

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

Adventist International Institute

of Advanced Studies

Theological Seminary

TITLE 1:

THE FUNCTION OF THE MOSAIC

WATER DRINKING ORDEAL OF NUM 5:11-31

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Num 5:11-31 is a puzzling biblical passage due to various difficulties pertaining to its origin, composition, nature, and purpose. The current study deals with the last issue, that is, the purpose of the ordeal of Num 5:11-31.

The study addresses the issue through the cognitive social function approach. Contrary to the fear, humiliation, abortion, and metaphorical views that assign the ordeal a negative role, this dissertation sides with the view assuming

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that it played a positive role in the Israelite community by protecting the accused woman. The study expands this view by suggesting that the ordeal was a divine ritual that protected not only the suspected woman but the entire Israelite community. This stance is based on the analysis of the involvement of human and divine participants in the ordeal and the transfer of the case of the suspected woman from the human sphere to God's jurisdiction. It follows that the ordeal of Num 5:11-31 may have mainly functioned,

1. As a socio-community builder which aimed to enhance relationships among Israelites themselves and with God.
2. As an instrument of God's judgment which intended to maintain moral purity in Israelite society. As such, the ritual communicated some important messages: 1. An accused person should be considered innocent until proven guilty. 2. No one should carry out justice for himself. 3. Sensitive issues such as suspicion about adultery need not to be resolved by violence; they should be referred to God for He is interested in the stability of the community and as the supreme arbiter He can penetrate secrets of human beings and fairly judge the course of their actions.