7 and texts from Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets than with Priestly literature. In both Joshua 6 and 7 and Deuteronomy 13, תָּרָם seems to have the ability to contaminate, the solution usually being utter destruction, sometimes including burning by fire.

One last thought: It is well known that Douglas' work has had a great impact on the study of the Leviticus and other Priestly texts. Douglas' (1966:41) concept of "matter out of place", although used to describe

20 With the motives of gold and silver a link is made between Deuteronomy 7, the Decalogue and Joshua 6-7. Gold and silver of the city Jericho would be dedicated to YHWH.

Priestly views of impurity, also seems appropriate for the problem caused by תָּרָם in Joshua 7. When תָּרָם is present “in your midst”, it causes a major problem, making it impossible for YHWH to be present. The solution is to destroy the “matter out of place” and, although this might sound like a very Priestly idea, it also seems to be present in very un-Priestly texts such as Deuteronomy 7 and 13. In both instances, objects associated with foreign gods are brought into the midst of Israel. These are also clearly “matter out of place”, or more specifically “gods out of place”.

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