

CHAPTER 2

Leviticus 19:33-34 – the forgotten injunction A case study of ‘alien’ students¹ in Senga and Nehosho suburbs of Gweru, Zimbabwe

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Introduction

The Priestly material in Leviticus has for a long time been a devalued part of the Hebrew Bible. The general trend of modern scholarship tends to be characterized by a deep-seated bias that views impurity rules as primitive and irrational taboos, and sacrifice as controlled savagery that is empty of any spiritual meaning. The central message, however, of the book of Leviticus expressed in the formulation, “You shall be holy because I, the Lord, am holy” (Lev. 11:45) is still relevant for Christians today. The book, in other words, is a literary expression of God’s desire that his holiness be reflected in the daily lives of his covenant people. Such a call to holiness is what this paper sees as having been violated as some landlords and landladies of Senga and Nehosho suburbs of Gweru in Zimbabwe, borrowing the language of Amos, “lie upon beds of ivory” (6:4) while poor students are packed like sacks in bundles of 6 to 8 people per room and charged exorbitant rentals ranging from \$50-\$70 per student in their houses. The paper begins by examining the way of life which was lived by aliens in the midst of the Israelites through reading behind the injunction in Leviticus 19:33-34. The insertion of such an injunction into the laws of Israel shows that aliens were victims of various kinds of abuse. By way of analogy, the paper relates the ill-treatment of such aliens in Israel to the life experienced by ‘alien’ students living in the aforesaid suburbs. It concludes by arguing that such students deserve better treatment and fair rental charges during their period of study at Midlands State University (MSU)