

DYNAMICS IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGION 3



Purity and the Forming of
Religious Traditions in
the Ancient Mediterranean World
and Ancient Judaism

EDITED BY

Christian Frevel and Christophe Nihan

BRILL

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Religious Traditions in the
Ancient Mediterranean World
and Ancient Judaism

Dynamics in the History of Religion

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PREFACE

The following volume has originated in a series of lectures held at the University of Bochum, Germany, in December 2008 and January 2009, in the context of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg 'Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe.' The idea was to bring together some of the best specialists in matters related to the construction, representation and implementation of purity and impurity in the Ancient Mediterranean, with specific focus on ancient Israel and ancient Judaism. The questions and discussions that developed out of these lectures led the editors of the present volume to invite some additional contributions.

The journey from the organization of these lectures to the present volume has been a long, albeit fascinating one, and it would not have been possible without the collaboration of several persons as well as the support of various institutions. Students from Bochum, Lausanne and Geneva have been instrumental in the preparation of this volume, especially Chen Bergot, Jan Clauß, Matthias Jendrek, Katharina Pyschny, and Katharina Tautz. The revision of the English was assumed, with much care and thoroughness, by Dr. Sarah Shectman. Both the original lectures and this volume have been made possible only by sponsoring through the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. In particular, the editors want to acknowledge the constant support and encouragement that they received from Prof. Volkhard Krech and Dr. Marion Steinicke, respectively Director and Research Coordinator of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg. Finally, the preparation of this volume was also made possible through the generous support of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies from the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. To all these persons and institutions, as well as to the contributors of this volume, we would like to express our most sincere thanks for making the completion of this journey possible.

The Editors
Christian Frevel, Ruhr-Universität Bochum
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February 2012

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations in general follow the list given in the latest edition of the "SBL Handbook of Style". Additional or divergent abbreviations are listed after the relating article.

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INTRODUCTION

Christian Frevel and Christophe Nihan

This volume goes back to a three-part workshop on 'Purity in Processes of Social, Cultural and Religious Differentiation' (December, 2008 and January, 2009). The workshops were part of the research group on 'purity' within the Käte Hamburger Kolleg 'Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe' at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum. They were accompanied by several other activities focused on purity, including workshops on 'Purity and Religious Dynamics' (organized by Christian Frevel and Nikolas Jaspert) and 'Religious Purity in Asia' (organized by Hans-Martin Krämer). In addition, the proceedings of the conference 'Discourses of Purity in Transcultural Perspective (300–1500)' (organized by Nikolas Jaspert) will be published as a complementary volume in the same series.

Since the methodological approach of the present volume was partly developed in the context of the international consortium in Bochum, it is necessary to say a few words about the consortium's general epistemological orientation. The consortium's research aims at developing a 'relational' concept of religion, by combining theoretical and historical approaches. One of the central assumptions of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg in Bochum is that the major religious traditions (so-called 'world religions') evolved and developed within permanent mutual exchange processes not only in their dissemination but also during their formation and constitutional establishment. By developing a systematic approach towards a theory of religious transfer, the research consortium in Bochum aims at elaborating a 'typology of religious contacts', in order to describe repeated patterns of influence, adoption, transformation, demarcation, and rejection in the encounter of religions. This will enable the consortium to develop *tertia comparationis* on the one hand, and to describe *differentiae specifica*e of particular religions on the other, without neglecting their specific historical and cultural appearance in time and space. The comparison of religions results from the interplay between exemplary studies and systematic approaches. Both will regard exogenous and endogenous factors, as well as the function of religions in their social, political and economic contexts.

The present volume is explicitly part of this approach, which combines inductive and deductive methods within a process that may best be described as 'abductive'. It aims at offering a comprehensive discussion of the development, transformation and mutual influence of concepts of purity in major ancient Mediterranean cultures and religions from a comparative perspective, with a specific focus on ancient Judaism. To that effect, the various papers collected in the volume offer a general, comprehensive discussion of the *material* evidence for conceptions and constructions of purity and impurity in the ancient Mediterranean, including literary texts, epigraphy, and archaeology. In addition to ancient Judaism, the cultures and civilizations surveyed include Mesopotamia, Egypt, Asia Minor, the Levantine area, ancient Iran, Greece as well as Rome. Although most of these areas have already been the subject of individual studies, to the best of our knowledge no similar description of purity in the ancient Mediterranean has ever been given.

The ambition of this volume is not merely restricted to collecting descriptions of purity concepts and representations in the ancient Mediterranean; it also aims at elaborating a comparative analysis of these concepts and representations. The basic methodological assumption underlying this enterprise is that the ancient Mediterranean and related areas, such as Mesopotamia, form a diverse yet coherent cultural area, which offers an ideal ground for a thorough comparative approach from the perspective of history of religions. Alongside their description of the material evidence for representations of purity and impurity in their cultural area, all contributions include a more theoretical discussion bearing upon the main concepts of purity that emerge from their field, as well as the social and religious functions of these concepts. From a methodological perspective, extra emphasis is given in each individual contribution to the significance of traditio-historical developments both for the elaboration and transformation of concepts of purity and related notions and for intercultural comparison between different religions and their concepts of purity within the ancient Mediterranean world.

Overall, the volume aims at working towards a systematic comparison of parallel developments and transformations of purity concepts in the main religious traditions of the ancient Mediterranean world, which should allow for a general assessment of points of contact and mutual influences. In addition, specific attention is given to the major functions of the concepts of purity and their development with respect to the formation of Judaism in antiquity within its ancient Mediterranean context. Ancient Jewish culture is characterized by a great diversity of purity concepts that

can be related to the forming of internal and external processes of differentiation and demarcation, resulting in a plurality of 'Judaisms'. This situation has logically led in turn to the forming of a sophisticated scholarly literature on the topic of purity in ancient Jewish society. However, the scholarly debate has not really moved beyond the traditional explanation that relates the emphasis on purity issues to an increased focus on the observance of earlier legal traditions from the Hellenistic and Roman periods onwards. This model creates numerous problems and the whole issue will benefit from a renewed approach that situates it in a broader comparative perspective. Ancient Jewish concepts of purity can work as a test case of sorts for understanding the complex dynamics involved in the process of formation, transformation, and adaptation of purity representations in a given culture in the ancient Mediterranean. A preliminary assessment of the main outcomes of this volume is provided at the end of this introduction.

1. 'SYMBOLISM AND BEYOND': SOME INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE
CONCEPT OF 'PURITY' IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Together with the distinction between 'sacred' and 'profane', the distinction between 'pure' and 'impure' (or clean and unclean) forms one of the most basic concepts in the history and study of religions. Accordingly, many of the major developments of that concept are closely related to more general changes and transformations in the history of religions as an academic discipline, from its somewhat complicated beginnings in the late 19th century to some of its most recent developments.¹ The following comments by no means claim to trace the complex history of the concept of 'purity' and of the distinction between 'pure' and 'impure' in the modern discussion. More modestly, they seek to point out some central aspects of that discussion and to identify major scholarly trends.

From the outset, the concept of purity has been closely tied to the discussion of religious prohibitions and, more specifically, to the notion of 'taboo', a Polynesian word borrowed by students of religion in the second half of the 19th century. This association plays a central role in the work of William Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites* (1889),

¹ The same is true, of course, of the distinction between 'sacred' and 'profane'; on the significance of that distinction for the origins of the history of religions as an academic discipline, see the seminal essay by P. Borgeaud, "Le couple sacré/profane".

who developed the general theory that the related concepts of 'sacred' and 'impure' in Semitic religions are in fact the expression of a primitive fear in the face of certain natural phenomena considered to be invested with supernatural force and therefore regarded as 'taboo'.² In Robertson Smith's view, which is representative of the evolutionary scheme that permeated the study of religions in the last decades of the 19th century, the distinction between 'sacred' and 'impure' developed from the undifferentiated concept of 'taboo', in connection with the transition from a 'primitive' mentality, in which the world is replete with potentially hostile 'spirits' and 'powers', to a more 'evolved' concept of religion that identifies distinct deities with whom human beings are now able to entertain personal relationships. This theory, associating the concepts of 'sacred' and 'impure' with a general concept of 'taboo' as a central category for the so-called 'primitive' religions, rapidly became highly influential and remained dominant throughout most of the first half of the 20th century among scholars of religion (J. G. Frazer, N. Söderblom, G. van der Leeuw, and many others). In its popular version, it gave rise to the idea that most representations of purity and impurity were the relics, so to speak, of some fundamental prohibitions (taboos), for which no rational explanations were to be found because they were imposed by the 'primitive' mind on a world conceived of as mysterious and inhabited by numerous hostile and incomprehensible forces. Occasionally, other authors sought to combine this general interpretation of the concepts of purity and impurity with more 'material' explanations, for instance, the idea that some of the rules declaring various types of animals to be 'unclean' had their origins in concerns for hygiene.

The break with this evolutionary model in the course of the 20th century resulted from the attempt, on the part of ethnologists and cultural anthropologists, to understand non-Western indigenous societies as coherent cultural systems with their own, distinct rationality, rather than to project Western categories upon them. As regards purity concepts specifically, this trend found its most developed formulation in the classical study of Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, first published in 1966, which bore the significant subtitle: "An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo".³ In a carefully articulated theoretical framework, Douglas conceptualized

² Smith, *Religion of the Semites*.

³ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*. For a comprehensive summary of her theoretical views on purity, see also Douglas, "Pollution".

earlier insights developed in her field studies on the Nuer and Lele tribes of Niger. Douglas' 1966 monograph is explicitly directed against the concepts of sacred and impure developed by Robertson Smith and Frazer, whom she criticizes for their views on the presumed confusion between these categories in the so-called 'primitive' religions.⁴ Likewise, she rejects all explanations of purity and impurity (such as the hygienist theories) as being naively materialistic and sterile.⁵ In consonance with the structuralist approach in anthropology developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss and others, she proposes instead to interpret a basic cultural distinction such as 'clean' and 'unclean' as part of a classification scheme that orders the complexity of reality by defining and imposing upon it internal as well as external boundaries. Against the earlier approach that regarded pollution beliefs as the relics of various loosely connected, non-rational 'taboos', pollution is now defined as a highly *relative* category, as is implied by her classical motto: "Where there is dirt, there is a system".⁶

From this perspective, the ascription of polluted status is a means to protect the system from certain specific elements situated outside of it, whose intrusion is perceived as a threat to the system.⁷ Accordingly, pollution beliefs are most apparent when the boundaries of a system are clearly defined. Ultimately this 'system' is itself the culture of a given society (or social group). In that respect, pollution beliefs—together with the corresponding purification rituals—manifest the symbolic structures of that culture, albeit in varying degrees. In certain instances, pollution beliefs can even serve in a given culture as a general analogy for the social order as a whole. This understanding of pollution beliefs and representations as manifestations of a *symbolic* system is illustrated in typical fashion in Douglas' detailed analysis of the classification of clean and unclean animals in the Hebrew Bible (Lev 11 and Deut 14), in which she seeks to demonstrate that such classification, far from being a mere list of traditional prohibitions, implies a distinct cosmology that associates 'classes' of

⁴ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 19–28.

⁵ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 29–32.

⁶ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 35. See likewise the views expressed in her short article "Pollution".

⁷ This means that, for Douglas, not just *any* element situated outside of the system is necessarily perceived as potentially polluting, but more specifically *those elements that are viewed as susceptible to threatening the system's boundaries*. It is in this sense that Douglas can distinguish between 'dirt' and 'pollution' later in her book: dirt, although it can be defined as 'matter out of place', is not always polluting, and remains tolerable as long as it remains outside of the system. See especially Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 94–113.

animals and their distinctive features with the basic distinction between air, water and earth.⁸

It is probably not an exaggeration to state that Douglas' theory of pollution has had an influence on later studies comparable, in many ways, to the influence of the works of Robertson Smith and Frazer in the first half of the 20th century. Until very recently, her work was usually referred to as the standard work on concepts of pollution and purity in encyclopedias about cultural anthropology and the history of religions.⁹ Although more recently it has been subject to some significant criticisms (see further below), it does not appear to have been replaced so far by a theoretical work of similar importance. In the past decades, countless specific treatments of purity concepts in a given culture have explicitly adopted Douglas' model in their own analyses. In the case of ancient Mediterranean studies specifically, one may mention for instance Robert Parker's seminal monograph, *Miasma* (1983), which uses a conceptual framework similar to that developed by Douglas in order to offer a comprehensive, in-depth analysis of the variety of systems and contexts of pollution that developed in ancient Greece.¹⁰ Furthermore (and perhaps even more significantly), a vast majority of scholars from various fields appear to have accepted the general notion that concepts of purity in a given culture should be approached from the perspective of that culture as a 'symbolic system', even when they do not accept the specifics of Douglas' analysis.

Gradually, however, a series of critiques has been addressed to Douglas' interpretation of purity as a symbolic system. While it is not possible, in the context of these remarks, to review this discussion in detail, it is nonetheless possible to survey some of the most important aspects of these critiques. Three issues, in particular, may be identified.

(1) A first objection to Douglas' theory arose relatively early, in the context of a more general discussion about the epistemology implied by the structuralist and symbolic approaches. Several scholars have criticized Douglas on account of the high degree of abstraction implied in her

⁸ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 41–57. However, her interpretation of that passage has been severely criticized by several scholars since. See on this especially the detailed argument developed by Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, which takes up earlier critiques against Douglas' analysis of Lev 11 and Deut 14.

⁹ See, e.g., among many others, the article by Stetton, "Purification", esp. 7504. The author describes *Purity and Danger* as a "landmark in the study of religious symbolism" and concludes that "this more systematic approach to purification has restored the concept as a major theme in the study of world religions".

¹⁰ Parker, *Miasma*.

view of pollution.¹¹ Even if we grant that pollution beliefs are somehow connected, at a very general level, with the delineation of fundamental boundaries in a given culture or social group, this does not automatically imply that all pollution beliefs may legitimately be viewed as cultural or religious symbols. Concepts of purity and impurity are not formed overnight, often having a complex history. They may have diverse origins, have been adapted and transformed over centuries, or may even be imported from one culture into another. Furthermore, they are often related to the specific environment of a group or a society; in other words, they are connected with the *ecology* of a given group and not just with its cosmology or its ethics.¹² That is, while it is probably safe to assume that all pollution beliefs somehow have a social *function*, this does not yet mean that these beliefs necessarily express social or cultural values. In later essays, Douglas herself seems to have become aware of this issue, and offers a more cautious formulation of the evidence, as the following quote, for instance, appears to indicate.

Pollution beliefs certainly derive from rational activity, from the process of classifying and ordering experience. They are, however, not produced by strictly rational or even conscious processes but rather as a spontaneous by-product of these processes.¹³

Such statements, however, appear to obscure the relationship between culture—defined as a “symbolic system”—and pollution beliefs, rather than clarify it. Furthermore, even in this formulation, representations of purity and impurity still appear to be derived primarily from the classificatory activity of a given group. In this theoretical framework, other central issues, such as the complex, multi-leveled interaction between a social group and its environment (ecology) or between that group and other groups (exchanges), tend to play a more marginal role.¹⁴

¹¹ See, e.g., Tambiah, “Animals”, and her general criticism of the symbolic approach implied in structuralist theories: “Cultures and social systems are, after all, not only thought but also lived” (457).

¹² See especially the critique of Douglas by “cultural materialists”, and on this Harris, *Cultural Materialism*. While the position of Harris (and other exponents of cultural materialism) has itself been rightly criticized on methodological and epistemological grounds, there can be no question, in our opinion, that the dynamics of the interaction between ecological constraints and the cultural productions of a given society remain a central issue for the analysis of pollution beliefs.

¹³ Douglas, “Pollution”, 58.

¹⁴ It must be recalled here that while Douglas strongly criticizes Robertson Smith and Frazer, her own theoretical work is significantly influenced by the functionalist approach

(2) Another, yet related, area in which major criticism has been voiced against Douglas' theory concerns her concept of *boundaries*. In Douglas' view, pollution beliefs tend as a rule to be formed in order to protect divisions within a social group that existed before those beliefs. Douglas even suggests, as we have seen, that these beliefs are strongest where social and cultural boundaries are clearly defined and well established. This rather static conception of purity and pollution beliefs may have something to do with the importance of the analogy of the *body* in her work. On numerous occasions she uses the image of the physical body as a simile for the social or political group: in particular, both need to be defended against external aggressions through control exerted over the parts of the body that are most susceptible to such aggressions.¹⁵ This homology, however, tends to predict a certain conception of the relationship between the group (as a social body) and pollution beliefs: the latter, in Douglas' analysis, tend to form only once the group has become a well-formed body, in other words, once its boundaries are clearly defined. However, several anthropological and ethnological studies have questioned this general representation, and insisted that in various cultures pollution beliefs are strongest precisely where the boundaries between two groups, or within the same group, are *not* clearly defined. Far from being dependent upon, or derived from, existing boundaries, pollution beliefs may in many cases be directly associated with the forming, transformation, or even rejection of these boundaries. Furthermore, in some instances, the function of pollution appears to aim not at preserving differences (as Douglas tends to assume) but at separating the like from the like and establishing distance, or difference, between elements and structures that, in a social group, are regarded as homologous or identical.¹⁶ These and similar observations suggest, in any event, that we must count on a more complex dynamic between the forming of pollution beliefs and the delineation of divisions within a given group or between two or more groups.

of the French sociologist E. Durkheim, who developed a theory of religion as the collective expression of the values and interests of a social group.

¹⁵ For this general homology, see especially Douglas, "Two Bodies". She herself notes that her thought on this issue is significantly influenced by the work of M. Mauss.

¹⁶ Compare, e.g., the pollution beliefs that, in several cultures, are associated with same-sex relationships, or with sexual intercourse between kin ('incest'). For a theoretical development of this issue, see especially the work of Testart, *Des mythes*, esp. 19–86. His analysis is influenced by the work of F. Héritier on the Samo culture; Héritier demonstrates that this culture is informed by a general division between 'hot' and 'cold' elements, which must remain separated. Thus, for instance, it is prohibited for a man to make love with a breast-feeding woman, because sperm and milk are both regarded as 'hot' elements.

(3) Third, and lastly, a further issue concerns the relation between representations and beliefs associated with pollution in a social group and the various practices that are developed by that same group in order to maintain, restore or achieve a state of purity, especially (though not exclusively) in the form of rituals of purification. The structuralist approach, of which Douglas herself was an exponent, is very much informed by a distinctive view of the 'communicative' function of social practices. From that theoretical perspective, social practices, such as rituals, can be explained against the background of the 'symbolic system' of a given culture and can thus be interpreted as the concrete manifestations of that general structure. This theoretical framework is evident in several of Douglas' analyses of purification practices in *Purity and Danger*, as well as in other essays. However, this approach has been significantly criticized, especially in the field of ritual studies. The very notion that rituals are intended to 'communicate' an external reality has been rejected in favor of an approach that seeks to understand ritual as a 'self-contained' activity, which cannot be aptly described by resorting to the concept of symbol.¹⁷ This has led several authors to distinguish between 'symbolism' and 'indexicality', on the basis of the epistemological distinction advanced by the philosopher C. S. Peirce.¹⁸ Contrary to the symbol, an index is a sign that is existentially related to its signifier (i.e., it does not represent, like the symbol, but indicates). As such, the indexical approach may legitimately describe the relationships between objects and actions associated in the course of a ritual's performance without having to postulate that all these relationships are necessarily meaningful, and even less that assessment of such meanings is required for interpreting the ritual's performance. Other theorists, like C. Bell, have emphasized the necessity of redefining and reevaluating the basic notions involved in the study of ritual, such as (especially) concepts

¹⁷ This discussion is too complex to be reviewed here in detail. For a comprehensive assessment of the critique of the 'communicative' or 'symbolic' approach to ritual, see especially Bell, *Ritual Theory*, esp. 13–66, with a strong emphasis on the thought/action dichotomy that this approach involves; as well as Kreinath, *Semiose des Rituals*, and more briefly, his general observations in Idem, "Ritual". A radical critique of the 'communicative' function of ritual was already voiced by Staal, "The Meaningless of Ritual", who disputes the notion that ritual "consists in symbolic activities which refer to something else" and argues that symbolic meanings play no essential role whatsoever for the participants in the ritual's performance. A definition of ritual in which the concept of 'symbol' is no longer a constitutive element was also proposed by Rappaport, "The Obvious Aspects of Ritual", esp. 179.

¹⁸ See Rappaport, "The Obvious Aspects of Ritual", and more recently Kreinath, *Semiose des Rituals*.

of action and agency, practice, and power/empowerment of ritual agents.¹⁹ So far, this discussion appears to have had little impact on the analysis of pollution and purification; on the contrary, the standard approach to purification rituals in terms of their 'symbolic' dimension appears to remain largely predominant. However, developments in the field of ritual studies show the limits of this approach and call for a new interpretive framework for the relationship between discursive and non-discursive practices associated with rituals. In particular, this means that purification rituals, like other rituals, need to be described and explained first and foremost for themselves, and not merely as the concrete 'translation' of a preexisting symbolic order.

2. SOME METHODOLOGICAL AND SYSTEMATIC ASPECTS OF THE PRESENT VOLUME

There is general agreement that concepts of purity can be used in very different contexts, in antiquity as well as today; for instance, one may not eat unclean food, must keep the sancta free from any defilement, keep the house clean, be morally pure without misdeeds, etc. While not merely restricted to hygienic aspects, purity and impurity classifications are often gender biased²⁰ as well as temporally and spatially defined. Categories of dual differentiation between 'pure' and 'impure' can be found in all aspects of thinking that structure the world in symbolic forms: culture, society, cult, ritual, morality, everyday life, philosophy.²¹ Following Petra Bahr, purity concepts can thus be called a "fundamental difference" (*Leitdifferenz*).²²

¹⁹ Bell, *Ritual Theory*. Instead of proposing a general definition of 'ritual', which she regards as epistemologically problematic, Bell prefers to approach rituals as the result of what she terms 'ritualization'. She interprets ritualization as a 'strategic practice', which serves to differentiate a given activity from other practices in a given culture. Basic features of ritualization are "strategies of differentiation through formalization and periodicity, the centrality of the body, the orchestration of schemes by which the body defines an environment and is defined in turn by it, ritual mastery, and the negotiation of power to define and appropriate the hegemonic order" (*Ritual Theory*, 220).

²⁰ For this statement, see Bahr, "Purity", 1562.

²¹ This holds true not only for the 19th century philosophy of idealism; see for instance 'division', 'discrimination', the 'art of dialectic', 'refutation' etc. as 'purification' in Plato, *Sophistes* 226d–e, 230d–e, or 'purity' as the foundation of style in speech in Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.5.

²² With special emphasis on religion: "Reinheitskonzepte...sind eine Art normatives Grundmuster der Religion, eine Leitdifferenz anhand derer die Welt eingeteilt und verstanden werden kann", Bahr, "Reinheit", 150 (The English version is slightly different:

As we have seen above, the symbolic dimension of categories of purity and impurity was repeatedly stressed by Mary Douglas. As categories often relating to symbolic values, they are communicative elements as well and hence part of social interpretational systems.²³ The asymmetric oppositional terms ('clean'/'unclean') provide a basis for a categorization which, from the perspective of cultural anthropology, must be regarded as a major social construct. Though not construed spontaneously or intentionally as classifiers and not even restricted to rational activity alone, one cannot deny that the historically and culturally developed categories *function* as a classificatory system in a given social context (even if they do not merge entirely in this function; see the criticism of Mary Douglas above). By forming multiple identities, they are meant to stabilize or destabilize social order within systems of complex interaction that are related to various ecological, economic, social, and religious factors. Rather than being absolute, universal, natural or essentialist categories as in 19th century scholarship,²⁴ 'purity' and 'impurity' are to be considered culturally biased, relative and ascriptive. Using the term ascription highlights the performative aspect in the application of the pure/impure-scheme, which is not entirely free from but rather beyond essential, material or physical aspects that are a matter of description.²⁵ To give an example: While being entirely culturally biased, the biblical declaration of the leper as "unclean" in Lev 13 is construed against the backdrop of a physical realm of skin deformation. The performative dimension of the ascription becomes obvious if one takes into account, for instance, the purity/impurity declaration in Lev 13:14–17:

But as soon as raw flesh appears in it, he shall be impure; when the priest sees the raw flesh, he shall pronounce him impure. The raw flesh is impure; it is scale disease. If the raw flesh again turns white, however, he shall come to the priest, and the priest shall examine him: if the affection has turned white, the priest shall pronounce the affected person pure; he is pure.²⁶

"Concepts of purity... are a kind of fundamental normative pattern of religion, a paramount difference, in the presence of which the world can be divided and understood", Bahr, "Purity", 1562).

²³ Cf. Bendlin, "Reinheit, Unreinheit", 412.

²⁴ See Maier, "Reinheit", 474.

²⁵ For the difference between "description" and "ascription" see Gethmann, "Menschsein", 45–48; and for the correlation of factivity, normativity and ascriptivity, cf. Varga, "Descriptivity", 162–71.

²⁶ Jacob Milgrom's translation.

The period and condition of the impurity are culturally defined, based on custom and medical knowledge—in this example the alteration of skin into ‘raw flesh’ and the shift to the ‘whiteness’ of the flesh. While the impurity is indicated by the physical state (“the raw flesh *is* impure”), the implementation is in need of a performative act by the ritual expert. The priest declares the impurity or purity of the person concerned through speech acts of ascription (“the priest shall pronounce the person impure/pure”). To give another general example: Although blood is very often regarded as a highly polluting substance, especially if it is detached from the body, the defiling capacity of blood is quite relative in different cultures. Human blood is treated differently from the blood of animals, and female menstrual blood is treated differently from the male blood of battlefield injuries. While violent bloodshed is defiling, controlled bloodletting is often considered to ‘purify’ and to have healing power. Blood used in rituals may have a polluting as well as a cleansing effect. Pollution by blood is defined contextually to a very high degree. It is not the blood as such and its natural state as a fluid representative of life but rather the culturally defined context that makes blood defiling. Once it is defined as polluting, touching the defiling substance will make the subject impure. The way to become pure again may be through riddance rites, ablution rituals, or ‘magic’ invocations, or the pollution may be constrained to a defined period of time. According to the understanding of ritual mentioned above, the ‘making of purity’ requires an act of performance to accentuate the change of status. This performative aspect is not meant primarily to communicate values that are connected to ‘purity’ or ‘pollution’, but rather to function as a transformational agent. Within this transformational act the culturally set boundaries of purity/impurity are marked and stabilized again. This change of status must not be involved with ablution or riddance, but rather with an authority (in the sense of agency) that declares the impure pure again. Alongside the descriptive aspect of contamination there is an ascriptive one that is defined by historical development and social convention. Additionally, it has to be stressed that in the ancient Mediterranean, social structure/sociality and body/corporeality are strongly correlated;²⁷ hence it becomes obvious that the categories of ‘purity’ and ‘impurity’ have not only cultural but also social aspects.

Thus, as was already revealed in the review of structuralist approaches, conceptions of ‘purity’ and its counter-concept ‘impurity’ are strongly

²⁷ See Assmann, *Tod*, 35f; Bester, *Körperbilder*, 28–40.

related to a certain worldview and hence they may vary between cultures. In the present volume a focus is laid on purity as a second-order meta-term for the description of cultural, social and religious differences.²⁸ To enable a comparative perspective, the concept is constrained in time and space to the ancient world: Greece, Western Asia, Mesopotamia, the Southern Levant, and Egypt in the second and first millenniums BCE. Particular differences notwithstanding, we consider the ancient Mediterranean a region with a relative coherence in cultural and religious respects, which evolved in processes of mutual exchange. Since we are dealing with pre-modern societies before secularization, the distinction between the different levels (social, cultural, religious) may be somewhat arbitrary and should be understood and applied heuristically. The approach is rather exemplary but covers all aspects comprehensively. However, it aims at offering a discussion of the development, transformation and mutual influence of concepts of purity in ancient Judaism and in major ancient Mediterranean religions from a comparative perspective.

One of the basic assumptions of the present volume is that purity concepts in the ancient Mediterranean are developed not in isolation but rather in diachronic and synchronic processes of contact, influence, reference and interference, i.e. mutual exchange. Hence, the present volume focuses on a comparison of contents, concepts and especially functions of purity discourses. The approach retained examines first and foremost the way in which notions and representations related to purity were used in the various societies of the ancient Mediterranean; but it also pays attention to the way in which such notions and representations developed in the history of these societies. In so doing, the present volume aims at treating the formation and transformation of purity concepts in synchronic and diachronic exchange processes.

Some further introductory remarks on systematic aspects may be useful in elucidating the setting of the present volume. While 'pure' and 'impure' are constructed as diametrical opponents that exclude each other, their dimensions are not completely parallel in construction. Although physical contact is crucial for both dimensions, the categories differ regarding the contact dimension. While the 'pure' can be defiled by contact with 'impure' matter, the 'impure' cannot be made pure simply by contact. For instance, an impure space may defile a pure person but a pure space

²⁸ See Cancick-Kirschbaum, "Reinigung und Vermischung", 141.

does not make an impure person pure. Purifying the impure by contact is restricted to specific agents (e.g. water, blood) and generally to performative acts (e.g. rituals). In contrast, every contact with the impure defiles the pure or degrades the state of purity. While 'impure' is a cumulative category (several impurities can be added, exacerbating the 'impurity' or the temporal extension of the defilement), 'purity' usually cannot be gradually amplified by addition or accumulation. Again it must be stressed that this general tendency should not be overemphasized or misunderstood in an essentialist manner. Due to different cultural contexts, exceptions from the aforementioned 'rule' are observable to some extent, for instance, in Greece.²⁹ While 'impurity' is a category often construed in relation to time (something is *temporarily* unclean but becomes clean again after a certain period of time), purity is usually not constrained *explicitly* by temporal extensions/limits. For example, the purity required of the priest in order to perform a sacrificial rite and to access the sanctum is not permanent. But while the change of status as a prerequisite of cultic acts is often demanded explicitly (the priest has to perform purification rites at the beginning of the ritual), the loss of this state of purity after the sacrificial rite is not precisely defined.

While 'impurity' is not a totally coherent construction where underlying logic is concerned, the order established by 'purity' is much more coherent. It is a symbolic and structuring system, which is regarded as endangered and has to be defended. Though purity has some genuine affinity to religious issues through its partial intersection with the 'holy', impurity does not necessarily have religious aspects.

Special emphasis in this volume is given to the religious aspect of purity conceptions. Because it is not self-evident from the above-mentioned settings, it should be emphasized that purity in this volume is understood as a 'religious' category or, more precisely, a category related to religious issues. This relationship is not naturally given (one may look for example at Buddhism in ancient China, Japan or Korea, where purity is not a 'religious' category in the same manner), but it is quite obvious in the 'Western' area, especially in the Mediterranean.³⁰ Although the categories of pure and impure are not limited to the cultic sphere in the ancient Mediterranean, they are nonetheless strongly related to that sphere. To

²⁹ See for instance the different degrees of purity in Plato's *Timaios*, 41d, or the examples given in the paper of P. Borgeaud in this volume.

³⁰ Cf. e.g. Sallaberger, "Reinheit".

keep oneself pure or to act in a pure manner is of cultic relevance. Purity is a very important category for the places where cultic acts are performed and for the objects and substances with which cultic acts are performed. Although this is quite obvious, it seems to be problematic to speak of a separate 'religious' purity because there is no *concept* of 'religion' in the self-understanding of ancient cultures.³¹ However, we must keep in mind that the assumption that there was no difference between the religious and the secular in antiquity follows the argumentative logic of the secularization theorem, which has been criticized in recent religious studies.³² It is necessary to distinguish between the religious and the profane both heuristically and on the level of meta-language in describing purity conceptions in ancient Mediterranean religions. Access to purity conceptions will mainly be through the centrality of the cultic sphere in those societies in which the difference between the holy and the profane is crucial. Already because 'holiness' and 'purity' are closely related, purity is never totally dissolved from the religious realm, the cultural bias of purity concepts in general notwithstanding. Although 'religion' is neither coextensive to nor identical with 'cult', there is no dimension or aspect of purity that is completely spiritualized or metaphorized and coevally totally disconnected from the cult. This assumption has consequences for the understanding of so-called 'moral' purity (see below). Cultic activity in a broader sense, as it is meant here, is the performative and pragmatic exterior of religion. Thus 'impurity' hinders a person's ability to participate in the cult (e.g. a feast, a congregation, a sacrifice, or a specific rite, etc.) or disqualifies an object from being used in the cult (e.g. as tool, utensil, sacrifice, votive, etc.). Normally, purity is the precondition for cultic activity or attendance. In this regard purity is a category of participation or exclusion and integration or disintegration in a social respect. In the ancient world purity regulations and purity discourses often function as 'regulative' in society, with both integrating and disintegrating power.

³¹ For an overview of the problematization of the applicability of the term 'religion' in studies of ancient cultures see Bendlin et al., "Religion". While "ancient terms denote realms of religious behaviour, . . . none of them captures the meaning of the modern concept of religion" (Bendlin, "Religion"). Bendlin thus votes for "a two-sided concept of religion that both takes heed of the close connection of the religious with other social systems and takes into account the ancient differentiation between religious and 'profane' spheres" (Bendlin, "Religion").

³² See for example Gabriel, "Jenseits von Säkularisierung"; Gabriel, "Religionssoziologie"; Gabriel, "(Post-) Moderne Religiosität". Also see Graf, *Die Wiederkehr der Götter*; Krech, *Götterdämmerung*.

Let us unfold the aforementioned aspect preliminarily in a conceptual manner: In almost every case of the worldviews of the Western Mediterranean, 'impurity' is a physically contagious category related to spatial concepts. Pure or impure is not only a category of objects or persons but also of places and spaces (e.g. temple precinct, city, land, living place, etc.). The contagious power of impurity has an unavoidable impact on the pure space, be it from within (by the actual presence of impurity, which is defiling) or without (by the influence of impurity from contact zones or even from afar, which is polluting). Thus, purity and impurity have a liminal function in establishing the borders of 'in' and 'out', inner and outer space, almost on a horizontal axis.³³ While the center is pure, the fringes are more impure than pure and the outside is impure. The borders may be defined *de facto* or just symbolically. Every transgression, be it physical or metaphorical, endangers the state of purity. The latter is constituted by holiness and/or (re-)established by purification. Purity thus appears to be part of an ordering system that is endangered by the defiling capacity of impurity. The latter is deviant and thus a threat to the established state of order.³⁴ In this respect purity/impurity as a symbolic category has a regulative function that may be used in a concessive, permissive, prescriptive, exclusive, restrictive, etc., manner. The specific use of the liminal function of purity is dependent on cultural conventions that may vary, and on the conceptual reversibility or irreversibility of pollution. However, endogenous and exogenous factors in the development of purity are strongly correlated.

As purity is the precondition for a proper cult, a sacred space is accordingly disqualified or impaired for valid cultic actions by defilement. However, it seems important to note that the pure/impure-scheme does not by itself 'naturally' constitute the border but rather makes the border describable, feasible and operational. The qualifier 'pure' ascribes the quality 'pure' to a certain area or aspect of reality. Sacred space is declared constitutively, initially, intentionally or performatively 'pure' so as to configure it as appropriate for proper cultic activity and for the presence

³³ In Mesopotamian tradition there is a vertical axis of purity, too. Sumerian literature considers the heaven (AN) and the goddess of heaven (INANNA) to be pure (e.g. the Hymn of the Sacred Marriage between Inanna and *Idindagān of Isin*, TUAT II, 5:659–673). The same holds true for Assyrian texts (e.g. A Hymn to Shamash, KAR 55). For further details, see the paper of M. Guichard and L. Marti.

³⁴ This is the accurate aspect of Mary Douglas' generalized definition of impurity as "matter out of place" (Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 94–113). This definition allows for spaces in which impurity is part of the order and thus not necessarily defiling.

of the divine as main agent and addressee of the cult. This constitution or preparation of cultic space has to be performed iteratively by declarative acts or by ritual activity. Acts of purification can be understood as acts whose sequentiality results in a transition of status from impure to pure, thus confirming pure status. Purity rituals change (or better, *communicate* the change of) the status from impure to pure or confirm the pure state of the cultic space, the matter used in cult, or the persons performing the cult. Rituals are based on worldview; they encode it iteratively in performative acts that are enacted by and communicated to the participants.³⁵ Hence, the transitional function of purity rituals is most meaningful in physical, social, and psychological respects. The rituals must be accepted conventionally to confirm the change of status, which may be symbolic rather than physical.³⁶ If they are accepted as communicative acts by the performers and the recipients (that is, the community in which they are performed), they declare the transformation from impure to pure. The person who is concerned need not understand the ritual cognitively, but its agency has to be accepted, i.e. 'believed in'. This conventional aspect holds true for the integrative and disintegrative functions of purity and impurity.

From this basic and over-generalized conception, which describes the spatial, temporal and social dimensions of purity, it seems obvious that the pure/impure-scheme is not only a classification system of everyday life. The religious-cultic dimension of purity is rather inherently predominant and thus performative. Purity surely comprises aspects of a social ordering system but does not merge totally therein. The functionality of purity, as has been seen above, is much more complex and not totally systematic or fully comprehensible. If there is no universality of purity issues and if theorizing the function of purity within a symbolic system is always in jeopardy of too much abstraction (see the criticism above of the simplification, "Where there is dirt, there is a system"), one must seek a proper methodological approach to the material. While it is a traceable term on the object level of language, purity is also used as a second-order term in the meta-language description of cultural and religious systems.

³⁵ For this understanding of ritual based on R. A. Rappaport, see de Hemmer Gudme, "Ritual", 65–66. Ritual and textual coherence of any ritual are interdependent, but not identical.

³⁶ The pragmatics of ritual includes both indexical and symbolic aspects of signs; see Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion*. On the theoretical discussion of indexicality in rituals, see Kreinath, "Semiose", 92–105.

By concentrating on the religious aspect, the present volume assumes that the dichotomy pure/impure is part of the specific terminology of religions. Without assuming unified and totally coherent systems of religious thought, purity—especially in the ancient Western Mediterranean—is considered to be religiously related to, or at least part of, the intrinsic logic (“Eigenlogik”) of religions. One objective of a comparative approach may thus be a comparison of purity semantics. Accordingly, many of the contributions in the present volume stress semantic issues. They do research on the semantic fields of purity and impurity to comment on the systematic aspects. Being aware that the comparison of specific religious traditions on the semantic level is seriously restricted by particularities of the culturally coded languages, the aim is not to compare the semantics in particular, either in a diachronic or a synchronic manner. Often the lexical fields of purity/impurity are not comparable, but the underlying concepts which are expressed semantically in a specific and distinct manner are. Even the role or function that purity plays in processes of social, cultural and religious differentiation and the rituals connected therewith are comparable. Accordingly, one needs to concentrate not only on lexemes but on contextualizations and conceptualizations of terms in descriptive, prescriptive and ascriptive texts, in epigraphic as well as in literary compositions, in narrative contextualizations as well as in textual representations of performances in rituals, in iconographic representations as well as in the material culture. Especially for the comparative approach to purity, a variety of avenues is required and, accordingly, is partially offered in the present volume.

Besides the semantic dimension, another aspect of the relevance of purity concepts in comparative studies is the correlation and interconnection between the anthropological, the social and the cultic dimensions. In the above-mentioned consortium on religious dynamics, we consider the formation, contextualization and functionalization of the concept as one of the *tertia comparationis* of ancient Mediterranean religions. In processes that are dependent on the cosmological order and worldview on the one hand and sociopolitical strategies and balances of power on the other, purity is often used to assign relevant borders both spatially and socially. Social stratifications and differentiations are defined by purity.³⁷ This is obvious for example in the higher demand for purity of priests as compared to lay

³⁷ On this aspect of purity in ancient Israel especially, see Olyan, *Rites and Rank*.

people, evidenced in ancient Egypt, Greece, Iran or Israel. In other cases—for example in the Qumran community—purity is used to demarcate an in-group from outsiders by defining the in-group as a pure community or as a community requiring a specific form of purity that others do not have and cannot achieve.³⁸ In these discourses purity is defined ‘genealogically’ rather than ethnically. Whether outsiders were established as constitutively impure is one of the issues debated in several contributions in the present volume. In general, no intrinsic impurity is attributed to foreigners in the ancient world, but purity concepts are frequently used for demarcation, for example in many temple-access regulations. There seems to be a connection between the challenge from outside and consolidation within a certain community. The more a religion or society is forced to demarcate itself by establishing and highlighting borders, the more important the liminal function of purity becomes in social respects. This constellation corroborates the critique of Mary Douglas’ assumptions made above. It is not clear-cut social/religious entities that develop coherent purity-systems. On the contrary, purity issues apparently arise where those borders are “in the making” or when they are challenged. Thus it seems more appropriate to strengthen the integrative and disintegrative functions of purity, which are correlative and coextensive in historical processes. Understood in this way, one can speak of the ‘demarcational’ function of purity.

Let us finally touch upon one important aspect of the purity discussion that is of particular relevance for the present publication: the question of moral purity. In addition to the basic differentiation between cultic and non-cultic purity, the distinction between ritual and moral purity is often stressed as a second basic differentiation. To have a pure heart or conscience (e.g. Ps 51:12; 1 Tim 3:9) or to act with pure hands (e.g. Ps 18:21) seems to speak of a purity that is completely disconnected from the cultic sphere and is attributed instead to the ethical realm. The difference between the two dimensions appears to be clear at first glance: While ritual purity is considered to be contagious, moral purity seems not to be. While both have collective aspects, moral purity is rather restricted to individual behavior. Finally, while ritual impurity may be a temporary phenomenon, moral impurity is often a lasting one.

³⁸ On the impurity of outsiders in Qumran, see the discussion between H. Harrington and C. Hayes referred to in Harrington, “Outsiders”; further Himmelfarb, “Purity Laws” and the contribution of I. Werrett in this volume.

Hence, the so-called moral dimension is discussed time and again as if it were an antagonist of the ritual dimension. It seems to be a more-or-less explicit reflex in purity discussions to indicate a linear development from the physical dimension to an ethical or spiritual moral dimension, which is expressed metaphorically.³⁹ The presumed development is often qualified as the difference between 'archaic' and 'rational'.⁴⁰ The purity of the heart, the mind or the inner self is explicitly contrasted to ritual or genealogical purity.

The question of whether moral purity is a metaphor, a category of its own or a category at all is very much discussed in religious studies. The issue has been given special emphasis in Jewish and Christian studies.⁴¹ The profundity of the discussion in this field, which cannot be unfolded here, is not always addressed and recorded in the broader field of religious studies. Nevertheless, there is a growing awareness of the shortcomings of such conceptualizations of purity in terms of "spiritualization", alongside reservations about simplistic models of linear development from ritual to moral purity and from real to metaphorical meaning. While there is no denying that purity refers to various contexts, including (un-)ethical behavior, and that there are relevant issues of morality in purity, the obvious peril is to confuse ritual and material aspects with moral issues. Impurity and moral transgressions ('sin' in the language of ancient Judaism and early Christianity) are related but by no means interchangeable. Purity is often, but not *necessarily*, a matter of ethics. Even if purity is considered an ethical issue, this should not lead to disregard for the cultic dimension. The separation of the two categories is misleading in several ways: The dimensions of physical and moral purity differ (for example on the level of acts) but are not two separate concepts, either in synchronic or in diachronic respects. They are close to each other and are often intertwined. There is neither a 'pure' moral purity nor a physical impurity without any link to the ethos of a specific society and thus to a certain ethic. Both dimensions interfere with each other and may be separated for heuristic purposes only. Every physical purity or impurity has a moral aspect and all purification has a moral dimension as well. Sometimes the moral aspect is strengthened explicitly, and sometimes the physical, but

³⁹ Often accentuated by reference to Mark 7 and a construed antagonism to Early Judaism, which does not in fact exist.

⁴⁰ See for example Angenendt, "Motiv", 301.

⁴¹ See for instance the overview in the publications of J. Klawans: Klawans, *Purity*; Klawans, *Impurity*; further Maccobi, *Ritual*; Kazen, *Jesus*; Kazen, *Impurity*.

they are never totally detached from each other. This becomes apparent in the above-mentioned intrinsic cultic dimension of purity in the ancient Mediterranean and thus holds true only for these systems of thought. Therein the cultic dimension is not independent from the cultural dimension, and the cultural dimension implies a certain ethos. The present volume will follow this line and will not separate the physical from the moral dimension except for heuristic reasons.

3. LEADING QUESTIONS

With the invitation to contribute to the present volume, the authors were presented with some guiding questions for the handling of the material in their papers. The invitation asked that questions not be answered by every paper explicitly but rather that they be considered as a framework, setting part of the agenda. Because some of the papers refer explicitly to these questions, they are given here as follows:

- (1) What role does 'purity' play in the forming of religious traditions? How are representations of purity described in the specific material with respect to their *liminal* function from a spatial, temporal, social and institutional perspective?
- (2) What role does purity play, within the geographical and chronological context, in rituals, cult(s), social organization, as well as in collective or individual processes of identity formation?
- (3) Is there a differentiating semantics of concepts of purity and impurity? Which are the aspects that come to the fore: physical, cultic, moral-ethical, or genealogical purity? Is there a remarkable differentiation between so-called 'ritual' and 'moral' purity, and if so, how are these domains distinguished one from the other? How do they influence each other mutually?
- (4) How is the difference between 'purity' and 'holiness' (or, respectively, 'pure' and 'holy') evaluated (differences, congruence, interdependence)?
- (5) Are there, in the investigated material (texts, images or archaeological remains), indications of *diachronic* developments of purity representations and concepts? Are such developments the result of religious contacts or influences from outside, or are they exclusively to be understood as an internal development? Furthermore, are there specific discourses focusing on the topic of purity, and how are they to be chronologically and historically located?

4. OVERVIEW OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE PRESENT VOLUME

The volume starts with a set of five essays dealing with conceptions of purity and pollution in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Anatolia, Persia and Phoenicia within a wide time frame, from the 3rd to the 1st millennium.

The comprehensive treatment by Michaël Guichard and Lionel Marti introduces the vast quantity of material on 'purity' in the ancient Near East and intends to come a step closer to a synthesis of notions of purity in the continuum of traditions. By presenting key aspects of purity concepts in the ancient world, the essay may be read as an introduction to the larger issues of the volume. After giving some remarks on the lack of systematizing studies in the field, the authors present a helpful differentiation between two levels of purity and impurity issues in Mesopotamia: the one related to the treatment of impurities in daily life and the other related to transgressions of order. While the former could be cleansed fairly easily, the latter especially are in need of ritual experts, who accomplish rituals either in order to free the people or the objects concerned, or to purify the 'world' from threats coming from the outside as a precondition for the divine presence within the human world. These levels are not separated in their study but rather form a complementary perspective on the topic addressed. The differentiation exposes two main points of emphasis: the world order as frame and background of purity conceptions in the ancient world, and the role of ritual experts as the main agents in the context of purity. In their essay Marti and Guichard focus on Mesopotamian traditions from two different periods and in different literary genres: on the one hand Sumerian myths, hymns and incantations stemming from the third dynasty of Ur and the Old-Babylonian period (22nd–17th centuries BCE), and on the other hand rituals, divinatory series, and exorcisms coming from the Neo-Assyrian period (9th–6th centuries BCE). The first part unfolds the importance of the purity/impurity dichotomy as a basic assumption of the Sumerian worldview. Purity is an ideal primordial state that is corrupted and defiled in time by civilization. Accordingly, purity is a lost ideal that has to be re-established to stabilize the world. Life causes defilement so that impurity, paradoxically, appears as a necessary component of the order of life itself. As a consequence, permanently endangered purity has to be re-established again and again within and by the annual cult. The purification rites that aimed at stabilizing the universal order and the dynamic equilibration of life and death were the matter of specialists who performed the rituals in the temple. The rites were addressed to the gods who guarded the worldly order. Purity is a constitutive prin-

ciple of world order and a precondition for the divine presence in the human world. From this perspective purity has little to do with concrete daily life, although it is considered to be the condition for life in general. It is rather a matter of royal politics and cult. But as the second part of the paper shows, this view is also dependent on the particular genre of texts. By addressing notions of purity and impurity in several texts from the Assyrian palaces (Ludlul bēl nēmeqi, Šurpu, Maqlû, Bīt rimki, et al.), the paper introduces basic categories such as inevitableness or consciousness of impurity caused by nature, trespass or external influence. Certain impurities were unavoidable. Thus the pragmatic dimension of the purity/impurity-scheme comes into consideration without walking right into the trap of a moral assessment of this aspect. As or analogous to fault, impurity provokes divine wrath and thus has to be eliminated by ritual specialists. As regards the analogy of impurity and fault, purification and elimination of sins, Guichard and Marti offer a helpful methodological link between 'ritual' and 'moral' purity.

The paper of Joachim Quack is an investigation into the relevance of purity in Egypt, which is strongly rooted in the presentation, discussion and analysis of ritual texts. His assessment goes far beyond the implicit idea that purity was in general a very important issue in Egypt. The point of departure is a lack of systematization of the vast quantity of material in research on purity issues in Egyptology. With his presentation Quack aims at identifying the 'core system' of purity concepts in Egypt: delimitation and liminality. Purity regulations are restricted to certain places and certain social groups (especially priests), and their handling depends on ritual experts. Accordingly, Quack's paper explores some traits of the delimiting function of purity, beginning with temple rituals and the accessibility of temples in the first section of his paper. That there was ever a specific need for purity rituals with regard to place, person and objects is both expected and well-known. In particular this holds true for the purity requirements of priests, which seem to be accentuated from the Ramesside period onward. By focusing on a substantial and long-standing royal ritual, which is presented in translation in this combination of texts for the first time, Quack investigates the need for purification of the king as a substantial part of the ritual. Purity was obviously important among the Egyptian elites. Besides this general aspect, Quack elaborates on the demarcational function of purity as regards inner-Egyptian discrimination. Regional dietary rules in particular were violently imposed on inhabitants of certain regions. In addition, Quack's analysis reveals that purity had a comparable, comprehensive demarcational function with

respect to foreigners and ordinary people. Although the sources in this regard are scarce, this holds especially true for the Late Period, which is most interesting in a comparative perspective. As regards the differentiation between moral and physical purity, Quack observes a considerable imbalance in the classes of material. While the physical aspect is focused primarily on rituals, the moral dimension is present for example in the Book of the Dead.

Taking his point of departure from Mary Douglas' structuralist concept of order, Manfred Hutter investigates the conception of purity and impurity in Anatolian religions. He assumes that purity is part of the social structure, and that pollution is an endangering transgression. The Hittite texts treat impurity as a contagious phenomenon that hinders a person from taking part in particular cult-related practices and that thus has to be removed by rituals. The relation between the pure and the sacred is discussed on the basis of semantic analysis of the relevant Luwian, Hurrian and especially Hittite terminology. Against the background of the history of research, Hutter opts for a special category of (cultic) purity in the term *šuppi*, but rejects the coinciding equation with "sacred". While everyday purity, *parkui*, serves the society and its cultural system, *šuppi* enables participation in cultic actions. Within this basic concept of a "vertical function" of purity, the contrastive pair pure/impure is governed by the specific worldview. Pollution endangers and threatens the state order as well as individual life by endangering the cosmic equilibrium, and thus it has to be removed.

Two examples, the polluting capacity of corpses and of intermarriages, form the starting point of Albert de Jong's analysis of the ancient Zoroastrian conception of purity and pollution. Initially, he points to the very important epistemological differentiation between theory and practice. He emphasizes that a strict, literal application of demanded purity regulations would have rendered any contact between Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians impossible. In contrast, de Jong estimates that purity rules are absolutely crucial to the translation of the Zoroastrian worldview. As regards the conception of pollution, the paper considers the difference between unavoidable and non-serious pollutions in everyday life, which may be removed with simple rituals, and severe defilement, which requires more elaborate and complex rituals. As in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources, the impurity issue is deeply gender biased, burdening women more than men. Regarding the development of purity conceptions in Iranian religion, de Jong argues for a considerable enhancement and intensification in the late Sassanian period, and links this with

the inner-religious processes of transnationalization, sacralization, spiritualization and textualization. This train of thought is especially interesting as a contribution to the comparative perspective of the present volume. One may easily discover parallels in the Egyptian, Greek and Roman religions as well as in the development of Hellenistic Judaism. However, while these parallels all roughly date to the same time frame in the late Persian and Hellenistic periods, the Sassanian example is much later.

Hans-Peter Mathys gives an overview of the Phoenician and Punic epigraphic and archaeological sources regarding purity. The available material is sparse and difficult to analyze, so that Mathys is methodologically reluctant to present far-reaching conclusions. First he argues, within the frame of cultic continuity in the Southern Levant, that purity issues may be expected in Phoenician religion as well. The relevant epigraphic material in Punic inscriptions, which of course remains scarce, shows the figurative use of the phrase “a pure heart” and uses purity as a category comprising the correctness of one’s entire life. Such an ethical dimension, which seems to be distinct from a mere physical dimension at first sight, may be read against the background of ancient Israelite conceptions of ‘moral’ purity as expressed for example in Pss 19:10; 73:1. The archaeological evidence hints at the role of water installations in various sanctuaries, such as Kamid el-Loz, Bostan esh-Sheik, Tell Amrith, and Kition. Although such installations may be connected with purity issues and purification rituals, no firm conclusion can be reached in this respect. Overall the fragmentary evidence seems to indicate an intensification of purity concerns from the Achaemenid period onward.

The essay by Noel Robertson offers a comprehensive discussion of purity requirements in the so-called ‘sacred laws’ of ancient Greece, especially in the case of inscriptions placed at the entrance of local sanctuaries. His discussion emphasizes the importance of a thorough analysis of the language used in these inscriptions, especially as regards the two main Greek terms for ‘pure’, *καθαρός* and *ἅγιος*. The term *καθαρός* has a limited use and appears mostly in inscriptions that prescribe the means of purifying a homicide or other offender. The term *ἅγιος*, meaning not only ‘pure’ but also ‘holy’, occurs more frequently and refers to the quality of a deity that is required from the worshipper. Furthermore, it appears to be used exclusively in connection with those deities whose cults pertain to the pastoral or agrarian milieu or to the weather. For Robertson, this phenomenon must be correlated with the formative period of the Early Iron Age (ca. 1000–750 BCE), when the Greek cities arose, with their (partly new) pantheon of deities, after the Mycenaean age. The fact that deities requiring

purity from their worshippers tend to be restricted to pasturing and farming deities suggests that purity rules, as reflected in the inscriptions of the 6th century and afterwards, were closely related to the recreation of these two resources in the context of the emerging cities. Robertson then goes on to corroborate this general thesis by means of a systematic survey of the rules of purity associated, first, with pastoral deities, and, second, with agrarian deities in the various inscriptions of Greek sanctuaries. Although these rules date to a later time, they remained largely unchanged in the course of time and continued to reflect the pastoral and agrarian cults that developed in the context of the emerging cities. The main exception to this concerns the introduction of rules of 'moral' purity from the 4th century BCE onwards. The concern for purity of mind seems to be largely related to the cult of Asclepius (who does not belong to the pantheon of pastoral and agrarian deities); otherwise, it is only seldom mentioned. καθάρσις also occurs in the context of purification from homicide and other serious wrongdoings. Robertson notes, in particular, that these rules for purification were not simply replaced by legal process, but somehow persisted alongside them. In addition, those rules do not make reference to the purity rules in the context of the cult, and the two practices apparently remained distinct.

The following essay, by Linda-Marie Günther, offers a general discussion of concepts of purity in ancient Greece, with special attention to the connection between purity and sacred sites. From a methodological perspective, Günther's study is rooted in a critical discussion of the notion of 'Greek religion', in which she basically argues that concepts of purity and pollution need to be analyzed first and foremost at the level of local cults. Günther also observes that purity, in Greece, is mostly related to physical and cultic purity, whereas 'moral' purity plays a less prominent role, and she notes that purity and 'holiness' are closely related notions. The main portion of her study is devoted to a detailed discussion of the literary and epigraphic sources informing us about defilement and purification in connection with Greek sacred sites. The literary evidence that she addresses consists mostly of accounts found in the writings of Herodotus and Thucydides, where the topic of defilement of sacred places occurs on several occasions. Thucydides, as she demonstrates, is especially interesting for the information that he gives not only about defilement of sacred places—especially through dead bodies—but also about various sacrificial rituals that were devised by the ancient Greeks for the purification of those same sacred places. The epigraphic evidence is more diverse, but here also it is nonetheless possible to draw some important lines of con-

vergence. The rules regarding pollution and purification that are defined in these inscriptions did not significantly evolve over the centuries and were mostly intended to preserve the purity and sanctity of local sanctuaries. Accordingly, the social relevance of such rules did not extend beyond the visit to the sanctuary. Nonetheless, these rules had an important collective function, since one central aspect by which the citizen of a Greek *polis* defined himself was in terms of his affiliation with local cults.

The essay by Philippe Borgeaud addresses the way in which ritual practices pertaining to pollution and purity, and especially food prohibitions, were used by ancient Greeks as a 'comparative space', in which similarities and differences not only within Greek culture but also with other ancient cultures could be construed and conceptualized. Food prohibitions, in this analysis, function as a central 'cultural operator', a sophisticated system of differences that was used by ancient Greeks to comment not only on their own practices, but also on the practices of their neighbors. The first aspect is illustrated in relation to the dietary rules defined by Pythagorism and other philosophical schools. Borgeaud observes that these rules do not obey a single, comprehensive logic but appear to have various rationales. Their coherence can only be appreciated when they are interpreted against the background of the basic structure of Greek meals, which is constituted by *sitos* (a flour-based dish, generally bread) and *opson* (including aliments such as olives, cheese, and onion). The ideal meal is defined by the correct proportion of *sitos* to *opson*; the absence of such proportion, in contrast, leads to what the Greeks condemn as '*opsophagia*'. This basic structure defines an alimentary norm of sorts, against the background of which a wide range of inner-cultural differences can be construed, relating not only to everyday domestic meals but also to sacrifices. The same approach was applied by Greek authors in their interpretation of Egypt. Ancient Egyptian culture, as Borgeaud recalls, was consistently considered by Greek authors from the perspective of its dietary customs, and especially its food prohibitions, which were then used by the Greeks in order to comment on their own alimentary rules, and especially on some distinctively 'sectarian' prohibitions such as those pertaining to fish and beans. A like paradigm can be identified in the representation by ancient Greeks of Jewish food customs, particularly those pertaining to sacrifices. Thus, as early as Theophrastes (a disciple of Aristoteles from the 4th century BCE), there appears to have existed a comparative 'triangle' of sorts between Greece, Egypt and Israel, in which food customs and food prohibitions, as a differential system, formed the general background against which ancient Greeks assessed their own culture in relationship with others.

The next essay, by Bernhard Linke, provides a transition from Greece to Rome. Linke's study offers a comprehensive survey of notions of 'sacral' purity in ancient Rome, with a specific focus on the relationship between sacral purity and social order. From a methodological perspective, Roman notions of purity and pollution need to be interpreted against the general background of ancient Mediterranean culture, especially ancient Greece. Linke argues that in ancient Greece, purity is inseparable from the attempt to secure the presence of deities within human society through the delineation of spatially distinct areas, whose 'marked-off' character (i.e. their sacrality) was highlighted by physical markers (such as, especially, boundary stones) as well as by distinctive codes of conduct. Such marked-off spaces were, however, always 'precarious', which accounts for the importance given to the performance of rituals of purification in Greek sanctuaries. Compliance with the rules of purity defined by local sanctuaries establishes the appropriate behavior of a person entering a sacred precinct to engage in an interaction with the Greek gods. In the case of ancient Rome, however, the general function of purification rituals appears to have been different, especially in the case of those rituals performed on a regular basis (and not only in exceptional circumstances); furthermore, Linke argues that this basic difference should be related to a more general distinction in the perception of sacred space in Greece and Rome. In the case of ancient Greece, the general function of purity rules can be defined as an attempt to increase the 'densification' of the sacral within the human sphere. The Romans, in contrast, had a much more intense perception of the presence of such sacral forces among them, and that perception significantly influenced their social, political and religious organization. Accordingly, in Roman society, the central function of purification rituals was much more oriented towards the preservation of a state of 'harmony' and stability, whenever that state was considered to be potentially endangered. Linke shows in detail how this basic difference applies at the level not only of the main purification rituals that were performed in Rome, but also of the roles ascribed to Roman ritual specialists (i.e. priests), in contrast to Greek ones. In addition, he demonstrates how these differences need to be interpreted against the political context of Rome's domination within Latium.

The second group of papers moves on to biblical conceptions of purity by focusing on the main parts of the Hebrew Bible in which the issue of purity plays a major role: The Torah, esp. the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; the Ezra-Nehemiah composition; and the book of Ezekiel. These essays intend to carve out the main lines of biblical

conceptions of purity on the one hand and the specific particularities of single books in this regard on the other. All the essays contribute to the relationship between tradition and literary composition, and to such basic aspects of the conceptualization of purity as the question of 'moral' purity, the relatedness between the sacred and profane, holiness and purity, and the social function of purity discourses in the Hebrew Bible.

The comprehensive essay on forms and functions of purity in Leviticus by Christophe Nihan reads the system of purity regulations in Leviticus against the background of the late Persian period. On the level of social organization, purity regulations are considered to be regulative, related to social control rather than to the abstract symbolization of life and death. By differentiating between physical impurities (mainly Lev 12–15, impurities related to unavoidable conditions) and 'moral' impurities (mainly Lev 11; 18; 20, impurities related to the level of acts), he reveals different but related forms of social control. Nihan explicitly argues against a separation between two distinct forms of impurities. In fact these different dimensions are linked in substance by building a fence around the sanctuary, and they are linked compositionally through the literary framework of Leviticus and the emphasis of Lev 16 as the superimposed center of purification and expiation. Regarding the social function, he determines that the purity laws are an instrument of internal and external differentiation between social and ethnic groups. On the basis of this assumption, Nihan argues that the concept mirrors the socio-historical background of the province of Yehûd in the late Persian period, in which the prevalence of hierocratic structures, instead of monarchic or hegemonic authority, was established.

As regards purity issues, the book of Leviticus has usually played a central role, especially in the case of Lev 11–15, while purity concepts in the book of Numbers have seldom been considered for themselves. This observation forms the point of departure for the essay by Christian Frelvel on purity conceptions in the book of Numbers. Giving an overview on the wide range of texts in this book, he underlines the importance of purity issues, which are predominantly but not comprehensively in accordance with the prescriptions of the book of Leviticus. By concentrating on the bridging function of Num 5:1–4 in a compositional respect, Frelvel discusses the integrity of purity discourses in the Torah, and in particular the question of the intensification of purity demands in the book of Numbers. He argues for a spatially based concept, in which the organization of the social living space is contingent on the sanctuary in the center. With the important issue of impurities caused by corpses, the book of Numbers

emphasizes the death-life opposition as crucial for the balance of purity and defilement in a living space, which is governed by the presence of the deity in the sanctuary and the cohabitation in the midst of the congregation. By unfolding the compositional function of Num 5:1–4 as a hinge between Leviticus and Numbers, purity is shown to be constitutive for the congregation as “holy”.

While Numbers and Leviticus accordingly adhere to a purity concept that is influenced by priestly ideology and the striving for power, and likewise reveal the interests of this social stratum in societal power plays, the imprint of the book of Deuteronomy is different. The essay by Udo Rütterswörden introduces the purity conceptions of this book regarding cultic attendance, dietary laws, the military camp, and the impurity of corpses. According to Rütterswörden, the relevant regulations in Deuteronomy show a familiarity with purity issues, but they are not pivotal or part of a theologically grounded purity ‘system’. He discusses the variation from the ‘priestly system’ in Exodus to Numbers. In his view there are significant differences to be observed: While the priestly order defines impurity and purity in terms of substances, the Deuteronomic concept regards purity as a quality. In consequence, holiness is the state of election that actualizes purity. Following Moshe Weinfeld in his argumentation, Rütterswörden pays particular attention to the conception of impurity in relation to the land. He thereby stresses Deuteronomy’s difference from the idea that a place or land can be made impure, as is attested repeatedly in priestly and related texts: In Rütterswörden’s estimation, this idea is alien to Deuteronomy. Instead, impurity is based on action and is related to the people, not to the land or to a place. It is identified with ‘abomination’ without making morality and impurity completely convertible. Except for the dating of Deuteronomy, Rütterswörden follows Moshe Weinfeld, who argued for a demythologizing and secularizing motivation in Deuteronomy. If this is correct and the concept of Deuteronomy has to be dated prior to Leviticus and Numbers for literary reasons, then the later sacralization becomes more intensive and important as it is read against the background of social developments in Yehûd in the Persian period. This is corroborated in general by the following two papers on Ezekiel and Ezra-Nehemiah.

Michael Konkel investigates the system of holiness in Ezekiel’s vision of the new temple in Ezek 40–48. If it is dated to the Persian period, the book of Ezekiel could then presuppose great portions of the Torah as points of reference. Konkel demonstrates that the general outline of the temple follows a spatial order of graded holiness that is interpreted as a verbaliza-

tion of Ezek 42:20—the priestly discernment between holy and profane. Access to the sacred precinct is restricted to the Zadokite priests; laypersons may enter the outer court, but foreigners are banned totally. Through a close comparison with the Pentateuchal laws, Konkel shows that Ezek 44 provides a coherent system of interpretation of the Torah legislation, which he calls a “Zadokite Halakah”. The separation of city and temple in Ezek 47–48 indicates the ideological intensification of a holiness concept that withdraws any uncleanness from the sacred precinct and at the same time decouples holiness from the moral sphere. Hence the purity concept of Ezekiel 40–48 is ambivalent; as a requirement for access to the sacred precinct it becomes all the more important, but in contrast to the Torah this has no direct consequences for the ordinary people who remain separated from the center of holiness.

In accordance with Ezek 40–48, the Ezra-Nehemiah composition demonstrates that the temple of Jerusalem is the identity marker par excellence in the late Achaemenid Era. Purity issues are functionalized to stress the inner cohesion and identity of the community and to sharpen the outer boundaries by exclusion of foreigners. But the conceptualization of purity in particular is different, as the contribution of Benedikt Rausche shows in detail. Purity in Ezra-Nehemiah is employed in texts that constitute the postexilic community with regard to the temple. In the book of Ezra a sort of ‘genealogical’ purity highlights the demand of purity for adequate and legitimate access to the sanctuary. Ezra 6:21, especially, indicates a discourse about legitimate cult attendance between the returnees and the resident people. Separation from uncleanness, which has moral and physical aspects, is formulated as a precondition to attend the Passover. While the border in this concept appears to be permeable, the same does not hold true for the Ezra narrative in Ezra 9–10. Following a strict demand for the genealogical purity of the ‘holy seed’ (Ezra 9:2), foreign women, who are regarded as polluting, have to be divorced. Israel has to separate actively from all the impurities of the nations, as foreign influence is regarded as a source of defilement. In the second part of his paper, Rausche discusses the purity strategies in the book of Nehemiah in comparison to Ezra. Again issues of legitimate access, membership, purification of temple and city, priestly purity, exclusion of foreigners and separation of the people are addressed, but in a slightly different way than in the book of Ezra. The moral aspect of purity receives more attention than the ritual and genealogical dimensions. In sum, Rausche argues for a common framework for purity issues in postexilic literature. The main lines are developed from the sanctuary as the center of the community. This

concept was used in textual discourses in social, religious and political respects quite differently, in an inclusivist as well as an exclusivist manner. In a way, the problematization of purity in Ezra-Nehemiah as presented by Rausche anticipates the importance of purity issues in identity discussions in postbiblical traditions of the Second Temple period, which are treated in the following section.

The volume concludes with a series of four essays that deal with conceptions and representations of purity and pollution in Second Temple Judaism. A first essay by Beate Ego addresses purity concepts in Jewish writings of the Hellenistic period. Ego offers a detailed treatment of three texts in which purity concepts play a major role. The first instance concerns the story of the 'Watchers' (celestial beings, members of the heavenly court) in *1 En.* 6–16. She observes that this story refers to a variety of types of impurity, such as, especially, impurity through (sexual) intercourse, menstrual blood, the violation of laws about mixtures (*sha'atnez* laws), as well as, more generally, the watchers' transgression of cosmic rules. Most of these types of impurity are derived from the Torah itself, but they are creatively used and reconfigured within a specific discourse that offers an etiology for the presence of violence in the world. In addition, this discourse can be interpreted as entailing a *halakhic* polemic of sorts against the Jerusalem priesthood, as well as a general critique of the ideology of Hellenistic imperial cults. The second case that Ego discusses concerns the reception of purity laws related to purification after childbirth (Lev 12) in one passage of the book of Jubilees (*Jub.* 3:8–14). In Jubilees, the law about purification after childbirth was already revealed (in an extended form) to the primeval couple, Adam and Eve. As a result of this recontextualization, the law takes on a new dimension, in which access to the sanctuary at the end of the time of purification is now symbolically connected to Adam and Eve's entrance into paradise. This hermeneutical move is part of a broader trend in Jubilees, which seeks to reinterpret various central purity rules in the Torah by conferring on them a 'cosmic' perspective. The third and final case concerns the martyrdom traditions reported in *2 Macc* 6–7, in which purity rules (especially the prohibition against eating pork) likewise play a central role. Ego shows, in particular, how the general function of such stories is to construe dietary rules, and purity rules in general, as a central marker of Jewish piety and orthodoxy, but also to suggest that the purification of the temple achieved by the Maccabees was the concrete answer of the deity to such piety. Overall, her study points to the need for a complete reexamination of the role played by purity concepts in Second Temple literature, and of the creativity with which such concepts were used and developed by the authors of that literature.

Purity concepts also play a central role in the Dead Sea Scrolls, a topic that is the subject of an extensive treatment in the next two essays, by Ian Werrett and Gudrun Holtz. Werrett offers a comprehensive review of the scholarly discussion about purity at Qumran, which stresses not only the various positions but also their methodological implications. Two preliminary sections discuss basic aspects of purity in the Hebrew Bible (such as, especially, the distinction between 'ritual' and 'moral' purity), which form the backbone of purity concepts in the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as the classical problem of the identity of the group present at the site of Khirbet Qumran. Werrett then identifies two major phases in the discussion about purity at Qumran, from 1947 to 1990, and from 1990 to the present day. Regarding the first phase, he shows how, through the work of such scholars as D. Flusser, H. Ringgren, J. Neusner and M. Newton, the relationship between 'ritual' and 'moral' purity and impurity at Qumran gradually emerged as a key issue, especially as regards (a) the non-figurative use of 'moral' impurity in Qumran and (b) the locus of purity, which appears to have moved from the temple to the community itself. The second phase is characterized by the studies of H. Harrington, F. García Martínez, J. Klawans and I. Werrett himself. Despite many differences, one area of consensus that appears to emerge from that discussion is the central importance, for assessing purity rules at Qumran, of the community's self-understanding as a 'substitute' of sorts to the Jerusalem temple, which they considered to be provisionally defiled. In contrast, one major issue that has emerged from that discussion is the extent to which it is possible to treat purity rules in the Dead Sea Scrolls as forming a comprehensive system or, conversely, to correlate different concepts of purity and pollution in the Scrolls with the internal evolution of the community over two centuries. In a careful discussion of this issue, Werrett rejects the assumption of a cohesive system of purity in the Scrolls, but also points out the methodological difficulties involved in correlating different purity concepts with different stages in the community's history, as well as the need to consider other alternatives (such as, e.g., the possibility that the community tolerated a certain degree of disagreement vis-à-vis the interpretation of biblical rules pertaining to purity matters). Despite these methodological issues, it remains possible to draw some general conclusions concerning the role of purity concepts at Qumran with regard to the community's identity. In particular, the 'increasing stringency' of the Qumran *yahad's* interpretation of biblical rules should be regarded as a reflection of its growing distance vis-à-vis the Jerusalem temple.

The two central issues pointed out by Werrett, namely, the relationship between 'ritual' and 'moral' purity at Qumran and the role of diachronic

considerations, are at the center of the study by Gudrun Holtz. She critiques the recent models of J. Klawans and E. Regev, who separately identify a three-stage development of the relationship between moral and physical purity. For her, the way in which these two aspects of purity are already combined, before 150 BCE, in writings such as the *'Damascus Document'* (CD) calls for a reassessment of the categories involved as well as their relationship. She argues, in particular, that moral and physical purity in the Dead Sea Scrolls need to be placed against the broader background of the anthropology and cosmology evinced by the 'sectarian' texts of the community. The various manifestations labeled as 'moral' impurity are themselves predicated upon a distinctive view of human sinfulness that, according to Holtz, would be better described as 'constitutional impurity'. This 'constitutional' impurity is itself grounded in a cosmic dualism (manifest, in particular, in the teaching about the 'two spirits'), as well as in a doctrine of 'predestination'. This conception is already apparent in a strand of wisdom texts in the Hebrew Bible, as well as in post-biblical wisdom literature, but the main innovation introduced by the Qumran community lies in extending this 'constitutional' impurity to include the whole scope of impurities. This development represents a synthesis between 'priestly' and 'wisdom' traditions, which might go back to the Teacher of Righteousness, the putative founder of the Qumran community. The general concept of purity identified by Holtz takes two distinct yet related forms in the 'sectarian' practices defined by the 'Rule of the Community' (1QS) and the 'purity liturgies' found in Cave 4. Though both sets of texts combine 'moral' and 'physical-ritual' concepts of purity within the broader framework of 'constitutional purity', the moral dimension predominates in 1QS, whereas in the Cave 4 liturgies the physical-ritual dimension does so. From a methodological perspective, this suggests that the analysis of the Dead Sea Scrolls should give priority to aspects related to the literary form of the texts and the social structure of the community over diachronic considerations, even though the latter cannot be entirely dismissed.

The last essay of this volume, by Jürgen K. Zangenberg, addresses the import of archaeological evidence for interpreting purity practices in the Second Temple period. Zangenberg emphasizes the methodological issues involved in the discussion, especially as regards the definition of 'Judaism' in that period, as well as the scope of the relevant material, which he identifies as comprising stepped pools (*miqwa'ot*) as well as stone vessels. The background for assessing archaeological data related to purity practices in Second Temple Judaism is the general concern with achieving a

state of purity in everyday life, and not only in the context of visits to the temple in Jerusalem, an aspect of Jewish culture in the Hellenistic and Roman periods that is well documented in several literary sources. The survey of *miqwa'ot* makes clear that a wide variety of such pools existed in Second Temple times. Although these pools often share common features, such as being cut into bedrock, with steps leading to the bottom, individual installations could differ considerably, especially in their size and capacity as well as in their archaeological context; no systematic development can be claimed at that time. The use of *miqwa'ot* was apparently common to all strata of Judaism (aristocrats, priests, laity). Furthermore, *miqwa'ot* are attested both in Jewish Palestinian and Samaritan contexts, which may be an indication of the parallel development of a 'practical *halakhah*' between Palestinian Jews and Samaritans. The use of stone vessels, for its part, was even more widespread in Jewish Palestinian society (but not in the diaspora). However, the relationship between these vessels and purity issues in Second Temple Judaism remains difficult to assess. The increase in the use of such vessels in the Herodian period (2nd half of the 1st century BCE) reflects a variety of economic and political factors, such as the intensification of international contacts, growing prosperity, and increasing internal differentiation of Jewish society during Herod's reign. It is likely that this situation favored the increase in purity practices related to the use of vessels in Palestinian Judaism. However, the assumption that the increase in the use and distribution of stone vessels could be directly related to the 'quest of purity' in some Jewish groups (such as the Pharisees) at that time (e.g. E. Regev) misreads the data and cannot be substantiated. The connection between the development of purity practices and changes in the material culture remains a complex one.

5. DYNAMICS OF PURITY IN THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN: CENTRAL FEATURES AND EMERGING TRENDS

As was pointed out at the onset of this introduction, the basic objective of this volume is to offer a survey of the main conceptions of purity in the ancient Mediterranean, as well as major practices associated with the opposition between clean and unclean. From a methodological perspective, this approach takes seriously the variety and diversity of such representations and practices in the cultures of the ancient Mediterranean. Accordingly, the purpose of this volume is not to establish some sort of 'general theory' of purity in the ancient Mediterranean. In our view, it is

doubtful that such a general theory is possible, or even desirable, unless one wants to fall back into the kind of 'essentialist' approach to purity that was commonplace some decades ago. Having said that, it is nonetheless possible to identify some general aspects, at the level of both the cultural construction and the social function, of the opposition between clean and unclean; those aspects may legitimately be regarded as defining central features of purity concepts in the ancient Mediterranean. To some extent, it is also possible to define some general trends in the forming and transforming of purity concepts in that cultural area. Identifying such central features and general trends is not only useful for laying out a general basis for cross-cultural comparison in the ancient Mediterranean; it may also hold significant potential for further studies on purity in other cultural areas. In the following, this issue will be discussed from a twofold, complementary perspective: First, the role of purity in the construction of social practice in the cultures of the ancient Mediterranean; and second, the role of purity in the formation and transformation of religious traditions.

(1) Purity and the Construction of Social Practice. One basic feature of purity that is manifest in several of the essays contained in this volume concerns the way in which purity concepts and representations constitute a central aspect of the implementation of social practice in a given group. Here, we may have a useful complement to the usual approach to purity as the expression of a more general 'symbolic order', the limitations of which were already discussed above (see § 1). More specifically, one could say that the opposition between 'clean' and 'unclean' is one of the major *loci* where the relationship between 'structure' and 'agency' is concretely articulated. In many respects, the opposition between pure and impure (or clean and unclean) functions as a basic cultural 'operator' that relates to further central oppositions in the organization of a social group. The ascription of 'purity' and 'impurity', respectively, corresponds first and foremost to the collective ascription, within a group, of a distinct *status*, which is itself related to a series of social *roles*. 'Impurity' is often, if not always, a category of exclusion. Accordingly, the state defined as 'unclean' is negatively marked and usually calls for the performance of socially codified practices intended to regain a state defined as 'clean', practices that may themselves be more or less institutionalized (e.g. in the form of rituals). Although the relationship between the construction of the opposition between pure and impure and the construction of agency at the collective and individual level varies considerably from one

culture to the other in the ancient Mediterranean world, some general features can be identified.

(a) First, purity concepts, in the ancient Mediterranean, are always related to the divine sphere and the deities of the social group; there is no such thing as a 'profane' or 'mundane' view of purity (and impurity) in those cultures. On the contrary, the opposition between pure and impure serves first and foremost to define a key aspect of the relationship between human beings (male and female) and deities, which can then be used, so to speak, in a derivative manner, in order to construe and conceptualize the relationships between in-group and out-group, or within the group itself (although even in this case, the 'religious' dimension of purity always seems to remain present). This means that the way in which social agency is construed through the opposition between pure and impure within a given group is itself centrally informed by, as well as related to, the way in which this same group construes its interaction with its own deities.

(b) Second, and this aspect is closely related to the first, one prominent feature in the various cultures surveyed in this volume is the way in which the social construction of the opposition between pure and impure is related to the social construction of *space*, especially (albeit not exclusively) in relation to the division between 'sacred' and 'profane' space. Especially in Greece or in the Southern Levant, but likewise in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Asia Minor, the opposition between pure and impure serves first and foremost to define and restrict access to the gods in their sanctuaries. In order to understand the full import of this, we need to keep in mind that local sanctuaries were key 'nodes' not just at the level of the cult, but also in other aspects of social organization (especially administrative, political and economic). Access to local cults, and participation in their rituals, was, therefore, a central aspect of the definition of collective and personal identity and agency in the various cultures of the ancient Mediterranean. Furthermore, the spatial dimension of the opposition between purity and impurity was not restricted to the sphere of local sanctuaries, but could be transferred to other socially construed spaces, such as, for instance, the palace (especially in the case of Egypt) or households (in the case of ancient Israel). In this respect, purity concepts have a central function, in the ancient Mediterranean, with regard to both the 'mapping' of social space as well as the definition of permitted and non-permitted interactions between specific areas contained within this social space.

(c) Third, and lastly, all the cultures of the ancient Mediterranean present—admittedly to varying degrees—‘high-grid’, sophisticated forms of social, political and economic organization. As would be expected from such cultures,⁴² the opposition between purity and impurity, in relation to the definition of agency at the collective and individual level, is closely related to what has been designated as ‘ritual mastery’.⁴³ Concretely, the knowledge of the distinction between ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ (as well as related distinctions) in such cultures is always in the hands of ritual specialists, usually priests, who themselves control (or at least have some degree of influence over) the local sanctuaries. In such societies, submission to the rules defining how to avoid impurity, what to do in a state of uncleanness, or how to be purified from such uncleanness, concretely manifests submission to this priestly authority and—correspondingly—enacts the empowerment of that authority. It is in this aspect, probably, that the relation between purity, the construction of collective and individual agency, and the establishment or maintenance of social hierarchies is most obvious.

(2) Purity and the Formation and Transformation of Religious Traditions. Another central aspect of purity concepts that emerges from this survey of ancient Mediterranean cultures concerns the role played by the opposition between purity and impurity in the forming and the ‘densification’ of religious traditions, especially in relation to exogenous and endogenous factors. Here also, despite the great diversity of the material surveyed in this volume, it is possible to advance some general remarks.

(a) One distinctive feature that emerges from the cross-cultural comparison between concepts of purity in the cultures of the ancient Mediterranean is the significant *stability* of purity concepts in the ancient Mediterranean, especially in early times (i.e. third and second millenniums BCE). In the case of the Hittite culture, basic concepts of pollution and purity appear to have changed very little over time (M. Hutter); the same conclusion arises from the survey of the Egyptian material, for the earlier periods (J. F. Quack), or of the Sumerian and early Mesopotamian evidence (M. Guichard and L. Marti). This conclusion is not restricted to the ancient Near East; analysis of the Greek inscriptions pertaining to purity (from the 6th century BCE to the late Hellenistic period) shows that the notion of purity presented by these inscriptions is essentially ‘unchanging’

⁴² On this, see especially M. Douglas, *Two Bodies*, 86–87.

⁴³ On ritual mastery, see, e.g., Bell, *Ritual Theory*, esp. 107–108 and *passim*.

(N. Robertson, L.-M. Günther). If one accepts the analogy between purity concepts in Israel and in Phoenicia (H.-P. Mathys), this holds true in some respect for the southern Levant, too. Conversely, when major changes in these conceptions occur—such as the abandonment of earlier representations and the emergence of new ones—those changes are largely consistent in reflecting major social, economic, political, cultural and/or cultic transformations. In this regard, the volume demonstrates that analysis of the development *and* transformation of purity notions proves to function as an excellent indicator for assessing broader cultural changes, especially from the perspective of their impact on religion and the forming of religious traditions in antiquity.

(b) Another major contribution of this volume is to help us put into perspective the changes in the dynamics of purity concepts that take place during the first millennium BCE, especially in connection with the so-called process of ‘Hellenization’. In early periods, as noted above, purity concepts exhibit a relative stability and permanence overall. Furthermore, the Hittite material surveyed by M. Hutter shows that, although external influences (especially from the Hurrian culture) on Hittite concepts of purity and pollution are attested, such influences were rapidly assimilated and integrated into Hittite purity concepts and rituals, without significant difficulties. The same conclusion holds true, *mutatis mutandis*, in the case of the early Egyptian (J. F. Quack) and Mesopotamian (M. Guichard and L. Marti) material.⁴⁴ It is only in traditions from the 6th century BCE or later that we witness major and rapid transformations of local representations of purity and pollution (emergence of new concepts, abandonment or reinterpretation of earlier ones). Although various internal factors underlying this major modification in the dynamics of purity may be identified in each culture, external factors are clearly predominant, especially in connection with the intensification of economic and cultural exchanges in the ancient Mediterranean (see further below). This development is especially manifest in Greek and early Jewish traditions from the second half of the first millennium (see especially the essays by P. Borgeaud and B. Ego; compare also the biblical material presented

⁴⁴ Quack also notes the relative ‘plasticity’ of Egyptian traditions with respect to the potential impurity of foreigners (non-Egyptians). For instance, although such foreigners appear in various traditions to be barred from certain parts of Egyptian sanctuaries—but not necessarily from the entire sanctuary—because these parts are reserved for the priests, other traditions attest to non-Egyptians who may become priests, despite their being foreigners.

by C. Nihan, C. Frevel, B. Rausche and M. Konkel, as well as the Qumran material surveyed by I. Werrett and G. Holtz). But it can also be observed in the case of late Egyptian traditions (J. Quack) and—chronologically postponed—in the Iranian material (A. de Jong). In some Greek traditions from the second half of the first millennium, this development even gave birth to a complex tradition comparing Greek and non-Greek purity rules dealing with food and diet, as P. Borgeaud demonstrates in detail.

At the same time, this observation calls for a revision of the traditional assumption of a complete cultural 'break' between the Hellenistic period and earlier periods in the ancient Mediterranean. The observed transformation in the dynamics of purity does not simply start with the emergence of Hellenistic kingdoms and empires in the ancient Near East following the death of Alexander the Great. Nor is it a phenomenon that may simply be accounted for by the encounter between the Greek—or, more broadly, Hellenistic—culture and other Mediterranean cultures. Rather, several essays point to the complexity of this phenomenon, which appears to start in the context of the Persian (Achaemenid) Empire at least (late 6th to late 4th century BCE), and will *then* gradually become more and more intense during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Without denying the role played by reactions against Hellenism in this process (see especially the essay by B. Ego in the case of ancient Jewish literature), various essays emphasize the importance of the Persian context for understanding the development of forms of contact and interaction between purity concepts in the ancient Mediterranean; in the case of ancient Judaism, specifically, direct contact between Iranian and Jewish concepts of purity and impurity is also raised by some essays.⁴⁵ In contrast, other essays emphasize the fact that contacts between Greek and Semitic concepts of purity do not simply begin with Alexander's campaign, but were already taking place in the period of Achaemenid domination in the Levant (P. Borgeaud, J. Quack, and H.-P. Mathys). Overall, this calls for a much more differentiated assessment of the transformation of the dynamics of purity and impurity in the second half of the first millennium than the current view of 'Hellenization' implies, and for the development of a theoretical model that takes seriously the complexity of the phenomenon of intensification of economic and cultural exchanges that may

⁴⁵ See especially the essay by C. Frevel on the emergence of the ascription of pollution to corpses in ancient Judaism, a notion not attested before the Persian period which may reflect Zoroastrian influence. For the parallels between Jewish and Iranian concepts of purity and pollution, see in general the essay by A. de Jong.

be observed in the ancient Mediterranean in the context of the Persian (Achaemenid), Greek and Roman empires. Additionally, the broader perspective regarding processes of densification and intensification of purity concepts in the ancient Mediterranean also implies that the emphasis on purity in Hellenistic Judaism is not a separate path in history—a Jewish ‘Sonderweg’, so to speak—but represents a cultural phenomenon that needs to be assessed against the background of a more general cultural development.

(c) A further phenomenon that emerges very clearly from the material surveyed in this volume, in connection with the transformation in the dynamics of purity and pollution in the second half of the first millennium BCE, concerns the close correlation between *internal* and *external* differentiation in the development of purity concepts. This phenomenon is especially obvious in ancient Jewish literature, although it has some parallels in other religious traditions from approximately the same period, especially some Greek philosophical schools (P. Borgeaud). Here, we have a major difference from *earlier* conceptions of purity, be it in Egypt, among the Hittites, or in Mesopotamia, where (a) the concern for external differentiation appears to play a much more limited role, and (b) it is usually *not* explicitly correlated with processes of internal differentiation (see J. Quack, M. Hutter, M. Guichard and L. Marti, as well as N. Robertson and L.-M. Günther for ancient Greece). In some Jewish pseudepigraphic or apocryphal writings such as the Henoch traditions (*1 Enoch*) or the book of Jubilees, the development of distinctive notions of purity and pollution as a reaction against ‘foreign’ influences—or, more exactly, against influences that are *construed* as such by the authors of these writings—goes hand in hand with polemics against various other Jewish groups, who are notably accused of succumbing to such foreign influences (B. Ego). A similar observation applies in the case of Qumran (see G. Holtz) and in some of the canonical traditions of the late Persian/early Hellenistic periods, especially those associated with the figures of Ezra and Nehemiah (B. Rausche). The fact that this situation is especially marked in the case of ancient Judaism is mostly due to the fact that, in the historical context of the second half of the first millennium, the *markers* of ‘Judaism’ were largely disputed; accordingly, the construction of identity automatically implied internal as well as external differentiation. For different groups, purity/impurity concepts thus offer a convenient tool for stigmatizing various categories of practices (such as nudity in the gymnasia, cf. Jubilees), specific institutions (such as certain forms of marriages), or categories of persons (such as, e.g., foreigners) by categorizing them as ‘unclean’ and—thereby—polluting.

Moreover, it must be observed that, in the second half of the first millennium, processes of differentiation (both internal *and* external) often go hand in hand with other processes of generalization, or even homogenization, of purity concepts. This is another, related aspect of the transformation in the dynamics of purity concepts in that historical and cultural context. The Qumran material surveyed in this volume by I. Werrett and G. Holtz is especially significant in this respect, since it offers evidence for both synthetic tendencies with regard to purity/impurity concepts—such as, e.g., the tendency to merge representations of *physical* and *moral* impurity—alongside the development of radically new conceptions of pollution, which are themselves part of the general strategy developed by the community to differentiate themselves from other Jewish groups of the time, as G. Holtz convincingly shows. However, the same principle is already at work in some biblical traditions from the late Persian period; the complex theories laid out in the books of Leviticus and Numbers, in particular, may legitimately be analyzed along the same lines (see the essays by C. Nihan and C. Frevel, respectively). In these two books, the general attempt to define a unified, comprehensive system of pollution centered on the central sanctuary and the priestly caste makes it possible to introduce a whole new series of sophisticated legal and religious distinctions regarding concepts of purity/impurity, which clearly reflect the changed religious and political situation under the Persian Empire.

Thus, contrary to a widespread assumption in the scholarly literature, the processes identified here with respect to purity concepts in the second half of the first millennium are not antithetic, but rather appear to be deeply complementary. In the case of ancient Judaism at least, *the close correlation between these processes characterizes the transformation in the dynamics of purity and pollution that gradually takes place in the second half of the first millennium BCE*, as compared with earlier concepts of purity in the ancient Mediterranean, be it in Asia Minor, in Mesopotamia, in Egypt or in classical Greece. This transformation itself corresponds to a distinct phase in the formation and transmission of religious traditions in the ancient Mediterranean, which may be regarded as a relevant example of the concept of ‘densification’ in the context of ancient Western religions. Such processes of ‘densification’, in turn, are crucial for the formation, development and transformation of religious traditions.

(d) To conclude, we may finally stress one related aspect that emerges prominently from a significant portion of the material surveyed in this volume. In some cultures of the ancient Mediterranean, the intensification of the role played by purity concepts seems to be closely related not

only to textual production but rather to a broader cultural shift, which may be characterized by the fact that the forming and the development of a religious tradition is predominantly defined by the reference to a body of texts that functions as a central authority. One may characterize this development as a process of ‘textualization’. Furthermore, this process goes along with another, related process of ‘sacralization’, which corresponds for its part to the fact that this body of texts is increasingly assigned a ‘sacred’ status within a given culture. Such a transformational process can be observed, in particular, in ancient Judaism and in the late Iranian traditions, although analogous and parallel trends can be identified in other cultures of late antiquity, be it in Egypt, Greece or Rome. In the case of ancient Judaism, the ‘textualization’ and ‘sacralization’ of ‘religion’ appears already to have begun in the Achaemenid period (see C. Frevel, C. Nihan, M. Konkel and B. Rausche) and goes on through the Hellenistic and Roman periods (see B. Ego, I. Werrett and G. Holtz); in the case of ancient Iranian religion (more specifically, Zoroastrianism), it seems to be linked with the Sassanid period specifically (see A. de Jong). The main feature of this process is the growing importance given to sacred ‘texts’ in the formation, transformation and adaptation of religious beliefs and experiences. The ‘textualization’ of religious notions (i.e., their encoding in various written works) becomes a central feature for defining the ‘authoritative’ character of these same notions. Conversely, as a result of this process, religious beliefs and experiences are no longer necessarily associated with specific places, but with the performance—be it at the collective or the individual level—of the various texts in which these beliefs and experiences are encoded. In the case of ancient Judaism and of Zoroastrianism, specifically, this general process of ‘textualization’ of the religious experience is intimately linked with the intensification of the role played by concepts of purity. Because such concepts are no longer legitimized by reference simply to local customs, but to the sacred texts of the group, they can also take on a new, more general relevance for that group.

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PURITY IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA:
THE PALEO-BABYLONIAN AND NEO-ASSYRIAN PERIODS

Michaël Guichard and Lionel Marti

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing a synthesis of notions of purity and impurity in the Ancient Near East proves a thorny endeavor. For reasons inherent to our occidental culture, studies preoccupied with this topic readily compare the biblical data with those of the Ancient Near East.¹ Yet, although the assyriological information on this material is plentiful and varied, it is difficult to reconcile with the Hebraic documentation, since Mesopotamia has bequeathed to us neither a systematic ‘discourse on purity’ nor sources that would allow us to theorize in this field with certainty.

The Mesopotamians have left us nothing theoretical about the manner in which they conceived their world, be it from a political, social, religious or moral perspective. Thus, we do not possess the codification of their conception of purity or impurity, nor even a systematic catalog of cases that would resemble Leviticus’ prescriptions for the Israelites (the so-called Holiness Legislation). The notion of purity is nonetheless omnipresent—to the point of obsession—in the texts of rituals, in incantations, in prayers and hymns in Sumerian or in Akkadian, in juridical documents, etc. It is not only a matter of concern for the priests, but rather society as a whole that was affected by this topic. The book of Leviticus ‘composed’ by members of the priestly class also included rules addressed to the entire Israelite community.

We can presume that there existed in Mesopotamia a systematic presentation of behavioral rules or of moral codes and that it was transmitted orally. Some regulations appear explicitly in several documents used by exorcists. It is nevertheless rather difficult to recover a complete system of thought from these bits and pieces of information, however numerous

¹ Since the fundamental study of van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia*, which can be supplemented by van der Toorn, “La pureté rituelle au Proche-Orient ancien”, 339–356. One can also consult Wilson, “*Holiness*” and “*Purity*”; and recently, Pongratz-Leisten, “Reflections on the Translatability of the Notion of Holiness”, 409–427.

they are, especially since we usually do not know the mechanisms for the spread of these types of principles in time and space.

Comparison is perhaps not the most reliable way to face this problem, especially for the more ancient periods, even though it might seem the most direct approach for more recent times. To our knowledge, the only author who has identified a general principle that would underlie the Mesopotamian 'system' is van der Toorn. Historians, however, must avoid being deceived by 'preconceptions on the Orient' such as the scope of the supposed ban on pork in ancient societies.

At the moment there is no in-depth synthesis on 'purity' in Mesopotamia. According to Sallaberger, an analysis of vocabulary indicates that one must distinguish between the notions of 'washing' (in particular in daily life) and of 'cultic purification' or 'religious purity', even though the vocabulary is partially the same.² It is perhaps less difficult to discuss 'purification', the concrete action, rather than purity, an abstract notion that Mesopotamian 'authors' never sought to define. One can easily conclude that everything that is 'dirty' is not necessarily classified as impure in the religious meaning of the term: a worker, on his job site, is not made impure in and of itself by the dirt he carries in order to construct a building. Neither one of these two aspects—hygiene and purity, which cannot be separated entirely—has really been explored in a systematic fashion: the latter one attracts more attention because it is initially overrepresented due to the abundance of religious literature that has reached us. The importance of ritual purity and the diversity of aspects that it takes make the topic vague and difficult to capture in its entirety. The present essay will tackle the question of hygiene only fleetingly, even though we are aware that this domain is part of culture and that it is thus not separable from the idea of 'cultic purity'.

Liturgical objects, the people who manipulate them, the human acts, the places where the rites are executed, everything that is related to the gods or their cult needs to be kept pure or made such. Even outside the sanctuary, individuals remain under the surveillance of the gods and the threat of various divine agents. As such, people must strive to maintain a state of purity towards the gods and towards their contemporaries. The level of requirement for purity varies then according to the categories of individuals and is a function of places and moments. Criteria evolved with time: thus, in sumero-akkadian culture, pork became impure and an

² Sallaberger, "Reinheit", 295–296.

object of official abomination only at a late period.³ Numerous interdictions also existed in the profane world, but what was part of everyday life and 'normal' is much more difficult to grasp on the basis of our written sources.

Indeed, the written sources' diversity itself is an object of confusion. The texts at our disposal are varied in kind and show that an analysis of purity needs to be approached through an extremely large number of different documents. The epistolary corpus can thus deliver considerable information on this topic. Besides anecdotes from daily life, we have at our disposal the correspondence between the scholars surrounding the king of Assyria and the king himself; naturally, scholarly treatises also approach this topic from a religious point of view as well as from a daily-life perspective; finally, the very numerous rituals of sin expiation and ritual purification are similarly attentive to this theme.

Nevertheless, this multitude of sources does not compensate for the absence of a treatise on purity. The cases mentioning the notions of purity and impurity are nearly infinite. They might mention ritual purification, an essential step before one comes into contact with the divinity; or perhaps the purification of holy places because they host gods; or yet again rituals of purification performed for the construction of buildings. The specialists involved in these processes were very many; it is necessary to distinguish between those who had to accomplish rituals because of the practice of their professional activity and those whose mission was to purify the world from outside aggressions. This distinction allows us to assume the existence of two levels of impurity in Mesopotamian thought: the one related to daily life and the other provoked by the transgression of a taboo or by the action of an exterior agent. In the last case, specific rituals are performed whose function is multiple, purification being mentioned among other types of interventions, since impurity is associated with notions of transgression of prohibition, of divine wrath, etc. Thus, such rituals often end with the fact of 'freeing' (*paṭāru*) people from their sin, in order to absolve them and to purify them.

It is necessary, from the start, to emphasize the wealth of related vocabulary: it creates nuance, perhaps even semantic confusion likely to render a systematic exposition, or an exposition that would aim to define too rigid a category, difficult. The Sumerian and Akkadian terminologies do not coincide perfectly, even though the former are mainly understood

³ Lion and Michel, *De la domestication au tabou*.

thanks to the latter. The relationship between these two lexical levels, through which, in the end, the same culture expresses itself, is complex, as is exemplified by the problem of the interpretation of the Sumerian term *kug*, which does not have a real counterpart in Akkadian. One cannot, however, do without the very rich Sumerian information that remains, in particular, the privileged witness for the traditional sacerdotal milieu in the centers of lower Mesopotamia.

The preferred rendering of the sumerogram *Kug* (=ku₃) was Akkadian *ellu(m)*, even though this latter must originally have had a close relationship with *sikil*, whose sign might well also be read as *el*. *Sikil* itself was glossed by either *ellu(m)* or by *ebbu(m)*. *Kug* and *sikil* are generic Sumerian terms expressing the notion of purity; they can be used as adjectives or as verbs. One must tackle their meaning on the basis of a considerable, diverse and dispersed mass of data. It has been noted that *kug* very often retained a literary character, while *sikil* was used more abundantly in texts of juridical practice. However, we should certainly refrain from thinking that *kug* would consist merely of this dimension; it also carried an added religious value that was particular to it (a notion of 'sacred,' or even 'holiness').

In these Sumerian texts, the periods, the places, the different layers of society and the various moments of daily life are represented very unequally. As a whole, all that is related to purity (or impurity) is presented in a very concrete manner: it may lend a picturesque touch to the various cases discussed, but the accumulation of details quickly creates the risk of losing sight of the whole. Nonetheless the few studies of these terms highlight the fact that a distinction might be made between an intrinsic state of purity (*ellu[m]* or *sikil*), the effect of brightness and/or of whiteness that calls for the idea of purity (*kug*, *šen*, *dadag* and *ebbu[m]*), and the notion of 'putting in order,' 'separation' (na-de₅).⁴ Thus, we may contrast the 'ki-sikil', 'a pure place' that designates the *virgo intacta*, and the 'kug-Inana', 'the bright Inana', famed for her erotic prowess, the latter representing foremost the morning or evening star;⁵ in a similar fashion,

⁴ Sallaberger, "The Sumerian Verb na de₅(-g) 'to clear'".

⁵ Vanstiphout, "Sanctus Lugalbanda", 259–260 argues that, in ku₃-^dInana, *kug* represents a fixed adjective ('Sainte-Inana'), the Sumerian adjective always being placed after the noun. Several divinities are also preceded by this epithet. Yet, this phenomenon is more frequent in particular in anthroponomy, where one finds Ku₃-^dNingal, Ku₃-^dNanna, etc. The only (divinized) human to carry the name is the legendary hero of Uruk Lugalbanda, often designated as ku₃-^dLugal-ban₃-da, "Saint-Lugalbanda". Having analyzed this case, Vanstiphout ("Sanctus Lugalbanda", 283) shows that *kug* contains the idea of 'miraculous power'.

‘kug’ refers to the brightness of metal, yellow (kug-sig₁₇) being used for talking about gold and white (ku₃-babbar) the preferred term where silver is concerned.

It is the common association of the two terms *ellu(m)* and *ebbu(m)* or of kug and sikil that creates the idea of ‘absolute purity’. Indeed it has been recognized for a long time that Mesopotamian languages make up for the absence of a precise conceptual vocabulary—akin to the one normally found in a modern European language—by using lexical couples whose opposition (or complementarity, depending on the case) allows for a full account of a particular notion.

The vocabulary of purification in Akkadian,⁶ as also in English and in French, applies as much to concrete practices of cleaning as to the notion of purification. One ‘washes oneself’ from one’s sins so as to be purified from them. The three main Akkadian terms for ‘pure’ are *ebbu*⁷ (from *ebēbu*), *ellu*⁸ (from *elēlu*) and *zakû*⁹ (from *zakû*). In the first millennium, the terms built on *ebēbu* and *elēlu* are often associated in pairs whose juxtaposition renders the notion of “pure being”, according to the principle mentioned above. Yet, the data for the language in its early stages reveal a fairly marked distinction between these two terms that refer to two purities with distinct motivations: it is only when they are both realized that the subject is completely pure/purified.¹⁰

⁶ See for example the somewhat dated study of Seux, “Pur et impur en Mésopotamie”, 452–459.

⁷ CAD gives the following meanings, CAD E 1b: 1. polished, shining, lustrous, clean, pure (in a cultic sense), holy, 2. trustworthy, proper.

⁸ CAD E 102b: 1. clean, pure, 2. holy, sacred, 3. free, noble. Refer also to the comments of Wilson, “Holiness” and “Purity”, 67–83.

⁹ CAD Z 23a–b: 1. clear, 2. clean, cleansed, in good order, 3. plain, 4. refined, pure, 5. free of claims.

¹⁰ See Durand, “Assyriologie” (2009–2010, 500), who distinguishes between *elēlum*, ‘avoir une pureté de souche, naturelle’, which in political language is used to refer to the *ellum*, ‘the free man’ (at another level of ‘independence’, *ki-sikil* ‘pure place’ refers to the ‘virgin’ [*virgo intacta*]), and *ebēbum*, ‘établir un degré de pureté, après estimation d’un déchet ou d’une perte, et accord entre plusieurs participants’. The *ebbum* (which Durand interprets as an active participle whose origin is not Akkadian but Amorite; see *Documents épistolaires du palais de Mari*, t. 2, 333–334) is thus the one who, in the texts of Mari, acts as an expert to estimate the quality of a product, or who even serves as referee when a contestation is foreseen; this is true for the economic domain (translated as ‘member of an elected industrial tribunal’) but also for the political world. The *tēbibtum* is not the ‘census of the people’ for itself, but the appreciation of the loss it experienced after a series of deaths due to conflicts; the term also indicates the method for estimating the time remaining between the end of a lunar month and the beginning of the next one, in order to calculate the appearance of the new moon: it is at that time that the oracles are taken for the next period. In contrast, *ellum* means ‘virgin oil’. One immediately notices the religious implications

Next to these terms, there are many other verbs meaning “purify”. In addition to the two mentioned earlier, some seem to be specific, such as *qadāšu*,¹¹ which appears in the context of rituals of purification accomplished by the ‘exorcist’ (*w*)*āšīpu*, *hābu*,¹² *kapāru*.¹³ In addition, all these roots are part of the formation of the names for rituals aiming at purification, such as *takpirtu*,¹⁴ *taqdīšu*, *tazkītu*, *tēbibtu*, *tēliltu* or *šuluhhû*. Compared to this profusion of names for purification, the terms defining the ‘impure’ are few. A common way of expressing ‘impure’ is *la ellu*, namely the negative form ‘not pure’.¹⁵ Impurity is also mainly understood as dirt, notably the terms (*w*)*aršu*¹⁶ (dirty) and, above all, *lu’û*.¹⁷ The last refers to what is ‘defiled’ rather than ‘dirty’. It is found in particular in contexts where the defilement is likely to disrupt a ritual activity for which it is necessary to be pure.

Given issues of space, this article aims to be a first presentation on the topic, in no way exhaustive, and it will be centered on these two aspects of purity and impurity. Our approach is assyriological in principle. We wanted to introduce this topic from the perspective of what is found about it in cuneiform texts, presenting the manner in which Mesopotamians themselves apprehended it, so as to reconstruct their notion of purity and impurity.

In that perspective, we thus intend:

- (1) First, to present two different periods very richly documented, namely, the third dynasty of Ur and the Paleo-Babylonian period that follows (22nd–17th century), on the one hand, and the Neo-Assyrian period (9th–6th century), on the other;

to which these two processes (laic in their principle) can give rise, especially in a world suffused with the religious.

¹¹ CAD Q 46a: 2. quddušu to clean, 3. to make ritually clean, to purify, 4. to consecrate, dedicate.

¹² CAD H 20a: 1. to consecrate, exorcise, purify by fumigation.

¹³ CAD K 178a: 1. to wipe off, 2. to smear on, 3. kuppuru to wipe off, to clean objects, to rub, to purify magically.

¹⁴ See in particular Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity*; and Jean, *La magie néo-assyrienne en contexte*, 105.

¹⁵ See the examples in CAD E 106a.

¹⁶ CAD A 309b: dirty, unclean.

¹⁷ CAD L 258b: to defile, desecrate, to dirty.

- (2) Second, and as a consequence of this choice, thus to tackle very different 'literary' genres: i.e., myths, hymns, and incantations for the first period, divinatory series and exorcism manuals for the second;
- (3) Third and last, to study the pure and impure from the perspective of two complementary angles, the cultic function of purity (rituals and temple) on the one side, and the treatment of impurity in daily life and in the Neo-Assyrian imperial court on the other.

Each of the two following sections of this essay makes forays into other time periods than the ones under scrutiny. This is largely inevitable, because the recent data coming from libraries contain traditions that are more ancient and whose originals are missing nowadays, and because some of the latest states of our texts can only be understood through their precursors, which are still poorly represented.

In particular, this approach amounts, in a first stage, to presenting purity and purification according to Sumerian literature, inasmuch as it is concerned with the domain of the sacred; and, in a second stage, to presenting the means for identifying and analyzing the impurity of the individual in the first millennium.

2. PURITY AND PURIFICATION ACCORDING TO SUMERIAN LITERATURE (2150–1600)

2.1. *The Science of the Sacred*

The knowledge of what was and was not considered pure, the manner in which one purifies something that can and must be pure, were probably the object of a 'science', as is perhaps already expressed in the Sumerian concept of *ku₃-zu*, whose etymology must be literally "(the one) who knows what is 'bright'/'pure'/'sacred'"¹⁸ and which has taken the general meaning of 'scholar', of 'very intelligent', or even of 'cunning'.¹⁹ Thus, the

¹⁸ Wilson ("*Holiness*" and "*Purity*", 34, n. 99) disagrees with Falkenstein, who understood the expression as 'pure knowledge' ('reines Wissen'). We are maintaining Wilson's idea while not adhering entirely to the separation of his system, which is too systematic. It is necessary to remember that, for Wilson, *ku₃* does not mean 'pure' (see above).

¹⁹ This quality applies to divinities like Nanše (Gudea, Cyl. A II, 1; following the translation of *Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, 2.1.7, <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.1.7#> (accessed 3/22/2011): "my dream-interpreter, an expert on her own") and Inana (Cohen, *Sumerian Hymnology: The Eršemma*, n^o79, l. 2 and 38); and to

famous prince of the city of Lagaš, Gudea (around 2100), introduced himself as someone who “knows the sacred and who knows the ‘things’” (ku₃ zu-am₃ enim zu-am₃; Cyl. B I, 12 and IV, 6).²⁰ Moreover, he is credited in a sort of formulaic phrase as “knowing what is great (gal)” and practicing it.²¹ This parallelism (kug/enim/gal) voluntarily emphasizes a plausible ‘etymological’ meaning of ku₃-zu.²²

Gudea’s peculiar intelligence is innate to him. It is conceived of as fundamentally receptive; maintained in an alert state through divine signals, he seeks from the gods the knowledge he can only obtain from them. In the narrative of the construction of the temple Eninnu, the insistence on Gudea’s scruples when it comes to correctly interpreting a nocturnal vision, to uncovering the meaning of the intentions of Ninĝirsu, who is demanding a new temple, leads him to conduct an investigation in his state among the main gods. Exceptional measures follow and they are only intended to prepare for the construction of the temple; they consist of putting the land of Lagaš in a ‘state of grace’. They denote Gudea’s knowledge of a complex ritual that he has brought to a point of perfection rarely attested later on, at least, which is in this instance presented with an unrivalled attention to detail (literary intensity). From the beginning of this very poetic narrative of construction (cylinder A), Gudea’s intelligence and exceptional capacities for action are emphasized and represent the preliminary condition for the success of such a venture commissioned by the gods.

The wise and the clever in sumero-akkadian mythology are, however, most often priests.²³ The most noteworthy are the 7 wise men called Apkallu. The admittedly very late Greek mythographer Berossus recounts that one of them, Oannes (in other words, U’anna, one of the Apkallu),

the fox in a proverb (SP 2.70; see Alster, *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer*, 60). ur ni₂-bi-še₃ ku₃-zu-a lugal-bi-ir sa um²-ra = “A (too) clever dog, by itself, comes to the point of attacking its master’s sinew” (SP 2.115; see differently Alster, *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer*, 68). For the abstract nam-ku₃-zu, see SP 1.19: “Good luck strengthens organization and understanding” (Alster, *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer*, 10).

²⁰ Thureau-Dangin, *Les Cylindres de Goudéa*, vol. 8, pl. XXXI and XXXIV; Edzard, *Gudea and His Dynasty*, vol. 3/1, 89–90.

²¹ See Averbeck, “Temple Building among the Sumerians”, 12.

²² Such a concept was not taken over as it was in Akkadian.

²³ Concerning Atram-hasis, he was not a priest according to Sallaberger and Vulliet, “Priester”, 620b. But the Akkadian poem shows nonetheless that he had a close relationship with the god of wisdom, Enki. In addition, we now know that his Sumerian precursor, Ziusudra, is defined in an ancient version of the flood as a priest of Enki (tablet MS 3026 of the Schöyen collection).

came out of the sea to bring the laws to a still-uncultivated humanity. The seventh of the Apkallu was named Adapa (interpreted in Sumerian as Utu'abba, 'born of the Sea'). He was Eridu's purifier (*išippu*); he came from the sea and ascended into the sky. Adapa was instructed in the rites of the land (*uṣurāt māti*)²⁴ by the God Ea (=Enki), whose priest he was. This quality explains why he is someone who is (always) "honest (*ebbu*), whose 'hand' is pure (*ella qāti*), a purifier (*pāšišu*), who watches over the rites scrupulously (*mušte"û parṣī*)".

The incantations often emphasize this transmission accomplished directly by the divinity, who can, on a case-by-case basis, provide remedies for crisis situations.

2.2. *The Case of the Transmission of Knowledge in the Sacerdotal Milieu of Ur*

The rules of purity applied, determined (at least partially) and maintained by the "priests", who have "sublimated" them in narratives such as the one of Adapa, must have been transmitted orally from father to son and partially in written form.²⁵ Admittedly, there is probably an immemorial character to some of these rules received from tradition. Yet, the sacerdotal milieu must have been a decisive factor in the preservation of this heritage, or in its transformation, for over time it also contributed innovations to it or exhumed obsolete practices and forgotten ideas from it. Of course, we do not know exactly how the priests taught them, nor to what extent they had a global vision, since purity is the condition itself of the rite and since purification can also be an isolated rite practiced several times during one long ritual action. The existence of collections of written rules, establishing what is pure and impure and assessing the extent of offences, on the model of the medio-assyrian laws, would not be inconceivable in itself. Were they practical, disparate and customary rules, which certainly varied from one place to another and from one time to another, and of which one did not perceive the specific unity? One part of the teaching must have consisted of the assimilation, copying and commentary of some of the works with pedagogical value. This can be illustrated through a 'collection of manuscripts' of the Eridu purifiers (abrig)

²⁴ Izre'el, *Adapa*, 9.

²⁵ One should note the role of the goddess of writing, Nisaba, in a hymn composed under the founding king of the Isin dynasty, Išbi-Erra (l. 6): "Nisaba, thou praiseth lustrations' rituals" (Reisman, "A 'Royal' Hymn of Išbi-Erra").

who came to settle close to the sanctuary of the Moon-god Nanna in Ur during the 19th century.²⁶ Among the texts of this collection is a sketch in Akkadian that mocks an ignorant client who thinks he can explain to the fuller how to clean the clothes that he brought.²⁷ D. Charpin suggested that the presence of this singular example in a milieu of purifier priests was not innocent.²⁸ The artisan *aškappum*, both fuller and laundry worker, after patiently listening to the absurd discourse of this new client, begins by swearing, “By Ea, Lord of the washing bucket, he who protects me!”²⁹ Now, Ea (= Enki in Sumerian) is also the god of purification *par excellence*. The mention of Ea “lord of the washing bucket” can, in addition, include a play on images—Ea being the “king of the Abyss” (lugal Abzu)³⁰—as well as on words—*nemsû* being glossed in the scholarly lexical list *Malku=šarru* (V) by *šuluhhû* = ‘container or ritual of purification’.³¹ This little text could thus be understood by the priests of Eridu as a mocking allegory. They could identify with the fuller, a character often mentioned in folklore,³² because one of his functions was to clean worn and dirty clothes. The lesson would be that purification is a matter for specialists, and more subtly, that this knowledge was not within anyone’s reach and, moreover, could not be reduced to a series of technical manipulations, which were in any case completely incomprehensible to the client. In addition, several hymns belonging to the same milieu evoke the purification rites and their divine origins in terms that are often mythological. This is the case more particularly in the Hymn to Nanna (so-called Hymn ‘E’),³³ which could be linked to consecration through purifying oil. If what are conventionally called ritual texts first appear in the time of Ebla, their redaction must be related to particular and circumstantial needs (which is the case of the Eštar Ritual of Mari, in the 18th century). Even though we know that several of the main canonical series go back at least to the time of Ur III, the composition of ritual texts of reference that were intended for transmission is only known from the end of the second millennium onwards.

²⁶ Charpin, *Le Clergé d’Ur*, 430–431; Reiner, “At the Fuller’s”, 407–411.

²⁷ See lastly Foster, *Before the Muses*, 151–152.

²⁸ This interpretation was neither criticized nor adopted by commentators. They have rather focused on the humoristic dimension or on the literary genre of the writing.

²⁹ Gadd and Kramer, *Literary and Religious Texts*, vol. 2, pl. CCII = UET 6 414, l. 27: *aš-šum é-a be-el né-em-sí-in ša ú-ba-la-tu-[ni]*.

³⁰ Van Dijk, *Cuneiform Texts*, 70, 3.

³¹ CAD N namsû, 245.

³² CAD N namsû, 245.

³³ See below.

The bulk of the examples we possess, such as the ritual of the *Mīs pî* ('the washing of the mouth [of a new divine image]'), which the Babylonian or Assyrian priests used to make or restore a cult statue, only date from the first millennium, even though this particular ritual is well attested from the 3rd millennium onwards. The famous 'Akitu Ritual', from Babylon, and the 'Uruk Rituals' date from the Seleucid era and bear witness rather to a desire for restoring ancient practices.

Among our potential informers, the ones who are most likely to bring us information about the domain of the pure or about the 'struggle' against impurity are obviously the recognized ancient specialists in purification. In the period between Ur III and the Old Babylonian era, several sorts of 'professionals' were directly involved: first, there were exorcists, *maš-maš*.³⁴ An administrative document from the time of Ur III shows one of them fulfilling a protection rite for the harvest in Umma.³⁵ In Mari, in the 18th century, we see that the specialist (*mašmašum*) can collaborate with moaners (*mārū kalê*) in order to purify (*ullulum*) an infected town.³⁶ Secondly, there were $lu_2 mu_7 - mu_7$ (or a variation, $lu_2 mu_{13} - mu_{13}$). They could practice expiation or exorcism rites in the sheep barns or in the palace on behalf of the kings of Ur III.³⁷ These exorcists are not connected to a particular divinity, even though they usually receive their formulas from Enki (= Ea) and Asalluhi (identified later with Marduk), as many of the incantations that have reached us indicate. This relative independence explains why the *maš-maš* could become a sort of warlock or sorcerer when he acted on the side of evil, using magic that was recognized as effective but was not officially approved by the main gods. It is interesting to note that in the *Enmerkar and Ensuhgirana* poem, the same sorcerer (who, by the way, is a foreigner in Sumer) is opposed to an *umma*, an 'elderly woman', appointed by the sun-god Utu.³⁸ One learns in the *Curse of Agade* (l. 29–30) that the old men received from Inana the sense of correct expressions (*ka-enim-ma*) and the old women the gift of giving (good) advice.³⁹ This wisdom that was particularly attributed to old women could be used as a defense of last resort against powerful curses. Yet, we know very little of this milieu, which is not well represented in written sources despite the

³⁴ The Sumerian verb *maš* means 'to purify'.

³⁵ Maeda, "The Agricultural Festivals in Sumer", 23–24.

³⁶ Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari*, 263.

³⁷ See Sallaberger, "Reinheit", 632.

³⁸ Vanstiphout, *Epics of Sumerian Kings*, 23–48.

³⁹ Cooper, *The Curse of Agade*.

abundance of exorcism literature that has reached us. In the sanctuaries, a group of priests possessed the secrets of the purification rites. First are the išib/isib (Akkadian *išippum*). Because this name is reminiscent of the Akkadian *wāšipum*—the common name for ‘exorcist’—or of *wašāpum*, ‘to exorcise’, it is probably a loan word from the Semitic. Thus, the *išippum* is a sort of purifier who, unlike the *wāšipum*, is attached to the service of a divinity and for this reason belongs to the staff of the sanctuary. In the so-called Ekur temple of Enlil in Nippur, a class of purifiers, the saġġa₂ (= Akkadian *mullilum*, ‘the ones who purify’), was entrusted especially with the perfume fumigations that were so important in the cult.

The homes of some of the priestly families were found with their archives. Close to the Eana at Uruk (the big sanctuary of Inana), the remains of a collection of archives that belonged to some *išippum* have been exhumed from a pit (Sherbenloch). The lot is unfortunately very fragmentary: it includes examples of ritual texts but, in its composition, it is strongly reminiscent of the collection of tablets from a family of purifier priests, *abriqqum*, living in Ur at about the same time.⁴⁰ In Ur, indeed, a house close to the temple of the Ekišnuġal contained the juridical archives and an informative ‘literary collection’ of a sacerdotal family that handed down its functions and its knowledge from generation to generation. The inhabitants of this house in Ur were abrig-priests (= Akkadian *abriqqum*), a type of purifiers, then, related to the cult of Enki.⁴¹ They were from Eridu, the town of Enki, which they were forced to abandon at the very beginning of the second millennium because of the desertification of the place.

The activity of this family was carefully analyzed by Charpin,⁴² who demonstrated that there was a relationship between these documents and the acts and ‘liturgical thought’ of their owners, as we have seen previously with the tale of the fuller. The juridical archives permit us to understand in particular their neighborly relationships, which reveal that there was a strong concentration of ‘priests’ working in the nearby Ekišnuġal. These dwellers were living on a mound (called ‘neighborhood EM’) right across from the sanctuary. The children of this abrig house pursued their scribal education at least partly inside their own house. One sees that, beside the elementary training (lexical lists, proverbs, excerpts of the classic

⁴⁰ Cavigneaux, *Uruk. Altbabylonisch Texte aus dem Planquadrat PE XVI-4/5*.

⁴¹ See Charpin, *Le Clergé d'Ur*, 51.

⁴² *Ibid.*

hymn (Hymn B) to Lipit-Eštar,⁴³ this education included copying historical texts—from the eras of Agade, of the third dynasty of Ur, and of the kings of Isin (a town that had exerted a great cultural influence after the fall of Ur III)—and traditional texts, like the *Exaltation of Inana* and the *Almanac of the Farmer*. The presence of such literary texts does not teach us anything specific about the *abriqqum* priests, since these were the classics in the curriculum of the scribes' apprentices in the so-called Old Babylonian period. Next to this category, Charpin has highlighted the existence of compositions that were particular to members of the family, such as hymns dedicated to the king of Larsa and Ur, Rim-Sîn (1822–1794), composed for special occasions, and remarkable and original hymns to the gods. The fact that scholars do not possess duplicates of these works from other sources, and even their grammatical specificities alone, allow speculation that their authors were really the purifier priests who lived in the house where the archaeologists exhumed the documents. Yet, even if this was not the case, if they were only copies, there is little doubt that, according to their content and on the basis of their characteristics, they 'say' important things about the manner of thinking in the milieu made up of the purifier priests of southern Sumer in the 18th century.

The selection that tradition preserves within these works can sometimes be noteworthy. But one needs to observe that the distinction between the two groups of texts, one group of traditional texts and one of 'circumstantial compositions,' is not entirely clear-cut. On the one side, we see that the text of the works of reference is not strictly fixed or set; important variations are found from one copy to another. The cause for such differences has not been identified with certainty. The texts in fact remain quite malleable and some scribes (the masters?) do not hesitate to modify them, adding, or even cutting out, verses or 'entire strophes'. On the other side, we do not know why the texts of the second group came into being (even though we can come up with hypotheses on the basis of their content) or, at the very least, why they were deemed worthy of being kept in the priests' dwellings themselves. It might be possible that they were used (at least secondarily) in a pedagogic manner adapted to the specific needs of the future *abriqqum*.

⁴³ Only one example of each category was found in the house (7, Quiet Street), which only provides a sample of the material that was used as a foundation for learning the written language in this place.

2.3. *Dilmun, the Pure Land: The Positive Story*

The case of the mythological poem *Enki and Ninḥursaġa* illustrates this point well.⁴⁴ It is known today through three manuscripts. The first one comes from Nippur, the second one from the house of the *abriqqum* in Ur (7, Quiet Street), and the third one, kept at the Louvre, is of unidentified origin. One can thus say that this text is not widely disseminated; yet its simultaneous presence in Nippur and in Ur leads to the assumption that, for a while, it was a 'pedagogical' tool in classical teaching, even if it was in fashion only momentarily. In addition, *Enki and Ninḥursaġa* does not appear in the catalogues of incipits at our disposal.

The Ur version is not preserved in its entirety, but it includes a sizeable addition that mentions the town of Ur. Although it does not play any part in the myth properly speaking, this addition means that the version was interpolated by an inhabitant of Ur, proud of his town. One ought to see it as a contribution of the occupants of the house at 7, Quiet Street. Their interest in this text, which features Enki, is even more obvious since they were themselves servants of this god.

The copy of the tablet carries a date: 24/XI/year 21 of Rīm-Sîn (1803).⁴⁵ Now, in the preceding year, Rīm-Sîn, king of Larsa, who ruled over Ur, annexed Uruk, an event that inaugurated a phase of political expansion that lasted several years (to the detriment of the rival dynasty of Sîn-kāšid).⁴⁶ The first decades of Rīm-Sîn have been described as "the glorious 30"⁴⁷ because they were characterized by a phase of economic prosperity visible in particular in the capital town of Larsa. In its way, then, the *Enki and Ninḥursaġa* poem commemorates this period. Even if it is not an original composition, the important addition of the Ur version exemplifies an optimistic reading of history. Indeed, the first part of the myth is devoted to the development of Dilmun (the present island of Bahrain), which became a prosperous economic center thanks to Enki. The scribe of the Ur version has added a list of countries close and far that exported their goods to Dilmun. The list concludes with a mention of the town of Ur (UET 6 1: col. II 16–18): "The sanctuary of Ur, throne of the royalty,

⁴⁴ Gadd and Kramer, *Literary and Religious*, vol. 1, pl. I–III; Attinger, "Enki and Ninḥursaġa".

⁴⁵ Notice that this date is not taken into account by Brisch, *Tradition and the Poetics of Innovation*, 14. On the dating of school tablets, see Glassner, "Ecrire des livres", 9.

⁴⁶ See Charpin, "Histoire politique", 120–121.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 119.

[(holy)?] town, sends you by freight grain, oil, and delicate clothes, beautiful clothes.”

The fact that the scribe represents Ur by means of its sanctuary (the Ekišnuġal) reveals his social situation. The poem shows an Enki who inundates marshes with his sperm, thus creating abundance. Here, it is tempting to relate this to one of Rīm-Sîn's undertakings during this same year—year 21, when he took Uruk—which he commemorated the next year in the name of the year 22:⁴⁸

The year when, on An, Enlil and Enki's beneficent order, the just shepherd Rīm-Sîn (re)dug a canal that had not been mentioned for a long time,⁴⁹ named it 'pure canal' and (thus) added large (additional) territories to the riverside towns.

The copy could be from the hand of Ku-Ningal, the head of the family (who died 13 years later).⁵⁰ Whether or not this 'edition' of *Enki and Ninġursaġa* was realized for a scholastic purpose, it was in any case related to a specific celebration, held in Ur, which corresponded to current affairs or at least was inspired by them.⁵¹

What was the importance of this myth of *Enki and Ninġursaġa*,⁵² of which a version was found in their house, for this family of Ur priests, *abriqqum*, a class of purifiers?⁵³ The text describes the origins of the island of Dilmun through a series of terms that all revolve around the idea of purity. The first and most important one, endlessly repeated, is *kug*, which qualifies the land of Sumer and, more particularly, Dilmun, which is at the center of the first part of the narrative. “The land of Dilmun”, says the poem insistently, “is/was *kug*”; then it indicates, depending on the version, that it was/is *sikil* or *šen* and *dadag*. These last expressions are thus used as quasi-synonyms of *kug*, since they are interchangeable. Yet, each term brings a particular nuance that is difficult for us to capture precisely. The pattern *kug/sikil/dadag* is found elsewhere, in the hymn to Nanna (E) discovered in the same house. This pattern might entail a gradation

⁴⁸ Sigrist, *Larsa Year Names*, 50.

⁴⁹ Or: “that had never received a name since the origins”.

⁵⁰ Charpin, *Le Clergé d'Ur*, 69.

⁵¹ Concerning the danger of reducing literary texts to historical events, see nonetheless Brisch, *Tradition and the Poetics of Innovation*, 15.

⁵² Attinger, “Enki et Ninġursaġ”, 1–52.

⁵³ See Charpin, *Le Clergé d'Ur*, 51.

towards the more ‘intense’.⁵⁴ We can also mention as an example the following excerpt from a hymn to the god ̒endursaġa (l. 18): “(Against?) the straight dock, (there is) the holy (kug) boat, completely immaculate (sikil) and dazzling white (dadag).”⁵⁵ This enumeration was reproduced in many other compositions⁵⁶ (it is common in incantations), as the later bilingual series ̒urpu VII 81⁵⁷ shows: “May Man, son of his God, be pure (or purified), clean, cleared!”

Kug and šen have in common a (primary or secondary?) relationship with metal. Kug can indeed have the meaning of ‘precious metal’,⁵⁸ as in the name ku₃-dim₂ (‘the one-who-shapes-precious-metal’), ‘goldsmith’; very often it simply means ‘silver’. Thus this term was related to the notion of purity in reference either to metalwork or to metal’s luster when it came directly out of the metalworker’s workshop. šen,⁵⁹ which has *ruqqum* (^{uru}dušen) as its common Akkadian equivalent (in addition to *ebbum* in our context), certainly brings to mind the image of a leveled surface, stretched to its limit (RQQ) through beating; hence the idea perhaps of an ‘equal and smooth surface’ for describing the original landscape of Dilmun.⁶⁰ However, it is necessary to note that the primitive ideogram depicts a vase containing water and that, in the Sumerian literature which interests us, the term can also have the meaning ‘(metal) bowl’. As it happens, this receptacle plays a role in ritual washing (see below).

⁵⁴ Attinger, “Enki et Ninġursaġ”, 33. The comparison between the versions of Nippur and Ur complicates things because of variants. See Pongratz-Leisten, “Notion of Holiness”, 424.

⁵⁵ Edzard and Wilcke, “Die ̒endursanga-Hymne”, 144–145 (composite version): kar-si-sa₂ ^{si}ma₂-gur₈-ku₃ sikil-am₃ dadag-ga-am₃. The text was reedited by Attinger and Krebernik, “L’Hymne à ̒endursaġa”.

⁵⁶ It was, so to speak, traditional, as an Old Babylonian lexical text copied by a student on a lenticular tablet shows: (...) a-na-de₅, a-gub₂-ba, a-ku₃-ga, a-šen-na, a-dadag-ga = “magic water, blessed water, pure water, clean water, limpid water”; Civil, “The Forerunners of *Maru* and *Ĥamtu*”, 64.

⁵⁷ Reiner, *̒urpu*, 38: lu₂-u₄-lu dumu-diġir-ra-na ġe₂-en-ku₃-ga ġe₂-en-sikil ġe₂-en-dadag: a-me-lu DUMU-DINGIR-šu li-lil li-bi-ib li-in-mir.

⁵⁸ ‘Métal brillant’ (‘shiny metal’) according to Cavigneaux, *Dictionnaire de l’Antiquité*, 1841.

⁵⁹ ‘Métal poli?’ (‘polished metal?’) for Cavigneaux, *Dictionnaire de l’Antiquité*, 1841.

⁶⁰ The archaic sign represents a vase, in which the sign A ‘water’ is inserted. See Salonen, *Die Hausgeräte der alten Mesopotamier*, 36; and Krebernik, “Die Texte aus Fāra und Tell Abū šalābīh”, 279; Steinkeller, “Studies in the Third Millennium Paleography, 2. Signs šen and alal”, 243; and Steinkeller, “Studies in Third Millennium Paleography, 2. Signs šen and alal: Addendum”, 39, adds that šen “marked a class of metal containers or receptacles, usually made of copper (...)”.

Sikil means pure in the sense of ‘virgin’, ‘untouched’, namely the internal, primeval and perfect state of a thing (the sign sikil can be read EL: it is thus linked very early to the Akkadian *ellum*). Dadag (UD.UD)⁶¹ means ‘luminous’, ‘clear’, perhaps ‘limpid’: one talks of a “‘pure’ stream of water”;⁶² we read:

It is a pure canal, of which the stream is transparent (dadag-ga-am₃).
Might it (always) provide (the goddess) Nanše with flowing water.⁶³

The description evokes something that gives out a sort of light because of the fullness of its nature: “The sperm of your lord, the white-pure sperm is in me, the sperm of Šin, the white-pure sperm is in me.”⁶⁴ We can even mention the sequence perhaps opening an incantation:⁶⁵ “Holy oil, virgin oil, gleaming oil.”⁶⁶ These notions were closely related, tending to merge; together, they suggest the primeval, physical and absolute purity of sacred things.

2.4. *Dilmun, the Pure Land: The Negative Story*

Having described the land of Dilmun in a positive manner, the poem *Enki and Ninhursaĝa* continues by offering a series of negative, picturesque descriptions, a common stylistic feature in creation narratives:

In Dilmun, the crow did not make a sound.
The francolin did not make (its) ‘dar-dar’.
The mastiff was not cutting throats.
The wolf was not carrying the lamb away.
Unknown was the pedigree dog who makes the little flock obedient.
Unknown were the pigs always devouring grain.
Once the widow had spread malt on the roof,
The birds that came from the sky were certainly not yet pecking at her malt.

⁶¹ One can also read zalag-zalag. It is practically impossible to decide which one is the right reading, or to establish a semantic distinction. However, see Pongratz-Leisten, “Notion of Holiness”.

⁶² i₇-dadag; see Behrens, *Enlil und Ninlil*, 64.

⁶³ Inscription of the prince of Lagaš, URU-KA-gi-na; Frayne, *Presargonic Period (2700–2350 BC)*, 265 (= RIME 1.9.9.1: xii, 41–44).

⁶⁴ Myth of Enlil and Ninlil: 83–84; Behrens, *Enlil und Ninlil*, 34.

⁶⁵ Text found on the side of the tablet; see Gadd and Kramer, *Literary and Religious Texts*, vol. 1, pl. LXXIII, (UET 6 67).

⁶⁶ i₃-kug, i₃-sikil, i₃-dadag-ge. Several commentators think it is the incipit of an incantation. Compare, e.g., the note following the translation of this passage in the *Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, 4.13.05 (see above note 19).

The doves' heads were not nodding next to her.
 The one sick in his eyes was not saying: "I am sick."
 The one sick in his head was not saying: "I am sick."
 These old women saying "how old I am!", they did not exist.
 These old men saying "how old I am!", they did not exist.
 There was no young woman who threw the unclean water of her bath in
 the city (?).⁶⁷
 There was no man who 'said' as he went across the river: "MI.NE!"⁶⁸
 As for the herald, he was not going around his district.
 There was no singer who was starting to sing his lament.
 At the edges of town, neither was he singing his lamentation.

As has often been noticed, purity is more easily defined by what is contrary to it. Here, the work uses several images from daily life, starting with the animal world (wild and domestic) and human society (its dependence towards the natural order: sickness, old age; and what comes under culture: bodily care, trades, singing—the supreme art in Sumer).⁶⁹ However, the choice of metaphors still remains enigmatic if one does not notice their obviously negative character: noise (from birds whose cry is not particularly pleasant, the moans of the sick and the old, the town crier [famous for announcing bad news, such as war mobilization, the loss of a seal by its owner or the convocation for duty], the moaners who sing sad songs), death, and what is harmful in general (in the animal world, prey are eaten by predators, human beings themselves face harmful animals,⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Or "her water (that had become) unfit for ablutions"? Attinger, "Notes de lectures: Enki et Ninḫursaġa", offers the translation "No young woman was bathing, none who poured the (waste) waters in the city". Katz, "The Story of Dilmun", 576, proposed a different translation: "An unwashed maiden was not (yet) treated with disrespect in the city". The verb *sig*, should no longer be understood in this context as *nadû* 'to throw' but as *dâṣu* 'to treat with disrespect'. According to *CAD D dâṣu*, 118–119, on the basis of the Sumerian equivalents, means 'to lie' and (secondarily) 'to treat unjustly', 'not to respect the law', which is hardly appropriate for the context of *Enki and Ninḫursaġa*.

⁶⁸ Unfortunately, this expression has not yet been deciphered. See Attinger, "Notes de lectures: Enki et Ninḫursaġa".

⁶⁹ See Attinger, "Enki et Ninḫursaġa", 34.

⁷⁰ The case of the pig is harder to determine; the context does not show that this animal is 'evil' in and of itself, since we know it was reared in Sumer—and our passage seems to refer rather to the domestic pig—but the problem has to do with the consumption of the grain. That being said, fattening pigs with grain is a well-documented practice. Rather than saying that grain is not the regular feed for pigs, the poem refers to the damage done by pigs (roaming freely) among the fields. The voracity of the pig is indeed proverbial. See Foster and Salgues, "Pig in Early Mesopotamia", 288. However, one should not simply dismiss the idea that the poem might be talking about wild pigs (common in marshy areas). Neither the vocabulary nor the animal classifications left to us by the ancients establish real distinctions. Thus, what is at stake would be the havoc that is wrought on grain fields by harmful animals, such as the wild boar, whose destruction was still com-

illness and old age; the poem likely has in mind the periodic impurity of young women, daily or political misfortunes, the role of moaners who appease the wrath of the gods, etc.). Thus the poem opposes what is pure/sacred (the Dilmun of origins) to what is profane, partially related to the idea of impurity (illness, the wastewaters of the young woman who took her bath, noise, etc.).

The perfect state of purity is not, however, represented by an 'absolute emptiness', since a 'town' preexists. It is nonetheless without life, because it is missing a source of running water. Thus Dilmun's purity is presented in a way that appears ambivalent to us. Dilmun is excessively pure and holy, and because of that, it is lacking the life needed by the new divine dwellers Enki and especially Nin-sikila, who received the island as a gift.⁷¹

Since we probably owe this version to one of the members of the *abriqqum* family at 7, Quiet Street, it must contain a fundamental teaching for priests who specialized in purification: the relationship between the two descriptions of Dilmun allows a glimpse of the fact that the pure world of the gods must coexist with human life, which is synonymous with movement, transformation, restlessness, suffering and death. It probably emphasized the fact that creation was perfect and rested in a complex and dynamic balance. It seems that the violence present in nature had to be contained but could not be suppressed completely. Such an understanding assumes that the state of nature could not be the seat of purity for the inhabitants of Sumer.

2.5. *The Sanctuarization of Lagaš*

This conception is ancient and also expressed, albeit in a different manner, in the literary work that we owe to the prince of Lagaš, Gudea (see Cyl. A, which is completed by the short version of the inscription of statue B).⁷² In order to accomplish his project of reconstructing the temple of the Eninnu, the whole city was returned to exceptional purity conditions. Two things in particular were at stake: on the one side, it

mon until recent times in the south of Iraq. The following trope, which has to do with the preparation of malt, and the damages inflicted by the birds that come to peck it, follows the same logic.

⁷¹ In contrast to the impression left by the text, this 'first' island of Dilmun is not all idyllic; even the gods cannot enjoy themselves there!

⁷² Edzard, *Gudea and His Dynasty*, 30–38. For a synthetic presentation of the sequence of the rituals of foundation and dedication of the temple, see Averbeck, "Temple building among the Sumerians".

was necessary to make each action and each step of the construction absolutely perfect; on the other side, the city and its inhabitants needed protection from the numerous potential dangers created by construction work in the area of the temple and by this situation of transition between 'old' and 'new temple'. But Gudea's attention was mainly focused on the divine landlord, Ninġirsu, who was or might have become irritated. The deterioration, even temporary, of the architectural and divine structure of the god's house, the presence of which not only protected the city but also represented its center, was cause for fear. Finally, it was necessary above all to reproduce the primordial and primeval act of construction of the temple, since from the beginning, even before human beings existed, sanctuaries had often been erected by the gods themselves.

Among the various measures mentioned by 'Gudea', there are well-known purification rites, such as the one performed with a torch or some other form of perfumed fumigation, as well as those accomplished through anointing with oil or special creams. Yet, the most striking measure must have been Gudea's desire that all forms of violence disappear from his state, be it in the public sphere, for example through the use of the whip or the incarceration of condemned persons in prison, in the domestic world, namely against slaves, and in more harmless ways such as in the disciplining of children. Death was proscribed from the land, which shows that, during the construction work, the entire city of Girsu had the sacrosanct character of a sanctuary.

Nature was not neglected. Admittedly, Gudea had no power over it, but he pretended that a sort of state of grace had touched it as well (Cyl. B IV, 17–20). A spell had taken care of sickness and predators:⁷³

In the town, the mother of a man who got sick (always) prepared the (right) potion. The herds of all the animals of the steppe were lying together, (since) the lion, the panther as well as the reptile of the steppe were in a (gentle) deep sleep.

2.6. Enki, Master of Purity According to the Hymn to Nanna (E)

The archive documents found in the house of Ku-Ningal do not allow for the recreation of daily religious activities of the *abriqqum*. However, several compositions found in the house, all of which likely date to the time

⁷³ This passage applies more exactly to the inauguration phase of the temple, but one can conclude that it also holds true for the entire preceding phase of the construction.

of Rīm-Sîn, recount in a more or less veiled manner the understanding of purity characteristic of this group at the sanctuary where they were officiating. The hymn to Nanna (Hymn E) is the most revealing.

The poem is dedicated to the glory of Nanna, the Moon-god; it first recalls his birth, namely his first appearance as a crescent moon. After having received universal sovereignty as his fate, he is put up in the Ekišnuġal, which had appeared beforehand on its own. On this occasion, a banquet is organized to which the other gods are invited. Enki specifically takes on the responsibility of providing the banquet's ritual purity. His role as purifier of the oven and of the meal is then praised. Then Nanna, after taking a recuperative bath, puts on his royal and priestly insignia as a novice (su-bar). The purification rites of the hand are handled by Enki's helpers, that is to say, Ningublaga and Kusu. The hymn closes with a final exaltation of Nanna, with which his consort Ningal is associated.

The active figure who seems to play the decisive role is indeed Enki, who lives in Eridu and is also invoked under the name 'Deer-of-the-Apsû'. He acts as supreme purifier, but only operates from his sanctuary of Eridu, which is also mythically confused with the sacred ocean (ABxA-kug), whence Nanna himself comes. It is Enki who provides the Ekišnuġal with water before Nanna is set up:

According to the destiny fixed for your flowing water, the water from below, enormous (stream), Enki, from the depth of the sacred Ocean, established under your feet a good earth, (like) a good mother.⁷⁴

One recognizes here the theme of the vital water that also renders Dilmun alive and that was missing at the origins. To the future sanctuary, spring water provides fertility, or what creates the conditions for the earth to be favorable to life and to the cult.⁷⁵ In *Enki and Ninġursaġa*, this rising of fresh water is created by Utu, the Sun-god, on behalf of Nin-sikila:⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Charpin understands the beginning of the passage very differently: "mais pour que tu puisses quitter majestueusement l'onde inférieure" (a-ra, a-sig-maġ-zu-še.): Enki puts down the ground on which Nanna, on the brink of emerging, will establish himself. However, we follow the reading from *Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, 4.13.05 (see above note 19): "Determining a destiny for your flowing waters, the majestic lower (?) waters...".

⁷⁵ See the above quoted excerpt of Frayne, *Presargonic Period (2700–2350 BC)* (= RIME 1.9.9.1).

⁷⁶ For the many difficulties strewn throughout this text, see Attinger, "Notes de lectures: Enki et Ninġursaġa".

Utu, who stands in the sky made ground come up for her—out of the bowl-kiru-erected (?) opposite Ezen, from the shining temple-ŠE.SUḪUR of Nanna, out of the mouth from where the water of the earth flows—fresh water. Henceforth, the water was flowing in the big basin²-ġirman and his town was drinking from it an abundant water, so that his wells of brackish water became wells of fresh water; his fields, his prairies and furrows were supplying it with grain.

In the hymn to Nanna (E), it is then written (l. 27–31):

Enki purifies the seat for you (Nanna!) and for you makes the residence sparkling clean;
 He consecrates the sky for you and makes the earth shine brightly for you.
 For you, he made the Ekišnuġal, forest of cedars, reach the sky.
 Your proud seat, he makes it (be) a sacred place for you, foundation of everything that belongs to the sky and to the earth.
 He accomplishes the rites and sublime lustrations with rectitude for you.

Enki creates and preserves not only the sacral integrity of the temple and of Nanna's throne but also, in a more general manner, the purity of the ground and of the atmosphere. Thus, it is understandable that he would make sure that the rites he himself leads are accomplished in the correct sequence. However, since he does not travel, he delegates his powers to several divinities of secondary rank: "Enki, (he who has made) makes his Apsû rise,⁷⁷ puts lustration (šu-luḫ) at your disposal, Kusu brought (this) same lustration to the temple, born from itself (Ekišnuġal)."

The ways that Enki finds to intervene are commonplace in regard to exorcist literature. Very often, Enki (or Ea in Akkadian texts) is the origin of magical remedies; but he prefers to transmit his knowledge to his son Asalluhi or to the exorcists. This attitude is recalled in the hymn to Haya:⁷⁸ "Enki offered you his life-inducing incantations from the princely sanctuary of Apsû." The ritual might in fact be concretely accomplished by the goddess Kusu or other agents, yet the hymn reminds us that Enki is indeed the rightful agent: "Kusu, who purifies the hands and makes them bright, consecrates her hands. (But it is) the 'Deer-of-the-Apsû' who, from the Eridu, purifies their hands through the anointing."

Kusu appears as the go-between who commutes between Eridu and Ur. This goddess, to whom Enki delegated his functions as purifier, is interesting because she embodies Enki, a rich and complex character, precisely

⁷⁷ The passage is understood in various ways. Our interpretation is supported by the parallelism of the next verse, which clearly suggests the passive role of Nanna.

⁷⁸ Gadd and Kramer, *Literary and Religious Texts*, vol. 1, pl. CIII–CIV = UET 6, 101, l. 38, also found at 7, Quiet Street, and thus in the same archive as the Hymn (E) to Nanna.

in his specialty as master of purity. Her name, ^dKu₃-su₃, means literally 'the one who bestows the pure/sacred'. Yet, her participation in the cult happens in particular at the time of the sacrifice, as the following passage indicates in a somewhat clumsy style (l. 40–41):

Outside of the Depth-of-the-Ocean,⁷⁹ (there are) ovens,⁸⁰ oxen, sheep and breads; outside of the chapel (happens) the saint lustration: (as) it will purify them for the temple through the oil anointing, they wait and their fore and hind legs have been tied.

This role is also mentioned in a hymn of Nippur:⁸¹ "[...] Kusu, consecrated [the oven (?)], purified the oven. She filled it' with [...], having (thus) consecrated it, Kusu did, in truth, let innumerable oxen and innumerable sheep into the big oven!" Fumigation by means of a censer is her most typical *modus operandi*⁸² but not the only one.

2.7. *The Apsû, Place of Origins for Purification Rites*

The sacrifice of animals usually took place in the main court of the temple, as this bilingual text (Nin-Isina's Journey to Nippur) indicates:⁸³ "In the Ekur-zagin,⁸⁴ the temple of Enlil in Nippur, she' (the goddess Nin-Isina) had the food offerings served. / In the main court, the court of Enlil, she' [slaughtered] oxen and sheep."

But the preliminary purification of the animals was dependent on this place also called Apsû, which was located in a certain spot in the sanctuary.⁸⁵ It is described poetically in a royal prayer,⁸⁶ where it appears at the same time as the foundation or underground structure of the temple,

⁷⁹ The Depth-of-the-Ocean refers, as we have seen, to the Apsû, where Enki rules. Here, however, it must rather mean a specific place in the Ekišnuġal. This place is also defined as eš₉, 'sanctuary' or even 'chapel'. On the symbolic level, however, there is no difference.

⁸⁰ One perhaps needs to understand '<toward> the oven', but the ovens themselves were the objects of purification rites.

⁸¹ Hymn to Kusu (= YBC 9860), edited by Michalowski, "The Torch and the Censer", 154. And see additionally *Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, 4.33.2 (see above note 19).

⁸² Michalowski, "The Torch and the Censer", 158; and Sallaberger and Vulliet, "Priester", 631b.

⁸³ Wagenonner, "Nin-isina(k)'s journey", 277–293, and particularly 282.

⁸⁴ In other words, the 'blue Ekur' or the 'pure Ekur', Enlil's temple in Nippur.

⁸⁵ Wilson ("*Holiness*" and "*Purity*", 8) places it in the Ur sanctuary, to the southeast of the terrace of the ziggurat. He argues from Woolley's discovery in this area of a cistern divided into 4 compartments.

⁸⁶ Gadd and Kramer, *Literary and Religious Texts*, vol. 1, pl. CXI–CCII = UET 6 105. The description of the Apsû is inserted in a prayer to Rim-Sîn. It is even more the case in Nanna E where, on the pretext of honoring Nanna, the role of Enki is particularly emphasized; the feeling is that the central topic of the hymn is not the king as much as the sanctuary. This document was also found at 7, Quiet Street.

the innermost sacred part of the temple (an allusion to groundwater?), the shadow of the temple (representing the height of its walls and/or the magical protection it offers, depending on the semantic understanding of 'shadow'), its big corner (ub-gal), a sweet-smelling forest and, finally, a pond (ambar). This place is not related solely to the character of Enki; Utu, the sun, is associated with it as well, since a solar emblem is represented on the door of the chapel in the Ekišnuġal. The collaboration between Enki and Utu was also discussed in *Enki and Ninġursaġa*. This reminds us that Utu, god of justice, also played a part in the area of purification.

A characteristic element of the chapel of the Apsû is the presence of a pool or waterhole.⁸⁷ This idea is strengthened by the recognized link between this place and the recipients of 'holy' water from the Old Babylonian era:⁸⁸

(In) the chapel of Apsû, the vase of holy water for the (ritual) bath,
and the sacred dock have been prepared perfectly;
Enki, the king of Eridu,
purified the dock (for) the (ritual) bath.

However, the hymn to Nanna (E) insists much more on the use of a purifying oil, of which it is simply indicated that it belonged to the stores of the temple. A preliminary passage through the Apsû is nonetheless possible. The bank of a canal could in fact be used in an improvised manner as the dock of the Apsû.⁸⁹ It is true that the chapel of the Apsû has its own power, which has a beneficial effect on the sanctuary as a whole. This structure on its own does indeed generate both a shadow and an aura, true magical protections.⁹⁰ Now that same document mentions the presence of a herd close to the Apsû, which recalls the animals being watched in the main court for purification:

Next to the pond of the Apsû of the Ekišnuġal,
In the holy sanctuary where the cows roam
[The shepherds (?) in charge of] the innumerable and pure blue calves take
their parts of presents;
[...] and their little ones.
They are staying in the [...] holy.

⁸⁷ Wilson, "Holiness" and "Purity", 12.

⁸⁸ See van Dijk, "Un rituel de purification des armes et de l'armée", 111.

⁸⁹ See the incantation/ritual quoted above; van Dijk, "Un rituel de purification des armes et de l'armée", 108.

⁹⁰ According to Gadd and Kramer, *Literary and Religious Texts*, vol. 1, pl. CXI–CCII = UET 6 105.

2.8. *The Purification Rites (šu-luḥ)*

The lustration ritual is covered under the generic term ‘cleaning of hand’, šu-luḥ (found in Akkadian under the form *šuluhhû*), which most of the time needs to be translated by ‘lustration’. Additionally, in the hymn to Nanna (E), when purification of the hands is discussed, the expression used is šu kug/sikil and not šu luḥ. The verb luḥ (in Akkadian, *mesû*) is generally limited to the domain of the profane, or at least it does not have that cultic undertone belonging to terms such as sikil, šen or dadag.⁹¹ Notice that šu, in some religious texts, could designate a (metal) cultic object, a recipient or an *aspergillum*, as has been proposed, so that the expression can be understood in the following manner: ‘to wash using the “liturgical object”-šu (?)’. However, as Falkenstein remarked,⁹² šu-luḥ does not necessarily have a religious connotation, since in Ur III the expression is used to describe the scouring of a canal, although rites might have been associated with it. The need to emphasize the religious use probably explains the frequent addition after šu-luḥ of the adjective ‘kug/ku₃-ga’ to describe ‘holy lustration(s)’ or possibly ‘a lustration/lustrations that sanctifies/sanctify’ (with a participle). This expression can be replaced by šu-luḥ-dadag or else šu-luḥ-sikil-dadag-ga (in a hymn to the god Nuska)!⁹³

Šu-luḥ is a fundamental principle (one of the Sumerian ‘me’), which constitutes ‘reality’. Its frequent association with ġiš-ḥur, or even garza, ‘rites’ or ‘cultic rules’ supports a translation of ‘rite(s) of lustration’ in a religious context. Likely this notion encompasses a great diversity of rites and functions.

A cosmogonic myth that introduces an incantation shows clearly that this ‘institution’ was vital, since it has a relationship with drinking water and agriculture:⁹⁴

In the wells, the water was not yet drawn, nothing had been instituted, the furrow had not yet been traced on the vast earth;
the supreme purifier of Enlil did not exist and had not yet accomplished the holy lustrations.

⁹¹ However Tinney, *The Nippur Lament*, 59: “The Temple lets itself decay because its rites, which are usually so carefully accomplished, pure and impeccable are defiled”. (me-luḥ-luḥ-ḥa-sikil-šen-na-bi šu-pel-la-ke₄-eš e₂-e ur₅ib₂-ug₇).

⁹² Falkenstein, “Sumerische religiöse Texte”, 86, and Falkenstein, “Fluch über Akkade”, 121.

⁹³ See line 11 of the poem in van Dijk, *Sumerische Götterlieder*, 108–113.

⁹⁴ Van Dijk, “Existe-t-il un ‘un poème de la Création’ sumerien?”, 129.

If the gods are the actors and if they guarantee the rites of purification, specifically those of the sky and of the earth, the human realm is under the immediate responsibility of kings, as this passage witnesses:⁹⁵ “O (king) Šū-ilišu, whom Ninlil bore in order for the rites of lustration to be accomplished perfectly.”

The kings, among whom some have officially endorsed the function of purifier (išib), could accomplish a ceremony, in particular to ‘purify’ or ‘consecrate’ their army.⁹⁶ However, it was more usual for the specialists to take care of it. The išib-priests were responsible above all for these rituals. Other categories of officiants were also involved, including the *gudapsû*⁹⁷ and the abrig of Enki, as well as lesser-known groups such as the *uz-ga* (Lament for Ur, l. 350–351):⁹⁸

The *uz-ga* priest who so loves the lustration rites was no longer establishing a rite of lustration for you.

O Father Nanna, your purifier (išib) had ceased to perfectly accomplish for you the holy rite of the bath (šita).⁹⁹

These rites are perceived as eternal: “No god can dissolve the rites of the temple. / Its pure lustration rites will never cease, like the earth.” For all that, there is a certain dread that they would stop or be forgotten, especially in the laments over the destruction of the towns of Sumer (*The Nippur Lament*: 54):¹⁰⁰ “He starts a bitter song because the rites of lustration of life are forgotten.”

But in the end, there is always a king elected by divine decision to restore them. The temple is the place where the purification rites are prac-

⁹⁵ Hymn to Nergal. Cf. Chiera, *Sumerian Religious Texts*, pl. XXI, 12:58, and Römer, *Sumerische Königshymnen’ der Isin-Zeit*, 91–127.

⁹⁶ An incantation has the following title: “Formula of the king who purifies his army”; see van Dijk, “Un rituel de purification des armes et de l’armée”, 108–111.

⁹⁷ “The *gudapsû* are appropriate for the rites of lustration”; Lutz, *Selected Sumerian and Babylonian Texts*, pl. CXX, 1 114: 12.

⁹⁸ See lastly Römer, *Die Klage über die Zerstörung von Ur*, 156–157. This word can describe a particular place, like the temple, or an officiating priest, but also it seems to describe a rite (see below).

⁹⁹ In the hymn to the god Nuska (presented in this context with the title cupbearer, namely guardian and manipulator of the sacred dishes), line 11 seems to suggest that *uz-ga*, *šu-luḥ* and *šita* describe ritual actions, all probably having to do with the theme of purification (the nice symmetrical structure of the whole is noticeable in passing): *uz-ga-ku*₃, *šu-luḥ-sikil-dadag-ga šita-ku*₃, *ḡa₂-ḡa₂-ḡa₂* (the three rites are matched with the tripling of the verbal base present-future) = “he tirelessly administers the holy rite-*uz-ga*, the rite-*šu-luḥ* pure and luminous, as well as the holy rite-*šita*”. The emphasis falls on the lustration-*šu-luḥ*, the most important of the three actions.

¹⁰⁰ Tinney, *The Nippur Lament*.

ticed more particularly. The hymn to Nanna (E) emphasizes especially the importance of purifying offerings and cultic meals. Yet, the mention of the purification of sheep barns in other works suggests that it is also a fundamental theme.

Without these rites, the gods cannot come into their temple, and their hearts become irritated. The gods and the officiating priests submit to this restorative rite: one thus ‘cleans’ the body (su) of the gods. But the effect of the temple šu-luḥ goes beyond the boundaries of the place: they are supposed to keep the world around, which is potentially hostile, in a state of tranquility. Finally, the purification of the sheep barn guarantees the increase and quality of its goods, which are also intended for the gods.

2.9. *The Places of the Rites*

It seems that everything can become ‘impure’, even the gods, although they abhor any form of defilement because they belong to the world and possess a form of corporeality. The sky, a pure place if ever there was one, or even the Apsû where Enki keeps the secrets of the rites of lustration, is no exception to the rule: “The Apsû is defiled.”¹⁰¹ The priests of Enki who lived on Quiet Street believe in the existence of particularly pure places, which are the dwelling places of gods: the Apsû, the sky, and certain places on earth, namely Eridu, Dilmun,¹⁰² Ur, and more specifically the Ekišnuḡal. In the sanctuaries, there are particularly protected places like the itima (in Akkadian, *kišsu*), the divine chamber that is always plunged in darkness. According to the legend of Narām-Sîn, the king of Agade, when the king destroys the Ekur of Enlil he desecrates all its parts, even the holiest:¹⁰³ “The Land (of Sumer) saw the nuptial room, a chamber that does not know daylight. / Akkad saw the sacred pools of the gods.”

The more private places, like the bedroom and the bathrooms, where the pails (šen) for the ablutions of the gods were kept, were places of superior sacrality; this is emphasized by the fact that they are forbidden to the commoner, who can neither enter them nor see them. Secrecy contributes to their mysterious character:¹⁰⁴ “Its rites, the rites of the Apsû, no one can see them!”

¹⁰¹ See Maul, “Gottesdienst im Sonnenheiligtum zu Sippar”, 393.

¹⁰² The Hymn to Šulgi D shows the great value given to the “palm tree of holy Dilmun” at the time of this king.

¹⁰³ Cooper, *Curse of Agade*, 129–130.

¹⁰⁴ Hymn to Enlil. See Falkenstein, *Sumerische Götterlieder*, 44.

In contrast, an important part of the temple was open to the faithful and lit by the light of day. The temple had to be kept clean and in good shape. Its staff was busy with this task daily. At the bottom of the temple hierarchy, the sweepers cleaned the courtyards, as their names ([munus]-kisal-luḥ) indicate. These responsibilities themselves were shared among different prebendaries who in all likelihood had their own subordinates clean for them. The sweepers, even though they were not priests, had to have their heads shaved like them. Cleanliness, in daily reality, was probably relative and dependent on the situations and the economic means of individual temples: we know of a priest-*assinnu* of Mari who complains that he is living among rubbish!¹⁰⁵

Obviously, lustration rituals happened every day in the main sanctuaries, since the gods ate their meals, and thus received their usual offerings, every day.

2.10. *In the World Outside the Sanctuary*

Outside of the sanctuary was the profane world, itself divided into the civilized world (*iri*) and into a zone given over to wild animals (*eden*). The cycle of life and death and daily nuisances were expected in it. Episodic impurity was fought against on a case-by-case basis. In normal times, the impure among the population were tolerated. The inscriptions of Gudea provide a list, the philological details of which are still problematic today; among others, one finds persons who were judged ‘sexually impure’ (*usug₃-ga*). Young women’s menstruation (*ki-sikil*) was a serious source of impurity. We know that the women living in the palace at Mari in the 18th century had to periodically leave the palace.¹⁰⁶ However, this is probably an unusual case, resulting from the fact that the building sheltered divine chapels. To the northwest of the great wall of Nippur was a door called “Big door of the impure (women)” (*ka₂-gal-u₂-zu₂-ke₄-ne*), where a large metal pool of 12 mines (*un^uduš^{en}*) used for the ritual ablution of defiled women was located.¹⁰⁷ These women were thus asked to wash symbolically outside of the town. However, it is possible that the (difficult!) verse of *Enki and Ninḫursaĝa*—“There was no young woman who threw the

¹⁰⁵ Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari*, 425 (= ARM 26 198).

¹⁰⁶ See Ziegler, *La population féminine des palais d’après les archives royales de Mari*, 18, n. 103.

¹⁰⁷ See Stol, “Nippur”, 540a.

unclean water of her bath in the city (?)¹⁰⁸—signifies that feminine ablutions were normally performed at home. As a consequence, waste water was poured in the streets rather carelessly. The Sumerian proverbs might include principles that were still in use when the Old Babylonian apprentice scribes were copying them. Thus, some read like hygiene rules: “An uncleaned hand, brought to one’s mouth, that is forbidden,”¹⁰⁹ or:

To pour beer without first washing one’s hand,
 To spit without stamping on it,
 To sneeze without moving dust,
 To kiss with the tongue, in the middle of the day, without being covered
 with a shadow,
 These are forbidden by Utu.¹¹⁰

Spitting in the street was certainly a commonplace behavior, even though it was deplored according to the social ethics sketched in these proverbs. Spitting is related to the notion of ‘spell’ (for example, *u₇*, has both meanings), which explains why it is condemned by Utu (Šamaš). Notice that the problem is not so much with leaving one’s saliva on the ground; rather it is with not making it disappear. Thus, this custom was so deeply ingrained that it was only asked that people erase that type of pollution, though it is evident that in fact this recommendation was infrequently followed. One of the measures taken by Gudea in order to start the restoration of the temple of the Eninnu was to clean the impurity left on paths by spit, which was thus not perceived as very dangerous in normal times. It seems, however, that the hero Lugalbanda became very ill during the military expedition to Aratta because of such a defilement, contracted by accident.¹¹¹

In a respectable household, it was customary for a servant to wash the feet of his master.¹¹² Each and every meal began with an ablution. In fact,

¹⁰⁸ If one prefers Katz’s interpretation (“The Story of Dilmun”) mentioned above, then one will argue that, because of public pressure, women were forced to regularly come and purify themselves at public ‘fountains’.

¹⁰⁹ SP 3.161; cf. Alster, *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer*.

¹¹⁰ SP 3.8; cf. Alster, *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer*.

¹¹¹ According to an oral contribution entitled “Funéailles héroïques dans la littérature sumérienne” that Guichard made at the Interdisciplinary Colloquium organized by the departments of Assyriology and of Biblical Milieux in Paris, at the Collège de France, April 14–15: the hero had caught a blemish (*uh₂*! [ERIM+ŠIM₅]; TMH 3, 10: 70) which had to be removed by the way of a lustration. But it did not work.

¹¹² “A girl slave, whose name is Šāt-Šamaš (...), every day, once she has grinded 10 liters of flour and washed her master’s feet, and, during the rainy season, once she has filled the hot water, if, on top of her tasks (*eš₃-gar₃*), he gives her a(nother) task to fulfill, it (the contract) will be cancelled”. Figulla and Martin, *Letters and Documents of the Old-Babylonian*

dish inventories witness to the omnipresence of pails with ewers in palaces as well as in individual homes.¹¹³

Thus, one would expect facilities designed for the ablutions of the faithful, who could at least go into the courtyards of the temples. Divine symbols appeared on such facilities, where the opposing parties would take the oath. In the Ekišnuḡal, the purifiers-*gudapsû* obviously played a role in these ceremonies. In that light, we should perhaps read a passage of the *Curse of Agade* (16–17) about the construction of the temple, the E'ulmaš, that is equipped with everything (included facilities to wash oneself?): “So that each person (purified) by the ‘ritual bath’ (a-tu₅) will rejoice in the (temple) courtyard, / and that on the spot of the party, the people might be amused.”¹¹⁴

However, when the king Šulgi entered the Ekišnuḡal, after his run (Hymn A), he first presented his offerings, arranged for the sacrifices and had an orchestra playing. Then he went to the area reserved for Ningal, Nanna’s consort. It was only then that he washed himself (l. 56–60):

Having risen like a wild animal from the spot reserved for the king,
In the august palace of Ningal,
I relaxed my knees and I washed (tu₅) myself in clear (lit. running) water.
(Then) I kneeled and ate my meal.
(Eventually) like the harrier and the falcon, I rose (again).

At the stage when Gudea was preparing the first auspicious brick for the Eninnu, he spent the night in the ‘old temple’ of Ninḡirsu, and, having thus been successful in appeasing the heart of his god, he washed himself at daybreak (Cyl. A XVIII, 3–4): “As the day was breaking, he washed himself / And arranged his (ceremonial) clothes appropriately.”

Then, the prince performs the acts of the cult (prayer, sacrifice, offerings). In doing so, his acts recall those of the high priest at the temple of Marduk, the Ešaḡila of Babylon, as they are described in the ritual of the *Akītu* in the Seleucid era.

Period, pl. LXIX, 366, l. 4–18; see Charpin, *Le Clergé d’Ur*, 475, who shows that we have a school manual. The clauses however must be related to social reality.

¹¹³ Guichard, *La Vaisselle de luxe des rois de Mari*, 311.

¹¹⁴ The use of sig₇ ‘to be green’, ‘to be beautiful’ is difficult to interpret. Falkenstein, (“Fluch über Akkade”, 79–80) is probably right to understand it in relationship to the expression hu₂ ‘to rejoice’ in the preceding line.

This 'ritual bath', which happened before any participation in the cult, was accomplished with a sort of deep bucket (*šen*) from which water was poured on the body. The use of soap made from a salicornia plant is well-known. The *naġa* plant, or its derivative, is the subject of a consecration incantation of pure water coming from a mythical source:¹¹⁵

The lustral waters emerge from the Apsû.

The water is consecrated for the body, the saponaria is purified for the body.

The lustral water¹¹⁶ is mixed with the sacred saponaria.

The expression 'washing of hands' might indicate that the participant was often content with just having clean hands. In the context of the cult, the bucket-*šen*, made for the bodily needs of the gods, is specifically named 'sacred bucket of Anu' in an incantation.¹¹⁷ A censer (*nîġ-na*); a torch (as depicted in an Ur III stela, where a naked priest lifts what seems to be a torch whose smoke rises towards the statue of the cult);¹¹⁸ and other sacred objects ('*aspergillum*'[?] *šu-kug*) were also employed.¹¹⁹ The whole was accompanied by an abundant use of tamarisk, reed, juniper, or cedar or cypress resin.

The belief in cyclical time, which was manifested in the lunar cycle, made monthly purification rites necessary. The king (on whom the fate of the entire country depended) was bound to accomplish them at the end of every month, when the moon disappeared. The ceremony was led by an exorcist (*lu₂-mu₃-mu₃*). The king came out wearing new sandals on his feet, ready to inaugurate a new month.¹²⁰ A verse from the myth *Inana and Šukaletuda* (l. 82) mentions the custom of regularly purifying

¹¹⁵ Van Dijk, *Nicht-kanonische Beschwörungen*, VIII, 14. Our translation differs slightly from the one of Wilson, "*Holiness*" and "*Purity*", 38–40.

¹¹⁶ Notice that *a-sa₁₀* is related to the Akkadian *mesû* 'to wash' in the (late) lexical series *lu₂=ša*, with, in this context, the specific meaning 'brewer' (Landsberger, *A Reconstruction of Sumerian and Akkadian Lexical Lists*, 132, l. 108). *sa₁₀* can mean 'to draw' (akk. *sābu*); see Conti, "Incantation de l'eau bénite et de l'encensoir", 255. However, this current incantation, which parallels *sa₁₀* and *kug*, shows clearly that this epithet describes the positive characteristic of water. According to Civil ("The Forerunners of *Marû* and *Ĥamtu*", 68–69), *sa₁₀* or *sa₁₀-sa₁₀* is more probably connected with the Akkadian *šab/pû* 'to soak'.

¹¹⁷ van Dijk, "Ein zweisprachiges Königsritual", 246–247.

¹¹⁸ Canby, *The "Ur-Nammu" Stela*, 24–25, and pl. 11 and pl. 43.

¹¹⁹ See van Dijk, "Ein zweisprachiges Königsritual", 246–247; Sallaberger, "Der 'Ziqurrat-Plan' von Nippur und exorzistische Riten", 613.

¹²⁰ This rite of new shoes is attested in Ur III (Sallaberger, *Der kultische Kalender der Ur III-Zeit*, 65–68) and in the Paleo-Babylonian period (van Dijk, "Ein zweisprachiges Königsritual").

the palace with palm branches:¹²¹ “One uses palms in the king’s palace for the purification (na-de₅).”

2.11. *The Permanent Danger of the Outer Edges of Sumer and Akkad*

Outside of Sumer and Akkad were alien worlds, subject but independent and always potentially rebellious. Their inhabitants did not venerate the gods, nor did they respect the basic rites that guaranteed the smooth operation of the world. As a result, these countries were plunged into constant defilement. Their existence and even their prosperity remained a mystery, as is attested in this passage of a prayer letter of Šin-iddinam (an Old Babylonian king of Larsa) that was still known in the late period:¹²²

(Among the people of the) land of Elam, even though they are as numerous as the grasshoppers, there are no dead.

The Šubartu, thick cloud, does not know reverence for the gods.

Its land (however) does not diminish; a time fixed for it (?)¹²³ does not exist.

Its troops are innumerable, its seed incommensurable.

They live under tents, and do not know the places reserved to the gods.

Because they travel on animal backs like the wild beasts, they do not know libations and sacrifices.

(The demons) Destiny, Unhappiness, Sickness, and Abomination do not even come close to them.

These men who despise the oath of god are perjury; (however) their army remains intact.

This world of the periphery represents the most remote circle in relation to the religious centers, and it contains all the dangers that one can possibly fear. The people who populate it have escaped the divine rules that the gods decree: they are not seen to die, even though the length of human life should not exceed 120 years, according to an irreversible divine decree.¹²⁴ Instead of being a benediction, this marvel puts them in the category of demons and plagues. They do not answer to any political ethic and do not respect their oaths. Divine justice has no power over them. Their nomadic way of life allows them to be associated with beasts.

¹²¹ Volk, *Inana und Šukaletuda*, 126–127, and 167–169. See also the exorcist ritual entitled ‘which jostles evil’ (hul-dub₂), described by Sallaberger, “Der ‘Ziqqurat-Plan’ von Nippur und exorzistische Riten”.

¹²² See lastly Brisch, *Tradition and the Poetics of Innovation*, 78–81, and 158–160.

¹²³ Literally ‘its day’.

¹²⁴ Myth of Namzitarra quoted by Geller, “Taboo in Mesopotamia”, 107.

This fantastical vision of barbaric people describes well what the dread of chaos located very concretely at the doors of the land represents. The scrupulous application of the rites, and in particular the rites of lustration, is supposed to contain this permanent threat, or at least separate the land from it. But the situation sometimes reversed itself in the course of history, as *The Lament over Nippur* tells (l. 86–88):

As if the acts of its purifiers were desacralized
As if its lustration rites were no longer creating calm in the (opposing)
countries
(Enlil) abandoned it, he turned his chest away from it.

2.12. Conclusion

For the priests of Enki at Ur, in particular those living between 1800 and 1700 near the great urban sanctuary, the universe rested on the dynamic of purification; the cosmic order was based on this fluctuating equilibrium between life and death. What gave life its strength and quality was precisely the purification acts. If these were interrupted or simply neglected, the city would collapse. Yet, the rites of the temple, the rites of the exorcists, could only be transmitted by the gods, who were their guardians. Since such rites were the prerogative of only a limited number of specialists in the temples, and since this knowledge was diffused very little except among a handful of families, these people then perceived for themselves an essential function within their civilization. But notice that they themselves would disappear behind their gods, such as Kusu, the actual actor behind the lustration rites. Subordinate to the royal powers, we do not know whether they ever exercised political influence.

3. DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF IMPURITY: THE WORK OF SPECIALISTS

Most of the documents we possess to study the treatment of evil and its rituals in the first millennium come from the 'libraries' of the Assyrian palaces.¹²⁵ There the kings of Assyria had collected a substantial mass of texts, so that their scholars had at their disposal a collection of documents as exhaustive as possible in order to fulfill their tasks.¹²⁶ Next to

¹²⁵ See for example Pedersen, *Archives and Library*, 130–180, and, lastly, Frame and George, "The Royal Libraries of Nineveh", 265–284.

¹²⁶ Concerning the function of protection of the king by his scholars, see for example Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, XVII–XXIV.

these technical texts, we also have some of the correspondence that the king maintained with his scholars,¹²⁷ which provides us with the parallel daily and concrete examples of the ways in which these manuals were employed by the scholars who had access to them.

3.1. *Notions of Purity and Purification*

Studying this corpus allows us to distinguish between a purification that can be called ‘of the surface’ and another, deeper one that is intended to extirpate the impurity rooted in the person.

Superficial ‘impurity’ was like a stain caused by external contacts, an echo of daily defilement, but at the spiritual level. Each relationship with the divine world (rites, prayers, etc.) demanded, as a preliminary act, purification from these defilements through appropriate rituals, in a manner similar to the way in which courtesy required one to be clean before one was introduced to someone. Thus, when a diviner wanted to practice divination, he needed to purify himself in the following manner before he could question the gods:

O Šamaš! I will bring to my mouth pure cedar; I will put it in a knot (made by) a lock of my hair, I will put for you in my bosom *the means of questioning*¹²⁸ (that) cedar (represents).

I have washed my mouth at the same time as¹²⁹ my hand. I have cleansed my mouth¹³⁰ with *the means of questioning* (that) cedar (represents); I have put pure cedar in a knot (made by) a lock of my hair. Once I carry in my clothes¹³¹ for you *the means of questioning* (that) cedar (represents), I am pure.

Towards the assembly of the Gods, I approach for the judgment.¹³²

¹²⁷ This correspondence has been reedited in several volumes. See Starr, *Queries to the Sun god*; Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings*; Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*.

¹²⁸ When one reads *ša-pí-am* as coming from *šēpu*: ‘to question’ (for this verb, see CAD Š/2 294a). The term has been read and interpreted diversely. The fact that it is put before *erennu* does not encourage taking it as an epithet of the latter, yet incandescent cedar was the means of summoning the gods.

¹²⁹ Û in OB is followed by the indirect case.

¹³⁰ This expression, which picks up on the one in l. 1, ‘to bring to one’s mouth’, recalls the image of the burning firebrand with which the lips of the one who must speak are purified (see Is 6:7, where Isaiah’s lips are purified with burning coal before he is sent on his mission).

¹³¹ L. 8 clearly echoes the preceding l. 3 and 4. The act of putting in one’s *sūnum* (= bosom or hem of a garment) is echoed by the verb *labāšu* ‘to be clothed’; we suggest that one indeed read with Hussey, *Early Mesopotamian Incantations*, vol. 11, texte 22, l. 8 *al-ta-ba-š[a]-ku* (= *altabbašakkum*) and not *al-ta-ba ak-ku*, which can only come from *šapāku*; yet the alternation š/l is not attested for this period.

¹³² This text was commented upon several times and its translation is not completely certain. See Goetze, “An Old Babylonian Prayer”, 25–29; Seux, *Hymnes et prières aux dieux*,

The diviner, with the help of the cedar—one of the purifying essences *par excellence*¹³³—purified all of the parts of his body that were going to be in contact with the gods: the mouth, through which he spoke, and the hands, with which he fulfilled the ritual action. For the diviner, this preparation could take a more complex form, as another ritual shows:

When the diviner is about to accomplish an extispicy for the king, and to accomplish the rituals: in the morning, before the sun shines, the diviner must wash with the water of the stoup. Having thrown grass *imhur-lim*¹³⁴ in the filtered oil, he will anoint himself with it.

He will clothe himself with a clean garment, and he will purify himself with tamarisk and with ‘well grass’. And, on an empty stomach, he will masticate cedar.¹³⁵

The ritual describes the steps of purification. The diviner began by washing with water, which would take care of the impurity covering his body. Other rituals show that numerous purifying plants¹³⁶ were mixed together in this water before it was ‘placed under the stars’ (that is, displayed during an entire night) in order to increase the power of the solution thus obtained. Because of that, the diviner would prepare himself before sunrise. Then, once he had rid himself of superficial defilements, he anointed himself with an oil including a purifying plant, so that he would maintain his status of purity for the entire time of the ritual—the oil naturally serving to protect the skin from outside attacks. He then treated his garments, which also needed to be pure, so that they would contaminate neither him nor his environment.¹³⁷

These two examples of rituals demonstrate the necessity of purity when one comes into contact with the divine, both the initial purification to get rid of the natural dirtiness/impurity of human beings and also the concern with maintaining this state during the entire length of contact.¹³⁸

467–470; Reiner, “New Cases of Morphophonemic Spellings”, 35 n. 1; Jeyes, “Divination as a Science”, 29; Hurowitz, “Isaiah’s Impure Lips”, 87.

¹³³ For the role of the cedar in the context of the divining ritual, see for example Starr, *The Rituals of the Diviner*, 48–49; and Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari*, 44.

¹³⁴ The name of this plant means ‘He confronted the 1000 (evils/demons)’.

¹³⁵ Zimmern, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis*, 112, l. 2–5.

¹³⁶ For a complete presentation of the various purifying products, see Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung*, 42–44.

¹³⁷ The same phenomenon is observed during the preparation of the ritual in Reiner, *Šurpu*, 11, l. 6.

¹³⁸ Concerning that notion of ritual purity, see van der Toorn, “La pureté rituelle”, 339–356.

In the same manner, the rituals of ‘washing one’s mouth’ were part of the process of purification of a person who needed to come into contact with the divine.¹³⁹ The mouth, being one of the means of communication with the gods, needed to be particularly pure.¹⁴⁰

The *takpirtu*¹⁴¹ ritual exemplifies the means used in order to maintain this state of purity. Built on the root *kapāru* (‘to wipe, to scrub’), the term properly means ‘to remove dirtiness’. It is used for persons as well as for buildings and living spaces.¹⁴²

In most cases where the contexts are preserved well enough to understand the use of this ritual, its sequence included first a preparatory phase,¹⁴³ and its length was coextensive with the length of the rituals with which it was associated. For example, in a letter from an exorcist to the Assyrian king that includes the description of a ritual of deliverance from evil *namburbû*, the ritual *takpirtu* is described in the following manner: “(...) it is said in the appropriate ritual *namburbû*: ‘He (the king) sits for 7 days in a reed hut; the purification ritual (*takpirtu*) is practiced on him; he is treated like a sick person (...)’”¹⁴⁴

The rest of the text describes in detail the other types of rituals that could be used, and these are specifically for eliminating evil. The *takpirtu* ritual is thus at the same time preparatory and coextensive with the length of the larger ritual, in order to maintain the patient in a state of purity sufficient to allow the practice of the other rituals to be effective.¹⁴⁵

On the other hand, there are cases in which the purification equates with washing oneself from a provoked impurity—a much deeper reality, which necessitates more complex means for freeing oneself from it.

¹³⁹ Walker and Dick, *The Introduction of the Cultic Image*, 12–13.

¹⁴⁰ See for example Hurowitz, “Isaiah’s Impure Lips”, 38–39; see above note 130.

¹⁴¹ See Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal*, 157 (note on the text 167, r.8).

¹⁴² See the examples included in *CAD T* 85a–b.

¹⁴³ But it must definitely be continued during the practice of the associated ritual. For the text, see Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, text 247, when a *takpirtu* ritual is accomplished in the wing of the palace called ‘of the eunuchs’, following a bad omen.

¹⁴⁴ Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, text 277, l. 9–15.

¹⁴⁵ For a similar case, see for example Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* = SAA 10, 212, where the chief exorcist mentions that he sent an exorcist to practice the ritual *takpirtu* for 6 days, while, at his side, a ‘cantor’ practiced rituals. Another very clear case is documented in Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, text 69, in which an exorcist must accomplish a ritual *takpirtu* at the same time that another ritual of deliverance from evil is performed following a bad omen.

3.2. *Cases of Provoked Impurity*

This type of impurity, which provoked a hostile reaction from the personal divinity or from the gods in general and which required a complex appropriate treatment, is clearly more pernicious because it has merged with the victim.¹⁴⁶

3.2.1. *Voluntary and Conscious Impurities*

The severe impurity of an individual could have multiple causes and could be related to several phenomena, which point to the conscious transgression of prescriptions.

Thus, a passage in the series *Šumma ālu*¹⁴⁷ specifies the level of purity of a man who needs to go to a temple after having performed certain actions:

If a man, having risen to go to the house of his god, touches (...),¹⁴⁸ he is not impure.¹⁴⁹ If a man, similarly,¹⁵⁰ touched the dog of Gula, he is not impure. If a man, similarly, has chewed of the (plant)-*kakkusu* from the wall, he is not impure. If a man, similarly, has chewed tamarisk, he is not impure.

If a man, similarly, drank wine and ate, he is not impure. If, similarly, a man put meat to his mouth, he is not impure.

If a man, similarly, ate leeks, cress, garlic, onion, beef or pork, he is impure.¹⁵¹

If a man, similarly, ate apple?¹⁵² he is impure.

¹⁴⁶ For van der Toorn, sins' hierarchy is related to a distinction between 'ethics' and 'etiquette' (van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction*, 12). For Geller, there is clearly a hierarchy in the depth of transgressions: the less severe ones are simply an inconvenience for the gods, while the most severe ones are sanctioned by law (Geller, "Taboo in Mesopotamia", 112).

¹⁴⁷ This series, called 'If a town', primarily includes a collection of fortuitous omens that can be observed in the environment of a city-dweller, such as the state of the wall of a house, the behavior of specific animals, or even meteorological phenomena. The first 40 tablets of this series have been re-edited by Freedman, *If a City Is Set on a Height. The Akkadian Omen Series Šumma Alu ina Mēlê Šakin*, vol. 1, tablets 1–21, and vol. 2, tablets 22–40.

¹⁴⁸ The interpretation of this item is not certain.

¹⁴⁹ Word for word: 'He is pure'. The question created by the interpretation of *sikil* in this line is the following: is it a purification created by the contact of the object or by the chewing of the plant with purifying virtue (which is how *CAD* understands it), or is it a preliminary state (purity) that has not been modified by the action (contact with an external object, etc.)? The fact that some of the conditions developed in the rest of the text make the naked man *nu-sikil*, 'impure', tends to indicate that one should understand *sikil* as 'he is not impure'.

¹⁵⁰ 'Similarly' (Sumerian: 'ki.min') in this passage stands for 'having risen to go to the house of his god'.

¹⁵¹ Gadd, *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets*, pl. 38; van der Toorn, "La pureté rituelle", 342.

¹⁵² If one reads: *giš-ḫašhur*?

If a man, similarly, ‘approached’ a woman in his dream, but did not have an ejaculation, this man has no lack,¹⁵³ he has not sinned. He can undertake all the questioning. There is no obstacle to access the god.¹⁵⁴

If a man drinks beer during a meal, this man is not impure.

If a man eats beer of the mountain during a meal, he is not impure.

These examples simply point out the level of purity of the man who prepares to enter a temple. His classification as ‘impure’ is a way of saying that he could not have contact with the divinity. His impurity had no consequences, as long as he did not transgress a prohibition. These verdicts are only warnings. However, if he enters a temple while he knows he is impure, he will have transgressed a prohibition and will contract a serious impurity, which will not fail to provoke divine wrath.

The text presents multiple situations grouped together by actions (touch, chew, eat, etc.). The first two lines describe what one can touch (or chew) without risk of becoming impure before the divinity, namely amulets (or purifying agents). The following lines give details concerning the consumption of food. Drinking alcohol during a meal protects against the impurity provoked by food. The case of meat brought to one’s mouth highlights the fact that it is the actual absorption of meat that makes one impure. The foods that are considered to make one impure for contact with the divine (cress, garlic, onion, etc.) are those that, when consumed, cause bad breath.¹⁵⁵ This creates a parallel between light impurity and cleanliness of the body. It was inconceivable to communicate with the gods while having bad breath.

The case of the man who has a dream demonstrates that it was bodily fluids that made one impure. The relationship between the verb *ebēbu* “to be without fault” and the absence of sin (*hiṭu*) must be noted. The text does indeed distinguish between two states of purity: *el* ‘he has not lost his natural state of purity’ and *eb* ‘he has not committed a violation that would have provoked an impurity in him.’

¹⁵³ This translation allows the maintenance of the meaning of *ebbu*, which refers both to the fact that the calculations are right (there is no lack) and to a certain purity related to the absence of lack towards the gods.

¹⁵⁴ If one reads: *ittāti ittanallak ana pān ili ūl parik*. See parallels in *CAD P 157b*.

¹⁵⁵ Indeed, leeks have a strong smell when cooked; at that time, meat was often rancid, thus giving out a very strong smell of rot, which the consumption of alcohol must have minimized because wine ‘washes the mouth’. Wine is often used as an offering to the gods and during rituals of purification.

The impurities acquired consciously are, in general, related to the voluntary transgression of a taboo, whether it is to spill blood,¹⁵⁶ to steal sacred goods, etc. We will not dwell on these cases because, since the causes were known, the modalities for eliminating impurities were clear, and the consequences of the action often included legal punishment, human justice adding itself to divine justice.

3.2.2. *Conscious and Involuntary Impurities*

Impurity could also be a result of a physical but involuntary condition, that is, it could be known, temporary but unavoidable. A clear case is menstruation, a period during which women were considered impure. A menstruating woman could be called *harištu*, “reclusive woman”,¹⁵⁷ that is, “made distant” so that their temporary impurity would not contaminate their environment.¹⁵⁸

Leviticus demonstrates that women, while they were menstruating, could not access a sacred place such as the temple, indicating that they were considered impure. In a similar manner, the Mari documentation shows that this taboo reached far back in time: the queen Šibtu planned to leave the royal palace for a couple of days during the month, which also reveals the sacred nature of that building.¹⁵⁹

Another case relates to childbirth. A woman who has just delivered a baby is described as *musukkatu* “the one who is taboo” or as *urruštu* “dirty or soiled”.¹⁶⁰ The length of the impurity could have been 30 days. In general, any bodily fluid, as was fairly usual, was considered a source of impurity.

Once the cause of the impurity ended, one simply needed to perform the suitable rite in order for purity to be restored. In this case, it was only a superficial purification, a simple cleansing that served to take away the last traces of residual impurity.

¹⁵⁶ Blood had a very important ritual value (see for example Durand, “Quelques remarques sur le vocabulaire de quelques parties du corps”, 69–71). Thus, to make two priestesses-*naditum* impure in a definitive manner, it was sufficient to put blood on them; see Pientka-Hinz, “Angeschmiert!” 254–261.

¹⁵⁷ See Stol's indications, *Birth in Babylonia*, 123 and n. 82, as well as 206.

¹⁵⁸ Regarding that theme, see van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction*, 31–33.

¹⁵⁹ Durand, “La religion amorrite”, 561–563.

¹⁶⁰ Concerning the impure state of a woman after birth, see Stol, *Birth in Babylonia*, 205–206.

3.3. *Unconscious Transgressions that Provoked an Impurity*

The third possibility is to become impure without being conscious of it. These are the most documented cases, because they are the most delicate to settle. The texts record many possible causes for these impurities, since taboos and prohibitions were very numerous in Mesopotamian society, in particular because of the multitude of gods and of their prescriptions.

3.3.1. *Unconscious Transgressions of a Prohibition*

This multiplication of prohibitions made unconscious transgressions even likelier, since the prohibitions could vary depending on the day. The collection of hemerology texts¹⁶¹ includes, in addition to auspicious and inauspicious days, specific prescriptions: practical advice or genuine indications of taboos that cannot be transgressed. For example, the prescription for the fifth day of the month of *tašrîtu*:

he will eat neither fennel, nor cress, the *šiqu* demon (eczema) will (would) take hold of him; he will not eat pork flesh, he will (would) have a trial; he will not eat roasted meat:¹⁶² the *rābišu* demon would strike him . . .¹⁶³

Likewise for the seventh day of *tašrîtu*:

he will not eat fish or leek: a scorpion will (would) bite him; prohibition of *Šulpa'e*, who presides at the table . . .¹⁶⁴

These prescriptions are similar to those expressed in *Šumma ālu* and, even though the notion of impurity is not explicitly mentioned, the fact that one incurs damages is, for some, an indication that the individual has upset his or her personal divinity, who turned away from him or her following the impurity, leaving him or her alone and with no protection. This is expressed clearly in the case of the expression 'prohibition (*ikkib*) of ND'. The term *ikkibu*, translated by dictionaries as 'taboo, consequence of breaking a taboo', designates the impurity that follows the transgression of a prohibition, since the consequence, 'a scorpion would bite him', is the act of a divinity.

¹⁶¹ The hemerologic texts are currently published only partially. See provisionally Livingstone, "The Magic of Time"; and Marti, "Les hémérologies néo-assyriennes".

¹⁶² A method of cooking (*šumû*) well-known in rituals. It seems that the taboo does not apply to boiled meat.

¹⁶³ Labat, *Hémérologies et ménologies*, 171–173, l. 42–45.

¹⁶⁴ Labat, *Hémérologies et ménologies*, 117, l. 55–56. Concerning alimentary taboos, see van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction*, 33–36. Regarding taboo about these plants, see Stol, "Garlic, Onion, Leek", 68.

These alimentary prohibitions were no accident; rather, although it is not spelled out in the hemerologies, they depended upon the cultic calendar. Indeed, at the beginning of the month of *tašrītu*, several important rituals took place.¹⁶⁵

These alimentary prohibitions have parallels in medical texts; thus the consumption of garlic, onion or cress in particular could provoke disorders.¹⁶⁶ One medical text specifies: “if he eats garlic and onion, he will have a headache”¹⁶⁷ or “during 7 days, he shall not eat garlic, onion, or leek”.¹⁶⁸

One of the tasks of the scholars surrounding the king of Assyria was precisely to protect him against these potential unconscious transgressions. A letter, unfortunately very fragmentary, highlights this phenomenon, with a scholar writing to the king of Assyria, according to the precepts of hemerologies, about what he can and cannot do: “He eats spelt bread and he drinks spelt beer, he eats beef, sheep and poultry; (but) he does not eat garlic, onion or fish, if he then wants to *have permanently*¹⁶⁹ happiness . . .”¹⁷⁰

An individual can be soiled by the impurity of a member of his family,¹⁷¹ such as his father or his mother. Such a case is specifically documented during the birth of children, when numerous abnormalities are explained by the misdeed committed by the parents. Thus, as an excerpt from the treatise on abnormal births, *Šumma izbu*, makes clear, “If a woman gave birth to an ‘unbalanced person’,¹⁷² be it masculine or

¹⁶⁵ See for example Cohen, *The Cultic Calendar*, 326–330.

¹⁶⁶ This series, named ‘If a malformed new-born . . .’, collects the fortuitous omens provoked by abnormal human and animal births.

¹⁶⁷ Köcher, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen*, vol. 3, text 318 iii 23.

¹⁶⁸ Köcher, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen*, vol. 6, text 575 iii 17 // 574 ii 30.

¹⁶⁹ This is our translation of *lirkus*.

¹⁷⁰ Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings*, text 231, l. 3’–6’.

¹⁷¹ See Geller’s idea, in “Taboo in Mesopotamia”, 112: “The Theory is that *māmītu* refers to a theoretical oath ostensibly taken by an ancestor, or even seven generations of ancestors, which forbids the swearer or his progeny from committing various private acts. The violation of the *māmītu*, that is, an explicit curse, serves as the ultimate sanction, the ill-effects of a broken oath being well documented”; for an identical situation in Mari, where one talks to Yasmah-Adad about a promise probably made by his father, see Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari*, text 84, and its commentary in Durand, “La religion amorrite”, 356–357.

¹⁷² This is the *šehānu*, a word translated originally as ‘giant’, then understood as ‘ecstatic’ by CAD Š/2 263a. For Scurlock and Andersen, *Diagnoses in Assyrian and Babylonian Medicine*, 334, it is an example of autism. Yet the verb *šehūm* is used to designate mood swings

feminine, this woman, someone who sinned (*arnu*) violated¹⁷³ her in the street.”¹⁷⁴

In addition, the word *māmītu*, which properly means ‘oath’, also connotes ‘malediction (related to perjury)’ provoked by the breaking of an oath. In some cases, in particular in the examples presented in the ritual *Šurpu*, the *māmītu* could be related to oaths that the ancestors of the individual had contracted and that must not be broken;¹⁷⁵ yet even if the individual was unaware of such oaths, he or she could still unknowingly breach them.

3.3.2. *The Spread of Impurity*

Impurity was contagious. Simple contact with someone or something that was impure made one impure.

Thus it was recommended, in a treatment for bad teeth, to draw marine water from the big ocean (*a-ab-ba*), “there, where no woman in an impure state has gone, there, where no woman who carries a taboo¹⁷⁶ washed her hands”.¹⁷⁷

Water was paradoxically one of the most dangerous substances because its use for purification filled it with impurities and made it susceptible to contaminating its environment, as the many cases of impurity contracted because of contact with soiled water show.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, walking on a place made impure could render one sick.¹⁷⁹

Being close to an impure person during the performance of a ritual had very negative results. This is particularly clear in the case of taking oracles and is also shown in the exclusion clauses¹⁸⁰ (*ezib* = notwithstanding) of

or social aggressiveness. This text shows that this characteristic could be the consequence of a sin: a woman who was the victim of someone unbalanced will give birth to an unbalanced person.

¹⁷³ Literally: ‘who made her fat’. Incidentally, the Mesopotamian custom allows for abortion in that situation. See Scurlock, “Outfoxing Ninhursag”, 31.

¹⁷⁴ Leichty, *The Omen Series*, 38, 69; and Stol, *Birth in Babylonia*, 168.

¹⁷⁵ Geller, “Taboo in Mesopotamia”, 112–114. For Geller, there is a distinction between malediction-*māmītu*, which would be less severe, and *arnu*, blatant sin.

¹⁷⁶ This can refer to a menstruating woman.

¹⁷⁷ Farber, “*Mannam lušpur ana Enkidu*”, 311–312. One text has the variant ‘her clothes’ instead of ‘her hands’. For this passage, see Stol, *Birth in Babylonia*, 205–206.

¹⁷⁸ See *CAD* R 356a.

¹⁷⁹ See the examples collected in *CAD* K *kabāsu*, 6a–b.

¹⁸⁰ During oracular consultations, the diviner thus indicates the cases that could have disturbed the ritual but that he decided to ignore. See Jeyes, “Divination as a Science”, 28.

the *Questions to Šamaš*¹⁸¹ (for example: “notwithstanding the fact that an impure man or woman got close to the place where the divinatory act took place and made it impure”), as well as in some extispicy apodoses, such as: “if there is a hole in the middle of the ‘presence’:¹⁸² an impure person has touched the sacrifice”.¹⁸³

One passage of the *lipšur* (= may he be freed) litanies also describes this phenomenon, since, besides the sins that a man could commit consciously, the following cases that could have caused his impurity are mentioned:

If he spoke to a ‘damned’ man (*tamû*),¹⁸⁴ if he has eaten the food of a ‘damned’ man, if he drank the water of a ‘damned’ man, if he drank the leftovers of a ‘damned’ man, if he spoke with a ‘sinner’ (= who committed an *arnu*), if he ate the food of a ‘sinner’, if he drank the water of a ‘sinner’, if he interceded in favor of a ‘sinner’ . . .¹⁸⁵

In parallel, the series *Šurpu* gives the same type of indication:

He slept in the bed of a ‘damned’ person, he sat on the chair of a ‘damned’ person, he ate at the table of a ‘damned’ person, he drank from the cup of a ‘damned’ person . . .¹⁸⁶

Contamination can thus result from having direct contact with someone who is impure, a ‘sinner’, or indirect contact with ‘what an impure person touched’, making one impure through that contact itself. There was thus a sort of ‘chain of transmission’ of impurity. This idea of contamination goes even further, since, as Maul notes, when a divinity sent a negative omen to someone, thereby giving it physical form, the simple fact of seeing that physical manifestation provoked the infection of the addressee.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸¹ Starr, *Queries to the Sun god*, XX–XXVII. These clauses can be organized into two categories: *ezib* standard and non-standard. The logic of these expressions sometimes escapes us; however, we can ask if they do not in fact reflect some non-explicit *namburbû*, a type of preliminary ritual of protection against a feared evil, thus making the work of the diviner easier, since it is unlikely that the latter could just dismiss cases of impurity as severe as the contamination of his divinatory activity by an impure person.

¹⁸² This refers to a groove on the left lobe of the liver; see Koch-Westenholz, *Babylonian Liver Omens*, 51–53.

¹⁸³ Koch-Westenholz, *Babylonian Liver Omens*, 122, l. 13’, and 501 under *ellu*.

¹⁸⁴ Following the practice of Akkadian sin terminology, which requires that a term mean, at the same time, an activity and its contrary (for example, *tamîtu*, oath and perjury). *tamû* can mean here ‘someone who has himself breached an oath’, since *tamûm* signifies ‘to take an oath, to swear’.

¹⁸⁵ Reiner, “*Lipšur* Litanies”, 136–137, l. 85–88.

¹⁸⁶ Reiner, *Šurpu*, 16, l. 100–103.

¹⁸⁷ Maul, “How the Babylonians”, 124.

3.3.3. *The Provoked Negative Actions: Sorcery*

One of the ways to become impure without being aware of it and without transgressing any taboo (at least voluntarily) was to be the victim of sorcery.¹⁸⁸ In that case, several means could be used to make the victim impure. Sometimes one contaminated through ‘dirty things’. Thus, the sorcerer could spit in the victim’s food. The word used to refer to spit (*ru’ātu*) can sometime appear as *lu’ātu*, the ‘dirty thing’. It is interesting to note that the verb meaning ‘make dirty/impure’ in the case of sorcery is *lapātu*, which properly means ‘touch with the hand, hit’¹⁸⁹ and which must carry this idea of contamination. The means of action of sorcery are multiple, as one text indicates:

The witch did an evil sorcery against me. She nourished me with bad drugs; she made me drink her drink which took my life, she made me take a dirty bath, which provoked my death; she anointed me with her evil ointment which caused my destruction, she made me be overtaken by her evil sickness which is ‘capture by the *māmītu*’...¹⁹⁰

In any case, once the spell was cast and the personal god was upset, the victim of the spell, deprived of his or her protections, encountered a series of misfortunes, which manifested themselves¹⁹¹ in ways not particularly different from those plaguing a person who became impure for different reasons.

Thus, when such misfortunes happened, the victim tried first to determine what caused his or her woes, and for this, he or she had to consult specialists.

3.4. *The Effects of Impurity and its Identification*

Although a person could be impure without being conscious of it, the gods were bound to make signs appear that indicated his or her state to the victim. If interpreted correctly, these signs allowed the person to identify the evil and become pure again. As long as an evil was not identified, it was impossible to perform the appropriate ritual to eradicate it. It is

¹⁸⁸ See Schwermer, *Abwehrzauber und Behexung*.

¹⁸⁹ See the example quoted by Abusch, “Witchcraft and Anger”, 93.

¹⁹⁰ Clay, *Babylonian Records*, text 18, l. 1–7, translated and commented on by Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 12; and Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber und Behexung*, 70, n. 5.

¹⁹¹ See for example Stol, “Diagnosis and Therapy”, 47.

thus necessary now to study the manifestations and the means of identifying impurity.¹⁹²

3.4.1. *The 'Loss' of the Personal Divinity*

In the Mesopotamian conception, each person was associated with a personal god, who protected him or her and served as his or her intermediary among the other gods. Very often, impurity or sin had as its first manifestation the fact of provoking the wrath and then the departure of this divinity,¹⁹³ which left that person with no defense against either natural or supernatural attacks. Thus, catastrophes that descended upon someone could be the sign of the personal divinity's wrath, either because of a transgression or because of a spell.¹⁹⁴ These signs were varied: sickness, bad luck, external attacks such as insect bites, etc. Such signs often launched investigative measures to find out if one had unknowingly become impure. The effects of divine wrath are presented, in more or less detail, in the prayers to the gods as well as in some literary works and in rituals. In general, they can be classed into three categories: physical problems such as illnesses, psychosomatic problems,¹⁹⁵ and social consequences.¹⁹⁶

3.4.2. *An Extreme Case: The Impossible Identification of Evil*

A passage of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* (= 'I want to praise the lord of wisdom') supplies all the actions needed in case of persisting bad fortune:¹⁹⁷

I called my (personal) god, but he did not pay attention to me; I prayed to my goddess, but she did not raise her head towards me. The diviner remained uncertain during an oracular questioning about (my) future; the

¹⁹² In Mesopotamian culture, fate was not ineluctable. The various omens sent by the gods had a preventive purpose, since human beings, having been warned in such a manner, could, if they accomplished the necessary rituals, escape their fate.

¹⁹³ The consequences of the personal divinity leaving are clearly described in the text *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*; see Annus and Lenzi, *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, tablet I, l. 43–120.

¹⁹⁴ See for example Abusch, "Witchcraft and Anger", 83–121.

¹⁹⁵ On this topic, see for example Stol, "Psychosomatic Suffering", 57–68. Concerning madness in the Mesopotamian documentation, see Stol, "Insanity in Babylonian Sources", 1–12.

¹⁹⁶ These effects parallel those of sorcery; see Stol, "Diagnosis and Therapy", 47.

¹⁹⁷ The main part of the first tablet of this text and everything that comes before on tablet II describes the symptoms that over-burden the victim. They are of all sorts, physical (a deterioration of the general physical health), emotional (severe depression), related to events (extreme bad luck), and relational (definite ostracism).

interpreter did not clarify my situation through fumigations; I implored the god of Dreams, but he did not open my understanding; the exorcist, through the rituals, did not lift the wrath that was coming down on me...¹⁹⁸

The wretched character, having deduced from his state that he is the victim of some divine wrath, seeks to know its cause: he consults various specialists, and then desperate, he calls upon an exorcist who knows general appeasing rituals.

This impurity, provoked by divine wrath, impacts his health, which once more leaves specialists baffled:

My symptoms scared the exorcist and the diviner was thrown into confusion by the omens he obtained for me; the exorcist did not diagnose the state of my illness and the diviner did not indicate the end of my illness.¹⁹⁹

This passage from *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* presents the different steps to follow and the specialists to consult when faced with bad luck. The present case is extreme, since none of the specialists have the means to solve the patient's problem.

The first solution, according to this text, is to pray to the divinity in order to quell its fury,²⁰⁰ then to call upon specialists, such as the diviner or the interpreter (*šā'ilu*), who are able to spot and interpret the signs from the gods and thus to understand why the individual is suffering.²⁰¹

Eventually, he calls upon a specialist, the 'exorcist', who is informed about many rituals but who also fails. The themes of the inability to understand divine wrath and the difficulty of appeasing it, themes witnessed in *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, recur in Mesopotamian literature, which sometimes even portrays powerless gods confronted with similar situations. This is the case in a passage of the ritual *Šurpu*²⁰² that has been specifically elaborated for cases in which the cause of suffering is unknown.

An evil malediction, such as a *gallû*-demon, has been placed on (this) man; silence and torpor have been placed on him; pernicious silence has been

¹⁹⁸ Annus and Lenzi, *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, tablet II, l. 5–9.

¹⁹⁹ Annus and Lenzi, *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, tablet II, l. 108–111.

²⁰⁰ For these penitential prayers, see for example Seux, *Hymns and Prayers*, 139–211; Maul, *Herzberuhigungsklagen*.

²⁰¹ The lack of answer in this specific case could be related not to the wrath of the personal divinity but to its absence, since, according to Jeyes, "Divination as a Science", 28–29, the diviner directly questions the personal divinity of the patient, who serves as an intermediary among the great gods. If this divinity is absent, the diviner is no longer able to receive answers from the gods, for lack of an intermediary.

²⁰² Reiner, *Šurpu*, 30, l. 1–34.

placed on him; an evil malediction, a (perjury) malediction, a migraine. An evil malediction has cut this man's throat, as one would do for a sheep. His god has left his body. His goddess, full of good advice, put herself aside. Silence and torpor cover(s) him like a cloth and control(s) him constantly. Marduk looked towards him.

He (= Marduk) entered the temple to see his father Ea and he cried: "Father, an evil malediction, such as a *gallû*-demon, has been placed on (this) man." He spoke to him a second time: "I do not know what to do (for) this man; what could appease him?" Ea answered his son Marduk: "My son, what is it that you do not know? What more can I give to you? Marduk, what is it that you do not know? What more can I give to you? What I do know, you know it (...)."

Over time, the risks of transgressions became more and more numerous, complex and sometimes so inconsistent for commoners that, during the first millennium, the theme of the enigmatic character of divine design for human beings developed. This is presented well in the "Theodicy",²⁰³ a text in which a man questions his friend about 'divine injustice', which creates situations in which a person who follows the divine precepts to the letter experiences misfortunes that are unknown to the one who strays from the same principles. His friend answers him:

Divine design is as remote as the depth of the sky. It is too difficult to understand, people cannot understand it. (...) Even if one (tries) to comprehend divine intentions, people cannot understand them ...²⁰⁴

The case presented in *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* is extreme and shows the gradation of possible answers available to the individual confronted with impurity, from the simple personal prayer to the use of complex rituals.

3.5. *Fighting Impurity*

3.5.1. *The Impurity Specialist in the First Millennium: The Exorcist*

Among all the purity specialists, the exorcist is particularly well documented in the first millennium.²⁰⁵ The translation 'exorcist' is traditional

²⁰³ For a recent translation of this text, see Foster, *Before the Muses*, 914–922.

²⁰⁴ Foster, *Before the Muses*, 920, l. 256–264.

²⁰⁵ Several sumero-akkadian terms are used to refer to the 'exorcist' without it being clear whether these were simple synonyms or different professions. There is the Sumerian *lú-maš-maš* and the Akkadian terms *mašmaššu* and *āšipu*. See Jean, *La magie néo-assyrienne*, 22–53; and Geller, *Ancient Babylonian Medicine*, 48–49, which ends with: "But what was the *mašmaššu* if not *āšipu*? (...) One difference does appear to emerge within the patterns of our evidence, that *āšipu* may have been a prestige term of scholarship and literature while *mašmaššu* comes from the actual parlance of practice and everyday life".

but does not account for all of his functions, and his status is still the subject of debate.²⁰⁶ His vast field of activities meant that he was always compared to other specialists whose activities applied to specific domains. Thus, because of his ‘medical’ talents, the exorcist has often been studied in relationship to the medical practitioner, the *asû*. For a long time, scholars accepted that Mesopotamian medicine²⁰⁷ was divided into two fields: the field of the *asû* ‘physician’, who was concerned with physical ailments, and the field of the exorcist, who dealt with the supernatural. Today, opinions are more nuanced, although a consensus has not yet been reached.²⁰⁸

The exorcist’s field of competences can be examined through documents of ritual practice as well as through the ‘manual of the exorcist’. This directory, which gives the names of the different books an *āšipu* needed to know in order to perform his job,²⁰⁹ gives an idea of his assignments and of the depth of his actions. It contains several broad sections, and it seems that the directory grew over time to include new knowledge,²¹⁰ so that it ended up covering, in its final form, an important part of the known scholarly texts. Among these are many texts related to purification, including those meant to counteract evil, which makes the exorcist into a specialist in the struggle against impurity in all its aspects. The fact that he is said to master the *išippūtu*, namely ‘the science of the (*išippu*, a certain type of) purifying priest’ is, in that regard, particularly telling. This manual does not permit defining the originality of the exorcist in comparison to other analogous professionals, since it mentions numerous texts that are also part of the basic knowledge of other professions. Comparison between scholars’ libraries also shows that one often finds the same books in multiple catalogues, never mind the specializations of their owners.²¹¹ Similarly, the exorcist was not the only one concerned to

²⁰⁶ For a review of the problem, see Jean, *La magie néo-assyrienne*, 3–52; and Stol, “Diagnosis and Therapy”, 48.

²⁰⁷ Concerning Mesopotamian medicine, see Attinger, “La médecine mésopotamienne”, 1–96; and lastly Geller, *Ancient Babylonian Medicine*.

²⁰⁸ See for example Scurlough, “Physician, Exorcist, Conjurer, Magician”; and Heessel, “The Babylonian Physician Rabâ-ša-Marduk”, 13–28.

²⁰⁹ See Jean, *La magie néo-assyrienne*, 62. For a study of these titles, and their classification, see Geller, “Incipits and Rubrics”, 225–258; and the comments by Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods*, 85–95.

²¹⁰ Its first part concerns precisely the *āšipūtu*, compiled by a certain Esagil-mukîn-apli of the time of Hammu-rabi of Babylon. Two other sciences are mentioned later: *kakugallūtu* (science of the priest ka-kù-gál, ‘the man with a pure mouth’, the incantation priest) and *išippūtu* (science of the išib, *išippu*, the purifying priest).

²¹¹ Jean, *La magie néo-assyrienne*, 144–167.

one degree or another with purification, and some rituals seem to have demanded the presence of several different specialists.²¹²

When an exorcist was called to a patient, he had at his disposal a complete range of measures for treatment, including rituals to protect himself against the potential evil carried by his patients, which shows that the risks of impurity transmission were taken very seriously.

In order to identify the ailment plaguing the patient, the exorcist could join forces with other specialists, such as the *bārû* (diviner). He also had at his disposal a manual for interpreting fortuitous omens, called ‘When an exorcist goes to the home of a patient . . .’;²¹³ it included a long list of ‘symptoms’, which allowed him to identify the illness of the patient and among which the effects of many cases of impurity were mentioned—be it the consequence of sacrilege, in particular of *māmîtu*, of sins, etc.—along with the appropriate remedies. For example: “if the patient’s face is covered with sweat and he is constantly weary:²¹⁴ hand of the Gemini; you treat him with exorcism and you wipe him abundantly: he will heal.”²¹⁵

Simply by observing the sick person, the exorcist was able to identify the ailment: the ‘hand of the Gemini.’²¹⁶ Once he obtained the identification, the practitioner acted in two stages. First, he used the appropriate ritual and practiced his ‘exorcism’ *āšîpûtu*, in order to suppress the deep impurity and its cause. Second, it was necessary to purify the patient, and thus to wash him of his dirtiness.

There were many rituals to treat impurities—about as many as there were ways of becoming impure. They may be divided into two categories: the rituals aimed at a known evil and the ones, more general, against an unidentified or poorly identified evil.

3.5.2. *The Specifically Targeted Treatments*

The rituals directed against an identified evil were called *nam-bûr-bi*, which means “(ritual for) its (evil’s) deliverance.”²¹⁷

²¹² See the case analyzed by Jean, *La magie néo-assyrienne*, 102–103; foundation rituals that require the presence of a *bārû*, of an *āšîpu* and of a *kalû*.

²¹³ Labat, *Traité akkadien de diagnostic*; and Heessel, *Babylonisch-assyrische Diagnostik*.

²¹⁴ See Heessel, *Babylonische-assyrische Diagnostik*, 224 n. 38’, and 268 n. 41.

²¹⁵ Labat, *Traité akkadien de diagnostic*, 70–71, l. 1, and CAD K 179b.

²¹⁶ Concerning these notions of ‘Hand of divinity’, see for example Heessel, *Babylonisch-assyrische Diagnostik*, 49–54.

²¹⁷ These texts have been reedited by Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung*.

Although these rituals could have a preventative effect, in particular when a diviner practiced extispicy,²¹⁸ they are predominantly curative against a specific evil, to free the victim from his or her impurity. The colophons found for this series demonstrate that it included at least 135 tablets, which covered several hundred specific cases. Each known bad omen thus had its own ritual. According to S. Maul, this type of ritual had to fulfill six precise objectives, which corresponded to the six parts of a *namburbû* ritual.²¹⁹

The following *namburbû* was used against a potential evil embodied in and predicted by a wild cat:²²⁰

For the evil (predicted by) a wild cat which constantly grows²²¹ in a plaintive manner, moans and rolls on himself constantly in the house of a man, precisely to make this evil pass and so that it does not go close to the man and to his house, etc.

The bad omen here is represented by a cat that is growling in a house. This type of omen appears in several divinatory series, and in particular in the fortuitous omen of the *Šumma ālu* series, 'If a town'.²²² It is followed by the description of the ritual that the exorcist needs to accomplish:

The ritual to accomplish: in the night, install a stoup. Drop in it tamarisk, some *maštakal* plant, gypsum, asphalt, big and small peas, and leave it during the night under the stars. Make a cat figurine out of clay.

Make it bicolor with gypsum and charcoal. Install two trays, (one) for Ea and (the other) for Marduk. Arrange three food rations of twelve breads baked of spelt in each of them; pour dates (and) fine flour; place a *mersu*-cake of honey and butter. Install a libation vase, fill the drinking vase with first quality beer and put it in place. Install a juniper censer. Once this part of the ritual is installed, let plants of the yard fall in it. Make this man stand upright, he raises the cat figurine and he says: . . .

²¹⁸ See Koch, "Three Strikes and You're Out", 46–48; Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung*, 198.

²¹⁹ Maul, "How Babylonians Protected Themselves", 124: "1) The person affected must placate the anger of the gods who had sent him the omen; 2) the person must effect the gods' revision of their decision to give him an evil fate; 3) the impurity which the person had acquired through the agency of the omen must be removed; 4) the impurity of the person's house and general surroundings must be removed; 5) the person must be returned to his normal, 'intact' life; 6) the person should be provided with permanent protection against the renewed threat of sinister omens".

²²⁰ Caplice, "Namburbi Texts", text 15; Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung*, 332–335.

²²¹ For *bakû*, 'to scream', see Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari*, 492.

²²² Omens concerning cattle, wild animals, dogs, cats and pigs are found in tablets 37–49; Freedman, *If a City Is Set on a Height*, vol. 1, 2.

The ritual is divided into two parts. First is the concoction of a water-based preparation with a strong purifying quality, whose strength is amplified by exposure to one night under the stars. Then, the exorcist fashions a figurine representing the evil spirit and destined to be the receptacle of the impurity. In a second step, the site of the ritual is prepared and the meal for the gods is served. As Maul notices, since the man for whom the ritual is practiced is impure, a part of the preparation involves arranging a particularly pure zone, made out of a carpet of collected garden plants with purificatory powers, where the man can stand without contaminating his environment through contact or upsetting the gods with his impurity.²²³ When everything was ready, the exorcist recited the following prayer:

O Ea and Marduk, merciful gods, who deliver the one who is bound, who act as a stake for the weak,²²⁴ and who love human beings! O Ea and Marduk, be present in this day, during my judgment: judge my case and decide my affair!

The exorcist calls upon the gods, so that they reconsider the case of the victim one more time and revise their negative verdict.

The evil (announced by) this wild cat, which growls plaintively and moans in my house, which terrifies me day and night, whether it is a failure in the eyes of my god, or a failure in the eyes of my goddess, O Ea and Marduk, radiant gods, let me escape the evil of the bad omens which are found in my house; may they not come closer to me, may they not approach, may they not border me, may they not reach me! May he (the cat) cross the river, may he pass the mountain, may he move 3600 double leagues (= as far as possible) away from my body, may he go up in the heavens like incense smoke, may he not return to its place, as the tamarisk that has been pulled out!

The ritual continues with the pressing demand that the gods prevent the evil from approaching the man, carefully expressing, through a succession of synonyms, all possible accesses, so that the evil can find no means of reaching the patient. The ritual can then end:

He says this before Ea and Marduk and he puts the cat figurine on the ground, passes over him the censer (and) the torch, purifies him with the water from the stoup. Make this man kneel and have him say everything that comes to his mind.

²²³ Maul, "How the Babylonians Protected Themselves", 127.

²²⁴ Horticultural image of a climbing plant, which needs a stake to grow straight.

He will throw this cat in the river. Without looking behind him, without going back on the road he has already taken, he will go directly towards his house, and as long as he lives, evil will not come close to him.

The use of the censer, the torch and the water signifies the purification of the patient, making the impurity inside his body come out. Then his body is washed with purifying water, which removes the remnants of superficial impurity; these are then transferred, by means of the water now filled with impurity, to the cat figurine. The entire passage corresponds to many ritual acts. Maul interprets the throwing of the cat effigy into the water, in particular, as a sort of trial by ordeal, in which the cat figure, since it does not come back to the surface, is found guilty by the gods²²⁵ and, thus, the victim is acquitted.

3.5.3. *General Rituals*

Next to precise rituals, aimed at a specific evil, there were other, much more elaborate rites against evils that were poorly identified or not identified at all. In any case, these are complex constructions, created in order to be maximally effective against a general phenomenon, whether it is sorcery (*Maqlû*), sin (*Šurpu*) or an unidentified impurity (*Bīt rimki*). There are many other rituals of this type, but these three illustrate well the structure and the motivation of these types of rites.

In some cases, evil resists all identifications. The gods themselves are sometimes helpless and need to practice general rituals, as shown in this passage from the *Šurpu* ritual, in which, after the god Marduk²²⁶ reports to Ea his incapacity to cure a patient, the latter advises him:

Go, Marduk, my son! Bring him in the pure *bīt rimki* and undo his malediction (of perjury) and untie his malediction (of perjury), the evil which brings trouble to his body, (whether it be) the malediction of his father, (whether it be) the malediction of his mother, (whether it be) the malediction of his older brother, (whether it be) the malediction for murder, all things of which this man was not informed. The malediction, through the incantation of Ea, may it be peeled like (a clove of) garlic, may it be pulled out like (the stems of) dates, may it be frayed like the fibers of a palm! O malediction (*māmītu*), may you be warded off by Sky and Earth!²²⁷

²²⁵ Maul, "How the Babylonians Protected Themselves", 128. For a different opinion, see Veldhuis, "On Interpreting Mesopotamian Namburbi Rituals", 150.

²²⁶ In this passage, Marduk plays the role of the exorcist. We know in addition that the exorcist sees himself as the human emissary of Marduk (see for example Geller, *Evil Demons*, XII).

²²⁷ Reiner, *Šurpu*, 31, l. 35–59.

Ea thus advises Marduk to practice two things: first, the purification of the man in the ‘house of the bath’ (*bīt rimki*), which is also the name of an important purification ritual; then, as the following lines describe, albeit without explicitly calling it this, the process of the *Šurpu* ritual.

Two general rituals serve to fight against an impurity of which the consequences are equivalent, but of which the cause is different: *Šurpu* suppresses an impurity related to the unconscious transgression of a taboo, and *Maqlû* cancels the results of a sorcerer’s attack.

3.5.4. *The Maqlû Ritual against Sorcery*

The *Maqlû* (‘combustion’) ritual is specifically designed to counteract sorcery.²²⁸ Nonetheless, it belongs to the category of general rituals, since different kinds of sorcery, as we observed earlier, can affect an individual in varied ways and make the victim impure as a consequence of divine wrath. *Maqlû* is used when the patient is affected by an act of sorcery, the specific nature of which is ignored.

The *Maqlû* ritual includes, in its canonical form, eight incantation tablets and one ritual tablet. Its compilation is the fruit of a long process of redaction and elaboration from varied incantations, in order to compose a ritual that would be used specifically against sorcery.

This ritual has many parallels, such as *Bīt rimki*,²²⁹ in particular in passages where the patient, having washed his or her hands, pours water on the sorceress’ representations, thus transferring his or her impurity to her. The elaboration of its final form in the first millennium would have been the fruit of a combination of preexisting rites and rituals in order to create a long and complex ceremony.²³⁰ Some clues indicate that, in the annual ritual calendar, *Maqlû* needed to be practiced in the month of *Abu*.²³¹ This did not prevent its use in case of need at other times.

²²⁸ This ritual was edited by Meier, *Die assyrische Beschwörungssammlung Maqlû*. A new edition is being prepared by Abusch. Refer to his many publications, in particular Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*; Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber und Behexung*, 37–55; and, lastly, Abusch, “A Neo-Babylonian Recension of *Maqlû*”.

²²⁹ See, lastly, Abusch, “A Neo-Babylonian Recension of *Maqlû*”, 1–16.

²³⁰ Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 116–117.

²³¹ Jean, *La magie néo-assyrienne*, 87. See Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 109, quoting from Gadd and Kramer, *Literary and Religious*, vol. 2, 410 obv. l. 25–27, here l. 27: *ne-pi-šam an-na-a ina u, 28*-kám ša iti ne in-ni-p[u-uš-ma] i-šal-lim*, “This ritual needs to be done on the 28th day of the month of Abu; he will get better”. It is interesting to note that the 28th day of Abu is not a propitious day (see Labat, *Hémérologies et ménologies*, 165). These rituals of the month of Abu perhaps need to be related to those indicated in Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, text 290, l. 6. For the rituals of the month of

The core of the ritual consisted of listing all possible forms of sorcery and then transferring the evil of the patient onto a figurine representing the person who cast the spell; the figurine was then burned in order to undo the evil curse. Tablet IX provides us with the ritual that needed to be performed.²³²

Sorceresses' representations are raised before Šamaš and then placed in a brazier, the bewitched person asking Šamaš to judge the affair by identifying the sorceresses and punishing them. Šamaš is the only one who can do this, since he is at the same time an impartial judge and the god of divination; knowing everything, he is able to identify the root of the evil. The following steps in the ritual consist of tackling the curse itself through the action of water, fire and fumigations, and then purifying the patient of evil residues, to 'remove' the sorceress and to accomplish rites that protect the patient from becoming the victim of another spell.²³³ The specificity of *Maqlû* comes from the fact that it acts against a unique type of evil, represented by the statue of the sorceress. The succession of incantations and actions aims to counteract all of the possible means of bewitching an individual, without forgetting a single one—since the one used against the victim is unknown—and to return the whole to the person who cast the spell.

3.5.5. Šurpu 'Cremation'

The most famous ritual against the effects of taboo transgressions is called *Šurpu*, 'cremation'.²³⁴ It is often quoted alongside the ritual against sorcery, *Maqlû* ('combustion'),²³⁵ but is distinguished from it by its means of action. While *Maqlû* is used to banish, through transfer, an impurity related to a known cause (sorcery) but instigated by an unidentified modality, *Šurpu* acts on unknown causes generating an impurity which, on the basis of a number of phenomena, one has come to suspect. This ritual includes several tablets²³⁶ that describe its different steps and components, in particular a 'ritual tablet' (qualified as 'tablet I' in the published

Abu, see in particular Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal*, 203–204.

²³² See the comments and the description given in Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 124–133.

²³³ See the summary table in Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 156.

²³⁴ The most recent edition of the text is Reiner's *Šurpu*; to be supplemented by Borger, "Šurpu II, III, IV and VIII in 'Partitur'", 15–90.

²³⁵ Indeed, these two rituals are next to each other in the *Manual of the Exorcist*.

²³⁶ One can consult the analysis of Bottéro, *Mythes et rites de Babylone*, 163–219.

edition)²³⁷ that describes the installation of the brazier, the purification of the specialist as well as of the patient, the preparation instructions and the sequence of events for the ritual. Tablets II and III list the multitude of potential faults, distinguishing between sins in tablet II and *māmītu*²³⁸ in tablet III; the following tablets include in part incantations against specific actions, a catalogue of potential faults committed by the patient, and the related rituals. Tablet IX in the series is very interesting, since it includes incantations to be recited over the different materials used during the ritual for purification. It deals with the different plants (tamarisk, cedar, etc.), water and flames, etc.

The process of purification as it is presented in the tablet of the ritual is the following: the exorcist prepares the ritual by installing the central object of the rite, the brazier. The patient is purified in order to participate in the ritual. Many incantations are recited; the patient is freed from his or her deep evil, and his or her impurity is transferred to different elements that are then undone, a symbolic representation of the patient from whom all impurities are being detached.

He (the patient) peels a clove of garlic and throws it in the fire; he pulls the date (from its stem) and throws it in the fire; he frays the fibers of the palm and does the same;²³⁹ he exposes a wad of wool to air and then does the same; he exposes goat hair to air and does the same; he exposes red wool to air and does the same...²⁴⁰

We know the incantations that need to be recited with each of these actions through tablets V and VI of the ritual. The incantations allow us to better understand the hoped-for results of the combustion, as the following example shows:²⁴¹

Incantation: just as he peels the garlic clove and throws it in the fire, (and just as) the burning fire burns it, so that it can no longer be cultivated in the flowerbeds, it can no longer be next to the rivulet or the canal, its root can no longer take possession of the soil, its bough can no longer rise, and it can no longer see the sun, and it can no longer approach the banquet of the god or of the king, (so then) the oath and the *māmītu*-perjury, the answer

²³⁷ This is, however, probably the last tablet in the series; see Lambert, "The Ritual for the Substitute King: A New Fragment", 122; Walker and Dick, *The Introduction of the Cultic Image*, 29, and n. 102; as well as Bottéro, *Mythes et rites de Babylone*, 165–168.

²³⁸ According to Geller, tablets II and III of *Šurpu* distinguish between two levels of fault (*Taboo in Mesopotamia*, 112–113).

²³⁹ Namely, he throws it in the fire.

²⁴⁰ Reiner, *Šurpu*, 11, l. 18–21.

²⁴¹ Each of these incantations follows the same structure.

and the questioning,²⁴² the evil that exhausts, the fault, the transgression, the shortcoming, the illness which is in my body, in my flesh, in my tendons, like this garlic clove, may they be peeled, and that in this day the burning fire may burn them, may the malediction go away and may I see the light.²⁴³

Contrary to the *Maqlû* ritual, *Šurpu* tackles an impurity related to an unconscious transgression.

3.5.6. *The Ritual of Bīt rimki*

This ritual belongs to the category of rituals that use water as a means of action.²⁴⁴ The expression *Bīt rimki*, that is ‘house of ablutions’, designates both the ‘bathroom’, which is, incidentally, mentioned to Marduk by Ea, and a ritual of purification by water.²⁴⁵ This ritual is addressed to commoners as well as to the king, but in our corpus, the copies that describe it are concerned only with the king.

In order to accomplish this ritual, the exorcists built a house of ablutions (*bīt rimki*) outside of town. The king would come to it at sunrise. The ritual²⁴⁶ itself consisted of the king going through seven ‘houses’ where, with the help of a specialist, he needed to cleanse himself each time from a specific source of impurity. Thus, for example, ‘houses’ two and six concerned the ‘sorcerers’, ‘house’ five the *māmītu*, and ‘house’ seven ghosts. Although each ‘house’ demands a specific ritual, the process is the same for all the ‘houses’: the sovereign, accompanied by a specialist, enters the house, each reciting specific incantations, and the sovereign, having washed a part of his body, lets water flow on the figurine that is supposed to represent the root of the evil.

This ritual is truly a general ritual, since, unlike *Maqlû* or *Šurpu*, which suppress the multiple manifestations of a unique cause, *Bīt rimki* purifies the patient from all types of possible attacks, from sorcery to the action of a supernatural being, as well as the transgression of prohibitions. The treatment of each specific evil in each of the ‘houses’ sometimes picks up incantations known from other rituals that treat similar evils. Thus, the

²⁴² For this sequence, see Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber und Behexung*, 162; and “*Turtu et maš’altu*”.

²⁴³ Reiner, *Šurpu*, 31, l. 60–72.

²⁴⁴ Note, for example, the ritual *Bīt salā’mê*, meaning, word for word, ‘the house of the aspersion of water’.

²⁴⁵ Reiner, *Šurpu*, 31, l. 36–37.

²⁴⁶ Edited by Laessoe, *Studies on the Assyrian Ritual and Series Bīt rimki*. To supplement, in particular, Borger, “Das Dritte ‘Haus’ der Serie Bīt rimki”, 1–17.

incantations described for 'house five' against the *māmītu* are parallel to those of tablet III of *Šurpu*, which also deals with *māmītu*; similarly, those of 'house' two are parallel to those of tablet I of *Maqlū*. Nevertheless, in all these cases, the mode of purification is different, since it is water.

The use of this ritual is documented for particularly nefarious events, such as those announcing the death of the sovereign, especially the omen foretold through an eclipse.²⁴⁷ An eclipse announcing the sovereign's death necessitated the ritual of the 'substitute king' or *šar pūhi*.²⁴⁸ Indeed, the usual means of counteracting ill omens, such as the *namburbû*, were not seen as sufficient in the face of such an extreme evil. The principle of the ritual was simple. One had to appoint a substitute king in place of the ruling sovereign, who ran the risk of suffering the effects of the bad omen; the killing of the replacement at the end of the substitution period fulfilled the bad omen.²⁴⁹ Then the true king went back to his throne. When the substitute was buried, a great number of purification rituals were performed to get rid of the residual evil linked to the bad omen and the evil caused by having been in close contact with the substitute, who was laden with considerable impurities. The following are the rites described by the specialist Mār-issar to the king Assarhaddon, which were performed during the inhumation of the royal substitute:

We prepared the tomb: he and his queen were wearing their finery, their ornaments; one saw their clothes dyed in purple; they are buried and lamented. The igneous offerings have been made, all the bad signs have been cancelled. The numerous apotropaic rituals (*namburbû*), the ritual of *Bit rimki*, the one of *Bit salā' mē*, the exorcist rituals, the penitential psalms and the 'litanies peculiar to the *tuṣšarrūtu*' have been accomplished perfectly. The king, my lord, needs to know this.²⁵⁰

The association of the *Bit rimki* with other rituals of purification and of elimination of evil shows the strength of the impurities that needed to be fought, as well as their diversity. The ritual of *šar pūhi* specifies that, after

²⁴⁷ Durand, "La religion amorrite", 495–496. The texts related to the omens announced by lunar eclipses were edited by Rochberg-Halton, *Aspects of Babylonian Celestial Divination*. The following is an example: "If an eclipse happens the 16th day (of the month of Abu [month v]), the king of the land of Akkad will die" (Rochberg-Halton, *Aspects of Babylonian Celestial Divination*, 239, l. 3).

²⁴⁸ See Bottéro, "Le substitut royal"; Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal*, XXII–XXXII; and Rochberg-Halton, *Aspects of Babylonian Celestial Divination*, 16, n. 61.

²⁴⁹ The living royal substitute played the same role as the substitution statuettes in other rituals, which were used to absorb the negative energy of the bad omen.

²⁵⁰ Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, text 352, l. 13–21.

the inhumation of the substitute, it was necessary to burn all his royal attributes (scepter, throne, table, etc.) and to perform the purification of the land and of the king.²⁵¹ In addition, it is also possible that a part of the purification rites that the king needed to execute could have served to ease his conscience.²⁵²

The fact that *Bit rimki* is associated with *šar pūhi*, and thus with ill omens announced by an eclipse, shows the strength of the latter. Indeed, other auspicious manifestations could announce bad omens for the king without making him resort to a substitution ritual. The eclipse was explained as the victory of demons on the Moon-god (in the case of an eclipse of the latter); the king thus lost his protectors and the order of the world was threatened.²⁵³ The purification of the sovereign by water was indeed urged in the ritual of the 'bad demons-*utukkū*' (*Utukkū lemnūtu*):

Place at his head the wood-*er'u* (with which one makes) a weapon which resounds loudly, throw Eridu's incantation, make the censer (and) the torch pass over him, purify him with the stoup of pure waters, may it purify and clean the king, son of his god.²⁵⁴

What distinguished these rituals is thus not their internal composition or their constitutive elements, since in all cases, we have an arrangement of rites and incantations drawn from a common stock, which explains their similarities. Each of these rituals is characterized by its means of action²⁵⁵ and by its target. For *Maqlū*, the figurine representing the source of evil, the sorceress, must be burned. For *Šurpu*, it is necessary to burn the different components of the ritual, onto which the patient has transferred his diverse impurities in order to be rid of them. In the case of *Bit rimki*, diverse sources of possible impurities are purified by water. It is easy to understand why these long ceremonies could happen regularly (once a year). They were general rituals against all types of evil, known or unknown, and could thus be carried out prophylactically, integrating them into a ritual calendar that became very structured in the first millennium. Nonetheless, they could also be used in a punctual manner, as needed. The fact that the king seems most concerned with them is

²⁵¹ Lambert, "A Part of the Ritual for the Substitute King", 110, l. 5–8.

²⁵² See Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal*, XXVI.

²⁵³ See for example the description of the reasons and of the sequence of events of the lunar eclipse in Geller, *Evil Demons*, 251–257.

²⁵⁴ Geller, *Evil Demons*, 253, l. 88–92.

²⁵⁵ See for example the comments of Bottéro, *Mythes et rites de Babylone*, 163.

apparent, but we must also take into account the fact that our documentation comes from a library that expressly gathers documentation aimed at protecting the king. This illustrates the extreme care that surrounded the royal person.

4. CONCLUSION

The difficulty in defining the notions of purity and impurity in the Ancient Near East comes from the fact that the Mesopotamians themselves have not passed on to us a 'code of purity' but only clues scattered throughout many varied corpuses, covering all aspects of life and literature. These notions concern the sacred world as well as the profane, daily documents as well as literary works.

The Sumerian texts analyzed in the first part of this essay display a gradation when it comes to purity. In its cultic function, purity aims at separating the divine from the most varied corrupting agents, so as to allow for the divine presence within the human world. From that point of view, purity represents a constitutive principle of world order independent of divinity. In its absolute meaning, purity can be seen as opposed to the cult, which is fundamentally a human endeavor (see *Enki and Ninĥursaġa*), and yet it is also the condition for life. We get the impression that for the Sumerians, who have written texts describing the world 'before human beings', the absence of human activity is understood as a time 'before defilement' yet also as a time 'before civilization', which is now the normal state of life. The organization of human beings, working for the gods, would thus inevitably introduce into the world both life and 'the necessity of defilement'. As has been said, existence is indeed a flaw in the purity of nonbeing. Hence the ambiguity of the impure: it disrupts the proper order of life, but it also makes it possible. Gudea is here to remind people that purity is a lost ideal that needs to be restored in some fashion when human beings are confronted with the necessity of reestablishing their society—by rebuilding the temple—or simply of insuring the course of their existence.

The cycle of time, in any case, makes use of purity, since the peculiarity of the living is to defile. This explains why purity constantly needs to be reactivated through daily rites as well as through monthly or annual festivities that lead to extremely complex rituals. Purity's virtues are multiple. As an 'act of consecration', it renders the usual agents of purification—like water, oil, and some plants, such as the tamarisk or the juniper—(more) efficient; to put it differently, they become 'purer than pure'. The

diversity of the vocabulary, which favors the concept of luminosity, as well as the diversity of the specialists for the rites of lustration and of exorcism, whether they were connected with sanctuaries or not, indicates that the Mesopotamians did not have a monolithic conception of these rites. The tendency towards the grouping of knowledge in the first millennium under the appellation *išippūtu* did not lead to their fusion.

To remain in the earthly realm, a sacred zone needed to be purified regularly, since it represented a place of contact with the divine world, whose mark was purity. Thus, temples were purified, and their divine representations were washed; the staff had to follow strict rules in order to avoid defilements and contaminations. According to the conception of this period, these rites of purification guaranteed the cosmic order and, thus, the well-being of the inhabitants of the world, among which the gods come first. Specialists were responsible for fulfilling all these rites, in an institutional social frame. Additionally, the world of the temple was a closed reality whose relative isolation protected it from contamination by impurity.

The profane or 'normal' world required no less attention and precaution. Indeed, it was a place where the risks of impurity were more present and more formidable than in the sacred domain, because in it impurity was less controllable and the role of 'chance' was very important. It was a world less protected, which admittedly was aware of the rules of 'savoir vivre' but whose strict and total control was impossible. In addition, in this world, impurity appeared under two forms: one a defilement of daily life, from which one was cleansed fairly easily, and another, more profound, that touched the core of existence. The cause of impurity could be sin, transgression, an external attack such as sorcery, even simple contact with an impure thing or being.

Impurity, in the same manner as fault, provoked divine wrath that descended upon the victim, who then experienced numerous trials. Because of that connection, impurity appears now as intimately linked to the vocabulary of fault; purification happened at the same time as the elimination of sins. In some cases, this impurity was related to an unconscious action, which explains why the victim tried first to find out its cause, involving, if necessary, specialists. Once the cause was unveiled, all that was required was to fulfill the suitable ritual. If the cause could not be established with certainty, one resorted to rituals more complex and allowing access to more expansive fields of pure and impure.

Impurity was regarded as an evil that was in a way unavoidable, that one could not eradicate but against which one could nonetheless act. Purity

was the prerogative of the divine world, and people, by their nature, lived in a universe marked by impurity, even though the gods had given them the means, through different rituals, to protect themselves against it and thus to maintain balance in the world. After all, the gods were creators of the world but also active participants in it.

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CONCEPTIONS OF PURITY IN EGYPTIAN RELIGION

Joachim Friedrich Quack

1. INTRODUCTION

To say that purity played a major role in Ancient Egyptian culture is hardly more than a triviality. Nevertheless it must be added that detailed research on what precisely purity in Ancient Egypt means¹ has not yet reached the levels already seen for other cultures, particularly in terms of, e.g., Parker's classical study *Miasma* or the global analytical approach of Mary Douglas in her study *Purity and Danger*.² Indeed, it is notable how often dictionary articles are used as the main references, in the absence of substantial, comprehensive surveys.³ The problem is by no means a lack of sources, but evidently the opposite. It almost seems that one is threatened with drowning in the vast sea of relevant texts and images. The present contribution cannot give a complete overview, but I want to highlight at least some elements that are of special importance.

There are many sources, but very few are substantial, normative and explicit at the same time. Basic rules, such as the ones exposed in the Old Testament, especially in the book of Leviticus,⁴ are difficult to find—although I will show, in the course of my analysis, that they did exist and that there are indeed still fragments of them preserved. But exploration of these texts is currently in a very preliminary state, so that we are still forced to reconstruct the core system of Ancient Egyptian purity concepts according to the isolated traces that it has left here and there.

¹ See especially the monograph of Altenmüller-Kesting, "Reinigungsriten"; still important are older surveys by Blackman, "Sacramental Ideas"; Blackman, "Some Notes"; Blackman, "House of the Morning". Gee, "Requirements" offers some general introductory remarks regarding purification in Egypt, but concentrates primarily on the negative confessions of the Book of Death, Chapter 125.

² Parker, *Miasma*; Douglas, *Purity*.

³ As, e.g., Blackman, "Purification (Egyptian)"; Meeks, "Pureté et purification"; Grieshammer, "Reinheit", 212–13.

⁴ See Douglas, *Leviticus*.

2. PURITY AND THE TEMPLE

2.1. *Purity in the Egyptian Rituals for Deities*

A temple ritual in Egypt is normally a very complex matter, comprising several different acts. Certain basic structures allow the modern researcher to discern a kind of grammar of the Egyptian ritual.

In the sequence of actions, one typical and important position for purification scenes is at the beginning of a ritual. As a first example, we may examine the so-called “Daily Temple Ritual”, which is primarily a ritual for the morning purification and clothing of a cult statue.⁵ Even the first act, which opens the ritual according to P. Berlin 3055 and is labeled quite neutrally “striking fire”, turns out, according to the evidence of its closing formula, to be a scene more specifically concerned with purity. This is true of almost all introductory scenes. In the version attested in P. Berlin 3055, scenes 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8 have the typical closing formula of purification scenes; later scenes contain only a few examples of this formula. The purification scenes appear concentrated again at the end of the text, after the clothing of the statue. To evaluate this structure, we must keep in mind that the ritual does not contain a substantial meal, unless this is to be understood in the very last scene⁶—but it is conceivable that a food ritual followed it in the sequence of the daily cult.

In the late papyri from Tebtynis, the typical closing formula of purification scenes in this section is even more dominant, including a number of scenes at the beginning of the text that are missing in older manuscripts—the final part of the ritual is not yet attested in these fragmentary papyri. Among them, there is at least one spell that can be recognized as a direct parallel to the ritual for purification of the king mentioned below.⁷

The structure of the so-called “Ritual of Amenophis” likewise seems instructive to me. This is an offering ritual attested several times in more or less detailed versions from the New Kingdom onward.⁸ Purification scenes appear, firstly, at the beginning of the text, where the reconstruc-

⁵ The old edition by Moret, *Rituel*, is not yet completely replaced. The first part of the ritual has been restudied by Guglielmi and Buroh, “Eingangssprüche”; important new manuscripts are edited by Osing and Rosati, *Papiri geroglifici e ieratici*, 101–28, pl. 14–16. Overall remarks in Lorton, “Theology”, 131–45.

⁶ The word *smꜣ*‘ used in this passage (written like “praising”) is understood as “offering” in the edition *Hieratische Papyri I*, 2.

⁷ Guerneur, “Nouvel exemplaire”.

⁸ See the survey by Tacke, “Opferritual”.

tion of the transmitted fragmentary text still faces certain difficulties.⁹ Afterward, we find them when the food offerings are being prepared and served¹⁰ and, finally, also as a burning of incense and libation to Re, prior to the reversion of offerings on the altar of the king.¹¹

As another example, we may cite the Ritual of Opening the Mouth, which in the temple sphere is mainly a ritual for the consecration of divine statues.¹² There we find purification scenes, both those with water as well as those with incense (scenes 1–7), concentrated at the beginning. In subsequent parts of the ritual, even though there are still numerous incense acts, their purificatory aspect is stressed less. A noticeable use of water for purifications is discernible at one specific point, directly before the great food offering. We have, on the one hand, spell 63A, a purification in the House of the Morning, which in the actual attestations always stands directly before the king's offerings in the court of the sun-god (scene 65C). On the other hand, the purification-focused scenes 67 (purification of the god's offerings with libation and incense) and 69A and B (accomplishing the ordinary glorification, pouring water on the altar) come directly before the great offering list in scene 69C. Similarly, a specific formula for purifying the offering meal is attested in several temples of the Greco-Roman period.¹³

Thus a basic structure can be recognized: purification scenes are usually placed at the beginning of a ritual, in order to define the place, persons and objects involved as being pure. Within a ritual, purification plays a particular role where the serving of the food-offering is concerned—casually said, it may be compared to today's fast-food restaurants, where the waiter cleans the table when a new guest arrives. Such daily, routine aspects should not be considered irrelevant.

A peculiar feature of the wording of purity formulae requires explanation. The typical closing phrase of such a spell is the final *ḥtp-ḫꜥ-nsw iwꜣi w'b.kw* "a king's offering; I am pure". The expression "a king's offering" is otherwise quite usual in an offering ritual, but it always introduces material objects, especially food but also cutlery, ointment or clothing. From this feature we can probably conclude that purity has a quasi-material quality

⁹ Scenes 10 and 11 (libation and fumigation), in particular, are important.

¹⁰ Scenes 24–29 in Tacke, "Opferritual".

¹¹ Scenes 42 and 43 in Tacke, "Opferritual".

¹² Otto, *Mundöffnungsritual*; Quack, "Fragmente". For the question of the scene sequence, see Quack, "Prätex".

¹³ Goyon, "Formule solennelle".

and that the king officially permits the performance and acknowledges the efficacy of purification as well as the giving of food and endowment as royal favors. The question of purity in proximity to the king, which I will discuss below, may also be connected with that point.

The typical combination in actual practice is the pouring of water and the fumigation with incense. Alongside that, there is a purification with natron, which of course is normally part of the water pouring, as natron is dissolved in water. These are the usual purification substances, and all others must be classified as unusual. At times we must also take into account that purification with, e.g., lapis lazuli (e.g., Dendara VIII 92, 2) indicates only purification with water poured out of a jar made of this substance.¹⁴

As a special case regarding terminology, in particular for purifying substances, it should be noted that the verb *sw'b* "to purify" is sometimes used in the sense "to decorate" (WB IV, 67, 2–3). Especially noticeable is the postscript to the Book of the Dead, chapters 30B+64 and 140, which are recited over amulets (a scarab and an Udjat-eye, respectively) said to be made of precious stones and literally "purified with gold",¹⁵ meaning in concrete terms, as archaeological finds show,¹⁶ a setting in gold. In any case, this expression demonstrates that Egyptians classified gold as a substance with purifying power. This should be understood in light of the fact that gold was also considered to be the flesh of the gods.¹⁷

2.2. *Purity as Condition for Access to the Temple*

The Egyptian temple is a system with zones of increasingly limited access. This is a matter not only of purity as such but of authorized access only for certain classes of priests. Here the ontological question must be asked: do consecrations linked to a specific higher class of priests imply a possible degree of purity that would not be achievable without these consecrations, that is, simply by keeping purification regulations as such?

¹⁴ Compare the figure in Dendara VIII, pl. DCCLXXIX, where the priest in question holds a sistrum and a jar in his hands.

¹⁵ For purification with gold in the Greek area, see Parker, *Miasma*, 228.

¹⁶ See e.g. Quirke, "Heart Scarabs".

¹⁷ Compare Schott, *Kanais*, 150; 169–70. No in-depth treatment appears in the section about gold in Aufrère, *Univers minéral*, 353–406.

The access rules are laid out most clearly in the Book of the Temple;¹⁸ therefore, I would like to present the most important passages from it. The architectural section, which gives a description of the temple from the inner- to the outermost parts, is especially relevant. The first of the relevant entries is unfortunately in a badly preserved description of the interior part of the temple building, perhaps in a section where the sanctuary and then the central halls were first mentioned. There, it is said: “[No] man [enters] them, apart from the prophets [of this] house(?)”. The next note is much better preserved. In it, the pronaos is defined as the last of the interior rooms, where space is also provided for the gatekeepers. Here we are told: “Now the whole temple is marked off with buildings in its square. No person is admitted into it, apart from those who serve as high-ranking priests for the gods’ rituals”.

Beyond the rules for priests, the building section of the Book of the Temple also gives information on buildings in the open outer court, which is marked off by a pylon; here we find, among other structures, “The ‘house of the morning’, in order to perform the purification of pharaoh in [it] when he enters the temple”. The next court, located further outside, is called the “court of the assembly”, which, of course, implies more general access. Nevertheless it should be noted that “assembly” (*mšꜥ*) can also be the name of a group performing the common cultic practice, suggesting that perhaps only men with institutional affiliation with the temple are envisaged. Here as well it is said, “A room is in it in order to perform the purifying of the king when he enters the temple”. The third court is defined as the location of a certain group, unfortunately lost in a break but obviously not included in the word “assembly”. Either women or non-priest inhabitants of the city are possibilities.

Special strict regulations for access are stipulated for the Osirian part of the temple. Only a few ritual specialists had access here; if someone unauthorized was caught, he would be treated as someone who had blasphemed the king, namely, he would be executed and placed on the fire altar. We can debate whether the decisive matter is just purity or whether there are other factors at play. Osiris is the endangered god, and there is also a high risk of abuse with regard to the figurines deposited in Osirian areas, which have considerable power as they are a god’s substance.

¹⁸ I am currently working on this comprehensive handbook; see, as preliminary reports, especially Quack, “Buch vom Tempel”; Quack, “Manuel du Temple”; Quack, “Organiser le culte”; Quack, “Les normes pour Osiris”.

The most substantial currently published source concerning rules of purity and access to temples is an inscription in the temple of Esna. There, a long digression on the question of who has access under which conditions and where is intercalated into a description of the sequence of a temple ritual.

Everybody, moreover, has to be pure from a woman in a purification (period) of one day, they shall purify them and moisten their clothes. Do not let anybody enter who suffers from god's anger or leprosy! Their position is in the surroundings of the temple. One should open the jar of this . . . to the left and the right of the dromos by everybody who is pure from a woman in a purification (period) of nine days. Whoever opens the jar within the (perimeter of) the water which is around his temple, they shall sit to the right and to the left, whereas it is not allowed that they lie down.

Performing of jubilation cries (?) in its interior by everybody. No person shall enter with the fur of a sheep around him. No craftsperson shall enter into it. The position of the city-dwellers is the wall of the temple, they should not enter onto the quay. Performing the offering on the altar of this honorable god by the prophets, the priests and all service staff of the temple. Whoever wears a hairstyle of grief does not enter into this temple! Shaving, nail clipping and combing is what (justifies) entering into it. All fine linen as a dress is what (justifies) entering into it. Natron water is what (justifies) settling down in it. As for all having allowance to enter it, they should be pure from a woman in a purification (period) of nine days and should not have eaten any taboo in a purification (period) of four days. As for anybody wishing to enter the temple or who has to do some work there, he shall have shaved his limbs and clipped his nails, and let him pray to the god at the dromos in the position of the city-dwellers while the service staff of the temple stands beside him and says: 'Be pure from a woman in a purification (period) of nine days and of each taboo in a purification (period) of four days'. If he acts this way, he can enter the temple at the door which is at the side of the pylon tower, after purifying himself as well as his clothes in the lake. Do not let any Asiatic/shepherd enter the temple, be he a small or a large one! Do not let any woman get close to all his surrounding within an area of 200 arourae. An island is at each side, so that you will not overstep it for 15 measure cords (of one hundred cubits) in the south and the north, 15 in the west and east. Their position is the causeway, it should not be overstepped to the north to the Golden one of Ai, to the south, west and east to the marsh of Khenit. Be careful about it! Beware of it! The king is in his good state, the whole country is free from calamity. Who is insistent in that will have worth; woe betide the one who commits an outrage against this! (Esna 197, 16–21)¹⁹

¹⁹ Sauneron, *Les fêtes religieuses d'Esna*, 340–49; Leitz, *Tempelinschriften*, 77–81.

The varying terms of abstinence and of purification from different pollutions find a remarkable echo in a Greek inscription from Megalopolis in which such criteria are defined, in that case for access to the temple of Isis and of Serapis.²⁰

In a hieroglyphic inscription from Philae, at the door of the northeast corner of the court between the first and second pylons, regulations for access are expressed as an address to the doorkeepers. The announcement states, among other things, what kind of plants and animals a person is not allowed to eat if he wishes to be able to enter the temple.²¹

O door keepers who are in this temple,
 Powerful ones of the throne who are in their monthly service,
 Those offices which will be in the hall,
 Carrying out their duties without ceasing,
 They are those who will be pure in the days,
 Who will eat from the pure place of preparing foodstuff!
 Those are the taboos, which you should not eat,
 Which are not allowed to come near to the inner part of the temple:
f; čis, bis, m:(t), kt.t, ht-ṯs, red onions, *ink, nš, gmī*,
 Donkeys, dogs, *m:(t)*, small cattle!
 Do not be indulgent with big and small
 Concerning the state of this temple!
 If something bad comes about to happen against this temple,
 Then it happens against Upper and Lower Egypt,
 Then each god will get angry against his place.
 One should not overstep the way of one's house,
 Without decaying, without fading away for eternity.

O door keepers of this temple,
 Hourly priests of the temple doing their duty!
 You should not let any person from the outside enter into the sanctua[ry]!,
 Who do not know [...],
 Who fight against that which comes out of the mouth of the prophet,
 Likewise any overseer.
 Concerning the one who wants to enter, they should come out in front of
 you,
 So that no-one from the outside is with him.
 This means all things which will enter in front of you!
 Beware of things in contamination (*s:(t)*),
 So that nobody will enter these halls,

²⁰ Bricault, *Recueil*, 42–43; similar, but in a more general way, also in an inscription from Eleusis, page 29–30.

²¹ Junker, "Vorschriften"; Aufrère, "Végétaux interdits".

Except in order to fulfill his service, unseen and unheard(?)!²²
 Beware of possessions from theft!
 (Even if) nobody will be caught due to his (other) misdoing,
 He will still be brought (to court) because of a case of the temple!
 In order to grasp . . .
 The staff of treasury which is in the temple
 Is informed about what happens to him.
 If there happens anything good for the temple,
 Then the god at his place is a peaceful god,
 And he puts this country into its correct state,
 He embellishes the fate in the temple.

In any case, an image of the king who solemnly says “everything that enters the temple should be pure, pure” is an often-attested element of temple decoration, precisely in the areas of entry and passageways.

3. PURITY FOR THE PRIEST

If, as mentioned above, purity plays a major role in the cult of the gods, it is obvious that the priest would be subject to certain purification rules.²³ Indeed this can plainly be shown by the fact that the normal word for priest, namely *wʿb*, is a derivation of the root *wʿb* “to be pure”; it is, by the way, still used as ⲠϢⲏⲛⲃ for designating Christian priests in the Coptic language.

The purification rules for priests are best documented in instances when they were not kept. In the so-called Elephantine scandal, a denunciation dating to the 20th dynasty against a priest who is accused of several offenses, it is also written:

Indictment that he walked into the cella of the fortress while it was (only) six days of drinking of natron which he had done, and the scribe of the treasury Montherchepsch imposed an oath upon this prophet of Chnum with the words ‘I won’t let him enter to this god until he completes his days of drinking natron’, and he did not listen to him and entered to the god while he still had (to complete) four days of drinking natron. (RAD 75, 4–8)

This shows the obligation of drinking natron for ten days in order to have access to the god’s statue in a state of cultic purity.

²² The text seems to be transmitted in quite a bad way; Junker’s “which no one else should see” is impossible, as *nb* can never be constructed as a substantive. I assume the common formula *n mꜣ n sꜥm*.

²³ See with a special focus Musso and Pettacchi, “Sexual Taboos”.

The ostrakon Narmouthis 109, from the later Roman period, also mentions a priest who was still in a state of incomplete purification when a certain document was brought; he did not become pure until the next day.²⁴ Unfortunately the exact duration of the period of purification cannot be determined, but a fixed term is nevertheless certain.

In principle, certain Roman-period hieratic papyrus fragments in which a handbook with rules for temple services is preserved would be of major relevance. This text, which is not the Book of the Temple itself but which bears some similarity to it, is transmitted in P. Carlsberg 386 + P. Berlin 14938, and possibly also in Greek translation in P. Washington University + P. Oslo 2 vs.²⁵ It is a collection of laws and regulations relevant for the temple and some priestly groups, in which elaborate norms are fixed for the priests, especially those of high rank. Only certain clothing is allowed for access into a temple, as are only certain kinds of food for the prophet. As soon as it becomes possible to sort the fragments into more complete sections, substantial progress in understanding Egyptian cultic purity can be expected from them.

Much better known among researchers are hieroglyphic temple-access texts.²⁶ They appear quite typically in passageway settings, i.e., mostly as inscriptions on doorjambs, where they indicate the rules governing passage into an area of more restricted access, for example, an important route to the offering altar. Different stylizations are attested, such as admonitory speeches concerning what the entering priests had to avoid. In addition to the interdiction of impurity, different kinds of moral misconduct are also highlighted. Such forms are known, e.g., from the temples of Edfu and Kom Ombo:

O prophets, god's fathers, ritual leaders, god's purifiers, high-ranking priests, all those Having access who enter to the god,²⁷ all governors in their monthly service, War-Priests,²⁸ 'In-the-earth'-priests in the house of the forms, who have access to the Temple in great Purity, in order to prepare the ointment of the first feast, those who purify themselves for Performing the god's rituals every day, those who purify Themselves at the first day, in order to let the god appear at his time of his navigation feasts!

²⁴ Menchetti, *Ostraka*, 49–50.

²⁵ See Quack, "Buch vom Tempel", 18–19; Quack, "Translating the Realities".

²⁶ Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux*, 144–84; Leitz, *Tempelinschriften*, 36–42; comparison with biblical texts in Weinfeld, "Instructions". For later traditions, see Grieshammer, "Unschuldserklärungen".

²⁷ The Edfu version adds here "all lector-priests".

²⁸ From here onwards, only the titles at Kom Ombo are given.

Do not introduce in trespassing!
 Do not enter in a state of grime (*s:t*)!
 Do not tell lies in his house!
 Do not snatch through calumny!
 Do not accept any list(?)
 In being partisan against the small for the great!
 Do not add to the weight and to the measuring rope,
 And you shall not detract from them!
 Do not change arbitrarily in the grain measure!
 Do not hurt the bushel of the eye of Re!²⁹
 Do not reveal what you have seen in privacy
 Of all secrets of the gods and goddesses!³⁰
 Do not stretch out your arm for possession in his temple!
 Do not take any liberty to steal his possession!
 Beware lest a fool says in his heart:
 'One lives by the food of the gods!
 One designates as 'food' what is coming from the offering altar in circulation,
 After the god has satisfied himself with it.
 He sails in heaven; he crosses the celestial vault,³¹
 While his eyes lie on his possessions at their location.

Do not do anything bad against the servant of his house!
 He loves his servants very much!
 Do not have any sexual intercourse under pressure!
 Do not impose any condemnation!
 Do not exert any violence against the people in the fields and in the city,
 Because they came out of his eyes,
 They originated from him!
 His heart is very sad about injustice in punishing,
 If there is no witness(?).³²

Do not run with your soles,
 Do not be short-tempered in a moment!
 Do not give your mouth free run in a discussion!
 Do not react with loud voice against the voice of somebody else!
 Do not impose any oath over something!
 Do not prefer the lies against the truth in a complaint!
 Beware that you are not (too) big when passing your service times(?)!

There is none who complains against him
 Who is free of being punished for something.

²⁹ The grain measure is understood as the eye of Re in Egypt; see recently Quack, review of Lippert, *Demotisches juristisches Lehrbuch*, 173 with references.

³⁰ Variant in Edfu: "at all secrets in the sanctuary".

³¹ Variant in Edfu: "the underworld".

³² This whole paragraph is only attested at Edfu.

Do not sing in his house in the inner part of the temple at the location of
the women!

Do not do anything at a place where it should not be done,
So that there is not a party taking place in his house,
But only at the place in front of which it is allowed to sing
By the entity(?) of the staff(?)!
Do not open the jar in the inner part of the temple,
So that you will not be drunk from it!³³

Do not anything according to your heart,
But you should look at the old writings!
Pass the directions of the temple in your hands
As an instruction for your children!" (Kom Ombo, text 878 with parallel in
Edfu III, 360, 12–362, 4)³⁴

Another stylization is that the officiant—on an ideal level the king in
this role—explains to the doorkeepers—on an ideal level the gods in this
role—that he did not do certain condemnable things.

O Gods in [...], in [Upper] and Lower Egypt,
Door-keepers of the big gateway,
Great Gods being secret of place in Edfu,
Who segregate the god in his chapel,
Who strike on his offering altar,³⁵
Who receive offering food at his side in the hall of the ennead!³⁶
Make way for me, so that I enter with you!
I am one of you,
I am Shu, the oldest of his father,
The high-ranking priest of him with spotted feathering,
Priest [...]
O great gods [...] of [...]
You should [not deter] me from the way of the god,
My legs shall not be opposed,
I will not be kept away from the enclosure of Ta-Wer,
That I will give orders about the god's substance,
That I give offerings to the one who created them,
That I give bread to Horus [...]
[...]
Not [...] on the way of god.

³³ This paragraph is only attested in Edfu.

³⁴ Alliot, *Culte d'Horus*, 184–186; Fairman, "Worship", 201; Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux*, 144–84; Kurth, *Treffpunkt der Götter*, 148–49.

³⁵ So the orthography of the inscription; the phraseology would be more in favor of "who hit with his scepter".

³⁶ In my opinion, against the translation by Alliot, only participles, not imperatives, can be read here.

I have not been partisan in the judgment,
 I have not allied with the strong one,
 I have not convicted the weak one,
 I have not led things in a violent manner,
 I have not decreased the parts of the eye of [Re(?)],³⁷
 I have not [...] with the hand scale,
 I have not committed an outrage against the bushel of the god's eye!
 Council³⁸ of the great god in this house,
 Great ones who are sitting on the mat,
 Messengers who [...] in a hurry!
 Behold, I have come to you, in order to do the truth for the master of the
 truth,
 To satisfy the Udjat-eye for his master.
 I am Shu, who is furnishing his offering-table prosperously,
 So that I pile up his offerings.
 Tefnut is united with me,³⁹
 That I adore Behedet⁴⁰ at his feasts,
 That I kiss the earth because of the greatness of his esteem,
 That I unite life with his divine power.
 I am a priest, I am pure! (Edfu III, 78, 10–79, 4)⁴¹

O Door-keepers, great Gods, masters of the flame, with long rays,
 Who open the door-wings of heaven and illuminate the two countries,
 Guardians [...] Upper and Lower Egypt,
 Who stand and sit at the right and at the left,
 Kings of Upper and lower Egypt of the south and the north,
 Venerable ones of the gods!
 I have come to you, great gods,
 After Horus has purified me,
 After Thot has perfumed me with incense.
 Make way for me so that I can pass!
 I have come on the way of the god,
 I have entered praised and have emerged loved,
 There are no male and female adversaries on my path.
 You cannot detain me, you cannot restrain me.
 The ram is my witness, the ram of the rams is my witness.
 I am Thot, the Great, the deputy of Re.
 I have come in order to accomplish rituals,
 The two male baboons are at my right,

³⁷ This refers to grain measures, see above note 29.

³⁸ Against Alliot's reading *hs ncr.w*, read certainly *ççç.t*.

³⁹ The sister of Shu. I read *Tfn.t shn.ti r-hn'i*. Alliot ignores the sign of the lion-headed goddess and creates an impossible syntactic structure.

⁴⁰ The cultic name of the city Edfu.

⁴¹ Edited by Alliot, *Culte d'Horus*, 142–43.

The two female baboons are at my left.
 O those who live from [...],
 Who endow the altars with food!
 I do not diminish the offering bread,
 I do not do painful things.
 I have not made any dirt.
 Horus is my purity.
 My hands are Horus,
 My arms are Thot,
 I have brought the Udjat-eye to his master,
 I have put Maat in her place.
 I am a prophet,
 It is the king who has sent me to see the god.
 A king's offering, I am pure. (Edfou III, 83, 2–11)⁴²

The fact that Egyptian priests underwent a purification with water in connection with access to the sanctuary is well documented in temple reliefs, e.g., at the bark sanctuary (“Chapelle Rouge”) of Hatshepsut from the 18th dynasty.⁴³

The neo-platonic philosopher Porphyrios has transmitted a long excerpt from the treatise of the Egyptian priest Chairemon in his book about abstinence from carnal food, in which the ideal and ascetic life of the Egyptian priests is described (*De abstinentia* IV 6–8).⁴⁴ With regard to the food, for example, some of the priests would abstain from any kind of food deriving from a living creature, and all of them abstained from animals with cloven hoof, from meat-eating birds, and from a large number of special cases, such as female cows.

At this point it is relevant to pinpoint more precisely the chronological development. The typical pictures of shaven-headed priests appear only in the course of the New Kingdom; for example, at the sanctuary of Hatshepsut they are still shown with wigs. In contrast, from the Ramesside Period onward, depictions of priests with hairless heads become common. This could be a sign that purity restrictions had become stricter at this time, or at least that more value was attached to demonstrating them visibly to the outside. Still, it should be noted that there are already occasional depictions of people with shaven heads in the Late Middle Kingdom, even though their titles do not clearly link them to priesthood.⁴⁵ By far the

⁴² Edited by Alliot, *Culte d'Horus*, 144–45.

⁴³ See Burgos and Larché, *Chapelle Rouge*, 212 (left) and 216.

⁴⁴ Horst, *Chairemon*, 16–23; Patillon, Segonds and Brisson, *Porphyre*, 9–13.

⁴⁵ See e.g. Habachi, *Heqaib*, pl. 162–63 and 166–67 (a warden of the chamber and a retainer); Wildung, *Ägypten 2000 v. Chr.*, 137 and 152 (a vizier and a beer brewer).

most explicit ones among the textual sources are very late texts, mostly from the Graeco-Roman period.

4. PURITY FOR THE KING AND THE PALACE

The above-mentioned places for the purification of the king in the temple lead us to the next complex. The person of the king was strongly connected to purity concerns in Egypt.⁴⁶ Indeed, there exists a detailed royal ritual focused on purification rites. In full form it is transmitted in at least four different papyri, of which only one is published.⁴⁷ All of these manuscripts date to Roman times, when in Egypt itself there was no longer a pharaoh who could have used them, raising the question of the extent to which they were really used, perhaps adapted for priests. More substantial sections, obviously from the same ritual, are already to be found in some scenes of temples in Ptolemaic times, especially in Edfu.⁴⁸ A single scene already has a parallel in a spell that has been incorporated into a relatively unusual Book of the Dead in the New Kingdom (P. Busca).⁴⁹ Another has nearly verbatim parallels in a royal ritual conveyed in a papyrus from approximately the 26th dynasty (or at most the 27th dynasty), as well as a shortened and adapted version for a goddess in a scene of the temple of Dendera (Dendara IV 249, 16–17).⁵⁰ Although I am not able to treat the history of the tradition in all its complexity, I would like to suggest that this is presumably a substantial and long-standing ritual. Indeed, this text could easily be the longest and most explicit text of all concerning purification and its attainment in a ritual in Egypt. Therefore it should be presented in as full a form as possible:

First spell
Poorly preserved

Second spell
Poorly preserved

⁴⁶ Smith, "Kingship".

⁴⁷ Schott, *Reinigung Pharaos*; for the Tebtynis manuscripts and for global interpretation, see Quack, "Königsweihe", 97–99.

⁴⁸ Noted in Schott, *Reinigung Pharaos*, 60–64.

⁴⁹ Crevatin, *Libro dei morti*, 50–51.

⁵⁰ Goyon, *Confirmation*, 53 and 84.

Third spell (restored from parallels):

Spell for the water

O Water, may you abolish all bad defilement of the pharaoh,
O inundation, may you wash off his errant demons.

May you wash the face of Horus,

May you rub the face of Seth,

May you wash the face of Neith,

May you rub the face of her spinners,

May you yourself rub the face of the pharaoh

As the face of the king when he bedecks his crown!

Loosened are the bands of the pharaoh through Horus,

Opened are his bands through Seth.

His purity is the purity of his god.

He shall not fall on some evil obstacle!

A king's offering, Pharaoh is pure.

Fourth spell

Spell for water, speaking words [by...]

[O you Gods...,

Come] that you [erase] all evil in him.

Any taboo he did, [...] at the lake!

His mouth...

His purity is the purity of Horus—and reverse,

His purity is the purity] of Seth—and reverse,

His purity is the purity of Dun-Awi—and reverse,

His purity is the purity of the Djed-pillar—[and reverse,

...

...] Pharaoh his purity.

A king's offering; Pharaoh is pure.

Fifth spell

Poorly preserved

Sixth spell (restored from parallels)

..., speaking words by [...] the great council which is in [...].

Purification of the mouth of pharaoh with [...]

[...] whose amulet is made out of shiny stone,

Who settles on the gates of the horizon,

Who is without stain [...]

[...], who follows Re at the place [...]

Who lives without wounds of his.

The purity of the pharaoh is the purity of this female vulture [...]

[...] that means to save him from... [in] any council...

[...]

Seventh spell

Poorly preserved

Eighth spell

Another spell for purification, speaking words:
 Pharaoh has [purified himself] with the great waters
 Which come forth from Elephantine, which originate from the [primeval
 ocean].
 He has [purified] himself with the eye of Horus,
 He has purified himself with its own substance.
 Isis has purified him as she has purified her son Horus in Chemmis.
 [He] is the one, prestigious in his dignity (?) in truth,
 He is Thot who purified himself with his own substance,
 [as] Re purified himself with his own substance.
 He has perfumed himself with incense, natron is adhering to his limbs.
 Pharaoh is Horus in Chemmis.
 To be spoken on four pellets of incense, four pellets of natron, putting them
 into water in a new bowl, to put a falcon of wax into it and some [...]
 that means [...].

Ninth spell (parallel in P.Busca and for a part also in the “gold amulet” text)

Another spell for purification
 A papyrus amulet of ore of the goddess is for pharaoh,
 Abolished is [all evil] from his head (?).
 The eye of Horus rests in its place,
 Secured for pharaoh as protection of his head.
 [Pharaoh did come] from the grove,
 He has swallowed its fruits.
 He has received his head, he has united his bones,
 He has washed himself; abolished is what (evil) was adhering to him.
 His purity is the one of Min from Coptos,
 As he counted his eyes as double feather,
 And his voice was justified through it.
 His purity is the purity of a little calf at its milk,
 The day its mother gave birth to it.
 His purity is the purity of the way-opener,
 As he let his eyes move up to his face, (?) as uraei,
 And he set them on his head as Isdes.
 Thot purifies the head of the pharaoh, his mouth with water jars,
 He has secured it with jars of water,
 He has purified it with gushing water,
 He has perfumed him with incense coming from Punt.
 Pharaoh follows Horus so that he lives,
 He follows Atum and endures.
 Horus has protected him, Atum has ascertained him,
 Geb has abolished all evil from him,
 Horus has abolished from him all evil adhering to him (?).
 The arms of Isis are a stronghold for pharaoh against all evil,
 It shall not come against him,

It shall not rise against him in eternity.
 He has united with the Horus eye-
 Variant: the Horus eye is well-disposed towards him,
 It shall not rise up against him!

May you awake in peace,
 May the ore awake in peace!
 Horus purifies himself with him,
 Seth purifies himself with him,
 Thot purifies himself with him,
 Dun-Awi purifies himself with him,
 The Djed-pillar purifies himself with him.
 May they abolish with it the evil adhering to themselves!
 Pharaoh purifies himself with him,
 May he abolish with it the evil adhering to him!
 He enters into it with the cast-off (garment),
 He comes out from it with his jaded (garment).
 You have dressed what is at his head,
 You have clothed what is at his feet,
 You have clothed what is at his bottom,
 You have clothed what is at his arms,
 You have clothed what is in all his dreams,
 In that night when he saw himself at this his place.
 Pharaoh is purified with this water which came out from Osiris,
 He has provided his bones with what belongs to him.
 A king's offering; Pharaoh is pure.
 Words spoken over a papyrus amulet of ore, put into water, purifying the
 king with it.

Tenth spell

Another spell of purification which is done for the king.
 Hail to you, you four gods who are in the primeval ocean!
 Pharaoh has come to you, arisen in the inundation.
 Pharaoh has opened the flood with his wings,
 He has opened the cavern with his horns,
 He has crossed the islands in the water of Horus.
 He has purified himself with his magic,
 He settled down(?) at the shore of the primeval ocean,
 ... the shape of Tatenen.
 The impurity (*bw*) of the pharaoh shall be upwards(?),
 His evil shall belong to the shore,
 What he dislikes shall be in the water,
 Swimming ...
 He has repelled his enemy when he rose in it.
 He has thrown down his enemy.

Pharaoh is Horus in the primeval ocean,
 No dead man's spirit has power over him.⁵¹
 The gods are satisfied with the purity of the pharaoh,
 When the magical formulae are recited [...] ⁵²
 [O...], whose glow is a fire,
 And his flame a torch⁵³ in the eyes of all his enemies among the dead and
 alive ones, etc.
 Pharaoh is pure, he has unified with his Ka in ... of the Kas,
 Pharaoh is pure,
 As the four gods in the primeval water [are purified and have] unified with
 their Ka.
 Pharaoh knows them and knows their names,
 In their manifestation, in their natures, in their shapes, in their limbs.⁵⁴
 ["Osiris who satisfies Re] with his truth" is the name of the one,
 He is pure, purified on his portico(?).
 "Tatenen" is the name of the next one,
 He is pure, purified on his elevation.
 ["The light in] its [perfection"] is the name of the next one,
 He is pure, purified on his hill.
 "He has taken hold of himself"⁵⁵ is the name of the next,
 He is pure, purified on his shore.

Pharaoh now is "Osiris who satisfies Re with his truth",
 He is pure, purified on his portico(?).
 Pharaoh now is "Tatenen",
 He is pure, purified on his elevation.
 Pharaoh now is "The light in its perfection",⁵⁶
 He is pure, purified on his hill.
 Pharaoh now is "He has taken hold of himself",
 He is pure, purified on his shore.
 Pharaoh has crossed the things(?) in the primeval ocean,
 He has purified himself in the primeval ocean.
 Water is on pharaoh,
 No dead man's spirit(?) can encroach on him,⁵⁷

⁵¹ Compare Quack, *Merikare*, 89, for the meaning. Schott's mistaken translation "Death has no power over him" has led to the assumption that this is an ontological statement that death developed after creation and therefore had no power over the primeval water and the people in it; this reading has unfortunately also been received in Hornung, *Eine und die Vielen*, 170 note 119; Assmann, *Totenliturgien*, 544.

⁵² In P. Carlsberg 658 *hft nis.tw ꜥh.w* is clear; traces of that are also found in the Berlin papyrus.

⁵³ According to the photograph, read against Schott *tk.w*, not *t.w*.

⁵⁴ Addition according to P. Carlsberg 658.

⁵⁵ Read *mḥf imf ḥsḥf* against Schott's *mḥt imf ḥsḥf*.

⁵⁶ Read *pr-ꜣ nḥ (w)ḥ; s(nb) pw irf šww m nfr.wḥf*.

⁵⁷ I read *nn ḥm [mwt] imf*; the determinative of the dying man is still preserved at the beginning of line 3, 9.

His impurity does not exist.

A king's offering, pharaoh is pure.

To recite upon four figures of the inundation god, in their shape (*bs*) and their form (*kmꜛ*) during [...], liquid of every [...] in them. To go around the king, [every single one...], purify on all limbs(?) of the king. To speak words, to abolish impurity, abolishing of impurity, male and female dead man's spirits, male and female enemies, male and female opponents.

This book has been made by the Lord of All when he purified his limbs(?) after the evil impurity of men, gods, glorified and dead ones.

Eleventh spell

Another spell for purification, words to be spoken.

Pharaoh is Re, arising in the primeval ocean,

[His] purity is [the purity of... in the] water,

With big flame...

Great illuminator when he shows himself in the flood in the morning,

Who abolishes all evil, as he arises in his purity from the flood.

May pharaoh arise in the flood(?)....

... shine... pharaoh...

May he be divine in the earth!

Those who are in the primeval ocean shall not upset him,

... shall not... him...

Here there occurs a break of continuity in the script. A direct sequence is, against Schott, anything but certain. The text begins in the midst of an instruction for action.

[...] together with this statue. Blowing by *khenu-sa*-priest. One says 'raising of the hands' [...] of the king, right to right, [left to left]. His ointment jars [...], sealed upon real myrrh, to place on the feet of the king to the right and the left [...], to the arms, at the feet. A calf... within this heaven (= baldachin?). Then he shall kiss the calf after the purification [with four jars] of water. [...] To release(?) the bark of Sokar. One says 'Releasing the encircler among the people (?) [. . .]' at his arms and his legs. [...] amulet(?) of Ptah. An amulet of the *seneb*-plant at his arms and legs, the sinew of a [...] upon his head, anointed with best ointment, his [body] dressed with two loincloths.

Twelfth(?) spell

Nephthys, come and purify pharaoh from all vermin he has killed, be it that he knew it or not, of which a god hated that he killed them! Relinquished is all evil that was adhering to him by magic!

As Re-Harachte was pure with this water which came from Heliopolis at the east side—repelled is all evil from pharaoh.

As Horus the little child was pure in his nest in Chemmis when he arose [...] and killed his enemies.

As those four goddesses were pure, Neith, Selkis, Isis, Nephthys, as they purified themselves [...] who originated from Atum.

As the winepress god was pure in Edfu when he purified himself from the hind-part of the red fish—repelled is all evil from pharaoh.

As Horus the oldest was pure, the begetting bull who grasped Isis(?)⁵⁸ [...] of the sea.

As the Apis-bull in the Serapeum was pure when he purified himself in the field of rushes when he had received [...] chapel of the crooked one in Akhmim.

As the eyeless one in Letopolis was pure after he had chopped off the heads, blindly [...] of his mother, and she closed his eyes.

As Horus was pure in Pe and Mesen when he wiped off...after he had chopped off the heads [...] of his enemy.

As the wild bull was pure in Buto—repelled is all evil from him, repelled is all evil from the pharaoh.

As Horus the leader of subjects was pure at that very day when for him these four hands have been made, fallen into the water.

And Re pronounced that he was pure by them on the shore of Netjeret—repelled is all evil from him, repelled is all evil from the pharaoh.

As Seth was pure in Tachbeti when he moved out of Tachbeti and came down to Nedit—repelled is all evil, equally.

As Horus the child was pure when he gave orders to the gods—repelled is all evil, equally.

As Horus-Min in Coptos was pure on top of his plantation when he was given his eyes as double feather and was justified, and his face should not lack them—repelled is all evil from him, repelled is all evil from the pharaoh.

As Horus-Min was pure in Coptos when his eyes were given to him, his right and his left one, and they were fixed on his head, and his face should not lack them—repelled is all evil from him, repelled is all evil from the pharaoh.

As the way-opener was pure when he united his eyes at his head as uraeus—repelled is all evil, equally.

Thot, come that you fix for pharaoh his head
 With this water which has come forth from Elephantine,
 Which removes grime(?) which the lips have devised,
 Which the one who beats with magic attests against him.

Pure is Horus, pure is Seth,
 Pure is Thot, pure is Dun-Awi,
 Pure are these four gods who have come forth around the lake of life.
 Pure is pharaoh, repelled is all evil from him through magic
 [...] against him, he cut off [...]

⁵⁸ If the reading is correct, this could allude to a myth according to which Horus violated and raped his mother; see Meeks, *Mythes*, 269–70.

Thirteenth(?) spell

[...]

Horus has risen in the two chapel-rows of heaven,
 He whom the lady of hearts has hidden(?) inside them,
 Beautiful is her head with Thot,
 The orphan child of lip and curl,
 The son who came forth from a male one,
 The ibis,⁵⁹ great of magic,
 The runner who separated the two gods.
 (*End of the preserved part of the Berlin manuscript*)

From the unpublished part (according to P. Carlsberg 658)

"[Pharaoh has purified himself] with the water jar with which Horus has purified himself,
 He has loosened the evil of him to the ground,
 He has [...] taken away to the ground.
 All male ones who will do anything against pharaoh,
 Their bodies, their limbs [...] their [...],
 They shall eat feces, while their drink is urine in their places [...],
 Their heads shall be in the earth, their feet in heaven.
 Those who say anything evil against pharaoh,
 Shall be addled (?),⁶⁰ [...] their [...] against them themselves".

The purification of the king is a well-known motif in Egypt. Strangely, though, one of the most ancient known attestations of the motif comes from an "indirect tradition", namely a Middle Syrian cylinder seal (today in Brussels);⁶¹ in some other seals and impressions, the details of the motif become increasingly less Egyptian in style and iconography. In Egypt itself, there are a few fragmentary cases from the Old and Middle Kingdoms; the earliest known complete attestation, by contrast, is a pectoral from the beginning of the 18th dynasty.⁶² Afterward, from the New Kingdom until the Greco-Roman period, the motif of the king being purified by two or four gods is quite well attested.⁶³ The stylization of the scene is notable: The water streaming out of the jars of the gods is constituted in most cases by hieroglyphic signs in the shape of "life" (*ʾnh*) and "dominion" (*wꜣs*). The positive effects that the purification should produce are made quite obvious thereby. The specific location of this scene is the area

⁵⁹ *thn* is visible.

⁶⁰ The reading *htht* is not secure.

⁶¹ Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 48 no. 4 and 50; Eder, *Ägyptische Motive*, 74–78.

⁶² Kairo Catalogue Général 52004; see Graefe, "Sonnenaufgang", 63 no. 37.

⁶³ Gardiner, "Baptism"; Assmann and Kucharek, "Wasserriten", 54–64.

of entry into the temple, thus they are mostly engraved in the outer passageways of a temple.

The royal ritual has links to the ideal of the sun god, in which, according to the Egyptian conception, the morning purification precedes the sunrise. This can be seen very well in the section of the victory stela of Piye in which he undertakes a kind of “pilgrimage” to Heliopolis. There, the text speaks of “Washing of his face with the river (water) of Nun with which Re washes his face”.⁶⁴

The best evidence for the Egyptian king’s palace as a location with access restricted according to purity is, paradoxically, a case that concerns not an original Egyptian king but a foreigner, namely the Nubian king Piye. On the large stela that he erected in memory of his victorious fights in Egypt is a report of how subject local Lower Egyptian potentates wanted to attend to the new ruler. Among them, only one is admitted, while the others have to wait outside. It is said:

Now these kings and leaders of Lower Egypt who came to see the perfection of his majesty, their position was like that of women,⁶⁵ they could not enter the king’s palace, because they were ‘m’ and had eaten fish. This is the taboo of the king’s house. However, king Namelt entered the king’s palace because he was pure and had not eaten fish. (Piye-Stela, l. 150–151)⁶⁶

The exact interpretation of this part is somewhat troublesome, as the lexical meaning of ‘m’ is problematic. For quite a long time it has been understood as “uncircumcised”, but there is no substantial evidence for this. It should rather be understood as a kind of sexual activity. With the combination of sexual and food taboos, the rules correspond especially to the performance instructions in the Book of the Dead and to core issues of purity in later magical texts.

⁶⁴ Grimal, *Stèle triomphale*, 130 and 136 note 402. For the larger context, see Kákosy, “Piye in Heliopolis”.

⁶⁵ So far this passage has always been translated as “their legs were (like) legs of women”, which would be singular and hardly understandable in context. In reality, we have here the demotic *rꜥ* “position” (compare Copt. ϣⲏⲧⲉ “way, kind”). The parallel sentence “they were not allowed to enter the palace” also pleads in favor of the new interpretation developed here. That women had generally less access authorization than men is clearly attested by the Book of the Temple.

⁶⁶ Grimal, *Stèle triomphale*, 176–77, and 178 note 529. See the special study by Galpaz-Feller, “‘Clean’ and ‘Unclean’”, who unfortunately takes the meaning “uncircumcised” for granted and therefore does not discuss its justification; see the short notes in Gozzoli, *Writing of History*, 56–57 with note 26, who underlines the parallel of the king’s palace and the temple of the god with regard to accessibility.

There were likely specific ceremonies for the purification of the king around the turn of the year. A text transmitted in hieroglyphic inscriptions in the Ptolemaic temples in Philae, Assuan and Dendara might also belong to this context.⁶⁷

The king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the two countries, Userkare beloved of Amun adores his mother; speaking words:
 "Hail to you, Isis, great of magic,
 Eldest in the womb of her mother Nut,
 Effective in heaven with Re!
 Praise to you in the day-barque,
 Jubilation to you in the night-barque,
 You who gave birth to all the gods!
 The son of Re Ptolemaios has come to you, Lady of Life,
 On this beautiful day in which you have appeared,
 That he ties on for you your head,
 That he fastens for you your neck.
 Userkare beloved by Amun is your son Horus.
 Your Ka is in peace, Lady of Life,
 On this beautiful day in which you have appeared,
 You whom the gods have pacified after the rage,
 You of whom Re desires that you are within his barque
 While repelling Apopis with the magic powers of your mouth.
 Behold, Ptolemaios has come to you,
 That he adores your perfection.
 May you release him from all his damnations in the previous year,
 His damnation of this year is removed—his back is towards it.
 He has given offerings on account of them.
 His countenance is towards you, mistress,
 While you have come anew.
 He has not done any malefaction of his town god,
 He has not committed any sin (*isf.t*),
 It shall not be counted against him in the council of the scribe of the two countries,⁶⁸
 Who assesses besmirchment in the course of the year,
 Who transmits the offering cattle to the slaughtering block.
 He is safe and sound from this year,
 The retainers protect him.
 In peace, in peace, good (new) year!
 May he take hold of the offerings!
 Your Ka shall be over him in life!"

⁶⁷ Žabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 66–67; pl. XVI right; in Philae Coppens, *Wabet*, 116–19. See Goyon, review of L. V. Žabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 92–93.

⁶⁸ That is, Thot.

Here the text speaks of the relief from “damnations” (*sčb.w*); this word, whose usual translation is provisional, belongs to the category of things that need to be removed most frequently in purification rituals, besides “impurity” or “infection” (*b.w*).

5. PURIFICATION RITUALS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ELITE

There are a number of rituals, which have received only scant attention in prior research, that primarily concern the protection and purification of Egyptians, presumably members of the elite. I have placed these rituals in the framework of antagonistic tensions at the Egyptian court, which are rarely spoken of explicitly.⁶⁹ An interesting example in a papyrus of the Ramesside period is as follows:

A beautiful day! Your mouth is opened;
 All your enemies among the dead and the living are quelled.
 Horus pours water upon your fingers;
 Geb (the god of the earth) hands over to you what is in him.
 Your face is washed by your father Nun,
 Your face is wiped dry by Hedjhotep(?).
 Ptah turns towards you with the garment, like he did for Re.
 Your mouth is opened with good utterances and choice expressions.
 The good day is remembered for you
 And forgotten for you is evil on the good day.
 Heaven and earth are in festival, the gods in joy.
 Jubilation is within the great caste, acclamation in the Benben-house.
 May you receive food in the presence of the great ennead,
 While everyone prays for health for you;
 And your heart is full of rejoicing.
 Nothing shabby which you have done will be reproached.
 No evil shall attach to your limbs,
 [...] shall be heard for you in presence of the lords of truth.
 O NN whom NN has born,
 Re purifies you at his coming forth, Thot at his shining forth,
 When this utterance is told to you which Isis spoke to her son Horus:
 “You are purified on the sixth day of the lunar month,
 you are protected on the last day of the lunar month”. (P. Chester Beatty IX
 vs. B 12, 10–13, 9)
 (*a long litany follows, then:*)
 “O you gods and goddesses whose names have been pronounced,
 Who dwell in the sky but eat on earth,

⁶⁹ See Quack, “Reinigen durch Anschwärzen”; Quack, “From Ritual to Magic”.

Whose uraei are on their heads, whose souls are in Busiris,
 And their mummy forms in the necropolis, whose names are unknown—
 But you know their names, you know their occupations—
 Come now and be gracious towards...⁷⁰
 May you safeguard him, may you loosen him,
 May you release him from all things bad and evil,
 The water of every god and every goddess, every male and female demon,
 Every male and female adversary,
 Every male and female wandering spirit,
 Every bitterness, every heat,⁷¹ every deafness, every blindness,
 Every swelling (?), every thirst;
 Every turmoil, every raging, every weakness,
 Every enmity, every... , every wrath,
 Which exist hidden in every country in the course of each day!
 You are protected, as the sun-god is protected day by day.
 Your enemies are overthrown in the course of each day.
 NN whom NN has born, he is the sun-god,
 The sun-disc is on his head,
 The gods protect him, the ennead safeguards him.
 You are NN whom NN has born.
 You belong to the gods whose names have been pronounced.
 You have been born in front of the Kas of the living". (P. Chester Beatty vs.
 B17, 4–18, 7)

The instructions for the manual act contain the following:

This spell is recited over real lapis lazuli, turquoise, carnelian, amber (?),
 malachite (?), green feldspar, granite, ..., iron and all precious stones, to
 be washed in milk, and the man shall be purified with it, as well as
 fumigating him with dust of barley. (P. Chester Beatty IX vs. B18, 7–10)

I would stress here that questions of purification are also touched upon, with the result that the effectuation of private purity, in which gods are utilized, goes hand in hand with overcoming opponents and rivals. The purification substances used in this case are notable, since milk, which is first used to wash gemstones, and grain dust have replaced the more normal substances, water and incense.

A similar combination is transmitted in a ritual spell for purification that forms a scene of the Ritual for Opening the Mouth on the one hand,

⁷⁰ Several doubtful words, perhaps corruptly transmitted.

⁷¹ Perhaps terms for skin diseases and inflammations; see for *thr.t* and *šmm.t* Quack, "Tabuisierte und ausgegrenzte Kranke", 69–70. With references, Fischer-Elfert, *Abseits von Ma'at*, 60; 77–81.

and on the other hand is already attested in an isolated instance in the early Middle Kingdom in a cosmetic scene, in a tomb.⁷²

Hail to NN, may your purification be made in the room of homage of the king,
 While you live, being renewed and rejuvenated as Re day by day!
 Thot, the master of the gods' words, has praised, to justify your voice,
 To throw down your enemies—they shall not exist!

One lexical point might be of importance in this connection. Within the Egyptian language, especially in earlier phases, the word *w'b* “to be pure” also has the special legal meaning “to be free of claims”.⁷³ The purification rituals studied here could thus also concern, at least partly, the situation of legal conflicts.

6. PURITY FOR ORDINARY PEOPLE

Before emphasizing that purity was eminently important for “the Ancient Egyptians”, we should consider whether it holds true so simply and comprehensively. Purity in the domains we have explored hitherto is clearly a concern for the elites, not for the population at large. The purity rules in place for entering a temple were not continuously enforced in daily life and for obvious reasons could not have been. This is especially clear with regard to the sexual taboo, which would have led, with perpetual use, to the extinction of the Egyptian population within one or two generations. Likewise, in the case of food taboos it is clear that the fish, pigs and small livestock mentioned explicitly in the relevant texts were actually eaten in Ancient Egypt⁷⁴—only a few members of the elite could have covered their daily protein needs through cattle, geese and desert game. We can even prove positively that fish was a regularly delivered food item in the workman's village of Deir el-Medineh⁷⁵—and this for a group whose official occupation was to hew out and to decorate the royal tomb.

That purity by itself was not expected of the general population is shown by the regulations in Esna, which imposed special purity periods

⁷² See Quack, “Fragmente”, 114–15.

⁷³ See Ritner, “Antecedents”, 351 with note 56.

⁷⁴ See for pigs, e.g. El-Huseny, *Inkonsequente Tabuisierung*; for fish, Gamer-Wallert, *Fische*, 60–85; Elsbergen, *Fischerei*.

⁷⁵ Compare for instance Valbelle, *Ouvriers de la tombe*, 272–74, who stresses that this seems to have been the most common aliment at this location besides bread.

on the laypersons who either wanted to pray in the temple or had to work there as craftsmen.

However, the fact that the potential low purity of certain professionals was regarded not as neutral but, at least within the scribal elite, as negative is shown in a series of compositions in which the advantages of the scribal profession, as compared to all other professions, are listed. As a distinctive focus of the professions concerned, it is consistently stressed that those professions are dirty.⁷⁶

A further important question concerns behavior towards foreigners. At least for the Late Period, there is evidence for a demarcation via purity conceptions. However, there are relatively few sources for this phenomenon in the Egyptian language. Although there are a few texts forbidding access to the temple for certain persons,⁷⁷ it must be noted that these mostly concern not the whole temple complex but only certain areas, such as the crypts, to which only a few Egyptian priests had access. In addition, the original ethnic names *ꜥm* and *šꜥs* became, in the vernacular of the Late Period, professional names for herdsmen of cattle and sheep. In any case, there is concrete evidence that foreigners could become priests in an Egyptian temple.⁷⁸

Furthermore, the biblical story of Joseph stresses that the Egyptians would not eat from the same table as the Hebrews (Gen 43:32).⁷⁹ Other than this, the main external source is certainly Herodotus. He indicates that the Egyptians were very much concerned with purity, even cleaning the bronze beaker on a daily basis, wearing freshly washed linen garments, practicing circumcision for purity, and requiring that the priest shave his whole body daily and wear only a linen garment and sandals made of papyrus, in addition to washing twice a day and twice a night with cold water. They were not allowed to eat fish and beans (2.37). In addition, we also learn that they did not slaughter cows but only male cattle, and for this reason did not kiss any Greeks and would not use any Greek

⁷⁶ See Jäger, *Berufstypologien*.

⁷⁷ On this see e.g. Sauneron, *Les fêtes religieuses d'Esna*, 347–48 note o; Derchain, *Papyrus Salt 825*, 168 note 83.

⁷⁸ Vittmann, "Beobachtungen".

⁷⁹ See also Moers, "Speise der Asiaten", who tries to establish examples for the earlier existence of food taboos. However, they fail to convince: the stela of Piye is only concerned with purity rules for the royal palace as a place of specific purity, the letter of Mena concerns rather the act of establishing blood-brotherhood, and the prophecy of Neferti is not about food taboos but about suffering from requisitions by plundering Asiatics; in the annals of Amenemhet the modal interpretation by Moers (that the Egyptians *had to* eat Asiatic food) is not borne out by the Egyptian text.

kitchenware (2.41). Another point in Herodotus indicative of differences in purity concepts between the two ethnicities is the treatment of the head of the sacrificial animal. At an Egyptian offering, many maledictions would be spoken over it and afterward, if there were any Greek traders nearby, it would be sold to them; otherwise it would be thrown into the river. All in all, the classification of Egyptians in contrast to other peoples where purity rules are concerned is not very explicit.

A peculiar trait, even if only marginally connected to the topic of purity, is inner-Egyptian differentiation. Many regionally defined taboos are valid only for inhabitants of a certain nome.⁸⁰ Regionally differentiated rules concerning which animals could or could not be eaten even had a real impact on delimitations and sometimes led to bloody inner-Egyptian conflicts.⁸¹ These differentiations within Egypt seem rather deeper-ranging than those against foreigners as such.

A special point concerns the question of purity rules for menstruating women⁸² and for women after birth. The Egyptian word for “menstruation”, *ḥsmn*, is linked etymologically with the term for “purification”. It is often assumed that women restricted themselves to certain rooms during menstruation. However, it is not easy to adduce clear evidence for this. The most pertinent cases seem to be certain demotic contracts in which the seller indicates to the buyer that his women could use a certain room during menstruation, or in cases with a woman as buyer, giving her this option directly.⁸³ Similar cases also exist in some Greek documents.⁸⁴ However, in actuality these texts stipulate only that the women *could* stay in those rooms during menstruation, not that they *had to* or that they were otherwise tainted with strong taboos. Moreover, the number of papyri in which such indications are mentioned is quite limited in comparison to the total number of demotic real estate documents preserved. The taboo of menstruating women, although it appears as a specific regional phenomenon in some nomes, is thus obviously not a comprehensive phenomenon.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ See e.g. Montet, “Fruit défendu”; Frandsen, “Menstrual ‘Taboo’”, 87 note 21–23 with further references.

⁸¹ See Quack, “Lokalressourcen”, 27.

⁸² See in detail Wilfong, “Menstrual Synchrony”; Frandsen, “Menstrual ‘Taboo’”.

⁸³ The most important sources are P. Louvre 2424; 2443; 2431, edited in Zauzich, *Schreibertradition*, 17–21; 21–26; 26–29; for the word for the room in question (but not explicitly the use during menstruation), see also P.BM 10446, Andrews, *Catalogue*, 66–67.

⁸⁴ Colin, “Espace réservé”.

⁸⁵ Wilfong, “Menstrual Synchrony”, 431.

The chief witness regarding the question of purification after childbirth—or rather, the only substantial source—is P. Westcar. There, it is recounted that Ruddjedet, after she has borne three future kings, undergoes a purification period of 14 days (P. Westcar 11, 18–19) before she again takes up her house-keeping activities.⁸⁶

Pointing to the phenomenon of the so called birth-houses in Egyptian temples, scholars have often thought that birth, and maybe even the whole pregnancy, happened in a special building outside the normal house.⁸⁷ The theory of the so called “childbed arbor”, which had been postulated as a specific place for the birth phase on the basis of picture ostraca of the New Kingdom, was attached to this.⁸⁸ I regard this assumption with some skepticism.⁸⁹ The P. Westcar itself relates that the gods, when they intend to help Ruddjedet give birth, come to the house of Ra-user, her husband (P. Westcar 10, 1–2). Nothing is written about a special building for the future mother. The pictures of the New Kingdom show, at most, some structure, but it cannot be demonstrated that it concerns a special childbed arbor outside the normal house, rather than simply an airy construction on the roof of the house that is preferred as a sleeping place during the summer heat.⁹⁰

7. PURITY GUIDELINES FOR A TOMB

Having eaten food by which a glorified being is disgusted and having had sexual intercourse with women before entering a tomb appear in an inscription of the Old Kingdom as reasons for a complaint being lodged in front of the gods’ court.⁹¹ This case is formulated in uncommon detail.

⁸⁶ Brunner-Traut, “Wochenlaube”, 23, suggests a separation of the woman in childbed from the household because Ruddjedet inquires about the condition of the household. I would agree only so far as Ruddjedet did not look after anything in those 14 days and obviously had stayed in her room. There is no specific commentary on this in Lepper, *Untersuchungen*.

⁸⁷ So firstly Chassinat, “Deux tableaux”.

⁸⁸ Brunner-Traut, “Wochenlaube”; see Vandier d’Abbadie, “Deux ostraca”, 21–29.

⁸⁹ Also doubted by Daumas, *Mammisis*, 74–75 and 135.

⁹⁰ Brunner-Traut, “Wochenlaube”, 20, admits that this arbor could have been on the roof or even have been the usual sleeping place. As crucial evidence for the spatial separation, she adduces modern ethnographic features (which are of doubtful value because they attest to the woman giving birth in the house of her parents, not the use of a separated arbor) as well as the birth-houses in the temples.

⁹¹ Silverman, “Threat-Formula”, 10–11. The text itself in Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, *Teti Cemetery*, 38, pl. 59a, col. 1.

Otherwise only a state of general purity and the avoidance of taboos are demanded, without a detailed indication of what exactly this entailed.⁹²

8. PURITY FOR DEAD PEOPLE . . . OR ALSO FOR LIVING RITUALISTS

The logical next step after the tomb is the purity of the corpse itself. There are several good indications that purification in the context of mummification was of some importance. Wall reliefs in tombs of the Old Kingdom already show the so-called purification tent.⁹³ Purification scenes are also provided abundantly in connection with the funeral scenes, especially in front of the tomb.⁹⁴

However, it must be noted that certain mourning customs do actually breach the rules of normal purity. The most glaring case concerns the hairstyle. Whereas under normal purity regulations a completely shaved head is desired,⁹⁵ one lets one's hair grow long during the mourning period.⁹⁶

Indeed, the end of that term is actually understood as a time of purification. This is most evident in the decree of Canopus (238 BCE). There (line 26 and 29 of the hieroglyphic text), Egyptian *sw'b snm.t* "to purify the mourning hairstyle" corresponds to Greek τοῦ πένθους ἀπόλυσις "to dissolve grief".⁹⁷ The final scene in the Book of the Death of Gatseschni from the 21st dynasty seems to me instructive in this regard. At the very end of the scroll is a purification scene, which is performed for the (female) owner. The usual colophon appears, but we also have the note, "The evil shall be to the earth as a mourning hairstyle".⁹⁸ Thus we can see that the mourning period required abstention from the usual condition of purity as a sign of personal pain and sympathy, accepting impurity as a mortification. This in turn provides an opportunity to end the mourning period with a final purification and to reenter the usual state of purity.

⁹² See e.g. Edel, "Phraseologie", 4–8; Morschauser, *Threat-Formulae*.

⁹³ See Grdseloff, *Reinigungszelt*; Vos, *Apis Ritual*, 157–58 with references.

⁹⁴ Barthelmess, *Übergang*.

⁹⁵ Perhaps also of the pubic area, as there are some depictions showing that. See Roth, *Egyptian Phyles*, 66–68; Grunert, "Nicht nur sauber".

⁹⁶ Posener, *Littérature et politique*, 152.

⁹⁷ Spiegelberg, *Priesterdekrete*; for a new study, see Pfeiffer, *Dekret von Kanopus*, 144–48 and 163–67; and an additional version in Tietze, Lange and Hallof, "Neues Exemplar".

⁹⁸ For the translation, see Quack, "Kolophon"; see also Lucarelli, "Colophon", whose analysis, however, cannot be correct as the orthographies assumed by her for *rk*, *m-s* and *mw* are all excluded in a hieratic text of this time; her reasoning against my analysis that the word would be separated at the end of the line (p. 127) is flawed, as in hieratic texts of the 21st/22nd dynasty, breaking of words at the end of the line is quite normal.

Shorter notes about mandatory purity can be found in abundance in the performance instructions in the postscripts of the Book of Death spells. Certain animal species, e.g. fish or small flock animals, are frequently proscribed, and abstinence from sexual intercourse is required.⁹⁹

However, this raises the question of how these texts are to be factually evaluated. Who should follow these purity rules and at what time? First of course we might think, in line with standard Egyptological reflexes, of the owner of the Book of the Death as a dead person. Soberly considered, however, such an approach is quite illogical. If this person were to conduct the ritual in the afterworld immediately after his death, he would have major problems with real purity, as he can hardly be expected to have observed “on spec” the many rules that are not permanently maintained, such as sexual abstinence. In contrast, if one thinks of a performance at the end of the embalming process, at the point of sepulture when the dead “arrives” in the afterworld, the specific postulation of purity rules would be absolutely unnecessary, as it can be assumed that the dead has neither eaten anything impure for 70 days nor had sexual intercourse; he would thus be long beyond all attested terms of purification.

Such rules are only reasonable for a real, living ritualist who performs the actions himself and thus can deliberately plan to fulfill the purity requirements. However, under these circumstances, further serious questions arise concerning the identity of the first-person speaker of the formulae.¹⁰⁰ The Books of the Death usually introduce the first-person speaker with the phrase “speaking words by NN”, where NN is the owner of the Book of Death, thus actually the deceased. How does this fit?

I see two options, which, however, both result in a performance by living people at least in the original state of using the text.¹⁰¹ The first option is a text that was not originally at home in the funerary sphere but rather had another usage, primarily in the temple cult. In this case the formulation in the first person is in accordance with acting instructions for the ritualist. The other solution is that the texts were actually used in a funeral context but that the speaker originally was not the dead but a still-living ritualist, who, for the benefit of the dead, performed a ritual. These texts

⁹⁹ Stricker, *Prähelleense Ascese*; Eschweiler, *Bildzauber*, 258–61.

¹⁰⁰ It is noteworthy that among the pyramid texts, all spells are cast in the third person (sometimes obviously changed) and manual instructions are almost totally lacking.

¹⁰¹ For the following, von Lieven, “Book of the Dead” is crucial; substantially important remarks also appear in Assmann, “Tod und Initiation”.

would then have come “in a package” into the literature provided for the dead.

Texts in the first person that do not feature the name of a specific individual as the beneficiary are especially important for the proper solution of this question. In particular, I think of cases like the papyri Gardiner 1–4, which both date very early (end of the Old Kingdom or First Intermediate Period) and use an anonymous first-person voice exclusively, thus indicating usage by a ritualist, but never mentioning a proper name.

Concerning purity instructions, I will illustrate these points with specific examples. As a first case I would point to BD 105.

Spell for satisfying the Ka, speaking words by NN:
 “Hail to you, my Ka, my lifetime!
 Behold, I have come to you,
 Being effective, appearing, ensouled,
 Being powerful, being healthy.
 I have brought natron and incense to you,
 That I purify you with it,
 That I purify your sweat with it.
 This bad utterance that I have said,
 This evil impurity that I have committed,
 It shall not be set against me(?),
 Because mine is this green papyrus amulet,
 Which is at the neck of Re,
 Which was given to those¹⁰² who are in the horizon.
 If they prosper, I prosper!
 My Ka prospers like them,
 My Ka is fed like them.
 The one who carries the scale, with noble truth¹⁰³
 At the nose of Re on that day!
 You shall not carry me off(?),¹⁰⁴
 Because I have an eye which sees, an ear which hears!
 I am no slaughtering cattle,
 They shall not make me into offerings
 For the chiefs—variant: chiefs and Nut!
 May you let me pass you!
 I am pure, justified is Osiris against his enemies!”

Hitherto, this text has been understood by Egyptologists as a relatively conventional speech of a dead person with the aim of rebirth.¹⁰⁵ As a matter

¹⁰² Variant in Nebseni: “That those gave me who are in the horizon”.

¹⁰³ As *k3i* is intransitive, I consider the translation “elevate Maat” impossible.

¹⁰⁴ The exact sense of the expression *tp-rmn* is not clear.

¹⁰⁵ Janák, “Journey to Resurrection”.

of fact, though, its focus is quite different. The aim is, on the one hand, to purify the Ka addressed as a recipient of the ritual; on the other hand, the individual emphasizes his own purity, or, more precisely, asks that his faults not be counted against him. With this, the possibility of being able to gain access to an area of limited access without being exposed to risks against body and life plays a major role. The only options that seem feasible to me are those of an officiant who arrives either to care for his dead forbear (namely, an ancestor) or to play the role of Horus for Osiris.¹⁰⁶

My second example is a spell concerning passing the gates (BD 145). Only the first portal out of this long spell is cited as an example.

“You are greeted by Horus, first portal of the weary-hearted.
 Make way for me!
 I know you, I know your name,
 I know the name of the god who guards you.
 ‘Mistress of shivering, with high pinnacles,
 Leader, mistress of breaking up,
 Who announces speeches and chases away thunderstorms,
 Who keeps the theft from the one who comes from afar’
 Is your name.
 ‘Horrible’ is the name of the god who guards you.
 I am clean through this water, in which Re purified himself,
 When he opened up the east side of heaven.
 I am anointed with the best of cedar oil,
 I am dressed with linen dress,
 The scepter in my hand is made out of heter-wood”.
 “Pass by then, you are pure!”

It must be noted that here purity connected with knowledge is essential, i.e., besides the correct purity and appropriate clothing, knowledge of the names of the door and the guardian is required. The assumption that this text is intended primarily for the ritualist is confirmed first by the introductory formula found in the most detailed version of the New Kingdom, in the tomb of Senenmut: “You are greeted by Horus”—thus the name is not changed to the name of the specific tomb owner. Second, we can see very clearly how this spell has been incorporated in the Late Period into an Osirian ritual in which the ritualist is definitely the living Horus,

¹⁰⁶ As long as you do not accept that a still-living ritualist has to be differentiated from the dead, you quickly move into aporias in which the otherwise precise analysis by Willems, “Embalmer embalmed”, ends.

who acts for his father Osiris,¹⁰⁷ and the destiny of the dead owner of the papyrus is linked to that of Osiris, not of Horus.

As a last example, I would like to cite a text that I might have been expected to treat under the aspect of purity conceptions in a moral sense, namely the well-known scene of the “judgment of the dead” in chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead.¹⁰⁸ I will restrict myself to a few sections and will not treat the great confessions, which I regard as sufficiently well-known.

What is said when reaching the hall of the two truths.
 To separate NN from all misdeeds he has done, to see every god face-to-face:
 “Hail to you, great god, master of the two truths,
 I have come to you, my master!
 May you fetch me that I can see your perfection!
 I know you, I know your name,
 I know the names of the 42 gods
 Who are together with you in the hall of the two truths,
 Who live on those belonging to evil,
 Who gulp down their blood
 On that day of calculating the characters before Wennennefer.
 Behold, ‘the one whose two daughters are his two eyes, lord of truth’ is your
 name!
 Behold, I have come to you,
 Having fetched Maat and abolished injustice,
 (*a long negative confession follows*)
 I am pure, I am pure, I am pure, I am pure!
 My purity is the purity of the great Benu-bird who is in Heracleopolis,
 Because mine is this nose of the master of breath who keeps all people alive,
 On that day of filling the Udjat-eye in Heliopolis
 In the second month of the time of sowing at the last day.
 In front of the master of this land.
 It is me who sees the filling of the Udjat-eye in Heliopolis.
 Nothing evil shall happen against me in this country,
 In this hall of the two truths,
 Because I know the name of these gods who are in her following the great
 god.
 (*the negative confession addressed to the 42 gods follows*)
 Hail to you, you gods!
 I know you, I know your names!
 I shall not fall to your massacre,
 You shall not let my evil ascend to this god whom you are following,
 My (mis)deed shall not occur with you,

¹⁰⁷ Goyon, *Imouthès*, 17–47; Smith, *Traversing Eternity*, 67–95.

¹⁰⁸ New synoptic text edition in Lapp, *Spruch* 125.

You shall speak the truth concerning me in front of the Almighty!
 Because I have committed the Maat in Egypt,
 I have not blasphemed any god,
 My (mis)deed has not occurred with the incumbent king.

...

I am pure, my forepart is in purity,
 My back part is in cleanliness,
 My middle is a pond of Maat,
 No limb of myself is free of Maat.
 I have purified myself in the southern pond,

...

'I will not let you step on me'
 Says the ground of this hall.
 'Why? But I am pure'.
 'Because we do not know your feet,
 With which you intend to step on us.
 Name them to me!'
 'Introduced before Min' is the name of my right foot,
 'Root of Hathor' is the name of my left foot.
 'Then step on us, you know us'.

...

'Come' says Thot, 'why have you come?'
 'I have come here in order to be announced'.
 'How is your condition?'
 'I am pure of any sin,
 I have kept away from the strife of those who are in their daily service,
 I do not belong to them'.
 'To whom I shall announce you?'
 'To the one whose ceiling is fire,
 Whose walls are reared Uraei,
 Whose ground is the flood'.
 'Who is that?'
 'That is Osiris'.
 'Thus pass by, you are announced!
 Your bread is the Udjat-eye,
 Your beer is the Udjat-eye,
 You will be brought offerings on earth consisting of the Udjat-eye'
 —thus he says about me.

Postscript

To be performed as it happens in the halls of the two truths. A man shall say this spell being pure and clean, after he has dressed in garments of the channel shore(?), the sandals as white sandals, made-up with malachite, anointed with myrrh of best quality, having sacrificed a fresh cow, poultry, incense, bread, beer and vegetables. Now you do this pattern as a drawing with ochre on the pure ground coated with soil on which no pig or goat has stepped. As for the one on whom this book is performed, he will be

prosperous, his children will be prosperous, he will be a confidant of the king and his royal court, he will be given a shenes-bread, a jar with beer, per-sen-bread, a big piece of meat from the altar of the great god, he will not be repelled at all doors in the west. He will be transported together with the kings of Upper and Lower Egypt, he will be in the cortege of Osiris. A true remedy, proven a million times.

The text is of relevance as it is focused on purity. It is explicitly called a ritual for the separation of misdeeds in the title, i.e., the aim is a statement of purity that also eliminates any possible mistakes. Besides purity, knowledge that legitimizes access is also necessary in this case; after finishing the confessions, the candidate has to prove his knowledge of different religious customs and names, of which only one case is included in the translation above. If we detach ourselves from the traditional Egyptological approach, we can see quite well that the actual aim of the spell is to receive a secure supply, on the one hand, and to gain access, on the other hand. The note in the postscript that the ritualist would be a confidant of the king and of his royal court raises the suspicion that we have an original court ritual concerning direct contact, on par with the highest elite, here.

An older source for purity regulations of similar difficulty is to be found in the so-called Book of the Two Ways, which is transmitted on coffins from the early Middle Kingdom but which goes back to original priestly rituals in the Osirian and solar domains, in my opinion. At the corresponding position (CT VII 449, d–e), it is said:

If a man sets out to go to the west, then the man shall recite in a purity period of four days and on his fourth day he shall go forth.

If I understand this text correctly (my analysis diverges seriously from most former editors),¹⁰⁹ then a purity term of four days of preparation for the ritual is demanded.

In addition, a totally different form of justifying access, this time clearly in a non-funeral field, is to be found in a text that in its first modern edition has been given the rather unfortunate title “Book of Thot”; it is actually a ritual for access to the chamber of darkness.¹¹⁰ The text’s main goal is the initiation of a scribe into the arcane secrets. The important section is as follows:

¹⁰⁹ See, in a slightly different sense, Backes, *Zweiwegebuch*, 111.

¹¹⁰ Jasnow and Zauzich, *Book of Thoth*; Quack, “Initiation”; Quack, “Dialog”.

[He-spoke-in-Hesrekh] said: 'If you smell of myrrh, then do not enter the House of Life! They are horny bulls which are in [it].

Is there a woman for you? Do you have any daughters? Then take care! [...] you; or is it a father, who sent you out? It is the teaching of the boy (?) who is worthy to examine you'.

The one loving wisdom says: 'I know the taboos which are in the chamber of darkness, I have come free of them.

I have turned wine into an abomination for me, I have forgotten the smell of the myrrh. Behold, my dresses are tattered, I am desirous!'

He-spoke-in-Hesrekh said: 'The Ibises which are her, their food is tiresome, their life is problematic.

They do not satiate themselves with bread, they do not get drunk by wine, they do not anoint themselves with ointment. Their taboo is to mention the name of the sexual intercourse.

Arrow demons (?) are what stand at their mouth, and snakes on their lips. Their offerings are dogs, their food is donkeys, their fruits are reptiles.

Will you be able to live with those who are in earth holes? What is their way to serve them?'

The one loving wisdom said: 'I will wash their writing bowls, I will rinse their writing boards (?), I will wipe off the dust of their boxes.

I will fill up the rest, I will light the torch, I will prepare charcoal for the temple houses.

I will break the stones (?), I will hug the boxes, I will produce [...].

I will receive the boxes (?), I will rush on the voice, I will open [the doors(?)].

I will carry the writing rolls on the way behind them, I will [...].'

Some of these taboos are similar to the purity instructions in rituals, especially the avoidance of contact with women. In general, however, they quite definitely concern mortifications, demonstrating a conscious abstention from the conveniences of life. In some points, especially with regard to tattered clothes and abstention from ointment and scents, they create a state diametrically opposed to the normal concept of purity.

Advice concerning the necessity of purity is quite common in Greco-Egyptian magical papyri, which are partly demotic but mostly transmitted in Greek. These certainly concern a living ritualist, and in view of the aims of the rituals, they were used outside the normal temple cult establishment. They very often emphasize that the question of purity is crucial for the efficacy of the ritual.¹¹¹ Where they become explicit, the concrete points are similar to the older Egyptian texts, as well as to the Book of the Dead postscripts and the access texts of the Greco-Roman temple: sexual taboo, no food from pig and fish, pure garments and ritual implements.

¹¹¹ Compare Quack, "Postulated and Real Efficacy".

The most common time span for purity terms is three days, sometimes seven. Much more complex is the ritual in the eighth Book of Moses, which requires a preparation period of 41 days. It should be noted that these instructions appear with rituals concerning not an urgent crisis but predictable situations, especially divination rituals.

9. FINAL REMARKS

Purity in Egypt has a delimiting function—certain rooms and persons are only accessible if their requirements have been fulfilled; certain social groups, especially priests, assert themselves through them. At the same time, however, it is also a limited matter. Most purity instructions are only valid for a certain period and in a certain situation and do not have to be kept permanently.

A possible differentiation of purity in the physical and the moral sense hardly seems possible.¹¹² Normally, in the text of a ritual, the physical aspect is more strongly emphasized, but the material presented here demonstrates well that the moral aspect is attached seamlessly.

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¹¹² Compare also Meyer, "Magical Asceticism".

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CONCEPTS OF PURITY IN ANATOLIAN RELIGIONS

Manfred Hutter

1. INTRODUCTION: ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH

When we discuss the topic of purity and pollution, we first have to recall that such terms have nothing to do with the modern concepts of 'dirt' or 'hygiene' or of 'cleanliness'.¹ However, an analogy established by Mary Douglas may be helpful as an initial approach:

In chasing dirt, in papering, decorating, tidying we are not governed by anxiety to escape disease, but are positively re-ordering our environment, making it conform to an idea. There is nothing fearful or unreasoning in our dirt-avoidance: it is a creative movement, an attempt to relate form to function, to make unity of experience. If this is so with our separating, tidying and purifying, we should interpret primitive purification and prophylaxis in the same light.²

In view of an anthropological and symbolic interpretation that also pertains methodologically to the history of religions, concepts of purification and cleanliness therefore have the function of systematizing an unsystematic experience; thoughts on and observations of dirt and pollution in early cultures, at the same time, include a symbolic consideration of order and disorder, of life and death. Concepts of (cultic) purity and pollution often form a binary pair, which allows essential conclusions concerning the religious system of a particular culture.³ Against this background, a reduction of 'pollution' to material dirt or health concepts⁴ would therefore not do justice to the circumstances in the Hittite cultural area. Rather, it has to be assumed that the concept of pure/polluted is part of a social system in

¹ For hygiene and health among the Hittites, cf. Ünal, "Ritual Purity", 208–23.

² Douglas, *Purity*, 2.

³ Cf. Douglas, *Purity*, 5–6.

⁴ In this sense Douglas, *Purity*, 30, talks about 'medical materialism': "Some argue that even the most exotic of ancient rites have a sound hygienic basis. Others, though agreeing that primitive ritual has hygiene for its object, take the opposite view of its soundness. For them a great gulf divides our sound ideas of hygiene from the primitive's erroneous fancies". See further Douglas, *Purity*, 33: "Most primitive peoples are medical materialists in an extended sense, in so far as they tend to justify their ritual actions in terms of aches and pains which would afflict them should the rites be neglected".

which pollution is conceived as a hazard for cosmos or society. Someone who is polluted—and therefore also polluting towards others—is in a state that cannot be accepted by society because he has overstepped a boundary that should have been respected. Due to this breach of liminality, others become endangered.

This framework provides a starting point for the Hittite cultural area. Even a cursory reading of Hittite texts quickly reveals that the terms ‘pure’ or ‘to purify’ are frequently mentioned.⁵ The adjective *parkui* ‘pure’ not only conveys a ‘pure’ state but also means ‘free of’, i.e., ‘pure’ is defined by the absence of the contrary. Someone is ‘pure’ who has not overstepped boundaries that would pollute him materially, and, if he has become polluted, he has to be ‘freed’ to rid himself of this ‘dirt’. In the same context, the texts repeatedly mention that a person becomes ‘pure’ if specific rituals are carried out; an instruction for temple personnel states accordingly:

Further, those who prepare the daily thick breads, let them be clean (= ritually pure), let them be washed and removed (of impurities?). Let the hair and the fingernails be taken (off) for them, and let them be dressed (in) clean clothes.⁶

We find another example in a purification ritual of an AZU-priest; he holds a cup with water and speaks as follows:

Just as this water is pure and they wash garments with it and purify them, (and just as) they wash tools with it and purify them, and just as this water purifies everything and makes it ritually clean, now it may purify you, O gods, in the same way. Now, you gods, be purified from the evil word, from oath, from curse, from bloodshed, from tears and from everything (else). And the ritual client shall be pure in front of you.⁷

Both texts are instructive concerning the ‘tangible’ concept of purity: One becomes ‘pure’ through the material removal of pollution, either by washing or by cutting off or the like, and one becomes free of it ritually at the same time. The second example can just as well be translated as follows:

⁵ For detailed references on the semantic field of ‘purity’, cf. Güterbock and Hoffner, *Dictionary: Volume P*, 161–74, with the following entries: *parkuwa* ‘to clear’, *parkuwalli* ‘pure’ (?), *parkuwantariya* ‘to be(come) pure’ (?), *parkue* ‘to be pure’, *parkui* ‘pure’; *parkuiye/a* ‘to be(come) pure’ (?), *parkuyatar* ‘purification’, *parkuemar* ‘purification’ (?), *parkuešš* ‘to be/ become pure’, *parkunu* ‘to cleanse’. In all cases, I have only given the first meaning of the word.

⁶ Taggar-Cohen, *Priesthood*, 61 (§ 2), cf. also 80–81 (§ 14); see further de Martino, “Purità”, 349.

⁷ KUB 43.58 i 4off; cf. also Haas, *Materia Magica*, 141; Wilhelm, “Reinheit”, 197–217, esp. 200.

“Now, you gods, be free (*pár-ku-wa-e-eš e-eš-tén*) from the evil word . . .” The fact that tangible things such as blood(shed) and tears are mentioned in this enumeration also underlines the ‘concrete’ liberation from those things that are contrary to purity.

Thus, for a first general determination, we may say that the concept of ‘purity’ among the Hittites starts with ‘material dirt’; therefore, ‘purification’ consists of ‘exemption from, being free of’ such substances, which have to be washed off, combed off, wiped off, or removed by using incense, etc.⁸ From this, we can also observe that ‘purity’ is not an abstract (or spiritual) parameter.⁹ Someone who is ‘polluted’ is ineligible for certain functions within society and/or would overstep a boundary, whereby harm would be done to the social order (and ultimately also to oneself). As a result, the maintenance of purity is an essential component of cohabitation and social order in the Hittite Empire.

2. PURITY AND POLLUTION—SOME ASPECTS OF THE LEXICAL FIELD

As a first step, these introductory thoughts require specification, as the terms that are used embrace some key questions, namely whether these different terms can be differentiated according to ‘ritual’ or ‘moral’ notions of purity and/or pollution, or in what way the terminology allows us to differentiate between ‘purity’ and ‘sanctity’ and perhaps even reveals interdependencies. First, an overview of the lexical field is required. In Hittite we have the following central word pairs:¹⁰

<i>parkui</i> ‘pure’	opposite: <i>paprant</i> ¹¹ ‘polluted’
<i>šuppi</i> ‘pure (in a cultic sense)’	opposite: <i>marša</i> ¹² ‘inappropriate (for cult)’

⁸ Textual references for such techniques of purification are given by Haas, *Materia Magica*, 70–79.

⁹ Cf. Wilhelm, “Reinheit”, 198.

¹⁰ Tischler, *Wörterverzeichnis*, 142–43; Hoffner, *Glossary*, 50, 72. Other terms are also related to ‘purity’ or ‘pollution’ but only in a certain context, while they primarily have a different meaning, e.g.: *ħarra* ‘to pollute’; cf. Luwian *ħāratar* ‘offense, hostility’ (Tischler, *Handwörterbuch*, 42; Melchert, *Lexicon*, 57); *gullakuwa* ‘atrocious’ (Tischler, *Handwörterbuch*, 82); *gangadai* ‘to purify, to atone for’ (Tischler, *Handwörterbuch*, 71; cf. Strauß, *Reinigungsrituale*, 101–8); *šaknuwant* ‘defiled’ (Cohen, *Taboos*, 61; *šaknuwant* can be used as antonym of both *šuppi* and *parkui*, cf. de Martino, “Purità”, 362 with § 3.2).

¹¹ Hoffner, “Perspectives”, 324.

¹² Cf. Hoffner, “Perspectives”, 324, for a further differentiation within the lexical field *marša*, of which not all derivations pertain to the field of ‘inappropriate for cult’.

In Luwian¹³ the following terms provide an initial approach to the topic ‘pure–polluted’:

*kumma*¹⁴ ‘pure, sacred’

papparkuwa ‘to cleanse, purify’¹⁵

opposite: *paratta*¹⁶ ‘impurity’

*wašḥay(a)*¹⁷ ‘sacralized’

For Hurrian texts, or those influenced by Hurrian culture, and loanwords, the following terms should be considered:

itk ‘to be pure’¹⁸

parn ‘to be pure’¹⁹

šeḥl ‘to be pure’²⁰

This leads to two questions: how do the terms in the three ‘literary and cultural languages’ of the Hittite Empire relate to each other, and how do they relate semantically?

The following Hittite-Luwian equivalents are unproblematic: Hittite *parkui* and Luwian *papparkuwa* (including their respective opposites) are linguistically unambiguous equivalents. The semantic equivalence of Hittite *šuppi* and Luwian *kumma* can also be judged as certain; however, these are two completely different words, each of which has not left any trace in the other—closely related—language, so that it may be possible to speak of a suppletive distribution of two highly semantically comparable terms in the Old Anatolian languages.²¹ In spite of this clear

¹³ *ḫalāl(i)* ‘pure’ (Melchert, *Lexicon*, 46); *marahšīwal(i)* ‘polluted’ (Melchert, *Lexicon*, 139; cf. Hittite *marīḫši*, Güterbock and Hoffner, *Dictionary: Volume P*, 186–87).

¹⁴ Melchert, *Lexicon*, 108; cf. also the following from languages related to (cuneiform) Luwian: In hieroglyphic Luwian we have *kumaza* ‘priest’ (Payne, *Luwian*, 147); for Lycian, cf. Melchert, *Lycian Lexicon*, 31–32; Neumann, *Glossar*, 175–78, with derivatives.

¹⁵ Melchert, *Lexicon*, 165 (cf. Hittite *parkuwai*).

¹⁶ Melchert, *Lexicon*, 167; maybe the divine name ^dParattašši is also related to this word.

¹⁷ Cf. Melchert, *Lexicon*, 263–64; for Lycian correspondent words, cf. Melchert, *Lycian Lexicon*, 78; Neumann, *Glossar*, 417.

¹⁸ Wegner, *Einführung*, 224.

¹⁹ Wegner, *Einführung*, 237; cf. also *parneški-* ‘brush’ (?), which might be derived from this Hurrian verb (Haas, *Materia Magica*, 732).

²⁰ Wegner, *Einführung*, 241; see further *šihilli(ya)* ‘pertinent to purification’ (IBoT 2.192 Ro. 23).

²¹ Luwian *kumma-* is related to Palaic *aš-kummauwa* ‘meat’ (literally meaning ‘pure for the mouth’); the semantic shift from ‘pure’ to ‘(pure) meat’ is also attested in Hittite for ^{UZU}*šuppa* ‘meat’ as a derivative from *šuppi* ‘pure’. Thus *kumma* might reflect the common Indo-European Anatolian word. Although *šuppi* is well attested since the Old Hittite period (and also earlier in personal names from the Old Assyrian period in Kültepe), it can be linked neither with Inner-Anatolian nor with other Indo-European languages (Kloekhorst, *Dictionary*, 790).

equivalence of *šuppi* and *kumma* as a word pair, the distribution of ‘purity terms’ is more complex within the Luwian tradition because *wašhay(a)* hardly differs from *kumma*.²²

Reconstruction of the compatibility between the Hittite and Hurrian terms is complicated by the still-insufficient knowledge of the Hurrian lexicon. The verb *parn* ‘to be pure’ can be regarded as equivalent to *parkui* because in the Hurrian and Hittite versions of the Allaiturahhi ritual these two terms correspond to each other.²³ The noun formation *itkalzi* as a title of a series of rituals is explained and translated in a colophon of this series as *aiš šuppiyahhuwaš* ‘(cultic) purification of the mouth’.²⁴ Again, it is still difficult to decide if *šehl* should rather be regarded as a probable equivalent of Hittite *parkui* or *šuppi*. In Hurrian as well as Hittite texts the collocation ‘water of “purity”’ appears repeatedly;²⁵ however, there are also comparable expressions that qualify the ‘purity’ of water either with *itkalzi* or with *parkui* or *šuppi*. Therefore, an unequivocal one-to-one semantic attribution is not yet possible.²⁶ Yet these comparisons reveal the following: while Hittite features an obvious, clear two-part scheme, Luwian attests an interpretable tripartition; the Hurrian tripartition is still dubious. This can be presented in table form as follows:

	Hittite	Luwian	Hurrian
‘pure’	<i>parkui</i>	<i>papparkuwai</i>	<i>parn</i>
‘pure’ (in a cultic sense)	<i>šuppi</i>	<i>kumma</i> ²⁷	<i>itk(alzi)</i> ²⁸

Summing up this condensed overview of the lexical field, we see that the topic of purity and pollution is clearly present in all three ‘cultic layers’ of the Hittite culture. On the basis of the lexical field—although only

²² Hutter, “Aspects”, 256–57.

²³ Güterbock and Hoffner, *Dictionary: Volume P*, 175; cf. the references in Haas and Wegner, *Rituale*, Nr. 2 Rs. 64–65 and Nr. 19 i 20–22.

²⁴ Haas, *Serien*, Nr. 6 iv 38–39; Nr. 9 iv 36–37; Strauß, *Reinigungsrituale*, 151.

²⁵ Cf. Haas, *Materia Magica*, 142: *šīye=na šeħelli=ve=na // šeħelliyas watar*.

²⁶ In rituals from Kizzuwatna the derivation *šeħellišiki* can often be found—possibly an object in which ‘pure’ water for rituals is kept or possibly, secondarily, the denomination of a specific ritual act that is meant to effect purification (Tremouille, “Objet”; Strauß, *Reinigungsrituale*, 98–101). Therefore it is also possible to instead limit the base *šeħl* to a specific field of purification, so that this would again result in a binary scheme *parn/itk* in Hurrian.

²⁷ The distinction between *wašha* and *kumma*- remains unclear.

²⁸ At the moment it is not possible to decide whether *šeħl* primarily means simply ‘pure’ or whether it means ‘pure in a cultic setting’.

provisionally and with some uncertainties—we can see that the concept of ‘purity’ plays an essential role in the conduct of one’s life.

3. ‘PURE’ OR ‘SACRED’?

Until now I have acknowledged this dichotomy tacitly by translating ‘pure’ or ‘pure (in a cultic sense)’. Can such semantic differentiation be justified? What are the differences and nuances in the meanings of the terms? Would it be possible to say ‘sacred’? That the Hittite tradition distinguished between the two terms is, in my opinion, convincingly shown in those contexts where *parkui* and *šuppi* are employed next to one another. For instance, a prayer of Mursili to the Sun-Goddess of Arinna (and another, largely identical prayer to Telipinu) says the following:

You, O Sun-Goddess of Arinna, are an honored goddess. To you, my goddess, there are revered temples in Hatti, but in no other land are there any such for you. Only in Hatti they provide for pure and holy festivals and rituals for you, but in no other land do they provide any such for you. Lofty temples adorned with silver and gold you have only in Hatti, and in no other land is there anything for you.²⁹

Such a juxtaposition leads to the discussion of semantic differentiation between the two terms, and Albrecht Götze was the first, in 1933, to take a clear stance when he wrote, “Therefore, I see in *šuppi* a higher degree of purity which I believe can best be translated by the word ‘sacred, sacrosanct’ ”.³⁰ About a decade ago, Harry A. Hoffner also expressed himself in favor of this viewpoint and wrote, “Although not all societies distinguish with separate terms the concepts of ‘holy/sacred’ and ‘pure’, Hittite is one of those which does so”.³¹ That is, *parkui* means simply ‘pure’, whereas *šuppi* as ‘sacred’ has another (numinous) quality. Rita Strauß writes less explicitly:

šuppi serves in this case to indicate the original pure state which is lost as a result of offences committed by oneself or by someone else. The attribute *parkui*- marks a different degree, a different quality of purity. Generally it

²⁹ KUB 24.3+; Singer, *Prayers*, 51; cf. also the prayer to Telipinu: KUB 24.2 obv. 18–19; Singer, *Prayers*, 55.

³⁰ Götze, *Annalen*, 233. Original quote in German: “Darum sehe ich in *šuppi* einen höheren Grad von Reinheit, den ich durch die Übersetzung ‘heilig, sakrosankt’ am besten zu treffen glaube”.

³¹ Hoffner, *Perspectives*, 324.

designates the purity which is sought again in cathartic rites and asked for in the recitations.³²

However, the ‘original pure state’ associated with *šuppi* implies that R. Strauß, too, seems to rate the purity associated with *šuppi* higher than *parkui*.

This ‘hierarchical’ differentiation, which I see being met with broad approval in Hittitological discussions, has, however, been seriously questioned and even rejected by Gernot Wilhelm, who says,

Translating the word *šuppi* (and its derivatives), with ‘sacred’, as is quite often done, is not entirely unproblematic. This translation is based on the opinion that *šuppi* designates a higher degree of purity than *parkui* ‘pure’.³³

Wilhelm’s criticism of the translation of *šuppi* with ‘sacred’ is partially correct, because by using the term ‘sanctity’ Götze and Hoffner introduce the concept of numinousness, which is contrasted at the same time with a ‘profane’ scope. However, in Hittite,

No concept has developed that denotes the immediate divine sphere of power and impact as such and contrasts it with the human normalcy beyond the sacred sphere; in other words: A concept that corresponds to the pair of opposites ‘sacred vs. profane’ apparently did not develop, but rather Old Anatolian thought is entirely determined by the categories ‘pure vs. polluted’.³⁴

In this regard we can certainly agree with G. Wilhelm’s rejection of the translation of *šuppi* as ‘sacred’. But we must next ask what, then, are the differences between *šuppi* and *parkui* that, according to Wilhelm, both and equally express the category ‘pure’.

³² Strauß, *Reinigungsrituale*, 247. Original quote in German: “*šuppi* dient hier zur Kennzeichnung des ursprünglich reinen Zustandes, dessen man durch selbst- oder fremdverschuldete Vergehen verlustig geht. Einen anderen Grad, eine andere Qualität von Reinheit markiert das Attribut *parkui*. Es bezeichnet in der Regel die durch kathartische Riten wieder angestrebte und in den Rezitationen erbetene Reinheit”.

³³ Wilhelm, “Reinheit”, 203. Original quote in German: “Wenn das Wort *šuppi* (und Ableitungen) öfter als ‘heilig’ übersetzt wird, so ist dies nicht ganz unproblematisch. Dieser Übersetzung liegt die Auffassung zugrunde, dass *šuppi* einen höheren Grad von Reinheit bezeichne als *parkui* ‘rein’”.

³⁴ Wilhelm, “Reinheit”, 204–5. Original quote in German: “... keine Begrifflichkeit entwickelt, die die unmittelbare göttliche Macht- und Wirkenssphäre als solche kennzeichnet und ihr die menschliche Normalität außerhalb der Sakralsphäre gegenüberstellt; mit anderen Worten: eine Begrifflichkeit, die dem Oppositionspaar ‘heilig vs. profan’ entspricht, ist anscheinend nicht entwickelt worden, vielmehr ist das altanatolische Denken ganz von den Kategorien ‘rein vs. unrein’ beherrscht”.

At this point I return to the thoughts borrowed from Mary Douglas at the beginning of this paper, in order to further analyze the categories pure vs. polluted on the basis of the terms *parkui* and *šuppi*. Purity (and pollution) is part of the social system, and pollution is considered dangerous in all aspects of life. The high number of so-called ‘purification rituals’ in the Hittite tradition—some referring to cultic offenses but many referring to interpersonal behavior, such as sexual problems, disputes or murder, and others referring to bad omens and the ‘purity’ of the king (which was linked to his authority and his ability to rule)—serve to maintain balance within society. If this purity is achieved, the participant in everyday Hittite life is ‘pure’ (*parkui*); the kind of purity associated with the adjective *šuppi* is only possible if someone is already *parkui*, but he is not necessarily *šuppi*³⁵ because this latter purity is only required for specific activities in the cult or in dealing with the gods—which is equally relevant for the strengthening of Hittite society. This, however, means that *šuppi* is not a hierarchically higher purity but a special category of purity that only concerns an (important) subsystem of Hittite culture, namely the cult, whereas *parkui* is essential for the entire cultural system. Thus Mursili’s statement that only in the Hittite Empire are ‘pure’ and ‘sacred’ festivals celebrated makes excellent sense: festivals are *parkui* because they serve society as a whole,³⁶ and they are *šuppi* because some festival participants are involved in concrete cultic acts dealing with the gods; these festival participants must also be *šuppi* for their part. These two terms therefore express the double function of the festivals in the Hittite Empire regarding the regalement and strengthening of people and gods, i.e. the ‘horizontal-social’ and the ‘vertical-theological’ aspects of festival.

4. LIMINALITY AND DANGER

Regular everyday life in Hittite society requires purity and at the same time the certainty that such a life is protected from negative forces, of which pollution (*papratar*) is perceived as one. This results in regulations concerning purity and pollution, in order to avert the negative effects caused by the latter. A typical example is recorded in the Hittite laws § 44b:

³⁵ Cf. also Hoffner, “Perspectives”, 324.

³⁶ Hutter, *Interdependenz*.

If anybody performs the purification ritual on a person, he shall dispose the remnants (of the ritual) in the incineration dumps. But if he disposes them in someone's house, it is sorcery (and) a case for the king.³⁷

As this law is already known in Old Hittite (KBo 6.2), it also confirms the old age of the concept that danger—in the worst case witchcraft, but also 'normal' contagion with pollution—may emanate from materials that were tainted with the pollution of a person in the process of their purification. Therefore Hittite rituals often document the concept that pollution must be deposited in a safe—and deserted—place, beyond the boundaries of human civilization. In the Samuha ritual CTH 480 (KUB 29.7+ Rs. 48ff.), the negative things that burden and pollute the ritual client and thereby affect his capacity to act in society are set into a boat as figurines; then the ritual expert pours oil on the boat, sets it on the river and speaks:

Just as the river carries the boat, and then there cannot be seen any trace of it—who has produced an evil word, an oath, a curse (and) impurity (*papratar*), the river shall carry it away. And just as the trace of the boat is not seen anymore, in the same way the evil word shall not go to the god, and it neither shall reach the ritual client. Now both the god and the ritual client should be pure (*parkui*) in that matter.³⁸

Rivers are an adequate place in this regard, either because they can carry the pollution far away or because they are symbolically considered borderlines, so that it can be said that the purification takes place 'beyond the river',³⁹ i.e., outside of the—at least symbolically imagined—'civilized' territory of the community. Similarly Tunnawiya's so-called 'ritual of the river' names the location of purification as the place "where a field does not exist, where a plough does not reach".⁴⁰ Sometimes the wasteland as a general term is named as the location of purification.⁴¹ Ritual residues can also be deposited in the underworld (the Dark Earth), which is considered a location of pollution, and a well-known mythologem is meant to ensure that the pollution has become ineffective: after the purification of Telipinu, removing his anger that disrupts life in the Hittite Empire and brings general misery, it is said,

³⁷ Hoffner, "Laws", 53; cf. Haas, *Materia Magica*, 135.

³⁸ Cf. also Haas, *Materia Magica*, 574.

³⁹ KUB 36.83 iv 10; Haas, *Geschichte*, 908.

⁴⁰ KUB 7.53+ i 41–42; cf. also VBoT 24 i 31–33, Anniwiyanni's ritual: "We go to the mountains, an untouched place. And where a plough never reaches, there we go".

⁴¹ Cf. Haas, *Geschichte*, 907.

May Telipinu's anger, wrath, sin, and sullenness depart. May the house release it. May the middle . . . release it. May the window release it. May the hinge release it. May the middle courtyard release it. May the city release it. May the gate complex release it. May the King's Road release it. May it not go into the fruitfield, garden, or forest. May it go the route of the Sun Goddess (of the Dark Earth).

The gatekeeper opened the seven doors. He drew back the seven bars. Down in the Dark Earth stand bronze *palhi*-vessels. Their lids are of lead. Their latches are of iron. That which goes into them does not come up again; it perishes therein. So may they seize Telipinu's anger, wrath, sin, and sullenness, and may they not come back (here).⁴²

The motive of the *palhi*-vessel, in which everything that is polluted is safely locked away, is also documented in several purification rituals,⁴³ and the quoted section emphasizes once more that pollution as contaminant is unwanted in cultivated fields and gardens in everyday life, in order to prevent the danger that results from pollution. Therefore pollution is—if possible—brought beyond the borderline separating the normal living area from the barren wasteland or the underworld.

In principle, this danger threatens everybody, but the king as representative of Hittite society and guarantor of the continued existence of this society must be protected specifically with regard to purity. The violation of his purity threatens the state order and world order, so that some narrations show clearly that whoever causes this pollution of the king—perhaps unintentionally—also forfeits his life. This 'purity' of the king illustrates—more clearly than other examples—the above-mentioned differentiation between *parkui* and *šuppi*, as pointed out—though with a different interpretation—by Harry Hoffner:

The Hittite king sought to maintain his purity at all times, and yet, in the course of festivals the action *šuppiyahh-* is often performed on him to prepare him for intimate concourse with deities.⁴⁴

This differentiation addressed by Hoffner emphasizes once again that regular 'purity' is a basic component of Hittite thought, so that the king in particular should be permanently pure; this is also reflected in the fact that many purification rituals are performed on behalf of the king or the royal couple. The king—as with every Hittite, in principle—only has to adopt the status of *šuppi-* for specific cultic functions.

⁴² KUB 17.10 iv 8–19; Hoffner, *Myths*, 17; cf. Haas, "Blutritus", 80–81.

⁴³ Cf. Haas, "Blutritus", 79–82; Wilhelm, "Reinheit", 199–200.

⁴⁴ Hoffner, "Perspectives", 325. Cf. e.g. the text KBo 17.74 + 21.25 + ABOT 9 i 40–42.

5. 'CULTIC PURITY' AS SUBSYSTEM

Thus the adjective *šuppi* as a designation for cultic purity has a well-defined function and relevance in Hittite thought. The cult personnel are often denominated by the epithet *šuppi*, for which Ada Taggar-Cohen has compiled the most important evidence in her study about Hittite priests.⁴⁵ Although priests—like other cult personnel—are in principle 'pure' (*parkui*), the exercise of their priestly activities requires a 'special form' of purity. In my opinion, we should therefore not assume a special 'status' for priests who are characterized as *šuppi*- within the priestly hierarchy, as is suggested by Taggar-Cohen: "We may assume that SANGA-priests who are high priests may also be called 'sacred SANGA-priests'".⁴⁶ Taggar-Cohen rightly qualifies her statement by pointing out that there are also "low-ranking sacred SANGA-priests". Therefore we should rather assume that the epithet *šuppi* expresses the active 'involvement' in cult, i.e. a temporary purity—which is associated with a cultic function⁴⁷—but not purity as a primary component.

This interpretation is supported by other texts. The observations made by R. Strauß on the 10th tablet of the *itkalzi* ritual are important in this context;⁴⁸ this ritual is performed for the royal couple Tuthaliya and Taduheba. Strauß compares the ritual—or the 'title' *aiš šuppiuwaš* given in the colophon—with the Mesopotamian 'mouth-washing rituals' (*mīs pī*); the latter serve in the investiture of a new cult image and function to 'breathe life' into the divine image. In Mesopotamia, other 'mouth washings' also take place at the restoration of a statue to make it 'suitable for cult' again; mouth washing for sacrificial animals, persons, priests or kings also exists. Only through the execution of this ritual act are "successful participation in rituals and the positive contact between the earthly and divine world"⁴⁹ enabled. Based on these Mesopotamian findings, Strauß

⁴⁵ Taggar-Cohen, *Priesthood*, 148–52.

⁴⁶ Taggar-Cohen, *Priesthood*, 152.

⁴⁷ This fits the passages in which 'sacrificial animals' or sacrifices and/or temples are characterized as *šuppi* (de Martino, *Purità*, 350, 361 + § 3.1); see also the list in Götze, *Annalen*, 234, of gods, priests, sanctuaries, etc., which are all *šuppi*; as well as lists of things that are treated as *šuppiyaḫḫ*. Cf. also Strauß, *Reinigungsrituale*, 247, on CTH 481, where the temple wall is washed with fine oil and water so that it is *šuppi*; at the end of the ritual the statue, all cultic utensils and everything belonging to the new deity are 'cultically cleansed' (*suppiešš*).

⁴⁸ Strauß, *Reinigungsrituale*, 181–82.

⁴⁹ Berlejung, *Theologie*, 184. Original quote in German: "macht dadurch die erfolgreiche Teilnahme an Ritualen und den positiven Kontakt der irdischen Welt mit der göttlichen erst möglich".

points out that even in Hittite ritual texts not only does a mouth ‘washing’ sometimes occur,⁵⁰ but such texts and rituals can also be consulted for the interpretation of the 10th tablet of the *itkalzi* ritual.⁵¹ She concludes the following:

Therefore the *itkalzi* ritual could also be necessary to re-establish the ritual purity of the royal couple or, instead of a justification/instauration, for a (renewed) confirmation and stabilization of their reign. Not least because of the parallels with CTH 471, the *itkalzi* ritual could be interpreted as ritual for the ordination of Tašmišarri to the priesthood or his confirmation in priesthood/priestly function.⁵²

The last of these possibilities seems to me to be the most plausible—also compared to the ritual of Ammihatna⁵³ in CTH 471: The *itkalzi* ritual brings the ritual expert into a state of purity ‘suitable for cult’, which qualifies him precisely for his task as a priest.

The interpretation that *šuppi* is closely connected to the purity necessary for the cult can ultimately be confirmed by a ‘non-religious’ text, namely § 164–165 of the Hittite Laws:

If anyone goes (to someone’s house) to impress (something), starts a quarrel, and opens either the (home owner’s) sacrificial bread (*harši*) or libation wine, he shall give one sheep, 10 loaves of bread, and one jug of . . . -beer, and reconsecrate his house (*šuppiyahhi*).⁵⁴

The legal text is significant for the interpretation of the lexical field *šuppi*.⁵⁵ The offense seems to be that the domestic cult is rendered impossible by the ‘disturbance’ of the sacrificial bread and libation wine; in order to

⁵⁰ Cf. Strauß, *Reinigungsrituale*, 182, for further references for the ‘purification of the mouth’ of divine images, of female ritual clients in some birth rituals (e.g. KBo 17.65 obv. 10–12; KUB 9.22 ii 28–30) or in the Old Hittite ritual for the royal couple (KBo 17.1+).

⁵¹ The objection or doubt put forth by Strauß, *Reinigungsrituale*, 185, that the *itkalzi* ritual does not include a direct rite of purification of the mouth, although it is denoted as ‘mouth cleansing’, is not necessary; cf. some *taknaz da*-rituals that only have the ‘title’ without the ritual client being ‘taken from the earth’. For further discussion of *itkalzi*, cf. also Mouton, *Rituels*, 65ff.

⁵² Strauß, *Reinigungsrituale*, 186. Original quote in German: “Somit könnte auch das *itkalzi*-Ritual zum Zwecke der Wiederherstellung der rituellen Reinheit des Königspaares oder, statt einer Begründung, der (erneuten) Bestätigung und der Stabilisierung seiner Herrschaft zu vollziehen sein. Nicht zuletzt wegen der Parallelen zu CTH 471 ließe sich das *itkalzi*-Ritual als solches der Priesterweihe Tašmišarris oder seiner Bestätigung in einem Priesteramt deuten”.

⁵³ Strauß, *Reinigungsrituale*, 153 points out that the ‘purification’ for Ammihatna identifies him as a cultic functionary.

⁵⁴ Hoffner, *Laws*, 132.

⁵⁵ Cf. also de Martino, “Purità”, 350; Hoffner, “Perspectives”, 324.

remedy this, not only material compensation but also a 're-consecration' of the house are required, so that in the future the domestic cult can take place again as an important—religious—part of a family-based society, in order to support their living together. Indeed, religion in the Hittite Empire was practiced in the 'official' state cult; but for the religious practice of the individual, the domestic cult was clearly more important than the state cult. To be able to perform these important religious activities, both the house and the householder must be *šuppi*.⁵⁶

6. CONCLUSION

In summary, it can be said that *šuppi* denominates the specific cult-related 'purity' as 'sub-category' and thus provides an interesting insight into an area of Hittite religious practice, whereas *parkui* reflects general purity (as opposed to everyday pollution). Thus the categories 'pure' and 'polluted' establish an organizing scheme that helps deal with everyday life and provides orientation—or disorientation—within society. The terms from the three different languages of the Hittite Empire that express the word pair 'pure vs. polluted' show that this point of view was common in Anatolia and do not allow any specific attribution to the so-called 'Luwian' or 'Hurrian' or 'Hittite' cultic layer. When we can in fact attribute specific texts to one of these cultic layers with regard to their (cultural- or religio-) geographical origin, it is not because of a fundamental understanding of 'pure'/'polluted', but because of individual themes, ritual elements or divine names. As far as the few Old Hittite examples allow us to judge, this concept, at least in its basic principles, seems to have changed only slightly during the whole Hittite period. Potential 'innovation' or 'influence' by concepts from outside of Asia Minor imparted by the Hurrians was well integrated into the system, as we have seen in the case of specific Mesopotamian elements in the *itkalzi* ritual.

As 'purity' has greatly influenced Hittite thought, it must finally be asked if the Hittites should be considered 'purity fanatics'. This would inevitably lead to a vision of the Hittites living in a 'society of fear', their one and only aim to avoid any kind of pollution. The latter was probably not the case, because in Hittite culture a variety of purification mechanisms can be found that are often dealt with in 'magical rituals'. Without entering

⁵⁶ Cf. Hittite laws, § 166–167 (Hoffner, *Laws*, 133–34).

into a theoretical discussion about 'magic' (and its relation to religion), the qualification of many of these rituals as 'magical' is not correct. We can rather consider these ritual texts to be a corpus that allows very different 'purifications'—and I assume that these texts could generally have a practical purpose, too, being not just the product of a scribe's education, even if the texts do not provide 'descriptions' of concretely performed rituals. The common denominator in these rituals—which definitely have different purposes—is to bring 'order' to society and to regulate the place of individual persons within the community, but also to re-integrate persons into society who were excluded (or had excluded themselves) from society due to 'pollution'. With these mechanisms, an instrument was thus available that, in spite of the emphasis on purity (and on the danger emanating from pollution), was sufficient to prevent the Hittites from living in constant fear of pollution, which would have paralyzed any activity. The model 'purity vs. pollution', rather, was an explanatory model that allowed not only the interpretation of grievances or problems in society but also the resolution of such grievances with the help of suitable ritual experts.

ABBREVIATIONS

- ABoT* Balkan, Kemal, ed. *Ankara Arkeoloji Müzesinde bulunan Boğazköy tabletleri*. T. C. Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı. Eski Eserler ve Müzeler Genel Müdürlüğü yayınlarından 3,3. Istanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1948.
- CTH* Laroche, Emanuel, ed. *Catalogue des textes Hittites*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1971.
- IBoT* Eren, Mustafa, ed. *Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzelerinde bulunan Boğazköy tabletleri secmementinler*. Ankara, 1988.
- VBoT* Götze, Albrecht, ed. *Verstreute Boghazköi-Texte*. Marburg, 1930.

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ASPECTS OF PURITY IN THE PHOENICIAN WORLD

Hans-Peter Mathys

1. SOME PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Little information can be found about purity in the Phoenician (and Punic) sources, be it in inscriptions, iconography or archaeology—even less than with regard to other aspects of religion in this cultural area. Even Greek and Latin secondary sources do not provide much more data. In particular, the two writings that provide the most comprehensive information about ancient Phoenician culture, instead of just fragmentary data, ‘De Dea Syria’ and ‘Sanchuniathon’ (partly preserved in Eusebius’ *Praeparatio evangelica*), are entirely silent about this issue.

Before we discuss in more detail the limited evidence we have, one basic issue can be usefully brought to the fore, namely, how the fragmentary data we have at our disposal may possibly be taken one step further by including some comparative elements in the discussion. One general inference, in particular, may prove useful in this regard. The small societies of Israel and Judah shared many religious ideas and practices with the Phoenicians; or, alternatively (but this is only a variant of the same conception), some groups in Israel and Judah fought intensely against some ideas and practices because they considered them to be extraneous and, thus, not compatible with the cult of YHWH.¹ Both the First and the Second Temple in Jerusalem conformed to Phoenician models and were dependent on building materials as well as experts from Phoenicia.² To be sure, no two temples were identical in the Levant; yet there were nonetheless extensive convergences, at least at the level of general architectural principles. This is also true for architectural details. Let me briefly enumerate some examples in order to illustrate this point. In the Second Temple—although not in the First—the cella was separated from the rest

¹ Most of the parallels mentioned in what follows do not come from the Phoenician home country and are, in addition, from a later time. This adds supplementary weight to the correlations observed.

² Compare 1 Kgs 5:19–24; 7:13–14, 40, 45, as well as Ezra 3:7.

of the sanctuary by a curtain;³ likewise, the temple in Kition may have contained a curtain as well.⁴ During the Achaemenid period, the role of the temple's gatekeepers gained importance in Israel, just as was the case in Phoenicia.⁵ The clothes of the Jerusalemite priests, which are accurately described in the Old Testament, were probably borrowed from the Phoenicians; otherwise, it is hard to explain why purple was part of the clothing of the priests in Jerusalem, since purple, in antiquity, was exclusively a Phoenician product.⁶ Finally, another feature shared by Israel and Phoenicia is the coexistence of animal and bird offerings.⁷

On the basis of these parallels, it is possible to go back, with due caution, to the issue of 'purity' and related rites in Phoenicia. One may presume that there must not have been fundamental differences between the two neighbors, especially when it is observed that the corresponding stipulations in the Old Testament do not exhibit any specific anti-Canaanite orientation.

With these preliminary remarks in mind, we may now turn to a brief discussion of the epigraphic and archaeological evidence. While there is, to the best of my knowledge, no iconographic evidence pertaining to purity conceptions in Phoenicia, some written and archaeological sources do exist.

³ The account of the construction of the Temple in 1 Kgs 6–8 (cf. especially the LXX's version) does not yet mention a curtain; this may be an indication of this account's relative antiquity. That the Second Temple contained a curtain can be inferred from certain indications: the description of the tabernacle, which partly reflects architectural elements from the Second Temple, mentions a curtain that separates the outer sanctum from the inner sanctum (Exod 26:31ff.). In addition, 2 Chr 3:14 also mentions a curtain; the position of this verse makes clear that it separates the inner sanctum from the rest of the sanctuary. Compare also the account in Matt 27:51, according to which the Temple's curtain was torn in the middle at the moment of Jesus' death.

⁴ *Prkm* (disputed reading) is also mentioned in the temple tariff of Kition (KAI 37 A 6.11). Donner and Röllig, *Inscripfen* 2, 54, tentatively suggest 'curtain watcher'.

⁵ The Books of Kings do not report about them; 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah mention them frequently; compare, e.g., the following passages: 1 Chr 16:42; 26:12; 2 Chr 23:19; Ezra 2:70; Neh 12:47. For Phoenicia, see Magnanini, *Iscrizioni* (Umm El-Awamid No. 9, 20); see further Krahmalkov, *Punic Dictionary*, "šʿr II"; Mathys, "Inscripfen", 281–83.

⁶ See for instance Exod 39:1.

⁷ Cf., e.g., Lev 1 and *CIS I*, 165 (12).

2. EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

The root *thr*⁸ appears in two neo-Punic votive inscriptions:

*Hr Guergour N 9*⁹

- 1) Votive offering, which dedicated to Bal Addir Pro-
- 2) fugus with a pure heart (*blb tr*), the year of the suffetes Arish,
- 3) the son of *gnṭ* and . . . bus, the son of Shafot.

*Guelma N 35*¹⁰

- 1) For the lord Bal Amun
- 2) offered with a pure
- 3) heart (*blb tr*)

Despite the very fragmentary character of these two inscriptions, one point, in particular, may be emphasized. Both inscriptions seem to imply that the votive gift does not have a value as such, as *opus operatum*, but only when it is presented with the right attitude. The emphasis on this point is exceptional within the genre of votive inscriptions. This ‘ethicizing’ use of *thr* probably presupposes that this term was important in the cultic context and could be transposed from there to other areas of social life.

The late Punic inscription known as Cherchell 1, dated with much caution to the first century CE by Février,¹¹ stipulates the following:¹²

- 1) As a memorial of her family for a pleasant and quick woman has erected the . . . stele
- 2) Abdeshmun, the son of Azrubal, for his mother, for Tawnat, after made the tomb monument
- 3) for the ‘living’, her husband Azrubal, the . . . Shaqlan
- 4) His mother, to serve fifty years . . . prescribed purity [*lthrt nktbt*]

⁸ For the writing of the etymological *h*, see Friedrich and Röllig, *Grammatik*, §32–33, 17, and especially Kerr, “Environment”, 1–11.

⁹ The translation of this text, together with the Punic terms in brackets, are taken from Jongeling, *Handbook*, 88.

¹⁰ The translation of this text, together with the Punic terms in brackets, is taken from Jongeling, *Handbook*, 242.

¹¹ Février, “Inscription”, 23–25.

¹² Jongeling and Kerr, *Epigraphy*, 43.

5) ...

6) ... who passed away at the age of eighty years.

The difficult reading of several letters as well as the disputed signification of certain expressions complicate the explanation of *lthrt nktbt*. The expression seems to refer to a form of prescribed purity, which the woman who died at age 80, and to whom her son erected a 'memorial', apparently observed—possibly for fifty years (?). It is unclear whether this form of purity refers to a cultic function—Février thinks of an honorary function of sorts within the Christian (!) community¹³—or to the woman's exemplary activity in the domestic sphere; the woman's characterization in l. 1 could speak in favor of the latter interpretation, although the term *nktbt* 'prescribed' in l. 4 does not. At any rate, we have to do here with a form of purity that is not *circumstantial* (and which could be achieved, for instance, through ritual bathing) but that can be acquired only over the course of an entire life. Here also, therefore, it seems we have to do with an extended use of the language of ritual purity. More specifically, the language of purity seems to be used in a 'moral' sense, although this remains somewhat uncertain. Both the Chershell 1 and 2 inscriptions have very personal content and display a unique formulation, which sets them apart from other inscriptions. These features tend to significantly complicate their interpretation.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

In many traditional cultures, purity implies water. Water was needed in order to perform several rituals; likewise, ritual purification was usually required in order to be able to perform certain cultic acts. One may refer, in this context, to the ritual practice attested in the cultic meals (*mrzh*), which occupied an important place in Phoenicia;¹⁴ there are good reasons to assume that people washed their hands at the onset of those meals.¹⁵ From an archaeological perspective, the importance of water in connection with purity and purification rituals corresponds to material evidence

¹³ Février, "Inscription", 23–25.

¹⁴ Brief information in Niehr, *Religionen*, 135–36; other possible evidence in Mathys, "Inschriften", 293–94.

¹⁵ The reverse conclusion from water *to* purity is not allowed. Water also means fertility, cosmic order, etc.

such as water supplies, water tanks, etc. In the case of the Phoenician-Punic world, the main archaeological evidence includes the following data. The first item dates from the Late Bronze Age, the others from the Achaemenid and later periods.

a) In Kamid el-Loz, a courtyard lies in the south of each of the two sanctuaries of the Late Bronze Age. These courtyards contained, among other things, water tanks, presumably for ritual bathing and libations.¹⁶

b) Water plays a distinctive role in Bostan esh-Sheikh, the sanctuary of Eshmun located outside of Sidon. The sanctuary had a special connection to healing and personal care.¹⁷ In certain inscriptions, Eshmunazor boasts that he has built a sanctuary to the god Eshmun near *'n ydll*, a name meaning 'the source *ydll*'.¹⁸ This river corresponds to Nahr el-Awwali, or the ancient Bostrenus, *Asclepius fluvius*. An inscription dated to the 14th year of Bodashtart probably refers to the works that were required in order to bring the water to the sanctuary.¹⁹ From an archaeological perspective, tanks were part of the architecture of Bostan esh-Sheikh from the beginning.²⁰ Much attention has been given by scholars to the 'Pool of Astarte's Throne' (*Piscine du trône d'Astarté*),²¹ originally a big and unroofed water basin; it is the only such pool within which a waterproof, sealed ground slab from the Roman period has been found. The basin was supplied with water from the North through a pipe. A second pipe pierced the cutting wall toward the 'Frieze Building' (*Bâtiment des frises*) and served as a drain whenever the flow was excessively high. On the back wall, in a niche, was located a socle, on which an empty throne of Astarte was resting. The connection between Astarte—or, correspondingly, her Grecized form Aphrodite—and water is attested by several late-antique sources. The Talmudic treaty *Abodah Zarah* 3, 4 recounts that Rabbi Gamliel had taken a bath in the pool of Aphrodite in Acco.²² In his *History*, Zosimos is able to refer to a peculiar practice that took place in the sanctuary of Astarte in Afqa. According to him, there was a lake there, which looked

¹⁶ About this, cf. Metzger, *Kamid El-Loz* 7; and Metzger, *Kamid El-Loz* 8 and *passim*.

¹⁷ About this god and other similar ones, cf. Xella, "Eshmun".

¹⁸ Compare KAI 14, 17 and *passim*.

¹⁹ Xella and Zamora, "Nouvelle inscription".

²⁰ Details about the canals and water tank can be found in Stucky, *Eshmun-Heiligtum*, 51–53.

²¹ About this, cf. Dunand, "Piscine"; details can be found in Stucky, *Eshmun-Heiligtum*, 147–68.

²² On the Babylonian Talmud, see Goldschmidt, "Synhedrin", 572; on the Talmud of Jerusalem, cf. Wevers, *Avoda Zara*, 102.

like an artificial pool. The believer could present offerings to the goddess there. Besides offerings made of gold and silver, fabrics and other precious materials are mentioned; if the fabrics fell to the floor of the pool, the offerings were pleasant to the goddess.²³

We may note, finally, that numerous statues of children were found in the sanctuary of Bostan esh-Sheikh. Cultic ablutions of children probably took place in basins, which were supplied with running water; unfortunately, we cannot say much more on this aspect of ritual purification in Bostan esh-Sheikh.²⁴

c) A sacred spring has been excavated at the foot of Tell Amrith,²⁵ quarried out of the rock. The center of the complex consists of a basin, which is $46.7 \times 38.5 \times 3.0$ meters large. According to H. Niehr, the supply of water came from a spring situated under the eastern portico.²⁶ In the middle stood a naos on a rock foundation (dated to the 6th–4th century BCE), on which a divine image (which is no longer preserved) was presumably standing. Little can be said with certainty about the nature of the cult that took place on the site. It may be observed, at least, that numerous (Greek) ceramics have been found in a pool, which might have served for the retention of the water, probably regarded as sacred.

d) Of special interest is Kition at Cyprus, where two sacral complexes have been excavated. In this study, we are concerned only with the one from Bambula. Built in the 9th century BCE and then progressively amplified, it experienced an important expansion during the 5th century BCE. The rectangular building, which was dedicated to religious ceremonies, contained important hydraulic installations.

Ce monument est remarquable pour le nombre et la qualité de ses installations hydrauliques, puits perdus, égouts, citernes, puits; il était rempli d'une très belle céramique grecque importée, dont les formes, coupes ou *skyphoi*, témoignent de la fréquence des célébrations de banquets ou de libations.²⁷

²³ BIBAION ΠΡΩΤΟΝ LVIII, 1–2; text and French translation in Paschoud, *Zosime*, 50. Details about Aphrodite in Sozomenos' works can be found in Stucky, *Eschmun-Heiligtum*, 159 n. 733; On a specific day, Aphrodite is said to have risen as a flame from the rock and to have fallen into the source. In *De Dea Syria* 8, the corresponding river is called Adonis (beloved of Astarte); Greek text with English translation in Attridge and Oden, *Syrian Goddess*, 14–15.

²⁴ Cf. Stucky, *Skulpturen*, 29–38.

²⁵ The following details according to Niehr, *Religionen*, 129–30.

²⁶ Niehr, *Religionen*, 130: "Die Wasserzufuhr erfolgte über eine unter dem östlichen Portikus gelegene Quelle".

²⁷ Caubet, "Sanctuaires", 158.

In French-speaking research, these installations are easily connected above all with the 'lord (or lords) of water' (*b'l mym*),²⁸ who figures as one of the beneficiaries of offerings on the temple tariff of Kition. However, this intriguing theory relies upon a reading of the inscription that has not found general acceptance.²⁹

As we can see from this overall survey, it is hardly possible to draw general conclusions from this scarce epigraphic and archaeological evidence. At most, it may be tentatively suggested that during the Achaemenid period, where the healing and welfare of individuals came to play a central role in religion,³⁰ purity might also have taken extra significance in the Phoenician-Punic area. This is corroborated, in particular, by the importance of water in the various cultic sites of that time. Finally, the inscription Chercell 1 also shows that the language of purity could be used in order to describe and summarize an entire life. Here, we have apparently to do with an extended use of that concept, which is no longer restricted to the cultic sphere exclusively; this phenomenon is reminiscent of the development that we find—albeit more markedly—in the Hebrew Bible (compare, e.g., Pss 19:10; 73:1).

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²⁸ So for example in Yon, "Maître", 252; compare the suggestive title of her article: "Le maître de l'eau à Kition". Yon borrows the reading and the translation from Masson and Sznycer, *Recherches*, 26.

²⁹ Cf. Donner and Röllig, *Inschriften I* (KAI 37 B 4.), 8, and Gibson, *Textbook*, 126 (33 B 4) read *lb'l ym(?)m* (the question mark is Gibson's).

³⁰ On this, cf. in particular Xella, "Eschmun".

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PURITY AND POLLUTION IN ANCIENT ZOROASTRIANISM

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This article will introduce the reader to the subject of purity and pollution in ancient Zoroastrianism and attempt to make the evidence we have for this subject useful for a comparative perspective, by calling attention to certain developments and possible ways to explain these. The first part of this task is comparatively easy, for there are many and very detailed sources for purity and pollution in Iranian literature, and there is a broad consensus with regard to most aspects of the subject.¹ The other part of the task is, however, much less easy to accomplish, and this is caused precisely by this consensus about, let us say, the ‘technicalities’ of the subject. For we can, as I hope to demonstrate shortly, sketch a logically coherent and strictly normative system of purity rules that would be valid for most expressions of Zoroastrianism in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods, but we are consistently faced with a substantial body of evidence that suggests that these rules were not, or at least not all, strictly applied. The general reaction to this takes two different shapes: either the evidence itself is buried, usually in footnotes but sometimes in polite phrases suggesting that “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak”, or a new religion is invented to account for the phenomenon. This is the case, for example, with non-Zoroastrian Mazdaism, put forward by some scholars as the religion of the Achaemenids,² and with a hypothetical Iranian Mithraism that has recently been suggested as the most likely religion of the Parthians.³

¹ As a consequence, there is a substantial body of literature dealing with the subject. The most important studies are Boyce, *History I*, 294–330; Boyce, *Persian Stronghold*, 92–138; Choksy, *Purity*; De Jong, “Purification”; Stausberg, *Zarathushtras*, 263–96; Williams “The Body”, “Purity Laws” and “Zoroastrianism”.

² This is no longer as popular a suggestion as it was a few decades ago, but it is still around. See, for example, Lincoln, “Paradis perdu” and *Religion*; Herrenschildt and Lincoln, “Healing”. The present writer has attempted to show the exact opposite, that the Achaemenids were in fact instrumental in the transformation of Zoroastrianism into the religion as it has survived. See De Jong, “Magi”, “Ahura Mazdā” and “Religion”.

³ Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*, 350–95 (without, it must be noted, any supporting evidence).

I shall provide two examples in a moment,⁴ but it is important first to stress the result of this approach. This is that a normative version of Zoroastrianism, as a clearly defined, systematically applied religious system, is preserved.⁵ This is an immensely useful tool, for it indeed allows scholars to judge many tiny little pieces of evidence that would otherwise make no sense;⁶ but it has become clear in more recent times that as such it is not just unhistorical—this it surely is—but actually goes *against* the evidence.

Of the two examples given here, one is well-known, the other one less so. The well-known example concerns funerary traditions. The Avesta (the earliest layer of Zoroastrian texts) and the Pahlavi books (the repository of the priestly tradition of Zoroastrianism, dating to late Sassanian and early Islamic times) are united in their treatment of funerary arrangements, and these are guided by some of the most crucial purity laws of the Iranian religion. These consider corpses to be the source of the most serious pollution—we shall come back to this later—and generally decree that it is the duty of Zoroastrians to prevent such pollution from spreading and especially to take precautions so that the good elements of creation—fire, earth, and water—are not unduly tainted by these sources of pollution. Within this system, it is unimaginable to consider cremation—for fire is the holiest of the elements of creation—and it is equally difficult to bury corpses in the earth. Later sources attempt to instruct believers about these matters by telling them how the goddess of the earth, Spandarmad, feels when a corpse is buried in her element; it is the same to her as it would be to a mortal when a scorpion is dropped in his pyjamas.⁷ A funerary system developed in earlier times to solve these problems: it consists of excarnation. This means that corpses are brought to a barren place and are left there to be eaten by vultures and dogs. These animals were created by Ahura Mazda specifically for this task, and they do it swiftly

⁴ These are both discussed at greater length in De Jong, “Religion”.

⁵ The most impressive attempts at doing this are the works of Mary Boyce, most clearly Boyce, *Zoroastrianism*.

⁶ As is evident from Boyce, *History II*.

⁷ See, for example, the Persian Zoroastrian text *Sad dar-e Nasr* 34: “If one fears that dead matter is buried in the earth at a certain place, it must be found, for that is a very good deed. For it is said in the Revelation that when dead matter is buried in the earth, Spandarmad the Amshasfand trembles. It is as painful to her as it is when a man has a snake or a scorpion in his pyjamas; for the earth it feels exactly the same. When dead matter has been buried and it is found (and removed), she is relieved from that pain”.

and efficiently. The bones themselves are clean—after a fixed period of exposure to the weather—and can be interred in the ground or collected and preserved in ossuaries, depending on local tastes and custom.⁸ This, it is well known, is the funerary practice still current among the Parsis of India and Pakistan and has only been abandoned by the Zoroastrians of Iran in the twentieth century.⁹ So, evidently, theory and practice coalesce nicely. The problem is that they really do not in the pre-Islamic period, where the evidence for primary burial is considerable and takes various shapes: burial directly in the ground, in metal sarcophagi and especially in sarcophagi made of clay and other porous substances.¹⁰ These have often been neglected—you would not know about their existence from many of the introductory publications on Iranian religions. This is clearly the most economical way of dealing with such burials: they have simply disappeared from the record. When disappearance becomes impossible, it has sometimes been suggested that they are evidence for the presence of non-Iranians—Elymaeans, Jews and Greeks—in Iranian lands, another way of making them disappear by claiming them to be evidence for interesting things that have, however, no relevance for Zoroastrianism.

The second example I would like to give concerns marriages between Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians. Here, again, the religious sources are unanimous: they are forbidden. It is a sin for Zoroastrian men to have sexual intercourse with non-Zoroastrian women. This is described as the sin of mixing the semen of Mazda-worshippers with that of devil-worshippers, and its consequences in the hereafter are extremely serious. Since non-Zoroastrian women do not observe the required rules for menstrual purity, having intercourse with them is identical with having intercourse with a menstruating woman, another extremely serious sin. Yet, the number of documented cases of Iranian kings who took non-Iranian wives is substantial and includes monarchs from all three Iranian dynasties: Achaemenids, Parthians and Sasanians.

⁸ For these different ways of treating the bones, see Grenet, *Pratiques funéraires*.

⁹ An historical-archaeological overview is given by Huff, "Archeological Evidence".

¹⁰ Much of the evidence comes from Iraq and is therefore usually treated as evidence for "local" (i.e., non-Iranian) practices; there is, however, also a substantial body of evidence from Iran itself, for example the large cemetery near the structure at Kangavar (Kambakhsh Fard, *Anahita*, 226–53) and the cemetery from Garmi in Iranian Azerbaijan (Kambakhsh Fard, *Parthian*).

So, regardless of the system that will be outlined here, it is important to remain aware of two things: the system itself is the end-product of a long development (largely uncharted, because Zoroastrians rejected the use of writing for literary and religious purposes), not an unchanging norm, and there is, as there is everywhere, a considerable gap between theory and practice, especially when it comes to contacts with non-believers. If one were to follow the letter of Zoroastrian purity laws, it would be impossible for Zoroastrians to have *any* dealings with non-Zoroastrians; the long record of the considerable economic, military, diplomatic and cultural prosperity of ancient Iran shows that Zoroastrians themselves did not always follow the letter of their purity laws. This should cause no surprise, but it remains useful to stress it every now and then.

Zoroastrians believe that the world came into being as the result of a pact concluded between two uncreated primal beings, the wise lord Ahura Mazda and the Evil Spirit Angra Mainyu, representing forces of good and evil respectively. The world itself is good; it was designed and created by Ahura Mazda as a trap to, eventually, rob Angra Mainyu of his most efficient powers. Before this final defeat, however, the two spirits wage war against each other under conditions laid down in their treaty, which mainly prescribes a limited period—9,000 years—and a limited place—this world—for the battle to take place. Although Ahura Mazda made the creation, the first thing that happened to it was a brutal attack from the Evil Spirit, who brought into it his own imperfections, as well as some additions. This is instantly recognizable in the world as we know it: the water of the sea is salty because the Evil Spirit polluted it; there are deserts and barren places; there is smoke on the fire—which should not be there—and there are diseases and death, all of his making. There are, moreover, imperfections in plants—bark and thorns—and there are animals that were brought into existence by him: noxious creatures, known collectively as *xrafstra* and consisting of insects and reptiles, rats, and felines. Killing these is a virtue, as opposed to killing good animals, which is allowed only in two different contexts: the hunt, in which case it is not necessary to have a religious ritual, and the rite of animal sacrifice. Otherwise, the taking of animal life is a sin.

Humans, in this worldview, are the special creation of Ahura Mazda, and they are the only element in this world that is not good or evil by nature. In fact, they have the option to choose sides in the battle: they can opt to join the forces of good and they can, if they wish, choose to join the forces of evil. There are, however, serious consequences brought about by

this choice. These emerge twice: first, after death, the soul is judged and sent to Paradise, Hell or a place in between. At the end of time, finally, there will be a general resurrection of all the dead and immortality for those who are still alive, and there will be a final judgment of all humans. In this case, there are two distinct traditions about the fate of the wicked: some say that they will be destroyed, others believe that their sins will be burnt away from their new bodies, a torture worse than the thousands of years they have spent in hell before the Resurrection.¹¹ In order to help mankind in this choice, the founder of Zoroastrianism, Zarathushtra, was invited to come to Heaven, there to receive the Revelation from Ahura Mazda himself. Upon his return to the earth, he broke the bodies of the demons and established a path to salvation. In order to qualify for a happy afterlife, humans must accept this Revelation and act upon it. It is in this context that the purity rules are crucially important, for it is impossible to lead a virtuous life if one does not preserve one's state of purity but rather allows sources of pollution to soil the elements.

The purity laws, in other words, are absolutely crucial; they are the most important ritual translation of the worldview sketched earlier, and they are an indispensable part of the battle going on between the forces of good and evil. I shall provide some technical details first, and then I will move on to questions that might be relevant for comparative purposes.

There are two basic sources of pollution, which differ chiefly in intensity. The first, known as *hixr*,¹² is excrement, every substance that leaves the body: urine, feces, semen, blood, hair, nails, breast milk, etc. (there is uncertainty about sweat, tears and breath, however). The second, more dangerous, category is *nasā*, material from corpses, dead matter. The lines between these two categories are reasonably fixed, but there is some discussion: if you lose a finger while grinding wheat, the blood from the wound is *hixr*, but is the disjointed finger *nasā*? This is important, for

¹¹ De Jong, "First Sin" with references.

¹² There is an unexplained discrepancy between the rarity (and meaning) of the Avestan word *hixra-* (possibly related to the root *haēk-* 'to flow'; see Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, 1812), used only three times in the *Vendidad* in a context of descriptions of places of excarnation, and therefore as a product of corpses, and the status of *hixr* in Pahlavi writings, where it denotes chiefly excrement, everything that leaves the body. Such excrement is discussed in the *Vendidad* only in its particular varieties—feces, urine, semen, etc.—not as a generic category. This is a telltale sign of the fact that the system of the Pahlavi books is the result of a (long) process of priestly speculation and systematization, not a simple continuation of the earlier system, as witnessed in the Avesta.

the treatment of the pollution that results from each differs considerably. Pollution with *hixr* is for most humans a daily event, but pollution with *nasā* occurs much more rarely. The ritual treatment of both types of pollution is therefore quite distinct: simple in the daily cases, extremely elaborate in the more serious ones.

I will frame my discussion of the treatment of sources of pollution in practical terms, because I believe that purity and pollution were initially seen and treated as physical conditions.¹³ The important aspect of the transfer of pollution is *contact*, which is visualized as a real, physical connection between the source of pollution and the person or object that is contaminated. This can really only happen through physical contact between the two, but the notion of contact is slightly more extensive than modern readers will find natural. It includes, obviously, touching, but it also includes looking at someone or something, for the Iranians believed—like most contemporary Greeks—that the gaze of a person is a physical extension of his/her body, that when one looks at someone or something, the gaze literally establishes contact between the eye—hence, the body—and the object beheld. Contact also includes contact through an intermediary that can serve as a conduit (a piece of cloth or wood, etc.), and it may also include—but this again is ambiguous—touching a person's shadow, for the shadow could also be seen as a physical extension of the body.¹⁴ Any person who is unclean thus immediately becomes a source of pollution. It is important, therefore, to take note of several consequences. There is not a hint of morality in the discussion: an unclean person is not morally wrong, nor do sins cause pollution. Sins are sins, pollution is pollution, but the two can interact and in fact do so very quickly, for it is a grievous offense to render a person unclean. Pollution thus has immediate social consequences, for a state of uncleanness makes it impossible to have any dealings with other persons. It is necessary, therefore, to act upon any occasion of uncleanness immediately. This is even more the case because it is impossible to perform any religious ritual in a state of uncleanness—even if one is not aware of it.

As we have seen, being human means becoming polluted on a daily basis. We all have normal bodily functions that produce *hixr* daily. The ritual prescriptions for dealing with these are, as a consequence, simple,

¹³ De Jong, "Purification", 309–10.

¹⁴ De Jong, "Shadow and Resurrection".

and we shall see that the ritual prescriptions for the more serious types of pollution are largely an extension of these simple rules. When the call of nature comes, and you need to urinate, you should go outside, dig a small hole in the earth and surround it with a furrow that encircles the little hole. While doing this, you need to recite the first half of a small prayer text appropriate to the occasion (i.e., different for burying nails, etc.). Then you squat over the pit (urinating while standing is a mortal sin), release the flow of urine, rise, cover the pit with the earth, recite the second half of the prayer, wash your hands and then you are clean again. The important elements are the furrow (which acts as a barrier that prevents the spread of the polluting substance), the ritual texts, which neutralize the demonic interest taken in sources of pollution, and the cleansing of the body with water. It is basically the same ritual for defecation and for the burying of nail clippings and hair, with small differences that need not detain us here.

In the list of bodily substances, only one is specific to men—semen—but many are specific to women's bodies only: menstrual blood and other vaginal secretions, breast milk and everything associated with childbirth. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the purity laws have weighed far more heavily on women's lives than they have on men's. A substantial part of all extant Zoroastrian literature is devoted to the subject of menstruation, and I must pay some attention to it. When a woman realizes her period has begun, she must immediately take off her clothes (these are not impure) and put on special clothes reserved for the occasion. She then withdraws to a special chamber in the house, where daylight cannot enter and where no fire may be burning (in earlier times this may have been a special menstrual hut). There she has a bed made of iron, without covers, where she can lie down, and she has to remain secluded for the whole duration of her menses. Food and water are brought to her in special metal containers unsuited to any other use, but only in small quantities—for everything must be consumed—and it is given her while she averts her gaze and covers her hands with a piece of her garment. She is not allowed to look at her relatives, or at any source of fire or light. When her period has ended, she must wait some additional time, just to be certain, and then she can cleanse her body with *gōmēz*—unconsecrated cow urine—and then with water, put on her ordinary clothes and resume her place in the life of the household. If she is breast-feeding, the child must come with her and be purified too. In historical times, women could and did undergo the most elaborate purification ritual when menopause had set in, to remove any trace of lingering offenses against the purity laws—

but this is part of a spectacular extension of cleansing rituals that we will discuss briefly in a moment.

For the more serious type of pollution—that contracted through contact with *nasā*—the ritual is far more elaborate and time-consuming, for it lasts ten days. It is known as the *barašnūm ī nō šab* (*barašnūm* of nine nights), and it is administered by two priests in the highest state of ritual purity. We see the same elements, but they are far more elaborate: an extensive system of furrows is drawn along a series of nine pits, into which the candidate must crouch, guided by the priest, who holds a container made of metal that is attached to a stick encircled by a rope with nine knots on it. The container is filled with unconsecrated cow urine and the candidate must wash his body with this, from head to toe, and from left to right for all those body parts of which we have two. In the foundational text for this ritual—contained in the *Vendidad*—the pollution with *nasā* is visualized as a demonic possession: it is the Corpse Demon who is dwelling in the candidate's body and who needs to be banished from it.¹⁵ The visual sign that banishment has taken place is that the demon leaves the body in the shape of a fly, and there is a dog present during the ritual, the famous dog with four eyes whose gaze sends away this Corpse Demon. The washing with urine happens in the first six pits, and it is followed by a cleansing with dust between pits number six and number seven. The candidate must wait until his body has completely dried and then wash his body with water, once in pit seven, twice in pit eight and three times in pit nine; following that his body is fumigated and he receives new clothes. Then, he has to spend nine nights in isolation—in a place of quarantine—during which there are smaller rituals, and on the tenth day he is clean again.

Now, these are the bare outlines of the most important aspects of Zoroastrian purity laws, and as mentioned above, they have generally been taken as immutable religious rules. In principle, it is likely that they functioned as such at least in the early Islamic period, but the whole approach to Zoroastrianism as a barely changing normative faith has almost entirely robbed it of its history. One rather dramatic consequence of this approach is that it has cloaked several important issues: the development of these

¹⁵ *Vendidad* 8.35–71.

prescriptions and rituals,¹⁶ and their practical application. I would like to use the remainder of this article to briefly explore these two subjects, for they are important if Zoroastrian data are to be used as contextual information for biblicists and historians of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

As for the development of these rules, it is clear that in the Sasanian period, the purity laws underwent dramatic extensions.¹⁷ This is part of a transformation that can be traced in the religion as a whole. This transformation is similar to developments that scholars working on other religions have traced: a large-scale development of the nature of religion as such and of religious practice in Late Antiquity. This development can be seen—in very broad strokes—as one moving away from traditions that were ethnic and traditional (i.e., without clearly indicated beginnings) and that focused on civic unity (as manifested in the four crucial aspects of temple, divine statue, animal sacrifice, founding myths), towards traditions that were transnational, had a (known) beginning in fairly recent history and focused on communal identity, as manifested in a new set of three crucial aspects: a prophet with a sacred history, revealed text, communal gatherings.¹⁸ Zoroastrianism does not easily fit either scenario, which is one reason why I would hesitate to follow Walter Burkert and many others in speaking of a religious *koinē*, even though I find the concept itself extremely interesting.¹⁹ But there is a marked change in the practice of Zoroastrianism, and in its textual and theological tradition, towards a new status for the revealed texts, the Avesta.²⁰ From its earlier function as a ritual language, it developed into a text that was read and studied and became the source of learned speculation. This happened, presumably, after the momentous process by which it came to be written down.

The Zoroastrian priests must have found in this new period of the history of their religion reasons to take a closer look at several aspects of communal life, and one of the results—traceable only in texts from the Islamic period—is that a connection was made between pollution and

¹⁶ Choksy, *Purity*, contains some attempts at periodization but consistently evades the question of the reasons behind the transformations.

¹⁷ By far the best discussion is Boyce, “Cleansing I”.

¹⁸ Stroumsa, *La fin du sacrifice*.

¹⁹ Burkert, *Babylon*.

²⁰ De Jong, “The Culture of Writing”.

mental states. That is to say, the lines that earlier clearly distinguished sins from uncleanness became blurred, and a whole new notion, that of a spiritual pollution, emerged, which was not there before.²¹ For this, too, the ritual for physical pollution was prescribed and once this step was taken, there was no holding back further developments. One of these was salutary, at least for most common believers: it became possible, when in a state of impurity, to hire a priest to undergo the *barašnūm* by proxy, thus cleansing a pure body in order to remove the pollution from a body that was not, actually, subjected to the physical rite of purification.²² In this transformation, too, the recitation of the confession of sins (*Pētūt*) was added to the ritual, even though it has no logical place there.²³ Finally, the consumption of *gōmēz* became part of the ritual, evidently in an attempt to give an outward manifestation to the notion that it was also an inner purification.

By noticing that there is no menstrual flow during pregnancy, it came to be believed that the infant in the mother's womb is fed with menstrual blood, thus tainting with serious pollution every human that was ever born; by further noticing that the menstrual cycle is affected by the practice of breast-feeding, it was concluded that breast milk, too, is somehow made of menstrual blood, with the same effect.²⁴ All these developments have, by some, been retrojected into antiquity, but they have no place there.

The recognition of such developments has important consequences, especially for comparative purposes. Zoroastrian purity rules have traditionally been interpreted as a *system* and as such as the practical expression of a particular *worldview*. This was a necessary step, in order to overcome earlier interpretations that saw these rules and prescriptions as bizarre and unfitting to the (postulated) simplicity of the Zoroastrian religion.²⁵ But it resulted in the system thus reconstructed acquiring notions of timelessness and being seen as a set of unyielding demands. This, in turn, relegated those who evidently did not conform to (all of) the system—

²¹ De Jong, "Purification", 312–13.

²² This development is the subject of De Jong, "Purification".

²³ For the *petūt*, see Asmussen, *X^aāstvānīft*, 26–112.

²⁴ Although there are a few earlier indications, these aspects of evolved Zoroastrian notions of purity and pollution are mainly known from Persian Zoroastrian texts. See, for example, *Sad dar-e nasr* 36; *Sad dar-e bondaheš* 72.

²⁵ Thus, for example, Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight*, 27: "[...] the *Vidēvdāt* with its dreary prescriptions concerning ritual purity and its listing of impossible punishments for ludicrous crimes", rightly criticized by Douglas, *Purity*, 25.

for example, those Zoroastrians who buried their dead—to a category of ‘pseudo-believers’, those who were either too weak or too ignorant of their own tradition to practice it fully. Notions of ‘spiritual pollution’ crept into discussions of early texts and early versions of the rituals, without any textual or other support, and developments that were recognized as such were either not explained or explained by more or less intuitive notions that, again, are unsupported by the (admittedly scanty) evidence we have. One example of this is the often-repeated idea that priests devised all kinds of new, and ever more expensive, rituals in order to fill their purses.²⁶ This rests entirely on a notion of a priestly grip on the communities that is, again, not supported by the evidence we have.²⁷ More commonly, the stringency of the application of purity rules is associated with situations of living under the rule of ‘unbelievers’. In Iranian history, this has meant that the (extremely brief) Seleucid ‘occupation’ of Iran is singled out as a period in which the purity rules must have acquired more active meaning for the believers, since there was no Zoroastrian authority to enforce them and the Zoroastrians were governed by ‘infidels’. The same ‘logic’ has often been applied to the history of Zoroastrianism after the Arab conquests, but in the first case (the Seleucids), there is no evidence whatsoever, and the second case is less convincing than it seems. For if the reconstruction here offered, tentatively, is correct, this means that the most spectacular development of the purity rules took place in a period during which Zoroastrianism was at the height of its powers: the late Sasanian Empire.

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²⁶ Critically discussed by Russell, “Advocacy”.

²⁷ See the important remarks in Kreyenbroek, “The Zoroastrian Priesthood”.

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THE CONCEPT OF PURITY IN GREEK SACRED LAWS

Noel Robertson

1. INTRODUCTION

Purity is often a requirement of Greek sacred laws, as inscribed on stone and typically posted at the entrance to sanctuaries, otherwise appearing somewhere as a compilation of rules.¹ A person is told just how—in what physical respects—he must be pure in order to approach a given deity so as to offer sacrifice. A typical form of words is ἀγνὸν εἰσιέναι ἀπὸ γυναικὸς καὶ λεχοῦς καὶ κήδους “enter pure from wife and childbed and mourning”. The meaning is that after marital intercourse or after a birth or a death in the family one must wait a certain time—one must be pure for so many days as specified in each case. After intercourse, much the commonest case, it may be only till next morning, otherwise for just a day or two; birth and death take longer. The forms of pollution can be refined or multiplied to various degrees. We hear of intercourse other than marital (more polluting because more extreme, not because it is somehow wrong), of miscarriage, abortion, infant exposure, death outside the family.

Pollution of this kind is an invisible condition attaching to one’s person: though intercourse is sometimes thought of as uncleanness to be washed away, the notion is only incidental. Purity however also depends on appearances. Just as often, and it may be either in addition or instead, dress and other adornment or equipment are subject to rule. Clothing is to be light and not dark, not elaborately wrought, only of wool or linen, shoes plain or none at all, no coiffure, no ring or belt, no jewelry, no iron, none of other things as well. The form of words may be μὴ εἰσιέναι ἔχοντας κτλ or μὴ εἰσφέρειν κτλ “do not enter with” or “do not bring in” such a thing. Again, it is a matter of a person’s fitness while worshipping. The proscribed items are for the most part not objectionable in themselves. They might figure otherwise by way of dedication; in a couple of instances they

¹ ‘Sacred laws’ is a term of convenience that was never used in any systematic way by ancient sources, but well suits the inscriptions studied here. See in general Parker, “Sacred Laws”; for the epigraphic category Guarducci, *Epigrafia* IV, pp. 3–45, Lupu, *GSL* pp. 4–9; for instances in verse I. and A. Petrovic, “Speaker and Communication” pp. 154–64.

are to be confiscated for the sanctuary. Some items are akin to so called sumptuary laws that restrict invidious display in funeral processions.

Rules of purity first appear in the 6th century BC, i.e. about as early as any kind of Greek inscription, and continue strong to the Late Hellenistic period, after which the old cults fell out of favour with ordinary persons.² Under the Empire, there are only a few instances in cities of Asia Minor where the well-to-do kept up appearances.³ Until then, rules of purity are as common as any kind of sacred law, and are always much the same. With greater fluency in writing and inscribing, they may become prolix; but they may also be as brief and pointed as before. Two general changes occur. From the fourth century BC Greek gods both in the homeland and abroad are joined by Egyptian and Oriental ones whose worship entailed unaccustomed food prohibitions, as of pork or fish, and also separation from a woman at her period. While taking Greek form they belong to non-Greek traditions and are not considered here. It is also in the fourth century that "righteous thoughts" or "a pure mind", ὄσια φρονεῖν or καθαρὰ γνώμη, are first mentioned by way of paradox beside the familiar requirements. The language used shows the influence of poetry and philosophy; the cults at first are those of healing deities whose worshippers were moved to a more reflective piety. With or without poetic form, moralizing rules remain exceptional to the end.

The notion of purity presented by these inscriptions is unchanging, apart from that moralizing tendency. It was there from the start, even before the 6th century BC, waiting to be attested by the emergence of the epigraphic habit. It has been largely unnoticed, though it coincides somewhat with the interest scholars once took in peculiar habits of thought, in animism and taboos, as a well-spring of early religion. Two standard collections of material are thus organized, on 'chastity' and on objects or materials superstitiously regarded.⁴ But habits of thought like these belong to an approach now largely given up. It is unsuited anyway to Greece and the Aegean as we know them archaeologically.⁵ People here

² Rules of purity at different periods are usefully surveyed by Nilsson, *Geschichte* I, pp. 97–98, 101–2, and II, pp. 73–74, 130, 373–74.

³ I pass over inscriptions from the interior that reflect native ways. On the other hand, Lydia and Caria were known to Greeks from early days, and their cults were always subject to Greek influence.

⁴ Fehrle, *Keuschheit*, and Wächter, *Reinheitsvorschriften*, still have their uses; they complement each other, Wächter omitting 'chastity' in view of Fehrle's treatment.

⁵ Nilsson, who led the new understanding of Greek prehistory in the light of archaeology, never gave up the term 'taboo'. But it is only in early work that it leads to plain

were not primitive; they were deeply influenced over a long period by the advanced cultures of the Near East. During Mycenaean times the Greek peninsula, or much of it, was well settled and prosperous. But disruption followed, bringing hardship and poverty during the so-called Dark Age, or Early Iron Age, of c. 1100–750 BC. Soon after, inscriptions on stone begin to appear, with sacred laws prominent among them. This is the context in which our laws on purity must be seen. The required approach is philological, interpreting the texts in the light of historical development. It begins with an important distinction in Greek vocabulary.

2. PURITY OLD AND NEW

Two Greek words are commonly used in the sense of 'pure', καθαρός and ἄγνός, each with a family of derived verbs and nouns. Whereas our rules of purity feature ἄγνός, καθαρός happens to be distinctive of another class of inscription, to be mentioned in a moment. Both words are age-old. Neither, it is true, has yet been recognized in Mycenaean tablets, but both are well represented in epic and lyric poetry, the earliest Greek literature surviving thereafter. The respective uses need to be set forth.⁶

καθαρός with its broader range of meaning 'clean, clear, spotless, unmixed' is at all times a commoner word by far, applied to clothes, floors, metals, grain ('winnowed') etc. καθαρός and καθαίρω, adjective and verb, appear in epic formulas such as the serviceable phrase ἐν καθαρῶι 'in the open'. The special meanings 'pure', 'purify' do not occur in epic, but this is unimportant; they are afterwards too common to be regarded as secondary. It is only that epic mostly avoids the related topic of homicide 'pollution'.⁷ The opposite of καθαρός 'pure' is μίαρός 'polluted', together with the verb μιάινω 'pollute'. It serves as opposite of ἄγνός as well, but there can be no doubt that it originates as opposite of καθαρός 'clean, clear' etc., for the

distortions of Greek usage, as when coiffures become token binding, shoelessness token nakedness: so e.g. Nilsson, *Feste* pp. 345–46. Parker, *Miasma* pp. 328–30, also finds room for 'taboo'.

⁶ The following should be mentioned as previous treatments of these words. For ἄγνός, Williger, *Hagios* pp. 37–72, Ferrari, "Due noti", Moulinier, *Pur et impur* pp. 270–81, Parker, *Miasma* pp. 147–51. For καθαρός, Moulinier, *Le Pur* pp. 149–68. For a comparison of καθαίρω and ἄγνίζω, Rudhardt, *Pensée* pp. 163–75.

⁷ Pollution as an ever-present danger of ordinary life is antithetic to the ardent milieu of epic poetry, to roaming and fighting, friendship and vengeance. It can sometimes be seen that epic turns away from the idea just when it threatens to intrude; cf. Parker, *Miasma* pp. 66–70, 130–37.

original meaning of *μιαρός* is ‘stained, tinged’, as with dye, blood, dust etc.⁸ The bloodshed denoted by *μιαρός* is at once a stain and a pollution; the war god Ares has the formular epithet *μυιφόνος* ‘stained with killing’.⁹

When inscriptions on stone begin to appear widely in the 6th century BC, *καθαρός* as well as *ἄγνός* is used in a characteristic way that is scarcely evident in literary remains of the period. The *καθαρός* inscriptions, very much fewer but likewise continuing for long ages and occurring throughout the Greek world, have an important purpose of their own. They set forth the means of purifying a homicide or lesser assailant who is not after all driven out of the community. Such persons need to be cleansed—often by literal washing, scouring, absorbing—so as not to sully others. Here is another kind of purity, a very archaic one. An opposite procedure is widely known as both an exceptional and a seasonal event. A community that feels itself somehow sullied offloads the dirt on a wretched scapegoat and expels him.¹⁰ Beyond a doubt, these drastic and expressive procedures were handed down in Greece from very early times; they are known throughout the world. The notion of purity expressed by *καθαρός*, purity as cleanliness, is as old as it could be; it is a good subject for structuralist interpretation.¹¹ I treat the *καθαρός* inscriptions at the end (“The cleansing of offenders”), by way of contrast with the *ἄγνός* variety that is distinctive of Greek religion. The *καθαρός* inscriptions no less than the *ἄγνός* ones testify to an extraordinary conservatism. During all the time they were displayed, washing etc. was completely superseded by legal process. As a result of this conservatism, *καθαρός* rules like *ἄγνός* rules retain age-old associations that are otherwise lost.

Turning now to *ἄγνός* ‘pure’, we find it used in early poetry in a striking fashion. Artemis, Persephone, and Apollo’s festival day are each called *ἄγνή* in the *Odyssey*; somewhat later, as epic (i.e. hexameter) poetry takes

⁸ *LfrgE* s. *μυαίνομαι, μυαρός*. In Mycenaean *mi-ya-ro* is used of textiles, evidently with the meaning ‘dyed’ (Cnossus Ln 1568, *DMic* I 451).

⁹ *LfrgE* s. *μυιφόνος*; as a formula the use goes far back.

¹⁰ O. Paoletti, *ThesCRA* II (2004) 33–35. *LIMC* V (1994) Hermes 168 is a vivid pictorial instance, if rightly identified.

¹¹ Cf. Parker, *Miasma* pp. 1–17 on pollution, pp. 18–31, 325–26 on purification: pollution is a basic “feeling” prompted by “disorder”, and purification is an effort to re-establish order, this in avowed agreement with some noted anthropologists. Vernant, *Myth* pp. 110–29, offers a professedly structural account: ‘pure’ and ‘polluted’ are opposite poles of man’s relation to ‘the divine’, and to approach these terms historically is to ignore an underlying “system of symbols”. This is by way of reviewing Moulinier, *Pur et impur*, who assembles and expounds all the literary mentions of purity without throwing much light on the subject. Despite Vernant, a historical approach is not thereby discredited.

cognizance of Demeter, she too is so called, quite insistently.¹² In lyric poetry ἀγνός is a quality of such elements of nature as groves, springs, meadows, fire, sky, light; also of shrines, and now of the gods Zeus and Athena.¹³ Later, we find groves, springs, and meadows as cult-sites of Artemis, Persephone, and Apollo, or of a deity known only as Ἀγνή. Obviously ἀγνός is not the pragmatic cleanliness that καθαρός denotes. Greek already possessed two words for different kinds of purity.

Our many inscriptions at a sanctuary entrance uniformly say ἀγνός rather than καθαρός in the first instance, and they employ the καθαρός vocabulary, if at all, only by way of amplifying. The intrusive καθαρός terms are relatively few down to the very end. Within the ἀγνός family we find such derivative terms as ἀγνεύομαι 'be pure', ἀγρεία 'purity' (also, concretely, 'priesthood'), ἀγρίζω 'purify', all occurring in our purity rules and in later literature. Now these ἀγνός inscriptions, relatively common as they are, show a definite limitation that has not been noticed. They do not extend to the full range of Olympian and associated deities or to the many departments of life they represent. On the contrary, they are typical of cults broadly describable as pertaining to a simple life and a country setting, and to pastoral or agrarian activities on a limited scale. Among the gods in question we find half the Olympian family—Zeus, Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Demeter, Dionysus—but only insofar as they belong to this milieu, which constitutes a small part of their concerns in the developed city-state. Early poetry sometimes has a similar range, with scenes of nature called ἀγνός and the same gods and sanctuaries so called. It is evident then that our ἀγνός inscriptions perpetuate an accustomed way of life, though not the age-old outlook of some καθαρός inscriptions.

In general, the purity denoted by ἀγνός is less urgent and elementary than the καθαρός kind. It consists in abstaining for a time from actions or associations most of which are not objectionable in themselves; it is demanded only for the purpose of entering a sanctuary or taking part in ritual. A person will therefore be ἀγνός on occasion but not as a rule.¹⁴

¹² *IjgrE* s. ἀγνός 1–2. Thereafter a wider range of gods are so called, often in dramatic contexts evoking fear and awe, outside the original background of cult. Parker, *Miasma* pp. 147–48 shows that cases where the epithet goes back to cult can usually be distinguished from others where it does not.

¹³ *LSJ* and *LSJRS* s. ἀγνός I 1–2; Ferrari, "Due note".

¹⁴ A courtesan in a comedy says cheerily, "I've been ἀγνή γάμων pure of intercourse for two days" (Menander, *Epitrepontes* 440). As personal names Ἀγνός and Ἀγνή and compounds thereof enjoy a certain currency; they evoke a pious disposition rather than a celibate state. The archetype and patron of midwives is named Ἀγνοδίκη (Hyg. *Fab.*

A person must always be καθαρός, however, since the purity so denoted is essential to the health and safety of people at large; as its opposite, one who is μίαρός ‘impure’ poses a general threat.¹⁵ At Cleonae in the Argolid (see fig. 1) one of the earliest inscriptions of any kind sets forth an elaborate procedure for purifying a homicide, referred to repeatedly as μίαρός (*LSCG* 56, lines 5, 8, 11, early VI BC). It is because Cleonae, with the Nemean games close by, was a place of wide resort in early days: the procedure was doubly necessary among a concourse of strangers from far-flung places. μίαρός is not a natural opposite of άγνός, though it comes to be so used in sacred laws; then it is a temporary condition, just like άγνός. Sometime in the 5th century, as the first such instance, a funerary law of Ceos refers to the effect of a death in the family as μιάινω (*LSCG* 97 A 25–26, 29–30 [tris], V BC). Thereafter it becomes fairly common.¹⁶

Etymology does not help with the prehistory of these words. Since καθαρός ‘clean, i.e. pure’ and μίαρός ‘stained, i.e. foul’ are fundamental opposites with a similar shape, *καθαρ- and *μιαρ-, they presumably belong to the same linguistic stratum. Yet no congeners are known in the traditional Indo-European repertory: we might rather guess that the earliest Greeks in the peninsula adopted them, together with some relevant customs, from e.g. Luwians or Minoans.¹⁷ άγνός ‘pure’ is confidently linked with several other old words expressing religious ideas: άγιος ‘sacred, holy’, άζομαι ‘revere’, also άγος ‘curse’, έναγής ‘accursed’, but here too the search for Indo-European cognates has been in vain.¹⁸ And although such words

274.10–13)—by way of irony, as the context indicates. The meaning “chaste before justice” proposed by King, “Agnodike” p. 54, does not accord either with Greek usage or with the spirit of the anecdote.

¹⁵ μίαρός ‘dirty’ is also an instinctive term of reproach equivalent to ‘polluted’, as in various instances cited by *LSJ* and *LSJ RS s.v.* 4. Apart from reproaches, έκμιαίνομαι as applied by Aristophanes and other writers to either involuntary ejaculation or masturbation is rendered ‘pollute oneself’ by Parker, *Miasma* p. 76 n. 9, and Henderson, *Maculate Muse* p. 175. But surely the usage originates as a literal ‘stain oneself’; customary terms for awkward lapses go far back.

¹⁶ Cyrene’s rules of purity (*LSS* 115, 335–324 BC) speak of μίαρός and μιάινω as the effect of childbirth (A 16–17, 19, tris) and of illicit intercourse (B 3, 5, 7, 21) and of miscarriage (B 26). At A 40, 41, μιαίνομαι ‘be soiled’ denotes as elsewhere the pollution of a consenting sexual act, not of a sexual act deemed offensive in itself. So Robertson, *Religion and Reconciliation* pp. 302, 305; otherwise Parker, *Miasma* pp. 76, 342.

¹⁷ Note however recent opinion of a different kind. Burkert, “Reshep-Figuren” p. 77 and *Orientalizing Revolution* pp. 64, 189–90, derives καθαρός from the Semitic verb *qtr* ‘fumigate’ (as with incense) and is followed by West, *East Face* pp. 39–40. On this hypothesis, the range of meaning of the Greek word, and especially its broad workaday use, are inexplicable.

¹⁸ Words of comparable meaning in Latin, Vedic, and Avestan are not related. Cf. Benveniste, *Vocabulaire* II 202–7; Frisk, *Wörterbuch* s. άγιος, άγνός, άγος; Chantraine, *Dictionnaire* s. άγος, άζομαι.

and ideas must go far back, they are not tethered to any literal correlatives in the way of *καθαρός* and *μαρρός*. What they signified in Mycenaean times is beyond conjecture.

In sum, *ἀγνός* is an important quality in early epic and lyric poetry, being attributed to certain gods and certain parts of nature. In a body of inscribed laws that begin only a little later and vary little during many centuries, the same quality is required of worshippers approaching the gods in question.¹⁹ The quality evidently took hold in the period before this, the Early Iron Age, c. 1100–750 BC. The Early Iron Age ended just as writing was introduced to bear witness to a new form of society, the Greek *polis*. Hence epic and lyric poetry, hence the inscriptions. Society continued to change thereafter, as did the pantheon of deities that answered to its needs. But *ἀγνός* rules change very little. They survive as a virtual relic of the Early Iron Age.

3. A NEW WAY OF LIFE

Conditions in the Early Iron Age, once curtailed by illiteracy, are now much better known from careful excavation, extensive surveys, and scientific methods of classifying materials and dating them. Epic poetry, which flourished throughout this period, looks back to the Mycenaean age before it in a wishful unrealistic way, as an age of heroes; yet it points convincingly to a key factor in its downfall, climate change. Another source of evidence has been quite neglected. It is the month-names in the calendars of each Greek city, which show the deities invoked by the city on important

¹⁹ The full list of 33 inscriptions is as follows, arranged by deity in the order we shall approach them, and chronologically under each deity. Zeus and/or Athena: *LSS* 156 A 7–16, Cos town, c. 300 BC; *LSS* 59, Delos, 116/15 BC; *LSAM* 12, Pergamum, II BC; *SEG* XLIII 710, Euromus, II AD; *LSS* 91, Lindus, III AD. Apollo: *LSS* 60, Minoa on Amorgos, V–IV BC; *LSS* 115 A 11–20, 32–79, B 40–59, Cyrene, 335–324 BC; *LSCG* 156 B 29–35, Cos town, c. 300 BC; *LSCG* 170, Isthmus on Cos, III BC; *LSCG* 65, Andania, 92 BC; *LSCG* 124, Eresus on Lesbos, II BC. Meter: *LSAM* 29, Metropolis, IV BC; *LSAM* 18, Maeonia, 147 BC; *ICr* I xxiii 3, Phaestus, II BC; *LSAM* 20, Philadelphia, I BC. ‘Great Goddesses’: *LSCG* 68, Lycosura, III BC; *GLS* 8, Lycosura, II BC. Pan: *GSL* 4, Marathon, 61 BC. Artemis: *LSS* 115 B 1–27, Cyrene, 335–324 BC; *LSCG* 171, Isthmus on Cos, II BC; *LSAM* 51, Miletus, I BC. Demeter: *LSS* 32, northern Arcadia, VI–V BC; *LSS* 33, Patrae, III BC; *LSCG* 154 A–B, Cos town, III BC; *LSAM* 6, Cius, I AD. Dionysus: *LSS* 70, Thasos, III BC; *IvMagn* 215, Magnesia, I AD; *LSAM* 84, Smyrna, II AD. Asclepius: *LSCG* 130, Astypalaea, III BC; *LSS* 82, Mytilene, ?*aet. Rom.*; *LSS* 118, Balagrae near Cyrene, II AD; *LSAM* 14, Pergamum, III AD. Unidentified: *LSAM* 35, Priene, III BC; *LSS* 108, Rhodes, I AD; *LSS* 106, Cameirus, ?*aet. Rom.*

occasions throughout the year.²⁰ Though such calendars are known only from much later documents, they go back to a city's founding, typically in the Early Iron Age. Each month is named for an important festival assignable to one or other of the Olympian deities; sometimes the name of the deity is substituted for the festival name. Festival names mostly denote a form of ritual, and if the ritual can be understood, we see why such and such a deity was worshipped at such and such a season. It is possible to give a meaningful tally of the gods featured in the calendars and of the months that belong to each of them—provided that we reconstruct sufficient calendars by a principled use of analogy.²¹ Month-names are therefore another relic of the Early Iron Age.

The gods prominent in the calendar, nine in all, must be mentioned at the outset.²² Six of them are in fact the gods of our ἀγνός inscriptions, associated likewise with the ἀγνός quality of nature in epic and lyric poetry: Zeus, Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Demeter, Dionysus. The other three are Poseidon, Hera, Hermes. These three changed greatly during this period, Poseidon and Hera losing their importance, Hermes acquiring new functions.

²⁰ Robertson, "Religious Criterion" pp. 25–36, points to the historical importance of city calendars. Dickinson, *The Aegean* pp. 54, 237, shortly afterwards happens to speak of calendars by the way, but only to discount them on the ground that the festivals for which the months are named are not demonstrably of early origin. Not so. The same festivals are imprinted in calendars throughout the Greek world, and the distribution of these calendars according to dialect shows that they originate at the time the dialects were formed, early in the Early Iron Age. Thereafter speakers of a given dialect lived in scattered places throughout the Mediterranean and could not possibly conspire to create a characteristic festival and month. Some forty years ago, J. Sarkady in a series of valuable articles (see the bibliography) pointed to the significance of calendars as reflecting early conditions. But the clue was not followed up; at that time calendars were thought by many to vary unpredictably (n. 21 below).

²¹ For a long time, reconstruction of this kind was out of favour. It has been fully vindicated by the important work of Trümpy, *Monatsnamen*: cf. Rigsby, review of Trümpy p. 55^o.

²² The tally is as follows, with the number of monthly slots that each god commonly occupies. Those with ἀγνός associations: Apollo (10 months), Demeter (6), Dionysus (6), Artemis (4), Athena (3), Zeus (2). Those without ἀγνός associations: Poseidon (5), Hera (4), Hermes (2). Two complicating factors should be mentioned. First, Demeter and Dionysus are each typically worshipped on just two staple occasions, respectively sowing and harvest, pruning the vines and opening the new wine; they each account for so many month-slots only because these staple occasions come at different times in different places. Second, the month Panamus, far commoner than any other but differing widely in its placement, has been excluded from the reckoning. The deity in question is unknown, and need not always have been the same. To explain this paradoxical situation, Trümpy suggests that Panamus originated as an intercalary feature. She may well be right, but if not some other exceptional circumstance must be found.

Archaeology and epic poetry both fix on climate change as a fundamental cause of the Mycenaean collapse. The climate became colder and wetter, causing a shift of population away from areas of wind and rain—which means from west to east in the Greek peninsula, then seawards through the Aegean islands to the coast of Anatolia.²³ Clothing changed from light wool or linen to heavy wool fastened with long pins and arched fibulas. As a result of both the weather and the movement of people, much of the cultivated land was abandoned and crops were given up as unreliable. Thus far archaeology. The same conditions appear in legend as caused by Zeus and Athena—the sky god Zeus and the maiden Athena who sprang from his head, then dropped from the sky as a wooden image, to become an object of worship representing both.²⁴

In the story of the Golden Fleece, located in Thessaly, an essential sacrifice to Zeus miscarries and the crops fail until Jason ‘Healer’ journeys eastward to the land of the Sun, sacrifices a magic ram, and sows a magic field to produce a burgeoning harvest. In another legend generally taken as suggestive of reality, the overseas empire of king Minos of Crete is challenged—and afterwards overthrown—along Greece’s east coast and among the offshore islands. The same result ensues: this area suffers famine as a punishment, but the hero Aeacus manages to appease Zeus with sacrifice. After the Trojan War, the heroic age of Greece entire is brought to an end by a great storm that wrecks and scatters the returning Greeks; it is sent by Zeus and Athena to punish their wickedness. Hesiod’s *Catalogue of Women*, itself a general review of heroic dynasties, concludes with an extraordinary passage that elaborates this theme to the utmost. Zeus with inscrutable purpose causes a sudden drastic weather change that leads to trafficking overseas, the abduction of Helen, and the Trojan War—and thereafter to the separation of the race of heroes and the race of men, these the creatures of the ensuing Iron Age.²⁵

City calendars present an alarming picture of winter weather, perilous because subject to the anger of Zeus and Athena. November is the month when newly sown fields are most exposed to storms, and the sea is altogether unsafe for ships. In a large majority of calendars it is named for a festival of Zeus or Athena or both. The names are expressive. *Maimaktêr*

²³ Snodgrass, *Dark Age* pp. 309–10, 313 (hesitantly), *CAH²* III 1 pp. 663–64 (decisively).

²⁴ Robertson, “Athena and Early Greek Society” pp. 389–90, 392–413, and “Athena as Weather Goddess” pp. 50–55.

²⁵ West, “Hesiodica” pp. 132–36 is the essential commentary on this passage; Clay, “The beginning and end” pp. 29–34 is the latest, with interesting suggestions.

'Raging' is an archaic word that serves as epithet of Zeus; the attested ritual features the use of a purifying fleece.²⁶ *Daidaphorios* 'Torch-bearing' denotes a ritual fire-setting that simulates a lightning strike by way of conciliating Zeus.²⁷ *Alalkomenios* 'Warding-off' evokes the warrior Athena as joined with Zeus in the season's ritual.²⁸ These calendar months reflect a fundamental change of belief, reflected also in Hesiod's new pantheon of Olympian gods. The sky god Zeus with his far-seeing purpose becomes the new ruler of nature and society, displacing the irascible weather god Poseidon who was foremost in the Mycenaean period, the counterpart of other weather gods in cities and empires throughout the Near East.²⁹ In city calendars Poseidon receives the nominal tribute of giving his name to December, the bleakest month of all, but the festival in question is virtually unknown.³⁰ Poseidon's worship everywhere declined and legend depicts him as obsessed with resentment of Zeus.³¹

Agriculture, highly organized in Mycenaean times, became unreliable with climate change. A shrinking population relapsed at first into a pastoral regime that has always been suited to the Greek peninsula when nothing else is sure.³² Such is a plausible if controversial interpretation of archaeological and scientific data; it is strongly supported by calendar evidence.³³ Communities that were now very small moved about with flocks and herds, passing from low ground in winter to high ground in summer, and back again. The two seasonal transitions in spring and autumn

²⁶ Robertson, "Athena as Weather Goddess" p. 53 and *Religion and Reconciliation* pp. 247–48.

²⁷ Robertson, *Religion and Reconciliation* pp. 243–45, 247.

²⁸ This is the last month of the year in the Boeotian calendar, serving also as intercalary month. The sanctuary site so named is evoked by Homer to typify the warlike Athena (*Il.* IV 8, V 908); it was of the first importance in early days, though little known later.

²⁹ With his temper and his trident Poseidon is a typical weather god of the Near Eastern kind—but discredited in Greece by the climate event of the Early Iron Age, and yielding place to Zeus, steady and principled. The mighty horse Pegasus whom Poseidon begets on Medusa is afterwards tamed in the service of Zeus, either carrying Zeus' lightning or drawing his chariot. In the old story of Bellerophon, Pegasus' stamping ground is Lycia, and now his very name proves to be the epithet of a Luwian weather god, i.e. one native to this region: see Hutter, "Der Luwische Wettergott". One could not ask for a neater demonstration of the change.

³⁰ See Robertson, "Poseidon's Festival".

³¹ The decline of Poseidon's worship is a central theme in the thorough catalogue of his cults by Mylonopoulos, *Πελοπόννησος*.

³² Cf. Campbell, *Honour* pp. 1–18; Hammond, *Migrations* pp. 37–51, 129–31, and *CAH²* III 1, pp. 621–24, 639–44, 698–99, 703–4.

³³ Apart from the calendar, this interpretation is fully discussed by Snodgrass, *Archaeology of Greece* pp. 184–209.

are marked in the calendar by festivals of the god Apollo—which happen to correspond very closely to those of St. George and St. Demetrius as observed by Greek shepherds living in areas unclaimed by settled life down to the mid 20th century.³⁴ The two Saints were no doubt recruited for the purpose in early Byzantine times, another Dark Age in the peninsula. Apollo, according to what is now a common opinion, was newly adopted in the Early Iron Age beside other Olympian gods inherited from Mycenaean times. New festivals established in his honour dominate the whole fair weather season during which dispersed communities gathered only at monthly intervals to concert their plans.³⁵ As in modern times, the most striking and important are those of May and October at the beginning and the end of this season, often with the names Thargelia and Pyanopsia that denote purifying rites.

The weather change of spring is associated also with Artemis, unlike Apollo an age-old deity in Greece, whose innumerable shrines are often in the countryside, beyond all the settled areas.³⁶ She is goddess of the hunt, a mode of bare subsistence that quickens in spring, when the animals grow active and the brightening sky is ruled by the moon—in virtue of which Artemis is also goddess of women.³⁷ Artemis and Apollo were now spliced together in myth as ostensible twins, even though their powers are mostly quite unlike and their cult-sites are nearly always separate. Artemis' long-accustomed festivals come just before the spring festival of Apollo; according to myth the twins were delivered of their goddess mother on successive days in May.³⁸

³⁴ Feasts of St. George and St. Demetrius, 6th May and 8th November: Campbell, *Honour* pp. 7, 115, 343–44, 352. Equivalent festivals of Apollo are *Thargêlia* and *Pyanopsia*, whence the Ionian month-names corresponding to May and October (other dialects have other festival- and month-names, but likewise belonging to Apollo).

³⁵ His festivals as we shall see dominate the whole fair weather season, in range and number far surpassing those of any other deity.

³⁶ Though 'Artemis' is not mentioned by name in Mycenaean tablets, the not infrequent title *potnia* with local designations may typically belong to her. *Potnia aswiya* of PY Fr 1206 is discussed with other instances by Morris, "*Potnia aswiya*", who equates her with Artemis of Ephesus.

³⁷ "The hunter waits beneath a cold sky, forgetful of his wife at home", says Horace (*Carm.* I 1.25–26), no doubt evoking some passage of Greek lyric poetry, his professed model. He waits in the early morning light of spring as nocturnal animals return to their lairs.

³⁸ Festivals of Artemis are concentrated—perhaps more than those of any other deity—in March and April, either of which is often named simply for 'Artemis', otherwise for the festival 'Laphria', to be explained as a differentiated form of 'Elaphebolia', deer-slaying rites. At Athens March is named precisely for 'Elaphebolia', and April too is named for a festival of Artemis which was spelled 'Munichia' in the light of the month-name as epigraphically attested; cf. Thraette, *Grammar* I pp. 264–65, upholding this form as the cor-

Other deities of pasturing are independent of the transhumant pattern. They go back to the Mycenaean age, when sheep were reared in huge numbers as a leading feature of the economy, and goats and oxen had their uses too. 'Meter' the reputed 'mother' of the gods was an ancient power even then.³⁹ She is later honoured with festivals of spring and summer marking pastoral occasions that evoke a picture of primordial simplicity, the Golden Age. She and 'Despoina' and others are found mostly in marginal areas of later times where old ways survived—and as we shall see they are among the strictest of all in demanding purity of the ἀγνός kind.

Towards the end of the Early Iron Age, conditions improved quickly, possibly reflecting an improvement in the weather too. Larger communities on sites both old and new, recognizably of the *polis* kind, were able to reclaim agricultural land and to produce the staple crops of grain and wine with a success that is dramatically depicted in legend and documented in the calendar festivals of Demeter and Dionysus. Legends of Demeter tell how the goddess came to different cities and bestowed the gift of grain together with the magic ritual behind it.⁴⁰ Those of Dionysus tell even more excitingly how the god on arriving at different cities overcame and punished wicked opposition.⁴¹ In the calendar, Demeter's festival of the sowing in early autumn lasts several days and draws a general attendance, sometimes with women segregated.⁴² Dionysus has a pair of festivals in winter and in spring that celebrate the pruning of the vines and the opening of the new wine respectively.⁴³ Unlike every other crop, the grape and wine cycle extends over a full two years, so that Dionysus' festivals as they apply to any given habitat are known as 'trieteric' or 'every-second-year' (literally 'every-third-year', with inclusive reckoning as a further complication).

rect one. But the termination '-ichia' can be discounted as analogical, beside so many such words; the less common form 'Munychia' is no doubt a contraction of *μουνο-νύχια, night-only rites. Processioners carried cakes with lighted candles up to the hill-top shrine, as if to reinforce the full moon in the sky. Hunting is again a principal concern, for the foundation story speaks of a hunter who swam ashore in the remote past when this coastal hill was an island.

³⁹ Cf. Robertson, "Missing Chapter", and *Religion and Reconciliation* pp. 69–83.

⁴⁰ The legends are surveyed by Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn* pp. 148–150, 178–79.

⁴¹ Such moral tales are likely to be a principal reason why the imperious and triumphant Yahweh, when the Greeks encounter him in the Hellenistic period, is often equated with Dionysus, otherwise a surprising choice instead of Zeus.

⁴² Demeter's 'Eleusinia' ritual is for men and women both, her 'Thesmophoria' ritual, even more widespread, for women only: Robertson, "New Light" pp. 374–79, "Two Processions" pp. 568–72, "Sequence of Days" pp. 25–33.

⁴³ Robertson, "Orphic Mysteries" pp. 229–32, *Encycl. Rel.* I 374–76 s.v. Anthesteria.

There was also a late addition to the pantheon of deities, the healer Asclepius. He inherits a role that formerly belonged to his father Apollo. As a pastoral deity, Apollo at first watched over the health of both men and animals: epidemic illness such as falls on both was attributed to his terrible anger, to unseen arrows shot from a mighty bow. But as the new cities grew and conditions improved, there was more concern for individual illness, and afflicted persons turned rather to the kindly hero who was Apollo's son, born of an erring mortal woman and barely saved from her funeral pyre. Like his father, Asclepius was often worshipped in a semi-rural setting of groves and springs, but now with regard to the cleanliness and peace thus provided. It is in shrines of Asclepius that purity comes to be exalted as a quality of the soul or of the mind.

Asclepius came too late to be registered in calendar nomenclature. Otherwise, we have dealt with six gods prominent in the calendar—Zeus and Athena, Apollo and Artemis, Demeter and Dionysus—who are all represented later both by ἀγνός inscriptions and by mentions in literature associating them with the ἀγνός quality. But as already said, three other gods are prominent in the calendar, but unrepresented by any ἀγνός inscription or association. These are Poseidon, Hera, and Hermes. They go back to Mycenaean times as surely as any of the others, but in the course of the Early Iron Age each of them undergoes a profound change. Poseidon and Hera lose favour, so as to be neglected in cult and diminished, even mocked, in myth. Hermes does not lose favour but is completely re-invented. Together, they supply a contrast that reinforces the ἀγνός criterion.

Poseidon as weather god is worshipped in mid-winter, in December or January, right after Zeus and Athena. These two however are solely responsible for the weather events of Greek legend, and Poseidon loses his former pre-eminence, as we saw. Hera was a former goddess “Earth”, as Zeus was a former “Sky”, in both cases the literal meaning of these Indo-European names.⁴⁴ Her ancient role as partner of Sky was signalled by three occasions in the year. She was honoured in autumn as a girl ‘ripe’ for marriage; shortly after the winter solstice, in the ‘Sacred Marriage’ festival of calendars throughout Greece, as a wife ‘fulfilled’; in summer as a woman ‘grown old’.⁴⁵ Despite this evident pattern of age-old ritual, the

⁴⁴ Zeus “Sky” is stock-in-trade of both linguistics and the history of religion. Among several contested views of Hera’s origins, this one finds support in the solid linguistic and historical evidence adduced by Renehan, “Hera as Earth-Goddess”.

⁴⁵ According to Pausanias (VIII 22.2), Arcadian cults of Hera are classified by legend as of three kinds, addressed to her either as Πᾶις “Girl” or Τελεῖα “Fulfilled” or Χήρα “Grown-old”.

rites in question were neglected in historical times, or continued only with some secondary meaning. Instead, Hera became a hostile power, begetting Giants as enemies of Zeus in the new story of the Gigantomachy, which follows a Near Eastern pattern of opposition to the weather god. Other myths of Hera are downright insulting. Like Poseidon she becomes a lesser sibling of Zeus, and like him is derided as quarrelsome and ineffectual; the all-powerful lord of Olympus is impatient of both.

Hermes is shown by his herald's staff to be god of heralds, who were once a king's most trusted officers.⁴⁶ He has a considerable role in epic poetry as herald of Zeus, king of heaven, and his most striking role in myth is to execute Zeus' spectacular plan for punishing Prometheus (Aesch. *PV* 941–1093).⁴⁷ This story of Zeus' righteous anger belongs to his November festival marking the onset of winter storms. At Athens, where November is named for *Maimakteria* 'Raging rites', the reported ritual is in fact the presentation of a herald's staff.⁴⁸ In Thessaly November is named for a festival *Hermaia*, as if Hermes or a herald was prominent in the season's ritual.⁴⁹ Such odd details are typical of our puzzled picture of festival origins in the Early Dark Age. Yet they suffice to indicate that the god Hermes was honoured at the outset for his connexion with the new weather god. Thereafter he survived in good repute, as Poseidon and Hera did not. He kept his herald's skill as the new civic patron of eloquence and education. And since a herald was concerned with country roads and journeys, he

Jost, *Sanctuaires* pp. 359–60, offers only a very tentative interpretation of this remarkable passage. Hera is little spoken of elsewhere in Pausanias' long account of Arcadia, which offered a surfeit of riches; but a corresponding picture of real-life observance can be found elsewhere. The first stage is evoked by a rite at Argos in which Hera recovers her virginity each year by bathing in a spring (Paus. 2.38.2–3): after the withering heat of summer, the rains of autumn cause springs to flow again. The second stage corresponds of a certainty to the widespread rite of winter variously called Γάμος, Γαμήλια, Τέλεια, Εύκλεια, at which both Zeus and Hera are indeed invoked as Τέλειος and Τελεία. The third with equal certainty corresponds to the festival of high summer and of withering heat, called Ἡραία at Argos and Δαίδαλα at Plataea, which inspires many stories of Hera estranged from Zeus and acting spitefully, as in the cases of Io at Argos and "Asopus' daughter Plataea" (Paus. IX 3.1–2).

⁴⁶ So Mondl, "Function and Social Position".

⁴⁷ Prometheus' wretched state, pinioned on a rock and assailed by a storm-bird or overwhelmed by a literal storm, exemplifies the power of 'Raging' Zeus at the time of his November festival.

⁴⁸ The Athenian ritual is known only from Eustathius (*Od.* XXII 481, p. 1935.5), excerpting some antiquarian source. Items just before and after are drawn from Pausanias Atticus: Erbse, *Untersuchungen* pp. 165 (Paus. α 150), 173 (Paus. δ 18).

⁴⁹ Apropos of the month-name Graninger, "Regional Cults" pp. 47–48, points to Thesalian inscriptions in which Hermes appears as conductor of the dead, with the title *chthonios*. Yet this is not a seasonal role suited to a month-name.

also became a guardian of country roads, a patron of hucksters who travel them, a mischievous rival of Apollo, and the father of Pan.⁵⁰ But all of it is outside the ἀγρός milieu, conspicuously so.

Such are the conditions of the Early Iron Age that created a concern for the ἀγρός quality and a preference for deities of the kind described. These conditions did not exist beforehand, in the Mycenaean age. Later they gave way to the relative security of the developing *polis* and of Panhellenic institutions, which together made possible a quality of life unknown before, in Greece or elsewhere. The pantheon of Olympian gods that originated in the Early Iron Age continued to change as society did; they lent themselves to many changing fashions of belief and finally to syncretism and even monotheism. Throughout all this, their first formative days were permanently captured in our ἀγρός inscriptions. In the following sections these inscriptions are examined as they pertain to each deity, in the same order as above.⁵¹

4. ZEUS AND ATHENA

As we saw, Zeus and Athena bring stormy wind and rain at the end of autumn. In this capacity they are worshipped at the top of hills or mountains, an archaic setting more often evoked in literature than represented by actual remains. Such however are the cults of Mount Cythnus on Delos, of the acropolis at Lindus, and of the acropolis at Pergamum, all known for ἀγρός rules.⁵² The sanctuary of Mount Cynthus was on other evidence the destination of a processional carrying of arms, probably shields and spears, appropriate to the autumn festival.⁵³ As a consequence, actual 'arms of war' are specified by the rules as the kind forbidden to worshippers.

⁵⁰ On any view of Hermes' origins it is fanciful to associate his name with ἔρμα 'prop, pile' in a supposed sense or function of roadside marker.

⁵¹ I follow the usual practice of citing sacred laws consistently from the three co-ordinate volumes of F. Sokolowski, *LSAM* of 1955, *LSS* of 1962, *LSCG* of 1969. Two advantages of Sokolowski's collection of 422 inscriptions are full bibliographies up to the dates indicated, including the constitution of texts, and informed discussion of many matters. It is no secret, however, that Sokolowski's own texts are unreliable—careless, arbitrary, downright misleading. I point to later work where it is helpful. The excellent *GSL* of 2005, by E. Lupu, gathers 27 sacred laws published since 1969.

⁵² *LSS* 59, Delos, 116/15 BC (Zeus and Athena); *LSAM* 12, Pergamum, II BC (Athena); *LSS* 91, Lindus, III AD (Athena).

⁵³ Bruneau, *Recherches* pp. 222–32, presents and interprets the epigraphic evidence. It belongs entirely to the Hellenistic period, but the excavators traced the sanctuary back to Archaic times, with both deities accounted for by the 6th century.

'Keeping pure from woman' is one of the foremost rules, drastic in its simplicity; it seems to follow that women were excluded altogether from the cult.⁵⁴ Though Cynthian Zeus and Athena are Greek in origin and in every detail of their cult, the numerous foreigners on Delos came to worship too, thinking no doubt of native deities in Anatolia and Syria that are similar.⁵⁵

At the acropolis sanctuaries of both Pergamum and Lindus the purity rules concern Athena alone, whereas Zeus occupies a separate precinct nearby.⁵⁶ In both cases it is likely that Athena has been assimilated somewhat to Anatolian goddesses.⁵⁷ These rules are elaborate, and specify the intervals for different kinds of sexual activity and for contact with miscarriage and death, and in some cases call for careful washing as well, an unusual requirement.⁵⁸ Those of Lindus, as late as the third century AD, end with two elegiac couplets commending the pure and warning others away; they approach the moral tone of some other late rules described below (sect. 12).

In the mid 4th century BC, on the prosperous island of Cos newly united as a single city, Zeus *polieus* 'of the city' is honoured at a festival of early spring that includes a striking rule of purity.⁵⁹ A festival of Zeus at just this time, late February, is ancient and widespread—without ever giving its name to the month, inasmuch as it occurs near the month-end, in the uncanny dark of the moon.⁶⁰ The sky god is now thought of as

⁵⁴ So Bruneau, *Recherches* p. 230.

⁵⁵ Cf. Renberg, *Commanded by the Gods* p. 360.

⁵⁶ At Pergamum, it is the Great Altar of Zeus. At Lindus, Zeus has a sanctuary somewhere on the acropolis in the light of indications cited by Morelli, *Culti* p. 80; there is no good reason to suppose him a late addition, as Morelli does.

⁵⁷ Lightfoot, *Lucian* p. 511, compares our two Greek inscriptions to the laws of purity reported of Lucian's Syrian goddess.

⁵⁸ According to Deshours, *L'Été indien* p. 238, the purity rules of Pergamum, like the following two sections of the same inscription, reflect a resurgence of local pride in old Greek ways, as distinct from a more cosmopolitan outlook. She does not take up details, however, and they hardly support her argument.

⁵⁹ The festival date, 19–20 *Batromios*, is given by *LSCG* 151 A 46 together with B 12. Though reconstruction of Cos' calendar is still tentative (and bound up with the calendar of Rhodes), it is apparent that *Batromios* can only be a month of late winter or early spring, and most likely February; Trümpy, *Monatsnamen* pp. 178, 182, 185, argues so at length. Apart from any calendar reconstruction, Smith, "Zeus Polieus", pp. 23–24, finds cogent reasons for supposing that the seasonal event on Cos is the sprouting of the crops. As an interesting sidelight, Scullion, 'Olympian', pp. 82–92 treats the expressive ritual on Cos as importance evidence for a 'chthonian' category of worship beside an 'Olympian' one.

⁶⁰ Thus at Athens, where a corresponding festival of Zeus *milichios* falls on February 23rd (and this was famously described by the Delphic oracle as *the greatest festival of*

descending to earth, his partner, and joining with her to foster the new growth of spring.

The festival program begins with a long-drawn process of choosing the sacrificial victim out of successive groups of oxen presented by each subdivision of the community, and driven round the agora while superstitious signs are observed. When the perfect animal has appeared, two members of the community are specially deputed for the task of killing him—even though a sacrificial victim is otherwise killed and butchered by hired help. During the night that follows, these two officiants are solemnly warned ‘to keep pure from woman and from man’, ἀγνεύεσθαι ἀπὸ γυναικὸς καὶ ἀνδρός.⁶¹ Next day, which is the festival day, they are ready to play their part: the pure plough-ox is slain by persons equally pure.⁶² Human kind co-operates with Zeus, animals, and earth to stimulate new growth, all of them ἀγνός.

5. APOLLO

Of all Greek gods Apollo is most concerned with purity. His sacred island of Delos was subject to drastic rules and procedures banning either birth or death; his oracle at Delphi ministered to many cities in time of need with some purifying remedy; and his principal epithet ‘Phoebus’, which also serves as another name, was generally taken to mean ‘Pure’.⁶³ He owes this exceptional concern to his early function, later much reduced,

Zeus’), Anthesterion = February is named for the new-wine festival of Dionysus on the 11th through 13th.

⁶¹ The parity of other-sex and same-sex relations is typically Dorian, the ethnic affiliation of Cos.

⁶² I have simplified somewhat in order to be clear. During that long-drawn process in the agora two oxen, not one, are chosen successively, and the second is sacrificed at once in the agora, the recipient being Hestia ‘Hearth’, symbolic centre of the community. It is because the newly inscribed rules belong to the larger community synoecized in 366 BC; this event was signalled by a duplication of the sacrificial victim. The pair of ox-slayers also represent a duplication, one of them being deputed by an official body, the *hieropoioi*, who originate with the synoecism; both however are concerned with the ox offered to Zeus, the original one.

⁶³ Plutarch, speaking as a Delphic priest with expert knowledge, insists on the meaning ‘pure’ for Φοῖβος, and cites the technical term φοιβονομεῖσθαι ‘keep pure’ used of priests in Thessaly when they suspend activity on certain uncanny days (*De E ap. Delph.* 20, 393c). The adjective φοῖβος, as distinct from the epithet and words like φοιβάζω coined with the epithet in mind, means only ‘bright’; φοιβάω means ‘brighten, polish’ metal or furniture. In fact the true accent for the adjective appears to be φοιβός (Bacch. *Ep̄nic.* xiii 139, a papyrus text). In this form it resembles a good many short emphatic words denoting colour or texture.

as a healing god.⁶⁴ Before the rise of medicine, sickness was thought of as a pollution that required cleansing by whatever means. The difficulty of finding the right means made Apollo also a god of oracles.

Cyrene is a Dorian city in Libya where Apollo was the leading civic deity, honoured as *archêgetês* 'founder' with reference to the Delphic oracle. A long sacred law posted in his sanctuary sets forth rules of purity that go far beyond all the rest of the genre (*LSS* 115, Cyrene, 335–324 BC).⁶⁵ Just a few of them are conventional, about intercourse and birth and death and admission to the sanctuary (A 11–20, 32–79, B 40–59, and the rules of Artemis mentioned below, pp. 218–19). Others are forms of ritual newly devised for contemporary needs and inserted with the conventional items as if they shared the same timeless authority. It is a tribute to Apollo's purifying power, but the details are mostly irrelevant to our present subject.

In early days oracular Apollo had local cults in many places, including the Aeolian domain on Lesbos and along the adjacent coast of Mysia.⁶⁶ Such a cult is evoked at the beginning of the *Iliad*, when Apollo sends a plague on the Greek army and is entreated at the emblematic site Chryse 'Gold'. About the fullest of all regular laws of purity belongs to an oracular shrine at Eresus on Lesbos (*LSCG* 124, II BC). The name of the deity does not in fact appear, and this important inscription has been neglected in consequence.⁶⁷ It is Apollo beyond a doubt. The following points support the identification.

1) Hesychius' gloss Ἐρέσιος Ἀπόλλων "Eresian: Apollo" shows that the local cult was famous. 2) The inscription distinguishes between the sanctuary precinct and a "temple" with more restricted access—no woman may enter "except the priestess and the prophetess". A temple with restricted access, and a prophetess, are both distinctive of Apollo's oracular shrines.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ See e.g. Nilsson, *Feste* pp. 97–101 and *Geschichte* I, pp. 538–44; Parker, *Miasma* pp. 209–10, 275–76, 393.

⁶⁵ This inscription has been subject to notorious problems of both text and interpretation; it is fully treated by Robertson, *Religion and Reconciliation* pp. 259–374.

⁶⁶ Parke, *Oracles of Apollo* pp. 171–79 assembles the evidence for this area.

⁶⁷ When the inscription was first made known in 1902, Apollo was canvassed by P. Kretschmer. But the standard view or rather quandary was soon imposed by Ziehen, *LSG* 117 and is repeated by Sokolowski, *LSCG* 124. Ziehen and Sokolowski think of a goddess rather than a god. Yet the scattered reports of oracular goddesses—for which see Latte, *RE* XVIII 1 (1939) 832–33, 837–38 s. Orakel—nowhere suggest an establishment like the one at Eresus.

⁶⁸ The prophetess at Delphi, commonly called 'Pythia', is referred to sometimes as 'priestess', sometimes as 'prophetess'. A 'priestess' distinct from a 'prophetess' is not otherwise heard of at any of Apollo's oracles, but this is not surprising if she was a subordinate

3) Arms and metals are banned, this too distinctive of Apollo (as we shall see in a moment).⁶⁹ 4) Both *galloi* and women exulting as *gallai*, i.e. male and female worshippers of Meter, are banned from the precinct: an extraordinary rule. Yet a corresponding picture has lately been revealed by excavation at Mytilene, the leading city of Lesbos.⁷⁰ A shrine of the Geometric and Archaic periods very likely belongs to Meter, since the most characteristic finds are statuettes of a usual type depicting the goddess—but ‘Apollo’ appears as a graffito on a vase, and must be a neighbour, perhaps a rival. Apollo and Meter are indeed rivals in respect of healing power.⁷¹ At Eresus and Mytilene we see reverse images of their rivalry, here in a shrine of Apollo and there in one of Meter.

The contents are as follows, with a few words supplied by conjecture where the stone is damaged. The usual matters of death, birth and intercourse are mentioned first, but it takes much longer to be pure again (lines 1–9). 20 days after death in the family, 3 days after other death; 10 days after [miscarriage], 40 days for the woman herself; 3 days after [live birth], 10 days for the mother; straightway after intercourse, which is indeed usual. Next certain persons and things are forbidden altogether (lines 10–14). [Persons accurst?] and traitors, *galloi* and *gallai*, warlike arms and any animal hide.⁷² Finally, the temple building has its own exclusions (lines 15–20). Iron and bronze except coin, shoes and other leather; any woman but the priestess and prophetess. At the last there is a further rule against watering flocks and herds in the precinct (lines 21–22)—but this rule is a commonplace of decency and order, distinct from laws of purity.

It is thus a mixture of things. Ordinary rules of purity—so many days after death etc.—are combined with others excluding dangerous or disorderly persons—criminals under two general heads, tumultuous worshippers of Meter—and dangerous or offensive things—arms, hide etc. Iron in

figure. Since men always take charge, Delphi and other Apolline oracles have ‘priests’ as well, and Didyma even has a ‘prophet’ more spoken of than the prophetess.

⁶⁹ At Delphi, says Ziehen, spoils of war were the commonest of dedications, often proclaiming the victory of one city over another; hence “warlike arms” could not possibly be excluded from any shrine of oracular Apollo. But things that worshippers must not carry on their persons may well be acceptable as dedications.

⁷⁰ The results of excavation in 1973 are summarized and illustrated by Spencer, ‘Lesbos’ pp. 296–99 and by Mazarakis Ainian, *Early Iron Age* pp. 89–91, 331, figs. 355–56.

⁷¹ Meter’s expertise is the treatment of mental disorders by means of ecstatic music and dancing—which is also the ritual behaviour of *galloi* and *gallai*, banned from Apollo’s shrine.

⁷² At the beginning of line 10 the missing word is perhaps *ἐναγέας* ‘persons accurst’, i.e. all those guilty of serious crimes. It is a general term more like ‘traitors’ than either of the words meaning ‘homicides’ suggested by Ziehen and Sokolowski respectively.

particular is proscribed elsewhere. “Do not bring iron into the sanctuary” is the single rule blazoned on both sides of a stele at a shrine of Apollo at Minoa on Amorgos (*LSS* 60, V–IV BC). Iron is excluded from a shrine of the hero Menedemus on the island of Cythnos because, according to a fanciful aition, this hero was cut down at Troy by a rain of blows (Callim. fr. dub. 663).⁷³ “Warlike arms”, a term used at Eresus, are also proscribed at certain shrines of Zeus.⁷⁴ Such rules are directed against persons bearing arms, not against metals superstitiously regarded.⁷⁵ What persons bearing arms might they be? It is true that in later days soldiers served on garrison duty in many cities. But the rule at Minoa is distinctly earlier, and the rule on Cythnos is adorned with a tale of old days. This is a long established prohibition that looks back to conditions of the Early Iron Age. As Thucydides well knew (I 5.3–6.3), *σιδηροφορεῖσθαι* ‘to bear iron’ was characteristic of the unsettled conditions then. He likely knew it, perhaps he chose the very term, because of such sanctuary rules. What of “hide”, “shoes”, “other leather”, mentioned beside the metals? Shoes, or certain shoes, are indeed proscribed elsewhere, but mainly as ostentation, which can hardly be the reason here.⁷⁶ And why all articles of hide? Because, it has been suggested, a hide as used in manufactured goods might come not from a sacrificial victim but from an animal dying in any way at all, then discovered as carrion—so that the product would defile a sanctuary.⁷⁷ This does not suit the context either. Now in the precinct hide goes with warlike arms, and in the temple shoes and other leather go with iron and bronze. In early days leather goods are typically spoils of war, inasmuch as flocks and herds are the usual object of raids and disputes.⁷⁸

⁷³ Schol. Ov. *Ib.* 451, who cites Callimachus apropos of Cythnos (the place-name being corrected from another source), reports that “the ritual was conducted without iron”, which is the actual language of a sanctuary rule. Such language inspires the story of a hero killed by sword blows, whence Ovid’s threat of as many “knife” blows for his imaginary enemy. We should not suppose that sacrifice was somehow performed without a knife, as does Pfeiffer *ad loc.*, oddly comparing a Parian sacrifice conducted without flutes and wreaths (Callim. fr. 3).

⁷⁴ *LSCG* 59 line 21, Zeus and Athena at Mount Cynthus on Delos, 116/15 BC, “no weapons of war”; *LSAM* 68 lines 2–3, Zeus Panamaros, Stratoniceia, “do not bring in a warlike arm”.

⁷⁵ To be sure, bronze and iron are both of them uncanny, associated with witches for example, and bronze like silver and gold may be objectionable as luxurious adornment. Wächter’s survey of “metals”, *Reinheit* pp. 115–18, includes many disparate items; it is not always the appropriate category.

⁷⁶ Wächter, *Reinheit* pp. 23–24, 55, 57–58, 61. Shoes are banned at both Andania and Lycosura (pp. 216–17, 222–23 below).

⁷⁷ Thus Nilsson, *Geschichte* I pp. 97–98.

⁷⁸ Excepting only the Trojan War, the greatest epic cycle was the war “for the flocks of Oedipus” (Hes. *Op.* 161–63). Thereafter conditions and customs did not altogether change.

In sum, Apollo's oracle at Eresus gives us laws stricter than elsewhere in the usual matters of birth and death—and other laws of a different sort, upholding peace and order. It is not that Apollo enjoins purity of mind, like his son Asclepius. The rules of peace and order are few and definite and practical. But they are also of broad concern, quite apart from admission to the sanctuary. Apollo is patron of several important livelihoods and undertakings, which together constitute a broader mandate than that of any other deity. In each of these roles he presides over a corresponding reunion of the community; as was said, Apollo's festivals mostly supply the month-names for the whole fair-weather season from April to September. In so presiding, this new-comer to the pantheon was invested also with age-old magic rites that give character to the seasonal reunions and names to the respective months: rites of the scapegoat, of 'beating the bounds', of the 'maypole', more truly a seasonal emblem in either spring or autumn.⁷⁹ The community background explains why Apollo insists on basic peace and order. It also explains why he purifies offenders of any taint of blood when they remain in the community (cf. the inscription of Tegea cited in 'The cleansing of offenders', p. 235).

Turning away from oracular Apollo, we find the god in a pastoral setting in a remote area of the Greek homeland, the southwest Peloponnesus, close to the 'Great Goddesses' of Arcadia discussed below. Apollo is most likely the principal deity of the 'Mysteries of Andania', a festival lasting several days in August, celebrated in an extensive grove in the countryside that was attached, at least in later days, to the city of Messene. These Mysteries are known mainly for two elaborate revivals, in 369 BC and in 92 BC. At the former date Messene city was refounded after centuries of Spartan domination, and the country festival was part of the new dispensation; but we do not know the details. At the latter date they were adorned with mystery rites of a showy and fashionable kind, as set forth in a long inscription at the festival site (*LSCG* 65).⁸⁰ It begins with the appointment of supervisors called ἱεροί and ἱεραί, "holy men" and "holy women", whose task it will be to oversee the general attendance (lines 1–11). Whereas the

Howe, *Pastoral Politics* pp. 77–97 describes the unending disputes between Greek cities over border areas that served as pasture land, together with "three major pan-Hellenic sacred wars" fought over Apollo's pasture land round Delphi. Howe's emphasis is on possession of the land, but animals as booty were important too, and many would be slaughtered at once for hides as well as meat, not incorporated somehow into existing herds.

⁷⁹ For details, see Nilsson, *Feste* pp. 101, 105–15, and *Geschichte* I pp. 530–36.

⁸⁰ The text is secure except for a few small lacunae. Deshours, *Mystères* pp. 19–20, recounts the publication history.

general attendance must observe an elaborate set of rules about clothing and other external items, the holy ones as married men and women are sworn emphatically to a rule of purity in their marital life, a private matter that could not be realistically prescribed for all the others.⁸¹ Tents are constructed for the attendance at large, with rules for their size and appointment, and for the order and decency of the occupants.

Purity is inherent in the setting, an extensive grove named '*Karneiasion*', with a sacred spring and fountain-house named '*Ἀγά*' 'Pure'. It is unclear why the worship was thought of as 'Mysteries'.⁸² Sacrifice is offered to a series of deities, perhaps at different points within the grove; at the last *Hagna* as goddess of the fountain receives a sheep, and Apollo *Karneios* as second last receives an ungedded boar, costliest of all the victims. On just these points the inscription is supported by the antiquarian writer Pausanias, who visited the site much later, in the 2nd century AD.⁸³ Pausanias likewise speaks of the '*Karnasion*' grove and singles out Apollo *Karneios* and *Hagnê*, though his notion of the presiding deities is otherwise different from the inscription. In a legendary history of the cult which Pausanias recounts elsewhere the grove is called *Lykos*, and the same name is given to an Athenian hero who is said to have founded the Mysteries in the remote past: not a surprising assertion, when we remember the immense prestige of Athens and the Mysteries there, both those of Eleusis and those of Phlya. Now *Lykos* unfailingly evokes Apollo *Lykeios*, another title of the god at the same season. Apollo *Karneios* has no place at Athens, but Apollo *Lykeios* does. The substitution is necessary if Athens is to receive credit for the founding.⁸⁴

⁸¹ "I have lived a life together with my husband *ὁσίως καὶ δικαίως* faithfully and righteously" (line 9). The vow is put in somewhat secular terms appropriate to the context of official business. The language of ritual purity is insistent in a vow even stricter which Athens imposed on a college of fourteen women, the *gerarai*, officiating in certain rites of Dionysus. "I keep pure and I am clean and pure both from all the things that are not clean and from intercourse with a man" ([Dem.] *lix Neaera* 78).

⁸² To discuss the background of the Mysteries is to enter a maze of controversy that has been winding inconclusively ever since the inscription came to light more than 150 years ago. The latest treatments are Zunino, *Hiera* pp. 301–34, and Deshours, *Mystères*, the fullest ever, which is valuable for its attention to the physical environment and to the possible bearing of cult-sites recently excavated in the Agora of Messene.

⁸³ Description of the festival site: Paus. IV 33.4–6. Legendary history: Paus. IV 1.5–9, 2.6, 3.10.

⁸⁴ The matter of the hero *Lykos* is complicated by an association he acquired only in Pausanias' own time. At this late date a prominent Athenian family named 'Lycomidae' professed descent from the legendary figure; Pausanias elsewhere, in his visit to Athens, gives a flattering account of the family's involvement in Athenian cults; he also adjusts the

Apollo *Karneios* and his great festival *Karneia*, which gives its name to August in most Dorian calendars, are a Dorian institution famous in history.⁸⁵ The festival was celebrated during several days under the full moon of August while the worshippers were lodged in tents. To this extent—and apart from the other presiding deities in the inscription, and still others known to Pausanias—the Mysteries of Andania appear to be simply a version of the *Karneia*.⁸⁶ It is feasible to speak of a ‘version’. The Messenians, though Dorian, were miserably oppressed for several centuries by Dorian Sparta. The revivals of 369 and 92 BC are two occasions when the Messenians were able to assert themselves, with help from other Greek states. They might well choose to restore this premier Dorian festival, and to present it in a form that suggested an unbroken tradition maintained in secret: ‘Mysteries of Andania’.

6. ARTEMIS

For reasons given above, the ancient goddess Artemis was associated with the new-comer Apollo in certain festivals. Her power begins in early spring, when the moon lights up a cloudless sky and brings a welcome change of weather.⁸⁷ This makes Artemis both a goddess of women by natural affinity and an imaginary huntress, since hunting begins in early spring as the animals grow more active. At Cyrene, in the area of Apollo’s sanctuary reserved for Artemis, a young woman is told at some length how to keep pure at successive stages—as bride-to-be, as new bride, and as expectant mother (*LSCG* 115 B 1–23, 335–324 BC).⁸⁸ On conceiving a child, she assimilates herself by magic actions to a bear, and obeys a priestess called ‘Bear’. Bears were common in early Greece, and the ritual is inspired by a bearish characteristic: she-bears in their strength and resolve are a model

legendary history and imports ‘Great Goddesses’ from the sphere of the Lycomidae into the Mysteries of Andania.

⁸⁵ The *Karneia* as Dorian institution: Robertson, *Religious Criterion* pp. 36–74.

⁸⁶ So Robertson, “Melanthus” pp. 246–54. Deshours, *Mystères d’Andania* pp. 234–35 simply rejects this out of hand (“intellectually stimulating, but not proven”, irony as argument).

⁸⁷ In early days and in folklore moons are named for a succession of natural events and associated activities throughout the year—though ‘year’ is not a concept, only the series of moons: cf. Nilsson, *Time-reckoning* pp. 217–25 (primitive examples), pp. 282–310 (folklore of modern Europe, beginning with Greece). Artemis embodies this outlook in a more advanced society.

⁸⁸ For text and interpretation see Robertson, *Religion and Reconciliation* pp. 319–52.

of maternity, ruthlessly excluding the male. The Bear ritual in turn gives rise to the famous story of Callisto, one of Artemis' company of Nymphs, i.e. nubile women; Callisto's punishment for involuntary pregnancy is to be transformed into a bear. Dogs too are associated with Artemis, being used in the hunt, and bitches are another model of maternity in the readiness with which they conceive and bear a litter. At Miletus the shrine of Artemis *kithônê* announces ordinary intervals of keeping pure after death, birth and intercourse—but a dog giving birth counts no less than a person (*LSAM* 51).⁸⁹ Dogs were kept in many sanctuaries of Artemis, and were led in procession at her festivals.⁹⁰ In iconography as in myth Artemis is a lovely young huntress coursing game with a pack of hounds, an image totally at variance with the secluded domestic life of Greek girls and women.

Artemis' purity is exalted in public ceremony just as in myth. Whereas the *Odyssey* describes her as ἀγνή each time she is mentioned (V 123, XVIII 202, XX 71), the record of Athens' Pythais refers to her not by name but as Ἀγνή Θεός "Pure Goddess" (*SEG* XXXII 218, lines 43, 84, 131, 103/2–101/0 BC). Stories portray an unyielding virgin offended by male lust and female unchastity (Orion, Actaeon, Ariadne, Coronis, Callisto). They exaggerate such rules of cult as we see at Cyrene, where child-bearing is the desired result: as a practical matter, unyielding virgins are not wanted. The *Odyssey* is more realistic in comparing Nausicaa to Artemis (VI 102–9, 151–52), since Nausicaa is ripe for marriage. The aetiology of the cult of Artemis *kithônê* at Miletus goes beyond realism to downright ribaldry. This cult epithet denotes the short and clinging tunic, *kithôn* or *chitôn*, which young women wear at her festival and the goddess wears in poetry and art, both in demonstration of fertility.⁹¹ It is said that the hero Neleus who founded the city of Miletus also founded this cult, because his daughter Elegeïs smacked her vulva and said, "Get yourself a big man".⁹²

⁸⁹ "Enter pure . . . from a woman in childbed and from a dog that has given birth (κυνὸς τετοκυίας) on the third day after washing".

⁹⁰ See Scholz, *Hund* pp. 45–46.

⁹¹ The epithet Χιτώνη attested for Miletus, Athens and Syracuse implies a festival name Χιτώνες, which has now appeared at Sardis. According to an inscription of Ephesus of c. 340–320 BC (*I Eph* 2), a group of tradesmen at Sardis are condemned to death for abusing *theôroi* from Ephesus who had been sent, according to old custom, ἐπι Χιτώνας "to or for Chitons". They were not fetching garments, as commentators suppose, but attending the festival so called.

⁹² Cf. Robertson, "Ritual Myth" pp. 237, 243–45.

7. METER

Meter is strictest of the gods as regards intercourse. At eponymous Metropolis near Colophon one keeps pure for two days after embracing a wife, for three days after a prostitute (*LSAM* 29, lines 4–7, IV BC). At Maeonia in eastern Lydia a man coming from his wife goes to an area for washing before he enters the sanctuary proper; a prostitute for her part waits three days and needs a special kind of purification that is not described (*LSAM* 18, lines 9–15, 147 BC). In mainland Greece no set of rules survive from a shrine of Meter. But the same strictness was undoubtedly observed. A famous story tells of impetuous young lovers, Atalanta and Hippomenes, who resort to a rustic shrine of Meter near Thebes and receive a signal punishment (*Ov. Met.* X 686–704).⁹³ Lydia and Greece and also Crete—we come to Phaestus below—all shared a strong attachment to this ancient pastoral goddess, and are brought together in a charter myth already known to epic poetry. Meter's cult on Mount Sipylus, famous for its Bronze-Age iconography, is home to Lydian Pelops, who goes forth to establish Meter's shrine at Olympia and to beget the principal dynasties of the Greek heartland, 'the Isle of Pelops'.⁹⁴

Meter's strictness in purity leads to other good behaviour. The inscription of Metropolis, after dealing with death and intercourse, continues in an unexpected way. It is forbidden to drag away a suppliant or do anything unjust, at the risk of Meter's anger (lines 8–13). As a chance detail in the orator Aeschines we learn that suppliants at Athens likewise resorted to Meter's altar in the Classical Agora (*I Tim.* 60–61).⁹⁵ The main city square, accessible and frequented, was an obvious place of refuge—and was also a common site for a shrine of Meter. In early days the whole community

⁹³ In the early 5th century Pindar celebrates Theban shrines of Meter both urban and rustic, the rustic one at *Dith.* 2.8–14; cf. Robertson, "Missing Chapter" pp. 263–67, 270, 277–78. In another version of their story the heedless lovers find themselves at a shrine of Zeus, oddly situated in the wilds (*Apld.* III 8.2.6; *Hyg. Fab.* 185.6). The variant may be due to the fact that Zeus as Meter's offspring is sometimes worshipped beside her, as at the Idaean cave.

⁹⁴ See Robertson, *Religion and Reconciliation* pp. 69–83.

⁹⁵ Robertson, *Religion and Reconciliation* pp. 79–80, 136–37, situates the Agora temple, for such it was, within the long history of Meter's worship at Athens. In many agoras, including the Old Agora of Athens, suppliants resorted rather to an altar of Zeus, which at Athens came to bear the proud label "Altar of Pity". As between the two deities, Meter is presumably original, yielding afterwards to her son, in the manner of archetypal Olympia. It is true that Athens' Classical Agora is no earlier than c. 500 BC, but we expect it to make use of old traditions.

came together for her festival of spring, the Galaxia, which celebrated the weaning of the lambs as a necessary stage before herdsmen departed for the extensive pasture lands of summer. Later the festival was very much reduced, but Athens' Councillors maintained a token celebration in the Classical Agora.⁹⁶ The moral injunction at Metropolis that was cited above follows from the circumstances of Meter's worship.

At Phaestus, where Meter is found beside the foot of the acropolis, next to the former Minoan palace, a verse inscription on the wall of her temple addresses worshippers as ἀγνοί, and includes a detail of her cult that seldom comes to light (*ICr* I xxiii 3, II BC).⁹⁷ "She mixes her potion for the faithful and for those who promise offspring", τοῖς ὀσίοις κίνχρητι καὶ οἱ γον-|εἶν ὑπέχονται (lines 3–4). The latter phrase repudiates the self-made eunuchs who carried purity too far.⁹⁸ In historical Greece they were generally disapproved: at Athens the Agora *Metróon* was traced back to the unjust slaying of such a person, a *Métragyrtēs*.⁹⁹

Under the local name Agdistis, Meter appears in a famous inscription of Philadelphia in Lydia as a well proven guardian of moral law, now assigned to a newly founded cult with ideals of purity anticipating those of Christianity (*LSAM* 20, I BC).¹⁰⁰ Philadelphia—an inland city at the foot of Mount Tmolus—was created by the king of Pergamum in the mid-second century BC to be a bastion of Greek culture. Two centuries later, the city became known for one of the earliest Christian communities (*Rev.* 3.7–13). Between these dates, a substantial citizen named Dionysius was visited by Zeus in a dream and prompted to found the new cult. As presiding deities, twelve in all, each of whom receives a newly constructed altar, Dionysius mostly chose personifications such as "Happiness" and "Wealth". Thereafter, the long inscription is taken up with rules of purity

⁹⁶ Robertson, "Missing Chapter" pp. 241–44, cites the scattered evidence for sacrifice in the Agora. The Council House and Tholos were next to Meter's temple, itself the archives office for decrees and other documents. In early days, before papyrus was imported in quantity, archives consisted of skins from Meter's animals.

⁹⁷ Sporn, *Kulte Kretas* pp. 201–2 describes the temple remains. But the conjectures that she favours about Leto and Isis as equivalent names are unwarranted. So too, despite its distinguished pedigree, is the Orphic interpretation of this poem (*Orph. fr.* 32 b iv Kern / 568 Bernabé)—the veiled language that rebukes self-castration is given an eschatological meaning it cannot bear. See further Robertson, *Religion and Reconciliation* p. 325 n. 17.

⁹⁸ For ritual purity as the object of self-castration, the careful argument of Nock, "Eunuchs", has yet to be refuted.

⁹⁹ Preserved only by late sources, the story is often dismissed out of hand. Nilsson, *Geschichte* I, p. 725, rightly upholds its significance.

¹⁰⁰ = *TAM* V 3, 1539. For general comment see Barton and Horsley, "A Hellenistic Cult Group", also Renberg, *Commanded by the Gods* pp. 284–85, 505–6.

that forbid absolutely any kind of sexual activity outside of marriage, a strictness quite unparalleled. Zeus and the emblematic deities are to play their part in upholding the rules through reward and punishment. Towards the very end (where the inscription is broken off, as so often), it is said that the rules are placed for safe-keeping “beside Agdistis [the holiest] guardian and mistress of this shrine”, presumably represented by a statue or a painting, “so that she too may show her kind intention” in upholding them.¹⁰¹ Novel as they are, the rules accord with Meter’s ancient customary disposition.

8. ‘GREAT GODDESSES’

From Meter we pass to ‘the Great Goddesses’ of Arcadia. That ancient landscape idealized by literature honours a pair of deities so called, one of them Despoina ‘Mistress’—both ‘Mistress’ and ‘Great Goddesses’ are descriptive terms concealing names too holy to be spoken. They are powers of nature much closer to pasturing than farming, though other Greeks sometimes equated them willy nilly with Demeter and Kore.¹⁰² At Lycosura the worship of Despoina was so distinctive that in 369 BC it saved the local community from being swept up into amalgamated Megalopolis. After 369, the cult at Lycosura flourished more than ever, and its festival of early summer became another set of ‘Mysteries’, admitting only those who submitted to a curious procedure.¹⁰³ Excavation has recovered *inter alia* sculptured scenes of worshippers masquerading as animals.¹⁰⁴ Two rules inscribed at different times in the second century BC are concerned respectively with the purity of appearances and the purity of one’s person. The earlier and longer one deals with clothes and coiffure before

¹⁰¹ [τὴν ἀγιοτάτην] is O. Weinreich’s supplement, generally accepted. [τὴν ἀγιοτάτην] is equally possible.

¹⁰² The distinctive Arcadian cults have been variously misunderstood. Nilsson, *Geschichte* I, pp. 477–81, sets them to rights; see also Jost, *Sanctuaires* pp. 297–355, and “Mystery Cults” pp. 155–64. Art and myth alike show the Great Goddesses holding sway over animals and plants and the whole of nature, so that Nilsson thinks of them as deities of fertility, an old-fashioned category. As a practical matter they are patrons of a pastoral regime.

¹⁰³ The festival time is indicated by seasonal items singled out in the longer set of rules: flowers are banned, but offerings may include barley ears cleared of darnel and white poppies (*LSCG* 68, lines 11, 15–16).

¹⁰⁴ Jost, *Sanctuaires* pls. 44–45, and “Mystery Cults” figs. 6.1, 6.4–8; Kaltsas, *Sculpture* nos. 584–91. The sculpture is attributed by Pausanias to Damophon of Messene, now increasingly known from excavations at that city.

turning to other matters of surpassing interest, 'initiation' and sacrifice (*LSCG* 68). The later and shorter one appears to deal with death and birth and intercourse, but is so fragmentary that no coherent sense emerges, except that two "tens" and a "five" bear witness to protracted intervals of waiting (*GSL* 8).

The longer inscription is full of ritual details, among them the following. "Black" as well as fancy clothes are banned, and "white" poppies are included among the preliminary offerings, and "white" animals are prescribed for sacrifice.¹⁰⁵ Now another sanctuary not far away, at Phigaleia, belongs to "Black" Demeter, and legend tells how the goddess herself put on "black" clothes and hid herself in anger, because Poseidon had roughly taken her so as to beget a daughter, who is Despoina.¹⁰⁶ We see why the longer rules at Lycosura exclude pregnant and nursing women from so called initiation (lines 12–13). The pastoral occasion signaled by these cults and stories is putting the rams to the ewes; the rites of Phigaleia and Lycosura are equivalent to the Roman Parilia of 21 April.¹⁰⁷

9. PAN

Pan's case is different from the rest. Let us note that the pastoral regime invested with stringent rules of purity is that of oxherds and shepherds and swineherds. These animals are essential and cherished; their keeping evokes the fondest images of a simple life. Goats and goatherds are a different matter. The animals are unruly and destructive; goat-herds are generally disliked.¹⁰⁸ In Christian belief goats represent the

¹⁰⁵ In lines 13–14, the term for the preliminary offerings is read by Voutiras, "Opfer", as ποσθύ[μα]/σιν, i.e. προθύμασιν, an improvement on the nonce word read before. Yet the following items may still serve for aromatic censuring, as argued by Ziehen on *LSG* 63.

¹⁰⁶ "Black Demeter": Paus. VIII 42.1–7. Other Arcadian cult legends turn on the same figure of a ravished goddess called either "Demeter" or "Rhea", literary names for the elder of the two "Great Goddesses". At Mantinea "Rhea" gives birth to Poseidon and sets him down among spring lambs browsing at a spring called "Lamb" (Paus. VIII 8.1–2), another seasonal indication. Poseidon's role, whether as consort or as offspring, is true to his original nature; he was the prepotent weather god until the sky god Zeus displaced him.

¹⁰⁷ Putting rams to ewes at the Parilia: Ov. *Fast.* IV 771–72, Col. VII 3.11; cf. Latte, *Röm. Rel.* 87. *Parilia* < *pario* means "rites of giving birth", fancifully taken as the birthday of Rome. The etymology < *Pales* defies both sense and phonetics, as Bömer, *Ovid* II 271–72, demonstrates at length.

¹⁰⁸ The damage done by goats to cultivated land, especially vines, is notorious; it was a fanciful reason for sacrificing goats to Dionysus. By poetic convention goatherds are either defeated by shepherds in singing matches or unsuccessful in their serenades: Theocr. *Id.* 1, 3, 5, 7. Or else the field of honour is left entirely to shepherds and oxherds: *Id.* 8, 9, 20, 27.

Devil.¹⁰⁹ Anciently, they belong to Pan, who is indeed revered as any god must be, but is always to be found by himself, except for frisking with the Nymphs. In 61 BC the cave of Pan and the Nymphs near Marathon received a dedication by three ephebes, members of Athens' youth corps.¹¹⁰ It consists entirely of an ostentatious rule of purity: "the god forbids one to bring in a patterned or a dyed or a [bordered?] garment" (*GSL* 4).¹¹¹ Why this? Fancy clothes are indeed prohibited in a wide range of cults, most of all in cults favoured by women, such as Demeter's, and in the context of processions and public gatherings. But here, in a cave, the prohibition seems as unnecessary as it is unexpected. Furthermore, this style of proclamation—"the god forbids"—is unique and arresting. Now caves of Pan are notorious, even beyond other caves, for illicit assignations.¹¹² The ephebes jokingly envisage a temptress like Horace's Pyrrha (*Carm.* I 5, c. 23 BC).

10. DEMETER

Cults of both Demeter and Dionysus differ from all others in the role they typically assign to a gathering of women, the womenfolk of the community, as magic operators of the female fertility of nature that is allied to their own. Women who gather in seclusion at Demeter's autumn festival, and women who resort to the hills at Dionysus' winter festival, are more aloof from men than women at any other time. Yet the rules posted at sanctuaries of Demeter or Dionysus say nothing about intercourse; instead there is much about clothes. The reason is simple. As long as women are at home with their husbands, they are not at liberty in the matter of intercourse. It is only after a festival has begun that measures can be taken to

¹⁰⁹ The belief is strongly held by modern Greek shepherds of the transhumant kind: Campbell, *Honour* pp. 26, 31, 347. To the extent possible, goats nowadays are cared for by women and not by men, because of the shameless sexual abandon which goats and women are deemed to share. Pan likewise is never found in any company but that of amorous Nymphs.

¹¹⁰ The ephebes go to Marathon chiefly to pay tribute at the great tumulus of the fallen. But Pan is renowned for vouchsafing help in the battle, and his cult in Attica, as at the nearby cave, dates from that time; so he deserves a visit too. Or is Pan associated in Athenian belief with the adolescent sexuality of ephebes? Remarkably, this was argued on quite other grounds by Borgeaud, *Cult of Pan* pp. 153–56, but dismissed as fanciful by Parker in his review. The new inscription, however, is open to just this interpretation.

¹¹¹ Since *χρωμάτινον* and *βαπτόν* as the first two items are necessarily distinct, the former cannot be simply 'coloured', which is the same as 'dyed'; it takes the place of *ποικίλος*, often used of fancy clothing, i.e. inwoven with coloured designs.

¹¹² Parker, *Miasma* p. 76 n. 8 gives references.

enhance this kind of purity.¹¹³ Sanctuaries of Demeter are sometimes in the countryside, sometimes in the city. Those in the city are often situated or constructed so as to assure the seclusion of women during a festival span of several days.¹¹⁴

At sanctuaries of Demeter the rules are much concerned with clothes.¹¹⁵ Also with jewelry, cosmetics, perfume. All of these conduce to sexual attraction, which is unwanted, either at the sowing festival when women are alone, or at the harvest festival when they parade through the streets with a basket of newly winnowed grain (and other folk are told to stay indoors and keep the windows shut). In the earliest such inscription, at a sanctuary of Demeter *thesmophoros* in northern Arcadia, clothing is the only subject (*LSS* 32, late VI / early V BC).¹¹⁶ “If a woman wears an ornate robe, it shall be dedicated” to the goddess; severe penalties are prescribed if the woman fails to do so or if the civic magistrate does not enforce the rule. At Patrae in Achaea, the following are prohibited during the festival *Damatia* “Demeter’s rites”—“no gold of more than an obol’s weight, no robe ornate or purple-dyed, no antimony, no piping on reeds” (*LSS* 33, III BC). The last item, *μηδὲ ἀὐλῆν*, is most unusual, and significant for our purpose: the wailing of a reed pipe was always thought seductive.¹¹⁷ For any of these offences the penalty is to purify the sanctuary, an extraordinary task.¹¹⁸

Cius in Bithynia gives us a rule for Demeter’s cult conveyed in hexameter verse—probably an oracle of Claros, with Apollo displaying a like

¹¹³ Fehrle, *Keuschheit* pp. 103–6, 121–22, 137–55 compiles the varied means of enhancing purity at festivals of Demeter. Where the efficacy of herbs and the like is in question, it can be argued that the intention or the result was otherwise, but the general purport is plain. As for Dionysus, the mood and manner of his winter festival are known only from distant and sometimes hostile report, but it is reasonable to suppose that purity was emphasized: so Fehrle, *Keuschheit* pp. 114–16.

¹¹⁴ Cole, “Demeter”, discusses the siting of Demeter sanctuaries at length and in the light of much archaeological evidence.

¹¹⁵ Accordingly, when women need to be informed of attire suitable for mourning, these rules too are posted at a shrine of Demeter, also at one of Artemis (*LSAM* 16 lines 30–33, *Gambreium*, III BC).

¹¹⁶ The festival *Thesmophoria*, says Herodotus (II 171.2–3), is an ancient custom of the Peloponnesus, hence distinctive of the Arcadians as aboriginal inhabitants. Jost, *Sanctuaires* pp. 325–26, notes that our rule agrees with this otherwise surprising assertion.

¹¹⁷ It is abhorrent to virginal Athena, and it typifies predatory Pan; for Plato it is a most pernicious influence.

¹¹⁸ Since all the women of the community lodge here for several days, a *Thesmophorion* is more extensive than any other kind of sanctuary—at Athens and Peiraeus we have concrete details to this effect. To purify a place is to sprinkle the blood of piglets everywhere.

concern for purity (*LSAM* 6, perhaps I BC).¹¹⁹ In the surviving lines, women parading in the *kalathos* (basket) procession of Demeter's harvest festival are told to "go unshod and in clean clothes, and leave things of gold at home". Why, in this injunction to simplicity, is gold singled out? Now the *kalathos* procession is otherwise familiar from Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter*—where the baskets themselves are said to be "full of gold" and representative of "gold unstinted" in the coming year.¹²⁰ "Gold" also signifies the harvest of grain; "golden" is also an epithet of Demeter herself.¹²¹ This is why, among all the various items of women's adornment, gold in particular is forbidden.¹²² It is a barren artificial thing that mocks the gold of nature.

The first part of the inscription of Cius is broken off. It concerned a point of ritual distinct from the *kalathos* procession, namely the "carving" of meat from sacrificial victims, and presumably the slaughtering as prior to the carving. Though it is a festival of women, a "man" is to do the carving. The line is incomplete; it must have added some essential qualification—men as hired help would be required in any case for slaughtering and butchering, even at a festival of women. A qualification that exactly fits the lacuna is the same as at the festival of Zeus *polieus* on Cos:

[ταῖς δ' ἰ]λασσομέν[αις δ' ἀγνός] δαιτρ(ε)υέτω ἀνήρ

For the women supplicating, let the man be pure who carves the meat.

It is likely enough that the preceding lines, entirely lost, forbade intercourse to any such servitor during the night before, as on Cos. If so, the oracle restores a neglected custom of old. At this late period, archaic ritual inadvertently neglected is rather often proposed as the remedy for misfortune; it is a recurring theme of oracles at both Claros and Didyma, as also of the Sibylline Books at Rome.

¹¹⁹ = *IKios* 16. For text and interpretation see now Rigsby, "Notes on Sacred Laws" pp. 79–80.

¹²⁰ Since the goddess in question is not named in the surviving lines, commentators entertain as well some Anatolian deity equated with Demeter. This is hypercritical, given Callimachus' similar language evoking Demeter, given too the appearance of Demeter *karpophoros*, i.e. Demeter at harvest time, in a late inscription of Cius (cf. Ehrhardt, *Milet* 2.466 n. 809). Though the city was brutally sacked by Philip V in 200 BC, old customs were undoubtedly restored thereafter.

¹²¹ Robertson, *Religion and Reconciliation* p. 204, discusses such evocative language.

¹²² So at Patrae, just mentioned; also in the pastoral cults of Andania and Lycosura. Besides inscriptions, Wächter, *Reinheitsvorschriften* pp. 117–18, cites literary sources forbidding women to wear gold while engaged in "the begetting of children" (which becomes a secondary concern of Demeter as grain goddess).

11. DIONYSOS

In the case of Dionysus, sacred laws inscribed on stone are almost lacking. Similarly, public sanctuaries of Dionysus are seldom found.¹²³ The reasons are readily apparent. Dionysus' winter festival takes place not at any shrine but at or near the hillside vineyards which are object of the magic ritual. His spring festival, when a community opens its store of new wine, is known for a boisterous display of cheer far from thoughts of purity. On the latter occasion, sexual license is evidence of Dionysus' power; it is embodied in the ritual masquing of his companion satyrs. At Athens however two famous old shrines known by the epithets *epi lēnaiôn* 'at the wine-presses' and *en limnais* 'at the pools' are associated with the festivals of winter and of spring respectively.¹²⁴ As to the former, wine-presses are a rustic implement belonging to the vintage, another occasion altogether; they are transposed to the city only as an emblem. Athens city at an early stage undertook to represent the extensive state of Attica; the two shrines were meant to focus ritual dispersed through many country districts.

Of all Greek gods Dionysus is the most lastingly popular, featured in both revivals and transformations of old religion. At Magnesia on the Maeander, a long inscription recording a late revival of his winter festival gives prominence to the ἀγνός quality required just then of a male priest who accompanies the female celebrants (*IvMagn* 215, I AD). The occasion is well known. With great excitement all the women of a given community go out to the vineyards so as to rouse the male potency of the ravaged vines.¹²⁵ They are projected in myth as 'Nymphs' or 'Maenads', and the potency of the vines is projected as the infant Dionysus, born from the winter rain in the myth of Semele's affair with Zeus. The womenfolk are for once far away from men, and free to indulge the impulses of a woman's nature—except that a male 'priest', young and innocent, is deputed to

¹²³ The excavated sanctuary at Athens is merely an adjunct of the 'theatre of Dionysus' below the Acropolis, at the east end of the south slope; it is no earlier than the late 6th century.

¹²⁴ Remarkably, neither shrine has been located, after a century and a half of searching the most trodden ground in the world. The present state of opinion is not even vexed conjecture, but bafflement and silence. It would be logical, however, to suppose that these shrines as well, both of them, were situated on the Acropolis south slope, but west of the theatre shrine which effectively replaced them. 'The pools' that once supplied fresh water for mixing the wine at the new-wine festival are well explained as run-off from the Acropolis south spring, a resource that soon proved insufficient. Why else was this prime land available later for the construction of the Stoa of Eumenes and the Odeium of Herodes Atticus? The latter perpetuates Dionysus' theatrical tradition.

¹²⁵ Robertson, "Orphic Mysteries" pp. 223–24, 229–32, treats the winter festival.

keep them company. As a youth he imparts the element of male purity that otherwise requires a term of abstinence or separation from women, as in our sanctuary rules. Euripides in the *Bacchae* famously depicts a mythical occasion corresponding to the winter festival. For dramatic purposes, the women's wild behaviour gives rise to invidious suspicion; so indeed does the presence of a youthful male priest, denounced as a charlatan.¹²⁶

In the middle Hellenistic period, Magnesia undertook to create a new or enlarged version of the winter festival (it is not clear which) and in the usual fashion obtained a response from the Delphic oracle authorizing the arrangements. The inscription that records the occasion is a century or so later. Most of the Delphic oracle is about organizing women into three *thiasoi* that will represent the whole extent of Magnesian territory—in the *Bacchae*, the women are led by three royal daughters with a corresponding range. But the very first item, which does not require any further rigmarole, is *ἱερεῖα τίθει / δὲ εὐάρτιον ἀγνόν* “appoint a priest graceful, pure” (lines 23–24). It is a male officiant whose role can only be to accompany all the women subsequently mentioned. The unusual word *εὐάρτιον* is apt for adolescent slimness; in the *Bacchae*, the priest is mocked for his daintiness. Dionysus himself is sometimes so conceived and depicted in art: the god has a life cycle as infant, boy, adolescent, and imperious bearded man, which corresponds to the growth cycle of budding vine, of grape as first formed and then mature, and of potent new wine.

Still later, in the second century AD, we find a sacred law that is one of the most unusual of the genre (*LSAM* 84).¹²⁷ It was posted somewhere in Smyrna, a city prosperous and splendid, flourishing in a favoured province of the Roman empire. Composed entirely in hexameter verse, the inscription gives elaborate rules of purity for the worship of Dionysus *Bromios* ‘Loud-resounding’ (like his jubilant worshippers). The author or the sponsor—his own name is lost, but he is “son of Menander”—is a “theophant”, and the rules apply to the god’s “precinct and shrines”. Now this is generally taken to be a private cult, but the priestly title and the ample premises are against it. Even more so are the realities of contemporary Smyrna. The principal civic shrine was in fact that of Dionysus

¹²⁶ Since the priest is central to the occasion, it is remarkable that his existence has lately been denied: so Henrichs, “Male Celebrant”, followed by others since. Before this, the priest was regularly postulated on the analogy of Euripides’ play. Neither side refers to the priest at Magnesia.

¹²⁷ = *ISmyrna* 728. The extensive bibliography is fully canvassed by Bernabé, *PEG* II 2 no. 582.

Briseus 'Heavy-laden' (as a vine is with ripe grapes).¹²⁸ It was managed by an "Association of Artists and Initiates" who cultivated relations with the Roman emperor and advanced the interests of the city in every way they could.¹²⁹ "Associations of Artists" devoted to Dionysus appear at many cities, but the one at Smyrna embraces "Initiates" (*Mystai*) as well—agreeing with the rare title "theophant" of our inscription and with the recondite, either Orphic or Pythagorean, nature of the rules. Admittedly there is a difference. Whereas Dionysus' epithet is *Bromios* in our inscription, it is *Brisios* in the Artists' dossier. Epithets however are freely bestowed, most of all in cults of Dionysus.

Abortion, miscarriage, death in the household, death outside it respectively require waiting intervals of 40, 40, 10 and 3 days, about as strict as could be. In a different vein, black garments are forbidden, and the eating of meat that is not from proper sacrifices, or of eggs, heart, mint, beans. The dietary prohibitions in their strictness or their oddity are typical of both Orphics and Pythagoreans; over the course of centuries both sects drew on a teeming background of popular superstition. But since Pythagorean doctrine was often fancied by the governing Romans—it was associated with conservative political sentiments, as Orphism was not—it seems likely to be in question here.

12. ASCLEPIUS AND PURITY OF MIND

With Asclepius we come to purity of mind, a moral virtue. Purity of mind does not appear among sanctuary rules until the 4th century, and not so often thereafter, and still without excluding the familiar physical requirements. It is not that the Greeks were backward or constrained in ascribing moral sanctions to the gods. They are proclaimed by epic poetry, and adjudicated by the Delphic oracle, and exemplified and argued in tragedy. As a matter of everyday life, city squares were adorned with sanctuaries and statues of deities both old and new who represented justice and concord and good faith. Yet the pastoral and agrarian and other cults surveyed above are focussed elsewhere, and the purity they demand, the

¹²⁸ In first publishing the inscription J. Keil thought of Dionysus *Briseus*, but no one since has taken up the suggestion.

¹²⁹ Hirschmann, "Macht durch Integration?", further argues that they cultivated relations with the considerable community of early Christians.

purity proper to ἀγνός, is non-moral. Morality could not be introduced without a certain awkwardness.

It will be helpful to compare the Eleusinian Mysteries. The Mysteries began as a festival of the sowing in which the secret ritual, a magic mimicry of human reproductive process, served to augur a new crop of grain; then the ritual was taken to promise a thriving afterlife as well, the human worshippers being assimilated to the grain more wishfully than ever.¹³⁰ Even so they were still ἀγνός in the same physical sense as Demeter and the grain. This became moral purity only by a shift of meaning that is well exemplified in a famous passage of Aristophanes. The Eleusinian processions in the *Frogs* are complimented with the terms ἀγνός (lines 334, 385) and ὄσιος (lines 327, 335), and as a hallmark of physical purity are costumed in clothes and shoes that are downright shabby (lines 404–12). It is the outlook of our inscriptions. But when announcement is made of persons unworthy to join the procession, and we are treated to a comic catalogue of sneaks and shirkers, the archetypal offender that gives colour to the rest is ὄστις . . . γνώμην μὴ καθαρεύει “whoever is not pure in thought” (line 355). Morality has been smuggled in for a comic purpose.

Aristophanes’ phrase in anapaestic rhythm might conceivably be adapted from a verse epigram at Athens’ Eleusinion. For when morality appears at last in our rules of purity, it is expressed by verse epigrams. The earliest such rule we hear of is probably the elegiac couplet inscribed at the door of Asclepius’ temple at Epidaurus, constructed in the early 4th century.¹³¹ ἀγνὸν χρῆ ναοῖο θυωδέος ἐντὸς ἰόντα / ἔμμεναι· ἀγνεῖα δ’ ἐστὶ φρονεῖν ὄσια “One must be pure to enter the sweet-scented temple: purity is righteous thought.” Since the couplet is transmitted only by late authors (Clem. *Strom.* V 1.13.3, Porph. *Abst.* II 19.5), we cannot be quite sure that it was inscribed when the building was new.¹³² But it was natural at the time to inscribe a verse epigram. From the 6th century onwards tombs and herms were adorned with maxims in verse for the benefit of passers-by. One such is famous, a moral rule like ours: στεῖχε δίκαια φρονῶν “go

¹³⁰ The most literal expression of this belief is Paul’s denial of it (I *Cor.* 15.36–38).

¹³¹ The temple is closely dated by the sculptural style of surviving fragments of the east pediment. Riethmüller, *Asklepios* I, pp. 308–10, weighs expert opinion and fixes on the decade 390–380 BC.

¹³² On the usual view, Porphyry takes the couplet from Theophrastus *On Piety* (= fr. 9 Pötscher), like some other material hereabouts; but the inference is disputed by Bremmer, “How Old is the Ideal”. However this may be, it is unlikely in the extreme that either the couplet or its place on the temple is as late as the early Empire, the date proposed instead.

your way with righteous thought" ([Pl.] *Hipparch.* 229a, cf. *CEG* I no. 304, c. 520–514 BC). The Epidaurus couplet belongs to this elegiac tradition, as we may call it. The tradition itself makes use of age-old hexameter formulas, and "sweet-scented temple" is one of them, familiar from Homeric *Hymns* (*Dem.* 355, *Aphr.* 58). The couplet at Epidaurus was a new departure that sounded just like old custom.

Some later instances are plainly inspired by Epidaurus. ἀγνὸν πρὸς τέμενος στείχειν / ὅσια φρονέοντα "go pure into the precinct, thinking lawful thoughts" is a hexameter verse at Mytilene for a deity unmentioned (*LSS* 82, no reported date)—but Mytilene had a notable cult of Asclepius.¹³³ A verse oracle found lately at Oenoanda calls for sacrifice to Asclepius γνώμαι καθαρῶι "with a pure heart" (*SEG* L 1352 bis, I BC). A rule at Rhodes city which comes to us without a name first calls for abstinence from intercourse, beans, and heart (the edible organ), and then gives the Epidaurian couplet but varies it at the end—οὐ λουτροὶ ἀλλὰ νόμι καθαρὸν "and not with a bath, but clean in mind" (*LSS* 108, I AD). Since food interdictions are mostly non-Greek, and since the words quoted are elsewhere linked with Sarapis (*Clem. Strom.* IV 22.142.3), there can be little doubt who is in question here. The Egyptian god is a kindly healer just like Asclepius; he has plagiarized Asclepius.

Astypalaea in the Sporades gives us a most unusual rule of conscience. "No one shall enter the sanctuary who is not pure. ἢ τελεῖ ἢ αὐτῶι ἐν νῶι ἐσσεῖται Either he shall see to it or it shall be on his mind" (*LSCG* 130, III BC). Both syntax and purport of these Greek words were much debated until editors settled on the meaning "Either he shall pay a fine or it shall be on his mind".¹³⁴ Now would any rule prescribe a fine and not the amount? Instead, τελεῖ has its basic sense of 'fulfil, accomplish', but is used absolutely, 'see to it'. It may be that purity requirements are exhibited nearby, or that they are generally known: but a more likely explanation lies at hand. Though editors have left it open what cult this may be, doubt is scarcely possible. Asclepius had a flourishing practice at Astypalaea, as we know both from local inscriptions and from others of Epidaurus that treat

¹³³ See Reithmüller, *Asklepios* II, pp. 360–61.

¹³⁴ First proposed by Wilamowitz, this meaning was firmly rejected by Ziehen on *LSG* 123; it has nonetheless prevailed. Ziehen also rejected three hypothetical alternatives, quite rightly. 1) "or [who is not] τελεῖ[ος] of sound body". But the inscription is by a careful hand, excluding any gross omission of letters. 2) "or [who does not] belong", scil. to the cult membership, with τελεῖ as present instead of future. 3) "or it will be for the magistrate or on one's mind", with τελεῖ dative.

the town as a colony (*IG* IV 1² 47–48, 615).¹³⁵ The couplet on the temple door of Epidaurus was famous; it must have been taken as gospel by cults elsewhere. So it was at Astypalaea, where a warning is now added about the burden of a guilty conscience.¹³⁶

Apart from Asclepius, purity of mind is seldom mentioned, but always in verse. The epigram exalting Meter's cult at Phaestus runs to six verses, five hexameters and a pentameter, and takes the form of a hymn (*ICr* I xxiii 3). Its stern and exalted tone, together with some misunderstanding of the sense, has caused it to be labelled Orphic (above n. 97). There is in fact no explicit rule, and nothing moral except the tone.

An epigram of late date and distant provenance is remarkable for jejune elaboration. It too is inscribed beside a temple door, at the well preserved Hadrianic temple of Zeus *lepsyros* at Euromus in Caria (*SEG* XLIII 710, XLVIII 1329). Three couplets vary the same thought. "If you have a pure (*καθαράν*) heart and have practiced righteousness (*δικαίον*) in your soul", enter. "If you venture on injustice (*ἀδίκων*) and your mind is not pure (*οὐ καθαρεύει*)", go away. "The temple abhors rascals, but fitly rewards the faithful (*όσίοις*)". This text has been thought to register a decisive advance in associating justice (*δικαίον*, *ἀδίκων*) with moral purity.¹³⁷ But justice is commended by early epigrams, and its inclusion here seems almost haphazard.

13. THE CLEANSING OF OFFENDERS

Whereas a person keeping pure for worship is *ἄγνός*, a person purified of wrong-doing is *καθαρός*. A small class of inscriptions constitute a tradition separate from the purity rules of cult, and at variance with them. The *καθαρός* vocabulary is now used exclusively; only once, in the latest inscription of all, is *ἄγνός* synonymous.

According to a usual belief of early days, to kill or injure a member of the community is polluting. If the killer or assailant remains in the community—and this is altogether likely in the case of one more valued than the victim—he must be somehow purified to avert any further difficulty. Greek literature seldom notices the custom, but only because

¹³⁵ See Riethmüller, *Asklepios* II, pp. 346–47. As to the connexion with Epidaurus, cf. *IG* XII 3 p. 30.

¹³⁶ The equivalent terms *ἐνθύμιον* and *ἐνθυμιστόν* are invoked against those who disregard other sacred laws, as cited by Parker, *Miasma* p. 253 n. 105.

¹³⁷ So Chaniotis, "Reinheit" pp. 156, 158, 163, 164 (while dating the inscription much earlier, to the 2nd century BC).

it is taken for granted. In well-ordered communities public documents once gave detail, but rarely survive. At Athens alone we have a document preserved by a literary source, *The Traditions of the Eupatridae* excerpted by Athenaeus (IX 78, 409f-410b). Five epigraphic instances are considered below; they extend in time from the 6th century to the mid Hellenistic period, and represent old custom both of the homeland (Cleonaë, Tegea) and of far-flung settlements (Lato, Thasos, Cyrene). They show that Greek cities commonly preserved the old means of purifying a wrong-doer even when it was wholly superseded by legal process.

Legal process does not always satisfy natural feeling. At Athens there is a strange story that serves to combine or reconcile purification and legal process. The story tells how the city came to celebrate the festival *Buphonia* 'Ox-slaying'. This agrarian festival involves the demonstrative slaying of a plough-ox, much like the festival of Cos noticed above; it is not really a purification rite of any kind, but rather the ultimate thank-offering for the harvest. At a time when the true meaning was long forgotten, it was fancifully said that the *Buphonia* ritual began when the responsibility for the ox-slaying was traced back by legal argument through the whole chain of officiants to the knife or axe that struck the blow—which was then thrown into the sea as a virtual purification.¹³⁸

So the purifying custom persisted beside legal process, and of course without reference to the purity rules of cult. We shall return to the long inscription from Apollo's sanctuary at Cyrene only because of its concluding and indeed culminating section, the procedure for purifying an offender in the great sanctuary. Otherwise these inscriptions derive from monumental structures at some place of vantage in each city, no doubt the agora in most cases. Sadly shattered as they are, they can all be recognized as public documents of the first importance. I take them in chronological order.

A rule at Cleonaë in the Argolid, of the early 6th century, is inscribed "with the greatest care and skill" in vertical lines, bustrophedon, on three faces of a stele (*LSCG* 56).¹³⁹ It was once conspicuous in some public place.

¹³⁸ Theophr. *De Piet.* fr. 7 Pötscher = Porph. *De Abst.* II 12–15; Ael. *Var. Hist.* VIII 3; Paus. I 24.4, 28.10. Another explanation of the rite pays tribute to the purification custom by saying that an Athenian farmer who killed an ox in a fit of temper fled at first to the archaic land of Crete to order to be purified (Theophr. *De Piet.* fr. 18 = Porph. *De Abst.* II 29–31).

¹³⁹ It is curiously like the enigmatic stele sealed beneath the Lapis Niger of the Forum Romanum (*ILLRP* 3), which is of similar date. Both came to light about the same time, and the resemblance was noted, together with a careful description of our stone, by its finder S. O. Dickerman.

As plausibly restored it speaks of a “polluted” person and his “purification” by two distinct procedures well known from literature, τὸλατήριον ἀπόβαμα “the expelling ablution” and ἱλασμόν “propitiation”, i.e. both a physical washing and a verbal deprecation of divine anger. Why are the procedures so prominently advertised? In early days Cleonae was in charge of the Nemean Games nearby, and lay on a route leading also to the Isthmian Games. Interstate events like these drew persons from far and wide—who might include bitter enemies. A purification ceremony, together with a more pragmatic compounding of differences, would reconcile them sufficiently for the purpose at hand. As it happens, there was a tomb at Cleonae commemorating two legendary heroes who had fought against Heracles during the war in Elis—and who afterwards took to the road to attend the Isthmian Games, but fell victim to Heracles’ bow just here (Paus. II 15.1). Heracles himself was famously in need of purification after his many killings, and he visited certain places, Athens for example, in order to receive it. His Athenian visit explains the origin of the Lesser Mysteries in Agrae. It is likely that the killing at Cleonae follows the pattern and provides an archetype for the local purification ceremony.

Only the merest fragments survive of an important document of the mid 5th century that was once inscribed on the wall of a public building in the agora of Thasos (*LSS* 65).¹⁴⁰ It calls for a drastic purification with the following details: “washing” [clothes], “customary right (θέμις)”, “banqueting”, “pouring libation to Zeus *katharsios*”, “of the land or of the house”, “bringing round and pouring out sulphur”, “[kindling?] the fire”, “[bathing] from the head down”. First the person is purified by a washing and a ceremony addressed to Zeus *katharsios* (banquet and libation presuppose a sacrifice); this much is like the purification at Cyrene examined below, to be performed at the great sanctuary of Apollo. Either Zeus or Apollo is the deity usually concerned; Delphi is famous for representing their combined authority. The other phrases describe a purification elsewhere, evidently of property and persons at the scene of the crime. Sulphur and fire remind us of Odysseus’ purification of the hall and the court where the suitors and others were slaughtered (*Od.* XXII 481–82, 493–94). Given its location on a wall in the agora, the document is more likely to be a standard procedure, the responsibility of certain magistrates dealing with certain cases, than a momentary response to some event that has embroiled the community.

¹⁴⁰ Pouilloux, *Recherches* pp. 82–85, 87–92, 99–100 (but it is fanciful to ascribe this document to the cult of Theogenes).

Tegea in southern Arcadia has left us an inscription of the 4th century that was likewise very prominent, being inscribed across two adjoining orthostate blocks of some public building (*LSS* 31). It refers to the cult of “Apollo” and to “priests and cult recorders” (*hiaromnamones*) and also, unexpectedly, to “dancers” (*orchêstai*)—who are best explained as pertaining to the festival time in spring when Apollo was honoured with song and dance. At the beginning are clear directives to “go out from the shrine, and purify the shrine, and on the next day ἰλάσκεσθαι propitiate with a cake”, and two lines later the fragmentary word]χραι, which may point to Hesychius’ dialect gloss ἐπιχρά· κατάχυσις, i.e. a ritual “pouring over” [someone or something]. We have the same combination of things, of physical cleansing and of addressing prayers, as at Cleonae. Thereafter the phrase “[a person] is καθαρός pure” is repeated at least four times, and we hear of someone “τεθνατός dead.” It is once more a purification rite for homicide, and possibly other offences. Yet the details of cult strongly suggest that this individual remedy is to be combined with Apollo’s festival of April or May. That festival is generally known for rites of purification such as the expulsion of a scapegoat—of which Tegea supplies a leading instance.¹⁴¹ This is the time, just before the harvest, when the community prepares itself by every means to receive the new crop. Individual need reinforces the community interest while adding further expenditure and spectacle.

At Cyrene in Libya the long inscription already cited twice for rules of purity—in respect of Apollo and of Artemis—also gives details of a purifying ceremony to be undertaken at need by a suppliant (*LSS* 115 B 50–59). Like other parts of the inscription, it has been variously understood. This document has a very broad range. The professed subject is καθαρμοί and ἀγνήϊαι, traditional purifications as it were, now authorized by Delphi (the organization of Dionysus’ worship at Magnesia was similarly authorized). In the cult of Apollo we are told what intervals are needed after intercourse, childbirth, and miscarriage; in that of Artemis ritual is prescribed at length for a new bride and expectant mother. Other rules are

¹⁴¹ Pausanias in his full account of Tegea describes the festival of Apollo *agyieus* and its legendary origin in a visit by Apollo and Artemis to complain that Tegea refused to harbour Leto at the time of their birth—actually a compliment, if Tegea was Leto’s first choice—which led to a killing and a pursuit that is unmistakably a scapegoat rite (VIII 53.1–3). Given both the birth story and the rite, the festival in question cannot be other than Apollo’s premier festival of spring. The month *Agyiêos* named for the festival falls sometime in spring, though it is not exactly placed in any city calendar: cf. Trümper, *Monatsnamen*, index s.v.

specially devised for contemporary needs, notably the right of access to shrines customarily forbidden of gods called Tritopateres. Whether old or new, all the aforementioned rules might be called ἀγνήϊαι. Three procedures at the last are plainly καθαρμοί—a trivial one for exorcising a house, and a modest one that consists of putting questions to a local oracle, but at the very end a public ceremony for absolving a suppliant, which entails considerable expense. The suppliant first appeals to an “intercessor”.¹⁴² With the intercessor’s help, and in the presence of a body of silent witnesses, he is seated on a fleece at the entrance to Apollo’s sanctuary and washed and anointed; then he goes within and the others follow, and he burns cakes in the altar fire (which recalls the rites of propitiation at Cleonae and Tegea) and sacrifices an animal—this with his own hand, an unusual effort. What wrong has he done, to be thus elaborately purified? He is plainly not an abhorrent criminal, but someone able and willing to bear considerable expense. And he follows his own conscience, like the others who exorcise a house or put questions to the oracle. The inscription caters to citizens of both larger and lesser means and is meant to suit a variety of needs; the concluding ceremony is for someone at the top of the scale.

At Lato in Crete we are informed of such offences as do *not* require purification. An inscription of the 2nd century BC posted in the agora lists exhaustively the cases of death and injury in which a person somehow responsible shall not be charged with homicide or assault: fire, boiling water, dog-bite, misadventure while lying in bed, it might be in rented accommodation (*LSS* 112).¹⁴³ A recurring phrase is μηθὲν ἐπικωλύεσθαι ἀλλὰ καθαρὸν ἦμεν “he shall be in no way implicated but shall be pure.” Once it is said [ἀγ]νός ἔστω “let him be pure,” an unexpected variation. The purpose of all this is simply to preclude improper accusations and threats of litigation: to be ‘pure’ is to be clear of blame. Crete was deeply conservative, almost unchanging, and pollution was still the avowed consequence of many crimes and delicts.

We see then that a few καθαρός inscriptions attest the strange old practice of physically purifying offenders who otherwise threaten the well-

¹⁴² The role of intercessor is also attested a little later, sometime in the third century, at another Dorian city traditionally kin to Cyrene, Lindus on Rhodes (*SEG* XXXIX 729). At Athens the role was entrusted to hereditary experts, the *Eupatridae*.

¹⁴³ Sokolowski prints only the longer frs. i–iv. For frs. v–xiv, see *ICr* I xvi 6—they are very fragmentary, but show how wide the range is. Sporn, *Kulte Kretas* p. 63, mistakes the purport of this inscription; it has been fully explained by Wilhelm, De Sanctis, and Latte as cited by Sokolowski.

being of a community. The practice is at variance with Greek law and social institutions, as it would be with ours today. It is another instance of the extreme conservatism inherent in the Greek 'epigraphic habit'.

14. SUMMARY

Greek has two words meaning "pure", *καθαρός* and *ἄγνός*, distinguishable in early usage as "clean, pure" and "holy, pure". The early usage is that of epic and lyric poetry, traditional genres captured in the first Greek writing but reflecting a long period of illiteracy before, the Early Iron Age. Thereafter, in Greek literature as we know it for a span of a thousand years, the two words and their many derivative forms converge in meaning, though *καθαρός* and its derivatives are always more commonly used. Yet the early distinction continues elsewhere, in a gradually diminishing degree. Inscriptions on stone, mostly beginning in the 6th century, sometimes perpetuate old usages otherwise unknown. Conspicuous among them are 'sacred laws' that insist on *ἄγνός* purity. It is defined in two general ways, as free from taint of intercourse or childbirth or death, or as plainly dressed and without objects of artifice.

The gods associated with *ἄγνός* purity are not the entire pantheon of Olympian deities who are worshipped in every Greek city, but only six of them: the gods Zeus, Apollo, Dionysus, the goddesses Artemis, Athena, Demeter. Also associated are the elder goddess Meter and the younger god Asclepius ('elder' and 'younger' in a mythical sense, like 'Olympian'). The range of sanctuaries at which *ἄγνός* rules are posted is restricted too, and more so. In the course of time, those six Olympians came to be worshipped in each Greek city as the patrons of activities and qualities co-extensive with civilized life. But the only sanctuaries hedged by rules of *ἄγνός* purity are those concerned, or formerly concerned, with simple country livelihoods, pasturing and agriculture, or with the weather and the seasons on which these livelihoods depend. Asclepius as god of healing is outside this range, but he came to his healing vocation—which in early days had been that of his father Apollo—in sanctuaries with a simple country setting. This background of simple pasturing and agriculture returns us to the Early Iron Age, from which early poetry emerged with a like regard for the *ἄγνός* quality.

It seems then a necessary inference that the *ἄγνός* kind of purity imposed itself during the Early Iron Age. This period, especially the early part, is known for harsh conditions; it probably began with a ruinous climate change. Together with a complete disruption of settled and

organized life, such adversity must have brought a general distrust of old customs and beliefs. People turned instead to a new pantheon of gods, newly led by Zeus instead of Poseidon. The former sky god and the family he now acquired were thought of as dwelling close at hand on a notional mountain top called 'Olympus', just like the mountains appearing next to every Greek community. These gods were entrusted with control of the weather and with fostering the simple livelihoods on which everything now depended. Monthly festivals were the means of concerting a community effort as needed; festival names were imprinted in a local calendar specific to each new community. These calendars survive without change to typify later Greek cities in a pattern deriving from the Early Iron Age; they are a prime source of information. The chief calendar festivals are those addressed to the same six members of the new pantheon: Zeus and Athena, Apollo and Artemis, Demeter and Dionysus.

All save Apollo are inherited from Mycenaean times, but their functions, as evident from the festival names, are new. Zeus and Athena are weather gods, strikingly different from the typical weather gods of the Bronze Age, and from Poseidon as the Mycenaean instance. These two are credited in the calendars with bringing a dramatic but consistent change of weather from autumn to winter. Artemis and Apollo appear in the calendars as fostering activities of the whole fair weather season from mid-spring to mid-autumn. This pattern of activities conforms to a style of life, transhumant pasturing, which recurs in the Greek peninsula during times of difficulty; it calls for a general movement between lowlands in winter and uplands in summer. Artemis had always displayed her power in spring; the new god Apollo was now added as her twin, so as to rule the summer months. Demeter and Dionysus represent the staple crops of grain and wine, with festivals marking the critical stages of growth and maturity. The myths of both deities show them arriving on the scene all at once and enforcing their worship with irresistible power. It is because these staple crops had failed during the harsher weather at the outset of the Early Iron Age, but recovered later when a concerted effort was made.

Such are the conditions of the Early Iron Age that called for *ἀγνός* purity. When conditions changed and the Greeks emerged from adversity and created the *polis* as a new background for civilization, *ἀγνός* lost its distinctive meaning and converged with *καθαρός*. The Olympian gods acquired a wide range of new concerns that superseded their narrow mandate of the Early Iron Age. But in a few places, whether in the countryside or amid a city setting, old cults continued, and with them the tradition of insisting on *ἀγνός* purity.

ABBREVIATIONS

- CAH*² *Cambridge Ancient History*. 2d ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970–.
- CEG* Hansen, Peter Allan, ed. *Carmina Epigraphica Graeca*. 2 vols. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983–89.
- DMic* Auro Jorro, Francisco, ed. *Diccionario Micénico: Griego-Español*. 2 vols. Madrid: Instituto de Filología, 1985–93.
- Encycl. Rel.* Lindsay Jones, ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion*. 15 vols. 2d ed. Macmillan, 2005.
- GSL* Lupu, Eran. *Greek Sacred Law: A Collection of New Documents (NGSL)*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- ICr* Guarducci, Margherita, ed. *Inscriptiones Creticae*. 4 vols. Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1935–50.
- IEph* Wankel, Hermann, and H. Engelmann, eds. *Die Inschriften von Ephesos*. Bonn: Habelt, 1979–81.
- IG*^{1,2,3} *Inscriptiones Graecae*. 15 vols. 1st ed. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1877–. 2d ed. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1913–. 3d ed. Berlin, De Gruyter, 1981–.
- IKios* Corsten, Thomas, ed. *Die Inschriften von Kios*, Bonn, 1985.
- ILLRP* Degrassi, Attilio, ed. *Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae*. 2 vols. Florence: La nuova Italia, 1963–1965.
- IvMagn* Kern, Otto, ed. *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maeander*. Berlin: Spemann, 1900.
- ISmyrna* Petzl, Georg, ed. *Die Inschriften von Smyrna*, Bonn, 1987.
- LfrgE* Snell, Bruno, et al. eds. *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos*. 4 vols. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1955–2010.
- LIMC* *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, 9 vols. Zurich, 1981–1999.
- LSAM* Sokolowski, Franciszek, ed. *Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure*. Paris: de Boccard, 1955.
- LSCG* Sokolowski, Franciszek, ed. *Lois sacrées des cités grecques*. Paris: de Boccard, 1969.
- LSG* Prott, Hans von, and Ludwig Ziehen, eds. *Leges Graecorum sacrae et titulis collectae*. 2 vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1896–1906.
- LSS* Sokolowski, Franciszek, ed. *Lois sacrées des cités grecques. Supplément*. Paris: de Boccard, 1962.
- LSJ* Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott and Henry Stuart Jones, eds. *Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.

- LSJRS* Glare, P.G.W. ed. Liddell, Scott, Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon: Revised Supplement*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
- PEG* Bernabé, Albertus, ed. *Poetae Epici Graeci*, 4 vols., Leipzig and Munich, 1987–2009.
- RE* Wissowa, Georg et al., eds. *Pauly's Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Alterthumswissenschaft*. 84 vols. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1894–1980.
- SEG* *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*. Leiden: Brill and others, 1923–.
- SIG³* Dittenberger, Wilhelm, ed. *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*. 3d ed. 4 vols. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1915–1924.
- TAM* *Tituli Asiae Minoris*, Vienna, 1920–.
- ThesCRA* *Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum*, 6 vols. Los Angeles, 2004–2006.

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CONCEPTS OF PURITY IN ANCIENT GREECE,
WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON SACRED SITES

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For this printed version of the paper on Ancient Greece that I had the honor of presenting in association with the workshop ‘Purity in Processes of Social, Cultural and Religious Differentiation’, I will retain the thematic focus on ritual and non-ritual purification of sacred sites. This theme corresponds to my interest in sacrilege, especially acts of violence against and inside religious sites during political disputes, a topic I was able to work on for quite some time. The central theme will be concepts of purity, which were supposed to be sketched out for ‘pre-Hellenic Antiquity’. However, it does not make sense to me to limit the scope to the time before Alexander the Great (336–323 BCE): this historical or, rather, art-historical–archaeological ordering of Greek Antiquity into Archaic, Classic and Hellenic periods is not well-suited to the history and study of religion. And as it turns out, the same answers to the various questions given in the workshop can be drawn from the available material from both pre-Hellenic and post-Classical evidence.¹

I have an additional reservation, concerning the plural ‘Greek religions’ in the original wording. Normally one speaks of the Greek religion:² the numerous and very diverse gods, as well as their similarly diverse cults, can in no way be described as different ‘religions’, although this unfortunately happens again and again. One example of this appears in a recently published archaeological paper on Apollo of Milet.³ The author first calls the god the “personification of statehood”, then calls the cult of Apollo a “state cult”, before finally, with respect to the close ties between Apollo

¹ Especially suitable for this purpose is the epigraphic text of a *lex sacra* from Cyrene, which has become, since its discovery in 1922, a *locus classicus* for pollution and purification precisely because it shows, with its controversial difficulties for language and religious study, how far from complete the investigations into this focus of our interest actually are. On this point cf., below, notes 35–36. A discussion of this significant document is not possible in the space allotted here.

² Cf. the standard work of Nilsson, *Religion, passim*.

³ Herda, “Apollon”, 13–75.

Delphinios and Apollo Didymeus, speaking of a specific “bipolarity of Milesian state religion”.⁴

Looked at this way, every (purported) ‘state cult’—for example the cult of Athena in Athens, of Hera on Samos and in Argos, or of Artemis in Ephesus—would qualify as a ‘state religion’, and we would count as many (state) religions in antique Hellas as city states/*poleis* or other state communities (*éthne* = tribal states, or *koiná* = federal states)—and this does not yet include the so-called Pan-Hellenic cults, for example, those of Apollo Pythios in Delphi, of Zeus Olympios in Olympia, or of Poseidon on the Isthmus of Corinth.

That the idea that ‘state cult’ equals ‘state religion’ is false can be demonstrated not least by the fact that there were usually several gods in a *polis* that were venerated ‘ex officio’, namely, by the entire settlement community, which was at the same time chiefly the cult community. Thus, in Athens for example, there was not just one, or more than one, cult of Athena, but also cults of Apollo, Dionysus, Demeter and Kore, Poseidon, etc. In Milet, there were cults not only of Apollo but also of Artemis, Athena, Aphrodite, etc. Therefore, one likewise cannot speak of a ‘change of religion’ when one determines that in one *polis* at a particular time a certain cult was clearly preferred over another cult. In the following, then, I will treat not religions but various cults, which of course all have their own religious contexts and interwoven traditions but which are not, each in itself, identical with ‘Greek religion’.

In what follows I would first like to sketch the basic characteristics of the concepts of purity that were common to most of the cults, as can be found in the relevant handbooks.⁵ Nilsson, in his writings on ‘power and the sacred’, emphasizes the extraordinary role that taboos of purity play in most religions, though he assumes that strict taboo precepts were rather scarce in ancient Greece.⁶ Purity and chastity were required of any person who approached the gods; for priests, there were at most additional rules of physical integrity.⁷ What he means by impurity is principally physical impurity and that generated by sexuality and death, although he recognizes in the Hellenes’ world of faith a pragmatic moderation in defining purity, which he ascribes to a characteristic relativization of that power

⁴ Herda, “Apollon”, 61.

⁵ Nilsson, *Religion*, *passim*; Parker, *Miasma*, generally uses ‘early Greek Religion’ to mean the pre-Hellenistic Greek religion.

⁶ Nilsson, *Religion*, 89–91; cf. Parker, *Miasma*, 328–31.

⁷ Nilsson, *Religion*, 90.

that is the basis of taboo concepts in other religions.⁸ For Nilsson, meanwhile, the central role is played by the term 'impurity', which has two opposites: pure and sacred. In this conception, impurity is to be eliminated by purification and changed into purity in the sense that what is now pure may approach the sacred because it is no longer tainted by the sacred's opposite, the impure.⁹ It must be noted that the profane is not the opposite of the sacred, and therefore the profane is also not identical with the impure but is instead an entity *sui generis*.

Due to the fundamental relevance of the Greek terminology, a short explanation of terms is in order:¹⁰ Ἱερός and ἄγιος/ἄγνός (ἄζομαι = to dread, esteem) are to be translated as 'holy/sacred', while ἱερός and its semantic field (ἱερόν, ἱερεύειν, ἱερεύς, ἱερεῖον) are of controversial etymology and evidently have to do with power and greatness. Ἄγιος, on the other hand, is connected with purity, but like the Latin *sacer* has the double meaning of 'pure/holy' as well as 'cursed'. Therefore the related noun ἄγιος on the one hand means maculation, sacrilege and, concretely, bloodguilt, but can on the other also express 'holiness'. Impurity by contamination is μίασμα ('maculation'), but μιάρός can also be a synonym for ἄγιος, while the verb ἀγνίζειν can be used synonymously with καθαίρειν ('cleanse'): Καθαρός is the commonly known word for 'pure', though this κάθαρσις ('purification') can also be of a metaphysical kind. The term ὄσιος is much debated; it can be used as a synonym for ἄγνός and καθαρός. Through the restoration of the pure by καθαίρειν, μιάρός ('dirty') becomes ἱερός again, or ὄσιος. According to Parker, ὄσιος denotes the opposite of taboo, namely, that which is welcome and pleasing to the divine and the very thing that should not be avoided.

Against the background of the philological aspects presented here, at this point some of the questions posed in advance to structure the presentations and discussions in the workshop can be answered.

The first complex question we can answer is as follows:

- Is there a differentiating semantics of concepts of purity and impurity and which are the aspects that come to the fore;
- is there a difference between so-called ritual and moral purity and, if so, how are these domains distinguished one from the other?

⁸ Nilsson, *Religion*, 90; 92–101 treats the following topics one after another: filth, sexual intercourse, menstruation, fasting, childbirth, death and the dead, murder and killing.

⁹ Nilsson, *Religion*, 90; 101–10 concerns purifications, including the Pharmakos ritual.

¹⁰ On the following, cf. Nilsson, *Religion*, 89–91; Parker, *Miasma*, 3–17; 330–31.

This has for the most part been elucidated: in any case, it is a matter of physical and cultic purity/impurity and much less of 'moral' purity; in addition, the differences are not fundamental or at least not discernible as such.¹¹

The succinct answer to the question "How is the difference between 'purity' and 'holiness' evaluated?" is that 'purity' and 'holiness' are in principle congruent terms. A further question can also be answered here, namely:

Are there in the material evidence indications of diachronic developments of purity representations and concepts;
are such developments the result of religious contacts or influences from outside, or are they exclusively to be understood as an internal development?

On this point, see the evaluation of pollution by sexual intercourse and menstruation, and of fasting as cathartic, which Nilsson, in his treatment of Greek concepts of purity, believed to be imperceptible: still rooted in the 1900s in terms of academic history, Nilsson perceived in such defective concepts a characteristic of the Greeks as a still-totally 'natural' people who neither appreciated (sexual) asceticism nor made any 'superstitious' 'ado about menstruation', and he attributed dissenting sources either to Oriental religions or to agrarian magic practices.¹²

Because to all appearances the concept of a 'contagious' impurity is fundamental to Greek religious thinking, much attention is paid to what are highly significant provisions for purification and its corresponding rituals. In this respect, the area of religious study based on literary tradition primarily refers to texts of classical authors, whereas religious historians increasingly draw on the rich epigraphic source material as well.¹³ In the following, therefore, I will give a short overview of the historiographic and epigraphic tradition on defilement and purification of cult sites.

If we turn to Herodotus, a well-travelled author who reports in considerable detail on his impressions and experiences, especially with foreign peoples,¹⁴ for information on purity, impurity, purification and defilement, particularly of holy places, we find many a curiosity: for example, he claims

¹¹ For completeness' sake it may be noted here that there is also 'genealogical' impurity, which at best can be considered the least frequent exception within the Greek concept of impurity: the most well-known example is the Athenian aristocratic family of the Alkmeonides, as descendants of the Kylon offenders.

¹² Nilsson, *Religion*, 94.

¹³ Nilsson, *Religion*, 91; Parker, *Miasma*, 1–17 (emphasis on the literary evidence).

¹⁴ Bichler, "Ethnography", *passim*.

that the Egyptians held pigs to be unclean (μιαρὸν θηρίον), that pig herders did not have access to any temples in Egypt, and that it was consequently forbidden to use pigs as sacrificial animals. However, he accounts for the fact that precisely these animals were sacrificed to Dionysus and Selene, and that their meat was also eaten at the sacrificial feast, by reference to a legend (λόγος ἱερός), which he then neglects to narrate.¹⁵ In another passage, in a description of an Egyptian's customary clothing, the author emphasizes that the white woolen robe worn over the linen undergarment is always removed before entering a sanctuary and that no one is buried in this garment, for that is 'forbidden' or an 'offense' (ὀύ ὄσιον)—also, incidentally, for members of Greek secret cults, namely, the Orphic and Bacchic mysteries. He claims that there is also a corresponding legend for this custom of removing the garment and for being buried without it.¹⁶ In sexual comportment the author sees one specific point common to Egyptians and Greeks with regard to purity at holy sites:

Further, it was the Egyptians who first made it a matter of religious observance not to have intercourse with women in temples, nor enter a temple after such intercourse without washing. Nearly all other men are less careful in this matter than are the Egyptians and Greeks, and hold a man to be like any other animal; for beasts and birds (they say) are seen to mate both in the temples and the sacred precincts [...].¹⁷

Moral impurity, which is rather rare in the area of Greek religious practices, can be found in two examples from Herodotus' historical works, whose political origin is evident. In the first case, in the island *polis* of Chios, it was forbidden to use grains and fruits from a certain farming area, namely, from the Mysic coastal area of Atarneus, a part of the mainland lying across from the island neighboring Lesbos in the north, for sacrifices. The reason he gives for this is that around 540 BCE, the purchase of that strip of land was practically paid for by a sacrilege, the betrayal to the new Persian rulers of the Lydian rebel Paktyes, who had saved himself by fleeing as a political refugee to the temple of Athena Poliuchos.¹⁸ In the second case, the enmity between the people of Argos and Aigina on the one hand, and Athens on the other, is supposed to have escalated after serious disputes surrounding two cult images originally of Athenian

¹⁵ Herodotus 2.47.1–2.

¹⁶ Herodotus 2.81.1–2.

¹⁷ Herodotus 2.64.1–2.

¹⁸ Herodotus 1.160.3–4.

provenance, to the extent that it was finally forbidden to bring any Attic object, even the Attic drinking cups used for the cult wassail, into a temple that was jointly used by both parties!¹⁹

Thucydides, the Athenian author of a contemporary historical work on the Peloponnesian War, reports on a purification of the superregionally significant temple of Apollo on the island of Delos,²⁰ which “in compliance with a certain oracle” took place in the year 426/5 BCE:

But at this time the whole was purified, and in the following manner. All the sepulchers of the dead that were in Delos they removed and proclaimed that thereafter no one should either die or give birth to a child on the island, but should first be carried over to Rheneia. For Rheneia is so short a distance from Delos [. . .] It was at this time, after the purification, that the Athenians first celebrated their penteteric festival in Delos.²¹

When querying the oracle in Delphi, the Athenians apparently asked the god for approval and guidance in rebuilding that temple, evidently in connection with the reinstatement of the earlier agons in honor of the Delic Apollo, which in recent times had fallen into oblivion but that were now held again every four years.²² The oracular god gave his permission, on the condition that the island be purified, for the planned enlargement of the sacred precincts—for example, for holding the chariot races that were now a part of the festival agons. A special problem that must have been considered in the request at Delphi was the status of the tiny islet Rheneia, which had for about 100 years been chained to Delos and was thus hallowed. After 426/5 this island was again a profane area, as not only were the sarcophagi (most of which were apparently prehistoric) removed to the islet from Delos, but also in the future the dying and women in childbirth were allowed to be there, which in a *temenos* was otherwise considered a defilement and thus prohibited. Even if Thucydides makes no mention of the concrete Athenian purification rites on Delos, a religious purification must have been carried out there, because the removal of the object causing defilement was only the first step, necessarily followed by a ritual to restore purity. Thus it was one of the indispensable principles of purity regarding cult sites that, for example, whenever a dead body was found in a sanctuary, the body first had to be removed, and then

¹⁹ Herodotus 5.88.2.

²⁰ Thucydides 1.8.1 initially tells of ancient sarcophagi that were removed or moved and whose grave goods included ‘Karian’ weapons.

²¹ Thucydides 3.104.1–2.

²² Cf. Hornblower, “Religious Dimension”, 169–97.

the temple had to be purified, for instance by washing the cult image in the sea.²³

Thucydides reports on dead people in temples in several other passages, in connection with the concept that those who were responsible, or held to be responsible, for their demise were marked as offenders and encumbered with guilt. The most prominent of these examples is that of the so-called Kylonian offense, *Κυλώνειον ἄγος*, which took place around 630 BCE.²⁴ The attempt of Kylon the Athenian, with a group consisting of his followers and armed men from Megara, to take over the Acropolis and establish a *tyrannis* failed due to the attentive militia, which under the direction of Megakles the archon besieged the stronghold and starved out Kylon's associates. In the end, the 'putschists' sat down on the altar of the Acropolis, namely, that of Athena, while some also ensconced themselves 'along the way' at the altar of the Eumenides. But the enervated fighters beseeching sanctuary were taken from the altar and then—outside the sacred precinct—killed. The offense of these Athenians consisted of their killing the men despite the assurance that they would be spared. The Athenians' reason for wanting to take the exhausted men away from the altar, to which, it should be noted, the men acquiesced, was that they saw them to be "near perishing in the temple". If Kylon's followers had been left to starve, seeking asylum, in the *temenos* of Athena, this would have been a serious desecration of the cult site. Those followers of Kylon who—evidently in the course of being led away—sat down at the altar of the Eumenides "were killed there". From Thucydides we learn only that those responsible for killing the asylum seekers were henceforth known as "offenders and blasphemers of the goddess". We learn nothing, however, of the purification—which was undoubtedly necessary and undoubtedly carried out—of the *temenos* of the Eumenides and surely also the *temenos* of Athena on the Acropolis.

Somewhat more information is to be found in Thucydides' account of the sacrilege committed against the asylum-seeking Spartan Pausanias, who was walled up and thus starved out inside the temple of Athena Chalkioikos, in which he had sought refuge; however, he was brought out of the sacred precinct just before he died, so that he died on profane ground.²⁵ The measures taken against the refugee—albeit without actively

²³ Cf. Nilsson, *Religion*, 102, or 91 note 2.

²⁴ Thucydides 1.128. Cf. Harris-Cline, "Athens", 311–12; 314–16.

²⁵ Thucydides 1.134.3–4.

killing the enervated man—were considered a serious crime against the goddess just the same, for some time later the Delphic Apollo ordered that Pausanias be buried opposite the *temenos*; in addition, the Spartans were ordered to consecrate two bronze statues of the man by way of atonement. The installation of these figures in the temple of Athena Chalkioikos and the corresponding ritual were by no means a ritual purification, as the temple had not been directly defiled by the body of Pausanias. Rather, here we have an act of penance for the crime of having robbed the goddess, whose property Pausanias had become through his physical contact with her sanctuary.

Thucydides portrays such acts as the killing, or the suicide, of suppliants (*hiketides*) in temples in the context of the civil war (*stasis*) in Kerkyra, which raged in 427/6 between pro-Athenian democratic forces and pro-Corinthian or pro-Spartan oligarchs. Four hundred men of the so-called oligarch party sought refuge in the temple of Hera but were coaxed by their opponents to leave the temple and were taken to a nearby islet, where they were given nourishment.²⁶ After they were transported back to the city temple, the situation escalated in favor of the democrats, who again attempted to talk the men into leaving the temple. When those who did so were immediately sentenced to death and executed, there was mass suicide in the temple and seven days of rioting in the city:

But most of the suppliants, not having consented to be tried, when they saw what was happening set about destroying one another in the sacred precinct itself (ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ), while a few hanged themselves on trees, and still others made away themselves as best they could. [...] Death in every form ensued and whatever horrors are wont to be perpetrated at such times all happened then [...] men were dragged from the temples and slain near them, and some were even walled up in the temple of Dionysus and perished there.²⁷

Several deaths at sacred sites—notably without any acts of violence—had occurred a few years previously in Athens, during a pandemic.²⁸ The plague was aggravated by the hygienic conditions as, during the regular, devastating raids by the Spartans in the first years of the Peloponnesian War, the rural Attic population was forced to move inside the city, which was well protected by its walls. When this happened, many people were housed, among other places, in temples to the gods and heroes (τὰ ἱερά

²⁶ Thucydides 3.70ff.; 75.5.

²⁷ Thucydides 3.81.3–5.

²⁸ Thucydides 2.47ff.

καὶ τὰ ἡρόωα), though not on the Acropolis, in the Eleusinion, or in such temples “that could be securely closed”.²⁹ As thousands of people died, the temples that had been converted to living quarters filled up with bodies.³⁰ Although one may assume that there was a purification of the holy places that had thus been defiled, Thucydides does not give an account of it, probably because the customary rites did not attract the historian’s interest.³¹ It is generally known with regard to Greek purification sacrifices and rituals that the animals used therein were normally suckling pigs and dogs, that is, the ‘cheapest’ animals. While the sacrificing of suckling pigs is a familiar matter—particularly in the cult of Demeter³²—it is surprising to find the ritual killing of dogs for the purpose of restoring purity. In this context, a short passage in Thucydides’ account of the plague is striking; it tells how the unusual illness affected the animal kingdom:

The birds namely, and the four-footed animals, which usually feed upon human bodies, either would not now come near them, though many lay unburied, or died if they tasted of them. The evidence for this is that birds of this kind became noticeably scarce [...] while dogs gave a still better opportunity to observe what happened, because they live with man.³³

The fact implied here, that dogs used in the purificatory sacrifices had not previously touched a dead body, may reflect an apologetic argumentation in favor of the purification rituals, as the sacrificial animals were not allowed to be defiled themselves by feeding on cadavers.

On the topic of purificatory sacrifices and sacrificial animals, it is not so much the literary texts that give information, but instead epigraphs, as the following examples may show. That other animals could also be sacrificed to purify a temple is shown by an early Hellenistic *lex sacra* for the temple of Aphrodite Pandemos from Athens (ca. 287 BCE).³⁴ The text of the epigraph, containing the regulations for the *astynomes*, each of which was determined by lottery, serves not to document religious innovations but to conserve older usages. Thus it informs us that in purifying the temple

²⁹ Thucydides 2.17.1.

³⁰ Thucydides 2.52.1–3.

³¹ Some researchers are of the opinion that the annual scapegoat ritual at the feast of Thargelia, as well as the magnificent decoration of the agons on Delos (see above), served to purge Athens of the dead from the plague; cf. Hornblower, “Religious Dimension”, 193–96; Auffarth, “Aufnahme”, 342–44.

³² Cf. Nilsson, *Religion*, 104–5.

³³ Thucydides 2.50.1–2.

³⁴ LSCG 39; IG II² 659, Syll³, 375; for a translation into German language see HGIÜ Nr. 305.

of the goddess on the occasion of the annual procession, it was necessary to provide a dove for the sacrifice, anoint the altars and coat the doors with pitch and, finally, to wash down the statues as well. We remain in the dark about the purpose to be served by providing roughly nine grams of porphyry, however, as was likewise decreed.

A *lex sacra* from Cyrene, whose contents go back to archaic times though the extant inscription was newly laid out only in the late 4th century BCE,³⁵ provides information in one of its paragraphs about the procedure for purification of the temple (κατάρως τὸ ἱερόν) there.³⁶ To be precise, the text concerns the purification of an altar when it has been sullied by the sacrifice of an animal that according to the traditional rules should never have been used. This defilement of the altar threatened to defile all subsequent sacrifices, whereby they would become invalid; this could be prevented by purification. This purification is portrayed as an act of cleaning and washing, by which the altar was primarily to be cleared of the fat drippings from the ‘impure’ sacrificial animal. The dirty water from cleansing the altar was to be disposed of outside the temple, whereas the remaining embers, including the ashes (ἡ ἕνυς), were instead taken ‘ἐς καταρόν’. The interpretation of this wording is controversial, for it remains unclear which ‘pure’ place—as a destination for ash and fire—is intended. I must make reference to the diverging translation of ‘ἐς καταρόν’ as ‘thereby restore things to purity’.³⁷ In commentaries on these commands of the Cyrene *lex sacra*, two things are rightly emphasized: First, it is noted that the ‘pollution’ whose rectification is regulated by these provisions is caused not by a thing that is in and of itself impure, but by the use ‘contrary to custom’ of a thing that is irreproachable as such. In this case, it is the sacrificial animal: “. . . pollution resides not in things themselves but in their use in the wrong context, where the wrong is established by the

³⁵ SEG IX 72; GHI 494–505; Luzzatto, *Lex*, *passim*.

³⁶ SEG IX 72, A 26–31. My translation: “. . . Wer auf einem Altar ein Opfertier geopfert hat, das zu opfern nicht Brauch (griech.: *nomos*) ist, soll von dem Altar das Fett, das darauf geblieben ist, abwaschen und die Schmutzreste (bzw. das Abwasser) aus dem Heiligtum entfernen sowie die Asche vom Altar und das Feuer fortbringen an einen reinen Ort, und wenn er sich dann gewaschen, das Heiligtum gereinigt und als Buße ein ausgewachsenes Tier geopfert hat, dann soll er opfern, wie es Brauch ist”. (To translate into English: “He who has sacrificed on an altar an animal that is not customary [*nomos*] shall wash the altar clean of the fat remaining on it, and remove the remaining dirt [or dirty water] from the temple, and shall also remove the ashes from the altar and take the fire to a pure place; and when he has washed himself, cleansed the temple and sacrificed a full-grown animal as penance, then he shall sacrifice according to custom.”) Cf. Parker, *Miasma*, 339.

³⁷ Parker, *Miasma*, 340.

existence of contrary customs".³⁸ Second, it is emphasized that by the act of 'wrong' sacrifice not only are the altar and the temple polluted, but also the person officiating at the sacrifice, who therefore must 'wash himself off' (ἀπονιψάμενος) before he can be admitted to a new sacrifice, initially the sacrifice of atonement. Furthermore, it is curious that only the officiant himself seems to be responsible for 'cleaning out' the dirtied altar.

The question arises in this context of whether sacrificial rituals in the Cyrenian temple of Apollo were performed without supervision or were administered by competent cult staff. It is not possible to answer this question based on the available material, but we can take a look at an inscription from about the same period from Piraeus that documents a resolution by the *demos* regarding the duties of the village mayor (*demarchos*) in the local thesmophorion³⁹: the office-bearer must see to it that no one sets consecrated animals free or keeps them in the precinct of the Demeter temple and, further, that no cult groups (*thiasoi*) form spontaneously. There are several exceptions to the rule that the rites of purification must be carried out in the presence of the priestess, namely on the feasts of thesmophoria, plerosia, kalamaia and skira, as well as in the religious gatherings of women in accordance with tradition. We may assume that the purification rites included, in particular, the slaughter of suckling pigs.

That rites of purification always involved a sacrifice—in cases of previously perpetrated pollution, certainly in the sense of penance (ζήμια)—is also clear from an epigraph from Rhodes from the first half of the 3rd century BCE, which set down a kind of visitors' regulations for the temple of a goddess named Elektrona. The resolution of the city officials and the people's assembly aimed explicitly at ensuring that the temple and the sacred precinct were kept pure; in any case, it was decreed that three marble steles be put up at various points of access to the temple grounds for public proclamation of the commands concerning access and penance.⁴⁰ It was forbidden, according to this decree, to allow horses, donkeys, jennies, mules or any other mane-bearing animal to be present in the entire temple, or even to use shoes or other objects made of pigskin. Related offenses, which could be reported by anyone, were sanctioned as follows: the offender was obliged to purify the temple and the sacred precinct,

³⁸ GHI 503.

³⁹ LSCG 36; IG II² 1177; for a translation into German, see HGIÜ Nr. 289.

⁴⁰ LSCG 136; IG XII 1, 677; Syll.³ 338; for a translation into German, see HGIÜ Nr. 344.

which also involved making sacrifices, which are however not specified. If someone did not respond to the order to perform this penance, the penalty for godlessness (*asebeia*) was imposed; of what this consisted in Ialysos is as yet unknown.

Sheep were not counted among the animals that defiled the above-mentioned sanctuary by their presence, and yet the *lex sacra* notes that he who drives such livestock into the temple grounds must pay a donation for each animal. This is no small fine, for in such a case it would likely have been the whole herd, at least 25 sheep, that charged the *temenos*, so that the reparations could easily have amounted to four or more drachmas.

And yet the difference between sheep and other 'mane-bearing' animals is obvious: sheep did not pollute the temple, so their presence in the *temenos* did not give rise to a purification ritual; the fine served primarily to protect the trees in the sacred grove, as is attested by similar regulations in epigraphic material from other regions.⁴¹ Thus there is a provision to this effect in a very extensive set of regulations for the cult of the Apollo oracle in Koroïpe, in central Greece, from the late 2nd century BCE.⁴² For our investigation, with its focus on purity and its maintenance in the temple, the passage on the responsibilities of the sexton (*neokoros*) in protecting the sacred grove in the oracle's temple is significant:⁴³ the competent official not only had to see to it that no one had the audacity to fell trees, or even just cut off branches, but he also had to make sure that no one drove herds of animals into the *temenos* to graze or to take shelter. In the case of noncompliance, which apparently refers both to offenses against the trees and to the unwelcome presence of sheep or goats, a fine of 50 drachmas had to be paid to the city. Regarding these animals, a separate provision stipulated a fine per head of the herd in the case that the driver was a slave, with an additional, quite formidable corporal punishment of 100 strokes of the whip for the slave himself.

In Koroïpe as well, just as in Ialysos, certain infringements against the 'regulations' of a certain temple are not defined as defilement; consequently, no ritual purification is required. As in 4th-century Attic Piraeus,

⁴¹ The fact that sheep (and goats) even in present-day Greece are a danger to the trees growing around rural chapels is exemplified by a warning sign on the gate to the chapel of Panagia Kavouradena on the south end of the island of Leros.

⁴² LSCG 83–84; IG IX 2,1109; Syll³, 1157; for a translation into German, see HGIÜ Nr. 492.

⁴³ Loc. cit., 78–87.

where the mayor (*demarchos*) had been obliged to make sure visitors observed the rules during sacrifices and, among other things, did not let any consecrated animals escape from the *temenos*, it becomes clear that not every case of misconduct violates the purity of the holy place.

Thus the source material presented here from the various regions of the Greek-Hellenistic realm of states—irrespective of the differences in detail—shows no development in the course of several centuries, let us say, in the severity of regulations for maintaining the purity of the sacred area. Even if some provisions, particularly the level of the fines and the assignment of certain officials, are certainly the result of the concrete and changing framework formed by the settlement population in the *polis* as a religious community, to all appearances these hardly concern the core of religious concepts. That the concepts of purity, or impurity, remained constant through the centuries is most strikingly visible in the frequent reference to conventional norms (*νόμοι*) and in taboos that have an antiquated feel, for instance the rule not to enter a temple wearing certain attire. In this context let me refer again to the provision for the temple of Alektrona in Ialysos that prohibits shoes or any other objects made of pigskin.

The polluting aspect does not merely involve the idea that pigs were impure animals (cf. above); the decisive factor could have been that the taboo-laden objects were usually crafted from the skin of animals that had not been slaughtered but had died ‘naturally’. Such ‘impure’ products, if brought into the *temenos*, could accordingly have contaminated the holy place.⁴⁴

To lead us further into the topic of dress rules or taboos, we have a very informative fragment from a *lex sacra* of the 3rd century BCE for the temple of Despoina in the small Arcadian town of Lykosura.⁴⁵ The cult site of the goddess, who is apparently the equivalent of Demeter or Kore, was frequented primarily or exclusively by women. One provision forbids pregnant women or nursing mothers from taking part in the sacraments,⁴⁶ and yet all the other paragraphs evidently refer to visits to the temple at any given time: people were forbidden to enter with objects of gold, colored clothing or rings on their fingers; sandals were also prohibited. In cases of noncompliance, the forbidden object had to be consecrated.

⁴⁴ Nilsson, *Religion*, 91.

⁴⁵ LSCG 68; IG V 2,514; Syll.³ 999; for a translation into German, see: HGIÜ Nr. 438.

⁴⁶ Loc. cit., 11–13 (with shaving in line 12).

Because the provisions did not require that the offending objects be removed from the *temenos* or that the site be purified but, on the contrary, the things stayed in the possession of the goddess, it is clear that no pollution of the temple can have been caused by such textiles or by their wearers. It seems apparent that the clothing rule in Lykosura aimed to achieve equality in the outward appearance of the female visitors to the temple, who in another paragraph are also forbidden to wear braided hair, head coverings or flowers, so that these provisions must rather be understood as limiting luxury.⁴⁷ Furthermore, a woman visiting the temple—in appropriate style, i.e., unadorned, in a white garment with her hair worn down and without a head covering—undoubtedly also had to be clean and sober, for this was generally required of all visitors to temples, male and female.⁴⁸

In closing, the questions that are still open may be answered: “How are representations of purity described in the sources with respect to their liminal function from a spatial, temporal, social and institutional perspective?”

The available material from which several representative examples have been presented here shows that concepts of purity in fact had a liminal function and that they therefore attempted, in spatial terms, to guarantee the purity, and the resulting sanctity, of the *temenos*.

The very fact that most *leges sacrae* were handed down in epigraphic form shows that the public proclamation of the relevant provisions, which very frequently were posted directly outside the entrances to the temple grounds, served to ensure compliance with these rules—as did the frequent provision that anyone could report an offense. From a temporal perspective as well, temple rules on purity and attire were normally only valid for the duration of the visit to the *temenos*. The social and institutional liminal functions of the relevant provisions become clear when we consider that the official duties that served to maintain cleanliness and purity were the responsibility not only of the temple staff, including the priests, but of the office-bearers in each settlement community. Revised versions and supplements to the relevant provisions gave rise to ever-new

⁴⁷ Loc. cit., 9–11; cf. Nilsson, *Religion*, 90. Cf. Bernhardt, *Luxuskritik*, 100–103; 253.

⁴⁸ Cf. also on this point the epigraph from Korope, lines 38–41: the competent city dignitaries, who together with the priests of Apollo and the prophet received the tablet with questions for the oracle, were obliged to do so with orderly deportment, in white garments with laurel wreaths, and in a state of cultic purity, as well as sober.

official publications, thanks to which the epigraphic material has been passed down to us.

“What role does ‘purity’ play within the geographical and chronological context as well as in collective or individual processes of identity formation?” The differentiation between ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ in the cults of the Greek *poleis* played a major part in the processes of collective identity, as whoever caused impurity in the sacred sites (*temenos*, altar, temple buildings) was expelled—until purity was restored—from the cultic community. All in all, the collective was predominant, because the individual, the ‘citizen’ of a polis, defined himself in terms of his affiliation with each of several cult communities, be it the festival community at the annual official feasts of the *polis* gods or the smaller sacrificial communities (*thiasoi*) that for the most part were organized within the family.⁴⁹

ABBREVIATIONS

- GHI* Rhodes, Peter John, and Robin Osborne, eds. *Greek Historical Inscriptions 404–323 B.C.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- HGIÜ* Broderson, Kai, Wolfgang Günther, and Hatto H. Schmitt, eds. *Historische griechische Inschriften in Übersetzung*. 3 vols. Texte zur Forschung. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992–1999.
- IG* *Inscriptiones Graecae*¹. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1877–;² Berlin: de Gruyter, 1913–.
- LSCG* Sokolowski, Franciszek, ed. *Lois sacrées des cités grecques*. Paris: de Boccard, 1969.
- SEG* Chaniotis, Angelos, and J. H. M. Strubbe, eds. *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*. Leiden: Brill, 1976–.
- Syll*³ Dittenberger, Wilhelm, and Friedrich Hiller von Gaertringen, eds. *Sylloge inscriptionum Graecarum*. 4 vols. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1915–24.

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⁴⁹ The same is true of the many attested cult associations of the Hellenistic period in which the metics convened: cf. on this Herrmann, “Urkunden”, *passim*.

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GREEK AND COMPARATIST REFLEXIONS ON FOOD PROHIBITIONS

Philippe Borgeaud

The purpose of this essay is to examine the way in which comparative thinking about ritual practices, especially prohibitions, was already taking shape in Antiquity.¹ That it was a comparative approach becomes manifest when we consider the way in which ancient Greeks looked upon Egypt. We may begin with an example taken from Herodotus, who states that “they (the Egyptians) are especially careful ever to wear newly-washed linen raiment.”² Further on, the same author declares that the Pythagorean, Orphic and Bacchic prohibition concerning wool—a prohibition that commands, in turn, the prescription of wearing linen—comes from Egypt.

[The Egyptians] wear linen tunics with fringes hanging about the legs, called “calasiris,” and loose white woollen mantles over these. But nothing of wool is brought into the temples, or buried with them; that is forbidden. In this they follow the same rule as the ritual called Orphic and Bacchic, but which is in truth Egyptian and Pythagorean; for neither may those initiated into these rites be buried in woollen wrappings. There is a sacred legend about this.³

Here, we are sent back to a space of comparison, in a very wide territory with vaguely limited provinces, in which practices that can be qualified in turn as Bacchic, Pythagorean, Orphic or Egyptian meet, intersect and merge. Unhappily, Herodotus does not specify whether the *hieròs lógos* that he mentions is Egyptian, Pythagorean or Orphic. Thus, the space for observation, the ground he chose for this limited comparative experimentation, has no precise limits. Its borders are not clear, and this can be explained (if not justified) by the fact that we are dealing with a set of practices that will never cease to be a topic of constant interrogation for the ancient authors themselves, from Herodotus to Porphyry and further.⁴

¹ This text is an updated and slightly revised version of an earlier article in French on this topic. See Borgeaud, “Réflexions grecques.”

² Herodotus II 37, near the beginning of the §. Translation by A. D. Godley.

³ Herodotus II 81.

⁴ For the difficulty, notably, of differentiating ‘Orphic’ from ‘Bacchic,’ see Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts*, 142–48. More generally, about Pythagorism: Macris, “Le pythagorisme érigé en *haireisis*”; as well as Macris, “‘Sectes’ et identité”.

1. FOOD AS “CULTURAL OPERATOR”

In this field of investigation, and with respect to ritual prescriptions, alimentary choices offer a major cultural “operator.” We may start here with a specific case, namely, the case of vegetarianism attributed to Orpheus’ teaching.⁵

As is well-known, attestations of vegetarianism—or rather, should we say, condemnations of *sarkophagía*—are extremely rare outside of Pythagoras and Empedocles. There seem to be seven of them, all pertaining to Orphism (*bios orphikos*), of which five are explicit.⁶

We get a rather clear impression out of this small dossier. From at least the time of Aristophanes, one or a number of poems attributed to Orpheus circulated that condemned murdering animals for food and thus also condemned bloody sacrifices. There is no need to go back once more to

⁵ For Orphic documents, cf. Bernabé, *Poetae epici Graeci*; cf. also Kern’s edition, in *Orphicorum fragmenta*.

⁶ See, above all, Casadio, “I *Cretesi* di Euripide,” 297: 1) Aristophanes, *Ranae* 1032 (= test. 90 Kern, 547; translation by J. Henderson): “Just consider how beneficial the noble poets have been from the earliest times. Orpheus revealed mystic rites to us, and taught us to abstain from killings (*Orpheus mèn gàr teletás th’hemìn katédeixe phónôn t’apéchesthai*).” 2) Plato, *Leges* VI 782c (= test. 212 Kern, 625 Bernabé; translation by R. G. Bury): “The custom of men sacrificing one another is, in fact, one that survives even now among many peoples; whereas amongst others we hear of how the opposite custom existed, when they were forbidden so much as to eat an ox, and their offerings to the gods consisted, not of animals, but of cakes of meal and grain steeped in honey, and other such bloodless sacrifices, and from flesh they abstained as though it were unholy to eat it or to stain with blood the altars of the gods; instead of that, those of us men who then existed lived what is called an “Orphic life,” keeping wholly to inanimate food and, contrariwise, abstaining wholly from things animate.” 3) Euripides, *Hippolytus* 952 (= test. 213 Kern, 627 Bernabé; translation by D. Kovacs): “Continue then your confident boasting, adopt a meatless diet and play the showman with your food (*di’apsúchou borás sítois kapéleu*), make Orpheus your lord (*Orphéa t’ánakt’ékhn*) and engage in mystic rites (*bákkheue*), holding the vapors of many books in honor! For you have been found out.” 4) Plutarch, *Septem sapientium convivium* 16, 159 C (= test. 215 Kern, 629 Bernabé; translation by F. C. Babbitt): “But to refrain entirely from eating meat, as they record of Orpheus of old, is rather a quibble than a way of avoiding wrong in regard to food.” 5) Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum libri* II 2, 14 (= test. 300-1 Kern, 630F Bernabé) quoting Porphyry, *De abstinentia* 269 (4, 22, 7 = CUF t. III, 40): “Orpheus, in his poems, rejects with horror all carnal food (*Orpheus in carmine suo esum carniū penitus detestatur*).” 6) and 7) To these five attestations, one may add, with Casadio, the famous fragment of the *Cretans* by Euripides (quoted by Porphyry, *De abstinentia* 4, 19 = 567 T Bernabé), where the matter is abstinence from animal food, as well as a development found in Alexander Polyhistor (test. 214 Kern, 628 Bernabé), quoted by Diogenes Laertius VIII 33), where mention is made of “all that those who hold the office of celebrating rites in sacred ceremonies forbid” (i.e., red meat, fish, birds, eggs and broad beans).

what was said on the matter by Sabbatucci, Detienne and others,⁷ apart from the fact that reality was probably more complex than is suggested by those few declarations taken out of their ritual setting.⁸ Condemnation of *sarkophagía* requires that it be understood in the broader, and more diverse, context of cultic prescriptions, to which this condemnation properly belongs and where it meets with other dietary and non-dietary prohibitions. Such prohibitions were usually made in relation to exceptional moments or to individuals separated from others; as far as dietary prohibitions are concerned, they concerned not just animals but also vegetables (broad beans, onions, garlic mainly; but also, sometimes, mint or pomegranate).⁹

This impression becomes further qualified by a consideration of the case of Pythagorism.¹⁰ Thus, it was said among Pythagoreans that meat was rarely eaten by Pythagoras himself (cf. Porphyry, *Vita Pythagorae* 34); but it is *not* said that he never ate it. As a matter of fact, it is even specified that exceptions concerned first and foremost piglets and hens (or cocks), although with the absolute rejection of certain parts of the animal, such as kidneys, testicles, genitals, marrow, feet, and heads (Diogenes Laertius added the heart).

Marrow he called *increase* as it is the cause of growth in living beings. The *beginning* was the feet, and the head the end; which have the most power in the government of the body. He likewise advised abstention from beans, as from human flesh. . . . He also wished men to abstain from other things, such as a swine's paunch (of the sow: *métra*), a mullet (*triglís*), and a sea-fish called a "nettle" (*akaléphe*), and from nearly all other marine animals. (Porphyry, *Vita Pythagorae* 43–44; translation by K. S. Guthrie)

Referring to a source from the 4th century BCE (*Rules of Education* from Aristoxenus), Diogenes Laertius (VIII 19) reports that Pythagoras forbade eating mullet or oblade, as well as the heart of animals or broad beans. The same author specifies that Aristotle added to this list the womb and

⁷ Casadio, "I *Cretesi* di Euripide"; Sabbatucci, *Saggio*; Detienne, *Dionysos*.

⁸ As Macris recently reminded us ("Speculations around a ritual; the critique of sacrifice from Pythagoras to Porphyros," a lecture given in Geneva, Dec. 2009), Derveni's papyrus (471 T Bernabé) does mention Orphic carnal sacrifices, but they are offered to *daimones* and not to gods (*theoi*); for this type of distinction between gods and demons, cf. Xenocrates fr. 100, quoted by Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 26 (361 B).

⁹ Wächter, *Reinheitsvorschriften*; Arbesmann, *Die Fasten*; Arbesmann, "Fasten"; Hausleiter, *Vegetarismus*; Parker, *Miasma*, 358–63; Bruit and Schmitt-Pantel, "Citer, classer, penser"; Grottanelli, "Carni proibite".

¹⁰ Cf. among others Burkert, *Weisheit*, 150–75; Detienne, "La cuisine" (cf. id. *Les jardins d'Adonis*, 72–113); Riedweg, *Pythagoras*, 65–71.

sea mullet (see Rose, fr. 194). It is, therefore, a matter of specific prohibitions regarding either (a) some types of animal species (specific fish, plough oxen, or sheep), or (b) some special organs of any animal (the womb, the heart), or even (c) specific vegetables that are sometimes associated with an animal, like the broad bean. Such permanent prohibitions are addressed to the members of the community; they otherwise imply an altogether normal diet, not a vegetarian one.¹¹

Diogenes Laertius continues by referring to Pythagoras' personal way of living. Some authors, he reports, affirm that he used to be content either with honey or bread and refrained from drinking wine every day. For meals, he would usually have boiled or raw vegetables, and seldom fish. It is when we come to his relation to sacrificial practices (and to their corollaries, such as divination) that things become more complicated. According to the writing of Diogenes, Pythagoras did not practice augural divination through observation of the birds' flight, and he was opposed to divination by fire, although he made an exception in the case of incense. Consequently, he never offered an animate being as a sacrifice; yet some authors say he sacrificed cocks and kids, but only young and tender ones and never lambs (this seems to have to do with a general prohibition concerning ovines). In any case, Diogenes reports that Aristoxenus declares that Pythagoras nonetheless allowed others to eat all sorts of animals, except plough oxen and sheep.

This is why we must be most careful with the following declaration, made a few lines later, which seems to present Pythagoras as an absolutely rigorous Orphic: "Not to let victims be brought for sacrifice to the gods, and to worship only at the altar unstained with blood."¹² Obviously, this is only a generalizing, and a posteriori, interpretation of a sort of vegetarianism that remained—exceptions apart—quite relative. The state of purity achieved through strict obedience to these prescriptions was not for all times, and especially not for just anyone. It is, rather, a temporary ritual pre-condition, a state that has to be periodically reintegrated, or recreated, according to circumstances. To abide everyday by such rules of ritual purity would amount to leaving the normal sphere of 'piety' (*eusebeia*) in order to become, at best, a kind of *theios aner*, or to join, at worst, the shady world of 'superstition' in the Greek sense of *deisidaimonía* (cf. Theophrastus, *Characteres* 16). From this perspective, it is not the

¹¹ On this point, see explicitly Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 4,11 11–13.

¹² Diogenes Laertius VIII 22; translation by R. D. Hicks.

content of practices that would be the issue, but their exaggerated, misplaced or excessive character. As a matter of fact, the same gestures, the same attitudes may be considered either as piety or as superstition, depending on their degree of intensity but also on their setting.¹³

Diogenes Laertius (VIII 33), following Alexander Polyhistor and, again, Aristotle, is a good example of the way in which the prohibitions discussed here essentially concern a transitory state of ritual conditioning:

Purification is by cleansing, baptism and lustration, and by keeping clean from all deaths and births and all pollution, and abstaining from meat and flesh of animals that have died, mullets, gurnards, eggs and egg-sprung animals, beans, and the other abstinences prescribed by those who perform mystic rites in the temples. (test. 214 Kern, 628 Barnabé; translation by R. D. Hicks)

As a final note, one must also observe that Diogenes Laertius takes pleasure in composing slightly mocking verses. Among these short poems, there is one in which he praises Pythagoras for abstaining from obliging others to respect the same interdicts as he does.¹⁴

A more comprehensive study of this question should subject each one of these Pythagorean prohibitions to a careful analysis. As a general rule, we can see that they are assigned a number of explanations by ancient authors, following various reasonings that are far from being unequivocal.¹⁵ What should we do with these rules and their manifold etiologies?

¹³ Cf. Borgeaud, "Une rhétorique antique de l'éloge".

¹⁴ Neither does the Neoplatonic practice, which likes to claim to follow Pythagoras, appear to be of one piece. This is how Porphyry, for instance, calls for a vegetarian behavior that may satisfy the city's laws (*De abstinentia* II 2 and 53; on this question, cf. Bruit Zaidman, *Le commerce*, 208). Marinus (*Vita Procli* 19) will be even more explicit, specifying that Proclus practices the vegetarian diet yet complies with the custom of bloody sacrifices (albeit without eating meat, but only touching it).

¹⁵ To become aware of this point, it is enough to survey the etiological discourse about the prohibition of broad beans. Diogenes Laertius states that, "According to Aristotle in his work *On the Pythagoreans*, Pythagoras counselled abstinence from beans either because they are like the genitals, or because they are like the gates of Hades... as being alone unjointed, or because they are injurious, or because they are like the form of the universe, or because they belong to oligarchy, since they are used in election by lot." Porphyry (*Vita Pythagorae* 44) develops one of these alternatives: "Beans were interdicted, it is said, because the particular plants grow and individualize only after (the earth) which is the principle and origin of things, is mixed together, so that many things underground are confused, and coalesce; after which everything rots together. Then living creatures were produced together with plants, so that both men and beans arose out of putrefaction whereof he alleged many manifest arguments. For if anyone should chew a bean, and having ground it to a pulp with his teeth, and should expose that pulp to the warm sun, for a short while, and then return to it, he will perceive the scent of human blood. Moreover, if

In order to tentatively address these questions, one must begin by locating these highly circumstantial behaviors in a wider context, in relation to a set of generally shared ideological representations in ancient Greece.¹⁶ At this point, we come upon a matter that has to do with the very structure of the meal. The Greeks understand the basic diet as consisting of the *sítos*, which is a floor-based dish, usually bread. Along with this main dish, there is also what is termed *ópson* in Greek, and of course *póton* (the drink, on which I will not comment here). One holds *sítos* with the left hand and *ópson* with the right hand.¹⁷ For this basic structure consisting of *sítos/ópson*, the key text is from Plato, a famous passage from the *Republic* picturing the simple life of a primitive state (*Republic* 372a–373d):

And for their nourishment they will provide meal from their barley and flour from their wheat, and kneading and cooking these they will serve noble cakes and loaves (*mázas gennaías kai ártous*) on some arrangement of reeds or clean leaves, and, reclined on rustic beds strewn with bryony and myrtle (*kataklinéntes epi stibádôn estróménôn mílaki te kai murrínais*), they will feast with their children, drinking of their wine thereto, garlanded and singing hymns to the gods . . . (translation by P. Shorey)

We may note immediately how this picture identifies the ideal diet with bread and wine—and nothing else! However, the same text continues with the following:

Here Glaucon broke in: “No relishes apparently (*áneu ópsou*),” he said, “for the men you describe as feasting.” “True,” said I; “I forgot that they will also have relishes—salt, of course, and olives and cheese; and onions and greens, the sort of things they boil in the country, they will boil up together. But for dessert we will serve them figs and chickpeas and beans, and they will toast myrtle-berries and acorns before the fire, washing them down with moderate potations . . . And he said: “If you were founding a city of pigs (*huôn pólis*), Socrate, what other fodder than this would you provide?”

Why a city of pigs? Is it the mention of acorns that reduces humans to the state of *balanèphágoi*, resembling primitive Arcadians? In the same passage, Socrates retorts that the city whose food choices he has just described is a real city, and a healthy one at that (*alèthinè . . . hugiés*). But

at the time when beans bloom, one should take a little of the flower, which then is black, and should put it into an earthen vessel, and cover it closely, and bury in the ground for ninety days, and at the end thereof take it up, and uncover it, instead of the bean he will find either the head of an infant, or the pudenda of a woman.”

¹⁶ Scarpi, “Interdizioni alimentary”.

¹⁷ Cf. Davidson, “*Opsophagia*”.

he also adds that one may just as well describe it as a city “inflated with humours” (*phlegmaínousan*). For it is a city where superfluity has established itself: beds and tables to eat on, and all that goes with it, including accompanying dishes (*ópsa*), perfumes and fumigations (*múra kai thumíamata*), courtesans and delicacies (*hetaírai kai pémmata*); luxurious clothes, houses, shoes, ivory, gold . . . ; a number of ‘crafts’: hunters, poets, actors, pedagogues, nurses, hair-dressers as well as cooks and butchers (*opsopoioi* and *mágeiroi*); and last but not least, all kinds of herds (*boské-mata*) that may be eaten. This is how we go from a pig-city, whose food, being essentially made of *ártos*, remains vegetarian concerning its *ópsa*, to a city of luxury and superfluity, whose food, being essentially made of such *ópsa*, has become meat-based.¹⁸

As a matter of fact, classical Greek tradition considers *ópson* as the normal accompaniment of *sítos*. But the same *ópson* also becomes a morally dubious, and philosophically blameworthy, delicacy when it is eaten without *sítos*, or with too little *sítos*. One has to keep a just proportion, at least theoretically or philosophically, so as not to fall into the error that the Greeks call *opsophagia*.¹⁹

Antiphanes, in *Rich Men* (fr. 34, 5–6 KA), presents Phoinikides and Taureas as “two old opsophagites who are able to swallow slices of fish on the agora.” Fish, normally food for the poor (a poorly regarded food, since fish itself eats man’s flesh), very quickly becomes fine food, a symbol of *opsophagia*.²⁰ *Opsáron*, diminutive of *ópson*, will eventually result in the term *psari*, ‘fish’, in modern Greek!

Opsophagites—true gourmets, but also gluttons for the ancient Greeks—are not ichthyophagites. But it is also no coincidence if fish comes in here.

As a matter of fact, there is a Greek reluctance, or hesitation, as regards fish (as appears to have been the case regarding broad beans, which constitute one of the basic aliments that are praised in the *Republic*, as well as, more generally, one of the bases of ancient food in general).²¹ On this topic of fish, a comprehensive record of the available evidence has been

¹⁸ Analyzing this passage of Plato, among others, Cambiano and Repici (“Cibo e forme”) insist on the fact that the primitive diet, as praised by Plato, is not a *bios orphikos*: on the contrary the diet of the city guards, in *Republic* 403–405, follows the Homeric model (i.e., no fish, nothing boiled, only roasted food).

¹⁹ See Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3,14 (cf. +, 3, 5).

²⁰ Cf. on this paradox Purcell, “Eating Fish”. Cf. also Davidson, “*Opsophagia*”.

²¹ Cf. Athenaeus 54 f; André, *L'alimentation*, 35.

compiled by Nicolas Purcell. Among the animals that Greeks eat (and there are many of them),²² fish is the only one that itself eats man—and is thus an object of horror on the part of these sailors afraid of the sea, the ancient Greeks. Purcell speaks here of a paradox, because far from being forbidden, fish, for all its discredit, is at the same time a refined delicacy, much sought after and often even ruinously expensive!

This ambivalence or apparent contradiction—namely, eating a dish looked upon as repulsive or impure—can also be found with the dog or horse, although perhaps to varying degrees. Here also, the prohibition sometimes tends to be more or less ‘forgotten’: consider the dog for Hecate; the horse, for Poseidon or Helios. In these instances, however, we are dealing with a true inversion of the matter of fish or broad beans: whilst fish and broad bean, both abundantly eaten by normal mortals, are the object of sectarian interdicts, horse and dog, generally kept out of all food, are sometimes sacrificed by ordinary people in very precise places or circumstances, such as Helios’ festivals and Hecate’s meal.²³ Hecate also receives for meals a much-appreciated fish that, however, is the subject of a prohibition in Eleusis, namely, mullet (*trigle*).²⁴ Obviously, this seems to complicate matters.

At this point, let us summarize by observing that the prohibition of some Greeks serves to comment upon the practice of others; and that, here also, the exception confirms the rule. To paraphrase the classical model elaborated by Sabbatucci, which was taken up by Vernant’s school,²⁵ it could be said that the prohibition that is circumstantial and specialized (or even foreign, or barbarous) comments upon a general custom and cannot be understood without the latter.

The main aspect that I would like to emphasize is that this complex play of mirrors, this self-commenting reflection of custom on itself, does not merely function within the culture of ancient Greeks. Quite to the

²² According to Hippocrates (Hippocrates, *De victu* 2.46 = 6,544–6 Littré), Parker gives the following list of eatable meats: ox, goat (m. f.), pig, sheep, donkey, horse, dog, wild bear, stag (or roe deer), hare, fox, squirrel; Parker, *Miasma*, 357.

²³ Cf. Zografou, “La nourriture”. But even then, certain practices challenge what could seem to be a well-established custom. Besides Hecate’s meals at the crossroads, which smell of garbage and excrement, a refined Lydian sauce called *kandaulos*, *kandylos* or *kandyle*, which probably refers to a dish made out of the flesh of a puppy, is already mentioned in the 4th century BCE: cf. Harvey, “Lydian Specialities”. But we are here in Lydia, that is, temporally and spatially a distinct place.

²⁴ Athenaeus 7, 325 A.

²⁵ Sabbatucci, *Saggio*; Detienne, *Dionysos*, 163–207.

contrary, it was also part of a broader speculation implicating other cultures as well.²⁶

2. GREEK PRACTICES AND REPRESENTATIONS RELATED TO FOOD IN THE MIRROR OF EGYPT

In Porphyry's *De abstinentia* (IV 20), one finds a conceptualization of purity that prefigures the one developed by Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger*: purity is defined as an "absence of mixture", *amixía*, whereas pollution is the result of such a mixture. It is in order to avoid getting mixed *with* that one has to beware *of* consuming certain types of food. The question, then, is this: not to get mixed with what? Porphyry answers: not to mix the same (i.e., oneself) with the other, or more precisely, with the opposite; not to mix my living body with certain foods, and especially animal flesh. Inasmuch as it implies the dead body of the animal, such diet would amount to mixing up the eating, living being with the dead being that is being eaten. Or, to put it differently, one should not mix up the same with the allegorical principle that is hidden in the other, the rejected food. Although it is not said so, this principle applies not just to animals but also to some vegetables. In this passage, however, Porphyry does not mention vegetables—such as, e.g., the broad bean, to mention this famous instance. He only considers abstinence from meat, by commenting upon the famous text of Euripides' *Cretans* (which he quotes in IV 19); this passage has been acknowledged as witnessing to vegetarian practices that compare with those in use in Orphic asceticism.²⁷ According to Porphyry's commentary, holy men (namely, the *bácchoi*, the initiated ones) set as a principle that purity consists of abstaining from mixing oneself with one's opposite. The *agneía* amounts to rejection (*apóthesis*) and abstinence (*áphexis*) from the multiple as well as from all opposites (*tôn pollôn kai enantiôn*). It means the isolation (*mónôsis*) and the seizure (*lépsis*) of what is familiar and naturally conforms (*tôn oikeiôn kai*

²⁶ Cf. among others van der Horst, *Aspects of religious*; Bonnet et al., *Religioni in Contatto*; Borgeaud and Volokhine, "La formation"; Borgeaud et al., *Interpretations of Moses*.

²⁷ Euripides, *Cretans* 472: (translation by Collard, Cropp and Lee): "Pure is the life I have maintained since I became an initiate of Idaean Zeus and a herdsman of nocturnal Zagreus, after performing feasts of raw flesh; and holding aloft torches to the mountain mother among the Curetes I was named a celebrant after consecration. In clothing all of white I shun both the birth of mortals and the laying-places of the dead, which I do not approach; and I have guarded myself against the eating of living food."

prospuôn). Starting with ritual prescriptions related to food thus logically leads to enunciating *sexual* prescriptions: the condemnation of hetero- or homosexual unions, as well as nightly pollutions, inasmuch as the latter imply, from a masculine perspective, the ‘feminization’ of the soul and thus a mixture of masculine and feminine (in addition to a mixture of life/death, because of what is done with the sperm, which gets lost and dies in the process).²⁸ This concern with maintaining the integrity of the same and protecting it from any interaction with something contrary or contradictory accounts for the fact that, before our passage, Porphyry, describing Spartan life as it was regulated by Lycurgus (cf. IV 3, 5), praises certain measures, the effect of which is to avoid contacts between foreigners (such as itinerant merchants, or other categories) and the population. Fear of the contrary leads to fear of the other. We know that Plato (*Leges* XII 950 A) and Plutarch (*Lycurgus* 27, 6–9) had already laid emphasis on this fear. Still, it is in Egypt—in a land that, in Greek thought, is often presented as paradigmatic—through the stoic writer Cheremo (Nero’s contemporary) and in matters concerning priestly practices that Porphyry will offer the most complete description of this concern with maintaining the pure in its purity (see *De abstinentia* IV 6–8). The Egyptians, he states, consider priests to be philosophers, who are withdrawn into temples just as sacred animals are and mingle with other human beings only during festivals (i.e., the only occasions when access to the temple is allowed to anybody).

Their diet also was slender and simple. For, with respect to wine, some of them did not at all drink it, but others drank very little of it . . . In many other things also they conducted themselves with caution; neither using bread at all in purifications, and at those times in which they were not employed in purifying themselves, they were accustomed to eat bread with hyssop, cut into small pieces. For it is said, that hyssop very much purifies the power of bread. But they, for the most part, abstained from oil, the greater number of them entirely; and if at any time they used it with pot-herbs, they took very little of it, and only as much as was sufficient to mitigate the taste of the herbs.²⁹

These true ascetics classify taking a boat to leave Egypt as “a major impiety . . . out of fidelity to ancestral customs; and any offence, even if light,

²⁸ On Christian etiologies of this same condemnation, cf. Brakke, “The Problematisation” (quoted on p. 17 in Poorthuis et al., *Purity and Holiness*).

²⁹ I am following here the translation by T. Taylor.

will mean exclusion.” Thus, they are “not allowed to eat any food or drink produced out of Egypt.”

A vast area of pleasure is thus closed to them. Even in the case of products from Egypt itself, they abstain from any fish, solipedic quadrupeds (horse, donkey), or fissipedic or non-horned ones; they also abstain from carnivorous birds. Many even abstain from any animal, without exception, and this is valid for all priests during the times when purity is permanently required; in such circumstances, according to Porphyry, they even refuse eggs. In addition, they also abstain from all animals that are not blameless. This is how, among bovine cattle, they reject females as well as twin males, spotted, multicolored, or deformed males; the same applies to those animals that have been under the yoke, because such animals were consecrated by their work, and so on.

The first prohibition mentioned in the list of Egyptian products concerns fish. This precedence, if we may say so, is not coincidental. One immediately thinks of what Plutarch says in *De Iside et Osiride* (ch. 6, 353 C): Egyptians abstain mainly from fish that comes out of the sea (*ichthúôn thalattíôn*); this abstention has to do with the fact that such fish come from elsewhere, from outside: “as the sea is away from our world, out of our borders . . . a foreign body, both corrupt and unhealthy” (353 D).³⁰ Egyptian evidence documents the fact that fish, in hieroglyphic writing, is used as a determinative for the word meaning ‘interdict’ (*bwt*).³¹ Egyptologists know that the reason for this is merely phonetic; still, fish, in Egypt, just like pork, is the object of many prohibitions. The fact that fish is absent from hieroglyphs used in the *Pyramid Texts* could be explained by a prescription for ritual purity concerning the king only.³² Later, that prescription was widened to the whole category of the initiated dead. In chapter 64 of the *Book of the Dead*, one may thus read: “This formula should be read when pure and blameless, without having eaten small

³⁰ This, of course, should be put into relation with the myth of Isis and Osiris: Typho, who is hunting by night under the moon, finds the chest; he cuts up Osiris' body into fourteen pieces, which he scatters; Isis finds all the pieces, except the male member, which has been swallowed by the lepidot, the pagrus and the oxyrinch, which are now held to be the most abominable of fish; she substitutes a simulacrum of the male member. Let us note that Plutarch also translates the Osiris myth into Greek categories.

³¹ On this word, and the concept to which it refers (often translated with ‘taboo’), cf. Montet, “Le fruit défendu”; Frandsen, “Tabu”; Frandsen, “Le fruit défendu”. On the alimentary prohibitions in Egypt, cf. Meeks, “Purété,” esp. col. 433ff.

³² We find the sign for the fish once in Pyr § 218c (N 537). Yet this passage is known in four different versions, and only Nioussere's version has the glyph for ‘fish’; the three others replace it with phonetic signs. Cf. Sethe's note in *Pyramidentexte*, 4.125.

herd or fish, and without having had sexual relationship with a woman.” Obviously this is an occasional prescription, and not an absolute or permanent prohibition. As a matter of fact, fish is not systematically avoided as food in Egypt (neither is pork); the opposite is true. One may even occasionally find fish on offering tables.³³

Just as there are levels of language, let us remember that there are levels of diet: to ‘sociolects’ correspond, therefore, ‘sociophacts’. Although fish is standard food, we should not be surprised by its quasi-absence in these royal texts par excellence, the *Pyramid Texts*. In the 8th century BCE, on the Victory Stele (l. 151), the Nubian pharaoh Piankhy specifies that princes who had come to bring tributes were forbidden to enter the palace because they were uncircumcised and eating fish: only the prince Nimrod (Namart), who met the requirements of purity, could access the Egyptian sovereign.³⁴ Let us also note that fish and birds, in certain rituals, are identified with the enemies of Egypt, ‘foreign invaders’. In some places (i.e., Edfou, Kom Ombo, Esna), there even existed a rite of stamping fish that was practiced before the temple or in the courtyard and that was used in order to cast a charm and reduce potential enemies to powerlessness.

For our present purpose, it does not matter that Egyptian sources only partially confirm the general picture sketched by Cheremo. That picture is less oriented towards the ethnography of actual Egyptian practices than towards a commentary that deals, from an Egyptian perspective, with certain mystic or ascetic practices of the Hellenes. As such, Cheremo sets himself in an ancient tradition. Since Herodotus, Egypt and its priests function as a central paradigm—obviously not the only paradigm for ancient Greek authors, but the one *par excellence*, one that makes it possible to reflect and comment upon the category of Greek sectarian prescriptions, especially (albeit not exclusively) food prescriptions, such as broad beans and fish. In this ancient tradition, Greece, as far as sectarian interdicts—those of Pythagorean, Orphic and Bacchic movements—are concerned, is

³³ For fish and Egypt, cf. Gamer-Wallert, *Fische und Fischkulte*. In Tanis, a twofold statue of King Amenemhat III (reappropriated by Psusennes) was found, where the king is figured as the Nile-god or as a personification of fecundity: he presents fish and plants on an offering table (statue Cairo JE 18221 = *General Catalogue* no 392; cf. Borchardt, *Statuen und Statuetten*, 9–11 and plate 63; Saleh and Sourouzian, *Catalogue officiel*, no 104). Fish and poultry are offered to the gods on the occasion of the royal jubilee in Bubastis, under Osorkon II: Naville, *The Festival-Hall of Osorkon II*, pls. XVIII and XXII. (These references were given to me by Nicole Durisch and Youri Volokhine. I would like to thank them for their assistance on Egyptological matters.)

³⁴ Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptien Literature*, 3,80; cf. Grimal, “La stèle triomphale,” 176; Ikram, *Choice cuts*, 35.

looked upon from Egypt. It will soon be the same with Judean practices, where, just as in Egypt, we find again precisely the case of circumcision³⁵ as well as restrictions regarding the pig (which, in Egypt, is presented as Seth's animal).³⁶ Just as all of Egypt, according to Diodorus, tends to behave like the Egyptian priests of Herodotus, one may ask whether there is not another, complementary tendency among Greek and Roman authors, which consists in representing the inhabitants of the Nile valley as a priestly people who would behave, as a whole, like the people who, among Hebrews, scrupulously observe the prescriptions of Leviticus.

Thus, Egypt, in Greek thought, represents a land of comparison, a compulsory detour for ancient thinkers willing to have a look from outside either at their own (i.e., Greek) customs or at the customs of others—especially those of the inhabitants of Judea.³⁷

Plutarch declares that “the Egyptians, who cut open the dead body and expose it to the sun, and then cast certain parts of it into the river, and perform their offices on the rest of the body, feeling that this part has now at last been made clean” (*Septem sapientium convivium* 16, 159 B; translation by F. C. Babitt). Elsewhere, the same author develops the image of fish and fishing along the same theme:

Nor is it easy to extract the hook of flesh-eating, entangled as it is and embedded in the love of pleasure. And, like the Egyptians who extract the viscera of the dead and cut them open in view of the sun, then throw them away as being the cause of every single sin that the man had committed, it would be well for us to excise our own gluttony and lust to kill and become pure for the remainder of our lives. (*De Esu Carnium* 2, 996 E; translation by H. Cherniss and W. C. Helmbold)

Taking up this tradition about entrails thrown into the river, Porphyry, too, describes the ritual of embalming (*De abstinentia* IV 10, 3–5). On this occasion, he records that declarations of innocence are stated, which are nearly verbatim quotes from chapter 125 of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*.³⁸ This Greek account of an Egyptian ritual, in which the key episode turns

³⁵ Since Herodotus (II 104), it seems obvious to Greeks that peoples that practice circumcision are of Egyptian (or possibly Ethiopian) origin.

³⁶ Cf. *infra*, n. 39.

³⁷ Hartog, *Le miroir d'Hérodote*; Hartog, *Mémoire d'Ulysse*.

³⁸ Formulas uttered by one of the embalmers, speaking on behalf of the dead: “I have honoured the gods as they should be, I have respected my parents. I did not kill, I did not rob. . . . So if I committed in my life any fault, eating or drinking forbidden food, it is not me who is at fault but them; and he shows the box containing the viscera. Having so spoken, he throws it in the river and embalms the rest of the corpse, looked upon as pure.”

out to concern the special treatment of the bowels, thus offers an opportunity to develop a metaphor that presents the body itself and its passions as an unfortunate fish, unable to reject or spit off the hook of desire that leads it to death. The metaphor is all the more artful since this image of desire, in Egyptian categories, is precisely what other texts describe as belonging, in Greece, to *opsophagia*, the consumption of fish, this delicacy whose consequence is to give up healthy and pure 'primitive' aliments and values.

Long before Cheremo, Egyptian food customs had already been described by Herodotus in relation (Hartog would say in 'mirror') to the Greek model. One must distinguish, with Herodotus, a greater rigor applying to the rules that were meant for priests (for whom the prohibition of fish, for instance, is absolute), whereas some degree of freedom is tolerated for the common people belonging to "these most religious mortals" (II 37).³⁹

In spite of the fact that, among Egyptians, all goes opposite to what one finds elsewhere (the Egyptian world is, for the Greeks, a world upside down), the Greek structure is nonetheless found again: "Whereas all others live on wheat and barley (*apò purôn kai krithéôn*), it is the greatest disgrace for an Egyptian so to live; they make food from a coarse grain which some call spelt (also called *zeia*: *apò oluréôn poieúntai sitía tàs zeiaàs metexéteroi kaléousi*). They knead dough with their feet, and gather mud and dung with their hands".⁴⁰ The main meal of Egyptians, this spelt loaf, kneaded with the feet, thus corresponds exactly to the Greek *artos*.

According to Herodotus (II 41), on whom Cheremo seems to depend, Egyptians exclusively sacrifice male oxen and pure calves. Cows are consecrated to Isis (= Io). For this reason, an Egyptian, male or female, could not kiss a Greek on the mouth, nor use a Greek's knife, his spits or his

³⁹ Herodotus II 37 (translation by Godley): "They are beyond measure religious, more than any other nation; and these are among their customs:—They drink from cups of bronze, which they cleanse out daily; this is done not by some but by all. They are especially careful ever to wear newly-washed linen raiment. They practise circumcision for cleanliness' sake; for they set cleanness above seemliness. Their priests shave the whole body every other day, that no lice or aught else that is foul may infest them in their service of the gods. The priests wear a single linen garment and sandals of papyrus: they may take no other kind of clothing or footwear. Twice a day and twice every night they wash in cold water . . . sacred food is cooked for them, to each man is brought every day flesh of beeves and geese in great abundance, and wine of grapes too is given to them. They may not eat fish."

⁴⁰ Herodotus, II 36.

cauldron; nor eat the flesh of an animal, even a pure one, if the latter had been sacrificed using the knife of a Greek.

3. PURITY BETWEEN GREECE, EGYPT AND ISRAEL: A "THEOLOGICAL TRIANGLE"

This reference, reported to Herodotus by his informers in Sais, Naucratis or Memphis, to the Egyptian concern for avoiding certain types of contact with foreigners probably arose from concrete experiences. Although Herodotus himself brings it down to an exposition of the specific consequences of a taboo regarding cows dedicated to Isis, this reference nonetheless takes place within a certain ideological framework, from which will soon emerge and develop in Alexandria a Greek discourse on exclusivity, considered a scandalous attitude. This discourse will apply to the dietary and ritual practices of a people described as Egyptian in origin, the Judeans who founded Jerusalem after they left Egypt with Moses. In this new discourse, Egypt becomes the ritual space from which, and in relation to which, both Greek and Jewish practices are defined in their specificities as well as in their contrasts. Cristiano Grottanelli has shown that one may compare the passage in Herodotus describing Egyptian repulsion with respect to Greek food practices with the narrative in Genesis (Gen 43:31–33) showing Joseph eating alone at banquets because Egyptians would not eat with Hebrews, for this (according to the text of Genesis) would be an 'abomination' to them. The same paradigm is at work in the scene from the novel *Joseph and Aseneth*, where the Hebrew hero—who likewise eats apart from Egyptians—refuses to kiss Aseneth under the pretext that the girl's mouth is unclean.⁴¹

We have already recalled that the Egypt that, in Greek thought, is seen in relation to Pythagorean, Orphic and Bacchic dietary taboos, also happens to be, as early as Herodotus, the same country that condemns the consumption of pork and from which circumcision originated. As regards pork, Herodotus (II 47) pretends that if an Egyptian accidentally touches a pig, he will dive into the river (the Nile or a canal) to wash away this impurity. This obsessive fear of contact, of touching things—and not just food—corresponds to the Pythagorean fear of contact with broad beans,

⁴¹ Grottanelli, "Aspetti del sacrificio"; cf. Grottanelli, "Carni proibite". On Jewish alimentary rules, cf. recently Noam, "The Dual Strategy"; Liss, "Ritual Purity".

as is illustrated by the famous tradition of Pythagoreans who, having been ambushed, would rather die than escape through a field of broad beans in bloom (Iamblichus, *De vita Pythagorica* 191; cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Pythagoras* § 39). According to Herodotus (II 37), Egyptians share with Pythagoreans this horror of broad beans, and this in spite of the fact that there are none in their country, except for wild ones: "The Egyptians sow no beans in their country; if any grow, they will not eat them either raw or cooked; the priests cannot endure even to see them, considering beans an unclean kind of pulse." We know otherwise that this general interdict of pork is not at all confirmed by Egyptian sources. It remains true that in Egypt, pork was mainly food for the poor. This may be why the priestly informants of Herodotus presented it as an abominable animal. In the context of a report of Egyptian dietary customs to a foreigner, the food for the poor became a forbidden one.⁴² It may have been the same for broad beans in Egypt.⁴³

The Pythagorean broad bean leads us to the borders of humanity. For Pythagoreans and probably certain Orphics, the idea of eating broad beans aroused a horror similar to the one that cannibalism would have evoked.⁴⁴ To crunch a broad bean induces a strong repulsion, which John the Lydian compares to the repulsion that the idea of eating one's parents' head would induce.⁴⁵ During the month of March, he says, one would

⁴² On pork in Egypt, cf. Ikram, *Choice cuts*, 29–33. In his conflict with Horus, Seth transformed himself into a pig and it is under this aspect that he kicked Horus' eye: cf. *Coffin Text*, § 157. Pork was part of the common diet, in spite of the limited number of representations of pigs in the royal or private monuments of the Ancient Empire. The reason is the clear difference between ideological representations (where bovines dominate) and economic realities: compare Garcia, "J'ai rempli les pâturages," 257: "On a remarqué que, de la même façon que la mobilité et la recherche de nouveaux pâturages assuraient aux nomades une certaine autonomie par rapport aux systèmes politiques centralisés, les rendements hauts et les faibles coups de l'élevage de porcs à petite échelle... permettaient aux communautés rurales un degré similaire d'autonomie. En conséquence, ni l'élevage de porcs ni la distribution de leurs produits n'étaient adaptés à l'organisation économique des systèmes palatiaux du Proche Orient ancien, ce qui expliquerait une certaine hostilité de ces systèmes à l'égard d'une ressource qu'ils ne contrôlaient pas et qui, pire encore, favorisait une certaine autonomie productive des plus démunis, hostilité évidente à la lumière des tabous appliqués à la consommation de la viande du porc." The same observation would apply for Homeric Greece: the heroes in the *Iliad* are filled up with beef! Still, there exists, but precisely outside of Ithaca's palace, a divine pig-keeper.

⁴³ Hartmann shows that broad beans indeed constituted food for the Egyptians: *L'agriculture*, 54. Cf. Daumas "Gemüse"; and especially Keimer, *Die Gartenpflanzen*, 5–7.

⁴⁴ Porphyry (*Vita Pythagorae* 44) is a good witness (cf. note 14). On the horror of cannibalism and accusations of ritual murder, see now Nagy, *Qui a peur du cannibale?*

⁴⁵ John the Lydian, *De mensibus* IV 42; cf. Detienne, *Jardins*, 98.

hold broad-bean meals, as the bean (*kúamos*) was consecrated to Mars because it gives birth (*kúein*) to blood. As a tribute to the god, one would smear one's eyes with the juice of broad beans, instead of blood. John the Lydian then hints at the repulsion that those beans aroused among Pythagoreans. Stimulating sexual appetite, the broad bean calls souls to birth and thus to corruption. The same author quotes Heraklides the Punic, for whom the bean, when it is covered up with excrement, takes in forty days time the aspect of human flesh; this conception, according to John the Lydian, would be the origin of the poet's verse: "to eat broad beans amounts to eating one's parents' head" (*îsón toi kuámous te phageîn kephalàs te tokéon*). The poet, here, is Orpheus.⁴⁶

Thus, everything was in place for the elaboration of a fundamental theological 'triangle', a triangle that would emerge as soon as Judaism became manifest to the Greeks and in which Egypt, Greece and Judaea were considered, theologically, as inter-dependent entities. The origins of this comparative model go back as far as the Ptolemaic period and should certainly be sought in Alexandria. As a matter of fact, comparison between anthropomorphic Greece, theriomorphic Egypt and monotheistic and aniconic Judaea may be found in the earliest version of Hellenistic narratives about Moses. According to the story by Hecataeus of Abdera, a pestilential plague once struck Egypt; the people were certain that the cause was the presence of too many foreigners practicing various rituals, which were likely to corrupt the traditional practice. Accordingly, measures for the expulsion of foreigners were taken:

Among the expatriates, the most distinguished, the most valiant ones got together in gangs and were thrown out, they say, into Greece and some other places, under the guidance of their eminent leaders, of whom Danaus and Cadmus were the most famous. But the plebeian mass migrated into the country called Judaea today, quite near Egypt, but a total desert at the time. At the head of this colony, a character named Moses, distinguished by his wisdom as well as his courage...

So Moses leaves Egypt in order to found Jerusalem and install a monotheistic, non-anthropomorphic religion,⁴⁷ and this at the very same time that these ancestors of great cities, Danaus and Cadmus, were heading toward Greece.

⁴⁶ Fr. 648F = 291K. This rich dossier, together with its variants, can be found in Bernabé, *Poetae Epici Graeci*, II, 2, 214–18.

⁴⁷ "He made no image of the gods, persuaded that the divinity had no human figure; he thought heaven which surrounds the earth is the only god and master of the universe."

In Manetho's version, Moses is not an expelled foreigner who became *oikistés*, the founder of Jerusalem. He is painted as an Egyptian priest from Heliopolis named Osarsiph. He leads an expedition against Egypt, in which leprous Egyptian refugees in Avaris mix with inhabitants of Jerusalem—a town founded in the past by the Hyksos, who had been themselves previously expelled from Egypt. This expedition threatens Egyptian cults directly: the pharaoh must shelter the sacred animals and cultural images (the *xoana*) of the gods.

The Solymites and impure Egyptians they had brought back with them behaved with such impiety that the domination of the ancient pastors (the Hyksos) appeared as a golden age to the witnesses of their sacrileges; not only did they burn towns and villages, plunder temples, and defile gods' statues, but they even made sanctuaries into kitchens where they roasted sacred animals, forced priests and soothsayers to act as sacrificers and butchers and then chased them, naked.

We know from Yoyotte's and Assmann's studies that this type of narrative belongs to the traditional Egyptian rhetoric dealing with the Asiatic invader.⁴⁸

At the time of Augustus, Trogue-Pompey (abbreviated in Justin 36, 2) will turn Moses into Joseph's son. The Egyptians, who were stricken with leprosy, ejected him from their state on the advice of their gods, and with him all those who were contaminated with such an infectious illness, for fear that it might infect still others. This is how Moses, who was thus condemned to be the leader of the banned people, "stole things that were used for the sacrifices of the Egyptians";⁴⁹ when the latter tried to recuperate them, they were forced to turn back because of the furious tempests that stopped their pursuit. Moses thus takes with him from Egypt all the utensils required for ritual cooking. He steals what constitutes him, in religious categories, as an Egyptian—at least from the perspective of the Greek tradition about Egypt that starts with Herodotus. This may be an aberrant interpretation; but it is a very clever one, since it seems to echo the enigmatic mention of golden and silver utensils that, together with clothes, were 'borrowed' from Egyptians by Hebrew men and women according to the account of Exodus (see Exod 3:21–22; 11:1–2; 12:35).

⁴⁸ Yoyotte, "L'Égypte"; Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*; cf. Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 15–33. On all this see also Borgeaud, *Aux origines*; Borgeaud et al., *Interprétations de Moïse*.

⁴⁹ *Dux igitur exulum factus sacra Aegyptiorum furto abstulit, quae repetentes armis Aegyptii domum redire tempestatibus compulsi sunt.*

Parallel to this Hebrew Moses (son of Joseph) who, according to Trogue-Pompey, steals the ritual objects of the Egyptian cult, another version, just as aberrant, is preserved by Strabo (XVI § 35). This time, Moses is presented as an Egyptian priest who went to Judea because he had become disgusted with the institutions of his country; a great number of men who honored the divinity left the country with him. According to Strabo, Moses said and taught that Egyptians and Libyans were mad to pretend that they could represent the divinity under the figure of ferocious or domestic animals, and Greeks were no wiser when they gave to that divinity a human figure; in his view, the divinity was no more than what envelops us, earth and sea, what we call 'heaven', 'world', or 'nature'. Here, the above-mentioned theological 'triangle' between Egypt, Greece and Jerusalem is explicit.

Either hostile, like Manetho's, or laudatory, as in the case of Strabo's, the Greek perspective considers the rules and prohibitions observed by Judeans to be an intentional inversion of the abandoned norm (the Egyptian norm). It is a very different inversion from the one that the Egyptians themselves—who, as noted above, do everything upside down without any consciousness of it—have always entertained spontaneously, and innocently, in relation to the Greeks.

The extreme theorization of this practice of inversion and alternation can be found in the writings of Tacitus, who, in his *Historiae* (5, 4–5), imagines a Moses instituting rituals that are both new (with all the scandalous dimension this may involve for a Roman) and contrary to those rituals practiced by the rest of humankind. The profane becomes sacred, and the reverse. The licit also becomes illicit. The effigy of a donkey, says Tacitus, was consecrated in the most withdrawn place in the sanctuary of Jerusalem. This refers to an ancient tradition, recorded under a different form by Diodorus (34, 1–3, an extract from Photius), who may quote Posidonius.⁵⁰ But whereas Tacitus implies a cult of the donkey, the tradition that Diodorus records describes the statue of a man with a long beard, riding a donkey, a book in hand: this was Moses. In this narrative, Antiochus sacrificed an enormous sow whose blood he spilled in front of the statue and whose fat he had extracted so as to stain the holy books, precisely those same books filled up with the rules that would inspire the

⁵⁰ According to Reinach, *Textes*, 56, Diodorus quoted Posidonius. For the tradition about the donkey in the temple, from the perspective of reactions and anti-reactions to this tradition, cf. Borgeaud, "Quelques remarques," in Borgeaud et al., *Interprétations de Moïse*.

Judeans' hatred for foreigners. Finally, Antiochus forced the high priest and the other Jews to eat the flesh of the victim. Thus described by a Greek author, this monstrous ritual should, of course, be related to the Jewish tradition concerning the edict proclaimed by Antiochus IV and the erection of the 'abomination of desolation' upon the altar of sacrifices in Jerusalem (see 1 Macc 1:41–54);⁵¹ but it may also be viewed as a narrative transformation (if not an ideological consequence) of the Alexandrian anti-Jewish tradition as recorded by Manetho. According to this tradition, Moses had forced Egyptian priests to sacrifice and cook the sacred animals in the temples, which had been transformed into grill houses (*optaniois*). Besides, the narrative of Posidonius also constitutes the earliest non-Jewish text referring to the Jewish prohibition against eating pork—a prohibition that Greeks, until then, thought they could observe in Egypt.

At the heart of the ritual, sacrificial cooking appears both as an anthropological and a political "operator". With the Jewish sacrifice, as it was understood by Theophrastus,⁵² we have the earliest witness of a Greek view on Judaism:

Nevertheless, says Theophrastus, though the Syrians [of Judaea] (*Ioudaioi*), because of their original mode of sacrifice (*thusia*), continue to offer animal sacrifices (*zôiothutoûntes*) at the present time, if any one were to bid us sacrifice (*thúein*) in the same way, we should revolt from the practice. For instead of feasting upon what had been sacrificed, they made a whole burnt-offering (*holokautoûntes*) of it by night, and by pouring much honey and wine over it they consumed the sacrifice more quickly, in order that even the all-seeing sun (*ho panóptes*) might not be a spectator of the dreadful deed.

And while doing this they fast throughout the intermediate days (the duration of the day); and all this time, as being a nation of philosophers, they converse with one another about the Deity (*perì tou theiou mèn allêlois laloûsin*: a phrase where the verb *laleîn* has the same meaning as in the LXX), and at night they contemplate the heavenly bodies, looking up to them, and calling upon God in prayers (*diâ tôn euchôn theoklutoûntes*). For these were the first to dedicate (*katérxanto*) both the other animals, and themselves,

⁵¹ Cf., among others, Berthelot, *Philanthrôpia judaica*, 152.

⁵² Theophrastus, *De pietate*, quoted by Porphyry, *De abstinentia* II 26, Porphyry being himself quoted by Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* IX 2. The English translation below follows E. H. Gifford. Eusebius' text could credit the idea that the *Ioudaioi* have been introduced in the text as a gloss, posterior to Theophrastus' gloss. Eusebius' manuscript tradition seems to be generally better than Porphyry's. But Porphyry's text, in this passage from *De abstinentia*, is in no way questionable. What seems to be the issue is rather the content of practices and beliefs Theophrastus attributes to the Jews (or Judeans). I note that neither Bernays nor Stern refuses the attribution of this testimony to Theophrastes.

which last they did from necessity and not from any desire. On that matter, it would be a rich lesson to observe the wisest people in the world, the Egyptians: they are so far from killing only one of these animals that they rather make images of the gods out of their figure, so true it is that they consider them to be appropriated to, and akin with, gods and humans.

From this perspective, there would be something like a history or an ideal pre-history of bloody sacrifice. The first state (the earliest one) would correspond to the Egyptian attitude, supposedly perfectly abstinent (vegetable sacrifices); the second state, to the animal (or even human) sacrifice, but without consumption of the meat by the officiants (the Jewish sacrifice, the holocaust); and the third state, to the sacrifice of the animal, followed by its consumption.⁵³

We shall note, following Jacob Bernays,⁵⁴ that Theophrastus makes Judaeans the philosophical caste of the Syrians,⁵⁵ like Brahmans are for the Indians, and like priests, in Cheremo's work, will be for the Egyptians.

We should also note that what is said here about the holocaust corresponds more or less to the *'olah* ritual as it is described in Leviticus.⁵⁶ However, the libation of honey and wine is embarrassing. Plutarch, for his part (*Quaestiones convivales* IV 6, 2, 672 B), does not ignore that honey and wine are incompatible for Jews according to the teaching (*tôrah*) of Leviticus.⁵⁷

What seems to me to be noteworthy, from the Greek point of view, is that we have to do in this case with a sacrifice through total consecration (and thus total destruction) of the victim. According to Rudhardt, the holocaust is very rarely named thus in classical Greek.⁵⁸ It is a specific form of ritual action, more frequently designated with the verb *kathagizein*, which means 'annihilation,' usually by means of the total combustion of a vegetable or animal offering. After a victory or a death, it is a ritual of a funerary nature.⁵⁹

⁵³ Cf., on that matter, Obbinck, "The Origin".

⁵⁴ Bernays, *Theophrastos' Schrift*, 111 (followed by Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 10).

⁵⁵ Cf. also Megasthenes (*Indikà* quoted by Clement, *Stromata* I 15, 72, 5 = 715 F 3 Jacoby), and the Peripatetician Clearchus of Soli (*Peri hupnou* quoted by Josephus, *Contra Apionem* I 179 = Fr. 6 Wehrli vol. 3).

⁵⁶ 6:2–6. Cf. also Lev 1:1; Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* III 224–225.

⁵⁷ Cf. Lev 2:11.

⁵⁸ Rudhardt, *Notions fondamentales*, 287, referring to Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* VIII 3, 24 [Iranian sacrifice, under the leadership of magi]; Xenophon, *Anabasis* VII 8, 4, 5 [sacrifice of piglets to Zeus Meilichios]; Plutarch, *Moralia* 694b; cf. Hesychius s.v. *holokautôma*.

⁵⁹ Cf. Rudhardt, *Notions fondamentales*, 236–38; and the dossier Jameson et al., updated: *A Lex sacra*, 18–20; cf. Parker, "Hos heroï enagizein".

In the description that Theophrastus gives, it is a sacrifice without sharing, without any part being put aside for human officiants or the funding community. The meal, if there is any, is the meal of the god alone. This amounts to a variant of absolute vegetarianism, a way, just as radical, to refuse the consumption of flesh.⁶⁰ Is it not precisely as an example of the reticence to eat the victims' flesh, or even as evidence of a ritual equivalent to a critique of bloody sacrifices of the *thusía* type, that this text of Theophrastus reached us through Porphyry, as well as through Eusebius? Theophrastus emphasizes that Judaeans were the first to introduce a bloody sacrifice. It is this first sacrifice that is the matter at stake in this passage, together with the repulsion that it induces in officiants obliged, against their will, to effectuate it for reasons that, unhappily, are not expounded. Inasmuch as in Theophrastus it is also a question of the introduction of human sacrifices, one may wonder if we are not dealing here with a counterfeited memory of Hebraic tradition about Isaac's sacrifice (the binding of Isaac).

Identity is built through relationship to others, so that alimentary choices become all the more significant when they are looked upon from afar and when they become the object of an outsider's observation. A famous passage from Seneca's text on Shabbat (as recorded by Augustine in *De civitate Dei* VI 11) is particularly revealing about what this detour through the customs of others may produce in terms of the thinking of ancient authors on their own practices. Here is what Seneca says after he has deplored the introduction into Roman practice of many Jewish customs, Shabbat included: "If Jews know of their rite's reasons, most of the (Roman) people practice (this same rite), although not knowing why" (*Illi tamen causas ritus sui noverunt; maior pars populi facit, quod cur faciat ignorat*). This implies the belief that one may obey rules or interdicts while being fully aware of the reasons for one's choices (the *causae ritus sui*). The only condition for such lucidity would be to have always scrupulously respected the invariability of ancestral customs. Were Greeks and Romans sometimes able to keep that condition as Egyptians and Jews could? Seneca might have answered negatively. It does not matter. It is

⁶⁰ The secret character of the ritual described by Theophrastus may echo a tradition close to the one reported about Gideon, in the book of Judges, 6:25: "... that night, Yhwh told him: 'take the bull which belongs to your father and cut down the Asherah beside it; then, build a proper kind of altar to Yhwh, your god, on the top of this height, and offer the second bull as a burnt offering, using the wood of the Asherah you cut down'. So Gideon took ten men from his servants and did as Yhwh had told him; but he feared doing it by day, because of his father's house and men in the town; he did it by night."

left to us to understand how such fidelity to custom, be it imaginary or real, could, according to Seneca, result in the knowledge of the reason for the cultural choice, an awareness of the cause underlying both ritual interdicts and preferences. It amounts to saying that, in order to know, one would have not to leave home; to stay in the village or, otherwise, not to return, to paraphrase a Pythagorean 'symbol': "When one goes traveling, not to return to the border."⁶¹

In this respect, we would have here a condemnation, constitutive of practice and reacting in advance to any relativist critique, of the comparative activity. This resistance, among certain ancient authors, to the efforts of thinkers and tradents, a resistance more fundamental than all that Herodotus, Plutarch and Porphyry say, is a matter that deserves further study.

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⁶¹ Pythagorean symbol, Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Pythagoras* VIII 17. We note the way that this 'symbol' makes us think of Loth as well as of Eurydices.

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SACRAL PURITY AND SOCIAL ORDER IN ANCIENT ROME

Bernhard Linke

Once a year the effigy of Athena was removed from its old temple in order to be ceremoniously conducted down to the sea, where it was ritually cleansed.¹ For the duration of this ritual, every other temple in the city of Athens was closed, owing to the belief that the absence of the goddess was a bad portent that might signify the intrusion of impurity into the city. Although the Athenians believed more than other Greeks in the presence of ‘their goddess’ in their city, they nevertheless deemed it necessary to protect this special relationship from any pollution through a cyclic purification of the cult statue, in order to preserve its sacral power. A similar ritual was applied to the cult garment of the statue of Athena in the Parthenon, the peplos, which was newly woven every four years and was then presented to the goddess during the great Panathenaea.² In the context of this splendid procession, the citizenry of Athens assembled according to their social status and collectively crossed the public space to deliver the new garment to their goddess and to reconstitute the link between her and the city. Therefore, even the items in immediate proximity to the goddess had to be cleansed, as they were in danger of being tainted by human presence, which could impair their sacral potential.

The example of Athens vividly illustrates that people’s everyday lives were strongly affected by the struggle for a positive relationship with the sacral forces. In the context of this struggle, the ever-present categories of purity and pollution served to indicate the degree achieved in establishing a close and reliable connection with the divine powers, which in turn guaranteed a safe environment for the community.³

¹ Plutarch, *Alc.* 34.1–2; Xenophon, *Hell.* 1.4.12; see also Deubner, *Attische Feste*, 17; 22; Scheer, *Die Gottheit und ihr Bild*, 58–59; Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 347–48.

² For the introduction and performance of the Panathenaea, see Neils and Bobrick, *Goddess and Polis*; Parke, *Athenische Feste*, 40–71; Ziehen, “Panathenaia”, 457–93; Deubner, *Attische Feste*, 22–35; Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 89–92.

³ In regard to the term pure (*katharos*), primarily used as an adjective, and pollution (*miasma*), see Rudhardt, *Notions fondamentales*, and Parker, *Miasma*; Bendlin, “Purity and Pollution”; see also Douglas, *Reinheit und Gefährdung*; and Douglas, *Ritual, Tabu und Körpersymbolik*.

Accordingly, purity in Greece is closely connected with the concept of sacrality and the attempt to secure its presence within the human community.⁴ Hence the struggle for purity attempts to increase the potentiality of the sacral in the human sphere and subsequently to enclose it in such ways as to protect it from the harmful—the polluting—influence of the profane.

This intense effort to achieve purity and consequently sacral presence can only be understood by taking into account the specific conditions of the Greeks' polytheistic conception of the world. In contrast to monotheistic religions, in which the deities' sphere is strictly separated from that of their mortal believers, polytheistic deities represent transcendental entities whose sphere is closely connected to the human world.⁵ The multitude of divine entities, and their genuine claim of being independent sacral powers amongst others, leads to the problem that the gods cannot be ubiquitous as in monotheistic religions. Polytheistic deities depend on the possibility of their being absent in order to explain and guarantee the independent existence and presence of each and every deity. Henceforth,

⁴ Bendlin, "Purity", 180. This strengthening of boundaries and the simultaneous stabilization of a positive connectivity between the sacral and the human spheres is of such fundamental importance in traditional societies because the human order in early communities was seen to be in a very close exchange relationship with its social and also natural environments. Only by a thorough, even scrupulous conforming to codes of conduct was the common reality detached from the cosmic order and thereby given an inner social climate. Its stability was, however, dependent on the maintenance of its identity-establishing boundary with its environment. Therefore extraordinary external impulses had to be prevented from intruding into the interior by employing sacral rituals and other protective measures. For the unity of society and natural order in early civilizations, see Müller, *Das magische Universum*; Hallpike, *Die Grundlagen des primitiven Denkens*; Bellah, "Religious Evolution", 363–64; see also Dux, *Die Logik der Weltbilder*, 103–22; Döbert, "Zur Logik des Überganges"; Luckmann, "Boundaries of the Social World". For the emergence of an artificial 'internal social climate' as a basis for the formation of human societies, and its consequences, see Claessens, *Das Konkrete und das Abstrakte*, 60–92.

⁵ Brelich, "Polytheismus", 127; for Ancient Greece see Thomas, "Wingy Mysteries in Divinity", 182: "Being is not separated into distinct categories in the Hellenic view; rather it is regarded as a continuum with various capabilities found along a band of being that extends from plant to animal to human to deity". Kearns, "Order, Interaction, Authority", 519–20; Vernant, *Mythos und Gesellschaft*, 103; Vernant, "Formes de croyance et de rationalité en Grèce ancienne", 120: "Les dieux sont là, supérieurs à nous, mais, si je puis dire, dans le même monde. D'ailleurs ils n'ont pas créé ce monde, au contraire ils ont été créés par un processus qui s'est déroulé dans le monde lui-même. Ils font partie du monde. Il n'y a pas de transcendance ou en tout cas pas au niveau de la religion: il y a une relative transcendance, bien entendu mais elle n'est pas élaborée intellectuellement pour faire que dieu est supérieure et au-delà de toute ce qui a été créé, créé par lui et à partir de rien, ce qui pour le Grec est absurde".

the presence of the gods—unlike in monotheism—cannot be taken for granted, and their attention has to be attained first.

It follows that polytheistic societies are always confronted with the traumatic possibility of a divine vacuum.⁶ Therefore, the religious dimension of Greek society was determined by the effort to create areas of sacral densification through the interaction of spatial demarcations and the stabilization of ritual actions, thereby increasing the probability of the presence of certain sacral forces within these areas. Such places were detached from the ordinary living environment by the emplacement of boundary stones and were enhanced in their special quality through codes of conduct,⁷ e.g., the strict provision that the sacral areas had to be kept free from death, birth and the spilling of blood.⁸ Rituals performed in these particularly purified spaces—preferably abiding by the respective local customs—increased the frequency of the invoked deity's sacral presence due to its taking delight in the sacrificial rituals.

Before entering these areas and especially before performing the rituals, the participants had to cleanse themselves and the sacrificial animals carried along.⁹ Furthermore, exceptional clothing and accessories, e.g., wreaths, symbolized a state of increased purity.¹⁰ By deploying into a ritual procession at the boundaries of the sanctuary, the participants demonstrated that their movements inside were subject to a specific rhythm and thereby detached from the ordinary world.¹¹ In the sanctuary, holy objects, mostly aniconic but also man-made cult images referring to the

⁶ Cf. Assmann, *Herrschaft und Heil*, 32–45.

⁷ Cf. Jost, *Aspects de la vie religieuse*, 115–16; Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 146.

⁸ Thucydides 1.134.2; Xenophon, *Hell.* 5.3.19; see also Parker, *Miasma*, 32–34.

⁹ For domestic hygiene, see Homer, *Od.* 4.759–761; cleansed clothes, Euripides, *El.* 791–4; regarding the white color, see Aeschines, *In Tim.* 3.77. For the wreaths, see Xenophon, *Anab.* 7.1.40; Aristophanes, *Plut.* 820; Plato, *Resp.* 328c and *Lys.* 206e–207a; see also Blech, *Studien zum Kranz*, 302–7, pointing out that the wearing of wreaths was a common feature of sacrificial rituals, so that its absence had to be explicitly explained; Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 101; 164.

¹⁰ Rudhardt, *Notions fondamentales*, 258–59, who emphasizes that these items most commonly possessed a socio-political as well as a religious symbolic meaning; see also Blech, *Studien zum Kranz*, 303: “Damit diene das *stephanophoreîn* zu den äußeren Zeichen der Teilnahme an den privaten und öffentlichen Festen und der Bestätigung der Zugehörigkeit zur Polis”. For purity as a prerequisite for participation in sacrificial rituals, see also Jost, *Aspects de la vie religieuse*, 83–84.

¹¹ Cf. Graf, “Pompai in Greece”, 57, who points out that the original meaning of *pompe*, especially with Homer, was ‘protecting escort’. In later times the objects in need of protection were probably the sacrificial animals carried along; see also Bömer, “Pompa”, 1879–88; Burkert, *Griechische Religion* vol. 2, 163–64; Burckhardt, *Griechische Kulturgeschichte*, 153–55; Jost, *Aspects de la vie religieuse*, 152–54.

diverse powers of the deity, symbolically manifested the increased sacral presence and made it palpable.¹²

In archaic times the need to preserve and protect the holy objects led to the construction of buildings that gradually attained monumental traits.¹³ These huge temples expressed the close relationship of a local community with a certain deity, whose protection was the basic precondition for an enduring human existence.¹⁴ A complex ensemble of ritual and material expenditures, which determined the specific position of the sanctuaries in the interaction of the public spaces, gradually evolved.¹⁵

However, it is significant that the structures and the rituals remained oddly disconnected; the rituals were performed outdoors at an altar.¹⁶ The altars, not the temples, were the centers of the sanctuaries and utterly indispensable, while the structures were purely ornamental art,¹⁷ the sacral status of which is still very much disputed in modern research.¹⁸ Accordingly, the temples were not—or at the most were only to a very limited extent—manifestations of a secure and permanent sacral presence of the gods within society.

The performance of ritual acts was indispensable to communication with the sacral forces, as their presence was intensively experienced in the situational event of the ritual.

This precarious dimension of the presence of the sacral element within society was probably a major factor in the cyclical performance of rituals of purification in Greek sanctuaries. Therefore, it is justified to speak of a precarious implementation of the sacral element within society in ancient Greece.

¹² The complex positioning and symbolism of the cult images in the context of Greek religion is thoroughly analyzed in Scheer, *Die Gottheit und ihr Bild*, *passim*.

¹³ For the connection between temple and cult image see Burkert, "The Meaning and Function of the Temple", 31–33, and Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 149.

¹⁴ For temple architecture in general, see also Coldstream, "Greek Temples?" See also Gruben, *Die Tempel der Griechen*.

¹⁵ Cf. Hölscher, *Öffentliche Räume*.

¹⁶ For the development of altars, see Rupp, "Reflections on the Development of Altars", 104, with the suggestion that altars are depicted on vases only in later times due to the fact that they were rather unimpressive at first.

¹⁷ Cf. Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 146: "Das Temenos dient der 'heiligen Handlung', dem Opfer; sein wesentlichstes Element, wesentlicher noch als Kultmal, Baum und Quell, ist der Altar, *bomós*, auf dem das Feuer entzündet wird".

¹⁸ While Sourvinou-Inwood, "Polis Religion", definitely says that the sanctuaries were property of the cities, which could also pass from one *polis* to another, Burkert, "Greek Poleis and Civic Cult", remains undecided. For Burkert the sanctuaries were theoretically owned by the gods but were in practice administered by the city; see also Chaniotis, "Habgierige Götter".

From the human point of view, a positive relation to the divine powers was undoubtedly a fundamental prerequisite for the successful existence of the community. Nevertheless, it was difficult for humans to assess the exact constellation of the communication process with the divine powers in the context of their cults because the uncertainty about the latter's willingness to actually communicate was never completely resolved. From this complex situation originated the extreme importance the Greeks attributed to the categories of purity and pollution. The human counterpart was to achieve a condition that contributed to a positive disposition of the gods when communicating with them. This condition did not depend on general aspects that referred to the line of conduct of the person concerned, nor indeed on categories of an extensive concept of morality. In this respect the gods of the Greeks issued amazingly few normative guidelines. The crucial aspect was rather a situational purity that originated from the adherence to the conventional rules of the respective sanctuaries.

2. POLLUTION AND PURITY IN ROME

In Rome, there were also numerous occasions on which the warranty or the restitution of ritual purity played a significant role. This applied especially to critical situations that might be caused by the death of a member of the community or by violations against sacral regulations and procedures. In such cases purification rituals had to be performed. These expiatory actions were termed *piacula* and were designed to heal any breach of the sacral regulations.¹⁹ Possible offenses to be expiated by a *piaculum* were disruptions of prayers or sacrifices²⁰ as well as violations of a feast day²¹ or neglect by a priest.²² John Scheid correctly emphasizes that this was not a matter of "inner" purity or impurity. It was rather compliance with the requirements of the formal procedures that was most important. When the violation of regulations or rules was committed with ill intent, the punishment of the offense or negligence was a public, not a religious, matter.²³

¹⁹ Fundamental to this question: Scheid, "Le délit religieux"; the deliberations of Mommsen, "Der Religionsfrevler nach Römischen Recht", remain important; see also Ehlers, "piaculum".

²⁰ Cato, *Agr.* 141; Ennius in Gellius 4.6.6; Macrobius, *Sat.* 3.10.7; Servius, *Aen.* 2.104.

²¹ Varro, *Ling.* 6.30; Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.16.9–10.

²² Livius 5.52.14; Gellius 10.15.10.

²³ Scheid, "Le délit religieux", esp. 122–26.

Beyond these situational sacral reactions towards interferences in communication with the divine powers, there were also a number of rituals that were periodically conducted to ensure the fertility of the fields and to prevent any pollution or sacral impairment. Among these rituals were the *lustrationes*. A *lustratio* was basically a circular procession around a certain object, often a site.²⁴ In the course of this procession, the sacrificial animals were most commonly carried along and, for example, single plots (*lustratio agri*), the Palatine or the city of Rome were circled. While we are rather well informed about private agrarian *lustrationes*, thanks to a prominent description by Cato the Elder in his work about agriculture (*de agricultura* 141),²⁵ only scant information exists regarding community-wide cyclic rituals, whose importance is therefore difficult to assess.²⁶ A particular exception, however, is constituted by the archaic celebration of the *Lupercalia*, about which we are slightly better informed.

On this occasion, the Palatine in Rome was circled by sparsely dressed men who lashed the spectators with straps of goatskin.²⁷ Based on the etymology of its name, this rite was most probably invoked to keep wolves and other harm away from the herds, although there is no consensus yet in the discussion.²⁸ The sacrifice at the end of the Roman census was presumably also meant to secure future prosperity. In the context of the census, a new list of citizens was compiled and the property situations, especially real estate, were registered anew. At its completion the collective citizen body assembled in arms on the *campus martius*, in front of the *urbs*.

During this *lustrum* ritual, the censor then led a pig, a sheep and a cow around the newly constituted community of citizens, after which the animals were offered up as sacrifices to Mars: Dorothea Baudy emphasizes that the ritual core of this action consisted not in the purification of the army but in the revival of the newly constituted community's ties with Mars,²⁹ an act that was also intended to secure the fertility of the fields as the basis of the community's well-being. Although caution has to be exercised due to the difficult nature of the information, it can nevertheless be concluded that cyclical rituals concentrated on fending off dangers

²⁴ Baudy, *Umgangsriten*.

²⁵ Cf. also 141; Tibullus 2.1; Virgil, *Ecl.* 5.74–75; Harmon, "The Family Festivals of Rome".

²⁶ For *amburbium* Servius, *Ecl.* 3.77; see Baudy, *Umgangsriten*, 251–52.

²⁷ Ulf, *Das römische Lupercalienfest*; Ziolkowski, "Cleaning-Up".

²⁸ For the state of research, see Ziolkowski, "Cleaning-Up", 194–210.

²⁹ Baudy, *Umgangsriten*, 227–46.

rather than on purification. This first result indicates that the constitution of sacral presence was differently conditioned in Roman society than in Greece.

This consideration is further strengthened by an analysis of additional aspects. A first hint in this direction lies in the fact that the political center in Rome possessed an extraordinarily powerful religious protection in the form of the old city boundary—the *pomerium*—a phenomenon non-existent in Greece.³⁰ Within the *pomerium* no armed forces were tolerated, the only exception being those army units selected for taking part in a triumphal procession. The area within the *pomerium* was a special place, harboring not only the political center but also the most important sanctuaries of the Roman people. These two components were—unlike in Greece—indivisibly connected and intensively entangled with each other.

This also becomes obvious when contrasting the problematic nature of the site of the people's assembly in Rome with the conditions in Athens. Romans were deeply concerned that the processes of political decision-making might be affected by the distorting influence of locally existing sacral forces. Whereas in Athens a purification ritual was performed that included the cleansing of the meeting place of the assembly with pig's blood,³¹ the problem was handled differently in Rome.³² The people's assembly—as well as the Roman Senate—in general met only in *templa*. The word *templum* in Latin is not synonymous with the word "temple" in modern language. *Templum* rather refers to a place that had its boundaries exactly defined by the augurs and that had also been freed from any residing sacral forces. Therefore, a *templum* was a place that had been demarcated and detached from its surrounding area with the agreement of Jupiter, given via the taking of the *auspicia*,³³ a process termed *inauguratio*.

However, not every *templum* was a sacral place in the Roman sense. In fact, the most crucial point was to avoid exercising communal and collective actions in areas affected or controlled by already existing sacral influences. Accordingly, the people's assembly and the Senate always met in *templa*, which did not have to be sanctuaries. The regularly repeated

³⁰ For the configuration of religious areas in Rome, see Rüpke, *Domi militiae*, 30–41, and Rüpke, *Kult jenseits der Polisreligion*, 6–9.

³¹ Cf. Schol. Aristophanes, *Eccl.* 128; Schol. Aristophanes, *Ach.* 44; Istros, *FGrH* 334 F 16; see also Hanell, "Peristiarchos", and Parker, *Miasma*, 21.

³² Scheid, *Religion des Romains*, 55–66; Rüpke, *Die Religion der Römer*, 179–82.

³³ Linderski, "The Augural Law", 2256–96.

purification of the site of the people's assembly in Athens therefore contrasts strongly with the practice in Rome where the *templa*, after having been liberated and purified once, assumed a status of permanent sacral invulnerability.

Furthermore, the performance of additional rituals might turn a *templum* into a sanctuary, a *locus sacer*.³⁴ Through this consecration the place was officially handed over to a deity, most often by the magistrate in charge, who was assisted by a pontifex. In the course of this process the sacral forces residing within the area, as well as the boundaries of the sanctuary and the exact forms of worship, were precisely defined. Moreover, which ritual acts were allowed or forbidden was also announced; special groups of persons that were not allowed to enter the sanctuary, as well as proprietary regulations concerning votive offerings and protective measures against abuse or theft, were mentioned. Once inaugurated, the area was permanently withdrawn from any mundane influence and instead became the property of the divine forces. This also applied to the buildings constructed on this ground. In contrast to the Greek temples, the sacral status of their Roman counterparts was beyond dispute.

Significant differences between Greece and Rome also became apparent in the different role and appearance of the priests in these two cultural regions. Although they were prestigious specialists with expert knowledge regarding the technical procedures of the rituals, priests in Greece in general did not possess a religious quality of their own outside their respective sanctuaries. It was otherwise in Rome, where the special religious dimension of the priests was very intensely experienced in the context of the public life of the community.³⁵ For one thing, Roman priests were not exclusively linked to one specific sanctuary. Besides the politically influential members of the four great sacerdotal collegia, governing an astonishingly huge quantity of arcane political knowledge, there existed various priesthoods in Rome, whose priests stood in a very close relationship to the relevant deity due to the adoption of a lifestyle thoroughly governed by numerous taboos and obligations. The *flamen Dialis* and the Vestal Virgins bore the most evident testimony to this.

³⁴ Cf. Scheid, *Religion des Romains*, 57–59.

³⁵ For the Roman priests, see Porte, *Les donneurs de sacré*; Beard, "Priesthood in the Roman Republic"; Scheid, "Le prêtre et le magistrat"; Rüpke, "Organisationsmuster religiöser Spezialisten"; Szemler, "Priesthoods and Priestly Careers in Ancient Rome"; Szemler, *The Priests of the Roman Republic*.

The *flamen Dialis*, the priest of Jupiter, was forbidden to swear an oath or touch anything impure.³⁶ Any profane activity had to cease in his presence, a rule ensured by heralds advancing before the priest who told the people to stop their activities.³⁷ Furthermore, the *flamen Dialis* was not allowed to spend a single night outside his sacerdotal home,³⁸ while his clothes, food and eventually his whole lifestyle were governed by numerous and strict rules.³⁹ Anyone ordained as *flamen Dialis* was basically excluded from the political sphere.⁴⁰ However, the manifold regulations indicate that this priest was less a representative of the community to the god than a personification of the divine force within Roman society.⁴¹

The physical presence of the divine was also symbolized by the holy open hearth attended by the Vestal Virgins on behalf of the whole Roman community.⁴² These sacral high officials—the only female priests at all—were subject to a number of strict rules concerning their conduct of life, the highest precept being the requirement of chastity. The impossibility of marriage and bearing legitimate children during their thirty-year service in the Vesta cult put them in striking opposition to the otherwise-pervasive Roman ideal of the female way of living. They were the only women not subjected to paternal authority, due to their fulfilling a public function. Moreover, they possessed an astonishingly autonomous status that was only to some extent constrained by the authority of the Pontifex Maximus. A further peculiarity was that they were the only official priests in the Greco-Roman cultural sphere who lived in a convent-like manner and were therefore distinctly separated from their social environment.

³⁶ For the ban on taking oaths, see Livius 31.50.7; Gellius 10.15.5; Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 44; for the avoidance of impurity, see Gellius 10.15.12; 15.19; 15.24; Pliny (E), *NH.* 18.119; 28.146; Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 109–11; Servius, *Aen.* 1.179; Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.16.9; for *flamen Dialis*, s.a. Marco Simón, *Flamen Dialis*; Vanggaard, *The Flamen*; Scheid, “Le flamme de Jupiter”.

³⁷ Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.16.9.

³⁸ Livius 5.52.13: *flamini Dialis noctem unam manere extra urbem nefas est*; see also Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.71 and Gellius 10.15.14, describing the somewhat relaxed regulations of the Principate.

³⁹ E.g., his clothes had to be free of knots (see Gellius 10.15.9; Servius, *Aen.* 4.262), and only a free man was allowed to cut his hair (see Gellius 10.15.11).

⁴⁰ For the exclusion from politics, see Livius 4.54.7; Gellius 10.15.4; Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 113.

⁴¹ John Scheid, *Religion et piété*, 40–41: “Le flamme de Jupiter ne peut pas prêter serment, car il est [original emphasis] le serment, il incarne le maître du droit et du serment. . . . Bref, tous ces indices semblent suggérer que par son mode d'alimentation aussi le flamme Dial était plus proche des dieux que des hommes”.

⁴² For the Vestal Virgins, see Saquete, *Las vírgenes vestales*; Martini, *Le vestali*; Meka-cher, *Die vestalischen Jungfrauen*; Schultz, *Women's Religious Activity*, esp. 70–81.

Consequently, the peculiar way of life of the *flamen Dialis* and the Vestal Virgins symbolized the permanent presence of the sacral within Roman society. They are not 'part-time priests' like many sacral dignitaries in Greece. Instead, the strict rules governing their way of living and the conduct of their duties identified them as representatives of the sacral in a society that was very much aware of its close ties with the divine forces.

This intense interweaving of the sacral and social spheres was not restricted to the priesthood. It was also possible for constellations to arise outside of these sacral organizations that might be described as constitutions of the sacral within society. One instance of this is the Roman triumphal procession.⁴³ Before each military campaign, the commanding magistrate consulted Jupiter Optimus Maximus to determine if he was willing to consent to the military operation.

If he did so, and furthermore showed his benevolence towards the magistrate and the *res publica* by granting a splendid victory over their enemies, the successful general was allowed to enter the city of Rome in a triumphal procession leading up to the capitol, where a great thank-offering was made to the god. The triumphal garb worn by the general during this ceremony was kept in the temple of Jupiter and made obvious references to the supreme deity.

Dressed in purple, standing on the quadriga, equipped with scepter and laurel wreath, the general must have seemed like an incarnation of the god to the people who watched and marveled at the magnificent ritual.⁴⁴ Even though the Romans were of course aware that the victorious general was human, the whole ritual of the triumph, with its manifold ceremonial arrangements, nevertheless made the idea that the Roman community possessed special ties with the deity, a feeling that was further increased with each victory, come alive.

⁴³ For the triumphal procession, see Beard, *The Roman Triumph*; Bastien, *Le triomphe romain*; Itgenshorst, *Tota illa pompa*, and Bonfante-Warren, "Roman Triumph and Etruscan Kings". For the complex symbolic reference system of ritual and public space in the Roman Republic, see Hölkeskamp, "Hierarchie und Konsens"; Hölkeskamp, "Pomp und Prozessionen"; and Beck, "Züge in die Ewigkeit".

⁴⁴ Livius 10.7.10: *lovis Optimi Maximi ornatus*; for the purple toga and tunic, see Polybius 6.53; Dionysius Halicarnasseus, *Ant. rom.* 3.61 and 62; Appian, *Pun.* 66; Livius 10.7.9; 30.15.11–12; for the quadriga, see Dionysius Halicarnasseus, *Ant.rom.* 9.71.4. The chariot itself was gilded; see Livius 10.7.10; Horace, *Epod.* 9.21; for the eagle-crowned scepter wielded by the triumphator in his left hand, see Dionysius Halicarnasseus, *Ant. rom.* 3.61.2–3; Valerius Maximus 4.4.5; Juvenal 10.43. In the right he carried a laurel branch; see Pliny (E), *NH.* 15.137; Plutarch, *Aem.* 34; Appian, *Pun.* 66; for the laurel wreath, see Pliny (E), *NH.* 15.137. A slave standing behind the triumphator held a gold wreath above his head; see Pliny (E), *NH.* 33.11; Juvenal 10.39.

This experience was also shared by the whole citizen body in the context of the circus games, which had their roots in the honoring of the gods and were therefore deeply enmeshed in the sacral sphere. At the beginning of the games, the most important symbols of Jupiter Optimus Maximus—the *exuviae*—were conducted into the circus in a ceremonial procession.⁴⁵ These processions were led by the supreme magistrates, whose attire was related to the triumphal garb.⁴⁶ The same garb was worn by the magistrates in charge during the games, which were performed in the presence of the gods. The people and the gods formed a physically palpable unit for the duration of the games.⁴⁷

As a consequence of these considerations, it appears that the constitution of sacral presence in Rome complied with a different logic than in Greece. While the religious life in Greece was characterized by the struggle for the densification of the sacral within the human sphere, the Romans were convinced that the sacral forces were already present in their midst. Accordingly, the gradual concept of the Greeks was opposed by a strong claim of stability in Rome. The existence of the sacral within society, in both its social and its spatial dimension, was presumed in Rome. Taking this conception into account, a division of the two spheres was well-nigh impossible.⁴⁸ It was not a gradual approach or a situational densification of the sacral that underlay the Roman conception of the world, but rather a fundamental harmony. This integration of sacral powers into the fabric of Roman society went to such lengths that John Scheid speaks of “fellow sacral citizens” (*dieux citoyens*).⁴⁹

However, this harmonizing tie between the sacral and social spheres was prone to being disturbed or endangered, even in Rome. This menacing scenario and its prevention constituted a central aspect in the religious worldview of the Romans. They assumed that in general the gods would, of their own accord, give a warning about impending threats against their relationship with the Roman community. In such cases ominous portents,

⁴⁵ For the *exuviae*, see Suetonius, *Aug.* 94.6. The *exuviae* of Jupiter Optimus Maximus were an eagle scepter, lightning bolt or gilded wreath; see Bernstein, *Ludi publici*, 42–43 (see note 63). For the carts (*tensae*) on which the *exuviae* were conducted into the circus, see Fest. p. 500 L; cf. Valerius Maximus 1.1.16; Suetonius, *Aug.* 43.5; *Vesp.* 5.7; Tertullian, *Spec.* 7.2.

⁴⁶ Livius 5.41.2: *augustissima vestis est tensas ducentibus triumphantibusve*; cf. Bernstein, *Ludi publici*, 48–51; Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, 153 (see note 55).

⁴⁷ Livius 2.37.9: *coetus quodam modo hominum deorumque*. Instead of the Forum the people could also be summoned in front of the Capitoline Temple; see Livius 25.3.14; 33.25.7; 34.1.4; 34.53.2; 43.16.9; 45.36.1; Appian, *civ.* 1.15.

⁴⁸ Cf. Linke, “Religio”.

⁴⁹ Scheid, *Religion et piété*, 51–57.

prodigia, for example deformed animals or lightning striking sacral places, were sent in order to call the problems to the attention of the humans.

A closer look at the ways in which Roman society reacted to these events and situations, which were seen as critical or symptomatic of crises, reveals a sophisticated system of mechanisms that was meant to guarantee the efficiency of the social order even in such situations.⁵⁰ Thus, the gods were in theory able to employ portents in order to highlight disturbances in their relations with human society. However, these portents on their own did not have any effect, instead only gaining importance after the sacral and political institutions of the Roman Republic accepted their relevance for the Roman community. Thereby the Roman priests, magistrates and Senate controlled not only the communication of the community with the gods but also the communication of the gods with the community.⁵¹ The consultation of the Sibylline Books formed a cornerstone of this control,⁵² as their situationally adapted references lent a remarkable degree of flexibility to the religious system in regard to its response to extraordinary incidents. The books were solely consulted on the order of the Senate and their counsels were announced in secret sessions. It was anything but a small effort that the social institutions of the Roman Republic performed in order to guarantee the stability of the collective order in times of crisis.

Correspondingly, the spectrum of advice given by the Sibylline Books was very wide. It ranged from the offering of sacrifices and the establishment of new temples to the introduction of new cults. The supplicatory procession, the *supplicationes* (first performed in 463 BCE), and the performance of feasts for the gods, the *lectisternia* (first performed in 399 BCE), had been part of this spectrum since the early phase of the Roman Republic.⁵³ Due to the fact that these two rituals concerned the whole population, they are quite instructive.

⁵⁰ Cf. Rosenberger, *Gezähmte Götter*, *passim*.

⁵¹ Cf. Scheid, *Religion et piété*, 51–55.

⁵² The origins of the Sibylline Books are unknown. According to the ancient sources they were acquired under the Etruscan King Tarquinius Superbus. The first consultation mentioned dates back to the year 496 BCE (see Dionysius Halicarnasseus, *Ant. rom.* 6.17.3); for the Sibylline Books, see Scheid, “Les livres sibyllins”; Scheid, “Rituel et écriture à Rome”, 7–8; Orlin, *Temples, Religion and Politics*, 76–116; North, “Diviners and Divination at Rome”; North, “Conservatism and Change”, 9; Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus*, 536–47; Porte, *Les donneurs de sacré*, 144–48.

⁵³ In contrast to older expiation rituals—e.g., the *lustratio*—the *supplicationes* were probably a slightly younger ritual, although the exact date of their introduction remains as unresolved as the problem of possible Greek influences; see Linke, “Emotionalität und

As with many elements of social and religious life at the time of the Roman Republic, we are dependent on the analysis of fragmentary evidence that has to be compiled to form a plausible overall picture. However, it is obvious that the *supplicationes* and the *lectisternia* were not confined to an exclusive circle but included a great part of the population.⁵⁴

The sanctuaries were opened,⁵⁵ and in the course of the *supplicationes*, the people carried wreaths and moved in loose formation and sequence from one sacral place to the next, pleading with the gods for mercy.⁵⁶ While the men offered up gifts, such as wine, the women begged the gods in a highly emotionalized form to rescue the Roman community from its plight.⁵⁷ To emphasize their pleading they threw themselves on the ground, loosened their hair and used it to clean the floors of the sanctuaries.⁵⁸

However, the *supplicationes* later also performed the function—particularly in the case of spectacular military successes—of thanking the gods in a state of joyful excitement, thereby ritually symbolizing the end of

Status"; Wissowa, "Supplicationes"; Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus*, 423–26; Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, 245–46; Rüpke, *Domus militiae*, 215–17; Rosenberger, *Gezähmte Götter*, 143–45; Freyburger, "La supplication de grâces"; and Freyburger, "Supplication grecque et supplication romaine", in whose assessment the *supplicationes* have a decidedly Roman character, which was either only superficially influenced by Greek rituals or had been adopted from Greeks or Etruscans at such an early time that the external part of the ritual had all but disappeared. Freyburger's assumptions were based on his research on the significant differences between the ritual forms of pleading and thanking in Greece and Rome. For the sometimes exaggerated Greek influences on the Roman *equites*, see also Scheid, "Graeco Ritu". For the *lectisternia*, see Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus*, 421–23; Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, 242–44; North, "Religion in Republican Rome", 618; and Rosenberger, *Gezähmte Götter*, 146–47.

⁵⁴ Cf., e.g., Livius 21.62.9: *universo populo circa omnia pulvinaria*, and 30.17.6: *Itaque praetor extemplo edixit, uti aedutui aedes sacras omnes tota urbe aperirent, circumeundi salutandique deos agendique grates per totum diem populo potestas fieret*; see also 22.10.8; 27.51.9; 45.2.7.

⁵⁵ Cf., e.g., Livius 8.33.20; 10.23.1, 23.17.6 and 40.4; 45.2.6–12.

⁵⁶ For the *supplicationes circa (ad) omnia pulvinaria* (or more rarely *circa omnia templa*), see for instance Livius 21.62.9; 24.10.13; 27.4.15; 30.21.10; 31.8.2; 32.1.14; 34.55.4; Cicero, *Cat.* 3.23; Cicero, *Phil.* 14.37; Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.12. For the wreaths, see Livius 34.55.4; 36.37.5; 40.37.3; 43.13.8; see also Freyburger, "Supplication de grâces", 289–98, who analyzes the etymology of the word *supplicatio* and the resulting consequences for its sacral background and performance.

⁵⁷ For the provision of wine and incense out of public funds, see Livius 10.23.2; see on that account Rosenberger, *Gezähmte Götter*, 144.

⁵⁸ Cf. Livius 3.7.7; see also Livius 26.9.8: *Ploratus mulierum non ex privatis solum domibus exaudiebatur, sed undique matronae in publicum effusae circa deum delubra discurrunt crinibus passis aras verrentes, nixae genibus, supinas manus ad caelum ac deos tendentes*; see also Wissowa, "Supplicationes", 943, and Rosenberger, *Gezähmte Götter*, 144.

a critical situation.⁵⁹ During the *lectisternia*, the cult images of the gods were taken from the temples to previously arranged places, where they were bedded on pillows (*pulvinar*). After that, the citizens symbolically dined together with their gods: “The gods, otherwise secluded sitting enthroned in their temples, came to the people and participated in the meal offered to them”.⁶⁰

Despite pending questions and uncertainties regarding the details of the procedure, one surprising element of the ritual, which is constantly emphasized in the sources, is striking: The structure adopted by the Roman community for the execution of its rituals was not determined by the usual strict organization of the public space into fixed principles of classification. As a general rule, the Romans excelled in organizing social activities or sacral rituals in such a way as to reduplicate the established social order among the attendees. However, in situations of extreme danger, they conspicuously chose a form of organization that was not governed by any form of stratification. Instead, the people went individually from temple to temple and begged for mercy or offered up votives in the context of the *lectisternia*. They did not do this as part of the community in whose structure they were integrated and which was usually reduplicated within the rituals.

However, both the suspension of the criteria for social order, which in general were strictly adhered to in public, and the importance of the participation of women stress the singularity of the whole scenario.⁶¹ It was not the *populus* in terms of the social order of a strictly structured and hierarchical union of the male members of the Roman people that begged the gods for mercy or thanked them for their help, but rather the Roman people in a universal sense who were called upon to communicate with the gods. Thus, whenever the fundamental connection of Roman

⁵⁹ For the connection of the *supplicationes* with the rituals concerning the triumph, see Versnel, *Triumphus*, 164–95; Halkin, *La supplication*; Freyburger, “Supplication de grâces”, 298–315.

⁶⁰ Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, 244; on the significance of cult images in Roman religious practice and for an analysis of the food rituals, see Rüpke, *Religion der Römer*, 72–75; 104; on the cult images, see also Gladigow, “Ikonographie und Pragmatik”, for *lectisternia* esp. 21–23.

⁶¹ For the emphasis on the participation of women, see, e.g., Livius 25.12.15: *matronae supplicavere*; 27.51.9: *matronae amplissima veste cum liberis*; see also 22.10.8 and 45.2.7. On the standing of women in Roman religion, see Scheid, “Die Rolle der Frauen”; Scheid, *Religion des Romains*, 111–12; Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 70–71; 95–98; Scheer, “Forschungen über die Frau in der Antike”, 159–61.

society with their sacral forces was in jeopardy, the former reacted with a sort of 'situational self-dissolution' in the context of highly emotionalized rituals. It is therefore appropriate to speak of a cathartic rebirth of the community.

3. PURITY IN ANCIENT SOCIETIES: A PROVISIONAL RESULT

Purity as a means of conserving collective identity and the ability to communicate with the sacred plays a substantial role in ancient societies. In the Greek as well as the Roman cultural sphere, there existed a multitude of purification rituals meant to protect the community from pollution and the damage this would cause. This applied both to the agricultural sector and to social life. However, despite these similarities, a closer look reveals significant differences. In Greece a trend may be observed wherein compliance with purity regulations aimed at increasing the possibility of the presence of certain sacral forces for the benefit of a specific social group at a specified place. Codes of conduct within the boundaries of the sanctuaries indicated that a border was being crossed on entering, which served to detach the sacral place from its mundane environment. Sacrifices performed under these special conditions were then intended to gain the attention of the sacral forces and focus it on the sacrificing community, thereby securing the latter's protection.

The essential precondition for this concept of purity lies in the apprehension that the gods can be absent; their presence must not be taken for granted. Therefore the attendance of the gods had to be ascertained in some basic form before the actual execution of the sacral communication. This necessity of maximizing the probability of sacral presence is undoubtedly related to the embedding of the sacral forces within the complicated social constellation of ancient Greece. A multitude of politically and socially independent communities referred in their cults to one and the same deity, with the result that regionally specific aspects were intricately correlated with commonly shared perceptions of the sacral system. Although the current research, with good reason, emphasizes the importance of regional specifics, it is nevertheless evident that an exclusive relationship between a certain community and a deity was impossible to establish under such conditions. Thus the deities possessed a social polyvalence due to their being counterparts for various communities. This polyvalence even applied to the goddess Athena, who had proverbially close ties to the city of Athens. As a result of the poly-social location of the

Greek gods, a latent contest for their favor ensued in which relative affinity and frequency became a crucial category. Accordingly, it was deemed necessary to increase the probability of these positive effects to which compliance with purity regulations contributed.

In Rome, reverence for the gods was originally also embedded in a poly-social context. Being part of the Latin League, the Romans shared their deities with the neighboring Latin communities. However, a fundamentally contrary trend can be discerned at quite an early time. Lavishly endowed cults of Latin deities were established in Rome that competed in obvious ways with the cults for the whole of Latium and were designed to supersede them eventually. The most prominent example is without a doubt provided by the outstanding cult of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, to whom a temple on the Roman capitol was dedicated in the late 6th century. This temple was of such monumental proportions that it far eclipsed the central Latin cult of Jupiter Latiaris.

The successful attempt to reconfigure the sacral landscape in favor of Rome served to demonstrate Roman dominance within Latium. At the end of this development the sacral landscape had changed dramatically, and the former poly-social establishment of the cults had been replaced by a cult constellation exclusively centered on Rome. Consequently, the time of the Roman Republic presents a very different picture than does the period of classical Greece. The whole Roman community was deeply animated by the belief that the divine powers relevant to their community were present within its center. Therefore, the problem of potentially absent gods due to a poly-social relativity did not occur to Romans; their gods were present. It was possible to encounter priests on the streets whose entire lifestyle symbolized this sacral presence. They were present at triumphs as well as during the circus games.

The sanctuaries provided places right at the center of society that were ceded to the gods on a permanent basis and thus testified to their sacral presence within the community, an aspect that was even further emphasized by the political meetings held there. These meetings demonstrated the close affiliation and certainty felt by the Romans in regard to the connection between the presence of the sacral and its importance for the community's orientation towards common action. Because of this, the center, i.e., the area within the *pomerium*, acquired a special quality. While the Greeks maintained a rather equalizing conception of the positioning of cults in the territory of their communities, the Roman cults were concentrated within the sacral city boundaries of the *pomerium* and its immediate vicinity.

The Romans thus developed a specific form of sacral densification that probably had its origin in the distinct demarcation from the other Latin communities. In the long run, this process resulted in an alternate concept of sacral presence: In general the presence of the sacral forces was beyond question. Society regularly reassured itself of this fact with great ritual effort. However, if justified doubts concerning the permanent sacral presence occurred, the society disintegrated into its most basic elements in order to restore its exclusive relation to the gods in the context of the *lectisternia* and the *supplicationes*.

If sacral purity refers to a state of exceptionally secure ability to communicate with the sacral forces, then this level of communication was achieved by the Roman community to an extent rivaled by few other societies.

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FORMS AND FUNCTIONS OF PURITY IN LEVITICUS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Notions related to purity and pollution play a major role in Leviticus, probably more so than in any other book of the Hebrew Bible, if we except the case of Numbers.¹ The following essay is a general survey of notions of purity and pollution found in Leviticus, using an approach that combines philological, historical and social-scientific insights. It discusses the various forms and representations of pollution in Leviticus and seeks to explain them in terms of their social and ideological function in the context of the ancient society that produced this writing. Contrary to other studies, which have usually treated Leviticus as part of a broader tradition within the Pentateuch (the so-called 'Priestly source', or P), this analysis will focus on the final form Leviticus as a separate 'book' within the Pentateuch.²

Discussing concepts of purity and pollution in Leviticus raises the central question of the genre and nature of the material preserved in that book. As with many other aspects of the religion of ancient Israel, the Hebrew Bible represents virtually our only source of information about concepts of purity and impurity before the Hellenistic period.³ However, contrary

¹ This is already shown by the occurrence of the main terms for 'clean' and 'unclean' in the Hebrew Bible, *ṭhr* and *ṭm'*; almost half of the occurrences of these two roots can be found in Leviticus alone. The verb *ṭm'* occurs 162 times in the Hebrew Bible, 85 of which are in Leviticus; the corresponding term *ṭāmē'* 'unclean' occurs 88 times overall, 47 in Leviticus alone. Likewise, the verb *ṭhr* occurs 94 times in the Hebrew Bible, 43 in Leviticus; only the term *ṭāhōr* 'clean' does not entirely follow this general rule (96 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, of which 21 are in Leviticus). On purity and pollution in Numbers, see the essay by C. Frevel in this volume.

² Compare, e.g., Wright, "Spectrum"; Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, esp. 40–55. This is also true of studies that have focused on concepts of purity and pollution in a portion of Leviticus, such as chs. 11–15, rather than on the book as a whole; compare, e.g., Milgrom, "Rationale"; Marx, "L'impureté".

³ In other words, if it were not for the biblical texts, we would simply have no idea of the role played by the distinction between 'pure' and 'impure' in the social and religious life of ancient Israel. This assertion may be slightly qualified if we take into account the possibility that some of the apocryphal and pseudepigraphic traditions, in which purity concepts sometimes also play a major role, may actually go back to the Persian period. I am thinking, in particular, of the core traditions constituting the "Book of the Watchers"

to other sources in Antiquity, such as, for instance, public inscriptions or archaeological remains, Leviticus cannot be used as primary evidence for popular beliefs pertaining to purity and pollution. Although it is likely to contain earlier instructional material, the book as such is a literary composition that was produced by a group of scribes closely associated with the temple in Jerusalem and that probably served first and foremost for the education of elites. Thus, from a social-scientific perspective, it would be naïve to read issues of pollution and purification in Leviticus as if that book were a mere report of contemporary practices, without taking into account the book's literary and ideological character.

For this reason, this study will begin with a brief assessment of the origins of the book of Leviticus and its intended audience, in order to define a general framework for understanding the possible functions of the instructions about pollution and purification that are laid out in that book (§ 2). The discussion will then address the two main forms of pollution defined in Leviticus, namely, physical (§ 3) and moral (§ 4) impurities. Basically, it will be argued that these two forms of pollution are complementary in that they represent an attempt to establish a form of social control over phenomena perceived either as *external* or *internal* threats against the integrity of the social group ('Israel') to which Leviticus is addressed. Furthermore, whereas these two forms of pollution have distinct origins and distinct effects, they are partly unified into a comprehensive system of purification, which is itself centered on the temple and its sacrificial rituals. Finally, in a further section (§ 5), we will try to see how it is possible to correlate this interpretation of pollution in Leviticus with the social milieu that produced this book during the Persian period.

2. THE COMPOSITION OF LEVITICUS IN THE PERSIAN PERIOD

Like the other books of the Pentateuch, Leviticus is a composite writing. There are many indications that the rules for sacrifices in Lev 1–7 and for

in 1 *Enoch* (1 *En.* 1–36), especially the story of the angelic watchers' descent to engage in sexual intercourse with human women and the ensuing contamination of the earth in 1 *En.* 6–11, which is usually regarded as the oldest section in the Book of the Watchers. While I am quite ready to accept the view that some portions of the Book of the Watchers may go back to the fifth or fourth century BCE, this material has been so heavily reworked during the Hellenistic period that it is not easy to isolate that pre-Hellenistic layer. Otherwise, the evidence brought by archeological and epigraphic data is usually limited and mostly negative (e.g., the absence of pig bones in Israelite settlements during the Iron Age).

various cases of impurity in Lev 11–15, in particular, had a complex genesis. The various rules contained in these two sections are not homogeneous but are characterized by numerous tensions and repetitions, pointing to a process of gradual composition.⁴ Furthermore, scholars have traditionally assumed that many of the rules in Lev 1–7 and 11–15 had their origin in one or more collections of priestly instructions that were handed down by generations of priestly families at the central sanctuary in Jerusalem (and, possibly, in Samaria as well).⁵ This opinion is supported by many observations and is most likely correct. For instance, the instruction about edible and non-edible animals in Lev 11:2–23 has a close parallel in Deut 14:3–20. Apparently, both Lev 11 and Deut 14 reflect separate adaptations, in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, of an earlier tradition of dietary rules.⁶ On a more general level, several passages in the Hebrew Bible attest to the fact that one of the basic meanings of the term *tôrāh*, in biblical Hebrew, is an instruction (or a ‘teaching’) delivered by priests on matters regarding issues pertaining to the offering of sacrifices and the treatment of impurity.⁷ Significantly, each of the instructions for purity defined in Lev 11–15 concludes with a similar subscription summarizing that legislation and beginning with the following sentence: ‘This is the *tôrāh* (teaching) for X . . . (*zōt tôrat-X*)’; a similar formula occurs in some passages of Lev 1–7.⁸ These and other observations corroborate the traditional view that Leviticus is rooted in a tradition of instructional material for priestly performance at central sanctuaries in Jerusalem and in Samaria.⁹ This

⁴ For instance, some passages imply that only the carcasses of *unclean* animals are polluting (Lev 11:8, 24–28; see also Lev 5:2), whereas another rule extends this principle to domestic quadrupeds as well (Lev 11:39–40).

⁵ On the reconstruction of such instructional material in Lev 1–7 and 11–16, see my analysis of the evidence (with discussion of the relevant scholarly literature) in Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 150–268 and 269–379 respectively. Today, scholars are much more skeptical about identifying similar material in the last section of the book (Lev 17–27), traditionally designated as the ‘Holiness Code’ or, better, the ‘Holiness legislation’, which is usually regarded as a later compositional stratum within the book with little earlier instructional material.

⁶ For a recent discussion of this phenomenon and its significance for recovering the instructional background underlying Leviticus, see Nihan, ‘Clean and Unclean Animals’.

⁷ See especially Deut 24:8; Ez 22:26; 44:23; Zeph 3:4; Hag 2:11. The same notion is also found in Lev 10:10.

⁸ See Lev 11:46–47; 12:7; 13:59; 14:54–57; 15:32–33; compare also, with a different formulation, Lev 6:2, 7, 18; 7:1, 11, and 37.

⁹ More specifically, some of the collections of instructions now found in Leviticus may have originated as ‘checklists’ of sorts for priestly specialists, the purpose of which was to set in written form the standard order for the performance of a given ceremony. The existence of such ritual ‘checklists’ is well attested in the Ancient Near East, especially in

conclusion suggests that recent attempts to disconnect Leviticus entirely from actual cultic practices in ancient Israel are likely to be mistaken.¹⁰

These remarks are important for situating the origins of Leviticus from a social and historical perspective. However, when it comes to the book in its final shape, it is equally clear that we cannot restrict its function to that of a mere priestly 'manual' or a transcript of sorts of ritual performances at central sanctuaries in Jerusalem and Samaria. In the canonical book of Leviticus, instructions concerning the offering of sacrifices and the measures to be taken in case of various forms of pollution are no longer presented as specifically priestly knowledge but as divine laws revealed to the ethnic group identified as 'Israel' at Mount Sinai (see Lev 1:1–2a). Furthermore, these laws are completed in Lev 17–26 by a collection of additional rules about communal ethics (see especially chs. 18–20) and the celebration of major festivals (chs. 23–25). Last but not least, this complex collection of instructions is organized according to a narrative pattern, the center of which comprises the account of the consecration of the first priests and the inauguration of the sacrificial cult in Lev 8–10, which itself follows the completion of the wilderness sanctuary at the end of Exodus (see Exod 40:34–35).¹¹ Concretely, this means that

Ugarit, in Ebla, and in Babylon. For a recent discussion of that issue, see Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 215–19.

¹⁰ Such attempts to disconnect the instructional material contained in Leviticus from actual ritual practice are evident in some recent works. Compare, e.g., Bergen, *Reading Ritual*, 4, who states: "I am not assuming that the text of Leviticus 1–7 was ever actually used as the basis for the correct forms of offering animal sacrifices". A little further, Bergen also states that the very existence of the text of Leviticus is "a sign of the absence of ritual" (*Reading Ritual*, 7). In similar fashion, Douglas, *Leviticus*, typically seeks to understand the book as 'literature', which for her apparently means that it has little if anything to do with the cult effectively practiced in the period when the book was composed. I certainly agree that it would be naïve to assume that the book simply 'mirrors' actual cultic practice at the time when it was composed. Yet this does not mean that Leviticus was completely detached from the rituals effectively performed in Jerusalem or in other central sanctuaries, or that it should be understood as an 'alternative' of sorts to these practices; the relationship between the literary 'text' of Leviticus and existing 'rituals' could also (and, in my view, more likely) be a complementary one. This issue can only be settled if we consider the more general question of the function of the Pentateuch in the Persian period, as well as its intended audience. See below.

The general issue of the relationship between 'text' and 'ritual' in Leviticus has been the subject of some important discussion lately. See especially Watts, *Ritual and Rhetoric*, esp. 27–38; as well as Bibb, *Ritual Words*, whose work is largely devoted to this very issue.

¹¹ Many scholars have correctly perceived the significance of the account of the inauguration of the sacrificial cult as a major narrative pivot determining the overall arrangement of the book; compare, e.g., Blum, *Studien*, 312–32. For further discussion on this issue, see Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 76–110.

whatever earlier instructional material is preserved in Leviticus has been consistently and thoroughly revised and amplified in order to fit a new composition, which is itself part of the broader narrative of Israel's origins found in the Pentateuch.¹²

In general terms, the Pentateuch defines what may be termed an authoritative account of the origins of 'Israel', which could be acknowledged in principle by all the groups who claimed to descend from the former kingdoms of Israel and Judah in Iron Age II, including not only the various diaspora groups established in Babylon, in Egypt, or in Susa, but even the inhabitants of the province of Samaria who worshipped YHWH, the patron deity of Israel and Judah, at the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim during the Persian and Hellenistic eras. To that effect, the Pentateuch combines a series of legal and narrative traditions, which define together the main features identifying 'Israel' as a distinct ethnic group according to the prevailing conception in the Ancient Mediterranean, namely, a shared ancestry (the genealogies of Genesis), a shared history (the exodus and the march towards the promised land), a shared geography, a common body of laws and customs, a common deity (YHWH) and, lastly, a central sanctuary with associated rites.¹³ In this authoritative account of Israel's history, the general function of Leviticus was to provide the main rites associated with that sanctuary; this is the reason why Leviticus, in the pentateuchal narrative, follows immediately after the account of the completion of the sanctuary at the end of Exodus (see Exod 35–40). To that effect, the earlier collections of priestly instructional material now preserved in Leviticus were adapted by being re-contextualized and re-organized in order to fit this new function.¹⁴ In addition, the scribes who composed Leviticus in the Persian period devised several indications

¹² Here again, there are indications that this process took place in successive stages. Scholars generally agree in distinguishing between a 'Priestly' (P) composition comprising Lev 1–16, which already presupposes an earlier version of Israel's origins, and a later supplement consisting of the 'Holiness legislation' (H) found in Lev 17–26 (or 17–27).

¹³ For a similar view, see, e.g., Davies, "Ethnicity in the Torah". For a broad-scale attempt to describe the Pentateuch as a 'charter' of sorts, based on various traditions, for the ethnic group 'Israel' in the context of the Persian period, see also Mullen, *Ethnic Myths*.

¹⁴ Regarding Leviticus, Mullen thus observes: "What is clear from the book itself is that a number of related issues, e.g., sacrifices, priesthood, purity, impurity, etc., all deriving from the technical world of the cultus, have been collected and edited here to form a particular view of how 'Israel' was to serve YHWH and how it was to preserve itself as a sanctified, separated people" (*Ethnic Myths*, 217).

intended to mark it off as a separate unit (or a 'book'), thus highlighting its distinctive function and status within the Pentateuch.¹⁵

The creation of the Pentateuch is usually dated to the 5th to 4th centuries BCE (i.e., the period of Persian, or Achaemenid, domination in Yehûd), and this dating can be supported both by external and by internal data.¹⁶ The precise circumstances that led to the creation of such a

¹⁵ To mention only some of the most obvious evidence: The book has its own, distinct introduction, and it ends in Lev 27:34 with a subscription (see also 26:46) that marks it off from the following book (compare Num 1:1). In the narrative of the Torah, Lev 27:34 concludes the divine revelation made at Mount Sinai. The following instructions in Num 1–10 take place, for their part, "in the wilderness of Sinai" (Num 1:1) and have therefore a status distinct from the instructions found in Leviticus. Note, further, the way in which the book is framed by the chronological indications found in the last chapter of Exodus (Exod 40:17: first day of the first month of the second year after the exodus) and in the first chapter of Numbers (Num 1:1: first day of the second month of the second year after the exodus). The two data in Exod 40 and Num 1 define a timeframe of exactly one month (the first month of the second year), in which the Leviticus narrative takes place. For this and further observations, see Ruwe, "Structure"; Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 69–76. Furthermore, the last chapter (Lev 27) returns to the issue of offerings made to the temple, thus rounding off the entire book by branching into the very topic with which the book opens in Lev 1. (On this, see Douglas, *Leviticus*, 244.) This device is all the more striking in that Lev 1 and 27 can be viewed as complementary. While Lev 1 (like the rest of chs. 1–7) deals with the bringing of sacrifices to the temple, Lev 27, for its part, deals with the restitution to the profane world (i.e., the 'de-secration') of things that had been consecrated to YHWH.

Whether or not this means that, at that time, Leviticus was already written on a separate scroll is more difficult to assess, since we have no material evidence for individual Leviticus scrolls before the 2nd and the 1st centuries BCE. From a technical perspective, however, there is general agreement that the Pentateuch is unlikely to have stood on a single scroll before the first centuries CE; before that, books such as Samuel or Chronicles probably represented the maximal size that could be contained in a single scroll, as was argued by M. Haran and others. Thus, the possibility that Leviticus was already copied in a single scroll in the Persian period can certainly not be excluded. It must be kept in mind, however, that in classical Hebrew the term 'book' (*seper*) refers first and foremost to a *conceptual* unit, which is not simply equivalent to the material 'scroll' (*m'gillâh*); thus, one 'book' could encompass several scrolls (as, e.g., in the case of the 'Book of the Law of Moses'), or one scroll could comprise several 'books' (as in the case of the Twelve Prophets).

¹⁶ At the end of the 3rd century the first Jewish historian writing in Greek, Demetrios the Chronographer, had already made use of the Greek translation of the book of Genesis in his treatise on Judean kings (circa 220–210 BCE), of which some fragments have survived. Likewise, some of the biblical and parabiblical manuscripts found at the site of Qumran have shown that the Samaritan version of the Pentateuch goes back to a pre-Samaritan text-type from the 3rd century BCE or even earlier. To be sure, we also know from the textual evidence at our disposal that the consonantal text of the Torah was not definitively stabilized before the turn of the era. Yet with one possible exception (the account of the building of the wilderness sanctuary in Exod 35–40), the variations that we can observe during the Hellenistic and Roman periods were usually of a limited scope. Internal evidence in other traditions of the Hebrew Bible points in a similar direction. Thus, e.g., the account of the Torah's public reading in Neh 8 (a text possibly going back

document, as well as the main groups involved in that enterprise, are not entirely clear, although it is possible to advance some general observations. Today, scholars tend to view the creation of the Pentateuch in the Persian period mostly as a *local* initiative, which was probably sponsored by aristocratic families in Jerusalem and—possibly—in Samaria.¹⁷ Leading priestly families were certainly involved in that enterprise, and in the case of Leviticus specifically it is generally agreed that the composition of that book was entirely controlled by such priestly families.¹⁸

In principle, as noted above, the Pentateuch could be accepted by a large number of Judeans and Samaritans claiming connections with the ethnic group known as 'Israel'; this will indeed be the case a little later in history, in the Hellenistic period. In the context of the Persian period, however, when only a very small portion of the population had been trained to read and write, the diffusion of the Pentateuch is likely to have been significantly more limited. While there is some evidence suggesting that the practice of communal reading or recitation of the Torah (or of sections thereof) was already taking place in the Persian period, that evidence is not sufficient to suggest that such practice was already fully institutionalized at that time.¹⁹ A more likely assumption, argued in detail

to the fourth century BCE) suggests that around the end of the Persian period a document comparable in scope to the canonical Pentateuch was already known in Jerusalem.

¹⁷ I tend to join with those scholars who believe the Pentateuch resulted from a compromise of sorts between priestly and non-priestly leading families in Judah and Samaria; compare, e.g., the model sketched by Albertz, *History* 2, 446–47. One older model (the so-called 'imperial authorization' theory) held that the Pentateuch was created with the approbation of the Achaemenid administration in order to be enforced as the *nomós* of the province of Yehûd. However, this theory has received substantial criticism and is now generally abandoned. This is not to deny, however, that the creation of the Pentateuch may be regarded in many respects as encoding a strategy of adaptation to the new political, cultural and economic context of the Persian Empire; on this issue, see, e.g., Hagedorn, "Local Law".

¹⁸ I.e., in terms of the book's literary history, the two main bodies of traditions that can be identified behind the present text of Leviticus—namely, 'P' and 'H'; see above, n. 12—are both unanimously regarded by critics as having originated in priestly circles. Note that this priestly influence over the composition of Leviticus is still reflected in the names given to that book in later traditions, such as *tôrât kohânûm* ('teaching of the priests') in the Rabbinic tradition (e.g., *m. Megillah* 3:5) or *levitkôn* (meaning 'belonging to the priests' or, alternatively, 'pertaining to the priests') in the Greek tradition.

¹⁹ Texts prescribing or describing communal recitation of the Torah can be found in a few traditions of the Persian period: see especially Deut 31:9–13 and Neh 8. However, the former passage prescribes such recitation only every seven years; the latter describes public recitation under Ezra but never mentions that it should take place on a regular basis. Further allusions to communal recitation of the Torah, such as Josh 8:31–35 MT (= 9:1–2 LXX) or Neh 13:1–3, are no more explicit. All in all, such passages do suggest that the scribes of the Persian period apparently envisioned a practice of transmission of the

by D. Carr, is that the Pentateuch was first and foremost devised for the education of a small elite in the Persian-period provinces of Judah and Samaria, who were trained, most likely at local temples, in order to be able to occupy various political and administrative roles. Through reading, copying, memorizing or commenting on the Pentateuch, these elite groups were thus inculcated with a set of central norms and values, which would then shape their official activities.²⁰

These remarks regarding the origins of the Pentateuch in the context of the Persian period shed some light on the central issue of the social and ideological function of Leviticus in the Persian period. Overall, the composition of Leviticus reflects a stage in the history of ancient Judean society when what was initially a form of instruction (*tôrāh*) exclusively reserved to the priests had become the central part of the educational system of an elite group claiming to be the heirs of the ethnic group known as 'Israel' in the Iron Age II. This development has sometimes been understood to reflect a 'democratization' of sorts of priestly knowledge. However, the opposite is probably true. With Leviticus, Persian-period scribes were now educated and even 'enculturated' (to use Carr's expression) into a system

Torah by the agency of communal reading, but they do not support the view that such practice was already taking place on a regular basis, as per the synagogal celebrations of later times. For a more positive assessment of the way in which the practice of reading Torah shaped the final composition of the Pentateuch, see especially Watts, *Reading Law*.

²⁰ See Carr, "Rise of Torah"; and more generally Carr, *Writing*, esp. 167–73. According to Carr the composition of the Pentateuch and its gradual acceptance as 'Torah' correspond to a decisive shift in the educational system of the Second Temple community, whereby the Torah gradually came to replace traditional wisdom (such as the book of Proverbs) and related matters (such as hymns) as the "first and most foundational text in the Jewish education curriculum" and the "source of fundamental values on which the rest of Jewish education is built" (Carr, "Rise of Torah", 44; for a similar point, see Carr, *Writing*, 166–67). Regarding the general thesis that education, in pre-Hellenistic Israel, would necessarily have been reserved to the training of political and administrative elites, Carr rightly observes that the people who are described as writing in Israel are always "officials of some kind: scribes, kings, priests, and other bureaucrats" (*Writing*, 116). This conclusion does not preclude the possibility that some of the groups behind the composition of the Torah in the Persian period could consider a broader diffusion of this document. The book of Deuteronomy, in particular, is characterized by a repeated emphasis upon writing and teaching, as well as by the rather utopian view of generalized education for all 'Israel' that surfaces in some passages of that book (e.g., Deut 6:1–3, 4–9; see Carr, *Writing*, 134–39). However, the fact that the same emphasis does not appear in other books of the Pentateuch, especially those of clearly priestly origin such as Leviticus, may indicate that this view of generalized education was not necessarily shared by all the groups behind the composition of the Pentateuch, and especially not by the priestly families standing behind the composition of a book such as Leviticus.

of values reflecting a distinctively *hierocratic* ideal of Judean society, in which the sanctuary, its cultic personnel and the various rituals associated with them occupied a central place.²¹ Before we turn to an analysis of the related concepts of pollution and purification in Leviticus, it will be useful to briefly summarize some major aspects of the society described in Leviticus.

The social organization projected by Leviticus onto ancient Israel consists of three successive areas, which are organized in concentric fashion: at the center lies the temple (or 'tent of meeting' in the language of the Pentateuch), then the community formed by 'Israel' (the 'camp'), and finally the world outside of the community (the 'wilderness').²² These three areas are related to various hierarchies: between priests and laypersons, between males and females, between various types of animals that

²¹ It is in this respect that the relationship between Leviticus, on the one hand, and the sanctuaries in Jerusalem and on Gerizim in the Persian period, on the other, should be viewed as a 'complementary' one (see above, note 10). Namely, the discourse contained in Leviticus educates its Persian-period readers in a certain 'ritual' culture, which would logically consolidate their endorsement of the ritual practices performed at the central Yahwistic sanctuaries in Jerusalem and Gerizim. In this respect, the relationship between 'text' and 'ritual' in Leviticus is one of cross-fertilization, not of either/or. In his recent book, Bibb, *Ritual Words*, esp. 34–69, comes to a similar conclusion, although he is more interested in the literary aspect of this process than in its social-historical dimension.

From a social-historical perspective, one may note, the 'substitution' model for Leviticus is hardly likely. If, as recalled above, Leviticus was composed at the library of the Second Temple under the control of leading priestly families, the very notion that it would have been construed as an 'alternative' or a 'substitute' of sorts for the cult becomes largely problematic.

²² At this point, it needs to be emphasized that this model of society is not simply an 'allegory' of sorts that could be 'decoded' by merely identifying its various elements with 'actual' institutions at the time when Leviticus was composed (e.g., the 'tent of meeting' = the Jerusalem sanctuary, the 'camp' = Jerusalem and/or the Judean community, etc.). Rather, it is a complex literary construct, in which the groups and institutions that are represented are carefully integrated into the narrative fiction of the wilderness. This is shown, *inter alia*, by the fact that the authors of Leviticus themselves distinguish between the wilderness 'camp' and the 'towns' in which the Israelites will later live (see especially Lev 25:29–31, 32–34). Concretely, this means that the sanctuary of Leviticus is more like an 'archetype' of the actual sanctuaries in Jerusalem and Gerizim, just like the wilderness 'camp' can be viewed as an archetype of the Judean ethnos in the Persian period. At the same time, however, there are also indications that the rules defined in Leviticus were not restricted to the wilderness setting but had a more general relevance. In the case of purity rules, for instance, one may note that the rules for *šārā'at*, or 'scale disease', after being defined for human bodies and fabrics (Lev 13:2–46, 47–59), are extended to *houses* (Lev 14:33–53), thereby suggesting a continuity of sorts between the wilderness setting and settled life inside the land. However, the way in which this 'adaptation' (or 'translation') of the rules first defined in the wilderness (according to the fiction of Leviticus) should take place is—deliberately?—left open by the authors of that book and will be, as a matter of fact, the subject of considerable exegetical discussion in the later Second Temple period.

may or may not serve as offerings, etc. Furthermore, all these boundaries and hierarchies are themselves predicated upon a number of basic dichotomies, primary among which are the related oppositions between 'sacred' and 'profane' and 'pure' and 'impure' mentioned together in one central passage of the book (Lev 10:10).²³ In essence, the division between sacred and profane identifies specific places (such as the sanctuary), times (the festivals, described as 'holy days' in Lev 23), persons (the priests), animals, plants and objects that have been set apart from other places, times, persons, etc., in order to be specifically dedicated to YHWH.²⁴ As a result, this division in Leviticus tends to be relatively static and easy to circumscribe. Some passages in Leviticus suggest a more dynamic apprehension of holiness, which can be acquired by all Israel. However, holiness in this case is not a permanent state (as per, e.g., the sanctuary or the priests) but rather an ideal to be achieved by the Israelites through observance of the Torah (see Lev 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:7–8; 20:22–26; 22:31–33).²⁵ The division between 'clean' and 'unclean' is in many ways complementary to the division between 'sacred' and 'profane', but it is also much more comprehensive because it is not restricted to the sphere of the 'sacred' but applies to the 'common' as well: whereas a sacred place, person or item must always remain clean, anyone or anything belonging to the sphere of the 'common' may always be either 'clean' or 'unclean'.²⁶ In addition, the division between clean and unclean is much more dynamic than the division between sacred and profane; as we will see, both cleanness and uncleanness in Leviticus are volatile and transient states, which can easily be reversed.

From a methodological perspective, the latter observation suggests that, in order to account for its dynamic dimension, the division between

²³ For important observations regarding the relationship between hierarchy and the clean/unclean dichotomy in Leviticus and in other biblical traditions, see Olyan, *Rites and Rank*, esp. 54–61.

²⁴ On the division between 'sacred' and 'profane', compare also, for instance, the detailed comments by Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 43–54.

²⁵ Furthermore, other passages imply that the holiness that may be acquired by the Israelites is based upon, and derived from, the 'static' holiness that characterizes the sanctuary and sacred times: see especially Lev 19:30 and 26:2. On the relationship between 'static' and 'dynamic' holiness in Leviticus, especially in Lev 17–26, see further Milgrom, "Changing Concept"; as well as Regev, "Dynamic Holiness". See also further below, § 4, and especially note 74.

²⁶ Compare, e.g., Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 616–617; Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 53–54. On the relationship between the oppositions clean/unclean and sacred/profane, compare also, e.g., the recent comments by L'Hour, "L'impur et le Saint".

clean and unclean in Leviticus is best approached by surveying the various forms of pollution and purification that are identified in this book. Furthermore, as we will see now in detail, the various forms of pollution can all be classified according to the *source* of that pollution. This source can be of two main types: physical (or biological), on the one hand, and moral, on the other.

3. PHYSICAL POLLUTION IN LEVITICUS

A first type of pollution in Leviticus concerns various physical or biological phenomena that affect especially the human body but also, by extension, materials such as houses, fabrics, or domestic utensils. In the scholarly literature, this form of impurity is frequently referred to as 'ritual' impurity, in opposition to 'moral' impurities, because its most obvious implication is to prevent access for the unclean person to the rituals performed at the central sanctuary (see especially Lev 15:31).²⁷ However, as will become obvious in the next section (below, § 4), the ritual dimension is no less significant in the case of 'moral' impurities, so that this terminological distinction is problematic in several respects. For this reason, I prefer to refer to this type of pollution as 'physical' impurity (or, alternatively, physical pollution).²⁸ The main rules for this form of pollution are defined in

²⁷ For this distinction between so-called 'ritual' and 'moral' impurities, see especially Klawans, *Impurity*, and the discussion below, § 4. Other scholars, who have seen this difficulty, retain the phrase 'ritual impurity' but add a further qualification such as, e.g., 'physical ritual impurity'; see for instance Gane, *Cult*, 51 and *passim*. In my opinion, such usage does not settle the basic issue and adds instead more terminological confusion, insofar as it suggests that there might be something like 'physical non-ritual impurities' (but not 'moral ritual impurities'). Once it is clear that the two main types of impurity in Leviticus both have a strong ritual dimension, it is better to omit the term 'ritual' from the designation of these two types.

²⁸ Alternatively, one could also speak of 'biological' impurities and 'biological' pollution; this usage would not make a significant difference. The phrase 'natural impurities', which is also sometimes employed, seems to me to be ambiguous, since it may induce a sense of normality, whereas the impurities described in Lev 12–15 are mostly construed as dangerous phenomena.

An entirely different distinction was offered by Wright, "Spectrum", who differentiates for his part between 'tolerated' and 'non-tolerated' impurities. The distinction has some merit, but it also raises several difficulties. First, it ignores the fact that, in Leviticus, the most obvious form of organizing pollution is according to its source, not according to its tolerated or non-tolerated character. Furthermore, as a classificatory device, the distinction is not entirely compelling (as Wright himself must partly acknowledge). This is particularly so in the case of inadvertent transgressions of the law. Such transgressions, which induce some form of pollution of the sanctuary (see below, § 4), are clearly prohibited

chs. 12–15 of Leviticus. In many ways, these texts are themselves connected to the complex legislation about clean and unclean animals in Lev 11, so that these chapters are often treated together. However, the sort of pollution addressed in Lev 11 is distinct, in several respects, from the physical impurities discussed in Lev 12–15, so that it is actually better to treat them separately. I will, however, return at the end of this section to the issue of the relationship between Lev 11 and Lev 12–15.

As in other collections in Antiquity, the main principle for classifying impurity in Lev 12–15 is according to the source of pollution. One major source of pollution identified in this collection is genital organs; genital pollution is the topic of a series of rules defined in Lev 12 and, above all, in Lev 15. The latter chapter is made up of two main sections (vv. 2–17 and 19–30) dealing with genital pollution in the case of men and women respectively. In the case of men, the main form of genital pollution concerns morbid genital discharges, i.e., gonorrhoea (15:2–15). Such pollution is highly contagious and transfers to any object touched by this man, such as the bed in which he sleeps (15:4–5), an object on which he has been seated (15:6), a saddle (15:9) or a vessel (15:12). Furthermore, it can also be transferred to other persons, who thereby suffer from a minor form of impurity lasting until the end of the day, although the law of Lev 15 suggests some subtle distinctions according to the nature of the object and the form of contact.²⁹ Also, the person suffering from morbid genital discharges must offer a sacrifice in order to be purified when his discharge has ended, to this effect bringing two turtledoves or two pigeons to the priest (15:13–15). Occasional, non-morbid discharges of semen, by contrast, are less severe: the man suffering from such an impurity is unclean until the end of the day and must bathe his body and wash any fabric or leather touched by his semen (15:16–17). In the case of women, Lev 15 identifies two sources of genital pollution: menstruation (15:19–24) and abnormal discharges of blood outside of the menstrual cycle (15:25–30). In both cases, similar

(i.e., non-tolerated), although they can nevertheless be compensated for through the appropriate ritual, as described in Lev 4.

²⁹ A person touching the bed (15:5) of the *zāb*—the man suffering from morbid genital discharges—or the place where he was seated (15:6) is unclean until the end of the day and must wash his clothes and bathe his body. The same rule applies if that person touches the body of that man (15:7), if he is touched by his saliva (15:8), if he carries any of the objects that the *zāb* has touched (15:10b), or if he is touched by the *zāb* if the latter has not washed his hands first (15:11). However, if a person only touches an object with which the *zāb* had contact, he is apparently only impure until the end of the day (15:10a). For further analysis of the communicability of impurity associated with the *zāb* and the *zābāh* in Lev 15, see especially Wright, *Disposal*, 181–89.

rules of contamination apply as in the case of abnormal male discharges (compare especially 15:21–22 in the case of contact with the bed where the menstruant has lain or the object on which she has been seated). The difference between the two situations resides in the fact that in the case of an abnormal discharge of blood, the woman must bring the same sacrifice as the man when her discharge has ended (15:28–30), whereas no such offering is prescribed for the end of her menstrual cycle. Finally, a short instruction dealing with pollution caused by sexual intercourse figures at the transition between the section dealing with male genital pollution and the section about female genital pollution (15:18); after engaging in sexual intercourse, both partners are unclean until the end of the day and must wash their bodies.³⁰

This set of rules is completed in Lev 12 by an instruction concerning the impurity affecting a woman after she has given birth. That woman suffers a period of impurity extending to 40 days, in the case of a male child, or to 80 days, if she had a female child.³¹ This period is itself divided into two sub-periods. A first period extends over 7 or 14 days, during which the woman's impurity is explicitly identified with female impurity during the menstrual cycle according to Lev 15:19–24 (compare 12:2b and 5a respectively). This probably means that her impurity has the same contaminating force as that of the menstruant.³² A second period extends over 33 or

³⁰ Thus, the four main cases addressed in Lev 15 have apparently been arranged according to an A-B-X-B'-A' pattern: abnormal male discharges (A); normal male discharges (B); sexual intercourse between man and woman (X); female normal discharges (B'); female abnormal discharges (A'). See especially Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 904–5; Whitekettle, "Leviticus 15:18"; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 205–7. However, it must be noted that the correspondence between 'normal' (i.e., non-morbid) male and female discharges (B-B') is only partial, since menstruation is defined as being significantly more contaminating than occasional emissions of semen in the case of men.

³¹ The reason for the double duration in the case of a female child is a classical crux. The most likely interpretation, in my opinion, is that it compensates for the absence of a rite of passage comparable to circumcision on the eighth day in the case of male children. This fits well with the general view, advocated in this section, that the ascription of pollution to certain biological manifestations is first and foremost a means to control those manifestations that are construed by a social group as presenting a potential threat for the group's cohesion and integrity. The main function of a rite of passage such as circumcision is to mark the admission of the male newborn into the social group and thereby to reduce that threat; the mother also benefits from this and can be more quickly reintegrated into her former social status. By contrast, the fact that the duration of the mother's exclusion from the group is twice as long in the case of a female newborn highlights the fact that those newborns, for whom no corresponding rite of passage was devised, present a greater threat to the group's internal coherence. See further below.

³² E.g., Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 744.

66 days, during which she must not touch anything holy³³ nor approach the sanctuary. At the end of this second period, she must bring a sacrifice consisting of a year-old lamb and a turtledove or a pigeon for her purification (12:6–7; if the woman cannot afford that offering, a less expensive offering consisting of two turtledoves is prescribed in 12:8). The explicit reference to the rule of Lev 15:19–24 concerning menstrual impurity in Lev 12 highlights the correspondence between the instructions found in Lev 12 and 15, as well as their complementary role regarding the classification of genital pollution in Leviticus.

Finally, the other major form of pollution identified in Lev 12–15 is found in chs. 13–14, which describe various cases in which a person, a fabric or a house may be affected by a form of infection designated as *šārāʿat*. The etymology of that term is unclear, but it is unlikely to refer to a specific disease, since the same term is used for various sorts of infections affecting not only human bodies but also fabrics and houses. Whatever the original meaning of that term, it was apparently used by the priestly scribes who composed Leviticus as a generic term describing several infections, which had in common that they manifest themselves through the apparition of discolorations, spots, scales, etc. (hence the usual rendering of this term by ‘scale disease’).³⁴ Although the instructions preserved in these two chapters are particularly complex, it is possible to identify some general principles in the arrangement of the collection. A first section (Lev 13:2–46) deals with *šārāʿat* affecting human beings. Various sub-cases are identified according to the specific form of the infection appearing on the surface of the skin: shiny marks (13:2–8); discolorations (13:9–17); ‘boils’ (13:18–23); burns (13:24–28); ‘scalls’ (13:29–37); tetter (13:38–39); and, finally, baldness (13:40–44). In all these cases, the person must be examined by a priest, whose diagnosis follows complex criteria enumerated in some detail. The priest may then either declare that person pure or quarantine him or her for a period of 7 days before further examina-

³³ This instruction probably refers to the flesh of the well-being offering in particular, which is the sole sanctum with which ‘lay’ Israelites are explicitly allowed to have contact when they are in a state of purity (see Lev 7:20–21), although it might also cover other, additional instances as well.

³⁴ Regarding the etymology of *šārāʿat*, see the summary of the discussion by Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 775–76, with reference to earlier studies. The fact that the same term can be used for human bodies, fabrics and houses is a clear indication that the priestly scribes who composed this instruction were not thinking of a specific disease but were using this term as a generic concept for a variety of infections such as, e.g., psoriasis in the case of humans and mold, or fungus, in the case of fabrics and houses. See further Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 816–20.

tion. If the subject is eventually declared impure, he or she must leave the Israelite 'camp', i.e., dwell outside of the community (13:45–46).

If that person, after being expelled from the community, no longer suffers from the infection, he or she must be examined anew by a priest (14:3). The person may then be readmitted inside the camp after submitting to a complex and expensive ritual extending over eight days. He must first remain in a transitional state for seven days—inside the camp but outside his tent—before he may offer an expensive sacrifice consisting of two male lambs, one yearling ewe, three tenths of an *ephah* of semolina mixed with oil, and one *log* of oil (14:10; an alternative, less expensive offering is prescribed in 14:21–32 for poor members of the community), after which that person is completely purified and fully readmitted into the community. These two sets of instructions (in 13:2–46 and 14:1–32) are completed by two series of instructions dealing with cases in which an infection by *šārā'at* is suspected to affect fabrics (13:47–59) or houses (14:33–53).³⁵ As in the case of Lev 13:2–46, an item of fabric or a house must be submitted to a detailed examination by a priest, who may decide to quarantine it before a final decision concerning its pure or impure status is made. Fabric declared unclean must be eliminated by being burnt in the fire (13:52, 55, 57), whereas in the case of a house the infected stones must be pulled out and 'cast outside the city into an impure place' (14:40–41); if the infection does not spread out to the rest of the house, the priest may purify (or decontaminate, *ḥṭ'*) the house through a ritual (14:54–57); otherwise the house must be entirely demolished (14:43–45).

As in the case of other sections of Leviticus, there are good reasons to assume that many of the rules preserved in Lev 12–15 have their origins in a collection of priestly *tôrôt*, which may have been handed down either in oral or written form.³⁶ Another passage of the Hebrew Bible, 2 Sam 3:29, suggests that the association of genital discharges (*zôb*) and skin diseases (*šārā'at*) was traditional in Israel and that these two forms of pollution were probably regarded as the most severe forms of bodily uncleanness.

³⁵ The general arrangement of these four sections thus follows an A-B-A'-B' pattern: persons (animate), fabrics (inanimate), persons (animate), houses (inanimate); compare Douglas, *Leviticus*, 177.

³⁶ For an analysis of the original material preserved in Lev 12–15, see Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 270–83 and 299–301. On the impurity attached in ancient Israel to *šārā'at*, see also Num 12:10–15; 2 Kgs 7:3–10; 15:5 // 2 Chr 26:16–21; on the impurity associated with menstruation, see Isa 30:22; Ezek 7:19–20 and 36:17. On the topic of popular aversion to impurity in ancient Israel, see further the remarks by Wright, "Observations".

At the same time, however, there are many indications suggesting that Lev 12–15 is not simply a loose collection of traditional instructions, but that the scribes who composed that collection carefully edited and adapted the earlier instructional material to form a coherent composition that fits its present literary context.³⁷ This observation, therefore, raises a further question, namely: What is the general concept of pollution evinced by Lev 12–15, and what function does it play in the context of the book as a whole?

A classical way of approaching this issue has been to interpret the various impurities identified in Lev 12–15 as symbols of more general aspects of human life, such as death or sexuality. Furthermore, following the lead of M. Douglas in her 1966 monograph (*Purity and Danger*), several authors have related this symbolism to the exhortation to imitate YHWH's 'holiness' that is found at the end of the laws on clean and unclean animals (Lev 11:44–45; see further 20:25–26).³⁸ For instance, J. Milgrom, building upon the work of some earlier critics, argued that all of the impurities addressed in Lev 11–15 were somehow associated with the realm of death.³⁹ As such, they were regarded by the priestly authors of Leviticus as antithetical to the holiness of Israel's deity, YHWH. In this view, the entire system of impurity defined by Lev 11–15 would be predicated upon the life/death dichotomy and would have as its general purpose the urging of the Israelites to side with the forces of life against those of death in order to imitate YHWH's holiness.⁴⁰ This line of explanation has been furthered by

³⁷ Note, in particular, the way in which the laws of chs. 13–14 have been framed with the complementary instructions about pollution caused by birth and by genital discharges in Lev 12 and 15; for this observation, see, e.g., Douglas, *Leviticus*, 176. This device highlights the gravity of the pollution caused by the various forms of infection of the skin, of fabrics and of houses identified in Lev 13–14, which may lead to the exclusion of an individual from the community (Lev 13:45–46) or to the destruction of a fabric item or a house.

³⁸ Douglas, *Purity*, 41–57. Douglas insists on the notion of holiness as wholeness, which in turn implies that "individuals shall conform to the class to which they belong" (Douglas, *Purity*, 53). As such, holiness is the opposite of impurity, defined as the property of those beings that, within the well-ordered system of creation, fail to conform to their class. Douglas concludes her analysis by suggesting that "the dietary laws would have been like signs which at every turn inspired meditation on the oneness, purity and completeness of God" (Douglas, *Purity*, 57). A similar approach is found in several of her later analyses of Leviticus and especially in her more recent monograph on Leviticus (see Douglas, *Leviticus*).

³⁹ See especially Milgrom, "Rationale"; as well as Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 766–68 and 1000–4. Among earlier critics who advocated a similar view, compare, e.g., Dillmann, *Leviticus*, 479; Paschen, *Rein und unrein*, 57–59. Other, more recent authors have adopted a comparable explanation, see for instance Wenham, *Leviticus*, 188, or Hartley, *Leviticus*, 140–47, esp. 145. Even scholars who are generally cautious about the relevance of 'symbolic' approaches to Leviticus have emphasized the importance of death symbolism in connection with impurity; compare, e.g., Gane, *Cult*, 200–1.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Milgrom, "Rationale", 106.

other recent authors, who proposed to regard the impurities of Lev 11–15 as symbols not only of death but of death and sexuality.⁴¹ Since death and sexuality, in the Hebrew Bible, are the main anthropological features that distinguish human beings from the deity, the laws of impurity in Lev 12–15 would remind human beings of their mortal condition while at the same time offering them the possibility to recover, through various rituals of purification, a state closer to that of the deity himself.⁴²

There can be no doubt that a valid insight lies behind this approach. Certainly, many (though not necessarily all) of the impurities mentioned may somehow be related to basic anthropological dimensions such as death and sexuality. But does this mean that the function of the laws on physical impurities in Lev 12–15 is to ‘symbolize’ (i.e., to communicate through symbols) a more or less sophisticated teaching about death and sexuality? I think that there are good grounds to question this view when we take a closer look at these texts.

A first, general issue has to do with the fact that it has limited support in the text of Leviticus itself. There can be little question that reading these rules, or performing them, would have attracted some sort of symbolic speculation among ancient Israelites; but the extent to which we are still able to identify such symbolic speculation is an entirely different matter.⁴³ What the symbolism of the laws of Lev 12–15 would have been is not stated in Leviticus itself; even the connection between impurity and death is nowhere explicit. Moreover, it is not even clear to what extent these laws should be related to the exhortation to imitate YHWH’s

⁴¹ See especially Wright, “Unclean”, 379; Wright, “Holiness”; and Marx, “L’impureté”. A similar approach is suggested by Klawans, “Pure Violence”, 140–49.

⁴² Wright, “Holiness”; Marx, “L’impureté”, esp. 382–84. Both authors relate this view to the story of the expulsion of the first couple from Eden in Gen 3 and argue that, for the priestly authors of Lev 11–15, the laws of purification would have been made necessary by this inaugural event.

Of late, this symbolic approach relating purification to the imitation of YHWH’s holiness has been developed by Klawans, *Purity*. Klawans argues, in particular, that “ritual purification involves a process of separating from these aspects of humanity that make one at least God-like, as a preparation for a number of sacrificial performances (selecting, killing, looking into, and consuming) that are much more God-like” (*Purity*, 72). For a general critique of Klawans’ approach, see the relevant observations by Hundley, *Priestly Tabernacle*, 21–23.

⁴³ See the similar remarks by Hundley, *Priestly Tabernacle*, 22–23. In his critique of Klawans, Hundley observes that the latter’s symbolic interpretation is often ‘non-verifiable’. Hundley himself does not deny the possibility that the priestly rituals had a significant symbolic dimension but convincingly argues that symbolism is not the ‘driving force’ of such rituals. He thus concludes: “Instead of being the *raison d’être* of the ritual system, symbolism merely ‘grows in and around’ sacrificial ritual” (Hundley, *Priestly Tabernacle*, 23).

holiness, since that exhortation is explicitly related to the dietary laws of Lev 11 exclusively (Lev 11:44–45; 20:25–26). In the case of the rules contained in Lev 12–15, it is not said that the general rationale for observing those rules is imitation of YHWH's holiness; instead, the collection formed by chs. 12–15 concludes with a general exhortation (15:31) that leaves this issue entirely out. Even if it can legitimately be argued that there is also no reason to entirely dissociate the rules regarding physical impurities in Lev 12–15 from the general theory about personal and collective sanctification in Leviticus, the difference in this respect between Lev 11 and 12–15 still requires that it be taken seriously. In other words, the symbolic approach, when applied to Lev 12–15, is not only very general, it also consistently runs the risk of imposing upon these texts an interpretation that is foreign to them.⁴⁴

Another, further issue has to do with the fact that the symbolism so identified is clearly unable to account for the various phenomena cited as sources of pollution in Lev 12–15. For instance, it is certainly possible to identify death symbolism in Lev 13:45–46, because the *m^ešorā'* (the person suffering from a skin disease of the *šārā'at* type) must tear his clothes, dishevel his hair and cover his moustache—all typical signs of mourning; another passage, Num 12:12, also clearly seems to associate *šārā'at* and death.⁴⁵ But it seems much more difficult (if not entirely arbitrary) to associate the same symbolism with birth (Lev 12) or sexual intercourse, for example.⁴⁶ Furthermore, if death symbolism were so preeminent in

⁴⁴ A fine case in point concerns the general prohibition against approaching the sanctuary in a state of impurity (Lev 15:31 and *passim*). Does such a prohibition aim at highlighting the possibility for Israelites to achieve a status more 'god-like', as per Klawans and others, or does it serve primarily as a reminder of their mortal condition? In the case of ancient Greece, where we find similar prohibitions, R. Parker has convincingly argued that the latter rationale applied: "By banning birth, death, and also sexuality from sacred places, the Greeks emphasize the gulf that separates the nature of god and man. (...) Excluded from a temple because of the birth of a son, a Greek is reminded, perhaps, that his son has been born to replace himself, and die in his turn, while the gods persist in splendid immortality" (Parker, *Miasma*, 66).

⁴⁵ On this association, see further, e.g., Gorman, *Ideology*, 132 and 152ff.

⁴⁶ Even the common notion that the loss of blood in the case of genital discharges would symbolize death because blood, in the Hebrew Bible, is the seat of life (e.g., Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 767–68 and 1002; similarly Harrington, *Impurity Systems*, 29) is problematic. As rightly emphasized by some authors, blood symbolism, in the Hebrew Bible, is a complicated issue. For instance, it is nowhere said that the blood of cuts and wounds is contaminating (as noted, e.g., by Frymer-Kensky, "Pollution", 401). Furthermore, if the issue underlying pollution beliefs attached to menstrual blood was the fear of death, it is difficult to understand why the legislation omits entirely the case of more lethal wounds (Whitekettle, "Levitical Thought", 377).

the laws of Lev 12–15, it would be difficult to understand the complete absence of any rule pertaining to the impurities caused by contact with a corpse, such as can be found in some passages of Numbers.⁴⁷ Approaching the impurities of Lev 12–15 as symbols of death and sexuality, rather than of death only, is more comprehensive but likewise faces some significant difficulties. In particular, this approach ignores the fact that it is not so much sexuality as such that is regarded as a major source of pollution, but rather genital discharges that, because they take place *outside* of sexual intercourse, indicate a temporary dysfunction of male and female genital organs (Lev 15:2–15, 25–30). Sexual intercourse, by contrast, only represents a minor source of pollution (Lev 15:18), and it is significant that this case is not even mentioned in the final summary of Lev 15 (compare 15:32–33).⁴⁸

This last observation opens the way to another approach to the conceptual coherence of the collection on impurities in Lev 12–15.⁴⁹ With the exception of sexual intercourse, all the other impurities identified in this collection are biological phenomena that intrude into the domestic sphere and evince a loss of control by the individual over his or her body or, alternatively, over major artifacts of domestic use: spots or discolorations appearing on human skin (Lev 13:2–44), on fabrics (13:47–59) or houses (14:33–53); unintentional discharges of semen, for a man (15:2–15, 16–17), or, for a woman, losses of blood during or outside her menstrual cycle (15:19–24, 25–30), etc.⁵⁰ All these phenomena represent, in general terms, “the irruption of the biological into social life”, according to the definition of pollution proposed by L. Dumont in his classical study of the caste system in India.⁵¹ Accordingly, the various rules defined in

⁴⁷ Compare Num 5:2–4; 19:11–22, and 31:19, and on this the contribution by C. Frevel in this volume. Leviticus mentions corpse-related impurity for the members of the priestly families exclusively (Lev 21:1–15).

⁴⁸ A similar observation is made by Eilberg-Schwartz, *Savage*, 183–86. It was further developed in a series of articles by Whitekettle, “Leviticus 12”; Whitekettle, “Levitical Thought”. However, Whitekettle goes too far when he seeks to interpret all genital impurities in Lev 12 and 15 as manifesting a dysfunction of the reproductive system, since this interpretation is blatantly contradicted by the fact that sexual intercourse is also considered polluting.

⁴⁹ The following discussion takes up, in shortened and revised form, some of my earlier analyses in Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 317–23.

⁵⁰ Note, significantly, that occasional loss of semen is defined in one passage of the Hebrew Bible (1 Sam 20:26) as an ‘accident’ (*miqrâ*), an expression that stresses the unintentional character of that phenomenon.

⁵¹ See Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus*, 85 (“l’irruption du biologique dans la vie sociale”). More generally, see his analysis of pollution in relation to caste system on pp. 69–85. A

Lev 12–15 for dealing with these impurities may be viewed as an attempt to re-establish a form of social control over these phenomena. They identify the degree of contamination involved in each of these forms of impurity, and they prescribe the rituals required for eliminating the pollution, such as bathing one's body, washing one's clothes or—in the most serious cases—bringing a sacrifice to the sanctuary. As a matter of fact, closer analysis of the laws of Lev 12–15 shows that there is a consistent relationship between the degree of pollution and the rituals prescribed, the general rule of which may be described as follows: *the more a phenomenon identified as a source of pollution exemplifies the loss of social control over human bodies and domestic artifacts, the more severe the degree of contamination ascribed to it, and the more significant the ritual measures that need to be taken by the individual in order to eliminate that pollution and recover a state of purity.*

This general principle is especially manifest in the legislation on genital pollution in Lev 15.⁵² The fact that morbid discharges of semen, in the case of men, are ascribed a significantly greater degree of pollution than occasional emissions of semen (15:2–15 and 16–17 respectively) corresponds to the fact that the former exemplifies the loss of control of an individual over his own body to a greater degree than the latter; accordingly, this difference is highlighted by the fact that purification from morbid discharges requires the offering of sacrifices (15:13–15), whereas occasional,

similar interpretation was argued by Parker, *Miasma*, esp. 59–96, in his analysis of pollution in ancient Greece.

⁵² An analysis of the impurities of Lev 15 in terms of control was already proposed by Eilberg-Schwartz, *Savage*, 186ff., who made the insightful observation that the most polluting emissions in Lev 15 are also those that are the least controlled and the least conscious, or intentional; he thus correctly concluded that there appears to be a direct relation between the controllability of a bodily fluid and its power to contaminate the body. “The difference between the ejaculation of semen and the release of nonseminal fluids or menstrual blood is the difference between a controlled, conscious act and a passive, involuntary occurrence. (...) Nonseminal and menstrual discharges which are less controllable than semen are also more polluting” (Eilberg-Schwartz, *Savage*, 187). This line of interpretation was further developed by Malul, *Knowledge*, 387ff., who insists for his part on what he calls the ‘epistemic’ dimension of impurity in Lev 15, which corresponds to the notion that those emissions that generate uncleanness are the ones flowing from an unknown source. Both analyses, however, are restricted to the case of genital emissions in Lev 15 (and, to some extent, in Lev 12) and do not seek to account for the entirety of Lev 12–15. In addition, they present some objectionable elements, especially in that they tend to dissociate the case of non-pathological and pathological emissions and to restrict their interpretation in terms of control to the former, which is unwarranted in my view. In addition, they also tend to focus on the issue of *individual* control over the body, rather than to address the issue in terms of social control over biological phenomena. For a detailed criticism of these two approaches, see Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 312–17.

non-pathological emission of semen involves a more lenient ritual of purification (i.e., bathing one's body). In the case of women, loss of menstrual blood is not just an isolated event but lasts over a period of several days (seven, according to 15:19b); accordingly, it is assigned a degree of contamination identical to pathological discharges of semen (15:19–24). However, contrary to the loss of blood outside of the menstrual cycle (15:25–30), regular menstrual blood does *not* require the offering of a sacrifice. Obviously, therefore, female loss of blood *outside* of the menstrual cycle is treated as a more serious form of pollution because it is abnormal and therefore represents for the woman a more serious loss of control over her own body.

The same analysis can be extended to the other forms of impurity identified in Lev 12–15. The birth of a child (Lev 12) does not only represent a major disruption of the social order.⁵³ It also goes along with a series of changes in the woman's body over which she has no control, including the loss of blood and other fluids during and after birth, which temporarily set her apart from the rest of society. Accordingly, the greater period of impurity for the woman after birth precedes the circumcision of her child, if it is a male (seven days, Lev 12:2b, circumcision taking place on the eighth day: Lev 12:3, and likewise Gen 17:12), which itself marks the social acceptance of the child by the community; in the case of a female child, that period is doubled, presumably in order to compensate for the absence of a similar rite. The following period of 33 days (66 in the case of a female child) is defined as 'the days of her purification' and corresponds to the period of recovery of her 'normal' (usual) reproductive functions.⁵⁴ In the case of Lev 13–14, finally, persons or artifacts affected with a form of *ṣārā'at* pollution must be removed from the community, either by being

⁵³ As noted by Parker, *Miasma*, birth and death are major transitions over which society has no real control (contrary to other transitions, such as marriage for instance). Accordingly, in many traditional societies birth and death are typically associated with a significant degree of pollution. This association legitimizes in turn the establishment in these societies of various rites of purification (usually in the form of rites of passage), which enable society to reassert its control over such biological phenomena. "(...) While marriage is a controlled event, birth and death intrude on human life at their own pleasure. They are an irresistible 'irruption of the biological into social life'. (...) The accompanying rites of passage can be seen as reassertions of control; the baby, thrust rudely into the world by nature, still requires social acceptance, and the shade will not be able to reach the world of the dead unless the due rites are performed. (...) Marriage, by contrast, is not an intrusion that requires sealing off, but is itself a harness set upon the rebellious body" (Parker, *Miasma*, 63).

⁵⁴ As observed, in particular, by Whitekettle, "Leviticus 12".

expelled from it in the case of persons (13:45–46) or by being destroyed in the case of fabrics or houses (or portions thereof, see 14:40–42). The reason for the particular severity of this form of pollution has apparently to do with the fact that *šārā'at*, in the case of human beings, was considered a divine punishment, as several passages in the Hebrew Bible suggest (see Num 12:9; 2 Kgs 5:27; 2 Chr 26:18ff.).⁵⁵ This is also consistent with the fact that the main sacrifice that the former *m^ešorā'* must offer is an *'āšām*, a sacrifice of reparation (see Lev 14:12–18; further 14:23–29), a type of offering normally reserved for sacrileges against YHWH (see Lev 5:14–16). Finally, it is of interest to note that fungus was also considered ominous in Mesopotamia and among the Hittites.⁵⁶ This would account well for the association of the rules about fungus of fabrics (Lev 13:47–59) and houses (Lev 14:33–53) in the general legislation about *šārā'at*. Overall, *šārā'at* impurity is construed, from the perspective of the priestly authors of Leviticus, as a form of pollution too serious to be contained within the boundaries of the community, and which can only be controlled by being removed from the community's boundaries.

The correlation analyzed here between social control, the degree of pollution ascribed to a given impurity and the nature of the measures prescribed for purification can be summarized in the following chart.

Table 1.

Passage	Nature of the impurity	Degree of impurity	Ritual prescribed
Lev 12	childbirth	– major for 7 days (14 in the case of a girl), as in the case of menstruation – minor (?) for 33 days (66 for a girl)	– the woman must bring a sacrifice to the temple at the end of her period of purification, consisting of a lamb and a dove
Lev 13:2–46	<i>šārā'at</i> of persons	– extreme: the <i>m^ešorā'</i> is excluded from the community (Lev 13:45–46), and can be readmitted only once he or she has been cured (Lev 14:2)	– examination by the priest and first ritual with two birds – the former <i>m^ešorā'</i> must bathe and can then reenter the camp, but

⁵⁵ On this, see further van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction*, 72ff.; as well as Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 820ff.

⁵⁶ For Mesopotamia, see especially Meier, “House Fungus”, who discusses the parallel with Lev 14:33–53; for the Hittite world, compare, e.g., the remarks by Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 864–65.

Table 1. (*cont.*)

Passage	Nature of the impurity	Degree of impurity	Ritual prescribed
			not his tent for a period of 7 days – on the 7th day, the former <i>m^ešorā'</i> must shave his body and bathe himself again – on the 8th day, he must offer a sacrifice consisting of two lambs, one ewe, 3 tenths of an <i>ephah</i> of flour, and a <i>log</i> of oil
Lev 15:2–15	morbid male discharges	– major (transfers to other persons, either directly or indirectly)	– when his discharge has ended, the former <i>zāb</i> must bring an offering to the sanctuary consisting of two doves – the person having contact with an object touched by the <i>zāb</i> or with the <i>zāb</i> himself (if the latter has not previously washed his hands, Lev 15:11) suffers a minor (one-day) impurity and must bathe himself and wash his clothes
Lev 15:16–17	non-morbid male discharges	– minor (one-day impurity, non-transferrable)	– bathing, washing one's clothes
Lev 15:18	sexual intercourse	– minor (one-day impurity, non-transferrable)	– bathing
Lev 15:19–24	non-morbid female discharges (menstruation)	– major (transfers to other persons, either directly or indirectly)	– no ritual prescribed for the woman – the person having contact with an object touched by the menstruant (or, presumably, with the

Table 1. (*cont.*)

Passage	Nature of the impurity	Degree of impurity	Ritual prescribed
Lev 15:25–30	morbid female discharges	– major (transfers to other persons, either directly or indirectly)	menstruant herself) suffers a minor (one-day) impurity and must bathe himself and wash his clothes – when her discharge has ended, the woman must bring an offering to the sanctuary consisting of two doves, as in the case of the former <i>zāb</i> – the person having contact with an object touched by the <i>zābâ</i> or with the <i>zābâ</i> herself suffers a minor (one-day) impurity and must bathe himself and wash his clothes

Overall, therefore, the various rules grouped together in Lev 12–15 can be viewed as exemplifying a concern for re-establishing a form of social control, through the ascription of various degrees of pollution and the definition of corresponding rituals of purification, over a number of biological phenomena that exemplify a significant loss of control by individuals over their bodies or major domestic artifacts. Whereas one person suffering from a severe impurity—such as, e.g., morbid genital discharges in the case of men and women—may theoretically contaminate the entire community, the Israelites, by observing the rules of Lev 12–15, are rendered able to prevent the diffusion of uncleanness and to preserve the general purity of the community living in proximity to the sanctuary (the wilderness ‘camp’, in the language of Leviticus). As such, the general function of this system of rules is to present the Israel of Leviticus as a model of order and social control over against various organic forces perceived as anomic and anti-social.⁵⁷ Moreover, the reason why ‘Israel’, in Leviticus, has to be

⁵⁷ Compare also Wright, “Spectrum”, 172, who comments about physical (or, in his terms, ‘tolerated’) impurities: “Impurity, even the simplest, is antisocial. Severe tolerated

such a model of social control is the presence of the *sanctuary*, which, according to the Exodus narrative, stands in the 'middle' (Heb. *b^etok*) of the community (see Exod 40:34–35, and 25:9; 29:45–46) and is where the group's patron deity, YHWH, resides. Uncontrolled diffusion of impurity caused by various biological phenomena presents the permanent danger that an unclean person may come into contact with the central sanctuary and thereby defile it. This point is made clear, in particular, in the final exhortation concluding Lev 12–15:

Lev 15:31 You must set apart (*nzr*) the members of Israel from their impurity, lest they die because of their impurity for rendering unclean my dwelling (*miškan*) which is in their middle.⁵⁸

The same rationale is evident in other passages of Leviticus dealing with physical impurities. The parturient is explicitly forbidden to touch 'anything holy' and to approach the sanctuary as long as she is suffering from childbirth impurity (Lev 12:4b). Likewise, a person in a state of impurity is forbidden to touch the flesh of the well-being offering (see Lev 3), because that flesh has been offered on the outer altar of the sanctuary and is therefore holy (Lev 7:20–21); the same rule applies for the priests in the case of the well-being offering and other sacrifices (Lev 22:4–8).⁵⁹ Last but not least, this is also the reason why priests, who have been consecrated to the

impurities must be restricted, excluded, or eliminated from the Israelites' habitation. With them there is thus a degree of social disintegration".

⁵⁸ Thus MT; the Samaritan Pentateuch and LXX read *zhr* instead of *nzr*, hence: "You must *warn* the Israelites about their impurity...". In my view, MT's reading should be preferred; this use of *nzr* in connection with Israel's impurities has a close parallel in Lev 22:2. The rendering adopted here for this verse follows Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 903, with some modifications.

That Lev 15:31 refers to a form of contamination by touch, as is usually assumed (e.g., Hoffmann, *Leviticus*, 430), is disputed by some scholars; compare, e.g., Kiuchi, *Purification Offering*, 61–62; Gane, *Cult*, 146–49. To be sure, it cannot be excluded that 15:31 has in view other forms of communication of physical impurity. However, it needs to be noted, (a) that contrary to 'moral' impurity (see below), the only form of communication that is explicitly indicated in Leviticus for physical impurities is by direct contact (unless these impurities have not been adequately taken care of through the appropriate ritual, in which case they transform into 'moral' impurities); and (b) that the language used in the MT, referring to the 'setting apart' of the Israelites, seems to allude to the various rules prescribing temporary seclusion for the person suffering from a physical impurity, the purpose of which is precisely to avoid communication of this impurity to other Israelites through contact. Thus, it should be said at the very least that the most obvious interpretation of Lev 15:31 is as referring primarily (though not necessarily exclusively) to pollution by contact.

⁵⁹ Contrary to lay Israelites, who are only allowed to eat the flesh of the well-being offering, priests are allowed to eat the flesh of minor purification offerings (see Lev 6:19–23), as well as the remains of the cereal offering (Lev 6:9–11).

service of the sanctuary (see Lev 8) and are therefore also holy (Lev 21:6), must submit to a greater control over biological sources of pollution: in particular, they must avoid contact with corpses (Lev 21:1–15) and are not allowed to eat the carcass of an animal found dead (Lev 22:8; compare Ezek 44:31).⁶⁰

In this respect, the legislation about physical pollution in Lev 12–15 and related passages of the book is in the service of a certain model of society, the organization of which is entirely centered on the central sanctuary—a ‘temple-based society’, as one might call it. The consistent separation between ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ in Lev 12–15 (see 15:31), as well as the prevention of the diffusion of pollution in the community through observance of the rules laid out in Lev 12–15, are actually subordinated to the preservation of another, more central division, between ‘holy’ (the sanctuary and its precincts) and ‘profane’ (the world outside, including the community of ‘Israel’). The society of Leviticus, by exerting a systematic control over physical impurities, acts like a ‘fence’ around the central sanctuary. By contrast, the sanctuary itself, with its well-defined divisions between three separate areas (outer court, outer-sanctum, inner-sanctum), each of which has a distinct grade of holiness, is defined in that system as the very center of order and structure.⁶¹

Before turning to the next section of this essay, a word is needed regarding the relationship between Lev 12–15 and Lev 11. Chapter 11 comprises an elaborate classification of animal species based upon the distinction between animals living on the ground, in water and in the air.⁶² For animals on the ground and in water, specific morphological criteria are given in order to distinguish between clean and unclean animals (see Lev 11:4–8 and 9–12 respectively); for birds, however, such criteria are replaced by a mere list of prohibited species (11:13–20). Also, a further set of rules is defined for ‘swarming’ creatures (*šereš*) living on the ground

⁶⁰ According to Lev 21:1–15, priests are allowed to approach a corpse only if the dead person is close kin (21:1b–4). Any contact with corpses is prohibited, however, in the case of the high priest (21:11). For lay Israelites, eating the carcass of an animal found dead is not prohibited but causes a minor form of impurity (Lev 11:39–40; further 17:15–16).

⁶¹ The various grades of holiness of the three main areas of the sanctuary (outer court, outer-sanctum, inner-sanctum) are laid out in the description of the various materials used for these three areas in Exod 26–27. See on this especially Haran, *Temples*, esp. 158–65; further Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 89–114.

⁶² A comprehensive discussion of this complex legislation is beyond the scope of this essay. For a detailed analysis, involving a thorough discussion of textual and archeological data, see Houston, *Purity*. Regarding the issue of the relationship between Lev 11 and Deut 14, cf. Nihan, “Clean and Unclean Animals”.

(11:29–38 and 41–45) and in the air (11:20–23; ‘swarming’ creatures in water are merely included in the rules defined in Lev 11:9–12). Animals defined as ‘unclean’ (*tāmē*) or, alternatively, ‘abominable’ (*šeqeš*) are prohibited for consumption, presumably because they render unclean.⁶³ This point is explicitly made, in the case of swarming creatures on the ground, in Lev 11:43, 44 (see further also Lev 20:25). Likewise, touching the carcass of these animals is prohibited and, in the case of unclean quadrupeds, causes a minor impurity (Lev 11:24–28). The form of pollution addressed in Lev 11 is obviously different from the one discussed in Lev 12–15, since it no longer deals with physical impurities affecting human bodies or domestic artifacts over which Israelites have no control, but concerns the distinction between animals that may be eaten and animals that may not (Lev 11:2b–23, 39–40, 41–45), as well as animals whose carcasses communicate a form of minor impurity, either directly (11:24–28, 39–40) or indirectly (11:29–38). Furthermore, since eating and touching animals defined as ‘unclean’ (or, alternatively, ‘abominable’) obviously involves a conscious, intentional action, this legislation falls in the general category of intentional transgression of the divine commands, the second major source of pollution in Leviticus (below, § 4).⁶⁴ The difference between Lev 11 and Lev 12–15 in this respect is emphasized by the fact that the law of ch. 11, contrary to chs. 12–15, concludes with a general exhortation to imitate YHWH’s holiness by abstaining from eating land ‘swarmers’ (vv. 44–45), which is taken up later in Lev 20:25–26.

However, the fact that the law of Lev 11 has been placed before the collection on physical impurities in Lev 12–15 is not entirely unmotivated; in some respects, Lev 11 can also be viewed as partaking in the legislation about physical impurities defined in Lev 12–15. On the one hand, the impurities of Lev 11 do not consistently follow the rules for ‘moral’ impurities defined elsewhere in Leviticus.⁶⁵ Nowhere, for instance, is it said that deliberately eating the carcass of an unclean quadruped pollutes the sanctuary and requires therefore the offering of a *ḥaṭṭā’t* sacrifice or the application of the *kārēt* penalty (compare, e.g., Lev 18:2–5; and further

⁶³ Regarding the distinction between ‘unclean’ and ‘abominable’ animals, see especially Milgrom, “Two Terms”.

⁶⁴ As was already noted by Hoffmann, *Leviticus*; more recently, see for instance Klawans, *Impurity*, 31–32; as well as Wright, “Spectrum”, esp. 165–69.

⁶⁵ See likewise Klawans, *Impurity*, 31–32; Wright, “Spectrum”, 165–69; most recently Kazen, “Dirt”, 44.

below, § 4).⁶⁶ Instead, the penalty for deliberately touching the carcass of an unclean quadruped, for touching the carcass of a clean, domestic quadruped found dead, or for eating the flesh of that carcass, is similar to the ritual measures prescribed in the case of minor physical impurities in Lev 12–15; the person is unclean until the end of the day and must wash his clothes (11:24b–25, 27b–28, 39b, 40). On the other hand, the second part of Lev 11 (vv. 24–38) deals in detail with the pollution incurred by the case in which the carcass of a land ‘swarmer’ (*šereš ha-’āreš*) comes into contact with vessels, cisterns or other domestic utensils (11:29–38). As M. P. Carroll observed long ago, this case typically constitutes another instance of the intrusion of the organic, or the biological, into the domestic sphere and thus builds a parallel with the general topic of the legislation on physical impurities in Lev 12–15.⁶⁷

Overall, the position of Lev 11 may be best explained by the fact that it was regarded by the priestly authors of the book as overlapping the two major sources of pollution, namely, physical and moral impurities. Some aspects of the legislation of Lev 11, especially in the second part of that chapter, vv. 24–42, introduce the topic of physical pollution, which is then further developed in chs. 12–15. At the same time, Lev 11 also prepares for the topic of the relation between pollution and the transgression of moral commands, which will be more fully developed later in Leviticus, especially in chs. 18–20. This aspect is further emphasized, at the end of ch. 11, by the exhortation to imitate YHWH’s holiness by abstaining from eating land ‘swarmers’, which, through the parallel with Lev 20:25–26, builds an ‘envelope’ of sorts around Lev 11–20.⁶⁸ This observation already points to the more general issue of the relation between ‘physical’ and ‘moral’ pollution in Leviticus, to which we must now turn.

⁶⁶ As noted, e.g., by Levine, *Leviticus*, 64–65; Wright, “Spectrum”, 165–66. Levine, however, wants to infer the obligation for a person to bring such a *ḥattā’t* sacrifice when he or she has eaten a prohibited animal or has had contact with the carcass of one of the animals mentioned in Lev 11:39–40, on the basis of Lev 5:2. Yet this inference is unwarranted. Lev 5:2 deals with the specific case of a person who contracted impurity by touching an unclean animal but was apparently not aware that he or she had become unclean; thus, it is altogether an entirely distinct case. See also the critical remarks by Wright, “Spectrum”, 165–66 n. 2. For a recent discussion of Lev 5:2, cf. Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 239–41; see also further below, § 4, on this passage.

⁶⁷ Carroll, “Leviticus Revisited”, esp. 121; compare also Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 686.

⁶⁸ This point has often been observed; compare, e.g., Blum, *Studien*, 319 and 323–24.

4. MORAL POLLUTION IN LEVITICUS

Other texts in Leviticus relate pollution to the transgression of divine laws, which are designated in Leviticus as ‘statutes’ (*huqqot*) or ‘customs’ (*mišpaṭîm*). We may therefore refer to this form of pollution as ‘moral’ impurity, in contrast to the physical impurities identified in Lev 12–15 and related passages. This conception is especially manifest in Lev 18 and 20. Lev 18 opens with a general exhortation addressed to Israel not to observe the ‘statutes’ of the nations who previously occupied the land and to observe instead the statutes and customs established by YHWH for Israel (18:2–5). There follows a lengthy enumeration of various prohibited sexual practices (18:6–18), all of which involve sexual intercourse with women who are of the same kin, either by affiliation (mother, sister, granddaughter, etc.) or by alliance (sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, etc.).⁶⁹ This list is itself followed by a further, shorter list of illicit sexual practices (18:19–23) involving sexual intercourse with a menstruant (v. 19), with a neighbor’s wife (v. 20), with another man (v. 22), and with a beast (v. 23); in addition, a prohibition against dedicating one’s child to the god ‘Molech’ has been included in v. 21.⁷⁰ The chapter concludes with a long exhortation (18:24–30), which takes up the language of vv. 2–5 but this time explicitly relates the observance of YHWH’s ‘statutes’ and ‘customs’ to the purity of the land given to Israel.

Lev 18:24–30 ²⁴Do not defile yourselves by any of these (practices), for by all these (practices) the nations I am casting out before you defiled themselves. ²⁵Thus the land became defiled; and I called it to account for its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. ²⁶You, however, must keep my statutes and my customs and commit none of these abominations, neither the native nor the alien who resides among you; ²⁷for all these abominations the people in the land who were before you did, and the land became defiled. ²⁸So let not the land vomit you out for defiling it, as it is vomiting out the nation that was before you. ²⁹For all who commit any of these abominations—such persons shall be cut off from their kin. ³⁰So you will heed my prohibitions not to

⁶⁹ For discussion of the main rationales of this complex legislation from a social-anthropological perspective, see Rattray, “Marriage Rules”.

⁷⁰ The rationale behind the inclusion of this prohibition in the list of vv. 19–23 is probably that a man’s offspring belongs to YHWH and may not be ‘given’ to another deity. See further Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 437–38.

commit any of these customary abominations that were done before you, and not defile yourselves by them; I am YHWH, your God.⁷¹

The overall conception of this central passage is clear and can be briefly summarized. Earlier ethnic groups who occupied the land have defiled themselves through their customs; as a result, the land itself was rendered unclean (*tm'*) and vomited out its former inhabitants. In order to avoid the same fate, Israelites are called to observe the laws and customs divinely revealed to them by YHWH; transgression of these same laws and customs, by contrast, would again lead to defilement of the land (and, accordingly, to the expulsion of its new inhabitants, namely, the Israelites themselves).

This conception is further developed in Lev 20, a chapter that evinces many parallels with Lev 18 and that can be viewed as a complement to that legislation.⁷² The law of ch. 20 opens with the case of a man dedicating his son to 'Molech', which develops the prohibition already found in 18:21. The main body of that legislation defines sanctions for various forms of illicit sexual relationships (Lev 20:10–21), which take up many of the relationships already addressed in Lev 18:6–23. The chapter ends with a long exhortation (20:22–26), the first part of which (vv. 22–24a) repeats, in shortened fashion, the central exhortation of Lev 18:24–30. The land was given by YHWH to Israel because its former inhabitants were 'loathed' by him on the grounds of their abominable practices (20:23–24a); accordingly, Israelites must observe YHWH's laws and customs so as not to be 'vomited out' by the land (20:22). The second part of the exhortation, however, introduces a new assertion vis-à-vis Lev 18:

Lev 20:24b–26 ^{24b}I am YHWH, your God, who has set you apart from the (other) peoples. ²⁵So you shall set between the clean beast and the unclean one, and between the unclean bird and the clean one, and so you shall not defile your throats with a beast or a bird or anything which crawls on the ground, which I have set apart for you to treat as impure. ²⁶You shall be holy to me, for I, YHWH,

⁷¹ I follow here, again with some modifications, the translation by Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1515–16. The text is well preserved in the main manuscript traditions and does not call for further text-critical observations.

⁷² Further on the relationship between Lev 18 and 20, see Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 452–59, with a discussion of other recent studies on this issue.

am holy; therefore, I have set you apart from the peoples to be mine.⁷³

Whereas non-observance of divine laws leads to pollution of the land, compliance to these same laws sets Israel apart from the other nations (v. 24b) and transforms the people into a 'holy' (*qdš*) nation, i.e., a nation consecrated to YHWH (v. 26). This is because sanctification is defined, in Lev 20:24b–26, as conformity to the divisions set apart by YHWH himself, such as, especially, the division between 'clean' and 'unclean' animals defined in Lev 11. Here, as already in Lev 12–15 (see 15:31), the division between clean and unclean is again explicitly related, and subordinated, to the division between 'holy' and 'profane'. Yet holiness, in this passage, is no longer restricted to the sanctuary, the sacrifices and the priests but is now defined as something that can be acquired by the community of 'Israel' as a whole, granted that they observe the divine laws that are contained in the Torah (cf. also Lev 19:2; 20:7–8 and 22:31–33).⁷⁴

As in the case of the identification of physical impurities, the identification of moral impurities evinces an attempt to reestablish a form of social control over phenomena that are construed as being antithetical to the preservation of the social order. The difference between moral and physical impurities, however, lies in the fact that moral pollution no longer involves a reassertion of control over *external* phenomena implying the loss of control by individuals over their bodies or over domestic artifacts, such as the physical impurities described in Lev 12–15, but over *internal* deviations vis-à-vis what are construed as social norms—in the case of

⁷³ My translation. In v. 25b, LXX, Samaritan Pentateuch and Peshitta read 'for the impurity' instead of MT 'for you to treat as unclean'; however, MT's reading is likely to be original in my view. In v. 26a, LXX and Samaritan Pentateuch merely read 'for I am YHWH', instead of MT 'for I, YHWH, am holy'. This might be an instance of parablepsis, due to the twofold occurrence of the term *qdš* in the Hebrew text preserved by MT. Regarding this central passage in Leviticus, see also especially the study by Ego, "Reinheit".

⁷⁴ This is a distinctive feature of the final section of the book, Lev 17–26, the so-called 'Holiness legislation'; see on this especially Milgrom, "Changing Concept of Holiness". However, as noted earlier in this essay (above, § 2), this extended concept of holiness remains distinct, in Leviticus, from the holiness ascribed to the temple, the festivals and the priests. It is not a permanent state (as per, e.g., the sanctuary or the priests) but rather an ideal to be achieved by the Israelites through observance of the Torah, as the various passages mentioning Israel's 'holiness' in Lev 17–26 make clear. Furthermore, that concept of holiness is not only derived from the temple's holiness, it also remains subordinated to it; in order to achieve sanctification, the Israelites must first and foremost 'keep' (i.e., observe) the holiness of the sanctuary and of sacred times (Lev 19:30; 26:2).

Leviticus, the laws revealed by YHWH to Israel in the Pentateuch.⁷⁵ The general structure of Lev 18 is telling in this regard. The prohibitions themselves are organized according to a comprehensive scheme moving from illicit sexual intercourse within the sphere of the *family* (vv. 6–16), to the *extended family* or clan (vv. 17–18) and finally to Israelite *society* as a whole (vv. 19–23).⁷⁶ Moral pollution, in this comprehensive scheme, encompasses the entirety of the social organization of Israel, from the most basic unit (the nuclear family) to the group as a whole. At the same time, moral pollution in Leviticus also takes on a marked *ethnic* dimension, as is made clear in the exhortations that frame Lev 18 and 20. Contrary to the various nations that previously inhabited the land and were ‘cast out’ by YHWH, Israel must observe YHWH’s laws in order to avoid defiling the land (Lev 18:2–5, 24–30). Observing the divine laws and keeping the land undefiled sets Israel apart from the other nations and concretizes its status as a ‘holy’ people, i.e., a people consecrated to YHWH (Lev 20:22–26).

The distinction between ‘moral’ and ‘physical’ impurities has been the subject of an extensive discussion by J. Klawans in a monograph devoted to the relationship between ‘sin’ and ‘impurity’ in ancient Judaism.⁷⁷ Klawans observes, in particular, the following differences. First, whereas physical impurities are usually not sinful, moral impurities are always consequences of serious transgressions of the divine laws (i.e., ‘sins’). Second, the two forms of impurity not only have different origins, they also have distinct effects. There does not appear to be any contact contagion associated with moral impurities; as Klawans puts it, “One need not bathe subsequent to direct or indirect contact with an idolater, a murderer, or an individual who committed a sexual sin”.⁷⁸ Third, whereas physical (or ‘ritual’) impurities are temporary, or impermanent, moral impurities have

⁷⁵ That moral pollution is often connected with the maintenance or enhancement of *internal* boundaries was already convincingly established by Douglas, *Purity*, 129–39, who insisted that the divorce between pollution and ethics was a modern view that had no support in traditional societies. Douglas also insisted that beliefs connecting social moral transgressions with pollution usually served to uphold the moral code of a society, especially in situations in which a situation was morally ill-defined, or different moral principles come into conflict.

⁷⁶ For this general arrangement of Lev 18 as a concentric structure of successive boundaries between family, clan or tribe and nation, see Mohrmann, “Study”, esp. 71–73. Note, however, that Mohrmann takes v. 18 not with v. 17 but with vv. 19–20, which I regard as unlikely.

⁷⁷ Klawans, *Impurity*, esp. 21–42. His theory has been adopted by some scholars since, such as Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, and Regev, “Non-Priestly Purity”.

⁷⁸ Klawans, *Impurity*, 26.

a long-lasting effect on the sinner and, eventually, on the land of Israel. Also, one passage in Lev 20, vv. 2–5, suggests that (at least) some moral impurities are capable of contaminating the sanctuary, since a man dedicating his child to ‘Molech’ is accused of defiling (*tm*’ Piel) the sanctuary of YHWH (see 20:3b).⁷⁹ Fourth, accordingly, moral impurities cannot be compensated for by ritual purification; they require individual atonement and/or the punishment of the culprit. Furthermore, building on Lev 26, which announces the future deportation of the Israelites for the sake of the land’s sabbatical rest (26:34–35), Klawans concludes that purification of the land—as well as the sanctuary—from moral pollution occurs exclusively through the exile (compare, also, Ezek 22). Fifth, and lastly, Klawans correctly observes that a different language can be used for moral impurities. For the spectrum of physical impurities, the sole terms used are the antonyms *ṭāmē* ‘unclean’ and *ṭāhōr* ‘clean’; the same antonyms can be used for moral impurities, but other terms may be used as well, such as, especially, the word *tô‘ēbâ* ‘abomination’.⁸⁰ For Klawans, all these differences indicate that ‘moral’ and ‘ritual’ impurities actually constitute two *distinct* systems of pollution in Leviticus, whose characteristics may be summarized in the following chart.⁸¹

Table 2.

	‘Ritual’ Impurities	‘Moral’ Impurities
Source	– natural – unintentional	– non-natural – intentional
Duration	– temporary (mostly)	– permanent
Spectrum of contamination	– contamination of other persons through contact	– pollution of the land and the sanctuary – no contamination through contact
Consequences	– provisional seclusion – performance of various rituals of purification according to the degree of pollution	– no provisional seclusion – no ritual of purification – purification of the land and the sanctuary through deportation of the Israelites (Lev 26; Ezek 22)

⁷⁹ In other words, moral impurities, contrary to physical ones, have a ‘miasmatic’ quality. This point was established, in particular, by Milgrom in a series of studies (see, e.g., Milgrom, “Israel’s Sanctuary”). This conception is also implied by one other passage at least in Leviticus, namely Lev 16:16; see further the discussion below.

⁸⁰ In Leviticus, see 18:22, 26, 27, 29, 30 and 20:13.

⁸¹ A similar assumption was already made by Büchler, *Studies*, in 1928.

Klawans' discussion is valuable in that it offers a systematic analysis of the main differences between 'moral' and 'ritual', or physical, impurities. Also, Klawans is certainly correct in arguing that the differences between the two categories do not only concern the *source* of impurity but its *effects* as well. However, the assumption that moral and physical impurities can be neatly divided into two separate 'systems', without any real overlap between them, results in some important difficulties and cannot account for the overall evidence in Leviticus.⁸² Klawans himself is forced to admit that in some cases the distinction between 'moral' and 'physical' impurities is not so clear-cut. This is so, for instance, in Lev 11, where (as noted above) a person transgressing the general prohibition against touching the carcass of a dead quadruped (Lev 11:8) is not said to have polluted the land or the sanctuary, but only incurs a minor form of impurity (that person is unclean until the end of the day and must wash his clothes if he has carried a carcass, vv. 24–28).⁸³ Thus, *intentional* contact with the carcass of an unclean quadruped has the same effects, in Lev 11, as one of the minor forms of physical impurity identified in Lev 12–15. Although this case is unique in Leviticus, it already suggests that the distinction between 'moral' and physical impurities is not so clear-cut and that there may be a greater overlap between the two forms of impurity than Klawans' model would acknowledge.

One major issue for Klawans' theory has to do with the general notion that moral pollution, contrary to 'ritual' or physical pollution, cannot be subject to ritual purification. This assumption is explicitly contradicted by Lev 16, a chapter that prescribes the ritual to be performed by the high priest once a year, on the day of *Kippurîm* (the 10th day of the 7th month; see 16:29; 23:26–32). The first part of the ritual concerns the purification of the sanctuary; the high priest must enter the inner-sanctum (16:12–13) and sprinkle the *kapporet* ('propitiatory') seven times with the blood of a bull and a male goat offered by the community (16:14–15). This part of the ritual, according to Lev 16:16, serves the following function:

Lev 16:16 Thus, he (i.e., the high priest) shall purge (*kipper*) the inner-sanctum from the impurities (*tum'ôt*) of the Israelites, and from their rebellions (*pišē'hem*), that is, all of their sins (*lekol-ḥaṭṭo'tam*); and he shall do likewise for the tent of meeting that dwells among them in the middle of their impurities.

⁸² Compare also the criticism of Klawans' model by Milgrom, "Systemic Differences". For a general critique of a rigid division between 'moral' and 'ritual' impurities (with reference to Klawans' work), see also now Kazen, "Dirt", esp. 44–45.

⁸³ On Lev 11 as a borderline case, see Klawans, *Impurity*, 31–32.

The 'impurities' (*tum'ôt*) mentioned here logically refer to the *physical* impurities described in Lev 12–15. This is all the more likely because *tum'â* was already used as a comprehensive term for physical impurities in the concluding exhortation of 15:31, to which Lev 16:16 explicitly alludes through the reference to "the tent of meeting that dwells among (or, alternatively, 'with') them in the middle of their impurities" (compare 15:31b: "my dwelling, which is in their midst"). If so, the term *tum'ôt* in 16:16 must designate, more specifically, the impurities that have *not* been taken care of according to the rules laid out in Lev 12–15. The term *p^ešā'im* (literally, 'rebellions'), for its part, refers to intentional transgressions of the divine laws.⁸⁴ Thus, as in Lev 20:3, this passage implies that the sanctuary is defiled not only by physical impurities left unattended but also by moral sins.⁸⁵ Together, both categories comprise 'all the sins' (*lekol-ḥaṭṭā'ôt*) of the Israelites which are capable of polluting the inner-sanctum.⁸⁶ However, as the very ceremony prescribed in Lev 16 implies, such defilement of the sanctuary is purged (Heb. *kipper*) once a year through performance of the ritual by the high priest.⁸⁷

The same conception, connecting moral transgression and ritual purification, is manifest in Lev 4. According to this legislation, a person who has inadvertently (Heb. *bišgāgā'*) transgressed one of the divine prohibitions

⁸⁴ On the use of this term in Leviticus and in the rest of the Priestly literature, see the recent discussion by Gane, *Cult*, 294–98. Gane concludes that it refers to defiant, inexplicable transgressions of the divine commands, such as are recounted in Num 15:30–31.

⁸⁵ For this view, see especially Milgrom, "Israel's Sanctuary", and further on this below. In a recent, comprehensive discussion of Milgrom's theory that moral pollution, in Leviticus, has a 'miasmatic' quality, Gane, *Cult*, 157, rightly observes that a passage such as Lev 16:16 "strongly implies support for the existence of one kind of pollution that affects the sanctuary from a distance".

⁸⁶ With Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1034, I take the last clause of the enumeration in v. 16a as a summarizing category: 'that is, all of their sins'. Gane interprets this clause as referring to a further category of transgressions, namely, non-defiant sins that can be expiated through sacrificial procedure. This view is based on his general thesis that the ritual of Lev 4 serves to purify individuals from the pollution caused by non-defiant sins by transferring such sins to the sanctuary. In this interpretation, however, it is difficult to understand why these less severe transgressions are mentioned last in the enumeration; note, also, that the fact that the formulation of this last clause deviates from the two previous ones suggests that it is not on the same level. For a general critique of Gane's 'transfer' theory, see below, note 88.

⁸⁷ This is the basic meaning of Hebrew *kipper*; compare with Akkadian *kapāru* 'to wipe out' (cf. "kapāru", CAD 8:178–80). On the meaning of *kipper* in Hebrew, see, e.g., Levine, *Presence*, 56–77; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1079–84; and more recently Gilders, *Blood Ritual*, 28–29, who convincingly argues that the general meaning of *kipper* in the ritual texts of the Pentateuch is "to effect removal".

(Lev 4:2; literally: “one of the commandments which must not be done”) must bring a *ḥaṭṭā't* (‘purification’) offering to the sanctuary. The nature of the offering prescribed in Lev 4 is defined according to the social rank of the culprit: if the inadvertent transgression was committed by the high priest or the entire community, a bull must be offered (Lev 4:3–12, 13–21); if it was committed by a chief of the community or an individual, a less expensive animal is required (a male goat in the case of a chief, a female goat or a sheep in the case of an individual; see Lev 4:22–26 and 27–35 respectively). In the first case, the blood of the animal is brought inside the sanctuary; the high priest sprinkles the veil separating the sanctuary from the inner-sanctum with it, places some of it upon the horns of the inner altar, and pours out the rest of the blood at the base of the outer altar. In the second case, the blood of the sacrifice is merely placed on the horns of the outer altar (while the rest of the blood is likewise poured out at the base of this same altar). As Milgrom has convincingly shown, this ritual legislation forms a system with the legislation of Lev 16: Whereas intentional transgressions of the divine commands pollute the inner-sanctum, inadvertent transgressions of the same commands pollute either the sanctuary, if such transgression was committed by the high priest or by the entire community, or the outer altar, if it was committed by an individual other than the high priest. In all these cases, however, the pollution of the sanctuary caused by the intentional or unintentional (inadvertent) transgression of divine laws is cleansed by the ritual disposal of the blood of the *ḥaṭṭā't* offerings prescribed by Lev 4 and 16 respectively.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ See Milgrom, “Israel’s Sanctuary”. This understanding of the system of pollution formed by Lev 4 and 16 together has been adopted by several scholars since. Moreover, there appears to be general agreement now among commentators that the function of Lev 16, at least in the final form of the book, is to cover all the transgressions that have not been dealt with previously in the legislation of Lev 4, thus acknowledging the general insight that the two chapters constitute a ritual system of sorts. Compare, e.g., the recent studies by Seidl, “Levitikus 16”, 240–43; Jürgens, *Heiligkeit*, 339–42; or Janowski and Zenger, “Jenseits des Alltags”, esp. 78–79.

A different interpretation of the relationship between Lev 4 and 16 has recently been proposed by Gane, *Cult*. Gane accepts Milgrom’s view that the ritual of Lev 16 serves for the cleansing of the sanctuary once a year from the ‘impurities’, ‘rebellions’ and ‘sins’ of the Israelites, but rejects the idea that this ritual would account for all the forms of pollution, physical and moral, not cared for during the year by the usual purification offerings instructed in cases of inadvertent sin (Lev 4) or of bodily uncleanness (Lev 12–15). He proposes instead what he designates as a “two-phase” system of cultic purification. Purification offerings whose blood is brought into contact with either of the two altars (i.e., all instances except Lev 16) serve to remove physical uncleanness or a moral evil from the *offerer* (phase 1). Disposal of blood on the two altars involves, however, transfer of impurity to the sanctuary, since blood is a carrier of impurity; hence the need for a further purification, this time of the sanctuary, that occurs once a year in the ritual of

Table 3.

Nature of the transgression	Area polluted	Ritual prescribed
– ‘minor’ inadvertent transgressions (chieftain or other individual)	– outer altar	<i>Lev 4:22–26, 27–35</i> – <i>ḥaṭṭā’t</i> offering consisting of a male goat (chieftain) or a female goat or a sheep (individual) – daubing of the blood on the horns of the <i>outer</i> altar
– ‘major’ inadvertent transgressions (high priest or the community)	– outer-sanctum	<i>Lev 4:3–12, 13–21</i> – <i>ḥaṭṭā’t</i> offering consisting of a bull – sevenfold sprinkling of the blood in front of the inner veil – daubing of the blood on the horns of the <i>inner</i> altar
– intentional, defiant transgressions Biological impurities that have not been previously purified (either intentionally or unintentionally)	– inner-sanctum	<i>Lev 16:3–10, 11–19</i> – <i>ḥaṭṭā’t</i> offering consisting of one bull and two goats, to be performed once a year by the high priest – unique sprinkling of blood eastward of the <i>kapporet</i> (propitiatory) – sevenfold sprinkling of blood in front of the <i>kapporet</i>

Lev 16 (phase 2). However, this theory is problematic in several respects. First of all, the very notion that the impurity of individuals would be removed from them by being transferred to the sanctuary is hardly likely in the context of Ancient Near Eastern culture. In addition, Gane’s analysis raises several issues of detail. In particular, the division proposed is problematic in that it tends to restrict the function of the ritual of ch. 16 to the purification of the sanctuary, whereas it is also said to effect atonement (*kipper*) for the people and the priests (see v. 24) by means of the transfer of their sins to the goat sent to Azazel (vv. 20b–22), including in particular a category of evil, *’āwonot*, that has *not* been previously cleansed from the sanctuary (v. 21a, compare v. 16a). Another issue has to do with Gane’s conception of blood as a carrier that becomes loaded with physical impurity or moral sin before being applied to one of the two altars. Such a conception, which forms the backbone of his pollution/purification system, is nowhere obvious in P, and Gane’s argument on this point is unconvincing. For further, more detailed criticism, see my discussion in Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 191–93.

Furthermore, in an appendix to the legislation of Lev 4 (see Lev 5:1–6), the requirement for a *ḥaṭṭā't* offering is extended to the case in which a person has become unclean through contact with any sort of impurity, of animal or human origin, but was unaware of it and therefore failed to comply with the prescribed rules for purification (Lev 5:2–3).⁸⁹ This means that, for the priestly scribes who composed Leviticus, failure to comply with the rules devised in Lev 11–15 for dealing with physical impurities, be it intentionally or unintentionally, is categorized as a form of transgression of the divine laws that, like other such transgressions, is also liable to affect the sanctuary from a distance. In other words, this is a case of *taxonomical transposition* within the system of pollution and purification that is devised in Leviticus, which shows very clearly how the boundaries between 'physical' and 'moral' impurities are, in fact, fluid, at least *with regard to the rituals for purification*. According to Lev 5:2–3, if such non-observance of the rules defined in Lev 11–15 was unintentional, it may be repaired through the bringing to the sanctuary of a *ḥaṭṭā't* offering, as in the case of the ritual prescribed for a chieftain or another member of the community (Lev 4:22–26, 27–35). If it was intentional, it is then assimilated to a defiant transgression of the divine commands—namely, the *p^ešā'îm* mentioned in Lev 16:16. For such transgression, no individual reparation is permitted, although the pollution caused by it is eliminated from the inner-sanctum by the high priest when he performs the ritual prescribed in Lev 16 once every year.

For the purpose of this essay, we need not go further into the analysis of the sophisticated ritual system elaborated in Lev 4 and 16 for eliminating the ritual pollution caused by unintentional and intentional transgressions. What the existence of this system implies is that it is mistaken to separate moral impurities from ritual purification and to interpret physical and moral impurities as constituting two separate systems of pollution in Leviticus, as per Klawans' model. Physical and moral impurities are clearly *distinct* forms of pollution in Leviticus: they have a different origin, as well as, to some extent, different effects. What we see nonetheless in

⁸⁹ For discussion of this passage, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 299 and 312–13; Kiuchi, *Purification Offering*, 28–29; Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 240–41. The syntax of 5:2–3 is complex, and its exact meaning is disputed. In my opinion, this section refers to the case of a person who has consciously touched a human or animal impurity, but was not aware that he or she had contracted impurity thereby and thus did not undertake the required purification ritual. Milgrom and Kiuchi offer a somewhat different understanding; for them, the person was aware that he or she had contracted an impurity but later forgot about it, remembering it only after the period of purification had passed. However, this issue is not decisive for the present discussion.

Leviticus is a clear attempt to bring these two types of impurity together as part of a *single, comprehensive* system of pollution and purification, a system that, furthermore, *is entirely centered on the sanctuary and its rituals*.⁹⁰ Physical impurities contaminate the sanctuary only if the person suffering from such uncleanness—either because he or she is directly affected by one of the impurities described in Lev 12–15 or because he or she has been contaminated by a person or an object affected by these impurities—comes into contact with it (Lev 15:31). In this case, such a person must remain at a distance from the sanctuary and observe the rules for purification prescribed by Lev 11 and 12–15. In addition, in cases of severe physical impurities such as childbirth (Lev 12) or morbid discharges (Lev 15:2–15 and 25–30), that person is required to bring a *ḥaṭṭā't* offering to the central sanctuary once his or her period of uncleanness has come to an end. Unintentional, inadvertent transgressions contaminate either the outer altar or the sanctuary and require the offering of a *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifice, according to the rules prescribed in Lev 4. The fact that the same kind of offering is prescribed in the case of severe physical impurities and inadvertent, unintentional transgressions further highlights the connection between these two forms of impurity in Leviticus. Thus, as D. Wright puts it, the two forms of impurity share not only “*loci* of pollution” (the sanctuary) but also “similar ways of removing that pollution (mainly *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifices)”.⁹¹ Finally, deliberate transgressions contaminate the inner-sanctum *and* the land. Removal of the pollution affecting the inner-sanctum is provided by the annual ceremony of purification prescribed in Lev 16, whereas removal of the pollution affecting the land is effected by means of the various sanctions defined in Lev 20, such as the death penalty in the case of the man dedicating his child to Molech (20:2, 4–5; see further the sanctions defined in 20:9–16) or exclusion (*kārēt*) from the community (e.g., Lev 20:18).⁹²

⁹⁰ This view is also held, e.g., by Wright, “Spectrum”, 164–65 and *passim*, who correctly identifies two distinct types of impurity but considers them to be part of a single ‘spectrum’ of pollution, itself predicated upon the central sanctuary. He aptly concludes, especially with regard to the rituals for the purification of the two forms of impurity: “Clearly, all the defilement-creating conditions in the priestly legislation are of the same conceptual family and system” (Wright, “Spectrum”, 165). Compare also the relevant observations by Kiuchi, *Purification Offering*, 64–66; Gane, *Cult*, 198–213, who regards physical and moral impurities as ‘distinct’ yet nonetheless ‘related’.

⁹¹ Wright, “Spectrum”, 164.

⁹² Although the meaning of *kārēt* is disputed, the most likely interpretation is that it refers to exclusion from the community; see for instance the recent discussion by Grünwaldt, *Heiligkeitsgesetz*, 149.

This conclusion implies, in turn, that physical and moral pollution in Leviticus should be viewed as complementary rather than opposite, especially with regard to the way in which they affect the central sanctuary. At the end of the previous section (above, § 3), it was observed that the various rules about physical impurities form a kind of 'fence' around the sanctuary. Their general function is to prevent any Israelite suffering from such impurities, be it directly or indirectly (i.e., through contact with a major impurity), from defiling the sanctuary by entering the sacred precincts while in a state of uncleanness, as is stated in the concluding exhortation found in Lev 15:31. The concept of 'moral' pollution, as it is elaborated in Leviticus, builds a further 'fence' around the sanctuary. The underlying rationale is that the sanctuary becomes automatically defiled whenever one of the divine commands is transgressed, be it intentionally or inadvertently; in addition, deliberate transgressions of the divine laws (but apparently not inadvertent ones, compare Lev 4) defile the land as well (Lev 18:24–30). Defilement of the sanctuary through transgressions of the divine laws can nonetheless be eliminated if the appropriate ritual, as prescribed in Lev 4 and 16:11–19 respectively, is performed; however, no ritual is prescribed for the purification of the land, and repeated defilement of the latter through non-observance of the divine laws eventually leads to the deportation of Israel outside of the land (Lev 26), as in the case of the nations that preceded Israel (Lev 18:2–5, 24–30; 20:22–26).

With these observations, we have concluded our study of the main forms of pollution and purification in Leviticus. There remains now to understand what were the social and ideological functions of such concepts in the historical context of the ancient society that produced this book. Strikingly enough, this issue has received relatively little scholarly attention; instead most critics restrict themselves to describing the various aspects of these concepts at a literary level.⁹³ Nevertheless, as we will see, it is possible to advance some general considerations at least.

⁹³ Compare, e.g., the studies by Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, or Gane, *Cult*, which are characteristic in this respect. One major exception is the study by Wright, "Spectrum", especially in its second part (pp. 170–81). Wright advances several relevant comments on the relationship between the two forms of impurity using insights from social-cultural anthropology, especially M. Douglas, C. Geertz and R. Wuthnow. In my opinion, his study has not received the scholarly attention that it deserves; some of his arguments will be briefly discussed below. One major difference, however, is that Wright, in his analysis of the social function of concepts of pollution and purification in Leviticus (and, more generally, in 'P'), focuses on the possible social effects created by the interaction between 'tolerated' and 'non-tolerated' impurities. While this is a significant point, the key issue, in my view, concerns the effect achieved by the way in which these two forms of impurity are related

5. POLLUTION, PURIFICATION, AND THE TEMPLE-SOCIETY OF LEVITICUS

We may begin this discussion with a preliminary remark, which takes up some of the observations made at the onset of this essay (above, § 2). Like the other books of the Torah, Leviticus may be described, in general terms, as a scribal exercise in imagination: in the guise of a sophisticated narrative fiction using earlier traditions, it projects a certain ideal of society onto a distant past. This ideal society, especially in the case of Leviticus, may be aptly described as a ‘conservative utopia’.⁹⁴ It is clearly distinct from the actual society in which the priestly scribes who composed Leviticus lived. At the same time, however, Leviticus also claims to be authoritative for the various groups that, in the early Second Temple period, considered themselves to belong to ‘Israel’, especially because the various rules that the book contains are consistently presented as divine revelations made to Moses (or Moses and Aaron) at Mount Sinai. Thus, in order to understand the ideological function of concepts of pollution and purification in Leviticus for the groups that identified themselves with ‘Israel’ during the Persian period, we need to contrast the model of society implied by these concepts with what we can legitimately reconstruct about the social, economic and political situation at that time.

From a methodological perspective, this general observation calls for further comment. Since the classical study by M. Douglas, it has been common to interpret concepts of pollution, in a given society, as operators for classifying reality and imposing upon it a certain ideal of order.⁹⁵ As the previous analysis has shown, this approach is also relevant for understanding concepts of pollution and purification in Leviticus. These concepts, as we have seen, can be understood neither as mere practical rules nor as general symbols of sorts referring to basic anthropological realities (such as, e.g., death and sexuality). Rather, they exemplify a form of social classification, or *taxonomy*: in general terms, the opposition between ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ corresponds to the opposition between ‘order’ and ‘anti-order’ respectively. The designation of persons, animals or things as ‘unclean’ serves to identify various phenomena that are construed as being

to the sanctuary, an issue that is left virtually unaddressed by Wright. Furthermore, even Wright does not really attempt to correlate his analysis with a specific historical context. For these reasons, my own analysis moves in a significantly different direction than his. Some comments on the social function of the opposition between ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ can also be found in the short article by Schaper, “Priestly Purity”.

⁹⁴ Schaper, “Priestly Purity”, 52.

⁹⁵ See Douglas, *Purity*; and further, e.g., Douglas, “Deciphering”.

susceptible to endangering the organization of the community and that can have their origin either in physical phenomena or in human behavior and action. This social taxonomy goes along with a set of measures, usually in the form of rituals for purification, the importance of which is a function of the degree of pollution ascribed to a given form of impurity; overall, the general function of such rituals is to reestablish a previous state of cleanness. In some extreme cases other rituals of purification are not sufficient, and additional measures of social control are required. In the case of physical pollution, such measures can lead to provisional expulsion from the community, as in the case of a person suffering from *ṣārā'at* (see Lev 13:45–46); in the case of intentional transgressions of the laws that, in Leviticus, are presented as divinely revealed, the person responsible for that transgression can be permanently excluded from the community (*kārēt*) or even put to death.

However, this kind of general description is only relevant up to a certain point; in particular, it does not address the fact that the discourse about pollution and purification in Leviticus is not some general expression of 'ancient Israelite culture' (although, as argued above, it certainly draws on traditional practices and beliefs). Rather, it reflects the distinctive interests and concerns of the priestly scribes who composed that book during the Persian period and is closely related to the attempt by that group to qualify and redefine its authority in that historical context. Here, we may usefully refer to the theoretical work of the anthropologist C. Bell. In her analysis of ritual, Bell questions the very assumption underlying the work of Douglas and many other social anthropologists, according to which the basic function of rituals would be to resolve fundamental contradictions within a given society. Instead, Bell regards the very notion that there would be any such 'fundamental contradiction' in all cultures as a scholarly 'myth' as well as an epistemological fallacy.⁹⁶ A better description, according to her, would be to say that it is a constitutive part of the strategy of rituals (or at least, of some rituals) to "generate the sense of a basic and compelling conflict or opposition in light of which other contrasts are orchestrated" in a given society or culture.⁹⁷ Furthermore, as a form of 'strategic practice', rituals are always embedded within a complex network of power relationships among the various participants in the ritual, relationships that are themselves concretely enacted in the sequence of

⁹⁶ Bell, *Ritual Theory*, esp. 35–37.

⁹⁷ Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 37.

the rituals.⁹⁸ It is certainly possible to apply this theoretical framework to the discourse about pollution and purification in Leviticus. Like the rituals analyzed by Bell, the rituals defined in the text of Leviticus claim to overcome a basic, or central, opposition (between clean and unclean), which they contribute to generating. This opposition itself commands a comprehensive set of further distinctions related to in-group and out-group boundaries as well as to specific social, political and gender hierarchies. The main difference, in this case, is that this central opposition is no longer simply generated by the rituals described in Leviticus, but more generally by the entire discourse on pollution and purification in that book, to which 'textual' rituals of Leviticus belong and which they contribute to shaping.⁹⁹

If we approach the discourse about pollution and purification in Leviticus from this perspective, and on the basis of the previous description that has been made in this study of 'physical' and 'moral' impurities, three aspects, in particular, may be emphasized: first, the scope of pollution in Leviticus, and the way in which pollution is used to construe in-group and out-group boundaries; second, the central place that is given, in this discourse, to the temple; and third, the negotiation of power between priests and non-priests that is involved in the construction of the opposition between clean and unclean, pollution and purification. We may briefly deal with these three aspects, before attempting to relate them to the historical context of the Persian period.

(1) In Leviticus, the opposition between clean and unclean is construed as a basic opposition in correlation to another central opposition, this time between 'sacred' and 'profane' (Lev 10:10). However, whereas the opposition between sacred and profane is primarily defined in Leviticus in relation to a specific place (the sanctuary) and specific times (the festivals described in Lev 23–25),¹⁰⁰ the opposition between clean and unclean

⁹⁸ On this, see Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 169–223, and further below.

⁹⁹ In other words, the 'strategic practice' that generates the central opposition, in the case of Leviticus, is the discursive 'system' of pollution and purification of which the 'textual' rituals form a part, rather than those rituals only. The codification of rituals in textual form is, however, yet another, specific manifestation of 'ritualization' as a strategic practice, which is especially (though not exclusively) connected with the transformation and redefinition of the authority of ritual specialists in a social group; see on this Bell, *Ritual Theory*, esp. 136–40.

¹⁰⁰ Note, in particular, how sacred place and sacred times are mentioned jointly in the key exhortations found in Lev 19:30 and 26:2. These two passages have exactly the same wording, and the parallel frames the section extending from Lev 19 (where the first exhortation to sanctification through observance of the Torah occurs, Lev 19:2) to Lev 25, which

has a much broader scope and applies to virtually every aspect of social and domestic life. As D. Wright convincingly argues, the experience of impurity is construed as something that is both 'ubiquitous' and 'perpetual', because physical (or, in Wright's terminology, 'tolerated') impurities can occur at any given time.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, the experience of pollution is not restricted to physical impurities but is extended to the sphere of actions and moral behavior; as Wright observes, the comprehensiveness of pollution in Leviticus induces a certain perception of reality, according to which everything may, in principle, be divided into 'clean' and 'unclean'.¹⁰² The two forms of pollution, as we have seen, are clearly complementary: one is about the threat posed by certain biological phenomena to social organization (in classical terms, 'nature' versus 'culture'), the other about the threat posed by internal deviations from social norms, which, in Leviticus, are consistently identified with the divine laws found in the Torah. Furthermore, the two forms of pollution tend to support each other, especially insofar as they are part of a comprehensive system of ritual purification.¹⁰³ On the one hand, the rituals prescribed for the purification of moral transgressions, be they inadvertent or deliberate, branch into the lesser rituals prescribed in the case of physical impurities, as can be seen from the graded *hattā't* offering in Lev 4 and 16. On the other hand, non-observance of the rules for purification from physical impurities is taxonomically transposed into a form of moral impurity (intentional or unintentional); in this respect, the sub-system of moral

precedes immediately the grand exhortation (26:3–45) concluding the entire book (and, beyond, the revelation at Mount Sinai). On the editorial function of Lev 19:30 and 26:2, see, e.g., Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 536–37.

¹⁰¹ Wright, "Spectrum", 176.

¹⁰² Wright, "Spectrum", 176: "Members of society might tend to categorize actions by one of the two states [i.e., clean and unclean—CN]. Even when the system has not specifically labeled the nature of an act, the structure of thought could lead to classification". Compare also the similar observations by Schaper, "Priestly Purity", 56–57.

¹⁰³ See also the detailed comments on this issue by Wright, "Spectrum", 170–81. Wright argues, in particular, that the association between 'tolerated' and 'non-tolerated' impurities in a comprehensive system of pollution and purification induces a "conception of cause and effect". The detestation of minor, tolerated impurities would enforce a sense of detestation for non-tolerated impurities and thus strengthen the social norms that these non-tolerated impurities are intended to protect. Likewise, compliance to the lesser obligations for purification from 'tolerated' impurities would induce a sense, in everyday ritual practice, of the necessity to conform to the higher obligations corresponding to the purification from 'non-tolerated' impurities. Conversely, "non-compliance with the rules of lesser impurities could suggest to the group that the individual is not willing to support it and that he might intentionally commit acts that cause prohibited impurity, which are detrimental to society" (Wright, "Spectrum", 178).

pollution and purification tends to function as a 'controlling device' for the other sub-system.

Moreover, the opposition between clean and unclean is not confined to internal organization in Leviticus; it is also related to the opposition between 'in-group' and 'out-group'. Being able to separate clean from unclean is defined as one of the basic conditions, apart from genealogy, for acceptance as a member of the ethnic group 'Israel'; accordingly, inability to perform such separation is presented in that book as the distinctive feature of other ethnic groups (Lev 18:24–30; 20:22–26).¹⁰⁴ The opposition clean/unclean thus serves for both internal *and* external differentiation. The two aspects are artfully intertwined in the narrative fiction of Leviticus and therefore support each other. This point is made clear, in particular, in the final exhortation of Lev 20, which was already discussed above. According to Lev 20:22–26, the reason why 'Israel' is different from the other nations is that YHWH has chosen to reveal to them his laws, primary among which are the laws related to the division between 'clean' and 'unclean' such as Lev 11 (see 20:25). Namely, observance of purity laws is what manifests Israel's unique, 'elected' status as an ethnic group.

(2) This comprehensive system of pollution and purification, together with the internal and external boundaries that it defines, is itself consistently related to the *temple*. One could say, in this respect, that one of the most significant aspects of the opposition between 'clean' and 'unclean' in Leviticus, as a 'strategic' discourse, is the way in which it concretely defines the implications of the central location of the temple in the community by subordinating the entire social organization to the sanctuary. In a sense, this is the other, complementary aspect of the relationship between the oppositions sacred/profane and clean/unclean in Leviticus: while the opposition between clean and unclean reaches *beyond* the sanctuary, to the entire community, this opposition is never construed independently from the opposition between sacred and profane but remains somehow subservient to it. The reason for the Israelites' required observance of the rules of physical and moral impurities is, ultimately, the protection and preservation of the sanctuary. Correspondingly, as we have seen in the

¹⁰⁴ Interestingly enough, this aspect is nuanced in one passage of the book of Ezra, in 6:21, where it is recounted how non-Israelites who had 'separated' (*bdl*) from the 'impurities' (*tum'ôt*) of the 'peoples of the land' were allowed to join the Israelites in the celebration of Passover. This passage presupposes the general view laid out in Lev 18 and 20 regarding the inability of other ethnic groups to 'separate' 'unclean' from 'clean' but introduces a minor qualification with respect to individual members of these same ethnic groups.

analysis of Lev 20:22–26, observance of the central divisions laid out in the rules of purity (such as, especially, the distinction between clean and unclean animals) is the basic condition for the sanctification of Israel, that is, for the extension of holiness from the sanctuary to the entire community. The transmission of physical impurities must be avoided because there is a risk that, if left uncontrolled, they may desecrate the sanctuary. As a result, the main implication of physical impurities is that the unclean person is prohibited access to the sanctuary and its rituals; physical impurity, here, is primarily defined as temporary *ritual* incapacity. The centrality of the temple is even more obvious in the case of moral impurities, because transgressions of divine commands directly affect the various areas of the sanctuary (outer altar, outer-sanctum and inner-sanctum) according to their gravity. Here, we have a unique way of associating the observance of the divine commands (i.e., Torah) and the temple, which, to the best of my knowledge, has no equivalent in Antiquity. Temple and Torah, in this conception, are no longer two distinct institutions but are *organically* related: if Israelites must keep the Torah, it is in order to avoid defilement of the sanctuary. In a sense, one could say that the temple, in this conception, has become the *raison d'être* of the Torah itself, as the main social and legal norm for 'Israel'.

(3) Third, and lastly, this discourse about pollution and purification in Leviticus, which places the temple at the center of society and correspondingly aligns social organization with the preservation and protection of the sanctuary, is inseparable from a *negotiation* of power and authority between priests and non-priests. Such negotiation is especially (though not exclusively) manifest at the level of the various rituals of purification that are prescribed in that book.¹⁰⁵ On the one hand, the capacity to distinguish 'clean' from 'unclean', which is presented in many other traditions of the Hebrew Bible as a distinctively *priestly* competence (e.g., Deut 24:8; Ezek 22:26; 44:23; Zeph 3:4; Hag 2:11), is now transferred to the *Israelites* as a whole. Moses and Aaron are tasked with teaching the Israelites the laws about most physical impurities (Lev 11:1–2a; 12:1–2a; 15:1–2a)—with the noteworthy exception of the instructions about *ṣārā'at* in Lev 13–14;

¹⁰⁵ One of the major insights of Bell's studies is that rituals—or, better, strategies of 'ritualization'—are always about "the construction of certain types of power relationships effective within particular social organization" and that these power relationships imply a complex negotiation of power, because all the participants in the ritual are somehow 'empowered', even when they do *not* control the ritual, although to different degrees. See Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 197–223.

see below—and the superscription to Lev 11 specifies that the purpose of this teaching is that the Israelites be able to “separate what is unclean from what is clean, and the animals that may be eaten from those that may not” (Lev 11:47). Furthermore, the teaching of these rules also implies, simultaneously, a conferral onto the Israelites (male *and* female) of the competence to perform some basic rituals in the domestic sphere, such as bathing oneself or washing one’s clothes (e.g., Lev 15:16–17 and *passim*), which may be legitimately enacted without the assistance of a priest.

On the other hand, however, the control of pollution and purification in Leviticus remains largely in the hands of the priesthood. Lev 10:10 states that one of the central tasks of priests, alongside teaching the Torah (10:11), is to “separate sacred from profane, as well as unclean from clean”, thereby suggesting that they preserve a specific competence in this regard vis-à-vis the rest of the community. Within Lev 11–15, this difference is illustrated by the fact that Aaron is repeatedly mentioned alongside Moses as enjoying the *direct* revelation of the rules about impurity, contrary to the rest of the people (Lev 11:1; 13:1; 14:33; 15:1).¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, in the case of *šārā’at* pollution in Lev 13–14, this extreme form of impurity cannot be dealt with by lay people alone but requires the intervention of a priest, who alone is competent to declare someone ‘clean’ or ‘unclean’; apparently, this is also the reason that these rules, contrary to the rest of Lev 11–15, are revealed to Moses and Aaron only and are not said to be taught to the rest of the community (compare 13:1; 14:1 and 14:33). The same observation applies in the case of rituals for purification: while minor rituals may legitimately be performed by the Israelites themselves, all the major rituals may *exclusively* be performed by the priests and merely involve a subsidiary role for non-priests, i.e., bringing the required offering.¹⁰⁷

One could say, to some extent, that the partial transfer of priestly competencies to non-priests was the price to pay, for the authors of Leviticus, for construing so broadly the spectrum of pollution. Establishing the opposition between clean and unclean as the basic opposition around which the entire social organization of ‘Israel’ is defined requires, accordingly, a conception of society that involves the entire community in a domain

¹⁰⁶ Why Aaron is not mentioned in 12:1 and 14:1 is not clear, and it is difficult to detect a distinct logic behind this omission. Presumably, Aaron is also implied in these two passages.

¹⁰⁷ The relationship between the control of rituals and social empowerment is a classical feature of ritual studies; compare, e.g., the discussion by Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 211–15, with several references to earlier literature.

of expertise traditionally regarded as a distinctively priestly competency. However, nothing would be more incorrect than to regard this development as entailing a 'democratization' of sorts of the priesthood or a radical rejection of the class division between priests and non-priests, as it has been recently argued.¹⁰⁸ Rather, as it appears, the discourse about pollution and purification in Leviticus involves an elaborate reordering of the respective competencies of priests and non-priests with regard to impurity, which, while conferring some 'priestly' skills to non-priestly members of Israel, at the same time establishes the superior authority of priests in the control of pollution. Altogether, the various rituals for purification that are prescribed in Leviticus define something like a 'ritual continuum' extending from the individual *household* to the *temple* and exemplifying, at the same time, a distinctive social *hierarchy*. Minor rituals for purification may be performed by the Israelites themselves in their households, but major rituals involve the obligation, for lay Israelites, to bring to the temple the prescribed offering, so that the corresponding ritual may be performed by the priests or even, in some of the most severe cases (Lev 4:13–21; 16:11–19), by the high priest himself. The minor rituals are irrelevant without the major ones; indeed, all those rituals are part of *one and the same system* of pollution and purification, at the top of which stand the priests as ritual 'specialists' and, above them all, the high priest, who alone is able to take care of the impurities that have not been disposed of during the rest of the year (see Lev 16). Here, we have a fitting illustration of the general thesis of M. Douglas, according to which the presence of ritual specialists is a distinctive feature of 'high-grid', or stratified, societies (in opposition to 'low-grid' societies, with a loose social hierarchy); such societies, according to Douglas's analysis, are characterized by a pronounced social hierarchy as well as a social ethos of piety toward authority.¹⁰⁹

We may now attempt to correlate this analysis of the main functions of concepts of pollution and purification in Leviticus with the historical context of the province of Yehûd during the Persian period and, especially, the role of the temple. Although our evidence for this period is very limited (albeit not nonexistent), it is nevertheless possible to identify a general trajectory, with regard to the temple and the priestly class in Jerusalem,

¹⁰⁸ See especially Bergen, *Reading Ritual*, 1–12; compare also the remarks by Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 12–14.

¹⁰⁹ Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 86–87.

between the beginning and the end of the time during which Judah was under the domination of the Achaemenid empire (classically dated 538 to 332 BCE). In the limits of this essay, it is not possible to address the various issues that this reconstruction raises, and the discussion will be restricted to those aspects that are significant for the present study.

One of the most important developments in regard to the temple of Jerusalem during the Persian period was the loosening of the traditional connection between temple and kingship.¹¹⁰ At the beginning of the Persian period, the temple was rebuilt (presumably in connection with the return from exile of a small group of Judeans under the lead of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel),¹¹¹ but Judah no longer had a local king, and the Jerusalem temple was not sponsored any longer by the Judean monarchy, as it had been before the exile. As the successor to the sanctuary of the royal period, the Second Temple probably enjoyed a significant amount of prestige, but it is unlikely to have played a major economic role from the onset in the administration of Yehûd, because the administrative center of the province was not in Jerusalem but in Mizpah (a town located some 20 kilometers from Jerusalem).¹¹² Furthermore, the absence of royal sponsorship meant that the maintenance of the sanctuary and its personnel was left to the local populace; since the province of Yehûd was

¹¹⁰ As noted, e.g., by Albertz, *Exile*, 133–34.

¹¹¹ This is the classical view, based on a combination of evidence found in Haggai, Zech 1–8 and Ezra 1–6. A minority view holds, however, that the temple was only rebuilt at some point during the fifth century, possibly in connection with Nehemiah's governorship (or even later); see, in particular, the detailed argument put forward by Edelman, *Origins*. Although this discussion is too complex to be addressed here in detail, and even granting that the evidence offered by Haggai, Zech 1–8 and Ezra 1–6 is complex, I remain unconvinced by this alternative reconstruction. Suffice it, here, to note that several texts that are usually dated to the fifth century, such as Isa 60–62 (the earliest portion of so-called "Third Isaiah"), do seem to presuppose that the temple has already been rebuilt; compare Isa 60:7, 13. Furthermore, it is striking to observe that no biblical or extra-biblical literature associates Nehemiah with the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

¹¹² After the capture of Jerusalem, the center for the administrative unit formed by Judah and Benjamin was moved to Mizpah; see 2 Kgs 25:22–23 and Jer 40:7–10. Mizpah probably kept that function until Jerusalem was reestablished as administrative center for the province of Yehûd; see, e.g., Lemaire, "Nabonidus", 201–4, as well as Lipschits, "Achaemenid Imperial Policy". Note, furthermore, that this conclusion seems to be corroborated by one passage in Nehemiah, Neh 3:7; cf. Blenkinsopp, "Judean Priesthood", 29. There is general agreement, today, that Jerusalem was very sparsely populated during most of the Persian period. Two recent estimations, by Carter, *Emergence*, 201–2, and Lipschits, *Fall and Rise*, 261–274, calculate that Jerusalem was never inhabited by more than 1,500 persons during the fifth century. It is only towards the late fifth and fourth centuries BCE that the town seems to have enjoyed a slightly more significant economic and political role. See further below.

very poor and sparsely populated during the Persian period, the maintenance of the temple was apparently a constant problem, as the account in Neh 13:10–14 appears to indicate (see further Mal 3:6–12).¹¹³ The chief priest (or high priest) was acknowledged as a respected and authoritative figure in the community, as some passages, especially in Zech 1–8, suggest (see especially the visions reported in Zech 3 and 6:9–15). In the absence of a king, his office was, at times, the only office of importance held by a native Judean, since the governors nominated by the Persian authority were not necessarily Judeans themselves; in this context, it is only logical that we find a distinctive trend, in some Persian period texts, to transfer onto him attributes that previously belonged to the king.¹¹⁴ At the same time, however, there is no real evidence suggesting that the Persian administration recognized any sort of official authority of the high priest in *civil* matters; thus, earlier theories about a ‘dual’ authority or a ‘diarchy’ in Yehûd consisting of the governor and the high priest are unwarranted and probably mistaken. More likely, the authority of the high priest was confined to the sanctuary on Mount Zion and its precincts, as has been convincingly argued by some scholars.¹¹⁵ Concretely, this means that the high priest (and, more generally, the leading priestly families in Jerusalem that backed his authority) was considered to be competent for all the matters pertaining to access to, and management of, the sanctuary but that his authority did not necessarily extend further.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ This passage recounts that during Nehemiah’s second sojourn to Jerusalem (dated 432 BCE), the tithe was not paid to the temple, so that the sanctuary was abandoned by its cultic servants (Neh 13:10–14). Even though this account is probably exaggerated, it coheres with the little we may reconstruct about the economic situation in Jerusalem at that time.

¹¹⁴ Compare especially the description of the high priest’s vestments in Exod 28–29, which takes up several motifs that, in other biblical traditions, are presented as distinctive of the Judean monarch, such as diadem (e.g., 2 Sam 1:10; Ps 89:40, etc.), tiara (Ezek 21:31) and anointing with oil (1 Kgs 1:39; 2 Kgs 9:1, 3, 12; 11:12; 23:30). Further on this, see my discussion in Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 393–94, with n. 513. Note, however, that the traditional view according to which in Zech 6:9–15 an ancient oracle addressed to the Davidide Zerubbabel would have been later revised in favor of Joshua, the high priest, is quite problematic and must be abandoned.

¹¹⁵ See especially the detailed discussion by Rooke, *Zadok’s Heirs*, 135–50; as well as Rose, *Zemah*, esp. 44–83.

¹¹⁶ Compare, e.g., the concluding comments by Rose, *Zemah*, 83: “In Zech. 3.7, Joshua, the high priest, is given certain prerogatives which formerly belonged to the king, but these are limited to the temple and its cult. No reasons are given for this transfer, and details are unclear. Evidence for increased civil power of the priest is absent, and so is evidence for a form of government called ‘diarchy’”.

Gradually, however, the situation seems to have evolved, in connection with the establishment of Jerusalem as the administrative center (*birâ*, or *birtâ*) for the province of Yehûd in the second half of the fifth century, presumably in connection with Nehemiah's governorship.¹¹⁷ This development implied that the temple of Jerusalem enjoyed a more significant economic and political role, especially once it served as the place where taxes were collected.¹¹⁸ In that context, the leading priestly families logically enjoyed more power and authority; the high priest, in particular, seems to have come to play a growing role in the administration of the province in the late fifth and fourth centuries. This assumption is corroborated, in particular, by the mention of "Yôhanan the (high) priest" (*yhwḥnn hkwhn*) as a Paleo-Hebrew legend on a fractional Judean coin.¹¹⁹ Although the coin is variously dated from 378–368 to 335–333, this mention suggests that towards the end of the Persian period, the high priest of the Jerusalem temple was influential enough to mint coins under his own authority.¹²⁰ The various stories in the book of Numbers (such as, e.g., Num 16–18 and 25) that emphasize the religious and political authority of the high priest over the rest of the community may likewise be placed in the same context.¹²¹ Interestingly enough, this 'theocratic' ideal of Numbers is also reflected, towards the end of the 4th century, in the work of Hecataeus of Abdera (*apud* Diodorus Siculus XL, 3, 5), who states that the Jews have 'never had a king' but are ruled by priests, the first of whom they designate as the 'high priest' and whom they regard as the 'messenger of God'. In

¹¹⁷ On *birâ/birtâ* as a technical term of the imperial administration for a provincial capital, see Lemaire and Lozachmeur, "*birta*", as well as the comments by Edelman, *Ori-gins*, 333.

¹¹⁸ See Schaper, "Jerusalem Temple;" and more recently on this issue, compare for instance Lemaire, "Administration", esp. 60–62.

¹¹⁹ For presentation of this fractional coin, see Meshorer, *Treasury*, 14 n. 20; cf. also the discussion by Fried, "Silver Coin".

¹²⁰ Lemaire, "Administration", esp. 62. A 'Yehohanan the high priest' is already mentioned in the Aramaic petition sent to Bagavahya in 407 by the Judean community in Elephantine (see Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri*, 30:18 and 31:17), although it is quite doubtful that this is the same person.

¹²¹ On this, see especially Achenbach, *Vollendung*, 443–628. In Num 25, for instance, Phinehas, Aaron's grandson, is reported to have received a specific covenant (*b'rit*) with YHWH, which is described both as a 'covenant of peace' and an 'everlasting covenant', two terms that were previously associated, in the biblical tradition, with the covenant concluded with the *Davidic* dynasty; see, especially, Ezek 34:23–24 and 37:26. Compare also the narrative in Num 17:16–26, which establishes the superiority of Aaron's tribe over all other Israelite tribes by recounting how Aaron's staff, when placed inside the sanctuary with the staffs of the chiefs of the other tribes, blossomed as the sign of the election of Aaron's tribe by YHWH.

reality, the high priest was always forced to reckon with the authority of the governor designated by the Persian administration; this potentially conflicting situation is already reflected, for instance, in the account of Neh 13:4–9, which recounts the conflict between Nehemiah and the high priest Eliashib regarding the admission of Tobiah, an Ammonite official, into the rooms of the sanctuary. However, after the Achaemenid empire definitively lost control over Egypt, after 400 BCE, its authority in the Levant seems to have gradually weakened, as can be seen, in particular, from the various revolts of Phoenician coastal cities during the fourth century. In this context, it was likely possible for the high priest—who, as was noted above, was the main *native* official in Yehûd—to gradually assert his economic and political authority over civil, non-sacral matters.¹²²

Against this historical background, it is possible to understand the concepts of purity and pollution in Leviticus as an attempt to enlarge and consolidate the authority of the priesthood and the temple over the rest of society in Yehûd. Through reading, hearing, copying or commenting upon Leviticus, the ancient audience was gradually educated in a distinctive model of society that, by construing the related oppositions between sacred and profane and between clean and unclean as central oppositions, subordinates social organization to the temple and, while conferring on the members of 'Israel' a degree of priestly competency in the domestic sphere, simultaneously establishes the authority of the priesthood over civil matters.¹²³ Later in the Second Temple period, some Jewish groups,

¹²² For this idea, see Achenbach, *Vollendung*, 130–40.

¹²³ As was pointed out earlier in this study (above, § 2), reading and commenting on a scroll such as Leviticus was probably intended first and foremost (though not exclusively) for the training of a small elite in Yehûd during the Persian period. Otherwise, we know little about the diffusion of Leviticus, and other Torah scrolls, during the Persian period. One passage in Neh 8 recounts the public reading of the Torah by Ezra in the context of a grand ceremony extending over eight days, but this account is replete with difficulties and is likely to be fictional. Compare, e.g., the recent and moderate statement of this disputed issue by Grabbe, *History*, 334–37. We can presumably deduce from this that public recitation of the Torah was known in Jerusalem in the fourth century BCE, but little more can be said with certainty. The authenticity of the imperial decree reported in Ezra 7:12–26, which grants to Ezra the authority to promulgate the 'law (*dātā*) of your God and the law (*dātā*) of the king' (Ezra 7:26) has likewise been questioned, in my view with good grounds. See, in particular, the detailed discussion by Grätz, *Edikt*; Grätz, "Ezra 7". Grätz convincingly shows, in particular, how the so-called edict of Artaxerxes is best understood against the Hellenistic practice of forging such documents in order to gain the support of Hellenistic rulers in the enforcement of local laws by referring to an earlier imperial authorization granted by the Persian king. Besides, it is unclear what is referred to in the expressions 'law of your God' and 'law of the king' and how the Aramaic term *dātā*, in these two phrases, relates to the Torah; it is also largely unclear how the account

such as the Pharisees, will seek to partly free themselves from that priestly influence by developing priestly, or quasi-priestly, standards of purity in their everyday lives.¹²⁴ Even so, however, such groups will not question the authority of Leviticus in matters of purity. Instead, through a gradual process of reception that starts in the Persian period and develops in Hellenistic and Roman times, Leviticus will slowly emerge as the normative discourse on such matters in Second Temple Judaism, laying the basis for the development of concepts of pollution and purification among virtually all Jewish groups of that period.¹²⁵

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of Ezra 7 relates to that in Neh 8. It seems probable that the picture presented by these two texts (although from a distinct perspective) of a sudden enforcement of the Torah in the entire province of Yehûd simultaneously is a later fiction; more likely, we should imagine a gradual process that started in the late Persian period and extended through the time of Hellenistic rule in Judea.

¹²⁴ See on this Regev, "Non-Priestly Purity".

¹²⁵ See, e.g., Harrington, *Impurity Systems*, as well as the essays by I. Werrett and G. Holtz in this volume.

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PURITY CONCEPTIONS IN THE BOOK OF NUMBERS IN CONTEXT

Christian Frevel

Everyone will agree that purity is an important issue in the book of Leviticus and that these texts have had the strongest impact on purity discussions through the ages.¹ Because of the predominance of Leviticus in the reception process, the importance of the book of Numbers regarding purity issues is often neglected. But is the idea of purity in Numbers the same as it is in Leviticus, or are there differences in conceptualizations of purity within the book of Numbers? If the latter, are they conflicting concepts or do they complement each other? The following chapter aims to address these questions and to compare purity conceptions in Leviticus and Numbers by giving an overview of the purity texts and their vocabulary, focusing on the book of Numbers. In a second part, the chapter will focus on the example of Num 5:1–4 as one of the most compositionally important purity texts in Numbers. Within this line of argumentation, the chapter aims at determining the specific outline of purity conceptions in the book of Numbers.

1. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND THE SEMANTIC FIELD 'PURITY/IMPURITY' IN THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

If you ask which book contains the main purity texts in the Torah, the most common initial answer is Leviticus. But a closer look reveals that the semantic field of 'purity' is present as well in the book of Numbers, and it is almost as frequent and dense there as it is in Leviticus. Although they do not always constitute the central focus, purification, pollution or defilement are addressed in the arrangement of the camp (Num 5:1–3); in the ordeal of jealousy (Num 5:11–31); in the instruction of the vows of the Nazirite (Num 6:1–21); in the passage on the initiation of the Levites into their service (Num 8); in the commandments regarding the postponement of the Passover ritual (Num 9:1–14); in the explanation of the donations to the priests (Num 18:9–14) and at the end of the general regulation of their behavior in the service in the tent of meeting (Num 18:32); in the chapter

¹ See for example the book edited by Marcel J. H. M. Poorthuis and Baruch J. Schwartz, *Purity and Holiness*.

on vows, once the profanation of a vow is brought up (Num 30:3); in the chapter on the Midianite war, when the warriors return with their captives (Num 31:12–24); and at the end of chapter 35, within the regulations of the cities of refuge (Num 35:33–34). In addition to these instances where the theme is at least touched upon, the whole chapter on the red heifer in Num 19 concerns impurity caused by corpses. One may add the narrative chapters 12, 17 and 25, where purity issues are treated more or less explicitly: Miriam's leprosy (Num 12:12–15), Aaron's כִּפּוּר-rite on the occasion of the plague Num (17:6–15), and Phinehas' act of expiation by killing Cozbi and Zimri (Num 25:5–15). The semantic field covers the entire spectrum, which is shown in the chart below:

Table 1.

Lexeme	Word Class	Translation	Frequency	Evidence
טהר	<i>Verb</i>	to clean, to purify	10	G-stem Num 19:12 [<i>bis</i>], 19; 31:23, 24; D-stem Num 8:6, 7, 15, 21; tH-stem Num 8:7
טהור	<i>Adjective</i>	pure, clean	11	Num 5:28; 9:13; 18:11, 13; 19:9, 18, 19
טהרה	<i>Noun</i>	purification, cleanness	1	Num 6:9
טמא	<i>Verb</i>	to pollute, to defile, to become unclean	24	G-stem Num 6:12; 19:7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 16, 20, 21, 22; D-stem Num 5:3; 6:9; 19:13, 20 [<i>bis</i>]; 35:34; Num 5:13, 14 [<i>bis</i>], 20, 27, 28, 29; tH-stem Num 6:7
טמאה	<i>Noun</i>	pollution, defilement, uncleanness	2	Num 5:19; 19:13
טמא	<i>Adjective</i>	unclean, defiled, polluted	11	Num 5:2; 9:6, 7, 10; 18:15; 19:13, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22
נדה	<i>Noun</i>	set apart, menstruation	6	Num 19:9, 13, 20, 21; 31:23 (attested only as מִי־נֹדָה)
חלל	<i>Verb</i>	to profane	2	D-stem Num 18:32; H-stem Num 30:3
חנף	<i>Verb</i>	to pollute	2	H-stem Num 35:33

Table 1. (*cont.*)

Lexeme	Word Class	Translation	Frequency	Evidence
חטא	<i>Verb</i>	to sin, to purify	10	D-stem Num 19:19; tH-stem Num 8:21; 19:12, 13, 20; 31:19, 20, 23
חטאת	<i>Noun</i>	purification offering	43	see below
כפר	<i>Verb</i>	expiate, purify	16	Num 5:8; 6:11; 8:12, 19, 21; 15:25, 28; 17:11, 12

Besides the undisputed lexical clues to the semantic field of purity, purification, impurity, pollution and defilement in general, one has to consider particularly the terms חטא/חטאת on the one hand and כפר on the other hand. We cannot respond to the scholarly discussion on the חטאת-offering here at length, but some introductory considerations may be in order for understanding the particularities of the book of Numbers.

There is a growing consensus, following Jacob Milgrom's assumption that "Purification offering' is certainly the more accurate translation"² of חטאת, rather than 'sin-offering': "The function of the *ḥaṭṭa't* sacrifice... is to remove contamination (*ḥittē* means 'decontaminate'). Hence, it should be rendered 'purification offering'".³ In his study on the חטאת, Nobuyoshi Kiuchi has underlined the connection of this offering with impurity and purification. Accordingly, he admits: "It is, however, incontrovertible that the *ḥaṭṭa't* offering and possibly also the term *ḥittē* deal with uncleanness".⁴ However, the interpretation of the חטאת-offering is still debated: Instead of the traditional meaning, Kiuchi sees the primary notion of חטא as 'hiding oneself',⁵ and he acknowledges the "rationale for uncleanness... in the fall (Gen 3)".⁶ Regarding the connection to an actual sin, in the end he sticks to a psychological transformation of the 'traditional' understanding of the חטאת by addressing the level of unconsciousness. Thus, "the *ḥaṭṭa't* offering deals with uncovering the offerer before the Lord in form of a sacrificial animal being killed...".⁷ In this interpretation the uncleanness is not physical or acquired by contamination, but mainly by moral

² Milgrom, "Sin-Offering or Purification-Offering?", 237.

³ Milgrom, *Numbers*, 439.

⁴ Kiuchi, *Study*, 101.

⁵ Kiuchi, *Study*, 41.

⁶ Kiuchi, *Study*, 102.

⁷ Kiuchi, *Study*, 102.

means. In contrast to this interpretation, Jacob Milgrom has convincingly argued for an understanding of pollution of the sanctuary by the sinful, that is, polluting, deeds of men. The blood, which is applied to the altar, cleanses the sanctuary by acting as a ritual detergent.⁸ With this argumentation, Milgrom further substantiated the above-mentioned translation 'purification offering' for חטאת. He assumed two kinds of חטאת, which differ as to the place of the application rite, namely, either inside or outside the sanctuary. In his study on Leviticus, Christophe Nihan has also pointed to two types of חטאת, but he goes in a different direction:

The *first type* was typically a rite for cleansing of sancta and eliminating impurities, in which the animal's blood served as a ritual detergent and the carcass, after having absorbed impurity, was disposed of by being burnt outside the sanctuary.... This ritual was further developed by the school of P... into a proper *offering* and extended from the purification of sancta to that of *persons* by being combined with a burnt offering. The *second type* was an offering made for the atonement of (moral) offenses, possibly mostly collective rather than individual.⁹

Both types of חטאת coexist in the books of Leviticus and Numbers alike. Looking at the evidence in Numbers, we find 43 instances of חטאת. Four of them clearly use the noun in the sense of 'misconduct, sin' (Num 5:6, 7; 12:11; 16:26; 32:23) and can be left aside here because they are not connected to a sacrifice. Num 18:9, where the provisioning of the priests is outlined, is not relevant with respect to the purpose of the offering. While the חטאת is mentioned together with מנחה and אשם, it is not explicitly connected either to a purifying aspect or to moral offenses. The same is true for the thirteen instances in the consecration ceremony in Num 7, although the ceremony may be seen against the backdrop of the purgation of the newly installed altar. But the combination of offerings hints at an integration of the חטאת into the regular sacrificial system.¹⁰ The same holds true for most parts of the thirteen instances of the festival calendar in Num 28–29, where the חטאת is often combined with the עלה-offering. A חטאת as a public rite is mentioned in the cultic calendar of the New Moon festival, in Num 28:15, where it may be interpreted rather as a

⁸ Milgrom, "Two Kinds", 73. For discussion, see Gilders, "Blood", 77–83.

⁹ Nihan, *Torah*, 183–84.

¹⁰ For the discrepancies and contradictions of Num 7 vis-à-vis the sacrificial system and the assumption that the initial sacrifices were not individual sacrifices, see Milgrom, *Numbers*, 362–64.

purification offering for the sancta, as J. Milgrom suggests, following rabbinic interpretation (*m. Shevu'ot* 1:4–5).¹¹ The ‘regular’ cases of Num 6:14, 16; 15:27 are included in the following observations.

Of particular interest are the instances in which the חטאת-offering is combined with a כפר-formula, as in Num 6:11; 8:12; 15:24–25, 27–28; 28:22; 29:5, and the חטאת הכפרים, as in Num 29:11. The כפר-rite is clearly an expiation rite with purifying aspects. As Roy Gane argues, following Jay Sklar,

כפר for sin may also include an aspect of purification because sins can pollute, and כפר for impurity may also include an element of ransoming because impurity causes danger.¹²

The intentional object of the כפר-rite is usually marked by the preposition על ‘on behalf of’. However, the central reference and target of the כפר-rite is the sanctum and especially the altar, not the offerer.¹³ In the following I will comment briefly on the relevant passages for the כפר-rite in Numbers. All passages are related to purity:

a) In Num 6:11 it is the Nazirite who has defiled himself by touching a corpse unwittingly or, more accurately, who has had indirect contact within the room where a deceased human lies.¹⁴ In so doing, he or she has annulled his or her vow by profanation (literally: he has made his vow unclean נדרו טמא, v. 12). Although unintended, the encounter of the Nazirite with the dead afflicts the sanctuary and thus he/she has to offer two turtledoves or two young pigeons on the eighth day. Though it is not explicated, the temporal setting of Num 6 hints at a correspondence with Num 19:17–19, where the defiled person is purified after seven

¹¹ Cf. Milgrom, *Numbers*, 242.

¹² Gane, review of J. Sklar, *Impurity*; cf. Sklar, *Impurity*, 186–87.

¹³ Nihan, *Torah*, 178.

¹⁴ This interpretation can be substantiated by a couple of arguments: The unwitting pollution follows the general law in Num 6:7. The Nazirite shall not bury his relatives because of his vow. He may not touch any corpse. Num 6:9 starts anew with a specific case: The presence of a Nazirite in a room contaminated by death. As the death is sudden and unforeseen (see the double accent on this aspect through the phrase בפתע פתאם), the Nazirite cannot avoid pollution. According to Num 19:14, everyone who is in an enclosed space in the event of a death becomes unclean. Thus, even if the Nazirite does not touch the corpse directly, he has polluted himself through the corpse. Thus he has to follow the ritual described in Num 19:17–19. Even if he realizes the coincidence of his attendance and the time of death only later, he has sinned and thus has to offer a guilt offering (Lev 5). For the interpretation of the אשם-offering in Num 6:12, see Levine, *Numbers 1–20*, 223: “The Nazirite was regarded as a form of sacred property, for he was, after all, sacred to God”. For the interpretation of vv. 13–18, see also Gane, “Function”, 13–16.

days, following the performance of the purification rite on the third and seventh days. Thus in Num 6:11, the priest effects purification because the Nazirite has incurred guilt by reason of the corpse (literally “from that he/she has sinned because of the vitality”¹⁵ מֵאֲשֶׁר חָטָא עַל-נֶפֶשׁ); the offering of two birds ensures that the defilement will not affect the sanctuary.

b) Num 8:12 is part of the induction of the Levites, which is displayed ritually as a solemn inauguration with several different aspects: initiation, purification, compensation for Israelite firstborn, and determination of the relation between Aaronides and Levites.¹⁶ Following the plot of Num 8, the selection and purification of the Levites is described in Num 8:5–7. Because they operate in proximity to God, special purity requirements are emphasized. Moses shall purify the Levites by sprinkling the water of חֲטָאת on them (מִי עֲלֵיהֶם מִי) (חֲטָאת הַזֶּה עֲלֵיהֶם מִי). Whether this is identical with the מִי נֹדָה (ה) of Num 19 (cf. v. 9: חֲטָאת הוּא) or is a separate water of lustration is disputed.¹⁷ Both are similar in function insofar as they are used as agents of purification. In Num 8:7 there is not the merest hint of sin;¹⁸ rather, חֲטָאת here, as in Num 19:12, means purification.¹⁹ The symbolic sprinkling by the priest shall remove all possible impurities from the Levites that may hamper or separate them from contact with the holy. Verse 12 describes the ritual inauguration by offering two bulls, one as a חֲטָאת and the other as an עֹלָה, as expiation/purification on behalf of the Levites (עֲלֵיהֶם לְכַפֵּר). No certain misconduct, sin or pollution of the Levites is presumed, and following the rite in vv. 5–7 they are already pure. Thus, the כַּפֵּר-rite is related to the altar of the sanctuary rather than to the Levites personally (cf. esp. Lev 8:15, 34; 16:30). The cleansing aims at the inner relationship between YHWH and the Levites, who are singled out as his particular property. With the purgation of the sanctum from all impu-

¹⁵ For נֶפֶשׁ as vitality of the deceased rather than corpse, see below.

¹⁶ See Frevel, “dann gehören die Leviten mir”.

¹⁷ Milgrom, *Numbers*, 61; Wright, “Purification”, 215; Scharbert, *Numeri*, 38; Staubli, *Leviticus*, *Numeri*, 233 and others opt for equalization. Levine, *Numbers 1–20*, 284, has argued against it, but he acknowledges the functional analogy. Cf. the Septuagint, which translates מִי חֲטָאת in Num 8:7 as ὑδαρ ἀγνισμοῦ and מִי נֹדָה in Num 31:23 as τῷ ὑδατι τοῦ ἀγνισμοῦ (because of the following מִי חֲטָאת?) but in Num 19:9, 13, 20, 21[bis] as ὑδαρ βαντισμοῦ.

¹⁸ For a contrary appraisal, see Levine, *Numbers 1–20*, 283.

¹⁹ A further argument can be seen in the use of the tH-stem of חָטָא in the sense of ‘to purify’, which is attested in Num 8:21; 19:12, 13, 20; 31:19, 20, 23 merely in connection with the מִי חֲטָאת and the מִי נֹדָה. The verb in Num 8:21 is usually translated as ‘purifying from sin’, as in RSV, NRSV, etc. But see Milgrom, *Numbers*, 64; Levine, *Numbers 1–20*, 270: “they purified themselves”.

rities connected to the Levites, this relationship is established as pure. This line of interpretation is substantiated by the execution in Num 8:21, where the phrase *ויכפר עליהם אהרן* is followed by *לטהרם*, “on behalf of their purification” or “to purify them”.²⁰

c) In the chapter of additional commandments on sacrifices and atonement, the passage Num 15:22–31 treats inadvertent trespasses. While vv. 24–26 cover unintentional sins by the community, vv. 27–29 cover the individual case of *שגגה*-wrongdoing. The structure of the passages is similar, but the number of sacrifices differs. Both cases require a goat as purification offering, and in both cases the order is followed by a *כפר*-formula: *על הכהן* “and the priest shall make atonement on behalf of...”. Although not explicitly stated, the inadvertent sins have defiled the sanctuary. Because of their defiling impact on the sanctum, the blood ritual for purification is required for the altar. In both cases, forgiveness follows the sacrificial rite, denoted by a *w^eqatal* of *סלח* in the N-stem: *ונסלח ל* “and they/he shall be forgiven”. As Jacob Milgrom has emphasized, the forgiveness is not part of the purification ritual; rather, the *כפר*-ritual is the formal pre-condition for the mercy of God and the forgiveness of the inadvertent trespasses.²¹

d) The purification rite as part of a purification offering (*חטאת*-offering) followed by a *כפר*-formula is attested explicitly twice in the late festival calendar in Num 28–29 (Num 28:22; 29:5), which cannot be discussed here at length. Of special significance is the phrase *חטאת הכפרים* in Num 29:11, which may be translated as “the purification offering of purgation”. This is related to the Day of Atonement, as can be seen from the date and from the parallel in Exod 30:10.²²

After taking a closer look at the passages on the *כפר*-rite in Numbers, we can conclude that the *חטאת*-offering in these cases can be termed a ‘purification offering’ and that the *כפר*-rite clearly shows aspects of purgation. Notwithstanding differences in detail, the book of Numbers is part of the Priestly purity system. This is based on the physical, contagious dimension of impurities, on the one hand, and the importance of purgation for the sanctum, on the other hand. Because the impure and the

²⁰ Cf. Nihan, *Torah*, 179.

²¹ See Milgrom, *Numbers*, 123–24.

²² Cf. Levine, *Numbers 21–36*, 388–89 and for further considerations, Nihan, “Israel’s Festival Calendars”, esp. 182; 207–10, rejecting the assumption that *חטאת הכפרים* in Num 29:11 has to be regarded as an addition.

holy are antagonistic and mutually exclusive of one another, the sanctuary has to be kept free from all impurities. The most striking characteristic of this system is the violability of the sanctuary by pollutions from afar, via unatoned trespasses. Thus the תאטח-offerings mentioned above are required for expiation and purgation of the sanctum. It is most obvious that a strict separation between moral and physical impurity falls short of this cultic system. There is neither a 'pure' moral purity nor a physical impurity without any link to the ethos of a specific society and thus to a certain ethic. The levels are closely related to each other and are often intertwined. In the book of Numbers there is neither a spiritualization of purity nor an independent metaphorical use of purity outside of the cultic realm.²³ In sum: The evidence of the book of Numbers seems to corroborate the development and integration of the תאטח in the Priestly offering system but does not provide clear evidence for two separate and distinct types of תאטח or an inner diachrony. In most instances, the purifying aspect and the relatedness to the sanctum stand in the background.²⁴ The 'two types' are not clearly differentiated, and although they are related to sin in some instances, they are largely free of moral aspects.

Before progressing from the semantic aspects of purity to Num 5:1–4 as an example, I want once more to emphasize one peculiarity of the semantic system of Numbers: The verb אטח is used rarely in Exod–Num in the D-stem in the sense of 'to purify' or 'to purge', especially for the altar (Exod 29:36; Lev 8:15) but also for the purification of the contaminated house (Lev 14:49, 52) or of one who has been defiled by the realm of death (once; Num 19:19).²⁵ In contrast, the tH-stem of אטח is used *only* in the book of Numbers (Num 8:21; 19:12, 13, 20; 31:19, 20, 23). As we have seen, the verb אטח in the tH-stem in Num 8:21 has the meaning 'to purify from uncleanness' and may not have the connotation of 'sin'. The same holds true for Num 19:12–13, 20. Finally, in Num 31:19–20 אטח in the tH-stem clearly means 'to purify'. Apart from Num 8:21, all instances are related to the defilement by death that is the most important 'purity' issue in the book of Numbers (see below).

²³ This holds true for the impurity of the land in Num 35:33, although the concept of the defiling blood-guilt is a bit too complicated to deal with here at length. For some further considerations on Num 35:33–34, see below.

²⁴ See Janowski, *Sühne*, 101–2.

²⁵ Additionally, in Lev 6:19 and 9:45 the D-stem denotes the performance of a תאטח-offering.

We can summarize the considerations on the semantics of purity in the book of Numbers as follows: A wide range of purity and impurity terms is attested in the book of Numbers. There are references to physical, ritual and moral aspects but neither to a genealogical nor an 'ethnic' dimension (e.g. the 'holy seed' in Ezra 9:2) nor to a metaphorical use of purity. Only once (Num 35:33–34) is the land explicitly the object of defilement by bloodshed. This has clear moral and metaphorical aspects, but again the physical dimension stands in the foreground (see below). There is no indication of a *separate* and *distinct* moral dimension of purity. All attestations related to persons deal with the ability or inability to attend the cult or to be part of the congregation that is constituted by the presence of God in its midst. Any impurity will hinder encounters with the holy and may pollute the sanctuary. This is particularly explicit in the inauguration of the Levites in Num 8. The Levites require extensive purification before their service around and for the tabernacle (Num 1–4, cf. 9:3b). Very important is the relation between holiness and purity, pollution and the integrity of the sanctum. The aspect of purgation can be observed in the use of *הטא* and *הטאת*, especially in the use of the tH-stem of *הטת* that is found only in the book of Numbers. The book of Numbers confirms the hypothesis that *כפר* is not primarily restricted to 'atonement' as reconciliation of the sinner with God but rather constitutes the purgation of the sanctum, which would otherwise be affected permanently by the committed sins. If impurities are not purified or treated properly, their 'negative' power accumulates and defiles the sanctum from afar. If the defilement is not eliminated or absorbed ritually, the logic of the cult—that is, the presence of the life-giving God in its midst—is endangered. It must be emphasized that this conception reveals the impossibility of separating the intertwined physical and moral aspects of purity. The most relevant issue in the book of Numbers is coping with death. The realm of death is seen to contrast with the life-giving power and thus defiles the holiness of the sanctum (see on this further below).

Overall, purity is an important issue in the book of Numbers. The frequency of the total attestations, especially in Num 5, 8 and 19, reveals a density of purity vocabulary similar to that found in Lev 11–15.²⁶ Hence,

²⁶ Taking as a reference point, for example, the relation to the total number of words in each chapter, Num 19 is third in the quantitative ranking of purity-related vocabulary, directly after Lev 15 and Lev 12.

the opinion that purity issues are treated primarily in Leviticus is misleading.

Striking, however, is the restriction of purity issues to a few chapters: Although we would expect purity to be an important theme, it is absent from the organization of the camp and the order of service in Num 1–4. Yet after this section, almost every chapter up to the departure of Israel in Num 10 focuses on several purity aspects. It is remarkable that in the narrative chapters (Num 11–14; 16–17; 20–25), which are usually considered at least in part to be older than the Priestly stratum, purity is by no means absent, although it plays only a minor role. Apart from the central chapter of Num 19 (and some minor issues in Num 31:12–24 and Num 35:33–34), purity is generally less present in the second half of the book of Numbers. In sum, even though purity is an important issue throughout the whole book of Numbers, the book's structure and plot are not dominated by this theme.

The second part of this paper will focus on Num 5:1–4, its contextual integration within the book of Numbers and its relations to Leviticus. Thereby it will be possible to expand our considerations on the function of purity in Numbers and our comparison of it to the book of Leviticus. The impurity caused by corpses will receive detailed attention because it constitutes one of the most striking particularities regarding purity in the book of Numbers.

2. THE PURITY OF THE CAMP: A GENERAL ORDER IN NUMBERS 5:1–4

The book of Numbers begins with the preparation for the wilderness sojourn with the census of the people and the organization of the camp in Num 1–4. It is quite significant that purity regulations appear after the general organization of the camp. The congregation is structured as follows: the sanctuary in the very center of the camp is framed by the Aaronide priests in front of the eastern entrance and the Levites at the sides and back (South: Kehatites; North: Merarites; West: Gershonites). Around the transportable sanctuary, the campgrounds of the twelve tribes are arranged. Thus the congregation of the people of Israel is constituted as a unity in preparation for setting out (Num 10:11–28). On the one hand, we must consider the composition of Numbers as a situational adaptation of the desert migration. On the other hand, it is also the constitution of the congregation in a space with clear borders defining 'in' and 'out'. The camp may be compared to an idealized walled city with a sanctuary in its center. On a third level, the camp also signifies the land

in which the Israelites will settle (see Num 21 and 32 for Transjordan and Num 34 for Cisjordan).²⁷ On a literal level, the text addresses the specific situation in the desert, but likewise on a conceptual or metaphorical level it presents the ideal city (i.e. Jerusalem)²⁸ and the ideal land (Israel, the Promised Land). The intertwined conceptual levels represent a specific worldview that is structured on a horizontal axis by dichotomies: presence/absence, holy/profane, pure/impure, etc. (see the figure below).

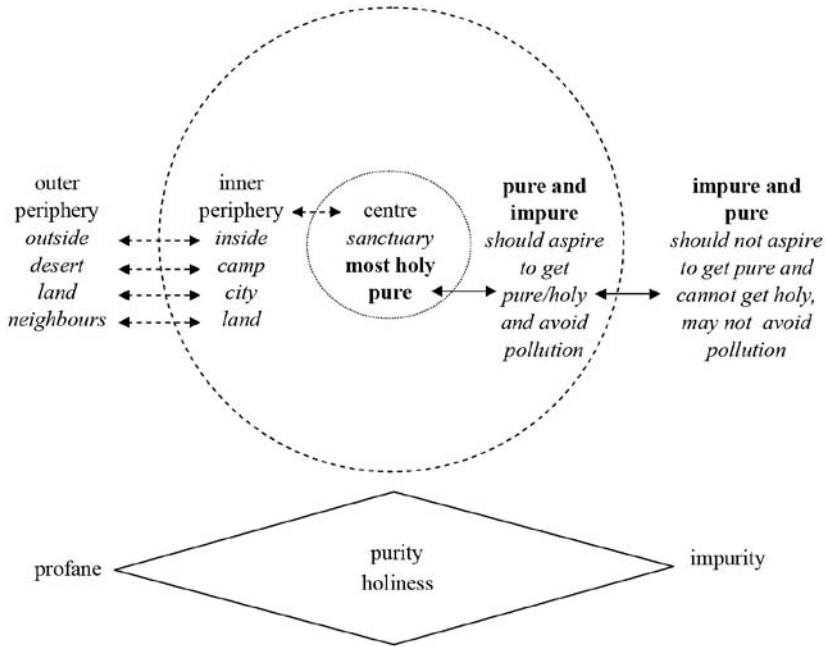


Fig. 1. Concentric Purity.

²⁷ The situation is still more complicated because the borders of the Holy Land possessed by the Israelites are an ideal rather than real. The historical background is much more likely the province of Yehûd in the late Persian period, which is presented as separate from all neighboring provinces. But the matter of this perspective is too complicated to be dealt with in this paper.

²⁸ See Achenbach, *Vollendung*, 500: "Der Text der Kapitel 5–6 wie auch die folgenden Texte sind zu lesen als Vorbilder, nach denen in Jerusalem die Grundregeln der Reinheit und der Heiligung zu beachten sein sollten".

The concentric conception of the camp, or the city or land, is highly idealized along a horizontal axis. The sanctuary lies at the center and the outer edge is the periphery. All outside borders have the same distance to the center of holiness. The sacred precinct is the most holy and pure, and the uncleanness of the periphery may endanger the purity of the center. Thus purity has a liminal function, emphasizing the borders in relation to the center. Although the whole concept is geared to the center, where the divine presence lies, the fringe and the outskirts are not inherently impure.²⁹ While the sanctuary is constitutively pure, the camp is not pure in principle or per se, because of the unavoidable uncleanness of the Israelites; therefore, the issue of purity *has* to be addressed after narratively constituting the basic arrangement of the camp.³⁰ This crucial function is assumed by Num 5:1–4, which at first glance may appear rather marginal:

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

Command the Israelites to put out of the camp

everyone with skin disease, and everyone who has discharge, and everyone who is unclean regarding a corpse.

You shall put out male and female alike, putting them outside the camp; they must not defile their camp, where I dwell among them.

*The Israelites did so, putting them outside the camp; as the Lord had spoken to Moses, so the Israelites did.*³¹

וידבר יהוה אל־משה לאמר:

צו את־בני ישראל וישלחו מן־המחנה

כל־צרוע וכל־זב וכל טמא לנפש:

מזכר עד־נקבה תשלחו

אל־מחוץ למחנה תשלחום

ולא יטמאו את־מחניהם

אשר אני שכן בתוכם:

ויעשו־כן בני ישראל

וישלחו אותם אל־מחוץ למחנה

כאשר דבר יהוה אל־משה

כן עשו בני ישראל:

²⁹ See for example Num 19:9 where a pure place (מקום טהור) exists outside the camp.

³⁰ Cf. Lee, "Conceptual Coherence", 474–76; 482–84, who strengthens the compositional link between Num 1–4 and 5:1–4 on the one hand, and on the other hand quite correctly emphasizes that purity is conceptually relevant in Num 5:1–10:10: "The concepts of divine holiness, purity or uncleanness are at best indirect unifiers of the twelve units of Num 5,1–10,10" (483).

³¹ The translations given in this text are mostly borrowed from the RSV, sometimes with slight variations.

The three cases of impurity are defined linguistically in the shortest manner possible: A general quantifier (כל) is followed by a participle or a short nominal clause. The narrative sequence in v. 4 reports the execution in a formulaic style.³² But the simple, straightforward phraseology should not obscure the fact that Num 5:1–4 is very important in a compositional respect. The newly established camp is configured as a pure enclosure that has to be kept clean for God, who is considered to be dwelling in the midst of the people (see above). Addressing purity after establishing the camp is all the more necessary because the encampment of the Israelites is likewise to be understood as a military camp,³³ which has clear inside-outside borders marked by the purity of the camp.

2.1. *The Linguistic Structure and Conception of Numbers 5:1–4*

Thus, after the arrangement of the camp and the regulations for the ministry of the Levites in Num 1–4, Num 5 starts (or, to make it clear on the conceptual level: *has* to start) with general remarks on the purity of the newly arranged camp, conveyed in a direct instruction to Moses. Moses is assigned by the Lord to command the people to keep the camp clean from (a) every leper,³⁴ (b) everyone having a discharge, and (c) everyone who is unclean through contact with the dead (כל-צרוע וכל-זב וכל טמא לנפש v. 2). The threefold case is followed by the same directive, namely to put the unclean person out of the camp (מזכר עדי-נקבה תשלחו אל-מחוז למחנה תשלחום v. 3a), that they may not defile *their* camp (ולא יטמאו את-מחניהם v. 3). This is substantiated by the dwelling of the Lord in the midst of the camp (אשר אני שכן בתוכם v. 3). The short unit is closed by a slightly expanded formulaic execution report that the people of Israel did as the Lord said to Moses (ויעשו-כן בני ישראל... כאשר דבר יהוה אל-משה כן עשו בני ישראל v. 4).

³² See Pola, *Die ursprüngliche Priesterschrift*, 124–27; 144, esp. 127.

³³ Cf. Hieke, *Unreinheit*, 50: “Das ‘Lager’ von Numeri 5 ist—kurz vor dem Aufbruch zur Wüstenwanderung—konzipiert als eine Mischung aus regulärer Wohngemeinschaft und Kriegslager... Es ist kein Kriegslager im strengen Sinn, da auch Frauen und Kinder eingeschlossen sind und die dadurch auftretenden Unreinheiten wie Menstruation und Samenerguss beim Geschlechtsverkehr nicht zum Lagerausschluss führen”.

³⁴ There is a consensus that ‘leper’, which is traditionally used to translate צרוע, denotes a person with a skin disease rather than leprosy (so-called Hansen’s disease, caused by the *Mycobacterium leprae*).

The focus of the paragraph is underlined by semantic repetitions. The term *מחנה* and the verbal phrase *שלח* (D-stem) are used four times each. The passage begins with the third person plural (*they shall put out of the camp...*; *מִן הַמַּחֲנֶה*: ‘where from’) and shifts to the second person plural (*you shall put out both male and female...*; *מִזְכֹּר עַד־נִקְבָּה*: ‘whom’, and finally *you shall put them outside the camp*; *אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה*: ‘whereto’). This is for rhetorical reasons and need not indicate diachronic development.³⁵ The unit is highly structured, as can be seen in the following figure:



Fig. 2. Structure of Numbers 5:1–4.

The core and focus is expressed at the end of the instruction, namely, the general need for the congregation to avoid *any* pollution because of the presence of the Lord in the midst of the congregation.³⁶ The ratio-

³⁵ But see Baentsch, *Numeri*, 469; Davies, *Numbers*, 44–45; Noth, *Numbers*, 46: “The double phrase in v. 3a disrupts the context by its use of the second person and is therefore shown to be an addition”. In the same way, Kellermann, *Priesterschrift*, 163–65, who considers v. 3a an addition that seeks to provide the dismissed people with protection and support: “Der Zusatz will also in zweifacher Hinsicht präzisieren. Auch für die Frau hat die Vorschrift ihre Gültigkeit; und die Reinerhaltung des Lagers ist nicht gleichbedeutend mit der brutalen Ausstoßung der Unreinen, sondern deren Platz ist in der Nähe des Lagers, vermutlich weil die Ausstoßung in den meisten Fällen befristet war”. This interpretation is by no means given in the difference between *מִן הַמַּחֲנֶה* and *אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה*, which corresponds to the difference between ‘from where’ and ‘whereto’. Thus, there are no substantial reasons to cut off v. 3a and v. 4a³⁷. The ‘Literarkritik’ of the latter, in particular, is a *petitio principii*.

³⁶ Cf. Lee, *Conceptual Coherence*, 484.

nale follows the concentric concept of graded holiness (see above). While the center is defined by the sanctuary, the outer, liminal border is the transition area from 'inside' to 'outside' the camp. The camp is depicted as having clear spatial borders that separate the center and its surroundings from the periphery. Therefore the polluted person has to be put out; otherwise the center would be defiled by the uncleanness. Significantly, the *מחנה* in the rationale in v. 3 has an enclitic personal pronoun, 'their camp'. There is no need for text-critical arguments³⁷ since the Septuagint attests the plural as well: τὰς παρεμβολὰς αὐτῶν. Rather, it seems to be a textual play on the single camp and the living places of the people (oscillating between bed and encampment). These encampments (*מחניהם*) together with the sanctuary constitute the camp (*מחנה אשר אני שכן בתוכם*) (Num 1–4) and are thus related to the holiness and purity of the center. The plural illustrates the spatial concept of the whole passage: By identifying the individual living places with the zone that is determined by the presence of the divine, the whole camp becomes affected by the holiness of the center. There is no real periphery *inside* the camp; the center pervades the surroundings all the way to the outer fringe. The camp is defined by the sanctuary and the holiness of the divine. The phrase *שכן בתוך* takes up Exod 25:8 (*ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם*) and Exod 29:45 (*ושכנתי בתוך בני ישראל והייתי להם לאלהים*). It justifies the requirement of purity with the presence of the holy expressed in the Priestly code in the Sinai pericope. Conceptually one may also compare Lev 11:44–45:

<i>For I am the LORD your God;</i>	כי אני יהוה אלהיכם
<i>consecrate yourselves therefore,</i>	והתקדשתם
<i>and be holy,</i>	והייתם קדשים
<i>for I am holy.</i>	כי קדוש אני
<i>You shall not defile yourselves...</i>	ולא תטמאו את־נפשתיכם...
<i>For I am the LORD who brought you up</i>	כי אני יהוה המעלה אתכם מארץ
<i>out of the land of Egypt,</i>	מצרים
<i>to be your God;</i>	להיות לכם לאלהים
<i>you shall therefore be holy,</i>	והייתם קדשים
<i>for I am holy.</i>	כי קדוש אני

³⁷ See for example Ashley, *Numbers*, 106, without any substantiation.

The fourfold כִּי-motivation (A “I am YHWH, your God”; B “I am holy”; A’ “I am YHWH, your savior”; B’ I am holy”) accounts for the ‘mimicry’ of the people: to be holy and, hence, to avoid defilement. Purity is the mode of encounter with the holy rather than an essential aspect of holiness. The rationale is not ‘be pure for I am pure’ but ‘be holy for I am holy’. Purity seems to be the exterior of holiness. While Lev 11 substantiates the command not to defile oneself by eating unclean animals by making an appeal to the nature of God and the derived demand to be holy, the particularity of Num 5 lies in its strong spatial conceptualization. If one replaces the camp with the land, this also holds true for Num 35:34:

<i>You shall not defile the land</i>	ולא תטמא את־הארץ
<i>in which you live,</i>	אשר אתם יושבים בה
<i>in the midst of which I dwell;</i>	אשר אני שכן בתוכה
<i>for I the LORD dwell in the midst</i>	כי אני יהוה שכן בתוך בני ישראל
<i>of the people of Israel.</i>	

As in Num 5, the requirement for purity follows from the concentric spatial concept and the centrifugal force of the holy center and the presence of the divine.³⁸ However, the focus of Num 5:1–4 is a general view on the constitution of the camp, rather than single and differentiated regulations regarding purity. Accordingly, neither the temporal limits of uncleanness nor the modes or rites to dissolve it are addressed. There are no rules of responsibility, jurisdiction, or competence regarding the attestation of impurities. The threefold כל is absolute and pretends that the cases are obvious. There is no judgment by a priest as in Lev 13–14. The passage focuses on defilement and uncleanness more generally; the precise and detailed regulations have to be commanded elsewhere (see below). Thus, purity is in a sense the ‘regulative idea’ of the camp, its organization, structure and form. The three modes of impurity are of overriding importance. They are characterized not as acts of *active* pollution but rather by the fact that immediate and virtual *contact* with them is defiling and thus endangers the whole camp. One can compare this to regulations for entering sacred areas in different cultures, which are often related to bodily defined (often gender-biased) conditions of purity.³⁹ Insofar as they are

³⁸ For further observations on Num 35:33–34, see below.

³⁹ Cf. regarding Egypt the paper of J. F. Quack in this volume; regarding Greece see the papers of L.-M. Günther and N. Robertson, with references.

applied generally in Num 5:1–4 to the camp, one can see the extension of the holiness concept of sacred space to the whole congregation. The brevity of the regulations in Num 5:1–4, without any further specification, emphasizes their relatedness to the contextual presuppositions of a) the commitment to the constitutive holiness of the community (Lev 11:44; 19:2; 20:26, et al.) and b) the graded holiness of the sacred space expanded from the inner center to the outer fringe (Num 1–4).

A further hint that Num 5:1–4 is better understood as a compositional hinge with general importance, rather than as a compendium with catechetical purpose,⁴⁰ may be seen in the lack of the natural, ‘regular’ and unavoidable impurities (the blood of menstruation, childbirth and seminal emission). These are not ominous in the same way as skin diseases, irregular discharges and defiling contact with corpses.

Rhetorically, the threefold כל in v. 2אב is underlined by the singular phrase מזכר עד־נקבה, which mentions both sexes explicitly.⁴¹ This seems essential in order to avoid the misunderstanding that the strict purity laws and the danger of defilement are only due to the fact that the מחנה is the Israelite *military camp* (Deut 23:10–15) and therefore related only to the men counted in the census (Num 1:36–45). The purity of the camp is the responsibility of the whole congregation of the בני ישראל, which comprises men, women and children, leaders and people, priests and Levites to the same degree. If the understanding of the מחנה as *military camp* was the (only) rationale of Num 5:1–4, the silence on defilement by excrement and ejaculation (Deut 23:11–14) would be much more striking.

In sum: Num 5:1–4 is the general constitution of the camp’s holiness and purity. By addressing three grave and general cases of defilement, it integrates the purity laws of Leviticus as the foundation of the congregation. The constitution of the community is essentially defined by the presence of the Holy in its center.

⁴⁰ Thus Achenbach, *Vollendung*, 501: “Ein einheitlicher, als Kompendium gedachter Text mit Beispielen für die katechetische Unterweisung des Volkes”. In contrast, in a recent article Achenbach labels the unit an episodic legend: “In einer episodischen ätiologischen Legende wird erzählt, man habe Aussätzige, Ausflussbehaftete und solche, die durch Berührung mit einem (toten) Körper... verunreinigt gewesen seien, aus dem Lager ausgeschlossen (V. 2)”; Achenbach, “Verunreinigung”, 360. This categorization underestimates the legal character and compositional function of Num 5:1–4, but see Achenbach’s appropriate considerations at the end of his article (see on this below).

⁴¹ Cf. both sexes regarding purity issues explicitly in Lev 12:5–7; 15:33. For the phrase זכר ונקבה or זכר או נקבה, cf. Gen 1:27; 5:2; 6:19; 7:3, 9, 16; Lev 3:1, 6; Deut 4:16.

2.2. *The Significance of the Three Impurity Cases Regarding Content and Context*

In a first review we will focus on the three forms of impurity separately. After that we will concentrate on defilement by corpses in particular and subsequently come back to compositional and diachronic concerns. The compositional function and the Janus face of the passage become clear when we look at the three categories of impurity:

(1) כל-צרוּע (טמא D-stem) includes all skin diseases that were ascertained as anomalies in Lev 13–14.⁴² There, the afflicted person is declared impure (טמא D-stem) by the priest. In cases of doubt or unclear diagnosis, the priest has to segregate (סגר H-stem) the afflicted (נגע) person and examine him or her again after a period of seven days. In cases that are not diagnosed as צרעת or that have healed up in the meantime, the priest declares the person pure again (טהר D-stem). Lev 14 gives directions for the cultic reintegration of the healed person. As long as a person is declared unclean (טמא), he or she must live alone outside of the camp (הוא בודד ישב מחוץ) למהנה מושבו (Lev 13:46). While Lev 13–14 gives the more detailed regulation, the isolation of the diseased outside the camp in Num 5 is in line with Lev 13–14. Num 12:10–15 is a narrative application of the law: Miriam is struck by צרעת and has to keep out of the camp for seven days. Thus Num 5:2 links Lev 13–14 and Num 12 compositionally.

(2) כל-זב includes all kinds of bodily discharge, including secretion, pus, ichor, semen and especially blood. It is striking that the discharge is neither specified nor narrowed down. Obviously, it is only understandable with Lev 15 as its background. The noun זוב and the G-stem participle זוב are used in Lev 15 frequently to designate bodily or, more precisely, male and female genital discharges that make a person temporarily unclean, so that he or she is unable to attend the cult (טמא). These defilements are uncontrolled and involuntary but not pathological;⁴³ they do not need priestly appraisal. After cleansing, the person is potentially טהר 'pure', that is, capable of attending the cult again but has to wait a further period of seven days until he or she is reintegrated into the cultic community. After washing the clothes and the body in fresh water, he or she is clean טהר

⁴² While less frequent than the noun צרעת, the G-stem passive participle is used in Lev 13:44, 45; 14:3; 22:4 to classify the צרעת-skin anomaly in a diagnostic manner ('Diagnosebezeichnung'). Exod 4:6; Lev 14:2, and Num 12:10 (and other instances outside the Torah) use the D-stem passive participle. See Seidl, "צרעת", 469–75.

⁴³ See Nihan, *Torah*, 282–83.

(Lev 15:13, 28); the priest offers a חטאת and an עולה-offering on the eighth day to reintegrate the person through ritual purification (ויכפר עליו/עליה) (Lev 15:14–15, 29–30).

The most striking difference between Num 5:2 and Lev 15 is that the unclean person with abnormal bodily discharge does *not* have to leave the camp in Leviticus.⁴⁴ He or she may live in the camp but every contact with him or her is defiling for the period of his or her uncleanness. We will focus on this difference more precisely below.

(3) Finally, כל טמא לנפש mentions uncleanness literally, in contrast to the two aforementioned cases. While כל צרוע and כל זב were made intelligible as repercussions of the taxonomies of the purity laws in Lev 11–15, the defilement by corpses is more specific. The impurity caused by dead bodies is mentioned in Leviticus, but not at the same length as are the צרוע and זב cases. This argument is valid only if כל טמא לנפש refers to dead human bodies exclusively and not to animal carcasses, which are mentioned several times in Lev 11:8, 11, 24–25, 31–40. Touching the carcass of an unclean animal is as polluting as touching a corpse. But this conception is not intended in Num 5, nor is it present at all in the book of Numbers. Taking the semantics of the Torah into account, it is quite clear that Num 5:2 covers dead human bodies only.⁴⁵ The combination of the adjective טמא with נפש introduced by the preposition ל would then express the pollution caused by the realm of death: everyone who

⁴⁴ But compare Deut 23:11–12 regarding the military camp.

⁴⁵ The texts in the Hebrew Bible are largely but not entirely consistent in differentiating between corpses and carcasses. Usually the dead person or dead body is denoted by participial forms of the root בּוּת (Gen 23:4, 6, 8; Exod 12:30; Num 17:13; 19:11, 13, 18; Deut 14:1; 26:14; 2 Sam 14:2; 2 Kgs 8:5; Job 33:20; Ps 31:13; 88:6, 11; Qoh 4:2, et al.). Except for Exod 21:34–36 where it is used for a carcass of an ox, the participle is restricted to deceased humans and corpses. It can be used to indicate the recently deceased (e.g. Ezek 44:25) as well as the long dead (e.g. Lam 3:6). עֵצֶם, which literally means ‘bone’, is used in the plural to denote a dead body or corpse (Judg 19:29; 1 Sam 31:13; 2 Sam 21:12, 13, 14; 1 Kgs 13:31; 1 Chr 10:12; Ezek 37:1, 7; Amos 2:1); the mummified body of Joseph (Gen 50:25; Exod 13:19; Jos 24:32); or skeletons that have been dead for a longer period (1 Kgs 13:2, 31; 2 Kgs 13:21; 23:14, 16, 18, 20; 2 Chr 34:5; Jer 8:1; Ezek 6:5; 37:3, 4, 5, 7, 11; cf. Job 20:11; Ps 141:7). This term is usually not used for carcasses. The same holds true for פּגַר, which is used for corpses, mostly in cases of death by force (Lev 26:30; Num 14:29, 32, 33; Isa 14:19; 37:36; Jer 41:9; Nah 3:3; 2 Kgs 19:35; פּגַרִים מוֹתִים; et al.). Apart from Gen 15:11 there is no record of פּגַר denoting a carcass. On the contrary, the *terminus technicus* נבּלָה is used for corpses and carcasses alike, but in a remarkable distribution between non-priestly and priestly texts: While in the non-priestly tradition נבּלָה is used to denote a dead human body (Deut 21:23; 28:26; Josh 8:29; 1 Kgs 13:22, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30; 2 Kgs 9:37; Ps 79:2; Isa 5:25; 26:19; Jer 7:33; 9:21; 16:4; 19:7; 26:23; 34:20; 36:30), it is used in the priestly tradition solely for animal carcasses (Lev 5:2; 7:24; 11:8, 11, 24, 25, 27, 28, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40; 17:15; 22:8; cf. Ezek 44:31). Finally, טרפָה is a term that denotes the animal carcass especially under the aspect that the death

is unclean regarding the **נפש**,⁴⁶ which means most obviously becoming unclean by touching a corpse. There are several predominantly late instances in which **נפש** is related to death or the dead: Lev 19:28; 21:1, 11; 22:4; Num 5:2; 6:11; 9:6, 7, 10, 11; 19:11, 13; Hag 2:13. Although there is a consensus that the term does not mean ‘soul’ as an entity separate from the body, there is an ongoing discussion on the semantic value of **נפש** in the above-listed instances: Does it denote ‘corpse’?

2.3. *The Conception and Logic of Defilement by Corpses*

If we look for example at Lev 19:28, **וּשְׂרַטְ לִנְפֶשׁ לֹא תִתְּנוּ בְּבָשָׂרְכֶם** “You shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead” (NRSV), and compare it to Deut 14:1, **לֹא לִמַּת תִּתְּגַדְּדוּ** “You must not lacerate yourselves... for the dead” (NRSV), **נפש** appears to be synonymous with **מוֹת**. The same holds true for Lev 21:1, which begins with the general commandment regarding the priests: **לֹא יִנְפֹשׁ לְאִי־טֹמֵא בְעַמּוֹ** “No one shall defile himself for a dead person among his relatives”. By defining different social relations that allow or prohibit defilement,⁴⁷ vv. 2–4 make clear that the funeral and the maintenance of the deceased are addressed (cf. Ezek 44:25–27). Thus it is obvious that any corpse defiles in some way, yet depending on the degree of family relation, defilement of the priest may be permitted.

of the animal was not natural (Gen 31:39; Exod 22:12, 30; Lev 7:24; 17:15; 22:8; Ezek 4:14; 44:31; Nah 2:13). In the aspect of violence, the term may be seen as analogous to **פָּגַר**.

While the living animal is addressed as **נֶפֶשׁ (ה) חַיָּה** (Gen 1:20, 21, 24, 30; 9:10, 12; Lev 11:10, etc.), the carcass of an animal is never designated as a **נֶפֶשׁ**, esp. not in the priestly tradition. Thus, it is semantically clear that Num 5:2 comprises human corpses only. This is further substantiated by the oppositional **נֶפֶשׁ (ה) אָדָם** in Num 9:6, 7; 19:11, 13.

There are some additional terms denoting a corpse or carcass that are of less relevance but should be mentioned here for the sake of completeness: **גוֹיָה**, literally ‘body’, can denote a human and an animal body alike (Gen 47:18; Neh 9:37; cf. Ezek 1:11, 23). In Judg 14:8–9 the carcass of a lion is meant, in 1 Sam 31:10, 12 the dead body of Saul (1 Chr 10:12 uses **גוֹפֵה** instead). Ps 110:6 and Nah 3:3 use the term as a synonym of **פָּגַר**, denoting dead human bodies. Finally, **מַפְלֵה** denotes a carcass in Judg 14:8.

⁴⁶ The Septuagint translates **נֶפֶשׁ** literally, as in all other relevant instances; in Num 5:2 **καὶ πάντα ἀκάθαρτον ἐπὶ ψυχῆ**. For the understanding of **ψυχή** as ‘vitality’, see Rösel, “Die Geburt der Seele in der Übersetzung”, 160–66, esp. 160: “vor allem bei Homer bezeichnet **ψυχή** die Lebenskraft des Menschen, die am Atem erkennbar ist”. Rösel wants to see traces of a conceptual shift in Lev 21:1 in the use of the exceptional plural **Ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς** instead of the singular (see further Rösel, “Der hebräische Mensch im griechischen Gewand”, 80). However, the change of the number may be influenced by Lev 21:11 and the exceptions in Lev 21:2–4.

⁴⁷ It is striking that the wife of the priest (see Lev 21:7, 13–15; Ezek 44:22) is not mentioned at all. The only reasonable conclusion is that it is permitted for a priest to bury his wife.

Very interesting in this respect are the restrictions on the high priest in Lev 21:11, where the wording differs slightly: *ועל כל-נפש מת לא יבא לאביו*: *ולאמו לא יטמא*. The NRSV translates: “He shall not go where there is a dead body; he shall not defile himself even for his father or mother”. The demand for purity is increased with the rank of the priest, because of his greater proximity to the sanctum, the holy and pure center. While every priest may defile himself in burying his close relatives, the highest priest, or High Priest, may not even defile himself in the case of parental death. He is generally warned not to approach any *נפש מת*. The phrase *נפש מת* is also attested in Num 6:6 in the law of the Nazirite, which is closely related to the purity prescriptions for the High Priest. If *נפש* were to be understood simply as a synonym of *פגר* or the like, the phrase *נפש מת* would be a pleonasm.

Because the basic meaning of *נפש* is ‘gorge’, ‘throat’, ‘desire’,⁴⁸ and the noun does express vigor and vitality, the denotation ‘corpse’ as a euphemism⁴⁹ was challenged convincingly by Diethelm Michel and Horst Seebass.⁵⁰ They argued, in contrast, that in the context of death the noun denotes the ‘human spirit’ or vitality that was dissolved in the process of dying.⁵¹ *נפש מת* (Lev 21:11; Num 6:6) means the *נפש* of the deceased rather than the death of the *נפש* or ‘dead *נפש*’.⁵² Because of the importance of this concept, some general remarks on the *נפש* should be made here: we must regard *נפש*, in essence, as the main conceptualization of ‘personality’. It comprises the actual vitality of a given person, including aspects of biography, status, individuality and performative presence. In this regard, it is never detached from the physical, mental, historical and social existence of a person. In the case of death, the aspect of physical presence diminishes and the capability for active motion decreases, but the *נפש* continues to ‘represent’ the deceased. He can still be addressed and is somehow—in a reduced form—present and part of the living world. His *נפש* abides in the Netherworld (*שאול*) during the process

⁴⁸ See Köhler and Baumgartner, “*נפש*”, 672–74.

⁴⁹ See for example Wolff, *Anthropologie*, 43; Lewis, “Dead”, 229.

⁵⁰ See Michel, “*Nēpæs* als Leichnam?” 81–84; Seebass, “*נפש*”, 531–555; Lehnart, “Leiche”. Berlejung, “Variabilität”, 294, again opts for the dead body denoting especially the corruptible parts.

⁵¹ See Kühn, *Totengedenken*, 130–34.

⁵² If *מת* is to be rendered as a masculine singular participle, it cannot be easily interpreted as an adjective modifying *נפש* because of the incongruence in gender with *נפש*, which is usually feminine. However, the numeric incongruence in Lev 21:11 conflicts with the understanding ‘a *נפש* of a deceased’.

of decomposition (Pss 16:10; 30:4; 49:16, etc.) but is at the same time not completely absent from the world of the living, because of the enduring remembrance of his former social environment.⁵³ In fact the נפש cannot act anymore, but it is nevertheless not powerless. Thus the simple contrast of either existing on earth or subsisting in a shadowy mode in the Netherworld (רפאים) is a false dichotomy. This is the background for the gradual concept of death (e.g. Ps 88). Following this fuzzy concept, one may admit that there is a *tendency* for the נפש to have a detached or dissociated existence not physically but socially. Anthropologically, the phrase נפש מת 'the נפש of the deceased' is thus most relevant in a twofold respect: There seems to be a tendency in the development of post-exilic anthropology for the holistic (synthetic, aspective, stereometric) concept of the 'person' as a psychosomatic unity to be broken up by dichotomic or trichotomic concepts, which act more or less on the assumption of a 'separate soul'.⁵⁴ The second aspect is that one may see more clearly the connection between death and defilement. It is not the dead body and its characteristics: the alienating deadness, motionlessness and the strange *rigor mortis* or the rapid process of decay. Neither does it stem from the body or the corpse itself, or from a demon or demonic capacity, as in the Persian belief.⁵⁵ Instead, the danger emerges from the vitality, presence, personality (נפש) that has gone out of the body but is not totally detached from the body. This is not exactly the conception of a spirit of the dead

⁵³ Cf. the Zoroastrian concepts of *uruan*, *daēnā* and *frauuāšī*. These components "refer not only to life, but remain relevant after death" (Hutter, "Impurity", 16); following Hutter, *frauuāšī* refers to the vitality, *uruan* to the soul and *daēnā* to the '(religious) view'. Especially relevant is the concept of *uruan*, which is not the same as the נפש-concept but which seems to be comparable: "This soul can temporarily leave the person (still alive); at the same time, it is the component of humanity, which endures after death, when spirit, mental power or vitality have ceased to exist. After death, this soul is the bearer of human thinking and feeling and must take responsibility before the otherworldly judgment seat" (Hutter, "Impurity", 17).

⁵⁴ Whether this tendency is influenced by Egyptian concepts, by early Greek philosophy or is due to an innerbiblical development should be discussed anew. If one takes into account the giving of breath in Gen 2:7 or testimonies such as Pss 49:16; 104:29; Lev 17:11; Job 11:20; 12:10; 14:22, etc., one may find the roots of a dichotomic conceptualization. Cf. Frevel, "Die Frage nach dem Menschen", 36, and Frevel, "Leben", 295–98.

⁵⁵ Following Zoroastrian conceptions, "the corpse demon (Av. Nasu-, Pahl. Nasuš, Nasrušt) was believed to rush into the body and contaminate all that came in contact with it" (Boyce, "Corpse", n.p.; cf. Hutter, "Impurity", 14; 18, who stresses the "pivotal challenge which death implicates for the bereaved... to minimize the pollution emanating from the dead body" (18, cf. 20, 25).

(Akk. *eṭemmu*,⁵⁶ Hebr. אַטִּים or more often אֹוֶב), although the similarity of the abiding נֶפֶשׁ and the spirit of the dead are irrefutable. The נֶפֶשׁ as the vital agency or vitality is displaced by the process of death, but it is not totally removed from the deceased at a certain point in time. Because it is in a way ‘out of order’, it is dangerous and thereby defiling. The נֶפֶשׁ is comparable to blood,⁵⁷ which is the substance conveying vigor and vitality and, hence—once it is emitted and thus ‘out of place’—one of the most defiling substances possible. However, the difference from blood is that נֶפֶשׁ cannot function as an agent in the cult. The purifying capacity is restricted to blood alone, because the נֶפֶשׁ is not material and is therefore impossible to comprehend as an agent in cultic or ritual acts.

In categories of time, death is not so much a single point in time as a process. In the phase of transition, the נֶפֶשׁ appears to have an endangering power that is no longer effective in the deceased but is not yet apart from the body.⁵⁸ This intermediate state, which may last until the corpse is fully decayed, explains why direct contact with the corpse, as well as contact with the realm of the deceased, is defiling. If we accept this line of argumentation, the use of נֶפֶשׁ in a defiling capacity becomes quite clear.

2.4. *Defilement by Corpses in Numbers 19*

Looking from this perspective at the main chapter on the impurity of corpses and the ritual addressing it in Num 19,⁵⁹ we may understand the logic of the two different passages concerning defilement by corpses in

⁵⁶ Following the Mesopotamian conception, a human (*awilum*) splits into two “entities” upon dying, the corpse (*pagru*), on the one hand, and the deathly ghost or spirit (Sum. GIDIM, Akk. *eṭemmu*), which descends into the Netherworld, on the other hand (cf. Loretz, “Nekromantie”, 304; Tropper, “Nekromantie”, 49–56). The *eṭemmu* is “some form of intangible, but visible and audible ‘spirit’... Normally the dead body was buried and burial allowed for the preservation and maintenance of the deceased’s identity after death and for his continued connection with both the living and the dead members of the family. Burial is crucial, for if a corpse is unburied... the dead person cannot be integrated into the structured community of the dead” (Abusch, “Etemmu”, 309).

⁵⁷ This does not mean that נֶפֶשׁ denotes the blood of the dead! Noam, “Corpse-Blood Impurity”, 249, discusses the possibility of equating נֶפֶשׁ with דָּם “blood” according to the phrase הַנֶּפֶשׁ הוּא הַדָּם in Deut 12:23, as suggested by Yadin regarding 11Q19 50:4–7. This attempt fails, as Noam has convincingly argued and as can be seen in Num 6:11, where נֶפֶשׁ is not accompanied by גִּוֹרֹת. Hence, it cannot be a synonym for blood only. Blood indeed has a defiling capacity, but it is used as a purifying agent in the cult also. Priests do not become unclean by touching blood in cultic activity.

⁵⁸ Cf. Kühn, *Totengedenken*, 134.

⁵⁹ The present paper does not aim to cover the complex ritual in detail. Num 19 consists of different parts, roughly divided as follows: the making of the ritual detergent, vv. 2–10; the general law on defilement by a corpse, vv. 11–13; specifying subsets, vv. 14–16; ritual

Num 19:11 and 19:13, 14–16. The second part of the chapter, after the making of the *מִי* (ה) *גְּדָה*, begins with a general statement (v. 11):

*The one touching a dead [body]
of any human being,
He will be unclean seven days.*

הנגע במת לכל-נפש אדם
וטמא שבעת ימים

Every contact with a corpse is defiling, without exception. This is in agreement with Lev 21:1–4, where the difference between allowed and prohibited cases of pollution through contact with a corpse was enumerated for ordinary priests. This uncleanness, which is unavoidable in cases of family funerals, epidemic plagues or theaters of war, applies to all Israelites. Without cleansing, the sanctuary will be afflicted with pollution. The difference between carcasses (Lev 11) and human corpses is accentuated by the appositional *לכל-נפש אדם*. As can be seen clearly in other attestations in Lev 24:17; 31:35, 40, 46; Ezek 27:13; 1 Chr 5:21 and also in Num 9:13, this phrase has to be understood as a priestly phrase, by analogy with the classification of *נפש חיה* (Gen 1:20, 21, 24, 30; 2:19; 9:10, 12, 15, 16; Lev 11:10, 46; Ezek 47:9), denoting a human being instead of an animal.⁶⁰ Thus, the additional phrase separates Num 19 clearly from Lev 11 and the uncleanness that is caused by carcasses.⁶¹ The latter does not need the water of lustration or a *חטא*-cleansing. The one who has touched a carcass of a clean (Lev 11:39–40) or unclean (Lev 11:8, 24–25, 27–28, 31) animal has to wash his clothes and remains unclean until the end of the day. Num 19:12 illustrates the procedure in the period of uncleanness in the ‘human’ case, which is seven times longer: The polluted person has to purify him- or herself (*חטא* tH-stem) twice, on the third and seventh days, otherwise he or she shall not be clean again. The ritual of lustration is described in vv. 17–19. It ends after seven days, in the same way as Lev 11:25, 28, 40: the defiled person has to wash his or her clothes (*כבס בגדיו*) and, additionally, him- or herself (*רחץ במים*), and he or she becomes clean at the end of the day.

of purification, vv. 17–19; additional regulations, vv. 20–21. See most recently Berlejung, “Variabilität”, 289–301 (with literature); Frevel, “Cadavres”.

⁶⁰ One can discuss whether *אדם* may be understood grammatically like *חיה* as an adjective or whether the noun is used in an adjectival sense. Be that as it may, the literal understanding of a *constructus*-relationship phrase, ‘a *נפש* of a human’, likewise resonates (see Gen 9:5 and Num 19:13).

⁶¹ From a compositional viewpoint, it is striking that the purity laws in the Torah begin with animal carcasses in Lev 11 and end with human corpses in Num 19.

The second general statement, in Num 19:13, underlines the relevance of the defilement for the sanctuary and differs significantly in its expression:

<i>Everyone who touches a dead [body]</i>	כל־הנגע במת
—a נפש of a human being who dies—	בנפש האדם אשר־ימות
<i>and who does not purify himself</i>	ולא יתחטא
<i>has defiled the tabernacle of the Lord;</i>	את־משכן יהוה טמא
<i>such a person shall be cut off from Israel.</i>	ונכרתה הנפש ההוא מ־ישראל
<i>Since the water of lustration was not</i>	כי מי נדה לא־זרק עליו
<i>dashed on him,</i>	
<i>He remains unclean; his uncleanness is</i>	טמא יהיה עוד טמאתו בו
<i>[still] on him.</i>	

As in v. 13, the difference from Lev 11 is stated explicitly by qualifying the dead as human. In contrast to v. 13, the defining **נפש**-phrase is not introduced by a ל of specification but by the repetition of the ב that marked the object of the נגע-case (במת). The determination of the noun qualifies the **נפש** explicitly as ‘a **נפש** of a human being’,⁶² which is further defined as deceased. Thus the focus shifts from **במת** to **בנפש**: the defiling and thus dangerous power is located in the **נפש** of the dead, which is related to the corpse, and not in the corpse as such. There is no restriction on direct physical contact because there is no definite location of the polluting power. Consequently, not only is touching the corpse itself defiling, but so are all objects, areas, zones and spaces in which the **נפש** of the deceased is ‘present’.⁶³ This is treated in the three following sub-sets, which are meant as examples and introduced as התורה: Dying in a tent (v. 14) stands for any enclosed and roofed space, an open vessel (v. 15) stands for any endangered object within the ‘realm’ of the dead, and ‘touching’ the **נפש** in the open field (v. 16) stands for any open space.⁶⁴

⁶² The only other instance of **נפש האדם** is Gen 9:6, where God requires a reckoning for the death of every human being.

⁶³ Maccobi convincingly argues against the analogy of ‘gas’ to describe the polluting atmosphere of a **נפש**: “Pollution was not some substance that crept around rooms. It was a state or condition of people or vessels that were situated, together with a corpse, in a certain kind of area” (Maccobi, “Tent”, 203). Hence, one should not assume from Num 19:13 that **נפש** has a certain material or physical quality.

⁶⁴ Noam, “Corpse-Blood Impurity”, 250, has recently suggested that in Num 19:16, **או בדם** should be added in the biblical text, because it seems to be presumed in the Temple Scroll 11Q19 50:4–7, the War Scroll 1QM 9:7–9a, and in a Geniza fragment of the Midrash Sifre Zuta on Num 19:11. Although the lack of blood is striking, it is methodologically

The inner logic is the spatial dimension rather than the relation to the deceased vis-à-vis degree of kinship or degree of social familiarity.⁶⁵ While the first subset defines all persons who are defiled by the נָפַח of a dead body (everyone who is inside and everyone who enters the room where a dead body is present: *direct and indirect contact*), the second makes clear that any open space is part of the intended enclosure, but a sealed space in the surroundings of a dead body is to be treated differently: “The operative principle is that the impurity present within the structure invades all of its interior air, or space, and only sealed vessels resist the impurity of the atmosphere”.⁶⁶ Since the open field in the third subset is not determinable by space and time, the contamination is restricted to direct contact. Thus the permanence of the defiling power is defined by further classification in *four* modes of touching connected by the coordinator וְ. (1) Irrespective of all circumstances, the one slain by the sword is defiling. This is crucial because there seems no escape from defilement in cases of war. Num 31:19–24 is the narrative implementation of this case.⁶⁷ (2) With the second case and the absolute form ‘the dead’ (הַמֵּת), the perspective is expanded again to all cases of death. (3) The focus on the עֲצָם אָדָם in the third case enlarges the category of defiling matter and the period of defilement. עֲצָם literally means a single bone. If a skeleton is meant, Hebrew usually uses the plural (as shown in note 45, above). Thus any human bone, especially a skeleton, is defiling. The expansion to human bones makes the defilement durable because of the long-lasting existence of bones. (4) Thus the last stage logically refers to the grave as the confined space of bones, that is, their usual abode.⁶⁸

problematic to amend the text. The assumption of a *homoioteleuton* is not convincing (cf. also the LXX, and Sam). Perhaps the lack of blood should be ascribed to its use as ritual detergent. This would require further discussion.

⁶⁵ Thus Berlejung, “Variabilität”, 297–98, who otherwise correctly stresses the reduced order of the periphery. Because people die in enclosed spaces in the city, the confrontation is not ‘the city’ against ‘the field’ but ‘the tent’ (as a roofed, enclosed space, see LXX ἐν οἰκίᾳ) and ‘the field’ as periphery.

⁶⁶ Levine, *Numbers 1–20*, 467. Instead of the inappropriate metaphor ‘gas’ (see note 63, above), Berlejung, “Variabilität”, 321, uses the metaphor of a filthy film (“Schmutzfilm”).

⁶⁷ We cannot discuss the singularities of vv. 21–23 here. See Wright, “Purification” for the differences from Num 19 and the striking supplementary content of Eleazar’s speech.

⁶⁸ Besides exceptional cases (e.g. 2 Kgs 9:37; Jer 9:21; 36:30; Ezek 39:15; Tob 1:17), human bones are not to be found in a natural or cultivated environment, because of the high estimation of the dead and burial customs in ancient societies. Thus the usual place for bones or skeletons is the grave. For the dangerous realm of graves, see the marking of the places meant as a warning against pollution in *m. Sheqalim* 1:1; 1:46; Mt 23:27. Perhaps 2 Kgs 23:6b also attests to the defiling power of graves when Josiah throws the dust of the pulverized asherah “upon the graves of the common people” to underline the irreversibility of cultic

Table 2.

<i>Matter</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Space</i>
One who has been killed by a sword	between slaughter and burial	any space
One who has died	after death until burial and beginning of decomposition	any open or enclosed space
a human bone or skeleton	during and after decomposition of the body	any open but usually enclosed space
a grave	utilization phase	a defined enclosed space

The arrangement of the four cases expands the temporal dimension of defilement from the time of death to the existence in the grave, which is an enduring 'abode'. Concurrently, the spatial dimension in which the defilement is taking place is again delimited from every place to a specific and marked one. With the grave, the defiling power is restricted to an enclosure, but it is enlarged in its temporal aspect and therefore totally disconnected from the time of death.

What appears to be an incomprehensible casuistic enhancement and accentuation of Num 19:14–16 becomes quite logical on the textual level at second glance. The realm of death and the defiling power of the נפש are durable or even everlasting. They do not end with the abiding of the spirit of the dead in the Netherworld. Body and vitality may not be figured as separate realms, even after a long period of time. The נפש has a relationship to the once-related body. This forms part of the conception of 'person' in ancient Hebrew thought.

2.5. *The Cultic and Conceptual Dimension of Impurity by Touching a Corpse*

Finally we have to consider the cultic dimension of כל טמא לנפש in Num 5:2 in particular. Conceptually, the life-giving power of the Holy and the realm of death are considered totally incompatible, just as purity is to impurity and wholeness to incompleteness. Integrity (or better, approximative integrity) is a presupposition for attending the cult. Because the encounter with death impairs this integrity temporarily, it hinders the people involved from participating in the cult at least for a certain period

use symbolically (cf. the long-term defiling capacity of bones in 2 Kgs 23:14, 16 and the defiling sacrilege of slaughter in 2 Kgs 23:20).

of time. Otherwise the power of death is polluting and defiling to the sanctuary.⁶⁹ Holiness and impurity are considered incompatible: “Since the quintessence and source of holiness resides with God, it is imperative that Israel controls the occurrence of impurity lest it impinge upon the realm of the holy God”.⁷⁰ In this context, Milgrom points to the importance of the relationship, and the opposition, between impurity and death on the one hand and the life-giving power of the cult on the other: “Of all the diachronic changes that occur in the development of Israel’s impurity laws, this clearly is the most significant: the total severance of impurity from the demonic and its reinterpretation as a symbolic system reminding Israel of its imperative to cleave to life and reject death”.⁷¹ Because impurity is contrary to life in a symbolic respect, the holy sanctum—which represents the power of life given by the resident God—has to be kept free from all uncleanness. Milgrom’s statement includes the diachronic appraisal that this system is not the earliest stage in the purity system. While it is not easy to determine the development precisely,⁷² it seems obvious that this system is represented in some later texts of the book of Leviticus and the later Priestly stages of the book of Numbers.

A first hint in this direction in the book of Numbers can be found in the law of the Nazirite, where defilement by touching a corpse is a central issue (Num 6:6–12). The vow of the Nazirite becomes invalid in case of uncleanness, even if the encounter was inadvertent and unwitting (Num 6:9). This could happen, for example, with a sudden death in the presence of the Nazirite. Because he or she is assigned to the sphere of God (הוא ליהוה v. 8), the demand for purity is as strong as for the High Priest (Lev 21:11). He or she may not even touch his or her parents in the case of their death (v. 7). Although the Nazirite is not urged to keep in proximity to the sanctuary, his or her vow creates a strong bond to God, who is connected to the sanctuary. Thus the Nazirite is required to maintain a higher degree of purity.

Further hints can be found in the specific law in Num 19: A period of seven days must elapse before cultic reintegration can take place on the eighth day, as mentioned in Num 19:11, 12, 14, 16, 19 and in Num 31:19, 24.

⁶⁹ See the comparable conception in Ezek 43:7–9, where the proximity of the king’s death in the palace is rendered unavoidably defiling to the sanctuary (see Levine, *Numbers* 1–20, 476; and the paper of Michael Konkel in this volume).

⁷⁰ Milgrom, *Numbers*, 346.

⁷¹ Milgrom, *Numbers*, 346.

⁷² See for example 2 Kgs 23:14, 16, 20; Ezek 9:7; 44:23–25; Hag 2:13–14 against Judg 20:6; 2 Kgs 13:21; Ezek 37:2; Jer 31:40.

Neither Lev 21:1–4 nor Lev 21:11 mentions temporary sanctions. The term חָלַל N-stem in v. 4 implies exclusion from all cultic functions.⁷³ The disqualification from attending the cult is addressed explicitly in the passage on the Passover in Num 9:6–12. For some men, the period of uncleanness resulting from touching a dead body (טמאים לנפש אדם אנשים אשר היו) coincides with the fixed date of the first Passover after the exodus (Num 9:1–5). They are not able to attend the festival at the proper time (ולא־יכלו) (לעשת־הפסח ביום ההוא v. 6). These men argue that they should be given the privilege of fulfilling their cultic duties: “Why must we be kept from presenting the Lord’s offering at its appointed time among the Israelites?” (למה נגרע לבלתי הקרב את־קרבן יהוה במעדו בתוך בני ישראל) (v. 7). The problem occurs because of the general obligation to celebrate the exodus annually as a perpetual ordinance (Exod 12:14, 17).⁷⁴ The Passover is established as part of Israelite identity: Foreigners (בן־נכר Exod 12:43) and uncircumcised sojourners (כל־ערל Exod 12:48, cf. Num 9:14)⁷⁵ are excluded from eating it. There is no exemption from this obligation for any Israelite (Num 9:13), but purity is required because the Passover is considered a sacrifice (קרבן). Uncleanness inhibits cultic attendance, especially the consumption of sacrifices (Lev 7:19, 21, cf. 22:4–6). The solution for the people temporarily excluded from the sacrifice is the postponement of the date of the festival until one month later (Num 9:10–12). Thus Num 9 clearly illustrates the requirement of purity in cultic affairs not only for matters of sacrifice (Lev 27:11) but for all attendees alike. Additionally, it shows that the congregation that is constituted by the celebration of the exodus is a pure community that should not be affected by any impurity.

Interestingly enough, it is not skin disease or discharge that is used as an example for discussing the degree of cultic obligation, but the impurity of touching a dead body. This underlines the centrality of this issue in the book of Numbers synchronically and likely diachronically, too.

The impurity caused by a corpse, that is, the נפש of the deceased, causes exclusion from cultic activity because the affected person is unclean. The defilement does not affect the sanctum as such, as can be seen clearly

⁷³ Cf. for the duties of priesthood Lev 21:9, 15; 22:9, and חָלַל in the sense ‘to make a vow invalid’ in Num 30:3.

⁷⁴ The phrase in Exod 12:14, 17 לדרתיכם חקת עולם is attested further in Exod 27:21; 30:21; Lev 3:17; 6:11; 7:36; 10:9; 17:7; 23:14, 21, 31, 41; 24:3; Num 10:8; 15:15; 18:23; 35:29. No other commandment is related to a cultic obligation that comprises all Israelites positively in an act that requires purity for its accomplishment.

⁷⁵ The requirement of circumcision is lacking in Num 9:14.

from Num 19:13, 20.⁷⁶ Only in the event of default is the sanctuary defiled by the uncleanness: If the polluted person is not sprinkled with the water of lustration on the third and seventh days, there is no purification and the defilement continues to affect the sanctuary. Because the pollution is serious, it also affects the sanctum from afar, without physical contact. The gravity of the transgression is marked by the definitive exclusion from the congregation (להוא מתוך הקהל Num 19:13, 20).⁷⁷

However, Num 5:2 prescribes that every unclean person (כל טמא לנפש) shall be put out of the camp. Is this in accord with the other instructions in the Torah? To answer this question, let us return to these other instances. Lev 22:4–7 is very similar to Num 5:2:

<i>No one of Aaron's offspring</i>	איש איש מזרע אהרן
<i>who has a skin disease or suffers a discharge</i>	והוא צרוע או זב
<i>may eat of the sacred donations until he is clean.</i>	בקדשים לא יאכל עד אשר יטהר
<i>Whoever touches anything made unclean by a corpse</i>	והנגע בכל-טמא-נפש
<i>or a man who has had an emission of semen,</i>	או איש אשר-תצא ממנו שכבת-זרע
<i>and whoever touches any swarming thing</i>	או איש אשר יגע בכל-שרץ
<i>by which he may be made unclean</i>	אשר יטמא-לו
<i>or any human being by whom he may be made unclean</i>	או באדם אשר יטמא-לו
<i>—whatever his uncleanness may be—</i>	לכל טמאתו
<i>the person who touches any such shall be unclean until evening</i>	נפש אשר תגע-בו וטמאה עדי-הערב
<i>and shall not eat of the sacred donations</i>	ולא יאכל מן-הקדשים
<i>unless he has washed his body in water.</i>	כי אס-רחץ בשרו במים

⁷⁶ There is no difference between את-משכן יהוה טמא in v. 13 and את-מקדש יהוה טמא in v. 20. The same holds true for the variation between מישראל and מתוך הקהל in the כרת-phrase.

⁷⁷ See the כרת-formula in Exod 12:15, 19; 30:33, 38; 31:14; Lev 7:20, 21, 25, 27; 17:4, 9, 10, 14; 18:29; 19:8; 20:3, 5, 6, 17, 18; 22:3; 23:29; Num 9:13; 15:30, 31; cf. further Num 4:18. The seriousness can be seen further in the fact that the law of Num 19 covers the Israelite and the foreigner (גר) alike as a perpetual statute (Num 19:10, 21; cf. Exod 29:9; Lev 16:29, 34; Num 10:8).

<p><i>When the sun sets he shall be clean; and afterward he may eat of the sacred donations, for they are his food.</i></p>	<p>ובא השמש וטהר ואחר יאכל מן־ הקדשים כי לחמו הוא</p>
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Again we can see stricter requirements for priests, who are explicitly not allowed to eat from the offerings not only in five cases of uncleanness caused by themselves (skin disease, discharge, touching a corpse, seminal flow, touching a swarming thing) but in every case of secondary uncleanness caused by touching an unclean person. This latter is explicitly independent of the type of uncleanness. The secondary pollution causes a period of uncleanness until the evening. The duration of cases of direct uncleanness is not stated; only the newly achieved pure state is mentioned as a qualification. Nor is it explicitly stated whether the priest has to remain outside the camp in the relevant cases of skin disease, discharge or pollution by a corpse, although we cannot exclude that this is implied. Thus we cannot adjudicate on the question of whether the person has to leave the camp. The same holds true for Lev 21:1–4 because the חלל-state of priesthood does not imply segregation from the community. But again we cannot judge whether the priest also has to leave the camp if he has made himself unclean by touching a corpse.

The above-discussed narrative of the deferral of the Passover seems to be more explicit. The men come to Moses and Aaron (ויקרבו לפני משה ולפני אהרן Num 9:6) and make their plea. Jacob Milgrom has argued that the phrase קרב לפני is intentionally used instead of קרב אל:

The use of *lifnei*, 'before,' instead of 'el, 'to,' with the verb *karav* is deliberate, indicating proximity but not contact. It is used whenever ritual or etiquette requires one to keep one's distance, for example, women before communal leaders (27:2; Josh 17:4), lay Israelites before God (e.g. Exod 16:9), or, as here, contaminated persons before Moses.⁷⁸

The statistical base is too small to decide whether this apparent tendency is being interpreted correctly. Whatever the case, the persons face Moses and Aaron, and it is not stated explicitly that the leaders (as in Num 31:13) have moved outside the camp. Thus it appears that the application of Num 19 in Num 9 is not acquainted with Num 5:2: the defiled

⁷⁸ Milgrom, *Numbers*, 68.

persons may be inside the camp. If we look at Num 19, there is only a slight indication that the person who is polluted by a corpse should leave the camp. The red heifer is slaughtered outside of the camp (Num 19:3, 7), and the ashes of the burnt heifer are deposited outside the camp in a clean place. But nothing is said about the whereabouts of the unclean persons on which the water of lustration is sprinkled on the third and seventh days (Num 19:11–22). However, the warriors who have been defiled in the Midianite War explicitly have to keep outside the camp for seven days, in accordance with Num 19:11 (Num 31:19–24).⁷⁹ This is a strong indication that the (military) camp is imagined as a pure place, and this conception accords with Num 5:1–4. Although there is need of further substantiation, we may dare to assume that Num 31:19–24 may be preceded by Num 5 diachronically.⁸⁰

2.6. *Further Compositional Considerations on Numbers 5:1–4*

The formulation טמא לנפש was incomprehensible without either recourse to Lev 21:1, 11; 22:4 or the anticipation of Num 9:6–10 and Num 19. By encompassing the whole congregation rather than the priests only, Num 5:2 offers a more general formulation and therefore presumes the general law in Num 19 as its setting. By accentuating the fact that the defiled person has to leave the camp, Num 5:2 is more advanced and goes further than the general law in Num 19, where no such exclusion is ordained. With the link to Num 31:19–24, the horizon of Num 5:2 reaches beyond Num 19 and comprises most of the migratory campaign, up to the allocation of Transjordan in Num 32. Num 19 is the central chapter on purity from corpse contamination and at first glance it seems to be isolated from the central Pentateuchal laws and especially the Sinaitic purity laws. Its compositional location may be influenced by the narrative of Num 16–17, as is often argued, and the ‘digression’ of Num 18 is not the strongest argument against this hypothesis: The priests are the only ones who may enter the taboo zone without endangering themselves.⁸¹ Be that as it may, it is striking that compositionally, Num 19 is the last great

⁷⁹ The narrative of Tobit’s engagement in burying a person strangled in the marketplace gives a further hint: After the burial, Tobit spends the night outside his own house, in the courtyard, *because of the defilement* (μεμιαμμένος, only in G I).

⁸⁰ See Seebass, *Numeri*, 292, 306; Achenbach, *Vollendung*, 615–22.

⁸¹ See Frevel, *Numeri*, 257, 261. For rejecting Num 20 as the compositional anchor, see Achenbach, “Verunreinigung”, 362.

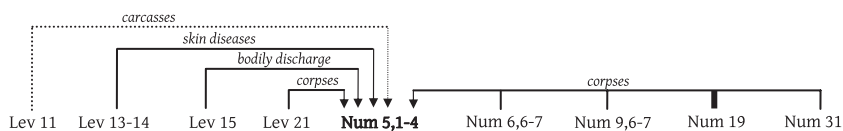


Fig. 3. Compositional Hinge.

chapter on purity issues in the Torah, while Lev 11 is the first one. Lev 11 (impurity by carcasses) and Num 19 (impurity by corpses) are clearly related to each other by theme.⁸² This is not by chance, as can be seen in the framing relationship of Lev 10:1–8 (sin of Aaron’s sons) and Num 20:1–13 (‘sin’ of Aaron and Moses).⁸³ The purity laws in Leviticus *and* Numbers are arranged intentionally. However, Num 19 remains textually ‘afar’ from Lev 11–15.⁸⁴ Compositionally, Num 5:1–4 bridges the gap by setting the purity agenda for the camp. On the one hand, Num 19 is introduced as the general law that makes the *שפוט לנפש* comprehensible; on the other hand, Num 5:1–4 forms a link to the priestly agenda in Lev 21 regarding defilement by corpses.

Hence, on a diachronic level it is obvious that Num 5:1–4 presumes not only Num 19 and a certain compositional form of the book of Numbers but also some form of Lev 11–15 *and* the Holiness Code alike. To be more precise, there are several hints demonstrating that Num 5:1–4 is part of a composition that has most parts of the books of Leviticus and Numbers in its background. This may be called a late Priestly Pentateuchal composition, the final redaction, R^p or the like. The argument can be further substantiated by some remarks on the compositional link between Lev 11–15 and Num 5:1–4.

Usually Num 5:2 is evaluated as an accentuation of Lev 15. Diachronically this intensification is considered to be an argument for the relatively late date of Num 5:1–4. Thus for example D. Kellermann: “Die verschärfende Ergänzung der Bestimmungen von Lev 15 läßt den Schluß zu, daß Num

⁸² The reception of Num 19 in the Temple Scroll 11Q19 is aware of the close relation. For this see Berlejung, “Variabilität”, 301–2.

⁸³ Lev 10 is closely related to Num 19; see Jürgens, *Heiligkeit*, 283. Note in addition the use of *שקדק* in Lev 10:3 and Num 20:13, which is regarded as putatively peculiar in both cases. For the compositional link to Lev 22:32, see Achenbach, *Vollendung*, 316–17; Nihan, *Torah*, 25, and below. Regarding Lev 10:10 see below.

⁸⁴ The horizon of this concept of legislation goes beyond Sinai. Moses as revealing agent, Aaron and Eleazar as cultic representatives and the orientation towards the (portable) sanctuary and its cult are more important in this late compositional stage than is the fixation on Sinai as the preferred place of God’s revelation.

5,2 jünger als Lev 15 ist".⁸⁵ Very interesting in this regard is the concluding admonition before the general subscript in Lev 15:32–33, in v. 31:

<i>Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate</i>	והזרתם את־בני־ישראל
<i>from their uncleanness,</i>	מטמאתם
<i>lest they die in their uncleanness</i>	ולא ימתו בטמאתם
<i>by defiling my tabernacle</i>	בטמאם את־משכני
<i>that is in their midst</i>	אשר בתוכם

On the textual level, Moses and Aaron are addressed, as Lev 15:1–2a makes clear. Thus the specific regulations of ch. 15 are framed by the exhortation just before the chapter closes with the general subscript or colophon. The focus is emphasized by the threefold use of טמאה 'uncleanness'. Verse 31 gives a rationale for the commandments of the whole chapter: The uncleanness endangers the Israelites by polluting the sanctuary if it is not removed. The defiled Israelites will die (ימתו) because of the defilement of *his* sanctuary.⁸⁶ There is no explicit divine agency mentioned in the killing, but there can be no doubt that God is involved, as in Exod 28:35, 43; 30:20; Lev 10:2, 6, 7; 16:2, 13; Num 1:51; 3:4; 17:28; 18:22, etc. Jacob Milgrom is right in pointing to the כרת-formula in Num 19:13.⁸⁷ Everyone who has touched a corpse and who has not purified himself with the *water for impurity* (מי נדה) (usually translated as 'water of impurity') shall be cut off from Israel (ונכרתה הנפש ההוא מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל) because he has defiled the sanctuary (את־משכן יהוה טמא). Here in Lev 15:31 the danger of death concerns all Israel, not only those who have failed to react to their pollution.

It is remarkable that the temporary and thus minor pollution from bodily discharges also defiles the sanctuary, if it is not treated adequately. Purity is a serious matter for the system of the Sinaitic world that is constituted by the sanctuary and the divine presence. Therefore, Moses and Aaron must separate the people from their uncleanness. The unusual H-stem of the verb נזר in v. 31 is difficult to interpret. Following the Septuagint (καὶ εὐλαβεῖς ποιήσετε), the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Peshitta, it is often

⁸⁵ Kellermann, *Priesterschrift*, 163.

⁸⁶ For the משכן with enclitic personal pronoun, the only other instance in the Torah is Lev 26:11. Thus, Knohl, *Sanctuary*, 70, ascribes it to the Holiness School. Cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 946–47.

⁸⁷ See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 945–46.

altered to the H-stem of זָהַר 'to admonish'.⁸⁸ If one keeps the Masoretic נָזַר, the most probable meaning is that the priest sets the people apart from their uncleanness.⁸⁹ This may be interpreted as the admonishing function of the priests, as Jacob Milgrom has suggested:

We find that the imperative (*dabbērû*) in the plural, ostensibly addressed to Moses and Aaron (v. 2), is actually aimed at the priests whose perpetual function is to separate Israel from impurity (Lev 10:10; Saadia), that is, to teach the Israelites (10:11; Ezek 44:23) to abstain from impurity and to purify them when it occurs lest they bring about the pollution of the Sanctuary.⁹⁰

Although this is one possibility, the difference from Lev 10:10, where בָּדַל in the H-stem means 'to distinguish', is striking. Thus, the other possibility may be to separate the people (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) from the uncleanness amongst them by dissociating the unclean persons. In both lines of interpretation, Lev 15:31 is not so far away from Num 5:2.

Lev 15:31 is commonly considered an addition to the 'priestly' material in Lev 15.⁹¹ This is further substantiated by the compositional function of the verse. It is remarkable that the same structure of 'relevant specifications—concluding admonition focusing on purity—subscript' can be found in the chapter on unclean animals, Lev 11. Lev 11:43–45 motivates the Israelites just after the taxonomy, underlining the relation between purity and holiness. The Israelites shall not make themselves abominable (וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ בָהֶם וְנִטְמַתֶּם) (אל-תשקצו) (v. 43)⁹² by the unclean animals⁹³ (בָּם). The rationale is the holiness of the Lord and his salvific deeds for Israel. The twofold כי אֲנִי יְהוָה in vv. 44–45 is followed each time by the exhortation וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי. There is little doubt that this wording resembles H in Lev 20:25–26. Christophe Nihan has convincingly argued that Lev 11:44–45 belongs to a larger framework:

The interpolation of v. 43–45 serves evidently to prepare for 20:25–26a, where Israel's holiness is also made dependent on observing the distinction between pure and impure animals... Moreover... the reference to 11:43–45—and more generally, of course, to the *tôrâ* of Lev 11—in 20:22–26,

⁸⁸ For introducing the object with the preposition בֵּן, see Ezek 33:8, 9.

⁸⁹ Cf. Lev 22:2. Literally, Moses and Aaron are addressed, but notice the associative realm of the priest and his duty in הִכָּהֵן in Lev 15:30.

⁹⁰ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 945; cf. Nihan, *Torah*, 283.

⁹¹ See, e.g., Elliger, *Leviticus*, 196; Kellermann, *Priesterschrift*, 63; Nihan, *Torah*, 282–83, and above, note 86.

⁹² שִׁקְצָא was a "Leitwort" in Lev 11 in vv. 10, 11, 12, 13, 20, 23, 41, 42.

⁹³ שִׁקְצָא was addressed in vv. 29, 31, 41, 42 and stands *pars pro toto* for the whole taxonomy.

the conclusion to the collection of Lev 18–20 (see the parallel with Lev 18:2–5), builds a great inclusion around Lev 11–20. It identifies these chapters as forming a distinct section on the purity of the *community* as a whole, since the section immediately following, Lev 21–22, is primarily concerned with the purity of the *priests* specifically.⁹⁴

While there is a link between the motivation clauses of Lev 15:31 and Lev 11:43–45 regarding the analogous function, we must mention the link to Lev 16:16 in relation to the content. Both verses are constrained by the centripetal concept of the camp and both stress the existence of the sanctuary in its midst as endangered by the impurities of the Israelites. In the ritual of the ‘Day of Purification’, the sanctuary shall be cleansed from all impurities of the Israelites (עַל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִטְמֵאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל v. 16a) by Aaron. “He shall do so for the tent of meeting, which remains with them in the midst of their uncleanness” (וְכֵן יַעֲשֶׂה לְאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד הַשֶּׁכֶן אִתְּכֶם בְּתוֹךְ) (טְמֵאתֶם v. 16b).⁹⁵ As Jacob Milgrom has convincingly argued, the ritual in Lev 16 addresses all kinds of pollutions of the sanctum, which have not been dealt with in other rituals and which have accumulated during the past year.⁹⁶

Accordingly, the motive clause in Lev 15:31 has a double horizon: on the one hand it closes Lev 11–15, and on the other hand it links them with Lev 10 and Lev 16, as Nihan has argued:

It connects the legislation in Lev 11–15 with the episode of the death of Aaron’s sons in Lev 10 and with the ceremony of ch. 16, where a similar statement concerning Yahweh’s sanctuary residing ‘in the midst’ of Israel’s impurities is found (see 16:16b). The request to ‘separate’... ‘the Israelites from their impurities’ makes perfect sense after 10:10–11.⁹⁷

This concept parallels Num 5:1–4. Therefore, it seems probable diachronically that Num 5:1–4 either presumes or parallels Lev 15:31, which should be assigned “to the book’s final editor”.⁹⁸

The bridging function of Num 5:1–4 within the book of Numbers is further substantiated by the phrase אָנֹכִי שֹׁכֵן בְּתוֹךְ, which appears almost exactly in Num 35:34 *and there only*. Num 35:33–34 treats the pollution of the land by bloodguilt and is the final purity topic in the book of Numbers!⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Nihan, *Torah*, 299.

⁹⁵ Cf. Nihan, *Torah*, 96.

⁹⁶ Milgrom, *Studies*, 75–84; *Leviticus 1–16*, 1033–34.

⁹⁷ Nihan, *Torah*, 283.

⁹⁸ Nihan, *Torah*, 283.

⁹⁹ The conception of the defilement of the *land* is attested in the book of Numbers in Num 35:34 only. But see Lev 18:25, 27; Deut 21:23; Josh 22:19; Jer 2:7; Ezek 36:17–18; Amos 7:17 (אֲדָמָה); cf. further Ezra 9:11; Ps 106:38–39; Zech 13:2.

The motivation in v. 34 is striking because it mentions the Lord living in the land twice: “You shall not defile the land (ולא תטמא את־הארץ) in which you (plural!) live, in which I live (אשר אני שכן בתוכה), for I the Lord dwell among the Israelites (כי אני יהוה שכן בתוך בני ישראל)”. The conception parallels the expansion of the required purity to the whole living space in Num 5. Since Num 35 is related to the Israelites’ living in the land, the pure ‘enclosure’ is consequently the whole land rather than the camp of the Israelites.¹⁰⁰

The *כי אני יהוה* motivation relates to the Holiness Code and especially Exod 29:46, where the formula is connected with the living of the Lord as well.¹⁰¹ Thus, there can be no doubt that Num 35:34 has a compositional function in the Torah.¹⁰² By resuming Num 5:2 and the combination of *טמא* with the dwelling of the Lord, which is unique in the Torah,¹⁰³ the relation between the beginning and the end of purity issues in the book of Numbers seems to be intentional.¹⁰⁴

Hence, Num 5:1–4 is a late and very dense text that brings the final composition and theology of the book of Leviticus into the concept of the book of Numbers. The congregation is regarded as holy and therefore must remain pure. With Num 5:1–4 the borders of purity and the borders of the holy enclosure are enlarged from the sanctuary to the whole camp. This is comparable to the conception of the holy city in Ezra and Nehemiah, where Jerusalem and the temple are identified by strengthening the outer borders.

In sum: Num 5:1–4 is a very late compositional bridge between the book of Leviticus on the one hand and the book of Numbers on the other. It links the purity conception of the book of Numbers with the final edition of the book of Leviticus. It is probably to be dated in the late Persian period. This

¹⁰⁰ In this respect one can agree with Seebass, who regards Num 35:33–34 as an indication “that the land Israel lived in was thought of as holy” (*Holy’ Land*, 99), although the land is not explicitly addressed as holy.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Seebass, *Numeri*, 447.

¹⁰² See further the link to Gen 9:5–6.

¹⁰³ The only other instances of the combination of *שכן* with *טמא* are Josh 22:19 and, slightly differently, Ezek 43:7.

¹⁰⁴ Whether the phrase *אשר אני שכן בתוכה* in Num 35:34 is a redactional intrusion of the author of Num 5:1–4 or whether both should be attributed to the same hand at all is difficult to decide because Num 35 is already a very late text as such. See Barmash, “The Narrative Quandary”, 1–16, 7–8, for attributing v. 34 to H; More appropriately, Seebass, *Numeri*, 436: “Man muß nicht einen Redaktor H bemühen, um 35,34 zu erklären, da 9–34 insgesamt wohl ein recht später Text ist”. Achenbach, *Vollendung*, 598, attributes v. 34 to the first theocratic edition of the book of Numbers: “Das Prinzip Num 35,34 schließt die Tora des ThB I ab”.

becomes clearer with the emphasis on the impurity of corpses, which is also a major focus of Early Greek and Zoroastrian religion.¹⁰⁵

2.7. *Evaluating the 'Intensified' Purity Restrictions in Numbers 5:1-4*

We have demonstrated above that Num 5:1-4 has picked up given purity conceptions from Leviticus and Numbers in a dense and abbreviated manner. The short phrases in Num 5:2 were incomprehensible without their intertexts in Lev 11-15; 21; Num 19 and others in mind. The composition was intended to constitute the congregation of all Israel as pure and holy. Purity was displayed as the 'regulative idea' of the camp, its organization, structure and form. The camp as the living place of this community was configured to be pure. The pure camp created a segregated entity with clear-cut outer borders. The text of Num 5:1-4 was created for this particular context in order to formulate a specific vision of the relation of the whole congregation to the center. Its function was not to give justifiable, individual commandments on purity issues in detail but to include a general sketch of the given purity laws. From this angle it seems inappropriate to compare the three single cases in detail with their hypotexts and to weigh the differences as tensions.

The main and often-discussed singularity of Num 5:1-4 is the expulsion of impure persons from the camp, which does not conform to Lev 11; 15 and Num 19 but which is in accordance with Lev 13-14: While the unclean person with a discharge and the person who was defiled by a corpse do not have to leave the camp, the person with צִרְוֹעַ-skin disease does. It seems that all the cases in Num 5:2 were subordinated under this legislation in accordance with the concept of a camp that must avoid any defilement of the sanctuary. The rationale can be found not in an intentional accentuation of the laws of Lev 11 and Num 19 but rather in the general concept of expanding the borders of holiness and purity to the whole camp. This concept is developed from the composition of the Priestly texts in Exodus and Leviticus, especially the Holiness Code, and has its parallels in Ezra and Nehemiah: The camp and the sanctuary, which stand in for the temple and the city, are conceptualized as a unity set apart clearly from the outside.¹⁰⁶ Following the logic of the sanctuary in the midst of the congrega-

¹⁰⁵ See Achenbach, *Vollendung*, 502-3; Achenbach, "Verunreinigung", 364-66; Hutter, "Impurity", 15-20; Frevel, "Cadavres".

¹⁰⁶ See Olyan, "Purity Ideology"; Blenkinsopp, *Judaism*, 196-204.

tion and the logic of the camp in Exod 29–Num 4, the segregating aspect is intensified in Num 5:1–4.

Besides the issue of exclusion from the camp, it is often argued that the case of defilement from a corpse, in particular, means an enhancement if compared to Leviticus because there it is addressed to priests alone. Thus it is argued that the book of Numbers expands regulations related to priests to the whole community. On the one hand, this would be in line with Ezra and Nehemiah and would fit the general tendency we have discussed, but it seems on the other hand to reveal a methodological shortcoming. The argument is valid only if we evaluate Leviticus and Numbers as distinct textual units that function separately. According to this theory, the book of Numbers is implicitly subordinated diachronically and the legislation of the book of Leviticus is regarded as complete. But if one sees, for example, the Priestly legislation on touching a dead person in Lev 21 as due to the inner logic of the final composition of Leviticus, one need not be astonished to find regulations for the whole congregation elsewhere. The compositional considerations above, which have suggested a systematic alignment of purity issues in the Torah, point in another direction: the intentional ordering of purity texts in the final stage of the Torah's composition. While the tendency of the argument may be correct, it is not at all convincing to date Num 5; 6; 9; and 19 altogether later than Lev 21:1–4. The development and "Fortschreibung" of Priestly texts must be considered more complex than models of P^G and P^S or P and H suggest. Any explanation has to take into account that the texts in Numbers are obviously part of the Priestly legislation and are involved in the same editorial processes. Thus we must be cautious with our *general* conclusions. However, tentatively, the specific case of defilement by a corpse seems to be a late topic in the development of the Torah, which was accentuated especially in the book of Numbers.

In sum, we should be cautious in claiming an intensification of purity concepts in the book of Numbers. Num 5:1–4 have their own intrinsic logic and are not meant as mere expansions of the purity concepts of Lev 11–26. In fact, they should be understood in a sense as embodying the application of the regulations in Lev 11–26 and Num 6; 9 and 19. Before deciding the issue in this way, however, we need further specification of the hermeneutical principles of the Torah as text *and* law. As long as we regard Num 5:1–4 as a conceptual hinge bridging Leviticus and Numbers, we may see the regulations as text rather than as law.

3. SUMMARY

This paper has shed light on purity conceptions in the book of Numbers. It has demonstrated that purity is an important issue in the composition, structure and concepts of Numbers, based on the spatial and centripetal conception of the sanctuary and the camp. The opposition between the life-giving center as constitutive of the whole system and the realm of death as endangering the balance of cohabitation has gained special importance in the book of Numbers. In the second part of the paper, Num 5:1–4 was shown to be a central purity text in the book of Numbers; it is a late text deliberately composed to occupy its present position after the constitution of the camp and as a prelude to Num 5–10 and (the accomplishment of) the initiation of the Sinaitic cult before the departure from the Sinai desert.¹⁰⁷ The text has been shown to be clearly related to several texts in the books of Leviticus and Numbers. It was seen to be part of the constitution of the congregation on the one hand and a compositional link between Leviticus and Numbers on the other. In Num 5:1–4 the camp of Israel was conceptualized as a pure living-space steeped in the holiness and presence of the living God in its midst. The three cases of skin disease, bodily discharge and defilement by corpses are purposefully selected as paradigmatic pollutions, and the system of exclusion is comprehensible within the Priestly system of graded holiness. By defining the congregation as holy and closely related to the center, the requirement of purity occurs as a precondition for the cohabitation of the divine and the people.

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¹⁰⁷ Frevel, "Levitikus und Numeri", 35–74.

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PURITY CONCEPTIONS IN DEUTERONOMY

Udo Rüterswörden

This paper consists of three parts. Part one works through the evidence for purity and impurity in Deuteronomy; in part two I present a thesis by M. Weinfeld; part three concerns the verification of this thesis along with a few conclusions.

1. THE EVIDENCE IN DEUTERONOMY

My treatment of the topic of purity is based upon a very simple distinction: the observation of purity can either have its roots in a conventional type of behavior or it can constitute the conceptual pivot for the theology of an author or an editor. Even if we do not grant 'purity' such a central position in an author's conceptual universe, we can assume that he would nevertheless respect conventional concepts of purity during his participation in the cult.

The lexemes 'pure' and 'impure' occur as the word pair **הטמא והטהור** ('the impure and the pure') in Deut 12:15, 22; 15:22. All three cases are concerned with the consumption of meat.

The two examples in Deut 12 are connected to the centralization of the cult at the one place that Yahweh will choose for himself. Because meat was usually eaten at sacrificial feasts, it would have been necessary to travel to the central sanctuary in order to roast any joint of meat. Deuteronomy makes logical provision for this in ch. 12 by introducing the non-cultic slaughter of animals, also called 'profane slaughter'. This kind of slaughter does not require participants at the meal to be pure. In this case, Deuteronomy is thinking analogically: the same rules of behavior are required as for hunting—wild animals may be eaten but not sacrificed, thus making them available for non-cultic consumption. The inner-Old Testamental debate was sparked by precisely this point, namely, the question of whether such an analogy could be made with *sacrificial* animals.

Deuteronomy answered in the affirmative with the phrase, "the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as they would of gazelle or deer". This formulation occurs in all three examples, except that Deut 15:22 is not concerned with profane slaughter in general but with a special regulation concerning

the consumption of first-born cows and sheep that have a physical defect and as such cannot be sacrificed.

This case, too, is concerned with profane slaughter, and as such the purity regulations of the sacrificial cult do not need to be observed.

Now, the pair ‘the impure and the pure’ permits a number of logical conclusions or relevant questions:

Are there events in which only the pure are allowed to take part, the impure being barred? One might assume that only the pure would be allowed to participate in the sacrificial cult, which has so many feasts. Yet Deuteronomy does not say that. Does this have to do with its character as a “mediated divine instruction to the laity”, as G. von Rad had it?¹ Yet even a layperson could have been given a tip or two about how a normal Israelite ought to behave on cultic occasions. In this context, however, this is assumed as conventional behavior, rather than something specifically prescribed.

The second question in relation to our pair ‘the impure and the pure’ is connected to this: Are there animals that neither are allowed to eat? This question is answered in Deut 14, which presents dietary regulations. The prohibition to eat blood plays an important role in this context—animals must be ritually slaughtered (Deut 12:16, 23ff.). What happens to animals that have died before they could be ritually slaughtered? These may not be eaten at all. Deut 14:21, however, brings another distinction into perspective: Foreigners may eat of them. This means that the concepts of purity, as rudimentary as they appear when one reads between the lines of Deuteronomy, are only for the members of Israel. We will return to this point.

‘Purity’ as a characteristic of people also appears in the rules concerning the military camp in which God is present. What consequences does God’s presence have for an individual soldier? In 1901, Friedrich Schwally formulated his answer in an extremely militaristic manner:

War is a continuation and intensification of the sacrificial cult. The camp, in the midst of which was the sanctuary, or rather, the dwelling of the deity (Num 5:3), was in general considered to be the location of this cult.²

This equation, in which war and cult correspond to each other, cannot be applied to Deuteronomy: The sacrificial cult can only take place in the

¹ Von Rad, “Deuteronomium–Studien”, 110.

² Schwally, *Der heilige Krieg*, 59.

central sanctuary, not outside on the (battle) field. If we take into account those in Deut 20 who are exempted from military service, we come to the conclusion that a military campaign is an event conceived for only a few men of advanced years. Deut 20 has no place for the concept of an unauthorized war of conquest and introduces a martial law in v. 19, a prohibition against chopping down the enemy's trees, which limits the consequences of war. There is hardly a more pacifistic military law than that of Deuteronomy. As a result, the concept of peace also occupies a notable position (v. 11).

According to Deuteronomy, Israel's military success is based not upon its own strength but upon the fact that Yahweh is in its midst and fights for it. His presence, however, is not of a cultic nature. The priests in Deut 20:2 appear in a passage with a plural addressee and as such do not belong to the original body of the military law found there.

Yet even if God is present in a non-cultic manner, this presence still requires purity on the part of the soldiers. What are the implications for them?

The only case that is explicitly mentioned in relation to this is designated in Deut 23:11–12 with the discrete phrase *מקרה-לילה* 'an event in the night'. The result of this event is that the soldier loses his purity and must leave the camp. His original state may be restored by means of an evening bath. This means that Deuteronomy knows precisely what the appropriate measures are for dealing with impurity. A comparable regulation can be found in Num 5:1–4, but the justification for the rule found there does not occur in Deuteronomy: *ולא יטמאו את-מחניהם אשר אני שכן בתוכם*. The idea that a place or land can be made impure is alien to Deuteronomy; humans and animals may be pure or impure, but not a place or a country. This is made clear as Deut 23:13ff. continues. The issue is the installation of toilets outside the military camp. Although *מחנה* can have a local aspect (v. 13), it usually stands metonymically for the sum of the gathered soldiers. The holiness of the camp is defined in terms of the status of the soldiers, as v. 15 makes clear: *ולא-יראה בך ערות דבר*.³ The use of *בך* makes clear that a collective is addressed. This means that improper conduct or the nakedness of a soldier are to be avoided in God's presence—one does not show one's bottom to the Lord. It is striking that only

³ Houston's comment that "it would appear that the holiness of the camp, if not of the people themselves, is threatened by impurity" cannot, therefore, be sustained and so does not speak against Weinfeld's thesis. Cf. Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, 225.

Deuteronomy has such a regulation. According to the Priestly Document and the Holiness Code, one's normal metabolism cannot make one impure, although Paschen draws our attention to the use of language:

In this way, the Deuteronomic text confirms that which is missing in the Priestly tradition: Originally, excrement was not assigned to the area of physically conditioned impurity, regardless of how one explains the measures prescribed in Deut 23:13f. It was presumably the Deuteronomic editor who first expanded the concept of impurity, though it should be noted that he does not apply impurity terminology to going to the toilet.⁴

In Deut 14:11 and 20 even birds that may be eaten are 'pure'. Perhaps this is an abbreviated phrase that can be clarified by comparing it to a contrasting formulation. Thus, we find in Deut 14:7–8, 10, 19 the following phrase: טמא הוא לכם. Impurity has a relational aspect; animals are impure in relation to Israel. This phrase appears similarly in Lev 11. If this categorization of pure birds has been abbreviated, then we can imagine that the birds are pure for 'you'.

In the explanation in Deut 26:14, the Israelite who yields his tithe says: ולא־בערתי ממנו בטמא "I have not removed any of it while I was unclean". According to the context, the issue is mourning, impurity and the gift of a portion of the tithe to the dead. The thought here is of a burial or of a cult of the dead in the broadest sense of the word, and talk of impurity takes place in this environment. This means that this text from Deuteronomy imagines that contact with death makes one unclean. Only the person becomes impure, not an object or a place.

These examples from Deuteronomy are conventional in the sense that they simply assume knowledge of purity and impurity, without specifically formulating laws concerning this matter. Purity is not the pivotal concept of a theologically grounded idea.

Nevertheless, one can draw a number of conclusions from the terminology, as Moshe Weinfeld first attempted to do.

2. THE THESIS OF MOSHE WEINFELD

In his magisterial dissertation, which has impacted Deuteronomy research up until this day, Weinfeld worked out the main differences in the concepts of purity between Deuteronomy and a broadly conceived Priestly

⁴ Paschen, *Rein und Unrein*, 62.

document.⁵ Like Kaufmann and in contrast to Wellhausen, Weinfeld dated the core of the Priestly tradition before Deuteronomy. This means that Deuteronomy re-coins Priestly concepts in a thoroughly demythologizing and secularizing manner.⁶ The problems in dating that arise with this hypothesis will not be treated here but will be left to further endeavor within this field of research. However, distinctions certainly ought to be made between the concept of purity in Deuteronomy and that of another block of tradition, summarily designated the ‘Tetrateuch’, although it consists of the Priestly Document, Holiness Code, and secondary Priestly material, etc.

a) Innocent blood does not pollute the land; rather it redounds upon the nation.⁷ In Deut 21:1–9 a murdered corpse is discovered; the perpetrator is unknown. Since blood has been shed, the deed must be expiated. This is because the blood will be accounted to the people in the vicinity. Thus reads v. 8: ואל־תתן דם נקי בקרב עמך ישראל ונכפר להם הדם “Do not let the guilt of innocent blood remain in the midst of your people Israel. Then they will be absolved of bloodguilt”. The law in the Tetrateuch concerning the cities of asylum also takes the shedding of blood into account, though here there is a different conception:⁸ The blood is not charged to the inhabitants but rather pollutes the land (Num 35:33–34):

You shall not pollute (הִנִּיף Hi.) the land in which you live; for blood pollutes (הִנִּיף Hi.) the land, and no expiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it. You shall not defile (טָמֵא Pi.) the land in which you live, in which I also dwell; for I the LORD dwell among the Israelites.

The construction ‘to defile the land’ is formulated with טָמֵא in the Holiness Code, in Lev 18:25, 27–28, as well as in Josh 22:19 and Jer 2:7; and with אָדָמָה in Deut 21:23; Ezek 36:17; cf. Amos 7:17.⁹ The evidence in the book of Jeremiah is worth looking at in more detail. There we find ותבאו ותטמאו את־ארצי ונחלתי שמתם לתועבה “But when you entered you defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination” (Jer 2:7).

⁵ Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*. Regev has taken up and pursued Weinfeld’s observations in his “Priestly Dynamic Holiness”, 243–61.

⁶ Cf. the paragraph entitled “Demythologization and Secularization” in Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 225–26.

⁷ Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 225–26.

⁸ It seems questionable to me whether one can draw on Num 35:33 in order to explain Deut 17:8–13. See also Hagedorn, “Deut 17,8–13”, 543.

⁹ For the biblical evidence, see Paschen, *Rein und Unrein*, 36.

According to S. Hermann, behind Jer 2:5–7 lies “an ‘historical picture’ just like the one which Deuteronomy or the Deuteronomist knew and which this tradition knew how to make use of in diverse ways”.¹⁰ This may be true for the picture as a whole, but it is not so for the individual brushstrokes. The idea that the land can be polluted is not Deuteronomic. The connection between pollution and abomination (תועבה) is an interesting one, also witnessed to in the Holiness Code (Lev 18:27). In Deuteronomy, strikingly, one may not eat ‘that which is abominable’ (14:3), a formulation that is not compatible with the usual use of this lexeme.¹¹ What we have here is substitution; in Deuteronomy, תועבה stands for something that is otherwise designated with ‘impure’, without תועבה and impurity being essentially identical. תועבה probably marks a cultural difference that appears at the point where we would otherwise expect a ritual one.

According to Lev 18:28, the consequence of polluting the land is that its inhabitants can be spewed out. This means that the land can exert a destructive force against its inhabitants.¹² We may compare this idea with the one found in Lev 26:34–35, 43 and 2 Chr 36:21, where the duration of the exile is determined by the time needed for the land to make up for its unobserved Sabbaths. In Deuteronomy the land does not have this autonomous power. One distinction between the two reports of the spies in Num 13–14 and Deut 1:19–46 is that in Num 13:32, the land about to be conquered is ארץ אכלת יושביה הוא “a land that devours its inhabitants”. Deuteronomy does not include this remark. This may well be due to the extremely complex development of the text, in which one must take account of editorial re-working. However, it must still be pointed out that such an idea is not found within Deuteronomy, neither has it accrued to the text through re-working.

Let us summarize point a): In Deuteronomy, bloodguilt does not pollute the land, but rather threatens people. This idea is probably not intended to refute any specific *Tetrateuchal* concept. This is because the idea that a land can either be or become impure is also found in the prophetic literature: Amos 7:17; Jer 2:7; Ezek 36:17. The dating of these verses and their relation to the Pentateuch can naturally still be debated. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the idea that a land can become impure is not limited to

¹⁰ Hermann, *Jeremia*, 122.

¹¹ Cf. Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 334.

¹² Cf. Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 559–62.

the Holiness Code. As such, Deuteronomy is not thinking differently from the Tetrateuch alone but from a more widespread idea.

b) The chapter in Deuteronomy in which purity concepts are most concentrated is Deut 14, with its rules concerning clean and unclean animals and the permissibility of their consumption.¹³ The explanation for such rules is found in v. 21 (cf. v. 2): **כִּי עַם קָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ** “For you are a people holy to Yahweh your God”. In Deut 7:6, this phrase tells us why Israel must keep itself distinct from the previous inhabitants of the land as well as destroy their sanctuaries. Here, ‘holiness’ is conceived differently than in the Tetrateuch:

Holiness in the Priestly view is a condition that can be secured only by constant physical purification and sanctification, whereas in Deuteronomy it is the effect of a unique act of God—the divine election of Israel—and thus devolves automatically upon every Israelite, who consequently must not profane it by defilement. The Priestly document conceives holiness to be contingent upon physical proximity to the divine presence and the preservation of that proximity through ritual means.¹⁴

It is especially remarkable that, in addition to this, in Deuteronomy the category ‘holy’ is only applied to the people and not to Yahweh, not even to his sanctuary.¹⁵ As a consequence, Deuteronomy abolishes the distinction between priestly purity and the purity that every Israelite must observe. For example, according to Lev 22:8 a priest may eat no **נבלה** **וטרפה**, because by doing so he would make himself impure (**טמא**). In contrast to this, according to Lev 11:39–40, a layperson may eat the **נבלה** of large dead animals. The resultant impurity can be removed by washing.¹⁶ Deuteronomy does not follow this distinction between priestly and general purity: according to Deut 14:21, everyone is forbidden to eat **נבלה**.

The Israelites are allowed to sell **נבלה** to the foreigner (**גר**) who is living within their gates. In this context, it is completely irrelevant whether the foreigner purifies himself or not. He is not obliged to maintain the kind of purity expected from the **עם קדוש**, eloquently described by Weinfeld as *noblesse oblige*. Even the land does not become impure if a foreigner who

¹³ See also Rütterswörden, *Das Buch Deuteronomium*, 90–94; Houston, *Purity and Monotheism, passim*; and “Dietary Laws of Leviticus”, 142–61; Venter, “The Dietary Regulations”, 1240–62; Moskala, “Categorization and Evaluation”, 5–41; Milgrom, “Ethics and Ritual”, 159–91.

¹⁴ Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 226ff. Cf. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 121–22.

¹⁵ Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, 225; see also L’Hour, “L’impur et le Saint”, 38–40.

¹⁶ For the following context, see Ego, “Reinheit und Schöpfung”, 131–44.

is dwelling within it eats meat that has not been ritually slaughtered and that thus still contains blood.

Lev 17:15, part of the Holiness Code, differs. According to this text, even the foreigner must respect the purity laws. Whoever belongs to בית ישראל or is associated with it as a foreigner (Lev 17:8–9)¹⁷ must respect not only cult centralization, which is very radically conceived here, but also the blood taboo. In complete contrast to Deuteronomy, what matters here is where one lives and not membership in the chosen people.¹⁸

In addition to this, it is worth looking at Exod 22:30: “you shall be a people consecrated (אנשי קדש) to me; therefore you shall not eat any meat that is mangled by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs”. This verse is editorial and does not belong to the old layer of the Book of the Covenant.¹⁹ With regard to the טרפה it is radical: no one at all is allowed to eat it—it is dog food.²⁰

3. VERIFICATION AND CONCLUSIONS

E. Otto titled one of his essays on Deuteronomy “Social Responsibility and the Purity of the Land”. This leads to the question of whether Weinfeld’s assumption is verifiable. The title of Otto’s essay does, after all, imply that Deuteronomy shares the idea that the land itself can be pure.

Otto’s observations are concerned first of all with Deut 22:

In Deut 22:1–12 demands for social responsibility (Deut 22:1–4, 6–7) are bound together with prohibitions of illicit mixtures (Deut 22:5, 9–11). . . . Just like bloodguilt, prohibited mixtures make the land impure. In this manner Deut 22:8 connects the list with the previous blood laws (Deut 19:10).²¹

However, in the prohibitions concerning illicit mixtures there is no explicit talk of impurity. At best one could mention תועבה in v. 5, a concept similar to that of impurity but not identical with it. We will come back to this.

¹⁷ See Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 415–16.

¹⁸ Milgrom, “Ethics and Ritual”, 182.

¹⁹ Otto, *Wandel der Rechtsbegründungen*, 60.

²⁰ For the issue in general, see Sparks, “Biblical נבלה Laws”, 594–600; also *Ethnicity and Identity*, 238–45.

²¹ Otto, “Soziale Verantwortung”, 134–35.

Closer to the heart of the matter is the reference in Deut 22:8:

When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it.

Yet the phrase **ולא תשים דמים בביתך** does not contain the terminology of ‘pure’ or ‘impure’, nor does it refer to the pollution of the land. According to the two other places where the formula **שים דמים** is used (Judg 9:24 and 1 Kgs 2:5), the bloodguilt is laid on people and not the land.

This also applies to Deut 22:8, where **בית** in the second half of the verse means ‘family’, as M. Rose has rightly pointed out: “both communal space and community in their entirety incur guilt”.²² Bloodguilt burdens people, not the land.

The land is in view in Deut 24:4 and 21:22–23. In Deut 24:1–4 a man is forbidden to remarry a woman whom he had divorced and who had then married another man. Verse 4 gives us the reason:

For that is an abomination before the LORD. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.

Two observations may be made:

- a) It is the woman and not the land that is made impure (**טמא hotp.**)—for whatever reason that may be.²³
- b) The land is understood in the context of the phrase **ולא תחטיא את הארץ**. The Hiphil of **חטא** means ‘to lead into sin, to seduce someone to sin’.²⁴ The word naturally tends to have a personal object; for the material object in Deut 24:4, Gesenius¹⁸ suggests ‘to make something guilty’.²⁵ The other place where the word is found with this meaning is Qoh 5:5. There we read: **אל־תתן את־פִּיךָ לַחֲטִיָּא אֶת־בִּשְׂרֶךָ**. The Zurich Bible translates: “Don’t let your mouth bring you into sin”, thus leaving **בשר** untranslated. This is reasonable, as here **בשר** stands metonymically for the person.

²² Rose, *5. Mose*, 275.

²³ “The text is notable because it uses the word ‘impurity’ in a relative sense. The comparable prohibitions on marriage in P do not know of an impurity which only applies to a specific person”. Paschen, *Rein und Unrein*, 36.

²⁴ Gesenius, *Hebräisches Handwörterbuch*, 339.

²⁵ See fn. 23.

The same logic must be applied to ארץ in Deut 24:4. This is confirmed by the usual meaning of חטא Hiph., especially in the phrase ואשר החטיא ואת ישראל in 1 Kgs 14:16; 15:26, 30, 34; 16:2, 13, 19, 26; 21:22; 22:25; 2 Kgs 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:2, 6, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 23:15; with Judah: 2 Kgs 21:11, 16; Jer 32:35. This means that in this phrase, the words 'Israel' or 'Judah' can be substituted for ארץ, which is to say that what is in view is not the topographical reality but a political, territorial unit, one that stands metonymically for the people who inhabit it. Evidence for such a use of the word in Deuteronomy appears in 15:7, 11; 24:14. In Deut 24:4, it is not the land that is made guilty, but the people.²⁶

It is only the second piece of evidence which has already been mentioned, Deut 21:22–23, that is finally capable of bearing out Otto's thesis concerning the pollution of the land:

And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.

Here we really do have the structure לא תטמא את אדמתך, which is not very common (cf. Ezek 36:17 and Amos 7:17).

Verse 23, however, has two motivations, which has always attracted attention. Thus, G. Seitz says:

Whereas the explanation 'for a hanged man is cursed by God' perhaps belongs to the pre-Yahwistic layer of the law, the prohibitive: 'You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance' (v. 23b) ought to be seen as a later motivation, one which belongs to the same level as 24:4b.²⁷

The idea that a corpse can pollute is widely held, e.g. Ezek 43:7 (פגור) and Num 19. A corpse does not, however, pollute the land.

We may recognize within the regulation an original formula that was consistently written in the third person and a secondary layer that opts for an address in the second person singular. It is not possible to securely date the age of this secondary layer. Given that the additions offer a form of address in the singular, they may well be pre-exilic.

²⁶ This is different in Jer 3:1.

²⁷ Seitz, *Redaktionsgeschichtliche Studien*, 127–28.

We would therefore have here a case in which a more ancient version without a form of address was paranetically re-formed. In this process, perhaps, a conventional idea was introduced that was nevertheless incompatible with the total context of Deuteronomy. A dogmatic unity has not been achieved. Nevertheless, despite this one contradictory example, Weinfeld's observations have proved to be durable in central areas.

According to Weinfeld, the Tetrateuch is concerned with achieving the status of holiness through the observation of ideas of purity; in Deuteronomy the opposite is the case: the nation is a holy nation and as such—*noblesse oblige*—strains to be pure.²⁸

The concept of a holy nation is not unique to Deuteronomy,²⁹ as Weinfeld tends to think:

It is not accidental, then, that the concept of a 'holy people' that predominates in the theological system of Deuteronomy is completely absent in earlier Biblical sources.³⁰

According to Weinfeld, the Priestly document is also one of these pre-Deuteronomomic sources. Yet, one ought to take into account not only Exod 19:6³¹ but especially the common phrase found in the Holiness Code: *קדשים תהיו כי קדוש אני יהוה אלהיכם* (Lev 19:2), as well as other formulae constructed with derivatives of the root *קדש*. 'Holiness' is a characteristic of God that the nation ought to strive to acquire. In contrast to Deuteronomy, however, there is no reference to the covenant. Apart from a marginal appearance in Lev 24:8, the term *ברית* is concentrated in Lev 26. This is to be expected in a chapter of curses that concludes the Sinai laws and thus also the Sinai covenant.³² In the Priestly Document, however, the covenant at Sinai does not play a significant role. The reasons for this are well-known,³³ yet it also creates a problem: ethics cannot be grounded in the obligations that arise from the covenant. Covenant theology is not totally foreign to the Holiness Code.³⁴ Nevertheless, purity and

²⁸ Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 229–30.

²⁹ For a criticism and differentiation of Weinfeld's position, see Knohl, *Sanctuary*, 183, fn. 43.

³⁰ Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 227–28.

³¹ Cf. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 226–27.

³² See Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 541–43; 551–52.

³³ See Knohl, *Sanctuary*, 143–52. Concerning Knohl's distinction between P and H, see Kugler, "Purity and Society", 3–27.

³⁴ Knohl, *Sanctuary*, 173–74; Lohfink, "Abänderung der Theologie", 157–68.

holiness concepts do appear there, at least partially, as an argument.³⁵ We encounter purity as an ethical category in Greece in the 5th Century.³⁶

In Lev 18 'impurity' is the reason why certain sexual practices are forbidden, whereby in v. 26 the נג is included in the prohibition, as otherwise the land would be polluted. Deuteronomy, too, rejects certain practices, amongst them being a transvestite, although the prohibition in 22:5 does not necessarily have a sexual connotation. This rejection is, however, no more due to holiness or purity than is the prohibition of prostitution in 23:18–19. The succinct and ungrounded statement in Deut 23:1 comes closest to the prohibitions of sexual relations with relatives in Lev 18. One context in the Tetrateuch in which purity concepts play a significant role is that of leprosy. This also appears in Deuteronomy, in Deut 24:8, without the term 'purity' being mentioned. The relevant regulations in Deuteronomy are integrated into the Deuteronomic law and thus belong to covenantal obligations. The behavior demanded does not require any further justification by using, for example, the keywords 'purity' or 'holiness'.

Further explanations in the cases first mentioned above are evoked with the term תועבה (Deut 12:31; 13:14; 14:3; 17:1, 4; 18:9, 12; 20:18; 22:5; 23:19; 24:4; 25:16), as compared to נבלה (Deut 22:1). The term appears in the context of rituals in 17:1, which could suggest a proximity to concepts of purity. In addition to this we have the prohibition mentioned above, namely, against eating תועבה (14:3), whereby one could just as well replace the word with טמא—though it would not be necessary, as in Deuteronomy תועבה is not conflated with 'impurity'.³⁷

Nevertheless, תועבה has the same consequences and the same characteristics as impurity in the Tetrateuch. This is a kind of conceptual switch in Deuteronomy, one that can be observed in both dimensions:

a) The Consequences. According to Deut 12:31, the תועבה of the previous inhabitants of the land consisted in the fact that they burnt their children. This is part of a system of statements that reaches as far as 2 Kgs 17. According to Deut 18:12, the תועבה of the previous inhabitants led to the loss of their land—and this is how the threat comes about that committing this kind of תועבה will lead to the Israelites' loss of the land. This

³⁵ "HS expands the realm of holiness. In its view, the concept of holiness also encompasses the realm of social justice. Holiness thus includes all areas of life and applies to the entire community of Israel and the land they inhabit". Knohl, *Sanctuary*, 180.

³⁶ See here Chaniotis, "Reinheit des Körpers", 150.

³⁷ Compare Regev, *Holiness*, 248–50.

makes the תועבה in the argument similar to the concept of impurity in the Tetrateuch—remember Lev 18:27–28:

(for the inhabitants of the land, who were before you, committed all of these abominations, and the land became defiled); otherwise the land will vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you.

Here, too, we have the term תועבה, except that here an additional element appears with the mention of pollution of the land. Deuteronomy is simply content with תועבה.

b) The Characteristics. Impurity can contaminate and spread out. Here as well we may make reference to Weinfeld: “P’s over-all conception is that impurity is a kind of a palpable substance that spreads from object to object by physical contact”.³⁸

In a similar way ‘wickedness’ in Deut 13 can spread out. Here wickedness is conceived of not as a substance but rather as a characteristic of human action. Yet the text is concerned not only with action but with a chain of actions, as v. 12 makes clear with its use of the verb יסף. The temptation to apostatize from Yahweh, expressed with the phrase גלכה אחרי אלהים אחרים, will be disseminated amongst and affect the public.³⁹ It is, in other words, an activity that can spread out. The apostasy and purity concepts in the Tetrateuch share this contamination and dissemination model. This becomes particularly clear when we observe an important detail in Deut 13:6: ובערת הרע מקרבך. The formulae that otherwise appear in conjunction with this formula in Deuteronomy can be found in concentrated form in Deut 13, so that all three cases in this chapter should be addressed as בערת-laws.⁴⁰

How does one hinder contamination with or dissemination of evil? By elimination or disposal. The verb בער itself does not occur in the Tetrateuch, though the Hiphil of נזר appears in Lev 15:31: “Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, so that they do not die in their uncleanness . . .”. The characteristic verb that differentiates impurity from purity is בדל (Lev 10:10; 11:47; 20:25; 22:26).

Perhaps this conceptual switch will enable us to clarify one of the most difficult problems in Deuteronomy research: the sequence of Deut 12 and 13. Whereas Deut 12 is concerned with the centralization of the cult, ch. 13

³⁸ Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 225; see also Paschen, *Rein und Unrein*, 52.

³⁹ At least in vv. 3 and 14; although the seduction in v. 7 occurs in secret, it is still a dissemination of apostasy from Yahweh.

⁴⁰ See the overview of the formulae by Seitz, *Deuteronomium*, 131ff.

starts a new topic by bringing up the prohibition against worshipping other gods. Deut 13 makes no mention of cult centralization, so that, in terms of content, the chapter stands out from its context in chs. 12–19. Is there a logic in the subject matter that can explain the sequence?

Perhaps it makes sense to have a look at the Tetrateuch and the Holiness Code in their entirety. Within the structure of the Tetrateuch, the completion of the tabernacle is followed by the first sacrifice in Lev 1ff. Aaron's first sacrifice in Lev 9 is followed—after a small interruption in ch. 10—by the regulations concerning pure and impure animals in ch. 11. The issue of 'purity' is then continued in the following chapters.

The establishment of the sacrificial site offers the appropriate point for treating the issue of 'purity'. This observation also applies to the Holiness Code. The law concerning the altar and sacrifices in Lev 17 is followed in ch. 18 by regulations dealing with the issue of 'purity'.

In light of this, the right and proper place for a discussion of 'purity and impurity' would be after the commandment concerning cult centralization in Deut 12. Here, Deuteronomy is talking about something that has the characteristics and consequences of impurity: worship of other gods. The word *תועבה* in 12:31 and 13:15 offers us a term that is close to that of impurity, but which is not identical with it. When we look at other regulations from the perspective of the cult, Deuteronomy holds that the worst offense that can be committed is apostasy from God, not a life of impurity.

This, then, is the reason for the sequence Deut 12–13, which substitutes a discussion of purity and impurity with a discussion of apostasy from Yahweh. No cultic offense can be as significant as that of breaking the covenant. Cultic purity comes into effect in Deut 14 in the form of food laws, whereby Deut 14:3 takes up the term *תועבה* from Deut 13:15. This reference⁴¹ connects Deut 13 with the following context.

The differences between Deuteronomy and the Tetrateuch in reference to their conceptions of purity and impurity may be summarized in the following manner:

a) Philosophically: whereas the Tetrateuch thinks in terms of substances,⁴² Deuteronomy privileges properties. Purity and impurity are qualities,⁴³ preferably of people or in relation to people, and not substances.

⁴¹ See Rütterswörden, *Deuteronomium*, 84, 93.

⁴² "[Bodily impurity], like the impurity of animals, may appropriately be characterized as objective-impersonal". Paschen, *Rein und Unrein*, 56; see also fn. 2.

⁴³ "Holiness is not an independent entity; one may even go further and claim that it is only a quality". Regev, *Holiness*, 255.

This also applies to the concept of 'wickedness', which in Deuteronomy qualifies human activity and is not personified. A classic example of this way of thinking is the regulation concerning the tithe in Deut 14:22–23, which the farmer sells at home in order to buy the requisite provisions for his sacrifice at the sanctuary. This means that fruit and produce do not have, in and of themselves, any particular holiness. Supplements in the text have even extended this idea to the firstborn.

b) Theologically: Deuteronomy thinks in terms of the category of covenant: holiness is a characteristic of the elected nation, which then—*noblesse oblige*—actualizes purity. This applies only to those who stand within the covenant, not to those outside. The Tetrateuch, in contrast, thinks territorially: in order for the land not to be polluted, even foreigners have to observe certain rules.

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THE SYSTEM OF HOLINESS IN EZEKIEL'S VISION OF THE NEW TEMPLE (EZEK 40–48)

Michael Konkel

1. THE 'PRIESTLY PROPHET'

Ezekiel is called the 'priestly prophet'.¹ This designation refers not only to his lineage from a priestly family² but also to the theology of the book that bears his name, whose theological thinking is focused on the temple, its sanctity and purity. The composition of the book rests upon the two temple-visions: the first one (Ezek 8–11) depicts the defilement of the temple in Jerusalem, which prompts YHWH to abandon his dwelling-place and leave it to be judged. The second one (Ezek 40–48), in turn, sketches a detailed picture of a new temple, which is cleansed and protected from defilement.

However, the label 'priestly' comprises yet another feature: The book of Ezekiel contains some intriguing parallels in language and phraseology to the so-called Priestly source in the Pentateuch. Nevertheless, the relationship of Ezekiel to P is a matter of dispute: scholarship after Wellhausen, which assumes an exilic-postexilic origin of P, usually sees Ezekiel as a predecessor of P (see, e.g., the comprehensive commentary of W. Zimmerli).³ In contrast, the Kaufmann school, which argues for a preexilic dating of P, makes Ezekiel the creative recipient of P (e.g., M. Greenberg, D. I. Block). Finally, recent research has added a third option: An exilic-postexilic date of P is assumed, but at the same time the final shape of Ezekiel is classified as post-P by dating the book in the postexilic era.⁴

However, the question of the relationship between Ezekiel and P consists of more than just determining the direction of literary dependency. If two texts use the same language and phraseology, this by no means implies that they share the same theology. Therefore with regard to holiness and

¹ E.g. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 345.

² It is not known if Ezekiel himself was a consecrated priest, as is often suggested, or if Ezek 1:2 only refers to his father. Regarding the biographical details of Ezekiel, see Konkel, "Prophet ohne Eigenschaften".

³ Recently, e.g., Sedlmeier, *Ezechiel*; cf. Hossfeld, "Ezechiel", 505, who calls Ezekiel "the father of priestly theology" ("Vater der priesterlichen Theologie").

⁴ E.g. Pohlmann, *Hesekiel*; Schöpflin, *Theologie als Biographie*; Klein, *Schriftauslegung*.

purity, the question has to be raised whether the concept in Ezekiel is in accordance with its parallels in P or whether we can determine different concepts of 'priestly theology'. I would like to follow this path by analyzing the concept of holiness as it is found in the second temple vision (Ezek 40–48). Even though the passages that reveal a close relationship to priestly language and theology cover the book of Ezekiel as a whole, only in Ezek 40–48 can we identify an elaborate system of holiness that can be compared with its parallels in the Pentateuch.

Surprisingly, this system has not gained wide attention in recent research.⁵ Most studies concentrate on redaction-critical issues but leave the question of the underlying theological system aside.⁶ Unfortunately, M. Greenberg was not able to complete his commentary during his lifetime, and his analysis of Ezek 40–48 is missing.⁷ Ezek 40–48 should therefore be the starting point for further research.

For this endeavor, we shall focus on Ezek 40–48 as it is found in the Masoretic Text. Nevertheless, it must be stated that this composition went through a redactional process stretching from the exile to the late Persian period and perhaps even into Hellenistic times.⁸ The so-called 'holistic approach' does not deny the existence of a redactional process per se (cf., e.g., the commentaries of M. Greenberg and D. I. Block) but claims to assign this process to the historical prophet himself. Ezekiel is seen as the editor of the book in its present shape. However, this not only reduces the complexity of problems that come to light in an in-depth study of the text, it also sets the book of Ezekiel apart from the literature of the Ancient Near East. The literary integrity of a pre-Hellenistic book with an overall length of 48 chapters would be the exception, rather than the rule, and has to be demonstrated properly. However, as will be shown below, the composition as a whole cannot be dated to exilic times. Rather, it mirrors a debate that was prominent in the Persian period, and therefore, the book of Ezekiel is an important witness for the history of the religion of Israel in the exilic *and* postexilic periods.

⁵ Regarding the current state of research, see Pohlmann, *Ezechiel*.

⁶ Stevenson, *Vision*, is the exception to the rule, but at the same time this study limits itself by suspending redaction-critical issues and presupposing an exilic date for Ezek 40–48. The study of Levenson, *Theology*, analyzes the tradition history of Ezek 40–48 but does not describe the implied specific system of holiness.

⁷ Greenberg, "Program", is merely a sketch, and meanwhile is nearly thirty years old.

⁸ For a detailed synchronic and diachronic analysis of Ezek 40–48, see Konkkel, *Architektonik* (cf. Rudnig, *Heilig und profan*). A commentary on Ezek 38–48 by the author in the series Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament is currently being written and will be published in 2014.

2. THE NEW TEMPLE (EZEK 40–42)

The general outline of Ezek 40–48 can be described as follows:

A		40:1–42:20	The new temple
	B	43:1–12	The return of YHWH's glory
		C	43:13–46:24
			The laws and audiences of the temple
	B'	47:1–12	The spring emanating from the temple
A'		47:13–48:35	The new allotment of the land

What we can observe is a linear structure woven into a concentric one. A line leads from the description of the temple to the description of the land from the inside to the outside. At the same time, the corpus of laws marks the center of the whole composition.

Let us first concentrate on the description of the temple. The sanctuary is located in the center of the land, right in the middle of an area (25,000 × 25,000 cubits)⁹ surrounded by the tribes of Israel (see fig. 1). The basic element of the architecture is the square (see fig. 2). The temenos covers an area of 500 × 500 cubits (Ezek 42:20) and is enclosed by a wall, which measures six cubits in width and height (40:5). In the middle of the northern, southern and eastern sides are massive gateways, which follow the design of so-called six-chambered-gates (cf. 40:6–27). Every gateway measures 50 × 25 cubits. A staircase of seven steps leads to the vestibule.

The gateways lead to the outer court, which is surrounded by chambers (40:7–8). The exact measurements and number of these chambers is not mentioned. In the four corners of the outer court are the kitchens for the preparation of the sacrificial meals of the people (46:21–24).¹⁰ The exact measurements of these kitchens are likewise not defined.

The inner court, measuring 100 × 100 cubits, with the altar in its midst, marks the center of the temenos (40:47). It is also entered by three gateways in the north, east and south (40:28–37). They follow the same pattern as the gateways leading to the outer court, except for the difference that the vestibule faces the outer court and thereby mirrors the vestibules of the outer court. Eight steps lead to the vestibule of each gateway. So the inner court is on a noticeably higher level than the outer court. In the area of the inner northern gate are the facilities for slaughtering the sacrificial animals (40:38–43).

⁹ Presumably the royal cubit of 0.52 m is required.

¹⁰ Ezek 46:19–24 was added later and integrated into the corpus of cultic laws (43:13–46:24). See Konkel, *Architektonik*, 234–43.

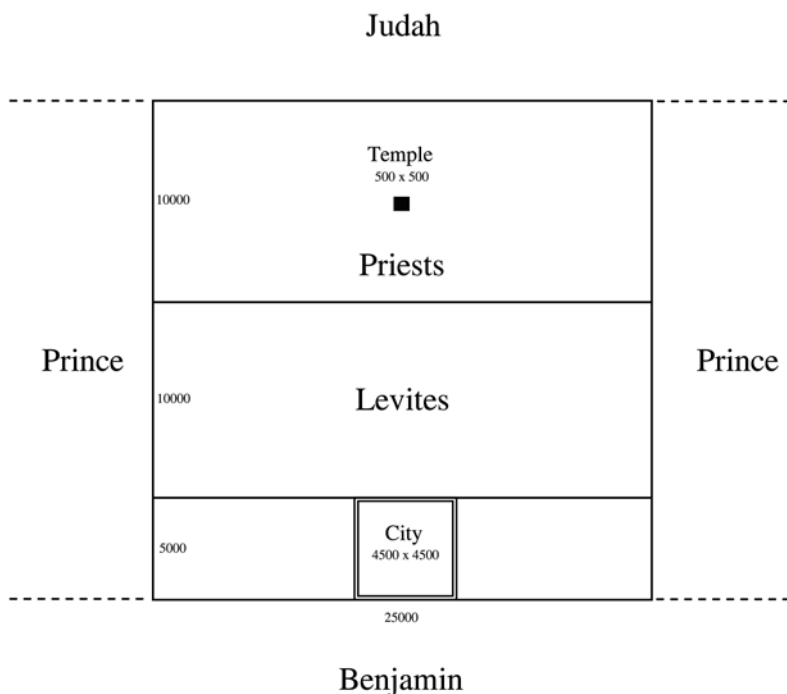


Fig. 1. The Holy Portion of the Land.

The temple building is located at the western side of the inner court (40:48–41:4). Designed as a long room with vestibule (20×12^{11} cubits), main hall (20×40 cubits) and cella (20×20 cubits), it corresponds to the temple of Solomon (cf. 1 Kgs 6). Even the inside measurements are identical, except for the vestibule, which differs slightly (20×10 cubits in the temple of Solomon). Like the temple of Solomon, the building is surrounded by three-story auxiliary structures divided into chambers (41:5–15a; cf. 1 Kgs 6:5–10). From the outside the whole building measures 100×50 cubits (41:13). There is one minor but nevertheless significant difference: In the temple of Ezekiel, a wall two cubits deep separates the main hall and the cella (41:3). This wall has no counterpart in the temple of Solomon.¹² We will return to this later.

¹¹ So according to LXX. MT reads “11 cubits”, which does not fit the system and can easily be explained as a scribal error.

¹² Regarding the temple of Solomon, see Zwickel, *Tempel; Keel, Jerusalem*, 264–337.

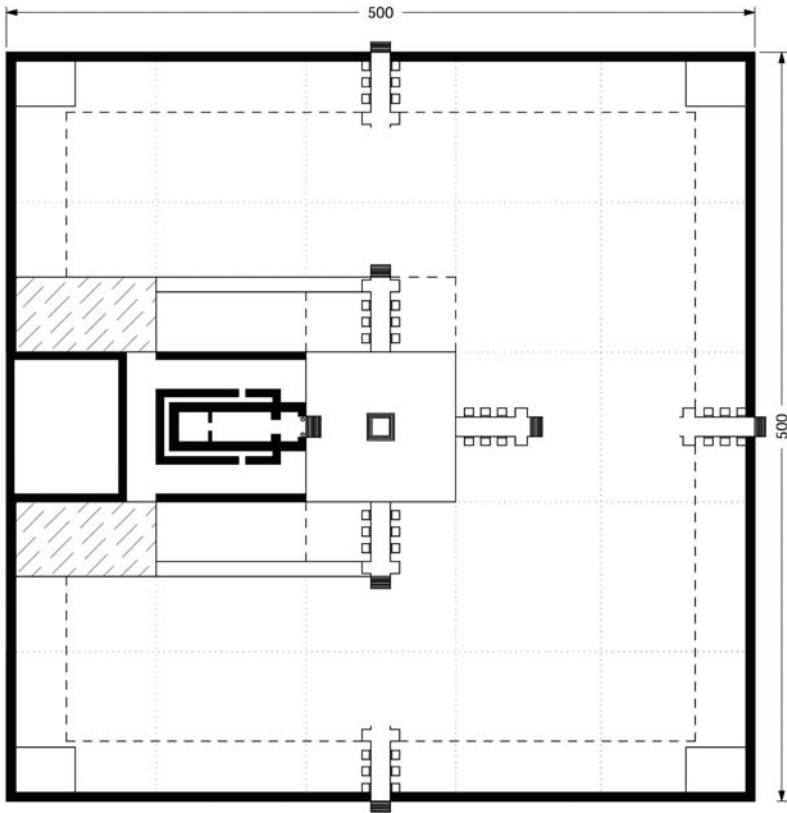


Fig. 2. The New Temple.

The area west of the temple building is separated by the so-called בנין 'structure' (41:12). Even though the measurements of its walls are mentioned, its function remains unclear. North and south of this structure are the sacristies of the priests, where the holy portions of the offerings are prepared (46:19–20) and the priests change their garments (42:13–14). The sacristies can only be entered by 'Heiligkeitsschleusen',¹³ as W. Zimmerli named them: These are passageways that run from the vestibules of the northern or southern gates of the inner court straight to the sacristies (42:1–12). All in all we have a restricted, most-sacred area that only priests are allowed to enter (see below) measuring 100×300 or 200×350 cubits, respectively.

¹³ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 1064.

As noted above, the basic element of the architecture is the square. Yet it is possible to be even more specific regarding the structural principle of this layout. W. Zimmerli suggested that the dimensions of the plan are based on the figures 25, 50 and their multiples, whereas E. Vogt identified the figure 100 as the reference point of all measurements.¹⁴ But one should take into account that the guidance of the prophet aims at measuring the holy of holies (cf. 41:4), so that the 20×20 cubits of the cella are indeed the structural principle of the whole temenos: Multiplying the floor space of the cella by 25 yields the 100×100 cubits of the inner court. Multiplying this again by 25 leads to the 500×500 cubits of the temenos. Just as the crossing of a Romanesque church generates its outline, the spatial dimensions of the holy of holies generate the temenos of Ezekiel's temple.

So we have a complex mixture of restoration and innovation: The structure of the first temple is preserved and at the same time integrated into a new system of graded holiness. Whereas in preexilic times temple and palace constitute one unit, now the palace has vanished (cf. 43:7–9).

Generally it is assumed that Ezek 40–42 is based on a blueprint that was transformed into literature.¹⁵ But closer scrutiny of the measurements that are mentioned in the text reveals two things: first, the design is clearly three-dimensional. There are two explicit measurements of height in 40:5 (outer wall of the temenos) and 41:8 (fundament of the temple building). Furthermore, there is a deliberate distinction of vertical layers: seven steps lead to the outer court, eight steps to the inner court, and ten steps to the temple building (25 steps altogether!). So there is a horizontal and vertical distinction of three areas of holiness: the outer court, the inner court and finally the temple building itself.

A second observation can be made: Even though mostly horizontal dimensions are mentioned, it is not possible to reconstruct a complete floor plan because some necessary measurements for drawing such a plan are missing.¹⁶ In my opinion this is deliberate. The focus is on the distinction of separate areas of holiness (cf. 42:20). Only the horizontal and vertical dimensions that serve this end are mentioned. Everything is focused on the architectural separation of the temple building and especially the holy of holies. A ring of walls, whose depth measures 15 cubits in total (ca. 7.9 m), shields the main hall and the cella. This also explains why

¹⁴ Zimmerli, *Ezechiel*, 993; Vogt, *Untersuchungen*, 140–44.

¹⁵ E.g. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel*, 1240.

¹⁶ Our fig. 2 takes this into account. The common reconstructions do not distinguish between dimensions that are mentioned in the text and dimensions that are conjectural.

the cella is separated from the main hall by a wall, which has no parallel in the temple of Solomon. In fact, we can observe a systematic narrowing of the entranceways from the entrance of the vestibule of the temple (14 cubits), via the entrance of the main hall (10 cubits), to the entrance of the holy of holies (six cubits). The entire architecture of the temenos serves to guard the temple building, especially the holy of holies. This is why the overall height of the temple building is not measured: it plays no role in this system, whereas the height of the outer wall of the temenos does. Ezek 40–42 is not the transformation of a blueprint into literature but the strict verbalization of a theological program: “to discern between the holy and the profane” (Ezek 42:20).

3. THE STRUCTURE OF THE CULTIC LAWS (EZEK 43:13–46:24)

Let us now turn to the body of cultic laws that marks the center of the composition of Ezek 40–48. The corpus shows clear indications of a redactional process.¹⁷ At first glance, a structure is hard to find. But there is a long speech of YHWH from 44:4 to 46:18, which should be the starting point for reconstructing the structure of the corpus:

a		44:6–31	Levites and Zadokites
	b	45:1–8	The holy portion from the land
a'		45:9–46:18	The prince and the people

The center of this speech is marked by an excerpt on the reapportionment of the land in 47:13–48:29. It focuses on the holy portion in the center of the land with the temple in its midst. The description of the center of the

¹⁷ Regarding a detailed redaction-critical study of Ezek 40–48, see Konkel, *Architektonik*. Three layers can be discerned: the basic layer comprises the description of the temple and the return of YHWH's glory (Ezek 40:1–43:10*) and can be dated to the exilic period. Shortly after the exile, chapters 47–48, with the utopian view of the new land, were added. Finally, in the late Persian period, the corpus of cultic laws (43:13–46:24*) was added, and the composition achieved its present shape. Probably in the Hellenistic period Ezek 42:16–19 was added. The verses should not be corrected according to LXX. If we take MT literally, these verses mention a third court that measures 500 × 500 rods (= 3000 × 3000 cubits). The same design with a temenos consisting of three courts is to be found in the Temple Scroll. However, this single addition should not be labeled a 'redaction'. A different approach is proposed by Rudnig, *Heilig und profan*, who discerns various layers. Nevertheless, there is a consensus on various points, especially regarding the late postexilic date of Ezek 44–46* (see Konkel, *Gola*). A postexilic date for Ezek 40–48 is also favored by Tuell, *Ezekiel*; cf. Tuell, *Law of the Temple*.

land marks the core of the long speech of YHWH and at the same time the midst of Ezek 40–48 as a whole. It is flanked by two blocks that each start with a ‘Scheltrede’ (44:6–8 and 45:9–10). The first block (44:4–31) is about the cultic tasks of the Levites and the Zadokite priests, and the second block (45:9–46:18) focuses on the social and cultic tasks of the prince.

This long speech of YHWH is framed by two texts that are designed as guidance for the prophet: 44:1–3 prescribes the permanent closing of the outer gate and the sacrificial meal of the prince, and 46:19–24 describes the kitchens for boiling the sacrificial meals of the priests and the people. The two texts can be subsumed under the topic ‘consumption of sacrifices’.

Finally, an altar law opens the whole corpus (43:13–27), as is common in the law codes of the Pentateuch (cf. Exod 20:22–26; Lev 17; Deut 12). To sum up, we can reconstruct a concentric structure in Ezek 43:13–46:24, with an altar law at the top:

a	43:13–27	The altar	
b	44:1–3	The closing of the eastern gate and the sacrificial meal of the prince	
	c	44:4–31	The cultic tasks of Levites and Zadokite priests
	d	45:1–8	The holy portion from the land
	c'	45:9–46:18	The social and cultic tasks of the prince
b'	46:19–24	The kitchens and the sacrificial meals of the priests and the people	

Due to the restricted space of this paper, I will concentrate on 44:4–31, which describes the cultic tasks of the Levites and Zadokites.

4. CONTROLLING ACCESS TO THE SACRED: THE EXCLUSION OF THE FOREIGNER AND THE CULTIC TASKS OF LEVITES AND ZADOKITES (EZEK 44:4–16)

Ezek 44:4–31 can be divided into two subsections (vv. 4–16 and vv. 17–31). The structure of the first one can be described as follows:

44:4–6a	Introduction: Controlling access to the holy
44:6–9	Indictment of Israel (‘Scheltrede’)—The exclusion of the foreigner
44:10–16	The cultic tasks of Levites and Zadokite priests

Verses 4–6a function as an introduction for 44:4–46:18 together, so that it is a kind of instruction for reading the corpus of laws as a whole:

4 Then he brought me through the north gate to the front of the temple. I looked and look, the glory of YHWH filled the temple of YHWH. Then I fell down on my face. 5 YHWH said to me: 'Human, pay attention! Look closely and listen carefully to everything I have to say to you regarding all the ordinances concerning the temple of YHWH and regarding all its instructions. Pay attention to the access to the temple at all exits of the sanctuary!¹⁸ 6 You shall say to the stiff-necked, the house of Israel...

This speech of YHWH is modeled according to 40:4. Not the architecture of the new temple but the 'ordinances of the temple' and 'its instructions' (cf. 43:11) are now the object of the prophet's attention. Verse 5 specifies that this is controlling access to the temple. Whereas Ezek 40–42 showed the new design of the temple with its strict separation of different areas of holiness, Ezek 44–46 now defines who is allowed to enter the sacred precinct. The corpus of laws is addressed not just to the cultic personnel but rather to Israel as a whole. As in the call of the prophet, it is called 'stiff-necked' (cf. 2:7–8). Obviously Israel has not left its 'stiff-necked' nature behind in the time of salvation.

The interpretation of the following is still controversial. There are some text-critical issues, the text seems to be redundant, and at a first glance the line of argumentation is hard to apprehend. We will try to propose a new interpretation that attempts to solve some of the issues that are debated in current scholarship.

Although the details of the following verses may be a subject in need of further discussion, the following can be said: The 'stiff-necked' Israel is accused of having granted foreigners, 'uncircumcised by flesh and by heart', access to the sacred precinct (44:7). This resulted in the desecration of the temple. It is not clear whether this implies the direct involvement of foreigners in the cult at the altar of burnt offerings (44:8). However, the consequence is by all means clear: foreigners are strictly banned from the sacred precinct (44:9), namely, the sacred area of 500 × 500 cubits.

Then the text moves on to the topic of the cultic tasks of the Levites, who are mentioned here for the first time in Ezekiel. The Levites are granted access to the sacred precinct, and they are assigned to minister as gatekeepers and to slaughter the sacrificial animals (44:10–11).

¹⁸ This is an exact translation of MT, which takes נְיָבִיב as a collective singular (cf. Ezek 11:6) and renders the preposition בְּ as 'together with' (cf. Exod 8:1, 13; Josh 22:8; Jer 11:19). There is no need for modifying MT, as is usually done (e.g. Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 618, et al.).

At first sight it is not clear how this connects to the preceding verses. Scholars often try to link the accusations mentioned in Ezek 44:6–11 with data from the preexilic period. Candidates for the foreigners are the Gibeonites (cf. Josh 9:21–27), the Nethinim, the ‘temple-slaves’ of Solomon (cf. Ezra 2:43–58), or finally the Carians, members of the royal guard, who originally came from Asia minor (cf. 2 Kgs 11:4–8). But linking the story of the Gibeonites with Ezek 44 is idle speculation, and the non-Israelite origin of the Nethinim is only assumed. D. I. Block opts for the Carians as foreigners in the context of Ezek 44: this “hypothesis finds support in v. 11 in Ezekiel’s appointment of the Levites as ‘armed guards’ (*pequddôt*) to replace these foreigners”.¹⁹ However, this is merely a chain of associations. The text does not link the charge to the Levites to act as gatekeepers with an office that foreigners have held in the past. Ezek 44:11 does not aim to appoint the Levites instead of the foreigners as gatekeepers. Rather, the Levites are responsible for guarding the entrances to the sacred precinct, to guarantee the observance of the prohibition of 44:9. In this way Ezek 44:10–11 is clearly linked to 44:6–9.

Generally it is assumed that Ezek 44:11 assigns the Levites the task of slaughtering the sacrifices, that is, instead of having the people do it.²⁰ If this is right, v. 11 would be in direct conflict not only with the Pentateuch but also with the practice of the Second Temple, where the layperson was responsible for slaughtering the animal.²¹ Ezek 44:11 would claim to restrict a task to the Levites that was permitted for every Israelite. This is one of the key arguments for classifying Ezek 40–48 as a vision of an exilic utopia that could not gain any effect either in the Pentateuch or in the cultic practice of the Second Temple.

But we may question whether this interpretation is compelling. It is not necessary to translate the term לַעַם as ‘for the people’. It is likewise possible to understand it as a genitive (e.g. Ezek 11:23; 45:8; 47:1) expressed with the preposition לְ, referring to עוֹלָה and to זֶבַח.²² So Ezek 44:11 does not mean that the Levites slaughter the offerings in lieu of the people, but rather that the Levites slaughter the ‘burnt offerings and sacrifices of the people’, i.e. the public offerings. This is the way they ‘minister’ to the people, as 44:11 states, by representing the people in the case of a pub-

¹⁹ Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 623; for the first time, probably, Skinner, *Ezekiel*, 330.

²⁰ E.g. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 1127, and many others.

²¹ Cf. Lev 1:5, 11; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33; 17:3–4; Josephus, *Antiquitates judaicae* 227; *m. Zevaḥim* 3:1; *m. Kelim* 1:8.

²² Cf. Jüon, *Grammar*, §130c.

lic offering. Slaughter of the public sacrifices by the Levites was common in the Second Temple period.²³ So Ezek 44:11 is not in conflict with the Torah, where a special ritual for public offerings is missing; rather, it mirrors a practice that was common in the Second Temple period. There is no hint that Ezek 40–48 bans laypeople from slaughtering their personal offerings. Accordingly, Ezek 40:38–43 describes the facilities for slaughtering the sacrificial animals in the area of the inner northern gate. Two installations are distinguished: one on the level of the outer court and the other one on the level of the inner court. The first one was accessible for every pure Israelite. Thus there is a difference between an area for slaughtering the offerings of the laypersons and an area for slaughtering the offerings of the priests.

The cultic service at the altar of burnt offerings within the inner court is restricted to the Zadokite priests (44:15). They are the 'guardians of the altar' and are identified with the 'Levitical priests' who figure prominently in Deuteronomy.²⁴ Furthermore, v. 16 states that "they are the ones who shall have access to my table". What does this mean? Synchronically, the 'table' must be linked with the 'table' inside the temple building, which is mentioned in 41:21–22. But these verses seem to be a late insertion into a text (41:15b–27) that itself is secondary.²⁵ Accordingly, it cannot be presupposed that Ezek 44:16 originally referred to 41:21–22. Some scholars relate this to the table of shewbread (cf. Exod 25:23–30); this assumption seems unlikely, however, because Ezek 40–42 does not mention it. The other option is to relate the 'table' to the altar of burnt offerings, but then Ezek 44:16 would be the only reference in the Old Testament that calls the altar of burnt offerings 'table'. However, there is another option: that 'table' refers to the most holy portions of the offerings that belong to the priests (cf. 44:28–31). The priests are invited to the 'table of YHWH', i.e., to the sacrificial meals. Ezek 39:20 and Mal 1:7 can be perceived as parallels. If we add the information given in 46:1–12, we can reconstruct a threefold hierarchy that is linked to the separate areas of holiness within the sacred precinct: uncircumcised foreigners have no access to the sacred square of 500 × 500 cubits. Laypersons as well as the Levites have access to the outer court, whereas only the Zadokite priests may enter the inner court.

²³ Cf. 2 Chr 30:17; 35:6, 11 and 11Q19 col. 22:4 (cf. 11Q18 frg. 30).

²⁴ Cf. Deut 17:9, 18; 18:1; 24:8; 27:9; see Dahmen, *Levitens und Priester*.

²⁵ Konkel, *Architektonik*, 59–62.

Such a strict separation of different areas of holiness has no parallel in the Pentateuch but mirrors a development that took place in the period of the Second Temple. I do not think that the issues Ezek 44 deals with can be explained with preexilic data. The xenophobia that is expressed in Ezek 44 has its nearest parallels in the postexilic era. The 'stranger' is the topic par excellence in the period of the Second Temple (cf. Neh 13:30–31). As will be shown, Ezek 44 presupposes a considerable quantity of tradition, if not an edition of the Pentateuch that already included the priestly and non-priestly texts. Ezek 44:4–46:18 seems to be a later insertion from the Persian period. Therefore, Ezek 40–48 cannot simply be seen as a utopian exilic design for the postexilic era, which had no effect in Persian times. Rather, Ezek 40–48 in its current shape has to be read as a Zadokite critique aiming at the cultic practice of the Second Temple in Jerusalem.

But how does this concept relate to the Pentateuch, especially P? Surprisingly, in the Pentateuch there is no specific law regulating access to the sacred precinct. Nowhere in P is the layperson banned from entering the tent of meeting. Deut 23:2–9 forbids foreigners to enter the 'assembly' (קהל) of YHWH—but it gives no answer as to how this relates to the sacred precinct, in particular to different courts within the temenos. So it seems that the Pentateuch leaves space for different interpretations of a question that was the subject of discussion in the Second Temple period. Once again, it cannot be said that Ezek 44:9 is in conflict with the Torah.²⁶ Rather, this verse can be understood as a strict interpretation of Deut 23.²⁷

However, how does the monopolistic claim of the Zadokites suit the theory of an Aaronide priesthood as it is outlined in P? It seems that at last in this regard there is a direct conflict with the Torah. In P, Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron, represent two priestly classes. As the late Chronistic genealogies show, the priests at the temple in Jerusalem traced their line back to these two sons of Aaron.²⁸ Thereby, Zadok was considered to be a descendant of Eleazar, and so it is generally assumed that the Zadokites were Eleazarides (cf. 1 Chr 5:27–41; 6:35–38).²⁹ In contrast, Ezek 44 restricts the priesthood strictly to the Zadokites/Eleazarides.

²⁶ Cf. *b. Yoma* 71b, where it is stated that the banning of foreigners had been part of the Oral Law from the time of Moses and was committed to writing by Ezekiel.

²⁷ Cf. Neh 13:1–9, where the expulsion of Tobiah from the sacred precinct is introduced with a reference to Deut 23.

²⁸ The standard reference regarding the history of Israelite priesthood is still Gunneweg, *Leviten und Priester*; cf. Cody, *History*. Regarding the Zadokites, see Rooke, *Zadok's Heirs*.

²⁹ Therefore it makes no sense to postulate a conflict between 'Aaronides' and 'Zadokites', as for example Rudnig, *Heilig und profan*, does. In the late Persian period, the

Surprisingly, Jewish tradition does not state that the Zadokite claims are in conflict with the Torah.³⁰ In my opinion this is deliberate. A closer look at Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, may provide the missing link: Num 25 gives the account of the Baal Peor incident. There, Phinehas acts as the savior of Israel by killing an Israelite man together with his Midianite wife. The text mirrors the problem of intermarriage as it was discussed in Persian times. Phinehas represents a radical position in this regard, which is rewarded by an 'everlasting covenant':

10 Then YHWH spoke to Moses: 11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has held back my wrath from against the Israelite people by zealously enacting my zeal in their midst, so that I did not annihilate the Israelite people in my [wrathful] zeal. 12 Say, therefore: I hereby grant to him my covenant of fellowship. 13 To him and his descendants after him this shall endure as a covenant of everlasting priesthood. It is in return for his having acted zealously on behalf of his God, through which he secured expiation for the Israelite people.³¹

Usually this is taken as referring to the office of the high priest (cf. Sir 25:23–25), because the high priests in the Persian period were Zadokites.³² But the text itself does not say this. Rather, the covenant with Phinehas only mentions the right to serve as priests in general. However, the phrasing provides room for interpretation. The monopolistic claims of the Zadokites in Ezek 44:15 can therefore be understood as an exclusive interpretation of the covenant with Phinehas: Even though the Pentateuch knows two priestly classes,³³ only the Eleazarides have the privilege of an eternal priesthood. The Levitical Ithamarides can potentially lose their right to serve as priests, and Ezek 44 blames them for having done so. While Num 25 simply grants the Eleazarides/Zadokites eternal priesthood, Ezek 44 interprets this as an exclusive right of priesthood.

To sum up, Ezek 44 perfectly fits the system of graded holiness as it is outlined in the description of the temple. Access control to the sacred precinct of 500 × 500 cubits is now in focus. Whereas Ezek 44 represents

Zadokites were integrated into the Aaronide genealogy. Therefore all Zadokites were Aaronides, but not all Aaronides were Zadokites.

³⁰ Cf. Cohen, *Miqra'ot Gedolot*, 296–97.

³¹ Translation according to Levine, *Numbers 21–36*, 281.

³² E.g. Levine, *Numbers 21–36*, 280: "Phinehas was granted an everlasting covenant, assuring that his descendants would hold the office of the Israelite chief-priesthood forever". Regarding the genealogical links between the Zadokites and Eleazarides, see Levine, *Numbers 21–36*, 297–300.

³³ Nadab and Abihu, the two firstborn sons of Aaron, "are eliminated from consideration in Lev. 10:1–7" (Levine, *Numbers 21–36*, 298).

a different view from the one found in the Pentateuch, it cannot be stated that it is in conflict with the Torah. Rather, Ezek 44 can be understood as a quite radical and exclusive interpretation of pentateuchal traditions from a Zadokite point of view.

5. THE PURITY LAWS FOR THE ZADOKITE PRIESTS (EZEK 44:17–27)

Whereas the degradation of the Levites and the monopolistic claim of the Zadokites regarding the priesthood have broadly attracted the interest of researchers,³⁴ little attention is paid to the adjacent ordinances for the Zadokite priests (44:17–31). Usually 44:17–31 is seen as “a potpourri of regulations concerning priests”.³⁵ Only J. Milgrom has attempted to search for an underlying system within these regulations. He compares the rules for the Zadokite priests in Ezek 44 with their parallels in the Priestly source. Milgrom states:

his (i.e. Ezekiel’s) list of prohibitions for the priesthood (44:17–27) is with only one exception in direct conflict with P... It should be noted that in each case Ezekiel takes the stricter point of view.³⁶

However, even though a closer look reveals that the rules of Ezek 44 partly differ from their parallels in the Pentateuch, I think that Milgrom is wrong.

Every regulation in 44:17–31 has a parallel within the Pentateuch. Tracing lines of dependence between these texts, however, is quite a complex task. Due to the confined space of this paper, we will focus on the regulations in vv. 17–27.³⁷ The following parallels can be observed:

The priestly garments	Ezek 44:17–19	Cf. Exod 28; 39; Lev 19:19; Deut 22:11
The priestly haircut	Ezek 44:20	Cf. Lev 10:6; 21:5, 10
Prohibition of wine	Ezek 44:21	Lev 10:9
The priestly marriage	Ezek 44:22	Cf. Lev 21:13–15
Teaching of Torah	Ezek 44:23	Lev 10:10
Judicial and cultic order	Ezek 44:24	Cf. Deut 21:5
Contact with corpses	Ezek 44:25–27	Cf. Lev 21:1–4; Num 19:11–22

³⁴ Cf. recently Cook, “Innerbiblical Interpretation”; Duguid, “Putting Priests in Their Place”; Fechter, “Priesthood”.

³⁵ Allen, *Ezekiel*, 263.

³⁶ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 452–53.

³⁷ The ‘Gottesspruchformel’ at the end of 44:27 separates this set of rules from 44:28–31, which marks the transition to 45:1–8 with the two themes ‘possession of land’ and ‘portion of the sacrifices’.

Some intertextual links are very close, some appear to be quite loose. We cannot trace a clear-cut development according to which Ezekiel would present the tightening of pentateuchal law, or vice versa. Ezek 44:17–19 continue the theme of guarding the sacred space. When entering the inner court, the priests must wear vestments made solely from linen. In the background is the prohibition of mixing linen and wool as it is found in Lev 19:19 and Deut 22:11. Generally it is assumed that Ezek 44:17–19 adapts Lev 16:4: At the Day of Atonement, the high priest shall enter the sanctuary dressed completely in linen. So Ezek 44:17–19 would represent a stricter stance than the Pentateuch by extending a rule for the high priest to the ordinary priests. But what kind of dress does the Pentateuch require for the Aaronide priests? Should the general prohibition of mixing linen and wool not apply to them?

The problem is not addressed in any commentary on Ezekiel. We will start to solve it by looking at the way Josephus paraphrases Deut 22:11:

Let not any one of you wear a garment made of wool and linen, for that is appointed to be for the priests alone. (*Ant.* 4.208)

According to Josephus, the vestments of the priests are made of linen. But the girdle and the sash were made from linen that was pervaded by woolen threads dyed in purple and crimson.

If we now take a look at the Pentateuch, things get complicated. The priestly garments are described in Exod 28 and 39 as part of the tabernacle appurtenances.³⁸ Regarding the undergarments, the skirts and the turban, it is stated that they are made from linen (Exod 28:39–43; 39:39–43). The textile the sash is made of remains unclear in the pentateuchal account. While Exod 28:39–40 does not provide further requirements regarding the material, Exod 39:29 states:

And the sash of twined linen and of blue and red purple and of crimson. It was a first-class product of work of the textile artist, as YHWH commanded by Moses.³⁹

Jewish tradition preserves a discussion concerning whether this verse relates only to the sash of the high priest or to that of the ordinary priests as well.⁴⁰ The background of this discussion is the question of whether only the sash of Aaron consisted of linen with interwoven woolen threads

³⁸ The standard reference for the priestly garments is still Haran, *Temples*.

³⁹ Translation according to Houtman, *Exodus*, 517.

⁴⁰ Cf. *b. Yoma* 6a, and see the Jewish commentaries to Exod 39:29 cited in Carasik, *Exodus*, 331.

or if the ordinary priests also wore a garment that contained a mixture of linen and wool. But the text of Exod 39:29 does not give any hint that the sash of Aaron was different from that of the other priests. So do we in fact have to claim a contradiction between Ezek 44:17 and Exod 39:29?

From my point of view this conclusion is not compelling. If we look at the text of Exod 39:29 carefully, we can see that the color of the interwoven threads is defined but not the material. Both wool and linen were dyed with purple or crimson in antiquity.⁴¹ Given the testimony of Josephus, the sashes of the priests consisted of a mixture of linen and wool in the period of the Second Temple. Ezek 44 argues against this practice, and as 44:18 shows, the sashes are the objects of dispute. However, Ezek 44 does not argue against the Torah. Rather, the Pentateuch shows a careful phrasing that can be interpreted in different ways. Obviously the garments of the priests were a subject of discussion in Persian times. Ezek 44 represents a position that cannot be summarized as more or less strict than the Torah. Rather, Ezekiel provides a definite formulation, whereas the Pentateuch leaves space for different interpretations.

However, why were the garments of the priests made from a mixture of linen and wool? The answer to this question is to be found in Deut 22:9–11:

9 You shall not sow your vineyard with two different kinds of seed, lest you make the full yield holy, both the seed which you sow and the produce of the vineyard. 10 You shall not plow with an ox and an ass together. 11 You shall not wear mixed material, wool and linen woven together.

The prohibition of mixing linen and wool is part of a larger set of rules. Verse 9 provides the rationale for those. Mixing things is not only a source of uncleanness but can also result in holiness. This leads us deep into the complex system of sacred contagion, which cannot be discussed further here.⁴² However, we can state that the mixture of wool and linen was seen as holy—and this is why the prohibition of mixing was not applied to the priestly garments. According to the Pentateuch, the priests themselves were holy, so it was a general practice that they could be in contact with a holy mixture. In contrast, Ezekiel claims a strict observance of Deut 22:11 and Lev 19:19, and thus he does not argue against the Torah but

⁴¹ Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte*, 76.

⁴² See Haran, *Temples*; Milgrom, *Changing Concept*; Jenson, *Graded Holiness*.

against a cultic practice, as it was common in the period of the Second Temple.

There is one last thing to consider. Ezek 44:19 adds the rule that the priests change their garments before entering the outer court, "to prevent them from transmitting holiness to the people by contact with the clothes". The linen garments, though not holy per se, had become holy by being in contact with the sacred. The rule has no direct parallel in the Pentateuch. Once again this is significant. Hag 2:12 states:

If someone carries sacred meat in the corner of his garment, and with his corner touches bread, pottage, wine, oil, or any foodstuff, will any of these be sanctified? The priest replied, and said, 'No'.

The sacred meat transfers holiness to the garment in which it is carried. But does the garment also transfer its 'second-order' holiness? The question to the priest shows that this was a controversial topic in the Persian period. At first sight, Haggai seems to contradict Ezek 44, where it is presupposed that the linen priestly garments could transfer their holiness to the people. But the answer of the priest in Hag 2 refers only to objects and not to persons. Neither Hag 2 nor the Pentateuch gives a direct answer to the problem Ezek 44:19 deals with. So once again Ezek 44 makes a clear statement, where the Pentateuch leaves a blank.

Ezek 44:20 moves from the priestly vestments to the topic of the priestly haircuts. The prohibition against completely shaving the head has its parallel in Lev 21:10 as a demand for regular priests. The prohibition of letting the hair grow loose is found in Lev 10:6 and later in 21:5 as a requirement for the high priest. The combination of both prohibitions is only found in Ezek 44:20. Moreover, the demand to keep the hair trimmed has no direct parallel. Nevertheless, as *b. Sanhedrin* 22b shows, this was practiced in the Second Temple period. We can observe a coherent approach: two regulations are referred to, from which a third one is deduced to fill a gap in the pentateuchal legislation.

The prohibition of wine in 44:21 has its parallel in Lev 10:9. We will return to Lev 10 in the discussion of Ezek 44:23.

The rules for priestly marriage follow. Because we have a direct parallel in the Pentateuch, a juxtaposition and detailed analysis seem helpful for our present purpose:

Ezek 44:22

They shall not marry widows or divorced women;

they may marry only virgins of the seed of the house of Israel, or widows who are widows of priests.

Lev 21:13–15

He may marry only a woman who is a virgin.

A widow, or a divorced woman, or one who is degraded by harlotry—such he may not marry.

Only a virgin of his people may he marry—

that he may not profane his offspring among his people, for I YHWH have sanctified him.

Lev 21:13–15 is part of a larger set of regulations that differentiates between rules for the high priest and less strict rules for ordinary priests. Ezek 44:22 parallels the rules for the high priest even though Ezek 40–48 does not mention such an office. So it is particularly significant that rules referring only to the high priest in the Pentateuch now in Ezekiel refer to the Zadokite priesthood as a whole. But the rules do not exactly match each other. First, the woman ‘degraded by harlotry’ is not mentioned in Ezek 44. But this makes no difference with regard to content: Both texts demand for the priests an Israelite virgin. This implies that a harlot is forbidden for the Zadokite priests, too. The only real difference is that Ezek 44 allows the Zadokite priests to marry the widows of priests, while Lev 21 consistently prohibits the high priest from marrying any woman who is not a virgin. Obviously the concept of Ezek 44 is secondary, stating an exception to the rule. But why do we have this exception? Scholarship has not given a satisfactory reply to this question yet. However, I would suggest a solution for this desideratum: In Ezekiel, the widow of a priest can only be the widow of a Zadokite. Children from a former marriage are therefore of Zadokite origin, too. In Ezekiel’s system the marriage of the widow of a priest does not contaminate the Zadokite lineage. In the Pentateuch this is different: The concept of an Aaronide priesthood allows the integration of non-Zadokite priestly groups. If we assume a Zadokite/ Eleazaride succession of high priests in the Second Temple period, then the concession to marry the widow of a priest would have created the risk of contaminating the high priestly lineage through former children from a non-Zadokite priest. So what we have in Ezek 44:22 is the consequent conversion of the high priestly laws of Lev 21 into the system of a pure Zadokite priesthood. The prohibition of mixtures forms the basis and governs the system of purity rules.

But there is still another difference that deserves attention. The law in Leviticus ends with the demand “not to profane his offspring among his people, for I YHWH have sanctified him”. At a first glance, such a demand would have fit perfectly in Ezek 44. So why is it missing? As the context shows, the demand clearly refers to the priest as person: the priest is holy (cf. Lev 21:6, 7–8). In contrast, the priests in Ezekiel are not called ‘holy’.⁴³ Moreover, the concept of a ‘holy people’, as is typical in the Holiness Code, is not found in Ezekiel. Israel is ‘stiff-necked’, and this attribute is not revoked but affirmed in the oracles of salvation. Moreover, it is the point of departure from which the Zadokite claims are vindicated (cf. 44:6–9). It seems that holiness in Ezekiel is an attribute that cannot be applied to persons but only to things belonging to the sphere of YHWH and—of course—to YHWH himself. People can be infected by holiness by coming in contact with the holy, but holiness is not something that can be attributed to persons due to their way of life. A proper way of living is the condition for the priests to draw near to the holy, but holiness is not a quality properly attributed to them. In contrast to the Holiness Code (Lev 17–26), holiness is not a moral category in Ezek 40–48.

The commission to teach Torah conforms almost verbatim to Lev 10:10, as 44:21 parallels Lev 10:9. Within 44:17–27, we have only two regulations that exactly match their corresponding text in the Torah, and both are to be found in Lev 10. From my point of view this is not by accident. In the Pentateuch only four speeches are directly addressed to Aaron. Three of them can be found in Num 18. However the first one is in Lev 10:9–10, precisely the two verses that parallel Ezek 44:21, 23. Due to lack of space, we cannot look at Lev 10 and its pivotal role in the composition of the Pentateuch. However, after the consecration of the priests, Lev 10:9–10 defines something like the essence of the priestly duties, and the story of the death of Nadab and Abihu shows how Aaron fulfills his priestly responsibilities in an extreme situation. Ezek 44 now affirms this essence of the priestly duties for the new temple.

Ezek 44:24 assigns the administration of justice to the Zadokite priests. Once again it seems that this is in conflict with the Pentateuch. Deut 17:8–13; 19:17 show that priests participated in the administration of justice, but judges stood at their side (cf. 2 Chr 19:8–11). In Deut 22:13–21 and 25:7–10, the elders are responsible for settling disputes in the community (cf. Exod 18

⁴³ The word *שמקדו* in Ezek 48:11 is syntactically and text-critically difficult and seems to be a late gloss.

and Deut 1:13–18). But there is one verse that fits our passage in Ezekiel. Deut 21:5 reads:

And the Levitical priests shall approach for YHWH, your God, has chosen them to serve him and to bless in the name of YHWH, and every dispute and every case of assault shall be settled according to their word.

Deut 21:1–9 deals with the case of a murder by an unknown person. Verse 5 clearly is an insertion into its context, which originally only mentioned the elders.⁴⁴ Even though the verse is added to a specific context, it entrusts the Levitical priests with the administration of justice in general. Regarding Ezekiel, it is important that Ezek 44:16 explicitly and exclusively identifies the ‘sons of Zadok’ with the Levitical priests. So Ezek 44:24a conforms to Deut 21:5.⁴⁵ The second half of Ezek 44:24 primarily functions as a counterpart to 22:26, so that the priests of the new temple are summoned to observe the cultic ordinances and to keep the Sabbath. As the threefold list of juridical terms shows, the priests are entrusted with an extensive responsibility regarding the maintenance of the social and cultic order.

Finally, the rules regulating the priests’ contact with the dead will be analyzed. Once again our text of reference is Lev 21. This time the rules for the Zadokite priests correspond not to the stricter regulations for the high priest but rather to the ones for the ordinary priests: In accordance with Lev 21:1–4, the Zadokite priests may defile themselves by coming into contact with the corpses of their nearest relatives: father, mother, son, daughter, brother and unmarried sister. Surprisingly, Lev 21 does not provide any regulations concerning purity rites for the defiled priests. The only text in the Pentateuch that deals with this issue is Num 19:11–22, where it is stated that contact with a corpse defiles for seven days. Num 19 refers to all Israelites, but it remains unclear if there were separate rules for priests. Ezek 44:25–27 fills this gap in the legislation of the Pentateuch: Obviously the seven-day period of Num 19 applies to priests, too. But an additional seven-day period *after* the cleansing is provided, ending with a purifica-

⁴⁴ Braulik, *Deuteronomium*, 152; Rütterswörden, *Deuteronomium*, 136; Niehr, *Rechtsprechung*, 112–14.

⁴⁵ Even though the history of jurisprudence in Israel is still unsettled in many ways, it can be said that following the centralization of Josiah, the elders continued to lose their influence, while in the postexilic era the priests continuously expanded their influence into the realm of jurisdiction. Deut 21:5 and Ezek 44:24 are witnesses for these postexilic claims of the priests to control the administration of justice. Cf. Niehr, *Rechtsprechung*, 112–14.

tion offering. Only afterwards are the priests allowed to enter the inner court to draw near to the holy. So once again, Ezek 44 is not in conflict with the Pentateuch but extends its legal tradition. Finally, another issue that confirms our analysis of Ezek 44:21 becomes clear: while Lev 21:1–4 depicts the priest as a holy person, the focus of Ezek 44:25–27 is not on the priest but on the protection of the sacred space.

To sum up, we can see that Ezek 44:1–27 is by no means simply “a potpourri of regulations concerning priests”.⁴⁶ The text claims more. If you add the rules for the holy portions, Ezek 44:17–31 covers nearly all topics of the pentateuchal legislation regarding the priests. The material is chosen deliberately, and a coherent system can be described that is organized by the prohibition of mixtures as found in Lev 19:19 and Deut 22:11. J. Milgrom is wrong in two ways: All the rules of Ezek 44 are neither stricter than their parallels in P nor “in direct conflict with P”. Rather, the regulations of Ezek 44 interpret the related pentateuchal traditions from a point of view whose pivotal point is the monopolistic claims of the Zadokites as expressed in 44:4–16. Therefore Ezek 44 can be labeled a “Zadokite Halakha”. Ezek 44 is not in conflict with the Torah but argues against specific cultic practices at the Second Temple in Jerusalem.

The rules mainly focus on protecting the sacred space. Thus the description of the temple with its perfectly structured architecture is linked with the corpus of laws in Ezek 44–46. Moreover, the prohibition of mixtures, which organizes the rules in Ezek 44:17–27, constitutes the principle for understanding the system of holiness in Ezek 40–48 as a whole: the distinction of separate areas of holiness is the positive counterpart to the prohibition of mixtures. The architecture of the new temple aims at a clear distinction between separate areas of holiness. Ezek 44 assigns these different areas to different parts of Israelite society: Foreigners are banned from the sacred precinct, laypersons may enter the outer court and only the Zadokite priests have access to the inner court, under strict conditions.

6. THE NEW ALLOTMENT OF THE LAND

Finally, we will take a quick look at the new apportionment of the land as it is described in Ezek 47–48 (cf. 45:1–8). The sketched boundaries are

⁴⁶ Allen, *Ezekiel*, 263.

roughly in accordance with Num 34:1–12. A restoration of Israel to its ideal borders from northern Syria to the southern Negev is expected. Just as Israel existed in its promised frontiers at the inauguration of the first temple (cf. 1 Kgs 8:65–66), so the new promise of the land has to be fulfilled before the new temple can be built. The injustice of the first allotment of the land by Joshua is canceled by assigning every tribe a portion of the same size. From the center of the land, a portion (תרומה) is selected in which temple and city are located. The portion measures $25,000 \times 25,000$ cubits, which multiplies the area of the temenos by 25. This portion is assigned to the tribe of Levi, which surrounds and thereby guards the temple. The other tribes are located to the north and south of this temple domain. Regarding our question, one thing is of special interest: The order of the tribes follows a pattern that distinguishes between the descendants of Jacob's wives (Leah and Rachel) and their handmaidens (Bilhah and Zilpah):

Table 1. The order of the tribes according to Ezek 48:1-8.

Dan	Bilhah
Asher	Zilpah
Naphtali	Bilhah
Manasseh	Rachel
Ephraim	Rachel
Reuben	Leah
Judah	Leah
Portion (Levi)	(Leah)
Benjamin	Rachel
Simeon	Leah
Issachar	Leah
Zebulun	Leah
Gad	Zilpah

The sons of Leah and Rachel receive their part in proximity to the 'portion', whereas the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah are pushed towards the periphery (cf. the position of the tribes in the camp according to Num 2). So we have another way of organizing the sacred space: Descent defines the distance to the holy.

However, the concept of the 'portion' is the most intriguing feature regarding the concept of holiness in Ezek 40–48: The 'portion' itself is divided into three parts (see fig. 1): The northern strip, measuring $25,000 \times 10,000$ cubits, is conveyed to the priests. The temple is located in the center of this strip. Southwards follows the strip of the Levites, measuring

25,000 × 10,000 cubits as well. The remaining 25,000 × 5,000 cubits are assigned to the residents of the city. This area is explicitly qualified as 'profane' (48:15). The city itself measures 4,500 × 4,500 cubits (ca. 5.5 km²). Jerusalem did not achieve this size until the 20th century!

Thus the city is located several kilometers south of the temple. Thereby a cosmological concept common in Mesopotamia and Israel is left behind: the temple as intersection point between heaven and earth marking the center of the world.⁴⁷ The city with its walls surrounds the temple and is a symbol of the protecting power of the god that dwells within the temple (cf. e.g. Pss 46 and 48). Beyond the city walls, the forces of chaos gain power the further one moves away from the temple. According to Ezek 40–48, the temple is located in the center of the land, but the city does not surround it. Temple and city are strictly separated. To say it somewhat exaggeratedly: The city with its walls does not protect the temple any longer; rather, the temple has to be protected from the profane city. Thus Ezek 47–48 radicalizes the separation of temple and palace, as is called for in Ezek 43:7–9. Just as there is no place for the concept of a 'holy people', there is also no 'holy city' in Ezek 40–48.

7. SUMMARY AND PERSPECTIVES

Our analysis demonstrates an elaborate system of holiness that connects all three parts of Ezek 40–48: the strict separation of different areas of holiness determines the new design of the temple, the corpus of cultic laws and finally the new allotment of the land. The system is organized by the prohibition of mixtures as it is found in Lev 19:19 and Deut 22:11. The principle of separating the holy from the profane is applied rigorously to such an extent that its feasibility is sacrificed: Whereas the design of the temple and the organization of access to the sacred precinct are ambitious but technically feasible, the strict separation of city and temple cannot be realized, nor can the schematic allotment of the land.

As can be demonstrated by our analysis of Ezek 44, the text presupposes a quantity of tradition that comprises not only elements usually assigned to P but also traditions from the late Deuteronomy. The cultic laws for the priests cover nearly the entire pentateuchal legislation that refers to the

⁴⁷ Janowski, *Heilige Wohnung*; Pongratz-Leisten, *Mental Map*.

priests. Even though the rules in Ezekiel differ in many ways from their parallels, it cannot simply be said that they are “in direct conflict with P”⁴⁸ or constitute a “Konkurrenzunternehmen zur Aaroniden-Theorie von P”,⁴⁹ as T. A. Rudnig calls it. Things are more complicated. Rather, it seems that Ezek 40–48 should be called a ‘Zadokite Halakha’, which interprets pentateuchal legal traditions from a specific point of view, namely the monopolistic claim of the Zadokites, which itself can be understood as an exclusive interpretation of the covenant with Phinehas in Num 25:12–13. Thus Ezek 40–48 can work as a critique of the cultic practice at the Second Temple in Jerusalem not by opposing the Pentateuch but rather by interpreting and extending its legal traditions.

The protection of the sacred space is predominant. The priest as a holy person is not in view, as even less is Israel, which is still called ‘stiff-necked’. In this conception, there is no place for holiness that is achieved by acting morally. Accordingly, ethical categories play only a peripheral role in Ezek 40–48. As a result, the judicial order is assigned to the priests in Ezek 44:24, but 45:8–9 delegates the enforcement of right and justice to the prince and does not connect this office with any term related to holiness. Whereas in the first temple vision (Ezek 8–11) the filling of the land with violence (סמך) marks the climax of abominations that cause YHWH to leave his temple (8:17), in the second temple vision ethical transgressions are not considered a cause of defilement of the temple in the future. Ezek 40–48 outlines a system of holiness that is constructed strictly spatially. Ethical transgressions may result in uncleanness (cf. Ezek 18), but this is seen as unproblematic as long as the source of uncleanness is withdrawn from the sacred precinct. In the same way, purity is the natural condition for drawing near to the holy, but purity itself is not a fundamental category in this system.

According to the book of Ezekiel, salvation is dependent on the presence of YHWH’s glory in the temple. Israel’s cultic and moral transgressions of the past induced YHWH to abandon his dwelling place and leave it to be judged. As a result, in Ezek 40–48 the concept of holiness is decoupled from the ethical realm. Moral transgressions cannot disrupt the future order of salvation. The catastrophe of 587/86 will never happen again, even if Israel remains ‘stiff-necked’, as long as the sacred space is protected from defilement.

⁴⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 452–53.

⁴⁹ Rudnig, *Heilig und profan*, 301.

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THE RELEVANCE OF PURITY IN SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM ACCORDING TO EZRA-NEHEMIAH

Benedikt Rausche

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout recent scholarly debate, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah have been regarded nearly unanimously as one composition, which in its final stage draws a dual portrait of Judean society in the Persian period under the reigns of the Achaemenid kings Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes.¹ This position has not remained unchallenged,² but it must nevertheless be noted that the composition contains clear links between the Ezra and the Nehemiah sections that (at least in part) may go back to a process of literary development that already included both components.

An account of the composition's literary development cannot be provided here, but we can distinguish between three different parts, each with its own distinct literary history, compiled to form a cohesive narrative. Thus, within the division between the Ezra and the Nehemiah sections, Ezra 1–6 should be treated as a separate unit.³

As one cohesive composition, Ezra-Nehemiah deals with the construction of identity after the exile, which culminates in two building accounts as well as the community's commitment to the Torah. All the attempts, material or non-material, to establish a common group identity are said to be challenged by enemies from outside and from within.

As will be shown, the topic of purity is used in Ezra-Nehemiah to stress the community's internal cohesion as well as to sharpen external

¹ See, e.g., the detailed discussion in Boda and Reddit, *Unity and Disunity*; Eskenazi, *Age of Prose*; Karrer, *Verfassung*; Steins, *Esra und Nehemia*, et al.

² See VanderKam, "Ezra-Nehemiah". The Masoretes regard Ezra and Nehemiah as one single book, for example by counting the words together and fixing a separate book ending not after Ezra 10 but only after Neh 13. The Septuagint regards both parts as a unity, too. Stylistic and thematic differences between Ezra and Nehemiah mentioned by VanderKam do not advocate for two independent books but can be explained by the compilation of different sources.

³ Cf., e.g., Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 107–9; Williamson, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, xviii–xxxii. This is an approximate division, of course, as several chapters remain disputed (cf. Neh 8; 9–10). But this is not crucial for the argumentation that will be presented within this paper.

boundaries. Furthermore, the community's relation to the sanctuary is a key to understanding the composition's notion(s) of purity.

Recently Hannah Harrington has assumed the following:

Although the sources of these books [Ezra and Nehemiah—BC] contain different nuances of thought on holiness and purity, they have been fit together by the compiler who presents a coherent ideology on holiness and purity which is startling in its innovation.⁴

Harrington's conclusion regarding the coherence of purity ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah, although drawn from a detailed analysis, might go a bit too far. As I will argue, there are indeed consistent conceptions throughout the composition, but the differences between certain texts regarding purity ought not to be underestimated. Thus it is more reasonable to speak of a discourse on, as well as developments in, purity ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah. After a brief overview of terminology concerning the topic in general, I will analyze each of the three parts that form the composition, concluding with a summary.

2. PURITY AND HOLINESS IN EZRA-NEHEMIAH

A first reading of the composition leads to the impression that cultic vocabulary is present but not extraordinarily prevalent.⁵ Nevertheless, a closer look shows that this language is of structural importance for the narrative.

In Ezra-Nehemiah, one of the great topics is the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem along with the (re)installation of a legitimate cult. The building of the temple especially dominates Ezra 1–6, but it is also an important motive throughout the following texts (e.g. Ezra 7–8; 10:1, 6; Neh 10:33–34; 13:4–31). Priests and Levites are frequently mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah, too.⁶ It is not surprising then that the authors take issue with the purity of the cult and its personnel. But the semantic field is not limited to texts on the sanctuary and its 'specialists'. Jerusalem, the land, the group of Judean inhabitants, as well as foreigners and their purity

⁴ Harrington, "Holiness and Purity", 115.

⁵ On the following, in general, see the detailed analysis by Harrington, "Holiness and Purity", *passim*.

⁶ Ezra 1:5; 2:36–63; 3:8–12; 6:16–22; 7:1–5, 7, 11; 8:15–36; 9:1; 10:18; Neh 3:1; 7:39–65; 8:7, 11, 13; 10:1; 12; 13.

status and its consequence for the holiness of the sanctuary are involved in this discourse, too.⁷ Looking only at purity terminology, the results are quite manageable:

The root טהר (pure/[to] purify) appears six times (Ezra 6:20; Neh 12:30 [twice]; 13:9, 22, 30); Neh 12:45 has a substantive form (טהרה). טמאה (impurity) occurs twice (Ezra 6:21; 9:11). The root נדה (impurity/impure) is used only in Ezra 9:11. גאל (pollute/pollution) is mentioned as a verb in Ezra 2:62 and Neh 7:64 (cf. the repetition of the list!) and as a substantive in Neh 13:29. The very strong, even polemical word תועבה (abomination), which includes cultic misdeeds (cf. Lev 18) and is sometimes connected with impurity, occurs in Ezra 9:11, 14.

All in all, purity terminology is limited to certain sections of Ezra-Nehemiah: besides the lists in Ezra 2/Neh 7, it can be found in Ezra 6:19–22; Ezra 9–10; Neh 12 and 13. Thus Blenkinsopp's observation of "the prevalence of specifically ritual language"⁸ is applicable only for some parts of the composition. But the brief overview provided here does not yet allow a final judgment on its relevance.

3. PURITY IN THE TEMPLE-BUILDING NARRATIVE

The survey of purity traditions in Ezra-Nehemiah starts with the narrative of the Golah group returning from Babylon after Cyrus's decree (cf. Ezra 1:1–4) and the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 1–6).

The list of returnees from the Babylonian Golah (Ezra 2:1–70/Neh 7:6–72) reports that some of the returnees, who are not able to account for their priestly genealogy, are excluded from the priesthood (מְזֵבְהֵנָה, cf. Ezra 2:61–63/Neh 7:63–65). In consequence, they are not allowed to eat from the 'holy of holies' (קֹדֶשׁ הַקֳּדָשִׁים), which probably means they cannot earn their living from the cult (cf. Num 18:9–10).

The root גאל occurs twelve times in the Hebrew Bible in relation to purity or cult. Dan 1:8 (twice, hithpael) describes Daniel's attempt not to defile himself by eating impure food. Isa 59:3 and Lam 4:14 express defilement with blood (in both cases probably referring metaphorically to immoral acts) using niph'al forms (cf. Zeph 3:1), while Isa 63:3 speaks

⁷ Harrington, among others, sees an extension of holiness here; see Harrington, "Holiness and Purity", 116.

⁸ Blenkinsopp, *Judaism*, 127. His assumption is mainly based on Ezra 9:2, 11; Ezra 6:21 and Neh 13:3.

of pollution with blood employing the hiphil. Mal 1:7, 12 mention the root twice in a pual and once in a piel form, discussing misdeeds in the context of sacrifice. A substantive deriving from the root can be found in Neh 13:29, where priestly malpractice is criticized.⁹

Mal 1:7, 12 provide the only other occurrences of גאל in a pual form besides Ezra 2/Neh 7.

Mal 1:7 refers to inadequate food (לחם, literally 'bread') offered on the altar of YHWH, polluting it and indicating contempt of YHWH.¹⁰ Mal 1:8 may explain why the offering is מגאל: Parallel to Mal 1:7, it offers the criticism that blemished animals had been offered.¹¹ Thus the offerings denoted by the term גאל are said to be not impure but defective.

In Ezra 2:62, a suitable translation of מן־הכהנה ויגאלו could thus be "they were excluded from the priesthood as inadequate".¹² This does not mean 'inadequate' only in technical terms. One must assume that the connotations of impurity and contempt are employed here intentionally. The criticized persons are not accused of being impure or profane directly, but they are nevertheless excluded from their priestly profession by doubts about their adequacy to be in contact with the holy. For the author of the list of returnees, priestly status certainly presupposes that there are no doubts about descent.¹³ Otherwise there would be the danger that the charged person would not be in the right condition to come into contact with the holy, which would be an act of disrespect towards YHWH. Thus, the text takes a certain polemical tone against the discharged 'wannabe-priests' that goes beyond only technical matters.

This exclusion will obtain until a priest appears who will be able to decide using Urim and Tummim (cf. Ezra 2:63/Neh 7:65). This means, however, that the decision is not necessarily permanent, which fits well with the understanding of גאל proposed here: it does not indicate immanent impurity in Ezra 2:62/Neh 7:64. It is a statement of temporary exclusion from a special profession. Exclusion is only an option with regard to the priesthood, as for lay persons no similar case is discussed in connec-

⁹ See below for further details.

¹⁰ See Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi*, 48, who points to the parallel use of גאל and בזה in Mal 1:6–7, 12.

¹¹ For the relation between Mal 1:7 and 8 and its implications for the meaning of גאל, cf. Reddit, *Malachi*, 164–65, and Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi*, 50, 57. For restrictions regarding offered animals, cf., e.g., Lev 22:18–25.

¹² The translation in the JPS Tanakh certainly is correct; it reads: "they were disqualified for the priesthood".

¹³ See Blenkinsopp, *Judaism*, 149–50.

tion to the list.¹⁴ A clear reference to the impurity of a certain group of people or lineage justifying their exclusion cannot be found, either in a ritual, a moral or a genealogical sense.¹⁵

Furthermore, compared to the texts that I will analyze below, it is striking that the struggle over the exclusion of groups from building the temple (cf., e.g., Ezra 4) also lacks any direct reference to purity.

At the end of the temple-building account, Ezra 6:19–22 reports the celebration of the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread. According to Ezra 6:20, the priests and the Levites purify (הטהרו) themselves and are said to all be pure (טהורים). Thus, they are able to slaughter the Passover offering explicitly for the returnees, the ‘sons of the Golah’. Performing a ritual such as this requires purity on the part of the cultic personnel. But there is another group mentioned who has to deal with (im)purity: those “who joined them in separating themselves from the impurity of the nations of the land to seek YHWH, the God of Israel” (6:21). Their separation is expressed by the root בָּדַל.¹⁶ This group, which does not originally belong to the returnees, has to leave behind the impurity of other groups (cf. the plural ‘nations’) in the land to attend the cult. It seems that there is a difference regarding purity between the Golah returnees as a legitimate community and other peoples in the land, who do not belong to the in-group automatically but are said to be in a state of impurity that has to be remedied before they may join the returnees in celebrating the Passover. For Ezra 1–6, the returnees are those who built the temple and excluded other people willing to join their project (cf. Ezra 4:1–3). They constitute a kind of ‘avant-garde’ of postexilic Yehûd. Without abandoning impurity, (polemically) ascribed to other groups living in the land, access to the Golah group, which is described as sanctuary centered by Ezra 1–6, is impossible.

When foreigners (גוֹיֵהָאֲרֵץ) are said to be impure (טמא as substantive), it is a kind of impurity explicitly connected to groups outside the Golah community, but it does not seem to be permanent or immanent, as they

¹⁴ Cf. 2:59–60, where a short note reports that three families were not able to prove their Israelite origins but did not suffer any consequences.

¹⁵ Contra Harrington, “Holiness and Purity”, 107, and Olyan, “Purity Ideology”, 9.

¹⁶ The root is common in a technical context in priestly texts, often related to the cult (normally in a Hiphil form). For the separation of the priests from lay people, cf. Num 8:14; 16:9, 21; Deut 10:8; Ezra 8:24. Perpetrators can be separated from the community, too (cf. Deut 29:20; Ezra 10:8). Additionally, the term is a technical one for the division between pure and impure (Lev 10:10) and can express the separation of something holy (cf. Exod 26:33; Ezek 42:20). See Otzen, “בָּדַל”, 518–520.

are able to separate themselves from it and join the Judean 'avant-garde'. The text does not establish an 'impermeable boundary'¹⁷ via purity ideology. Rather, it opens a door for foreigners labeled as impure not to be excluded from the community of Israel irreversibly.¹⁸ Ezra 6:21 probably represents a late concept that has to be confronted in Ezra 9–10, discussing the topic of inclusion and exclusion in a detailed and alternative way.¹⁹ A late dating of Ezra 6:19–22 is suggested by its dependence on 2 Chr 30, probably aimed at placing an ideal Passover feast against the background of the deficient one narrated by the Chronicler (cf. 2 Chr 30:17–19).

The topic of Ezra 6:21 differs from Ezra 2:61–63. In the list, the adequacy of priests was of concern. Ezra 6:21 seems to qualify all inhabitants of the land who do not belong to the group of returnees from the Babylonian Golah as explicitly impure but leaves open the possibility of their abandoning impurity and joining the community of the returnees at least in celebrating the Passover. Short notes on the synchronic and diachronic relation between Ezra 6:21 and Ezra 9–10 will be given below.

4. PURITY IN THE EZRA NARRATIVE

Ezra is one of the great figures representing the period of identity construction in Early Judaism. As his mission is to implement the Torah in Yehûd properly and to organize cultic affairs (cf. Ezra 7:12–26), he is also described as interested in purity and holiness.

In Ezra 8:24 the term בָּדַל (to separate) is used for the first time in the Ezra narrative, but in spite of the usage in 6:21, Ezra here separates out twelve priests who have to transport silver, gold and vessels for the temple in Jerusalem (cf. Ezra 8:25 and Num 8:14). The rationale given is the priests' sanctity, which allows them to carry the consecrated vessels (cf. Ezra 8:28). Ezra 8:33–34 notes their proper handover to priests and Levites in Jerusalem. Thus Ezra's mission starts with great care about holy equipment related to the temple that may illuminate the following narrative.

In Ezra 9:1, leaders in Jerusalem tell Ezra that the people of Israel as well as priests and Levites have failed to separate themselves (בָּדַל, niph'al) from the 'peoples of the lands' (עַמֵּי הָאָרְצוֹת). Their marriages with foreign

¹⁷ Cf. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 27–34.

¹⁸ A similar position may be found in Isa 56. Although the text lacks any purity terminology, it 'plays' with the term בָּדַל, also known from Ezra 6:21.

¹⁹ Cf. Neh 9:2; 10:29 and 13:3.

wives are seen as an offense against Israel's state of holiness, as the 'holy seed' (זרע הקדש) had mingled (ערב) with the 'peoples of the lands' (עמי הארצות; cf. Ezra 9:2).

The (dis)qualification of the 'peoples of the lands' as impure (cf. Ezra 9:11) and their connection with abominations (תועבת, cf. Lev 18:22, 26, 27, 29, 30) should be regarded as one of the narrative's main concerns.²⁰ Ezra 9:14 even denotes them 'peoples of these abominations' (עמי התעבות) (האלה). The contact between them and Israel as a holy people—here discussed in the context of marital relationship—is dangerous and prohibited because it could profane the holy community through impurity, disturbing its relation to the sanctuary and thus to YHWH. It would be an unfaithful act against something holy to YHWH, as expressed several times by the term מעל.²¹

There are parallels between Ezra 6:21 and Ezra 9 but also several incoherent aspects to be noted. Both use the term בדל (niph'al) and deal with separation from impurity (cf. Ezra 6:21 and 9:11) as well as the antagonism between Golah-Israel and other groups (cf. Ezra 9:1). This combination is otherwise unattested in the Hebrew Bible.

But whereas Ezra 6:21 uses גוי־הארץ ('nations of the land')²² to denote the out-group, Ezra 9 has עמי הארצות.²³ Whereas Ezra 9–10 seems to build upon the term עַם־הָאָרֶץ²⁴ and broaden the group excluded from the building of the temple in Ezra 4 via plural forms, Ezra 6:21 seems to be closer to 2 Chr 32:13, 17, where the form גוי הארצות ('nations of the lands') is used.

Moreover, Ezra 9:11 uses not only the root טמא but also נדה (twice) to denote impurity.

²⁰ The term is used 117 times in the Hebrew Bible to denote an abominable ethos, mainly opposing YHWH (cf. Lev 18:26, 29, 30; Deut 18:9, 12; 20:18; 32:16; 2 Kgs 16:3; 21:2; Jer 2:7; 16:18; 44:22, and 43 occurrences in the book of Ezekiel; cf. also Ezra 9:11, 14). Cf. Preuß, "תועבה", 580–92.

²¹ Cf. Ezra 9:2, 4, 6; 10:2, 6, 10. מעל denotes a misdeed against humans (cf. Num 5:12; Lev 5:21) or against God (cf. Josh 7:1; Num 5:6; Lev 5:15; Ezek 14:13–20). In the book of Ezekiel, it is used to express unfaithfulness against God; cf. Ezek 14:13–20. Milgrom deals with it in combination with the term אשם. See Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 345. According to Milgrom, מעל is "the legal term for the wrong that is redressed by the 'āšām" (for this notion cf. Lev 5:15, 21 and Num 5:6). Deut 32:51 has מעל as an antonym of holiness. For the threat to punish the desecration of Israel, cf. Jer 3:2–3.

²² The phrase only occurs in Ezra 6:21.

²³ 'Peoples of the lands', cf. Ezra 9:1, 2, 11; cf. also Ezra 10:2, 11 ('peoples of the land').

²⁴ Cf. Ezra 4:4: 'people of the land'—where probably the inhabitants of Samaria are meant, as the reference in Ezra 4:2 indicates.

Whereas in Ezra 6:21 it is possible for a non-member of the Golah to separate from the nations' uncleanness and join the community of Golah-Israel, in Ezra 9:11, 14, the peoples are connected with their impurity, namely their 'abhorrent practices', in a way that leaves open no possibility of getting rid of it. Thus Ezra 6:21 distinguishes between Golah-Israel and those who fulfill the required purity norms, on one hand, and those who do not fulfill them, on the other; but this difference requires a decision to be made by individuals or groups.²⁵

The borderline drawn by Ezra 9 seems to be of another kind. Ezra 9:11 states that YHWH had announced, through 'his servants, the prophets', that the land taken over by Israel was a 'land of uncleanness' (ארץ נדה) because of the peoples' impurities (נדות)²⁶ caused by 'their abominations (בתועבותיהם) with which they filled up the land from one end to another with their impurity (טמא)'.²⁷ The ideology of purity appears concentrated in this verse. In Ezra's prayer (Ezra 9:6–15), it is the key to understanding the necessity of the prohibition against mixed marriages.²⁸ The peoples' uncleanness has rendered the whole land unclean. Thus, a connection between the uncleanness of the prohibited groups and the uncleanness of the Canaanite peoples mentioned in Lev 18:24–27 is introduced here (cf. the list in Ezra 9:1).²⁹ The reference to 'abominations' mentioned in Lev 18 disqualifies the people both ethically and culturally. Israel as 'holy seed' has to separate from those peoples who are qualified not by holiness but by abominations and impurity. Otherwise Israel will endanger its existence in the land with the 'holy place', the sanctuary (cf. Ezra 9:8:

²⁵ The legal status of those who had separated themselves and joined Golah-Israel is not explicated further. Maybe this group is a kind of equivalent to the גרים, the foreigners dwelling in the midst of Israel, who are otherwise unattested in Ezra-Nehemiah. Cf. also Blenkinsopp, *Judaism*, 141–42.

²⁶ This term occurs in the Hebrew Bible 29 times in three different contexts: 1) impurity by menstruation; 2) impurity in general; 3) purification. See Milgrom and Wright, "נדה", 250–53.

²⁷ See Milgrom, "Dynamics", *passim*. Ritual impurity and holiness are incompatible. In the book of Leviticus, the exclusion of someone impure from the Israelite camp is based not necessarily on a notion of Israel as a holy people but on God's presence in the camp (cf., e.g., Num 5:2–3; in a temple-related context: Ezek 9:7).

For the sanctuary, cf. Ezek 5:11; 2 Chr 29:16.

²⁸ Note the reference to the prohibition in Exod 34:15–16 and Deut 7:3 here as well as in Ezra 9:1–2, which is expanded from a rationale based on denomination (foreign wives lead to apostasy) to a rationale based on cultic ideology.

²⁹ Cf. also Ezek 36:17, 25.

(מקום קדשו).³⁰ Israel, defined by its Golah history several times in the Ezra narrative (cf. Ezra 8:35; 9:4, 7; 10:6, 7, 8, 16), has to separate itself, just as the priests do (cf. Ezra 8:24!), because of its relation to the sanctuary. The identity of Israel is based on the self-definition of being returnees from the Babylonian Golah as well as being a group gathered around the sanctuary participating in its holiness. Those who do not belong to this community by birth are prohibited from entering, e.g., through marital relationships. The only solution for the ‘problem’ of mixed marriages then is to expel foreign wives (cf. Ezra 10), who would have been a steady source of impurity. The cultic sin (מעל) against the holiness of Israel, which has been profaned by the entry of the peoples’ impurity, has to be treated with an אִשָּׁמ -sacrifice, described in Lev 5:14–19 (cf. Ezra 10:19).

An interesting hypothesis has been added to the discussion by David Janzen, who observes an analogy with the separation of Israel anticipated in Ezra 9 and Lev 15:31.³¹ This reference could be strengthened by noting Ezra 9:14, in which Ezra expresses his fear that mixed marriages could even lead to the extinction of the rest of Israel. Lev 15:31 sees uncleanness as deadly dangerous for Israel, too, as it would defile God’s dwelling place in the midst of his people. The problem in Ezra 9–10 would be frequent contamination of the community and thus the danger that the sanctuary would come into contact with impurity. Janzen supports his theory with reference to Jacob Milgrom, who states that holiness and impurity are opposing terms.³² A sanctuary-centered community that imposes special restrictions on itself could by no means tolerate the ‘infiltration’ by persons/groups regarded as unclean. This explains the emphatic ending of Ezra’s prayer (cf. 9:14–15) very well.

In opposition to Ezra 6:21, impurity is not reversible for outsiders in Ezra 9. As Ezra 6:19–22 seems to be close to Chronicles, a late dating is to be supposed. The verse therefore has to be seen as a late correction of implications that could be deduced from Ezra 9–10. Arguing for the opposite direction of dependence would make it quite awkward for Ezra 9–10 to deal at such great length with the case and not talk about the Passover, focusing instead only on mixed marriages as a threat to Israelite existence

³⁰ Note that living in the presence of ‘his holy place’ is seen as an act of divine mercy in the Ezra prayer.

³¹ Janzen, *Witch-hunts*, 40–41.

³² For Janzen’s argument, see in detail Janzen, *Witch-hunts*, 54–83; 114–15. For Milgrom’s thesis, cf. Milgrom, “Dynamics”.

within the land.³³ The peoples in Ezra 6:21 are able to separate themselves from their impurities, whereas in Ezra 9–10 the only possible outcome is separation from the peoples as a whole.³⁴

But Ezra 6:19–22 does not correct the view on mixed marriages. It is focused on the celebration of the Passover. Thus, an ideal picture of this feast is drawn in accordance with the Torah, where even foreigners are allowed to attend the Passover (Num 9:14). Exod 12:48 connects permission to take part in the feast with circumcision.³⁵ In Ezra 6:21, permission to attend is connected to purity because the identity marker par excellence is the temple. Circumcision probably was not useful for establishing clear boundaries here, as other groups surrounding the Golah-Judeans practiced it, too.³⁶

A strict exegesis of Ezra 9–10 would also have prohibited the inclusion of foreigners from the cultic community celebrating the Passover, as the chapters argue in favor of radical separation. Ezra 6:21 does not necessarily deny the separation of Golah-Israel, centered on the temple, from the others, but it permits other groups to join the cult if they fulfill specific purity requirements and are willing to seek the God of Israel. They remain a separate group but are not totally excluded from the cult. Perhaps Ezra 6:21 intends to fill a gap within the conceptual world of Ezra-Nehemiah: In contrast to the Torah, the composition does not discuss possible legitimate status of a resident alien, a גַּל, within Israel. Although no legal consequences are drawn from Ezra 6:21, the creative application of purity ideology in this verse probably allows a conditioned integration analogous to pentateuchal law.

Ezra 6:21 reveals a theological reflection that goes beyond Ezra 9–10, where purity ideology is the vehicle in an elaborate attempt to secure the identity of the Golah group on the contentious issue of marital relationships. In both cases, postexilic identity appears to be centered on temple and cult. Both arguments aim at conformity with Torah by employing

³³ Contra Grätz, *Edikt*, 57–58. Cf. Pakkala, *Ezra*, 69–73.

³⁴ The different terms used for denoting the out-group also argue for post-dating Ezra 6:21. Otherwise one would have to explain why it is not taken up in Ezra 9–10. The usage in Ezra 6:21, on the other hand, is explicable by reference to dependence on 2 Chr 30.

³⁵ This seems to be in line with the attitude of Neh 10:29, a clearly late part of the composition that is dependent on the Ezra material.

³⁶ Ezek 44:7 refers to circumcision in the context of the forbidden access of foreigners to the temple but does not discuss the possibility that the foreigners could be willing to be circumcised. Isa 56:1–8 seems to be closer to Ezra 6:21: The foreigner who observes Shabbat and is willing to adhere to God's covenant is not separated (בָּדֵל) from the people of God but included. He even has access to the temple (cf. Isa 56:7).

purity ideology for their interest, but they come to different conclusions about the question of inclusion or exclusion. In both cases the moral and the ritual meaning of purity is relevant. Neither dimension can be divided in voting for one specification of purity against the other.

5. NEHEMIAH AND PURITY

If the building of the temple is the central topic of Ezra 1–10, then certainly the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem is central to the Nehemiah section. This does not just denote a functional act in order to defend the city. In Neh 11:1, 18, Jerusalem is called ‘the holy city’ (עיר הקדש), and Neh 12:27–43 describe the wall’s consecration in cultic terms. In Neh 12:30, the priests and the Levites purify themselves (ויטהרו) before they purify the people and, uniquely in the OT, the gates and the walls of the city, too. Jerusalem, which contains the sanctuary and the people living within the city, has to be in a state of purity similar to the priests. This short observation reveals an analogy with the Ezra part of the composition: In both cases, the holiness of the sanctuary is expanded and thus requires an expanded obedience to purity restrictions.

Neh 12:45 then notes, within a list of priestly duties (12:44–47), the ‘charge of purity’ (ומשמרת הטהרה) as part of the priests’ and Levites’ duties. It is paralleled by the ‘charge of their god’. The two phrases seem to describe the priestly and Levite duties as a whole. After the report of the dedication of the wall, the priests and the Levites are said to be fulfilling their duties in an ideal way, explicitly mentioning the care taken over purity. The liturgically organized dedication of the wall is supplemented by the picture of the ideally operating cult personnel, stressing the relevance of purity.

In Neh 13 the topic of exclusion of foreign influence appears again in relation to purity terminology. In Neh 13:4–9 Tobiah, one of Nehemiah’s notorious enemies and at several points representative of dangerous foreign influence³⁷—he is normally referred to as ‘the Ammonite’³⁸—is given a room within the temple by the high priest Eliashib. Ironically, Tobiah is also called a relative of Eliashib (cf. 13:4). The room had been storage for temple equipment before. Nehemiah regards this act as ‘evil’

³⁷ Cf. Neh 2:10, 19; 3:35; 4:1; 6:1, 12, 14, 17–19.

³⁸ Note that Ammonites are to be excluded from the community according to Deut 23:4–9, which is adopted in the late addition of Neh 13:1–3.

(cf. 13:7) and forces Tobiah to leave, taking his possessions with him. In 13:9 he then orders that the rooms of the temple be purified (ויטהרו). This action certainly aims in several directions:

First of all, Tobiah, a Yahwist by name, is treated like a foreigner and excluded from the Judean community. Nehemiah's view of the postexilic community clearly aims at a distinct Judean identity, contrasted by his enemies who are often (dis)qualified by different ethnonyms.³⁹ When a room Tobiah had used is to be purified, his presence is regarded as a source of impurity. He is not allowed to participate in the temple cult and therefore has no share in the postexilic community defined by its relation to the sanctuary.

Second, it is not enough to purify only the room used by Tobiah, but several rooms must be purified, as the Masoretic Text states in 13:9.⁴⁰ In consequence, the mere presence of a foreigner casts an intolerable impurity on the sanctuary. This impurity is not necessarily bound to Tobiah's foreignness but more likely derives from the illegitimate usage of rooms within the temple by an unauthorized person. Thus the purification of more than one room could point to doubts as to Eliashib's competence regarding purity in general, rather than at a contagious gentile impurity.

The text criticizes the high priest for allowing foreign influence to cause impurity via unauthorized presence within the temple. Moral and ritual dimensions of impurity are intermingled here, as the unacceptable presence in the temple seems to be a moral misdeed that affects the rooms of the sanctuary ritually (cf. the purification ordered by Nehemiah). The high priest is shown to be incompetent in his *métier* of distinguishing between pure and impure (cf. Lev 10:10–11; Neh 12:45). Nehemiah has to correct him in the central sphere of priestly authority.

According to Saul Olyan, the story of Neh 13:4–9 represents an idea of impurity deriving from an older priestly tradition of ritual impurity.⁴¹ In Olyan's view, the notice about Nehemiah ordering the purification of the temple's chambers after the expulsion of Tobiah points to an attitude against foreigners that regards them as ritually impure. Thus Tobiah himself, not his unacceptable presence or use of a room, would have to be

³⁹ Cf. the frequent occurrence of the term יְהוּדִי (Neh 1:2; 2:16; 3:33–34; 4:6; 5:1, 8, 17; 6:6; 13:23)—a clear difference from Ezra. See also Karrer, *Verfassung*, 81; 147–61.

⁴⁰ Many translations render the plural into a singular, following the Septuagint. But this is not necessary. The Masoretic text provides the *lectio difficilior*.

⁴¹ Cf. Olyan, "Purity Ideology", 10–12.

seen as a source of ritual impurity.⁴² This is a possible conclusion, too, but the problem of impurity is not directly related to foreignness in the text.⁴³ Thus, it still remains more plausible that the problem is an unauthorized person using the temple and storing unauthorized items in it. Foreigners would not be said to be ritually impure in that case, but Nehemiah's foreign enemy would be depicted as defiling the sanctuary through his actions.

In Rainer Albertz's view, Nehemiah excludes notorious enemies from the province of Yehûd via the polar opposites pure/impure.⁴⁴ While Tobiah is attacked directly, the priest is challenged indirectly. Beneath the political implications stated by Albertz, Neh 13:4–9 implicitly represents a mistrust of foreigners entering the sanctuary.⁴⁵

In Neh 13:23–29, Nehemiah has to end the same mechanism of foreign influence as in Ezra 9–10: mixed marriages. Nehemiah first criticizes Judean men who had married foreign wives, because their children did not learn to speak 'יהודית'⁴⁶ properly (cf. Neh 13:23–24).⁴⁷ Thereupon Nehemiah refers to biblical traditions prohibiting mixed marriages, such as Deut 7:3; Exod 34:15–16 (Neh 13:25) and the traditions about Solomon's foreign wives (Neh 13:26; cf. 1 Kgs 11:1–13). For Nehemiah those marriages are an unfaithful act (cf. מעל in Neh 13:27). The precise nature of the offense in Neh 13:27 cannot be specified. From the context of ch. 13, with its activities to secure temple and cult, it is possible to understand mixed marriages, denoted as מעל, as an offense against the sanctuary, even when only lay people are involved. But as there is no act of atonement mentioned and Nehemiah does not seek a solution with the same urgency as Ezra, the root may imply only a general offense against God. Thus an

⁴² Cf. Olyan, "Purity Ideology", 11.

⁴³ In Neh 13:4–9, Tobiah is not explicitly called 'the Ammonite'.

⁴⁴ See Albertz, "Purity Strategies", 203–4. Blenkinsopp sees "Nehemiah's specific contribution (...) in the application of ritual principles to politics"; cf. Blenkinsopp, *Judaism*, 143.

⁴⁵ Not only must the holy place be defended against foreign influence, but Shabbat as holy time is under attack by the action of Tyrian traders, too (Neh 13:15–22). Trade on Shabbat is a profanation of the holy day (cf. Neh 13:17, 18; see also Neh 10:32), which Nehemiah wants to stop immediately. The traders are forced to stay out on Shabbat. In 13:22 he asks the Levites to purify themselves (מטהרים) and to guard the gates in order to sanctify Shabbat (לקדש את יום השבת). Blenkinsopp observes an amplification of the Levitical charge to guard the sanctuary here; cf. Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 361.

⁴⁶ Certainly Hebrew is meant; cf. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 397.

⁴⁷ In consequence they would not be able to participate in the cult. But the differences between 'Ashdodit' and 'Yehudit' should not be overestimated; cf. Kottsieper, *Yehudit*, 100–101.

ideology that sees Israel's existence in the land as endangered by contact between holiness and impurity cannot be detected here.

In Neh 13:28–30 purity is clearly at stake. A grandson of Eliashib has married a daughter of Sanballat (cf. Neh 13:28).⁴⁸ Nehemiah's reaction is to expel the couple. Perhaps both families had in mind a cross-border alliance (cf. Neh 6:18), or perhaps they did not even recognize a border between their families. Though he had only criticized those lay people who had married foreign wives, not taking official steps against those marriages, Nehemiah is not willing to tolerate this case.

In Neh 13:29 we find Nehemiah pleading to God to remember 'them' (לָהֶם). This remembrance would, of course, not be a positive one, as it is a result of 'their' pollution (לְאָג) of "the priesthood and of the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites". Here לְאָג is used again, probably in relation to the mixed-marriage crisis narrated before but perhaps including Neh 13:4–9, too, as Eliashib—and therefore the main representative of the priesthood—is involved both times.

Neh 13:29 calls for the rejection of the marriages not by, for example, explicitly citing the restrictions for priests given in Lev 21:7, 13–15 but by accusing them of having polluted the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites. Perhaps this refers to the covenant of Levi known from Mal 2:1–9, which the priests are said to have broken (cf. Mal 2:8). This allusion is situated in a context of prophetic criticism of mixed marriages. If Judah is said to have desecrated the sanctuary of YHWH by marrying "the daughter of a foreign god" (cf. Mal 2:11), it is the priests' failure for not having prevented such an act.⁴⁹

Again, it is not clear that לְאָג refers to pollution in a ritual sense, and at any rate it seems that the priests' misbehavior is responsible, not the impurity of foreigners. There seems to be an analogy between Neh 13:28–30 and the list of returnees in Ezra 2/Neh 7 terminologically as well as thematically: The term לְאָג is used in the context of preventing priestly families from bringing potential foreign influences into the province in both texts. But there are also differences, as in the list normal priestly families are at the center of attention, while Nehemiah deals with the high priest's family. Contrary to Neh 13:28–30, Ezra 2/Neh 7 mentions

⁴⁸ For possible historical backgrounds cf. Wright, *Rebuilding Identity*, 261–67; Knoppers, "Nehemiah and Sanballat".

⁴⁹ Cf. the idealized figure of Phineas in Num 25 as well as the violent reaction of Levi to the rape of Dinah and the Shechemite proposal to intermarry. For a detailed analysis of the relation between Neh 13:29 and Num 25, see Frevel, "Bund".

neither expulsion nor purification, as no pollution of the priesthood itself is reported.

Nehemiah broadens the prohibition of exogamy for the high priest (cf. Lev 21:14–15), at least to the high priest's family. This seems to be in line with the tendency of Ezek 44:22, where exogamy is prohibited for all the priests.⁵⁰ גאל is perhaps best translated as 'contempt' here, similarly to Ezra 2:62/Neh 7:64. Eliashib and others disrespected the priestly duties that the author of Neh 13 regarded as important. This is the second time that Eliashib is challenged by Nehemiah in the field of purity and therefore in his priestly competence. Neh 13 in general casts doubts on the competence of the priests concerning purity, holiness and the observance of Shabbat. It therefore has similarities to the book of Ezekiel (cf. e.g. Ezek 7:26 and 22:26) on this level, too.⁵¹

Neh 13:30 reports that Nehemiah had purified (טהרתים) 'them' from everything foreign (מכל-נכר). To whom exactly that refers is not entirely clear, but the following allusion, which specifies Nehemiah's actions for priests and Levites, suggests that the 'Yehudim' in general are meant. Foreign influence is regarded as a source of impurity. Neh 13:30 probably refers not only to 13:28–29 but to the whole chapter, mainly dealing with foreign presence and its consequences. The mention of purification aims not at gentile impurity applied to Israel but at foreign presence within postexilic Yehûd, especially at the cultic nerve-center of the sanctuary (or the sacred time of Shabbat). According to Neh 13:4–30, impurity occurs when foreigners are in the wrong place at the wrong time. Their unauthorized presence in or close to the sanctuary or its personnel can cause pollution, which endangers the community as a whole. Thus, access to the cult is limited and people denoted non-Judeans are excluded from the inner circle of power in the province, which is represented by the cult as the core of Judean identity.

Christine Hayes tries to explain the relationship between foreigners, impurity and exclusion with the label 'genealogical impurity'.⁵² This means that gentiles themselves are not impure, but rather the mixing of holy and profane seed produces profane or, in the case of priests, impure descendants. Purification would mean the prevention of such

⁵⁰ Neh 13:4–9 seems to be close to Ezek 44, too: entrance into the sanctuary is limited to Levites and Zadokite priests there (cf. Ezek 44:7–16; v. 7 deals with the forbidden presence of foreigners in the sanctuary as a violation of the covenant).

⁵¹ See Blenkinsopp, *Judaism*, 145–46.

⁵² Cf. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 28–29.

descendants.⁵³ That kind of impurity would establish a strict boundary between 'in' and 'out'.

Saul Olyan observes a combination of the idea of moral impurity (cf. the references to Lev 18 and 20) with marital restrictions for the priests (cf. Lev 21:7, 13–15; Ezek 44:22) in Neh 13. Whereas Ezra 9 was concerned with the desecration of the holy, here defilement would be the problem. Olyan agrees with Hayes that mixed marriages in Neh 13:28–30 pollute the priestly genealogy.

Contra Hayes and Olyan, it seems questionable that the text deals with genealogical impurity. Nothing is said about the children of mixed marriage in the high priest's family. Instead, the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites is at stake. Purity is endangered by a lack of boundaries protecting the sanctuary from foreign influence. From the point of view of Neh 13, mixed marriages of priests are intolerable because priests are in contact with and thus have to protect the sanctuary; in contrast, lay persons are only criticized for mixed marriages.

The texts in Neh 13 deal with the limitation of access to the sphere of holiness rather than consequences for the high-priestly genealogy. The pattern of identity is clear: It includes only those belonging to the in-group, who are defined as Judeans by Nehemiah.

Purity terminology is used in Neh 13 differently than it is in Ezra 9:11, as it does not refer to a danger to the holiness of Israel as a people. The priests, and especially Eliashib, are criticized here, for they have not defended the sanctuary, the core of Judean identity, from non-Judean influence. The aim is to declare Nehemiah's enemies incompatible with the center of postexilic life, and the priests in charge incompetent.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Ezra-Nehemiah does not represent a totally unified system of purity.⁵⁴ But the idea of an expansion of holiness beyond the sanctuary, to the people as well as to the city of Jerusalem in general, is the base upon which different notions of purity depend. The centrality of the sanctuary and the protection that this center of identity needs must be seen as rationales for the discourse on exclusion and inclusion in Ezra-Nehemiah, but the

⁵³ Cf. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 28.

⁵⁴ Pace Harrington, *Holiness and Purity*, 115–16.

conclusions are as different as the circles engaged in the process of the literary development of Ezra-Nehemiah.

For Neh 13:4–9, 28–30, it must be noted that the moral aspect is central to the pollution of the priestly covenant that disqualifies the temple establishment. Most likely a political-religious conflict lies in the background here. Another aim is to show certain groups of non-residents in Yehûd to be untrustworthy regarding the center of Judean identity, which at the same time is the center of power. This is done not by reference to an immanent ritual or a genealogical impurity but by showing contact between outsiders and the cult to be inadequate: A foreigner uses a room of the temple illegitimately, provoking a cultic misdeed; mixed marriages violate the commandments of the Torah, too—for lay persons (cf. Neh 13:25) as well as, especially, for the high priest's family (cf. Lev 21:14). The marital relationships represent an illegitimate contact between the sanctuary, represented by its personnel, and foreign influence.

Through the idea of extended holiness, new questions concerning the correct behavior of the holy people emerge. Ezra 9–10 answers them with a radical, exclusivist position linking those denoted foreigners with impurity, which then, although described in ethical terms, appears to be a kind of immanent impurity, oscillating between ritual and moral connotations. It is important to note that we are not on a one-way road to exclusivism here, as can be seen in Ezra 6:21, where it is possible for foreigners to separate from impurity. The concepts of postexilic community were shifting between an exclusivist Golah identity, an ethnic Judean identity and more inclusivist concepts. The prevalent and common core of Judean identity for all these concepts remains the sanctuary as well as the importance of purity.

Joseph Blenkinsopp observes a “policy of ritual ethnicity”⁵⁵ in Ezra-Nehemiah based on the temple law in Ezek 44. Its train of thought would have been as follows:

Since the political community is also, and essentially, a cult community, participation in the cult is an essential condition for membership. But if those of foreign descent are forbidden entry to the temple, they cannot participate in the cult and are thereby excluded from membership in the community.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Blenkinsopp, *Judaism*, 144. On the relationship between the ideology of Ezra-Nehemiah and the book of Ezekiel, cf. 133–59.

⁵⁶ Blenkinsopp, *Judaism*, 144–45.

The community would constitute itself by its relation to the sanctuary—and foreigners, qualified as inadequate for this relationship, could not be part of it. The ideology observed by Blenkinsopp cannot be found explicitly throughout the whole composition of Ezra-Nehemiah. Ezra 6:21 seems to go in another direction and Neh 13 mainly deals with the inner circle of political and religious power (cf. the lax treatment of mixed marriages by lay people). Nevertheless, Blenkinsopp's summary fits the position expressed by Ezra 9–10 very well.

The question of purity and impurity, exclusion and inclusion, is always related to the holiness of the temple. Purity ideologies remain crucial for the definition of postexilic community according to Ezra-Nehemiah, in so far as they regulate legitimate access to the center of identity.

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PURITY CONCEPTS IN JEWISH TRADITIONS OF THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD*

Beate Ego

Whereas biblical, rabbinical and comparative religious studies have dealt extensively with the topic of 'purity', this research discourse has only been reviewed to a minor extent in reference to the Hellenistic period of ancient Judaism. In this context, the main interest of such research focuses on the purity concepts of a number of literary works from this period, such as the book of Jubilees,¹ the oeuvres of Philo² and Josephus³ and the Qumran literature.⁴ Focus is also placed on such issues as the moral aspect of purity⁵ or the relationship between purity and the temple.⁶ Usually, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha are covered in a few sentences in the relevant articles and surveys. What is still lacking is a comprehensive overview of early Jewish purity discourses, their developments and mutual references.

There are several reasons for this virtual 'white spot' in research into the purity discourse of ancient Judaism. The first reason is related to the subject matter itself, since it is rather difficult to access the relevant material. Unlike biblical tradition and rabbinical literature, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, which together with the Dead Sea Scrolls must be regarded as the most important sources of ancient Judaism in Hellenistic times, do not contain a separate 'purity Halakha'; instead, recourse to the topic of purity takes place *en passant* in the narrative context. Very often,

* I would like to thank Ms Judith Spangenberg for translating the text.

¹ Cf. Döring, "Purity and Impurity"; Hayes, "Intermarriage and Impurity"; Himmelfarb, "Sexual Relations"; Milgrom, "Concept of Impurity"; Ravid, "Purity and Impurity"; Regev, "Pure Individualism"; VanderKam, "Viewed from Another Angle"; Werman, "Concept of Holiness".

² Rhodes, "Diet and Desire".

³ Castelli, "Josephan Halakha".

⁴ Concerning the traditions of Qumran, cf. the contribution by Gudrun Holtz in this volume, 519–36.

⁵ Cf. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*. A critical discussion with Klawans can be found in Haber, "They Shall Purify", 40–46.

⁶ Neusner, *Idea of Purity*. A critical discussion with Neusner can be found in Haber, "They Shall Purify", 31–40.

these texts only implicitly refer to the theme of purity, without using the relevant terminology.⁷

Besides these difficulties, research itself is also responsible for the current situation: the occasional claim that we only encounter an unoriginal and epigonic extension of the Hebrew Bible's purity discourse in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha⁸ denies every diachronic development between biblical traditions and early Jewish texts of Hellenistic times. Accordingly, little interest in this theme is aroused and no analysis is initiated.

In the following, I would like to stress that such a view of early Jewish purity discourse is a misjudgment. On the basis of three exemplary traditions from Hellenistic times, I will show that purity discourses are apparent in non-biblical ancient Judaism. Indeed, some such purity discourses can claim originality and creativity and therefore go beyond the Hebrew Bible's concepts of purity.

1. THE NARRATION OF THE FALL OF THE ANGELS IN THE BOOK OF THE WATCHERS (1 EN. 6–16)

The story of the watchers in 1 *En.* 6–16 plays a prominent role in Jewish texts from the Hellenistic Period that deal with the themes of 'purity' and 'impurity'.⁹ This tradition, being an interpretation of Gen 6:1–4,¹⁰ belongs

⁷ An example from the Tobit tradition: the statements that old Tobit stays away from the meals of the Gentiles (Tob 1:10–11) and washes himself after burying the dead (Tob 2:9) need to be seen in the context of the concepts of dietary law and impurity caused by the dead. However, it goes without saying that the corresponding terms cannot be found. The situation is similar for the figure of the demon Asmodeus, who kills Sara's husbands. As I have pointed out elsewhere, he can be understood as a symbolization of the alien; the conflict with the demon needs to be interpreted against the background of the endogamy commandment; cf. Ego, "Rolle des Dämons", 309–17.

⁸ Wandrey, "Rein und unrein", 245; Wandrey, "Reinigung", 252; Goldenberg, "Reinheit", 483–87.

⁹ There are many publications on this text. Concerning the text tradition, cf. Black, *Apocalypsis Henochi*; Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book*; Milik, *Books of Enoch*; Uhlig, *Äthiopisches Henochbuch*. Important studies include: Bartelmus, *Heroentum*; Bedenbender, *Gott der Welt*; Black, *Book of Enoch*; Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*; Collins, "Apocalyptic Technique"; Dimant, "1 Enoch 6–11"; Hanson, "Rebellion in Heaven"; Losekam, *Sünde der Engel*; Newsom, "Development"; Nickelsburg, "Apocalyptic and Myth"; Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*; Reed, "The Trickery of the Fallen Angels"; Stuckenbruck, "The Origins of Evil"; Suter, "Fallen Angel"; an excellent research overview of the different works can be found in Wright, *Origin*, 11–50.

¹⁰ This is the opinion of most researchers; however, cf. Witte, *Urgeschichte*, 293–97, who defines the relationship between Gen 6:1–4 and 1 *En.* 6–19 as a literary coexistence and assumes that both texts have a common source.

to the earliest parts of the Ethiopian Enoch. According to J. T. Milik, who edited this tradition's Aramaic fragments from Qumran, this text dates back to the end of the 3rd or to the early 2nd century.¹¹

As already pointed out, the story of the watchers has undergone multi-stage growth: An older layer, the so-called Shemihazah myth, was connected secondarily with a kind of Jewish Prometheus myth. This myth states that divine beings had illegally shared their knowledge of different cultural achievements with humans. This tradition was then linked to the Enoch tradition.¹²

A closer examination reveals that the theme of impurity plays a central role in this tradition. The Shemihazah myth tells of angels who desire the beautiful daughters of man and who wish to father children with them. With this aim in mind, a group of 200 angels, headed by Shemihazah, descended to earth to mix with the daughters of man. Whereas at this point Ethiopian Enoch says that the watchers had 'mixed' (*tadammaru*) with the women, the Greek Panopolitanus and Syncellus state that the angels had 'defiled' themselves (μαίνεσθαι ἐν αὐταῖς; 7:1). The women become pregnant and give birth to giants, leading to a time of chaos and disaster: The world and man are no longer able to feed these giants. Thus, the text states:

4 And the giants began to kill men and to devour them. 5 And they began to sin against the birds and beasts and creeping things and the fish, and to devour one another's flesh. And they drank the blood. 6 Then the earth brought accusation against the lawless ones. (1 *En.* 7:4–6)¹³

The motif of angels sharing the knowledge and skills reserved for the celestial world with man is integrated into this tradition by stating that the angels taught man how to enchant and how to cut roots and plants (8:3). They also disclosed to man information about manufacturing weapons, metal working, make-up and astronomy (8:1).

Man's complaint about the giants' acts of violence is brought before God through the angels Michael, Uriel, Raphael and Gabriel; it then becomes apparent that the watchers' sin is their defilement.

¹¹ Concerning the dating, cf. Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 24–25; cf. also the overview in Wright, *Origin*, 23–28.

¹² Concerning the literary criticism, cf. Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch*, 191–93; cf. also Newsom, "Development", 310–29, and the overview in Wright, *Origin*, 29–37.

¹³ Quoted according to the translation by Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch*, 182.

8 They have gone in to the daughters of the men of earth, and they have lain with them, and have defiled themselves with the women. And they have revealed to them all sins, and have taught them to make hate-producing charms. 9 And now behold, the daughters of men have borne sons from them, giants, half-breeds (9:8–9).¹⁴

Eventually, God announces the angels' punishment: Asaryalyur is ordered to announce the flood to Noah to enable him and his family to escape. In contrast, Raphael is instructed to tell Asa'el, who was instrumental in imparting the secrets, that he will be abandoned in the desert until he meets his death in the burning heat on Judgment Day. The earth, however, should be healed (1 *En.* 10:4–8). Gabriel again is sent to the “bastards, the half-breeds, to the sons of miscegenation” (10:9); he shall drag the children of the watchers into war against each other so that they will be destroyed (1 *En.* 10:9–10). Finally, it is Michael's task to let Shemihazah and the other watchers know that they will perish because they united themselves with women and “defiled themselves in their uncleanness” (10:11).¹⁵ After being bound for 70 generations, they shall be burnt on Judgment Day (1 *En.* 10:12ff.). Then the beginning of a new era will follow, for Michael shall destroy all acts of violence on the earth's surface so that justice and truth will rule and God will bless the earth (1 *En.* 10:16–11:2).

In a subsequent Enoch tradition, 1 *En.* 12–16, Enoch must announce the judgment to the watchers because they “forsook the highest heaven, the sanctuary of the(ir) eternal station, and defiled themselves with woman” (12:4).¹⁶ The watchers react to Enoch's words by asking him to provide intercession for them before God. Enoch therefore ascends before God's heavenly throne; however, the divine judgment is confirmed. Here again, the accusation of defilement plays a significant role:

3 Why have you forsaken the high heaven, the eternal sanctuary; and lain with women, and defiled yourselves with the daughters of men; and taken for yourselves wives, and done as the sons of earth; and begotten for yourselves sons, giants? 4 You were holy ones and spirits, living forever. With the blood of women you have defiled yourselves, and with the blood of flesh you have begotten; and with the blood of men you have lusted, and you have done as they do—flesh and blood, who die and perish. (1 *En.* 15:3–4)¹⁷

¹⁴ Quoted according to the translation by Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch*, 202. ‘Half-breeds’ is attested to in the Greek Syncellus manuscript; cf. Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch*, 204.

¹⁵ Quotations according to Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch*, 215.

¹⁶ Quoted according to the translation by Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch*, 234.

¹⁷ Quoted according to the translation by Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch*, 267.

As a result of this accusation,¹⁸ judgment over the watchers' children is proclaimed. However, this is an intensification compared to the judgment proclaimed in *1 En.* 10:9–13, in that it is said that the giants' spirits will continue to exist on earth even after their death; their disastrous acts will not find an end before Judgment Day.

After this close examination of *1 En.* 6–16, we must ask how precisely the concept of purity and impurity inherent in this tradition can be conceived. Our text reveals a variety of approaches:

- a) According to *1 En.* 7:1; 9:8 and 12:4, uncleanness is simply due to sexual contact.¹⁹
- b) *1 En.* 10:11 refers to contact with women's blood, e.g. to menstrual impurity.²⁰
- c) The mention of 'half-breeds' (αἰβδηλα) in *1 En.* 9:9 (Syncecellus) and in *1 En.* 10:9, 15 provides a further pattern for the defilement mentioned in this text, since it links the defilement of the angels to the *sha'atnez* laws.²¹ Whereas in the Hebrew Bible these laws are connected to the commingling of different animals, seeds or fabric materials such as wool and flax (cf. Lev 19:19; see also Deut 22:11), 4QMMT uses this expression to describe the illegitimate marriage between priests and levites.²²
- d) The term 'bastards' (μαῖζηρέους—ממזריא) in *1 En.* 10:9 hints at "the offspring of a union forbidden in the law".²³ However, it is difficult to determine what kind of illegitimate relationship is alluded to.

¹⁸ There is only brief reference to the revelation of divine secrets here; cf. 13:1–2 and 16:3; on this, cf. Losekam, *Sünde* 69f.

¹⁹ For 7:1 and 9:8, cf. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 184. Concerning the biblical source of impurity through intercourse, cf. Lev 15:18.

²⁰ Cf. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 225. According to Nickelsburg, 15:3 should be understood against the background of menstrual impurity; however, the context of this statement makes it more plausible to interpret 'blood' as a symbol of human carnal existence, which is opposed to the spiritual existence of angels; see below. For the issue of menstrual impurity, see Lev 15:19ff.

²¹ See Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 213; 223; cf. also *1 En.* 7:1 (Aeth) 'to mix'.

²² Cf. Qimron, *Miqṣat Maaše Ha-Tora*, 172–73; Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 213; Lange, "Daughters", 32: "Like the offspring of two different breeds of animals or a garment made out of two different kinds of materials the giants are flawed as they are the offspring of a union of two different kinds. Hence, in the Shemihazah myth the defilement of the watchers results from a mixture of two things which do not belong together, i.e. the watchers' intercourse with women".

²³ See Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 223.

- e) Finally, *1 En.* 15:3 implies a dualistic worldview: the watchers defiled themselves because they crossed the cosmic boundaries between heaven and earth. In her dissertation, Claudia Losekam highlights the point that, unlike *1 En.* 6–11, here the angels' sin is not the infringement of divine sexual regulations but rather the angels' self-denial and thus a denial of the order God created. In this context, the 'blood' refers to the carnal existence of man and not, as in *1 En.* 10:11, to menstrual impurity. In that way, the punishment of the angels no longer being allowed to ascend to the heavenly realms (*1 En.* 14:5) is only consistent, as it complies with their self-selected belonging to the earthly world.

To summarize: the story of the watchers in its final form alludes to a variety of types of impurity, e.g., impurity through intercourse or through menstrual blood, illegitimate marital unions in general, violation of the *sha'atnez* laws and the angels' transgression of the cosmological order by leaving the celestial world.²⁴ This polyphony of purity concepts suggests that the story does not polemicize against one special violation of the purity Torah but rather focuses on the overall concept of 'purity' as a paradigm in general. However, it may be assumed on the one hand that this tradition includes criticism of the priesthood, which became unclean in the ways of the halakha by not adhering to the priestly requirements for purity, particularly with regard to legitimate marriage.²⁵ On the other hand, it may also disagree with the idea that heavenly beings transgress cosmic boundaries, as presupposed in Hellenistic imperial cults.²⁶ With this general approach towards the issue of purity, which contains several different violations against the purity Torah, the danger arising from

²⁴ Further studies ought to explore the issue concerning the diachronic aspects of these different purity concepts.

²⁵ Cf. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 21–22; Suter, "Fallen Angel", 114–35; on this cf. also the work by Lange, "Daughters", 33. Lange puts the Shemihazah myth into context with Nehemiah's reform of the illegitimate union of the priests (cf. Neh 13:28). This thesis is based on the discovery that his "rhetoric of defilement and purity" as well as the *kil'ayim* laws are priestly concepts. The use of priestly language and ideas in connection with the intermarriage of the watchers creates the suspicion that, as angels, the watchers have the status of heavenly priests. This is corroborated by *1 En.* 9:1, which states that "the angels remaining in heaven look out of the heavenly sanctuary".

²⁶ Cf. Nickelsburg, "Apocalyptic and Myth", 391; Bartelmus, *Heroentum*, 182, who sees a reflex on the rule of Antiochus IV in this text. However, dating the Book of the Watchers to the late 3rd or 2nd century, which was suggested by Milik and is widely accepted, contradicts this connection.

‘commingling’ and ‘impurity’ is clearly presented to the recipient of this tradition.

In any case, it becomes apparent that this narration aims to give an etiology for the world’s violence and sinfulness and for the rule of negative powers. The union between divine creatures and womankind, which is considered impure on the basis of different concepts, has fatal consequences. The giants’ actions are so destructive that, eventually, they put the world’s existence at risk. The acts of violence in the world that have the potential to endanger the existence of the whole creation go back to this cosmic impurity; when at the end, however, there is the prospect of eschatological salvation, it shows that this tradition is not only an etiology for the violence in the world, which underlines the relevance of purity laws in the broadest sense, but also an articulation of the potential for hope.

2. THE LAW OF PURIFICATION AFTER CHILDBIRTH IN THE BOOK OF JUBILEES (JUB. 3:8–14)

Another tradition that gives us access to early Jewish purity concepts can be found at the beginning of the book of Jubilees, in *Jub.* 3:8–14.²⁷ This text contains a remarkable reception of the law of purification after childbirth from Lev 12:1–7.²⁸ In this passage, we read the following:

(8) In the first week Adam and his wife—the rib—were created and in the second week he showed her to him. **Therefore, a commandment was given to keep seven days for a male (child) and for a female two (units) of seven days.** (9) After 40 days had come to an end for Adam in the Land where he had been created, we brought him into the garden of Eden to work (it) and keep it. His wife was brought (there) on the eightieth day. After this she entered the garden of Eden. (10) **For this reason a commandment was written in the heavenly tablets for the one who gives birth to a child: If she gives birth to a male, she is to remain in her impurity for seven days like the first seven days; then for 33 days she is to remain in the blood of purification. She is not to touch any sacred thing nor to enter the sanctuary, until she completes these days for a male.** (11) **As for a female she is to remain in her impurity two**

²⁷ Concerning this text, cf. Ego, “Heilige Zeit”; Ravid, “Purity and Impurity”, 76–80; van Ruiten, *Primaeval History*, 85–89, among others. Concerning purity concepts of the Book of Jubilees in general, cf. above, note 1.

²⁸ Concerning the biblical tradition, cf. Erbele-Küster, *Körper*, 19–48; Gerstenberger, 3. *Buch Mose*, 134–40; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 742–63; Paschen, *Rein*, 53, 60–61; Staubli, *Bücher*, 106–14; Vos, *Woman*, 60–73; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 185–89; Whitekettle, “Leviticus 12”; Wright, “Holiness”, among others.

*weeks of days like the first two weeks and 66 days in the blood of purification. Their total will be 80 days. (12) After she had completed these 80 days, we brought her into the Garden of Eden because it is the holiest in the entire earth, and every tree which is planted in it is holy. (13) **For this reason the law of these days has been ordained for the one who gives birth to a male or a female. She is not to touch any sacred thing nor to enter the sanctuary until the time when those days for male or female are completed. (14) These are the law and the testimony that were written for Israel to keep for all times.***²⁹

As the different font types indicate, this passage consists of two different levels that merge into each other: the law of purification after childbirth itself in Lev 12:1–7, in italic font, and the narrative frame in Roman font. This passage almost completely reproduces the biblical law of Lev 12:1–7. *Jub.* 3:8 initially paraphrases Lev 12:2, 5a. A citation from Lev 12:2aß, 4, 5 follows in *Jub.* 3:10–11. The passage closes in *Jub.* 3:13 with a kind of summary containing a brief paraphrase of Lev 12:4b, 5b. By means of this repeated reproduction, the complex content of this legal provision is clearly expressed: A woman who gives birth to a child is initially in a state of impurity. This corresponds to the impurity caused by menstruation, which contaminates everything that comes into contact with the menstruant or things with which she was in contact.³⁰ This phase lasts for seven or 14 days for a newborn boy or girl, respectively. The time ‘in the blood of her purity’³¹ follows, during which the woman is only impure with regard to the sanctuary, and access to the temple cannot be granted to her. Again, the impurity of a woman in child-bed has two different durations: The state lasts for 33 days if the newborn is male and 66 if it is female.

The question of the different periods of impurity for a woman in child-bed and the time of the ‘blood of her purity’, still considered a *crux interpretum* today,³² is explained in the book of Jubilees by combining the legal requirements with the narrative frame of the creation account. As the underlined passages show, there is an explicit link between biblical law and narration in vv. 8, 10 and 13.

²⁹ Quoted according to the translation by van Ruiten, *Primaeval History Interpreted*, 85.

³⁰ Cf. Lev 15:19–24.

³¹ The term ‘purity’ must be seen in relation to the previous state of impurity due to menstruation; cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 749: it is probably “a frozen idiom that refers exclusively to the parturient’s state following her initial seven (or fourteen) days of impurity”.

³² Cf. the remarks by Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 744ff.; 763–65 with references to earlier literature.

The overall argumentation must be understood in the context of the creation story of the book of Jubilees, which is distinguished by a synthesis of the priestly account in Gen 1:1–2:4a and the Jahwistic, or non-priestly, account in Gen 3:1–24. According to *Jub.* 2:14, God created man, whom he created as ‘a man and a woman’, on the sixth day of creation. In the present context, this expression based on Gen 1:27 does not mean that God created man and woman as two separate beings at the same time, but rather still sees Eve as originally part of Adam.³³ According to *Jub.* 3:3–7, Eve only gains her individual existence on the 6th day of the second creation week. In *Jub.* 3:3–7, we read that God takes a rib from Adam on the 6th day of the second creation week and ‘builds’ Eve from this, bringing her to Adam;³⁴ immediately after this, the narrator states that Adam knew Eve, a motif that, in the biblical tradition, only appears after the so-called Fall of Man in Gen 4:1. The narrative’s progress shows that, according to the conception of the book of Jubilees, the first man was created outside Paradise,³⁵ because Adam is brought to the Garden of Eden 40 days after his creation, and Eve is not allowed access to the garden before the 80th day. When we reduce this narrative to its essentials, the following counterparts appear:

Adam’s creation in the first week	7 days of impurity/son
Eve’s creation in the second week	14 days of impurity/daughter
Adam’s transfer to paradise on the 40th day	Temple visit on the 40th day/son
Eve’s transfer to paradise on the 80th day	Temple visit on the 80th day/daughter

Through these references, the law of purification after childbirth is given a symbolic meaning. The seven- or 14-day state of impurity for women in child-bed correlates with the time between the beginning of creation and the final creation of Adam or Eve. In this context, paradise and sanctuary are connected in a symbolic representation.³⁶

³³ Concerning this, cf. Halpern-Amaru, “The First Woman”, 610: “the original human of Jubilees is a male with an undeveloped female aspect”; cf. also van Ruiten, *Primaeval History*, 75.

³⁴ According to Berger, *Jubiläen*, note ad. loc., this is a harmonization of both creation accounts; cf. Van Ruiten, *Primaeval History*, 75.

³⁵ Halpern-Amaru, “The First Woman”, 610.

³⁶ Cf. Anderson, “Celibacy”, 142–43; Himmelfarb, “Sexual Relations”, 27; cf. also Ego, “Heilige Zeit”, 214. Of course, a certain incongruity in a symbolic compilation of this kind cannot be overlooked; concerning this aspect, cf. Baumgarten, “Purification”, 5–6: “What is not so clear is the logical symmetry involved in this etiology. . . . [T]he entrance of Adam

The result of this combination is that, in the book of Jubilees, the law of purification after childbirth no longer finds its primary foundation in Moses' annunciation³⁷ but instead is some kind of 'shadow' of a primal event that took place *in illo tempore*. When the mother of a male newborn accesses the temple for the first time, she imitates Adam entering paradise; if she is the mother of a female newborn, Eve's entry to paradise is repeated.

With regard to the question of the importance of purity and impurity concepts in Early Judaism, it is essential here to attempt to justify a certain purity law not only through its place in the Torah of Moses but also by anchoring the concept in the creation account.

In the book of Jubilees, this foundation of the law of impurity after childbirth is in line with other pre-Mosaic reasons given for the law; other halakhic elements, such as the Sabbath and the Feast of Weeks or Passover, are also introduced in the book of Jubilees' primeval and patriarchal histories. The warning not to contaminate the Sabbath takes an important position, as this motif is connected with the creation of the Sabbath; with this, the commandment to observe the Sabbath in the Torah of Moses, which concludes the book of Jubilees, appears to be a repetition of primeval legislation. This part of the regulations undergoes special legitimation because it is recalled that these laws, too—like the law of purification after childbirth—are written down on 'Heavenly Tablets'. Thus, these regulations gain a timeless, quasi-cosmic validity.³⁸

Engaging further with the book of Jubilees, it becomes apparent that social and institutional purity regulations are also justified in the primeval history. The warning against contamination by mixing with other peoples provides the basic thrust; the story of Dinah functions as a negative example, which culminates with the remark that the separation of peoples constitutes a commandment that is written down on the Heavenly Tablets and that is thus of a timeless nature. However, it is this very episode

and Eve into the garden, after their respective periods of purification, can with little difficulty be viewed as paradigmatic for the acceptance of newly born infants of both sexes into the sacred sphere. However, Leviticus 12 refers to the *mother's* exclusion from the sanctuary during her purification for a period which varies according to the sex of the child. It also requires her to bring an expiation offering at the end of this period. Can one assume that the purification period for the mother was also extended to the child?"

³⁷ Cf. the framework in Lev 12:1, 2a.

³⁸ Concerning the Heavenly Tablets, cf. Ego, "Heilige Zeit", 209; García Martínez, "Heavenly Tablets", among others; with references to earlier literature.

that legitimates Levi's priesthood. Here, too, the events 'at the beginning' become constitutive for the foundation of the purity halakha.³⁹

3. ELEAZAR'S MARTYRDOM: PURITY REGULATIONS AS A SIGN OF ABIDING BY THE LAW (2 MACC 6)

Finally, reference must be made to a tradition from the Second Book of Maccabees, which dates to the 1st century BCE and which reflects from a distance upon events during the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Maccabean revolt and the establishment of the Hasmonean dynasty.

Whereas the First Book of Maccabees simply presents an overall view and summary, reporting that the pious were martyred for adhering to the dietary laws (1 Macc 1:62–63), we find two very specific stories of pious people in the Second Book of Maccabees: Old Eleazar's martyrdom is reported in 2 Macc 6:18–31, and in 2 Macc 7:1–42 we read the tragic story of the mother and her seven sons.

Let us first look at the story of old Eleazar: Eleazar, one of the most respected scribes in Jerusalem, insistently refuses to follow the decree to eat pork imposed by the Hellenists, even when they attempt to 'administer' it to him violently. In times of religious persecution, however, this refusal puts him in mortal danger. Those who already know Eleazar want to help him, to enable him to overcome this life-threatening situation. They suggest he bring his own self-prepared meat and pretend to eat from the meat offering of the Hellenists. He would then fulfill the king's commandment on the outside and yet remain faithful to his religion and its laws. However, Eleazar steadfastly refuses to accede to this proposal:

23 He, however, adopting an honourable argument, one which was worthy of his age, of his hoary preeminence, of the magnificent white hair which he had come to have and of his superior deportment since childhood, but especially of the holy and divinely-established legislation, immediately declared, accordingly, that they should send him on to Hades. 24 'For it is not worthy of our age to dissimulate, of which the result would be that many of the youth, under the impression that the nonagenarian Eleazar had gone over

³⁹ With regard to content, the individual passages are thematically connected to individual statements from the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs. In this testament, the warning against associating with strange women is already a well-known topos (*T. Sim.* 5:5; *T. Reu.* 2:2–3:3; *T. Ash.* 5:1); in the Testament of Levi, in contrast, a justification for pertinent priestly laws is given through an instruction by Levi's grandfather (*T. Levi* 9:6–14). Concerning the development of the Levi tradition, cf. Kugler, *Patriarch*.

to foreignism, 25 would themselves—due to my pretension and my short and merely momentary life—go astray because of me, and I would (thus) cause abomination and blemish to sully my old age. 26 After all, even if now I do escape punishment by humans, neither living nor dead will I escape the hands of the All-Ruler. 27 Therefore, passing out of life manfully I will on the one hand show myself worthy of old age, 28 and on the other leave to the youth a noble example of enthusiastically and nobly dying the good death for the august and holy laws.’ Saying that much he immediately went up upon the torture-drum. (2 Macc 6:23–28)⁴⁰

Having said this, Eleazar is beaten to death; his last words confirm his joyful acceptance of death, despite the pain, because he can understand it as an expression of his fear of God.

This passage emphasizes very clearly that the dietary law does not need to be observed for its own sake or on account of the material quality of the food. Instead, it is crucial for the dietary law to appear to be part of the divine commandment, which then is of a symbolic nature.⁴¹ By observing the dietary law, Eleazar expresses his faith in and his fear of God.

The last words of the youngest of the seven brothers, who speaks just before his death, point in the same direction. He says:

37 As for me, just as my brothers I give up both body and soul for the ancestral laws, calling upon God that He speedily become merciful to the people; and that you, after afflictions and scourging, will therefore admit that He alone is God; 38 and that, with me and my brothers, shall be stayed the anger of the All-Ruler which was justly loosed against our entire nation.... 40 And so he passed away in purity, in complete faith in God. (2 Macc 7:37–38, 40)⁴²

The overall outline of the Second Book of Maccabees shows that these narrations are more than just individual examples of the pious Jews’ adherence to the law. The martyrs’ actions, and thereby also indirectly their adherence to the associated dietary laws, play a key role with regard to understanding the entire work.

Following the episode of the mother and her seven sons, Judah Maccabaeus and his fellow fighters take action. They ask God to take pity on the desecrated temple and to remember the innocent blood (2 Macc 8:1–4). Immediately afterwards, events take a turn. The Lord’s anger turns to mercy, and Judah and his men start fighting the Gentiles. The aim of the often-miraculous

⁴⁰ Quoted according to the translation by Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 271–72.

⁴¹ This close connection between purity concepts and the Torah can also be found explicitly in 1 Macc 1:66; 4:42; 14:36. It thus becomes apparent that the behavior towards the dietary laws also functions as an indicator of the protagonist’s law abidance.

⁴² Quoted according to the translation by Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 298.

military successes achieved by Judah and his men is to reconquer the temple of Jerusalem and to purify it. Thus, 2 Macc 10:5–8 states:

5 And it happened that on the very date upon which the Sanctuary was profaned by the non-Jews, on that very date the Sanctuary was purified, on the twenty-fifth day of the same month—Kislev 6 and with mirth they celebrated for eight days in the style of (the festival of) Tabernacles, recalling that not long before they had been grazing away the festival of Tabernacles in the mountains and in the caves, as if they were wild animals. 7 Therefore, holding wands and also fresh branches, along with palm-fronds, they offered up hymns to Him who had made successful the path to the purification of His own Place. 8 And they resolved by an edict and decree made in common that the entire people of the Jews should celebrate these days annually.⁴³

The account of the purification and rededication of the Jerusalem temple can be seen as a sign that God has heard Judah's prayer. The granting of this prayer is based in turn on God's mercy, remembering the martyrs' innocent blood. In other, exaggerated, words: since the pious were willing to die for the purity laws, God was willing to give the Maccabees the military power that enabled them to purify the Jerusalem temple.⁴⁴

4. SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK

The texts compiled here refer to very different aspects of 'purity' and 'impurity' that need to be discussed in the context of early Jewish literature. It becomes apparent that, with regard to biblical concepts of purity, the traditions discussed above can claim originality and creativity for themselves and therefore go beyond the Hebrew Bible's concepts of purity. Thus, the Book of the Watchers explains the cosmic relevance of purity, whereas the book of Jubilees connects the purity motif to the primeval history. Finally, the Second Book of Maccabees demonstrates the symbolic value of the Jewish purity laws and their practical dimension.

Subsequent works on early Jewish literature should contextualize these results in depth. For this purpose, individual literary works should be read with an eye to their conceptions of purity, in order to systematize the different aspects of the early Jewish purity discourse and to relate them to one another.

⁴³ Quoted according to the translation by Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 369.

⁴⁴ Concerning the concept of martyrdom in the Book of Maccabees, cf. Kellermann, *Auferstanden*; van Henten, *Entstehung*; Goldin, *Martyrdom*.

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THE EVOLUTION OF PURITY AT QUMRAN

Ian Werrett

ABSTRACT

From the earliest days of Qumran scholarship down to the present, it has been repeatedly observed that the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit an intense interest in the concept of purity and the religious laws of Second Temple Judaism. This preoccupation with purity and the Jewish temple cult has been understood by modern scholars as one of the defining features of the scrolls and as a possible key to unlocking the identity of those who may have been responsible for their authorship. As one might expect, the task of transcribing and translating the nine hundred or so documents that were recovered from the region in and around the ancient site of Khirbet Qumran has been a slow and laborious project, but with the publication of each new document the portrait of the community behind the scrolls has come into sharper relief. Now that the entire corpus of texts has been published and is available for inspection, it is possible to chart both the evolution of scholarly thought on the concept of purity at Qumran and the evolving perspectives on purity that are exhibited by the scrolls themselves.

INTRODUCTION

If Second Temple Judaism can be described as a system of myths, rituals and sacrifices that enabled the Jewish people to understand and maintain a relationship with their God, then purity is the state of being that made that relationship possible. According to the Torah, God's continued presence among the Israelites was contingent upon his people maintaining a level of purity that was proportional to his holiness (Lev 19:2; Deut 23:14). Although Jews were expected to maintain a moderate level of purity wherever they resided, the purity rulings that were incumbent upon all Jews during the Second Temple period became more rigorous the closer they were to the Jerusalem temple—an enormous complex of buildings and precincts that were sanctified by God's indwelling presence (Lev 21:23). The purity of this temple was safeguarded by massive walls of stone and gates that divided the complex into a series of increasingly stringent zones of purity. The outermost of these zones, commonly known as the Court of the Gentiles, was open to Jew and non-Jew alike. By contrast, the inner precincts of the complex (i.e., the Court of the Women, the

Court of the Israelites and the Court of the Priests) were restricted to clean Jewish women, clean Jewish men and priests who were free from impurity (Josephus, *Bellum judaicum* 5). Entry into the temple's inner sanctum, or Holy of Holies, was limited to the High Priest and only then on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). By enclosing the sanctuary within these increasingly circumscribed zones of purity, the theological architects of the Second Temple period (read 'priests and scribes') were attempting to create a ritually pure space in which to perform the sacrifices and rites that were deemed vital to maintaining the Jewish people's relationship with God.

Generally speaking, the concept of impurity in the Hebrew Bible can be divided into two subcategories: moral and ritual. Although these terms are problematic and do not explicitly appear in the Scriptures, they nevertheless describe two distinct states of existence.¹ On the one hand, moral impurity is a lengthy if not permanent condition that is the consequence of avoidable or sinful acts, such as illicit sexual behavior (Lev 18; 20:10–26), murder (Num 35:33–34) and idolatry (Lev 19:4; 20:1–5). Moral impurity cannot be transmitted through direct contact and it can only be expunged by engaging in acts of atonement or by punishing the offending individual. Ritual impurity, on the other hand, is the temporary consequence of largely unavoidable or non-sinful conditions, such as menstruation (Lev 15:19–24), lawful sexual activity (Lev 15:16–18) and the burial of corpses (Num 19). Unlike moral impurity, ritual impurity is primarily transmitted through direct contact and those who have been rendered ritually impure are to be cleansed through a variety of lustrations, probationary periods and/or sacrifices. For the purposes of our discussion below, it is important to note that both of these forms of impurity, if left unchecked, had the potential to defile the temple and damage the relationship between God and his people, albeit in different ways.²

¹ For a detailed discussion on the biblical distinction between ritual and moral impurity, see Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 21–42.

² Whereas ritual impurity temporarily defiles people, objects and the temple through direct contact, moral impurity defiles the land, the non-repentant, and renders the Sanctuary impure from afar. Despite these differences, however, it must be said that the categories of ritual and moral impurity, as defined by Jonathan Klawans and others, are not as distinct as they would have us believe. For example, in contrast to ritual purity, which results in temporary defilement and can be expiated through various acts such as bathing and sacrifices, Klawans argues that moral impurity results in a "long-standing, if not permanent, degradation of the sinner" that is without a rite of purification. But this is not entirely accurate. As Milgrom has rightly noted, the scapegoat rite on the Day of Atonement

1. PURITY AND THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Even before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, several theories had already been forwarded regarding the identity of those who may have been responsible for authoring the ancient text known as the *Damascus Document*. Recovered at the end of the nineteenth century in the Ben Ezra Synagogue of Old Cairo, the *Damascus Document* and its contents were first published in 1910 by the eminent Talmud scholar Solomon Schechter.³ Focusing almost exclusively on the legal and purity rulings contained in this document, Schechter hypothesized that the authors were a community of Zadokite priests from the Second Temple period whose practices paralleled those of the Samaritan sect known as the Dositheans. Shortly after the appearance of Schechter's volume, Louis Ginzberg published a book entitled *An Unknown Jewish Sect* in which he argued that the legal positions of the *Damascus Document* had more in common with the Pharisees than they did with the Dositheans.⁴ Although Schechter and Ginzberg disagreed on the identity of the authors, the discovery of the *Damascus Document* at Qumran in the 1950's would eventually confirm their contention that the text had originally been composed during the Second Temple period. Sadly, neither man would live long enough to see this hypothesis verified.

In 1954, some two years before the archeological excavations at Khirbet Qumran were completed,⁵ Chaim Rabin theorized that the purity rulings in the *Damascus Document* reflected the beliefs of an ultra-pious Pharisaic group referred to in the rabbinic sources as the *haburah*.⁶ But as the contents of the scrolls started to emerge it became increasingly apparent that they contained a number of theological and legal opinions that were at

(Lev 16:1–34) not only purges the Sanctuary from any defilement but it also cleanses Israel from any moral impurities.

At the end of the day, all impurities, be they ritual or moral, are an affront to God who, according to the Hebrew Scriptures, is both perfect and holy (Deut 32:3–4; Ps 99:9). Any accumulation of impurity, therefore, would eventually drive God away from his abode in the Holy of Holies, thereby rendering the cult ineffective and leaving the Israelites defenseless (Deut 23:14). Although I will treat the concepts of ritual and moral impurity as distinct categories throughout the course of this discussion, it must be stated from the outset that the terms 'ritual' and 'moral' are problematic and cannot easily be disentangled from one another. See Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 26; Milgrom, "Israel's Sanctuary", 390–99.

³ Schechter, *Documents of Jewish Sectaries*.

⁴ Ginzberg, *Unknown Jewish Sect*.

⁵ de Vaux, *Archaeology*, vii–ix.

⁶ Rabin, *The Zadokite Documents*.

odds with the descriptions of the Pharisees in the Greek, Christian and rabbinic sources.⁷ It was precisely these differences that prompted Eleazar Sukenik to identify the scrolls, and the purity rulings contained therein, as belonging to a group known as the Essenes,⁸ a sect of pious Jews who are described in some detail by the ancient historians Josephus⁹ and Philo of Alexandria¹⁰ and identified by Pliny the Elder¹¹ as living along the western shore of the Dead Sea during the Second Temple period.

In the sixty or so years since Sukenik first posited a connection between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Essenes, a wide range of theories have been forwarded concerning the identity of those who may have been responsible for authoring and collecting these ancient documents.¹² Despite numerous efforts to dislodge Sukenik's theory from its lofty perch as the consensus position within the scholarly guild, the Qumran/Essene hypothesis continues to be the most plausible explanation for the relationship between the archeological and textual evidence thus far recovered from Qumran.¹³

⁷ Two of the most frequently cited disagreements involve a difference of opinion regarding the *tebul yom* and the Red Heifer rite. In contrast to the Pharisaic opinion on the *tebul yom*, which permitted those who had completed their purification rituals, but had not waited until sunset, to participate in society as if they had been cleansed (*m. Parah* 3:7), the scrolls unanimously state that the purifying individual must wait until evening to be cleansed (4Q269 8 ii 3b–6; 4Q394 3–7 i 16–19; 11Q19 49:20–21). As for the Red Heifer rite, the scrolls prohibit children from functioning as sprinklers of the *מי נדה* (4Q269 8 ii 6), whereas the Pharisees were known to have used children as sprinklers in order to avoid some of the impurities of adulthood, such as the defilement that would result from bodily discharges and sexual activity (*m. Parah* 3:1–2).

⁸ Sukenik, *Megillot Genuzot*.

⁹ Josephus, *Bellum judaicum* 2.119–61; Josephus, *Antiquitates judaicae* 13.171–73; 18.18–22.

¹⁰ Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit* 75–91.

¹¹ Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 5.17, 4 [73].

¹² For a Sadducean identification, see Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*. For the Jerusalem origins hypothesis, see Golb, *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls?* For the interpretation of Qumran as a pottery factory, see Magen and Peleg, “The Qumran Excavations”. For the interpretation of Qumran as an agricultural fort, see Hirschfeld, *Qumran in Context*. For the interpretation of Qumran as a *villa rustica*, or manor home, of a wealthy Jewish family, see Donceel and Donceel-Voûte, “The Archaeology of Khirbet Qumran”, 1–38. And for a Christian identification, see Thiering, *Jesus and the Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls*; Eisenman, *James the Brother of Jesus*.

¹³ Although the term ‘Essene’ is nowhere mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls and its etymology is uncertain, the geographical descriptions of Pliny the Elder, when read in light of the archeological evidence from Qumran and the thirty or so parallels that have been observed between the Community Rule (1QS) and Josephus’ descriptions of the Essenes, support the notion that the Qumran community is to be identified with the Essenes. For more on the Qumran/Essene hypothesis, see VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, 75–98; de Vaux, *Archaeology*; Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*; Metso, *The Serekh Texts*.

2. THE CONCEPT OF PURITY AT QUMRAN: 1947–1990

In 1959, Józef Milik, the noted biblical scholar and original member of the Dead Sea Scrolls' translation team, published a survey on the texts from Qumran in which he asserted that a number of the scrolls from Cave 4 appeared to be "obsessed with questions of ritual purity".¹⁴ Little did Milik know when he wrote these words, however, that the documents to which he was referring would remain unpublished and largely unavailable for inspection for the better part of the next forty years.¹⁵ It goes without saying that the unavailability of such texts as the *Temple Scroll* from Cave 11 and 4QMMT would prove to be a major stumbling block to those who were attempting to locate and understand the concept of purity in the scrolls.¹⁶ In spite of these difficulties, a handful of scholars were, from very early on, able to identify one of the most compelling and important articulations of purity in the Dead Sea Scrolls: a tendency to associate moral impurity with ritual impurity.

To the best of my knowledge, David Flusser was the first scholar to explicitly comment on the association between ritual and moral purity in the Dead Sea Scrolls.¹⁷ In comparing the concept of Christian baptism with the lustrations of the Qumran community, Flusser notes:

... purity, according to John the Baptist, is not obtainable without the previous 'cleansing of the soul', i.e. repentance. This idea, that moral purity is a necessary condition for ritual purity, is emphatically preached in DSD [i.e. 1QS].¹⁸

Although Flusser stops short of saying that ritual and moral impurity have been combined into a single conception of defilement, the similarities he observed between the lustrations of Qumran and those of John the Baptist have added to our understanding of Christian baptism and its development from earlier Jewish practices.¹⁹

¹⁴ Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery*, 41.

¹⁵ Baumgarten, *Qumran Cave 4. XIII*; Baumgarten, *Qumran Cave 4. XXV*.

¹⁶ The *Temple Scroll*, a document from Qumran containing a lengthy collection of laws relating to the temple and ritual purity, was not published in English until 1983. Similarly, the document known as 4QMMT did not find its way into publication until 1994. See Yadin, *The Temple Scroll*, trans. of *Megillat ham-Miqdas*; Qimron and Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4. V. Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah*.

¹⁷ Flusser, "The Dead Sea Sect", 215–66.

¹⁸ Flusser, "The Dead Sea Sect", 243.

¹⁹ William Brownlee and James Robinson preceded Flusser in noting a connection between John's baptism, the lustrations of Qumran and the remission of sins; however, neither Brownlee nor Robinson used the terms 'moral purity' and 'ritual purity' when

The writings of Helmer Ringgren represent the next stage of development in the scholarly guild on the association between ritual and moral impurity in the scrolls. Building upon the work of Hans Huppenbauer,²⁰ Ringgren observes that, for the Qumran community, sinful behavior was metaphorically related to the concept of ritual impurity: “Since sin is often taken as defilement or impurity [in the scrolls], deliverance from sin is described correspondingly as *cleansing*”.²¹ Although he refrains from commenting on how it is that this articulation of purity deviates from the biblical model, Ringgren does offer some preliminary thoughts on the relationship between ritual and moral impurity in the scrolls:

The relationship between ritual and moral purity is clarified in the upper half of the third column of the Manual of Discipline [1QS]: one cannot be had without the other. He who does not abandon sin but walks in the hardness of heart will not be cleansed through atonement or be made pure through water. He who wishes to do penance will be sprinkled with water of purification and God will lead him in the right way.²²

What is missing in Ringgren’s discussion, however, is a detailed description of the association between ritual and moral impurity and how it is that this relationship would have manifested itself within the Qumran community. Whereas the language of 1QS appears to indicate that sinful activity contaminates individuals on both a moral *and* a ritual level, thereby necessitating acts of atonement *and* purification (1QS 3:3b–9a; 4:20b–22a; 5:13b–14a), Ringgren fails to explain whether these expressions are real or metaphorical. This lack of specificity is most clearly evidenced by Ringgren’s frequent use of similes: “sin is often taken *as* defilement or impurity”; “deliverance from sin is described correspondingly *as* cleansing”; and “cleansing is often described with expressions which are taken from the language of ritual. . . . [T]his was also true of sin *as* impurity” [italics mine].²³ Complicating matters even further is the fact that Ringgren has elsewhere described the biblical articulation of moral impurity as having a ‘figurative meaning’,²⁴ which would seem to suggest that he

describing the practices of the Qumran community. See, Brownlee, “A Comparison of the Covenanters of the Dead Sea Scrolls with Pre-Christian Jewish Sects”, 49–72; Robinson, “The Baptism of John”, 175–91.

²⁰ Huppenbauer, “*THR and THRH*”, 350–51.

²¹ Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran*, 123–24.

²² Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran*, 124.

²³ Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran*, 123–24.

²⁴ Ringgren, “טרה”, 291–95.

understood the relationship between ritual and moral impurity in the Dead Sea Scrolls as a metaphor for uncleanness.

In his groundbreaking book *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*,²⁵ Jacob Neusner echoes Ringgren's belief that the biblical articulation of moral impurity is largely metaphorical. Where he deviates from his predecessor, however, is on the relationship between ritual and moral impurity at Qumran. Unlike Ringgren, who appears to have interpreted this association as a figurative construct, Neusner sees it as a very real state of affairs:

The *yahad's* laws treat committing a sin not as a metaphor for becoming unclean, but as an actual source of uncleanness. If one transgresses any part of the law, he is excluded from the 'Purity' of the sect. It is not *as if* he were unclean, as with the biblical metaphor. He is *actually* unclean and requires a rite of purification. So the uncleanness is not metaphorical but is treated as equivalent to the impurity imparted by a corpse or a menstrual woman.²⁶

The litmus test for this interpretation, according to Neusner, concerns the so-called 'purity' of the community. As many scholars have noted, the term הטהרה or 'the purity' appears quite frequently in the Community Rule (1QS 6:22; 7:25; 8:24) and was employed by the authors of 1QS to describe the pure foodstuffs, pure liquids and/or pure objects that were considered to be off-limits to all but the members of the Qumran community. In order to gain access to the טהרת אנשי הקודש "purity of the holy men" (1QS 5:13; 8:17) and the טהרת הרבים "purity of the many" (1QS 6:16–17, 25; 7:3, 16, 19), individuals first had to be cleansed of their moral and ritual impurities by submitting themselves to the authority of the community and its teachings:

Ceremonies of atonement cannot restore his innocence, neither cultic waters his purity. He cannot be sanctified by baptism in oceans and rivers, nor purified by mere ritual bathing. Unclean, unclean shall he be all the days that he rejects the laws of God, refusing to be disciplined in the *Yahad* of His society. For only through the spirit pervading God's true society can there be atonement for a man's ways, all of his iniquities; thus only can he gaze upon the light of life and so be joined to His truth by His holy spirit, purified from all iniquity. Through an upright and humble attitude his sin may be covered, and by humbling himself before all God's laws his flesh can be made clean. (1QS 3:4b–9a)

²⁵ Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*.

²⁶ Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*, 54.

Given that the purities of the community were only accessible to those who had attained full membership within the *yahad*, a status which required individuals to atone for their sins and participate in various cleansings, probationary periods and examinations by the leading members of the group, Neuser's contention that the Qumran community understood moral impurity as being 'an actual source of uncleanness' is well taken. "What makes this view of purity other than metaphorical", claims Neuser,

... is the provision of both a specific disability consequent on sin-impurity and a rite of purification—whatever it may be... [the initiate] is really impure and requires cleansing from impurity before he may have contact with the pure objects of the community.²⁷

This understanding of moral impurity is markedly different from a metaphorical articulation and it represents a major shift in thinking on the concept of purity within ancient Judaism.

A second innovation at Qumran, argues Neuser, was the belief that the locus of purity in ancient Israel had been moved from the temple in Jerusalem to the members of the Qumran community. This is evidenced not only by the *Damascus Document's* insistence that the temple had been rendered impure (CD 5:6b–15a; 20:22b–24), but also by the witness of 1QS, which privileges the purity, behavior and prayers of the Qumran community over and above the sacerdotal activities of the temple cult (1QS 9:3–6). Based upon these observations and on the work of Bertil Gärtner, who was one of the first scholars to articulate the notion that the Qumran community understood itself as being a temporary replacement for the sanctuary in Jerusalem,²⁸ Neuser argues that the theologians of the *yahad* intentionally shifted the location of the *axis mundi* from the defiled temple in Jerusalem to the מקדש אדם, or "sanctuary of men", at Qumran (4Q174 1–2 1 6). "In some measure", writes Neuser, "this represents a 'spiritualization' of the old Temple, for the Temple now is the community, and the Temple worship is effected through the community's study and fulfillment of the Torah".²⁹ Although these observations represent a significant stage of development within the field of Qumran research, Neuser fails to elaborate on what is arguably the most important question to come out of his study, namely: What is the nature of the relationship between Qumran's innovations on purity and their self-understanding as the *axis mundi*?

²⁷ Neuser, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*, 54.

²⁸ Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community*, 4–46.

²⁹ Neuser, *The Idea of Purity*, 50.

In *The Concept of Purity at Qumran and in the Letters of Paul*,³⁰ Michael Newton attempts to answer the question posed by Neusner's study by dividing the relevant material from the scrolls into three areas of concern: entry into the community, life within the community and exclusion from the community. According to Newton, the key to understanding the purity innovations recorded in the scrolls is the sacerdotal nature of its congregation:

[They] were a priestly community and as such had to be protected from any intrusion of uncleanness either from without, in the form of unconverted Israelites, or from within, in the form of the sinful member who either temporarily or permanently is tainted with impurity and has to separate himself from the membership.³¹

In other words, the Qumran community's obsession with purity and their desire to combine ritual and moral impurity into a single conception of defilement was an attempt to protect their priestly congregation from all forms of uncleanness. But the question remains: If the priests of the Qumran community had removed themselves from the temple cult in Jerusalem in order to live in isolation along the shores of the Dead Sea, why would they need to maintain a level of purity that was reserved for those who were officiating in the temple? In response to this question, Newton argues that the community "took these measures because it saw itself as the Temple, 'a house of holiness for Israel and a foundation of the Holy of Holies for Aaron' (1QS 8:5, 6), and as such had to maintain itself in a pure condition in order to guarantee the divine presence".³²

For Newton, the *yahad's* obsession with purity is grounded in the belief that God had abandoned the temple in Jerusalem and taken up residence with the members of the Qumran community along the shores of the Dead Sea. As a 'sanctuary of men', the community believed that it was their responsibility to maintain a high enough level of purity so as to ensure God's continued presence in their midst. It was precisely this burden, argues Newton, that was behind the community's decision to combine ritual and moral impurity into a single conception of defilement, a conception that, from the perspective of its architects, prevented God from being exposed to any and all forms of impurity.

³⁰ Newton, *The Concept of Purity*.

³¹ Newton, *The Concept of Purity*, 18–19.

³² Newton, *The Concept of Purity*, 42–43.

3. THE CONCEPT OF PURITY AT QUMRAN: 1991–2010

Although many scholars have described the release of the scrolls to the general public in the fall of 1991 as a watershed moment of tremendous importance, which it was, the truth of the matter is that this was but one of many important developments to occur in the field of Qumran studies at the end of the twentieth century.³³ One such moment, which has gone largely unnoticed, was the appearance in 1993 of two publications that would set the stage for all subsequent studies on the concept of purity in the Dead Sea Scrolls: a groundbreaking monograph by Hannah Harrington, entitled *The Impurity Systems of Qumran and the Rabbis*,³⁴ and a seminal article by Florentino García Martínez, entitled “The Problem of Purity: The Qumran Solution”.³⁵

Regarding the title of García Martínez’s article, it is important to recognize that the ‘problem’ to which he is referring is related, in part, to the defilement of the temple that occurred during the Antiochene crisis (2 Macc 6:1–11). In the wake of this traumatic event, and the subsequent cleansing and re-dedication of the sanctuary by Judas Maccabaeus in 164 BCE, the Jerusalem temple and its maintenance became an increasingly controversial subject. Even before Antiochus Epiphanes had defiled the Sanctuary through the installation of an altar to Zeus in the year 167 BCE, differences of opinion regarding the problem of purity had resulted in the

³³ The release of the scrolls to the general public was initially instigated by Ben Zion Wacholder and Martin Abegg, Jr., whose publication, entitled *A Preliminary Edition of the Unpublished Dead Sea Scrolls: The Hebrew and Aramaic Texts from Cave Four*, appeared on the 4th of September 1991. Eighteen days later, the Huntington Library in San Marino, California published an announcement that appeared in the *New York Times* stating that it would be willing to release microfilm copies of the scrolls to any scholar who asked for them. Responding to these unauthorized publications, the Israel Antiquities Authority, the body responsible for the official publication of the scrolls, tentatively agreed to make all of the photographs of the scrolls available on the 27th of October 1991; however, the IAA’s publication, *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Microfiche*, would not appear until 1993. The final blow to the IAA’s so-called ‘monopoly’ on the Dead Sea Scrolls came on the 19th of November 1991, when the Biblical Archaeology Society published a two-volume set of photographs of the Dead Sea Scrolls, entitled *A Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. For more on the controversy regarding the publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Shanks, “Of Caves and Scholars”, xv–xxxviii. And concerning the availability of the scroll corpus, see Eisenman and Robinson, *A Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls*; Tov and Pfann, *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Microfiche*; Lim and Alexander, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Reference Library*; García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*; Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, *Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Reference Library*.

³⁴ Harrington, *The Impurity Systems*.

³⁵ García Martínez, “The Problem of Purity”.

formation of the major Jewish sects: the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. According to García Martínez, subsequent disagreements between these sects would eventually lead to the creation of various subgroups and the Dead Sea Scrolls bear witness to the emergence of one such movement.³⁶

García Martínez argues that the nascent Qumran community, as a subgroup within the Essene sect, would have originally understood the purity requirements of the Torah as being reserved for the temple and the priesthood. However, in the documents that have been dated to the community's formative period, such as the *Temple Scroll* and 4QMMT, García Martínez notes that "there is already a tendency to extend the requirements of Temple purity to the whole holy city [of Jerusalem]".³⁷ This same tendency, claims García Martínez, is also exhibited in the *yahad's* decision to enlarge the scope of the priestly purity rulings so as to include all Jews, as when the *Temple Scroll* prohibits the blind from entering the 'Temple City' (11QT 45:12–13). By barring the blind and unclean individuals from the city of Jerusalem, the nascent Qumran community was attempting to hold lay individuals to the same level of purity that was expected of priests who were officiating in the temple (Lev 21:17–20).

Not surprisingly, the *yahad's* zeal for expanding the purity laws of the Torah to the entire city of Jerusalem and to all Jews was not shared by many of their contemporaries. According to García Martínez, when the nascent Qumran community failed to convince the temple priests to adopt a similar stance on the problem of purity, they broke ties with the Jerusalem cult and retired into the wilderness of the Judaean Desert (1QS 8:14; 4QMMT C7). During this period of self-imposed exile, the Qumran community's *halakhic* interpretations became increasingly rigorous. This is most clearly evidenced, argues García Martínez, in the documents from the community's latter stages of development, such as the *Damascus Document* and 1QS, which repeatedly indicate that the purity of the *yahad* takes precedence over the Jerusalem temple and its priestly custodians. Moreover, as we have noted above, 1QS even goes so far as to suggest that the *yahad* was functioning as a temporary replacement for the temple:

When, united by all these precepts, such men as these come to be a community in Israel, they shall establish eternal truth guided by the instruction of His holy spirit. They shall atone for the guilt of transgression and the rebellion of sin, becoming an acceptable sacrifice for the land through the flesh

³⁶ García Martínez, "A Groningen Hypothesis".

³⁷ García Martínez, "The Problem of Purity", 157.

of burnt offerings, the fat of sacrificial portions and prayer, becoming—as it were—justice itself, a sweet savor of righteousness and blameless behavior, a pleasing free-will offering. At that time the men of the Yahad shall withdraw, the holy house of Aaron uniting as a Holy of Holies . . . (1QS 9:3–9)

Like Neuser and Newton before him, García Martínez agrees that the Qumran community saw themselves as a temporary replacement for the temple in Jerusalem. Similarly, García Martínez concurs with the notion that the *yahad* deviated from the biblical tradition by combining ritual and moral impurity into a single conception of defilement. What differentiates García Martínez's study from those of his predecessors, however, is the way that he arrives at these conclusions. Whereas Neuser and Newton were apt to interpret the purity rulings of the scrolls through a synchronic lens that tends to see the texts from Qumran as being reflective a single moment in time, García Martínez embraces a diachronic approach that understands the Dead Sea Scrolls as bearing witness to a lengthy period of development. By reading the scrolls diachronically, García Martínez claims to have identified an evolution of thought on the concept of purity that was largely in line with the biblical model during the *yahad's* formative years but that became increasingly stringent as the group tried to differentiate itself from the temple establishment and their contemporaries. In reading these documents diachronically, García Martínez is also able to suggest a possible connection between the larger historical narrative of the Second Temple period and the scrolls by claiming that the Antiochene crisis and the subsequent installation of the Hasmonean High Priests may have been the impetus behind the Qumran community's decision to break its ties with the temple cult and relocate along the shores of the Dead Sea.³⁸

In contrast to García Martínez, who interprets the purity rulings of the scrolls in light of the larger historical setting in which they were written, Hannah Harrington's goal in *The Impurity Systems of Qumran and the Rabbis* is far more specific: to reconstruct the purity system of the *yahad* and to compare it with that of the Mishnah. In order to accomplish this task Harrington adopts a synchronic approach and limits her discussion to the laws of ritual purity. Furthermore, she rejects the notion, espoused by García Martínez and Newton, that the *yahad* could have constructed a surrogate temple at Qumran, be it real or metaphorical:

³⁸ García Martínez, "A Groningen Hypothesis", 126–28.

The sectarians of Qumran regarded themselves as living, not in the sacred status of the Temple of the present or of the future but in the pure status incumbent by the Torah, according to their interpretation, on ordinary Israelites. They believed that in the eschaton there would be a re-established Temple at Jerusalem with an accompanying cult, however, it was impossible to reconstruct a surrogate Temple at Qumran.³⁹

As proof of this interpretation, Harrington cites the absence of an altar at Qumran and various discrepancies between the legal rulings of the scrolls and the archeological remains from Qumran. In particular, she points to the presence of female skeletons in the Qumran cemetery and the existence of marital regulations in the Dead Sea Scrolls as evidence that the members of the *yahad* were sexually active and did not use the *Temple Scroll*—a document that prohibits female residents and sexual activity in the ‘Temple City’ (11QT 45:11–12)⁴⁰—as a blueprint for recreating a surrogate ‘Temple City’ at Qumran. Rather, argues Harrington, the community was committed to the idea that they should study the laws of the *Temple Scroll* in order to prepare for a future date when the temple would be restored. In this way, observes Harrington, the situation of the Qumran community was not terribly dissimilar from that of the Rabbis who, after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, continued to study and discuss the Torah’s sacrificial system in the hopes of seeing its eventual restoration.

Although Harrington’s unwillingness to accept the surrogate temple theory represents a serious departure from her predecessors, her most significant contribution to the field of Qumran studies involves her identification of the dominant hermeneutical trends in the writings of the *yahad* and the Rabbis:

Stark differences in interpretation between the two groups often co-exist. The sectarians usually increase the stringency of the [biblical] laws in cases of ambiguity or divergent traditions. On the other hand, it was the continual concern of the Rabbis to limit not extend the restrictions of the Torah whenever possible without incursion of biblical sanctions.⁴¹

Unlike the Rabbis, who attempted to interpret Scripture in such a way as to limit the force of the Torah’s restrictions on the laity, Harrington notes

³⁹ Harrington, *The Impurity Systems*, 56–57.

⁴⁰ According to Yigael Yadin, the references in the *Temple Scroll* to quarantining menstruants and postpartum women from every city (11QT 48:16–17a), which are absent in the rules of quarantine for Jerusalem (11QT 46:16b–18), may well suggest that women were not allowed to live in the ‘Temple City’; Yadin, *The Temple Scroll*, 1:306–07.

⁴¹ Harrington, *The Impurity Systems*, 43.

that the Qumran community repeatedly interpreted Scripture with an eye towards severity. This predilection for stringency, argues Harrington, was an outgrowth of the community's concerns regarding the accidental violation of the Torah's legislation. By embracing a stringent hermeneutical model, the members of the Qumran community had hoped to protect themselves from any and all transgressions of Scripture, no matter how small. Unfortunately, this model was far too conservative for the vast majority of their contemporaries and, according to Harrington, the members of the *yahad* had no choice but to withdraw from mainstream society in order to pursue their quest for purity in isolation along the shores of the Dead Sea.

With the appearance of her 2004 publication *The Purity Texts*,⁴² Harrington attempted to update her earlier research by taking advantage of newly published documents and collecting all of the purity data from Qumran into a single volume. But despite having access to a larger body of literature, Harrington's position on the Qumran community's style of interpretation remained unchanged:

The many purity texts found at Qumran reveal an approach to purity which is stringent. The biblical prescriptions for purity are often increased and impurity is regarded as a more potent force than it is by any other ancient Jewish group in antiquity.⁴³

Although this conclusion is identical to that of her earlier work, and has been widely accepted by the members of the Qumran scholarly guild, Harrington's understanding of the rationale behind the Qumran community's stringent hermeneutical agenda is vastly different from her earlier study. Where Harrington had formerly understood the severity of the group's legal interpretations as a scholarly pursuit that was related to the restoration of an eschatological temple, her most recent volume indicates that the Qumran community's rigorous approach to purity was an outgrowth of the belief that the *yahad* had, in fact, become a temporary substitute for the temple in Jerusalem:

After the break with the Temple, the community is seen as a substitute and must be protected just as the Temple was. Levels of purity in the community parallel levels of purity required in the Temple and in the holy city.⁴⁴

⁴² Harrington, *The Purity Texts*.

⁴³ Harrington, *The Purity Texts*, 12.

⁴⁴ Harrington, *The Purity Texts*, 38.

In contrast to her earlier work, which describes the *Temple Scroll* as an eschatological document that had little to no bearing on the day-to-day lives of the Qumran community, Harrington's most recent volume claims that the *yahad* used the *Temple Scroll* as a blueprint for maintaining a surrogate sanctuary and 'Temple City' at Qumran. In support of this interpretation, Harrington points to a number of *halakhic* similarities between the *Temple Scroll* and the *Damascus Document*, such as the prohibition against engaging in sexual activity in the city of the temple (11QT 45:11–12; CD 12:1–2), and to new archeological evidence indicating that the remains of women in the Qumran cemetery were Islamic and therefore not contemporaneous with the *yahad*.⁴⁵ These observations, and others, seem to have convinced Harrington that the *Temple Scroll* has far more in common with the textual and archaeological evidence from Qumran than she had previously thought, thereby minimizing some of the *Temple Scroll's* seemingly unrealistic and eschatological expectations, such as its prohibitions against allowing the blind, the corpse impure, female residents and sexual activity in the 'Temple City' (11QT 45:7–12, 17).

Before turning to my own contributions on the study of purity at Qumran, I would like to discuss what is arguably the most comprehensive analysis to date on the relationship between ritual and moral impurity in the Dead Sea Scrolls: *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*, by Jonathan Klawans.⁴⁶ In this compelling study, Klawans embraces a diachronic approach that is not unlike that of García Martínez. Specifically, both Klawans and García Martínez argue that the *Temple Scroll* and 4QMMT, documents that do not combine ritual and moral impurity into a single conception of defilement, were written during the Qumran community's formative period. Moreover, they also agree that those texts that display a strong association between sin and impurity, such as the *Damascus Document* and the Community Rule, were written during the later stages of the *yahad's* existence. Where Klawans deviates from García Martínez, however, is on the rationale behind the Qumran community's shift in thinking on the subject of purity.

For García Martínez, the members of the *yahad* left Jerusalem and relocated along the shores of the Dead Sea because they could not convince the priests in Jerusalem to significantly extend the laws of purity beyond the walls of the temple complex. After the break with the temple priests

⁴⁵ Harrington, *The Purity Texts*, 14; 39; 50–54.

⁴⁶ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 21–42.

had taken place, the Qumran community's position on purity became increasingly stringent and, as noted above, they eventually came to see themselves as a replacement for the sanctuary in Jerusalem. As the new temple, the Qumran community needed to protect itself from all forms of impurity and, according to García Martínez, the combination of ritual and moral impurity in the scrolls was simply an outgrowth of the community's self-understanding as Israel's new *axis mundi*. By contrast, Klawans claims that the Qumran community's decision to combine moral and ritual impurity into a single conception of defilement may have been the issue that forced the *yahad* to retreat into the Judaeen Desert in the first place.

According to Klawans, although the *Temple Scroll* and 4QMMT bear witness to certain legal disputes between the nascent Qumran community and their opponents, these documents do not contain any of the distinctive features of Qumran sectarianism, such as an interest in dualism, predestination, messianic figures and angels. Given the absence of these distinctive features, Klawans claims that these documents were written during the *yahad's* formative years and that the disagreements recorded in a document like 4QMMT may have led to subsequent quarrels over the relationship between ritual and moral impurity:

I am not certain which came first—the interest in the defiling force of sin or the schism—but the fact remains that the defiling force of sin necessitates, justifies, and reinforces the physical separation of the sectarians from the larger Jewish polity. If you believe in the maintenance of purity, and you believe that sin and sinners are defiling, you have little choice but to remove yourself from that society that you consider to be irredeemably sinful.⁴⁷

Beyond the suggestion that the Qumran community's position on the impurity of sin may have been the motivating factor behind their decision to leave Jerusalem, Klawans offers yet another hypothesis for the community's decision to withdraw from society: the defilement of the land.⁴⁸ If, according to the Holiness Code (Lev 17–26), sin contaminates Israel and leads to an expulsion from the land, then the Qumran community may well have understood their location along the northwest shore of the Dead Sea as a form of exile (cf. 1QS 8:12–16; Isa 40:3). Although these theories are compelling and certainly worthy of consideration, Klawans' most significant contribution to the field of Qumran studies is located in

⁴⁷ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 92.

⁴⁸ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 88–89.

his detailed analysis of the ways in which ritual and moral impurity have been combined in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

As Klawans has rightly observed, one of the most unusual aspects of the relationship between sin and impurity at Qumran involves the idea that sinful acts render individuals ritually impure. In contrast to the biblical witness, which treats ritual and moral impurity as separate states of existence requiring vastly different responses from those who have been affected, the Community Rule treats sins, such as deceit, blasphemy and idolatry, as ritually defiling acts (1QS 4:10–11, 21; 7:17–18). Similarly, Klawans notes that the *yahad* considered instances of non-sinful behavior, such as the ritual uncleanness that accompanies a woman's menstrual cycle, to be morally defiling (4Q512 29–32 vii 8–9; cf., 4Q274 1–4; Lev 15:19–24). In both instances, the biblical articulation has been modified and expanded so as to create a far more rigorous and comprehensive approach to the concept of purity.

Yet another interesting aspect of the relationship between sin and impurity at Qumran involves the purity of outsiders and insiders. According to Klawans, the Qumran community considered outsiders to be both ritually and morally unclean due to their ignorance regarding the proper interpretation of the Torah and their unwillingness to be “disciplined by the Yahad of His society” (1QS 3:6). Regardless of social status or race, outsiders were permanently defiled and prohibited from touching the Qumran community's pure objects and pure foodstuffs (1QS 3:4b–9a). In order to be cleansed the outsider must become an insider, but even insiders were not immune to the defiling effects of sinful behavior:

No man belonging to the Covenant of the Community who flagrantly deviates from any commandment is to touch the pure food belonging to the holy men. Further, he is not to participate in any of their deliberations until all his works have been cleansed from evil, so that he is again able to walk blamelessly . . . (1QS 8:16–18)

In order to regain his status as a fully functioning member of the community, the insider must be cleansed from all of his defilements. Only through the combination of asking for repentance and engaging in the community's expiatory rites could the defiled insider hope to be cleansed (1QS 3:6–9). “According to the sectarians”, notes Klawans, “moral repentance is not efficacious without ritual purification, and ritual purification without moral repentance is equally invalid”.⁴⁹ One cannot be had

⁴⁹ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 85.

without the other and the sinful insider was required to engage in both before being cleansed. An exception to this rule, however, involves the outsider who was first expected to submit himself to the authority of the Qumran community. Given that the lustrations of the community's opponents were thought to be unclean and ineffective, outsiders would, in the opinion of the *yahad*, remain ritually and morally unclean for as long as they refused to join the ranks of the Qumran community.

My own contributions to the study of purity at Qumran involve a complete reassessment of the purity rulings in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In a 2007 publication, entitled *Ritual Purity and the Dead Sea Scrolls*,⁵⁰ I conducted the first comprehensive analysis of the ritual purity rulings in the scrolls since the full publication of the legal material from Qumran.⁵¹ By adopting an independent approach that treated each of the documents from Qumran as a unique composition with its own agenda and point of view, I had hoped to avoid, as much as humanly possible, reading the texts in light of one another. Only after treating each of the documents in isolation and allowing them to speak with their own voices did I then compare my findings. Towards the end of my study I further limited my focus by examining those rulings that displayed explicit agreement and/or explicit disagreement that went beyond the witness of Scripture.⁵² By identifying examples such as these, I had hoped to locate compelling points of contact that were worthy of further discussion.

At the conclusion of my study I was able to identify nine examples of explicit agreement and eight examples of explicit disagreement that went beyond the witness of Scripture.⁵³ Of the nine cases of explicit agreement, six involve a consensus on the intricacies of corpse impurity, while the remaining three are concerned with bodily discharges (2×) and sexual

⁵⁰ Werrett, *Ritual Purity*.

⁵¹ The documents from Qumran that were considered in my study include: the *Damascus Document* (CD/DD); 4Q159; 4Q249; 4Q251; 4Q265; 4Q274–278; 4Q284; 4QMMT (4Q394–399); 4Q414; 4Q472a; 4Q512–514; and the *Temple Scroll* (11Q19). 1QS, 1QSa, 1QSB, 1QHabPeshet and 1QH were not included in this study because they did not contain any of the five major categories of purity under consideration (i.e., diseases, animals, corpses, bodily discharges and sexual misdeeds).

⁵² Unlike implicit examples of agreement/disagreement, which tend to be founded upon circumstantial evidence, and examples of agreement/disagreement that are in line with the Hebrew Scriptures, which were the common property of all Jews, examples of explicit disagreement and agreement that go beyond the witness of Scripture provide us with a far more precise way to identify common interpretations and/or divergences between two or more documents, authors, redactors or groups.

⁵³ Werrett, *Ritual Purity*, 288–305.

misdeeds (1×).⁵⁴ Similarly, of the eight examples of explicit disagreement in the scrolls, two take up the issue of corpse impurity while the remaining six are concerned with bodily discharges (4×) and sexual misdeeds (2×).⁵⁵ Interestingly, no cases of explicit agreement or disagreement were discovered in the areas of diseases and animals.

As one might expect, the results of my study have raised some concerns about the systemic approach and have called into question the nature of the relationships between the documents from Qumran. Moreover, the examples of explicit disagreement that I have identified, such as the lack of concord regarding those who are eligible to sprinkle the ashes of the Red Heifer,⁵⁶ have challenged the prevailing notion in the scholarly guild that the “similarity of the concept and laws of purity [in the scrolls] are more striking than their differences”.⁵⁷ If nothing else, the fact that nearly half of the seventeen cases of explicit agreement and disagreement

⁵⁴ The cases of explicit agreement include a consensus on the following items: all objects in a house are rendered impure by the presence of a corpse (CD 12:17b–18; 11Q19 49:5–21a); the ashes of the Red Heifer may not be sprinkled on the Sabbath (4Q251 1–2 6; 4Q265 7 3; 4Q274 2 ii 2–3a); children may not act as sprinklers of the ashes (4Q269 8 ii 6; 4Q277 1 ii 7); the *tebul yom* is impure until evening (4Q269 8 ii 3b–6; 4Q277 1 ii 2; 4Q394 3–7 i 16b–19a; 11Q19 49:20–21; 50:4b–9, 10–16a; 50:20–51:5a); corpse-contaminated individuals must engage in a first-day ablution before being sprinkled with the ashes of the Red Heifer (4Q277 1 ii 7b–10a; 4Q414 2 ii, 3, 3 2, 13 5; 4Q512 1–6 xii 5–6; 11Q19 49:16b–21; 50:10–16a); liquids in a corpse-contaminated house transmit impurity to the first degree (CD 12:15b–17a; 11Q19 49:9–10); men with a bodily discharge must be quarantined (4Q274 1 i 0–2; 11Q19 46:16b–18; 48:14–17a); a person who has had an emission of semen transmits impurity through his touch (4Q274 1 i 8b–9; 4Q272 1 ii 3b–7a); sexual relations are prohibited in the city of the temple (CD 12:1–2a; 11Q19 45:11–12a).

⁵⁵ Instances of explicit disagreement that go beyond the witness of Scripture include: a lack of concord over who is eligible to sprinkle the ashes of the Red Heifer (4Q269 8 ii 4b–6a; 4Q394 3–7 i 17–19a; 4Q277 1 ii 5b–7a); a disagreement on the proper way to go about cleansing household items that have been rendered impure by a corpse (4Q269 8 ii 3–6; 11Q19 49:16–20); differing opinions on the appropriate distance between a camp/city and its latrines (1Q33 7:6b–7; 11Q19 46:13–16a); a disagreement on whether or not a newborn child is ritually pure (4Q265 7 11–17; 4Q266 6 ii 5–12); diverging opinions on how to purify a man with a bodily discharge (4Q512 10 x 1–2, 11 x 2–5; 11Q19 45:15–17a); a disagreement on the appropriate way to purify those who have come in contact with a man who has had a bodily discharge (4Q274 1 i 5; 4Q277 1 ii 10b–13); conflicting opinions on whether or not uncle/niece unions are valid (4Q543 1 5–6 1–7; CD 5:7–11; 4Q251 17 2–3; 11Q19 66:16–17); and lack of agreement on whether or not Jew/Gentile unions are prohibited (CD 19:15–21; 4Q251 17 7; 4Q394 8 iii 9b–19a; 4Q396 1–2 iv 4–11a; 4Q513 2 ii 2–5; 11Q19 57:15b–17a; 63:10–15).

⁵⁶ According to the *Damascus Document* and 4QMMT, the ashes of the Red Heifer (Num 19) had to be sprinkled by a clean man who had waited until evening (4Q269 8 ii 4b–6a; 4Q394 3–7 i 17–19a). By contrast, 4Q277 1 ii 5b–7a claims that the sprinkler of the ashes had to be a clean priest.

⁵⁷ Harrington, *The Purity Texts*, 12.

are instances of disagreement shows that the similarities and differences between the purity laws in the Dead Sea Scrolls are equally compelling.

Following in the footsteps of García Martínez and Klawans, I have attempted to explain the discrepancies among the purity rulings in the scrolls by embracing a diachronic approach. While this approach has enabled me to account for many of the disagreements in the scrolls, it was unable to account for them all. For example, like my colleagues, I too observed what appeared to be an evolution of thought in the scrolls on the relationship between ritual and moral impurity. And although this evolution seemed to explain the lack of concord between certain rulings, such as the disagreement in the scrolls over the proper way to purify objects from corpse contamination,⁵⁸ it is also true that the *Temple Scroll* was frequently at odds with the rest of the texts from Qumran. Of the eight examples of explicit disagreement that I have identified, six involve a lack of agreement between the *Temple Scroll* and the rest of the texts from Qumran. This observation, combined with the fact that the *Temple Scroll* displays a number of utopian characteristics, such as its unheeded divine call to construct a gigantic temple complex that, if built, would have been equal in size to the entire city of Jerusalem (11Q19 3–13:8; 30:3–47:18), would seem to suggest that the genre and provenance of the scrolls may well have a major role to play in the ever-evolving discussion on purity at Qumran.

Based on the results of my study, I have concluded that the Dead Sea Scrolls fail to contain a cohesive purity system. This conclusion is also supported by the work of Klawans, who has observed that although the ideas of ritual and moral impurity have been combined into a single conception of defilement in certain documents (i.e., 1QS, 1QH, 1QM, 4Q274, 4Q277, 4Q414 and 4Q512) there is no equivalent association between these types of impurity in the *Temple Scroll* or 4QMMT. Given this lack of concord, I find myself in agreement with Klawans, who has suggested that “the ‘systemic’ methods advocated by some scholars—whereby a single

⁵⁸ Where the *Temple Scroll* requires corpse-contaminated clothing, sacks and skins to be washed in water (11Q19 49:16a–20), the *Damascus Document* indicates that skins, clothing and utensils that have been rendered unclean by a corpse are to be sprinkled with the ashes of the Red Heifer (4Q269 8 ii 3b–6a). This deviation may well be representative of an evolution of thought on the subject of the ashes of the Red Heifer whereby its range of cleansing abilities was gradually expanded beyond that of the protosectarian document (i.e., the *Temple Scroll*) so as to include any items that had been rendered ritually and morally impure through a corpse.

purity system is discerned in diverse Qumran texts—is to be called into question”.⁵⁹

While I admit to being partial to the diachronic approach, which has been employed to good effect by the likes of García Martínez and Klawans, this approach is not without drawbacks. In particular, not only is the diachronic approach overly dependent upon the notion that there is a concrete relationship between the documents in the so-called ‘library’ of Qumran, but it cannot easily account for disagreements between two or more texts that were written during the same period of time.⁶⁰

It goes without saying that there are other ways to try to explain the explicit cases of agreement and disagreement between the purity rulings in the scrolls, but these approaches have similar limitations. For example, while it is possible to use the genre and contents of a text to determine whether or not it is a Qumran composition, none of the so-called ‘sectarian texts’ are so far afield from the rest of the documents at Qumran so as to indicate that a rival sect may have authored them. Furthermore, even if the genre of a sectarian text appears to be utopian or eschatological, we cannot know with absolute certainty how the members of the *yahad* may have interpreted a document at all times during their nearly two hundred year history at Qumran (c. 130 BCE to 68 CE). Even if the Qumran community eventually came to see themselves as a temporary replacement for the temple and applied the rules and regulations of the *Temple Scroll* to themselves, doing so would have conflicted with the witness of the *Temple Scroll*, which clearly indicates that its purity rulings were intended for the city of Jerusalem and a massive sanctuary that never saw the light of day.

Another possible way to understand the differences in the purity rulings from Qumran is as a naturally occurring phenomenon. Gaps and ambiguities in Scripture can be interpreted in any number of ways and, regardless of how well defined a group’s identity is, divergent interpretations

⁵⁹ Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 90–91.

⁶⁰ This is particularly true in relation to the explicit disagreement in the scrolls over the purity of a newborn child (4Q265 7 11–17 and 4Q266 6 ii 10b–11). Here we have an example of two texts that exhibit different opinions on the same subject but were authored at roughly the same time, contain overlapping material and were stored in the same cave. Although Charlotte Hempel has noted that the author/redactor of 4Q265 frequently exhibits an “independent treatment” of the overlapping passages from 4Q266, as well as other manuscripts of the *Damascus Document*, the diachronic approach cannot easily explain these types of disagreements. Werrett, *Ritual Purity*, 298; Hempel, *The Laws of the Damascus Document*, 103.

are bound to appear. This is most certainly true of the rabbinic material, which contains countless examples of disagreements that go beyond the witness of the Hebrew Scriptures. Given that several hundred scribes were responsible for authoring and redacting the Dead Sea Scrolls, it stands to reason that some of the aforementioned disagreements reflect legitimate differences of opinion and/or unintentional scribal mistakes. It is also possible that, like the rabbis, the *yahad* tolerated and even encouraged a modicum of disagreement on the purity rulings and their proper interpretation. Although I find the latter proposal to be quite appealing, it would seem to be undermined by the witness of the sectarian documents, which, purity rulings aside, are overwhelmingly compatible in terms of their terminology, theology and calendrical concerns.

In spite of its shortcomings, and the strengths of competing approaches, a diachronic reading of the purity rulings from Qumran is to be preferred for four reasons: (1) it enables us to explain the differences between those texts that combine ritual and moral impurity into a single conception of defilement and those that do not; (2) it provides us with an explanation as to why it is that composite texts, such as the *Damascus Document*, contain sectarian and non-sectarian elements; (3) it give us a tool to reconcile cases of explicit disagreement within the corpus of texts far better than the systemic approach, which is severely undermined by any lack of agreement; and (4) it sheds light on why it is that some of the texts from Qumran seem to reflect legal positions that are in line with the biblical model, whereas others elaborate on the biblical model in the direction of severity in order to account for a wider range of possibilities.

Even if I had not uncovered numerous examples of explicit disagreement in the purity rulings of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the consensus opinion regarding the *yahad* and its evolution from a group that initially supported the idea of the temple to one that removed itself from Jerusalem, relocated along the shores of the Dead Sea, and ultimately came to see itself as a replacement for the temple, argues against the notion that the Dead Sea Scrolls contain a cohesive purity system. The very act of changing the locus of purity from the temple in Jerusalem to the members of the *yahad* is reflective of a massive shift in thinking that would have had monumental repercussions on the Qumran community's purity rulings. This evolution of thought, which would have taken several generations to complete, is reflected in the scrolls in the form of the aforementioned explicit disagreements and in the increasingly stringent approach to purity that the Qumran community seems to have embraced prior to their destruction at the hands of the Romans in 68 CE.

CONCLUSION

The study of purity in the Dead Sea Scrolls is, in many ways, only just beginning. Although scholars have been writing on the subject of purity at Qumran since the discovery of the scrolls in late 1940's, many of the early publications on the subject were hampered by an inability to access all of the documents in this corpus of texts. Limited access to the scrolls led many scholars to understand the vast majority of the non-biblical scrolls as having a 'Qumranic' origin. Moreover, scholars frequently used the purity rulings in the scrolls to identify the authors rather than using them to comment on the nature of the rulings themselves.

Much has changed since the release of the scrolls to the general public in 1991, and many of the synchronic and systemic conclusions that were generated by the first generation of Qumran scholars must now be abandoned. In spite of its shortcomings, a diachronic reading of the scrolls would seem to be the most fruitful way to understand the explicit agreements and disagreements between the purity rulings in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Over the course of its two hundred year history, the Qumran community seems to have moved further and further away from the temple cult in Jerusalem and, as a result, the type of Judaism that they ended up practicing became more and more insular and severe. From a diachronic perspective, the increasing stringency of the *yahad's* interpretations can be explained by the Qumran community's belief that the Sanctuary in Jerusalem had been defiled and by the fact that the members of the community had, at some point in their history, come to see themselves as being representative of a surrogate temple of flesh and blood. As the true Israel and the only legitimate Sanctuary of God, the Qumran community believed that only they had the ability to maintain an appropriate relationship with the God of Israel. This radical evolution of thought, which did not happen overnight, appears to have inspired the community to embrace a progressively severe stance on the subject of purity and to combine the concepts of ritual and moral impurity into a single conception of defilement. By combining the concepts of sin and impurity, the theologians of the Qumran community had hoped to create an environment in which the members of their group would be free from all forms of impurity so as to ensure the continued presence of God in their midst.

Although the diachronic approach has enabled us to place the Qumran community into a larger historical context and to identify their evolution of thought on the relationship between sin and impurity, which is no

small feat, alternative methodological approaches, such as those in the areas of literary criticism, feminist criticism, source criticism and social scientific criticism, will no doubt take us in new and exciting directions. As these alternative approaches are brought to bear on the legal material in the Dead Sea Scrolls, our understanding of the notion of purity at Qumran will continue to evolve.

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PURITY CONCEPTIONS IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS:
'RITUAL-PHYSICAL' AND
'MORAL' PURITY IN A DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE

Gudrun Holtz

In recent years, a large number of scholarly works have been published on purity issues in the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS). Taking its point of departure from J. Klawans' book *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*, the present article aims to reexamine two aspects of the discussion about purity in the DSS. The first aspect is the question of the adequacy of extant diachronic models to explain the different perspectives on the relationship between ritual-physical and moral (im)purity.¹ The issue is explicitly discussed in part one and is in the background of parts two and three. The second aspect concerns the question of the specific forms of the relationship between ritual-physical and moral impurity in the scrolls (parts 2 and 3). In this context, the adequacy of the category of 'moral' purity for parts of the texts is problematized and a further category, namely 'constitutional' impurity, introduced (part 2).

1. RITUAL-PHYSICAL AND MORAL PURITY IN A
DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE: THE PROBLEM

On the question of the development of the relationship between ritual-physical and moral purity in the DSS, J. Klawans and E. Regev have each in recent years proposed models differentiating three stages.²

¹ I wish to thank Mr. Trevor Hyde for revising the English of this article, and the participants of the workshop "Reinheit als kulturelle Leitdifferenz" held at Bochum in January 2009 for their contributions to the discussion of the paper, which helped me sharpen some of the arguments forwarded here.

The phenomenon of what in scholarship is mostly described as 'ritual' purity—cf. e.g. Klawans, *Impurity*, 23—here is called 'ritual-physical' purity. This term is used to indicate, on the one hand, that the purity issues in view concern a person's body and, on the other, that there are rituals that concern non-physical aspects of purity as well, namely, its ethical-moral dimension; see below, p. 531. The term 'ritual' is used in keeping with common scholarly terminology. In this article the term 'purity' is used both for the overall phenomenon of purity and impurity and for the state of cleanliness as opposed to impurity.

² See Klawans, *Impurity*, 48–56; 67–91, esp. 91; Regev, "Temple", 252–60.

Klawans recognizes a “clear evolution of ideas”. The first stage, as represented by 11QT and 4QMMT, he sees as characterized by the non-integration of physical and moral impurity. The third stage, as represented by 1QS, 1QM and 1QH, he believes to show the “full integration of ritual and moral impurity into a single conception of defilement”, whereas the second stage, as seen in CD, is said to be a combination of both the first and the third stages.³ According to Regev, on the other hand, in the first stage physical purity clearly dominates, as is demonstrated principally in 4QMMT, a letter from the Teacher of Righteousness and his group to the high priest, later called the “wicked priest”. Only at the end of the letter is moral impurity, of which ‘the multitude of the people’ is accused (C 6–9), to be found. Regev judges the attempt of the ‘wicked priest’ to assassinate the Teacher to be decisive in the further development of the idea of purity in Qumran. Consequently, the Teacher’s group disqualified the ‘wicked priest’ as morally impure.⁴ Accordingly, in CD, one of the documents ascribed to the second phase, the defilement of the temple is understood to be due to the moral impurity of the high priest and some of the worshippers.⁵ Finally, in 1QS, the document representing the third stage, “immorality, wickedness, and their defiling consequences seem to pervade the entire world outside the realm of the Qumran sect”.⁶

Both models have difficulties in the second and third stages. Both Klawans and Regev adduce texts from CD 4–6 for the second phase, which they understand in terms of moral impurity. These interpretations, however, are not without problems.

At the center of Klawans’ analysis is CD 5:6–9. He rightly understands the prohibition of incest (ll. 8–9) as illustrating the moral dimension of pure and impure. He claims that the same is true for the sin of cohabitation with a menstruant (ll. 6–7), since the wording of the passage “is clearly related in some direct way to the . . . prohibition of cohabitation with a menstruant (Lev 18:19)”.⁷ This rule is part of the Holiness Code, which for Klawans is a reflection of the idea of moral defilement.⁸ Several arguments, however, can be adduced for interpreting this text primarily in terms of ritual-physical impurity: (1) The 4QD materials point to the fact

³ Klawans, *Impurity*, 91.

⁴ Cf. 1QpHab 8:8–13.

⁵ Cf. Regev, “Temple”, 257–59, on the basis of CD 6:11–17 and 4:15–19.

⁶ Regev, “Temple”, 259.

⁷ Klawans, *Impurity*, 54.

⁸ But see Himmelfarb, “Impurity”, 12–13.

that the prohibition of cohabitation with a menstruant is formulated with not just Lev 18:19⁹ but also Lev 15:24, a text clearly dealing with physical impurity, in view.¹⁰ (2) In CD 5:6–7, two commonalities with Lev 15:24 can be observed: The texts share the verb ‘lie’ (שכב) as well as the idea of transmission of impurity from the woman to the man. (3) According to Lev 15:31, the physical impurities mentioned earlier in the chapter, among them impurity due to cohabitation with a menstruant, are apt to pollute the temple. Exactly this is presupposed in CD 5:6–7. Although physical impurity is the main thrust of CD 5:6–7, an interpretation that includes the additional context of CD/4QD illustrates that a moral dimension of the text cannot be completely dismissed.¹¹

Klawans’ main example for moral impurity in CD, then, turns out to be a combination of both physical and moral impurity. In his model, the text serves as a major example for the first phase of the development of purity conceptions in Qumran. Because the main example for the first phase is not without difficulties, Klawans’ second phase, defined as a combination of the first and the third phases, stands on rather weak ground as well. In addition, it may be noted that the CD materials adduced for the third phase are rather sparse.¹²

Regev’s interpretation of CD materials for the second phase involves similar problems. According to CD 4:17–18, the three nets of Belial are fornication, wealth and defilement of the temple. Regev understands the latter in terms of moral defilement, thereby ignoring the fact that the defilement of the temple is interpreted in CD 5:6–9 in both moral and physical terms. Furthermore, the high priest who stands center stage in Regev’s argument is not even mentioned.¹³

⁹ Cf. 4Q273 5 4–5, עד ... מימי ספרה את דם [...] [...] האש את איש את האש [...] אשר י [...] and see Werrett, *Purity*, 87.

¹⁰ Cf. 4Q266 6 i 1–2, על [...] אלה ע[ון] נדה על, and see Werrett, *Purity*, 87.

¹¹ Cf. 4Q266 6 ii 1–2, a text alluding to Lev 15:24, which interprets the impurity of the male caused by prohibited cohabitation with a menstruant as iniquity (עון נדה). However, it is not physical impurity as caused by the flux that is morally defiling, but rather the transgression of the law; see Himmelfarb, “Impurity”, 21. For reasons of space, the arguments from the context adduced by Klawans, *Impurity*, 52–56, in support of his strictly moral reading of CD 5:6–7 cannot be discussed in detail. Suffice it to note that they are not without difficulties either.

¹² Cf. Klawans, *Impurity*, 75–88.

¹³ The latter is true of Regev’s second example, CD 6:11–17, as well; cf. idem, “Temple”, 258–59.

As concerns his third stage, Klawans argues both with texts that pre-date the foundation of the yahad and with texts that go back to the Community itself. Basic to his argument is the passage about the two spirits (1QS 3:13–4:26), which is believed by a number of scholars today to have originated between 200 and 150 BCE.¹⁴ The same holds true of 4QTohorot (4Q274–278)¹⁵ and seems to apply as well to those of his prooftexts from 1QS 5–9 that have parallels in 4QS 256 and 4QS 258. Both manuscripts go back to the very early phase of the community, possibly to the period before the Teacher of Righteousness joined the predecessor group of the yahad.¹⁶

This is to say that much of the material adduced by Klawans for the third phase of his model is older than 4QMMT and CD, which texts are claimed by him for the first and second phases.¹⁷ There is good reason to assume that the different relationships between physical and moral impurity described by both Klawans and Regev already existed by 150 BCE.¹⁸ It therefore seems necessary to ask for non-chronological models explaining the different relationships between ritual-physical and moral purity as well.¹⁹

2. RITUAL-PHYSICAL, MORAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL PURITY

In current scholarship the categories most discussed are ritual-physical and moral purity. Further clarifications, however, seem necessary.

2.1. *The Relationship between Ritual-Physical and Moral Purity*

As mentioned above, the third phase of Klawans' model is characterized by the identification of ritual-physical and moral impurity.²⁰ Other scholars, such as Regev and Himmelfarb, however, understand both dimensions

¹⁴ Cf. Lange, Lichtenberger, "Qumran", 57.

¹⁵ See Harrington, *Texts*, 57.

¹⁶ Cf. Lange, Lichtenberger, "Qumran", 58.

¹⁷ This argument partially applies to the texts selected by Regev for the first and second phases of his model as well.

¹⁸ This is self-evident as regards the texts of the first phase. The texts of phase two are connected by Klawans with texts clearly dating before 150 BCE (*Jub.*). For the third phase, see n. 13–15 and the following.

¹⁹ For a further critique of Klawans' diachronic model, cf. Werrett, *Purity*, 298–303.

²⁰ Further cf. Newton, *Concept*, 40; 46–47; 49, and Baumgarten, "Rituals", 209; concerning 4Q512, Baumgarten, *Damascus Document*, 56; 146.

to exist side by side.²¹ In what follows, this controversy is analyzed afresh on the basis of two major examples that Klawans adduces to support his thesis of the identification of ritual-physical and moral impurity.

The author of 1QH 9 [1]:21–24 characterizes the human 'I' in four pairs. The first pair describes its material dimension: The 'I' is "a creature of clay and fashioned with water". The second pair is made up of two terms that need to be clarified: "a foundation of shame and a source of impurity (סוד הערוה ומקור הנדה)".²² The third human 'I' is described as "an oven of iniquity and a building of sin"; these attributes are related to human action and clearly have a moral dimension. The final characterization concerns the spiritual-moral dimension of the human 'I': It is "a spirit of error and depravity without knowledge", to which "terrified by your judgments" is added as a third attribute.

As concerns the second pair, the semantic evidence and its position in the sequence of terms advocate an understanding in terms of physical impurity. ערוה is "used regularly for the dualistic portrayal of man's corporeal nature";²³ מקור refers to "a source of liquid flowing from the body".²⁴ As is usual in the DSS, נדה here is used of pollution caused by death and bodily discharges.²⁵ Accordingly, 1QH 9 is not concerned with characterizing iniquity and sin as 'ritually' defiling²⁶ but with qualifying the bodily existence of humans in terms of physical impurity. Physical and moral impurity in 1QH 9, then, stand side by side, representing the two dimensions of the human 'I', the physical and the moral.

This can be seen similarly in 1QS 3:3–12. The text first contends with the impossibility of physical and moral purification for those who refuse to join the covenant set up within the realm of the yahad (ll. 3–6). In its second part (ll. 6–12), the conditions are formulated under which purification seems possible. Both parts of the text are closely related and interpret each other. Lines 6–8 clearly show that the impossibility of non-members becoming pure by 'acts of atonement' (כפורים; l. 4) refers to

²¹ Cf. Himmelfarb, "Impurity", 9–10; 36–37; and Regev, "Temple", 266–77; see further Harrington, "Nature".

²² If not mentioned otherwise, the translation follows García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Scrolls*.

²³ Baumgarten, *Tohorot*, 93.

²⁴ Levine, *Leviticus*, 75. In Lev 12:7 and 20:18 מקור refers to the female flux, in 1QM 7:6 and 4Q514 4 7 to male sexual organs; see Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 973. For מקור הנדה further cf. 1QH 20 [12]:25.

²⁵ See Baumgarten, *Tohorot*, 86; but see below p. 526 with n. 32.

²⁶ Cf. Klawans, *Impurity*, 76; 84.

moral impurity due to iniquity and sin. From the term 'flesh' (בשר; l. 9), however, which signifies the corporeal nature of humans, it follows that the purification waters mentioned in ll. 4–5 refer to physical impurity.

But both physical and moral purity, according to 1QS 3:3–12, are obtained in the first place not by human purificatory rituals but by the Holy Spirit, which effects the cleansing of the human spirit by transforming it into a spirit of uprightness and humility (ll. 7–8).²⁷ In this spirit, "compliance of his soul with all the laws of God", that is, the law as interpreted by the yahad, is attained. Only then, "his flesh is cleansed by being sprinkled with cleansing waters . . ." (ll. 8–9). Moral cleansing, then, is the precondition for the efficacy of the cleansing waters.

Again, what is in view is not the identification of moral and physical purity. Rather, both human acts of purification, the moral atonement of sin by the spirit of uprightness and humility and the—ritual-physical—cleansing of the flesh, although intimately linked, remain distinct. Yet, the clear prevalence of moral purity can be observed. It is best explained by the preceding context, which is about the conversion of the 'heart' from wickedness to the 'just judgments' of the yahad (2:25–3:3).

2.2. *Moral and Constitutional Impurity*

Against the background of 1QH 9:21–24 and 1QS 3:3–12, the question arises of whether 'moral' is an adequate category to describe the type of impurity in view in these and similar texts. The category of 'moral' impurity as used by Klawans on the basis of texts from the Hebrew Bible presupposes the possibility of choosing between good and evil, between obedience and disobedience to the law. In 1QH 9 and 1QS 3, however, humans do not have the capability to act morally. They are subject to circumstances that only allow them to sin. As little as they are able to influence the state of their bodily purity, so are they unable to affect their actions. The related type of impurity here is described as 'constitutional' impurity. It is a fundamental anthropological category that applies to all human beings without exception. For all of them, willingly or unwillingly, share in basically the same anthropological condition set for them by God and/or his agents. 'Constitutional impurity' is concerned with what is possessed by humans from birth. It cannot be completely removed by ritual

²⁷ Cf. the parallel expressions . . . ברוח עצת אמת אל דרכי איש יכופרו (ll. 6–7), וברוח יושר וענו(ת)ה תכופר חטתו (ll. 7–8) and קדושה ליחד באמתו יטהר מכול עוונותו (l. 8).

means. Similarly, 'genealogical' impurity cannot be overcome ritually. 'Constitutional' impurity, however, differs from 'genealogical' im/purity in that it transcends any human divide: the divide between Israel and the nations as well as genealogical differentiations within Israel or, as the case may be, within Essene Judaism, namely priests, Levites, Israelites and proselytes. 'Genealogical purity' serves inner-human categorizations that aim at defining boundaries between different groups of human beings. By way of contrast, 'constitutional purity' operates within the opposition of God's perfection and holiness and human imperfection.

'Constitutional impurity' is represented in two forms: the wretchedness of the human 'I' in contrast to the glory of God on the one hand and, in the context of dualism, rootedness in predestination on the other.²⁸ The first form manifests in 1QS 11:9–15.²⁹ The hymn first describes the wretchedness of the human 'I' who cannot but sin:

9 . . . However, I belong to evil humankind, to the assembly of unfaithful flesh; my failings, my iniquities, my sins . . . with the depravities of my heart 10 belong to the assembly of worms and of those who walk in darkness. For to man (does not belong) his path.

The hymn then turns to praise the power, mercy and justice of the God (ll. 10–15) who is the only hope for the wretched 'I':

14 . . . he will judge me in the justice of his truth, and in his plentiful goodness always atone (יכפר) for all my sins; in his justice he will cleanse me (יטהר) from the uncleanness of 15 the human being (מנדת אנוש) and from the sin of the sons of man (חטאת בני אדם), so that I can give God thanks for his justice and The Highest for his majesty.

Ritual-physical impurity and moral sinfulness are the two dimensions that characterize human constitution.³⁰ They cannot be overcome but by God's purifying acts. Human purity is the precondition for cultic

²⁸ The examples of the first form are part of Essene prayer texts that are recited by the very 'pious' ones who perceive the most fundamental divide to be not among humans but between God and human beings. They thus tend to obliterate inner-human divisions. The passages adduced for the second form stem from the teaching of the two spirits, 1QS 3:13–4:26. This text, again, is concerned with humans in general, without any sociological identifications being discernible; cf. Holtz, *Gott*, 90–91.

²⁹ For another example, see 1QH 9 [1]:21–24 (cf. above, 2.1). Impurity here is understood as a fundamental anthropological element that characterizes human beings as contrasted with the power and glory of God (ll. 21, 24).

³⁰ Further cf. 1QS 11:21, where this aspect is circumscribed by being 'born of woman'; also see Job 14:1; 15:14; 25:4; Ps 51:7. 1QS 11 probably goes back to early Essene times; cf. Lange, Lichtenberger, "Qumran", 58.

participation (l. 15), since purification achieves the partial overcoming of the absolute opposition between God and humans and thus allows humans to approach God and sing his praise. To humans as such, this is an impossibility, for the totally impure cannot praise the Holy one.³¹

The second form of what is called here ‘constitutional impurity’ is, as mentioned, rooted in predestination, which in the pre-150 BCE teaching of the two spirits (1QS 3:13–4:26) is a form of dualism. In contrast to the texts discussed so far, however, this text only deals with questions of moral purity.

After characterizing the effects of the spirit of truth (4:2–8), the text proceeds to specify the works of the spirit of deceit (ll. 9–11). These works are moral in nature, among them greed, sluggishness in the service of justice and wickedness (l. 9) and here, most importantly:

Impudent enthusiasm for appalling acts performed in a lustful passion (וקנאת זדון מעשי תעובה ברוח זנות), filthy paths in the service of impurity (ודרכי נדה בעבודת טמאה) (l. 10).

The thoroughly moral context advocates a moral understanding of these expressions. Similarly to passages in the Hebrew Bible, the term נדה, which originally denotes physical impurity, is used in a metaphorical sense here.³² The offenses mentioned in ll. 9–11 are for the most part not especially grave sins but quite common behaviors that are part of human constitution or, in the words of the Qumranites, part of the ‘structure of man’³³ in the period of the existence of the two spirits.

Characteristic of the teaching of the two spirits is a cosmic dualism specified in anthropological and ethical terms.³⁴ According to the text, each human being, to a different degree, is under the power of both the spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit (4:24–25). As was “decided in the predestined order of creation”,³⁵ God has allotted a portion of both spirits

³¹ Further cf. 1QH 9 [1]:31–33; 1QH 19 [11]:10–14; 4Q284 7 2 (?); 4Q512 29–32 9 (?).

³² Cf. Ezek 7:19–20; Lam 1:8, 17; Zech 13:1 (לנדה), and Ezek 36:17 (בטמאת הנדה). A metaphorical understanding of the second expression is further supported by the corresponding term “magnificent purity which detests all unclean idols (וטהרת כבוד מתעב כול גלולי)” (l. 5) of the preceding passage. To Klawans, *Impurity*, 76, the first expression quoted from l. 10 serves as an example of the identification of moral and ritual purity.

³³ Cf. 1QS 4:20; 1QH 9:22.

³⁴ Cf. Frey, “Patterns”, 290–95.

³⁵ Frey, “Patterns”, 293. For a further example, see 1QS 5:13–14; cf. below n. 40. Whether what is called ‘predestination’ by Frey and others—e.g. Broshi, “Predestination”, 241, as well as in the present article—should rather be called ‘determination’ is a matter of debate. By way of contrast, Lange, Lichtenberger, “Qumran”, 69, e.g., talk about the “grundlegende

to each individual, who will thus perform a majority of works of light or darkness and will receive the corresponding fruits eschatologically. In this conception, the individual is not a moral subject who is free to choose his or her actions, but rather acts out the spirits' allotment of works.

Purification here is achieved not in this time but only at the end of time, when God is to purify the structure of the human being,

20 . . . ripping out all spirit of injustice from the innermost part 21 of his flesh (בשרו), and cleansing him with the spirit of holiness from every wicked deed. He will sprinkle over him the spirit of truth like lustral water (כמי) (in order to cleanse him) from all the abhorrences of deceit and (from) the defilement 22 of the unclean spirit (ברוח נדה).

God, in other words, eschatologically purifies humans by removing all prerequisites to do evil and by empowering them through the Holy Spirit to walk in holiness. As humans in this time cannot but perform both good and evil works, according to their portion of the two spirits, so eschatologically purified humans cannot but act according to the will of God. Freedom of choice is not given, neither in this nor in the coming world. Although human impurity in 1QS 3–4 is the consequence of ethical misbehavior, its ultimate reason, thus, is constitutional, not moral.

The constitutional dimension of impurity, however, is not a general feature of the writings of the yahad, not even in 1QS. This can be seen from a passage from Qumran law that is found in different versions in 1QS 5 and its earlier parallel, 4QS 258. The opening statement of 1QS 5–9 reads:

1 This is the rule of the men of the Community who freely volunteer to convert (המתנדבים לשוב) from all evil and to keep themselves steadfast in all he commanded. . . . They should keep apart from the congregation of 2 the men of injustice.

The term 'to freely volunteer' presupposes freedom of choice.³⁶ The argument, then, is not constitutional but moral. But there are further differentiations to be made. 4Q258 i 5–8 says:

Determination allen Geschehens in der Schöpfung". 'Predestination', according to their definition, is there if the "Festlegung der Welt und des Menschen" is connected with the "Heils- bzw. Unheilsperspektive", which, however, in 1QS 3:13–4:26 is the case; see esp. 4:6–8:11; 14:26. Since the idea of predestination as described is part of the dualistic passage 1QS 3:13–4:26 too, in the present paper it is held that 'constitutional impurity' is rooted in predestination as part of an overall dualism.

³⁶ For this translation, cf. Conrad, "נדב", 238; 245, and García Martínez, *Tigchelaar, Scrolls*, 71; 79, etc.

5... And whoever enters the council of 6 [the] Com[mun]ity shall... 7...
 [...be segregated from all the men of] injustice, [and] they are not to
 approach the pure food of [the hol]y 8 men.

The text presupposes that the men of injustice would, if allowed to approach the pure food of the holy men, morally pollute it. The moral interpretation of the passage is suggested by its context: The men of injustice have not converted from evil and joined the Community but continue to “walk in the stubbornness of (their) heart” (l. 4). Consequently, they keep from exercising the works demanded, such as “humility, justice and right, [compassionate] love [and se]mely behaviour” (l. 3).³⁷ Since the whole passage is morally centered, without aspects of ‘physical’ impurity even being mentioned, the main thrust of the text is ‘moral’ impurity. ‘Physical’ impurity is included, if at all, in the general remark on converting to the Law of Moses as interpreted by the Community (ll. 6–7). The constitutional dimension, however, is missing.³⁸

A later variant, 1QS 5:13–14, which is supposed to go back to the group behind 1QS 1–3,³⁹ shares some of the aspects of 4Q258 but also contains considerable differences:

13... He (sc. probably one of the men of injustice) should not go into the waters to share in the pure food of the men of holiness, for one is not cleansed, 14 unless one turns away from one’s wickedness, for he is unclean among all the transgressors of his word.

Both traditions know of the prohibition addressed to the men of injustice against approaching the purity of the men of holiness. The implied reason is moral impurity. 1QS 5:13–14, however, raises two more issues: (1) The prohibition against going into the waters reflects the use of water by the members of the yahad to ritually-physically cleanse themselves before eating. (2) The reasoning given for the prohibition is in line with 1QS 3:3–12 as part of the dualistic passage 1QS 1:16–3:12. The immediate reason for the prohibition against approaching the pure food, thus, is the moral impurity of the men of injustice; in the background, however, is the constitutional

³⁷ For further, clearly moral aspects of the passage, cf. 4Q258 i 10–11: The expressions “their works are uncleanliness (מעשיהם לנדח)” and “there is uncleanliness in al] [their possessions] (הונום) [וטמא מכ]ל” imply moral impurity as well. Further cf. CD 6:15: “to abstain from wicked wealth which defiles”.

³⁸ For a similar text, see 1QS 8:16–19: As in 4Q258 i 5–8, it is ‘moral’ impurity that prevents transgressing members of the yahad from approaching the pure food of the men of holiness.

³⁹ Cf. Murphy-O’Connor, “genèse”, 546–47; Knibb, *Qumran*, 110; and Metso, *Texts*, 10.

impurity of those who belong to the lot of Belial.⁴⁰ It needs be underlined that the latter dimension is only part of the reasoning given for the rule, not part of the rule itself.

2.3. *Chronological Aspects*

A comparative evaluation of the texts discussed, both those produced by the yahad after the re-founding of the Community by the Teacher of Righteousness around 150 BCE and earlier texts from the DSS, shows that the later texts add the ritual-physical dimension of impurity to the moral one. Much more strongly than in the earlier texts, then, humans are perceived as corporeal-spiritual/moral entities in the Essene texts. To this a second aspect needs to be added: The later traditions interpret both moral *and* ritual-physical impurity in constitutional terms. In contrast to the constitutional interpretation of physical impurity first found in the texts from the early Essene period, this type of interpretation is already seen in reference to moral impurity in earlier texts, namely in the proto-Essene teaching of the two spirits found in post-biblical wisdom literature⁴¹ and in a strand of the wisdom texts from the Hebrew Bible.⁴²

Similarly, the motif of purification of humans by the Holy Spirit can already be found in texts produced before the foundation of the yahad, that is, in the teaching of the two spirits and in Ezekiel.⁴³ In both these texts, in contrast to 1QS 1–3, purification by the Holy Spirit is understood as an eschatological event. Still, the present understanding of purification in 1QS is not a fundamental innovation by the yahad but is already found in Ps 51:12.

The traditio-historical changes that can be observed in the post-150 BCE texts, namely the parallelization of ritual-physical and moral impurity, with both categories being interpreted in ‘constitutional’ terms, are best explained by supposing a linkage between wisdom tradition and priestly tradition. This new synthesis seems to go back to the Teacher of Righteousness who, being of priestly descent, around the year 150 joined

⁴⁰ The argument presupposes that belonging to either the lot of God or the lot of Belial (1QS 2:2, 5) cannot be influenced by humans. Along this line, those who ‘freely volunteer to convert’ from wickedness to join the community (1:7, 11) act according to their—predestined—membership in the lot of God.

⁴¹ Cf. Lange, *Weisheit*, 128–30.

⁴² See esp. Job 25; for further texts, cf. Job 4:17–19; 14:3; 15:14–16; Ps 51:4.

⁴³ Cf. Ezek 36:25; 11:19. Ezek 18:31, on the other hand, expresses the notion that the people of Israel are to get themselves a new heart and a new spirit. The combination of both elements reminds us of 1QS 3:6–9.

up with the predecessor community of the yahad. His and his group's interest in ritual-physical purity is evident from 4QMMT. In the literature of this new group, these priestly ideals seem to have merged with the constitutional interpretation of purity issues already to be found in wisdom circles. Especially clear is the evidence of 1QS 3:3–12, a text that goes back to the yahad. This passage shares several traits with the pre-yahad wisdom text of the two spirits, 1QS 3:13–4:26, namely the Holy Spirit as agent of purification, dualism, a 'constitutional' understanding of purity and the preponderance of moral purity. An additional aspect, ritual-physical purity, comes into view in 1QS 3:3–12. Against earlier evidence, it is this linkage of moral and physical purity, both interpreted 'constitutionally', that in the texts going back to the yahad could be observed time and again.⁴⁴

In its own way, however, this combination is already found in Leviticus. The major examples in the Priestly Code are the two he-goats of Yom Kippur⁴⁵ and, in the context of the purificatory ritual for scale disease, the sacrifices following the sprinklings and washings that also have a moral connotation.⁴⁶ In the Holiness Code, the combination of moral and ritual-physical purity can be discerned with respect to murder, fornication and idolatry.⁴⁷ But quite apart from the fact that the passages in Leviticus do not explicitly combine physical-ritual and moral aspects of impurity, they do not include the constitutional element of impurity found in the wisdom traditions discussed either.

It must be noted, however, that the passages from Leviticus are legal texts, whereas the large majority of the Essene texts discussed are, in terms of literary form, hymnic-liturgical⁴⁸ or hortatory texts.⁴⁹ In the

⁴⁴ Priestly influence, however, can be observed elsewhere as well. It is an accepted scholarly thesis that 1QS 5–9 is a later version of 4QS 256 and 258 reworked by priestly circles linked to the Teacher of Righteousness; cf. esp. 1QS 5:2 and 4Q 256 ix 2–3 par 4Q258 i 2–3; 1QS 5:9–10 and 4Q256 ix 7–8 par 4Q258 i 7, and see Lange, Lichtenberger, "Qumran", 57. Also see above, pp. 527–28, with the observations made on the parallel versions of 4Q258 i 5–8 and 1QS 5:13–14.

⁴⁵ The offering of the he-goat selected for sacrifice is meant to cleanse the sanctuary from all kinds of pollution, both physical (מטמאת) and moral (ומפשעיהם לכל־חטאתם); cf. Lev 16:16 and see Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 857.

⁴⁶ Cf. Lev 14:4–9 (ritual-physical dimension) and 14:10–20 (moral dimension). The "battery of all four sacrifices—reparation, purification, burnt, and cereal offerings", mentioned in vv. 10–20 is to make sure that "all possible misdemeanors" of the scale-diseased person "have been covered" (Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 858). In view here, obviously, is moral impurity.

⁴⁷ See Himmelfarb, "Impurity", 12.

⁴⁸ Cf. 1QH 9 [1]:21–26 and 1QS 11:9–15; further cf. the texts mentioned by Klawans, *Impurity*, 78 (1QM 13:5; 1QH 4 [17]:19; 19 [11]:11; 4Q512 29–32).

⁴⁹ Cf. 1QS 2:25–3:12 and 4:2–14; 4:20–22.

strictly legal parts of 4QMMT, CD/4QD and 1QS/4QS, the constitutional dimension is missing, just as it is in Leviticus.

3. RITUAL-PHYSICAL AND MORAL PURITY IN THE MIRROR OF THE PURIFICATION RITUALS: PURITY CONCEPTIONS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN THE ESSENE MOVEMENT

So far the argument of this paper is to a large extent based on 1QS. 1QS, however, only reflects the perspective of one group within the Essene movement. To round off the argument, the purity liturgies of Cave 4, which reflect a different branch of the movement, need to be included.

As Regev has shown, the purity rituals of 1QS mainly serve to attain moral purity. Prominent among them are “judicial scenes and ceremonies . . . such as the stages of observing the character of a novice and different legal procedures against transgressing members”, the ceremony of the “annual entry into the covenant” and, most importantly, the “ablution in ‘the holy spirit’”.⁵⁰ In contrast, 1QS only briefly mentions two rituals for the attainment of ritual-physical purity. One consists of the sprinklings and washings in the context of the annual entry into the covenant (1QS 3:3–12), the other of the washing before meals (1QS 5:13).

This is not to say that the community behind 1QS did not practice any other physical rituals. Genital discharges, for example, although not discussed in 1QS, can be assumed to have been an issue in this community as well and, consequently, to have been addressed by the corresponding rituals. The fact that physical purity, as opposed to moral purity, hardly plays a role in 1QS probably hangs together with the structure of the community behind 1QS. It seems to have been a community of men who perceived themselves as a substitute for the Jerusalem temple. This explains the high purity standards of the group as well as its separation from all impurity, especially that of the men of injustice. The observance of the rules of physical purity by the members of the group can be presupposed. The importance given to moral purity in 1QS, however, indicates that the social life of the group and the integration of new members were not free from problems. This situation, then, is addressed by the rituals of moral purity.

A different picture emerges from the purity liturgies of Cave 4, 4Q284, 414 and 512, which, albeit in different ways, deal with both the rituals

⁵⁰ Regev, “Temple”, 272–73.

themselves and with the social structure of the group behind them. The purificatory rituals described ideally consist of three elements, two physical rituals—immersion and sprinkling—and different prayers that interpret the water rituals.⁵¹ The rituals are meant to cleanse a person from ritual-physical impurity, especially that caused by contact with death or by genital discharges. According to proto-Essene and Essene understanding, impurity caused by genital discharges, on analogy to the procedure prescribed in the Torah in case of impurity caused by death, demands a purificatory period of seven days with purifications on the first, the third, and the seventh days.⁵²

According to 4Q Purification Liturgy, the following blessing is to be said after the sprinkling at the end of the seven-day purification period, after sunset (4Q284 3):

3... Blessed are yo[u, God of Israel (אל ישראל)] 4 [...] you engraved true purity (טהרת אמת) for your people (לעמכה) to [...] 5 [...] to be] purified (מכול טמאתם) with them from all their uncle[an]liness (מכול טמאתם).⁵³

‘God of Israel’ is not among the characteristic names used to address God in the Essene parts of the DSS.⁵⁴ The term defines God in relation to the people of Israel as a whole. This pan-Israelite interest is also seen in the expression ‘your people’. In using the term ‘true purity’, however, the blessing at the same time points at demarcating the purity standards of the group behind 4Q284 from those of other groups, namely those of the Pharisees.⁵⁵

The blessing 4Q Ritual of Purification A (414) 2 ii 3, 4 starts out similarly, by praising the God of Israel for commanding the ‘purity of all’ (טהרת כול). In what follows, however, the moral and the exclusivist aspects are stressed. According to the text as reconstructed by Eshel, the commandment aims at the separation “from all] 8 impure people (מכול אנשי נדה) according to their guilt (באשמתם), they could not be purified (יטהרו) in water of purification (מי רחץ)”.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Cf. Eshel, *Ritual*, 136 with n. 7.

⁵² Comp. 11QT 49:17–21; 4Q274 1 i 4.7.9; 4Q274 2 i 1–2; 4Q284 2 i 3; 4Q284 2 ii 4; 4Q284 3 2; 4Q414 2 ii 3, 4 2; 4Q512 1–3 1; 4Q512 10–11 5; 4Q514 3.

⁵³ Translation according to Baumgarten, *Purification Liturgy*, 127.

⁵⁴ Cf. Lange, Lichtenberger, “Qumran”, 57.

⁵⁵ The anti-Pharisaic dimension of the blessing follows from the timing of the prayer at sunset; cf., e.g., Schiffman, “Halakhah”.

⁵⁶ Texts from 4Q414 are given according to the reconstruction and translation of Eshel, *Ritual*; here pp. 141–42.

In contrast to 4Q284 3, impurity in this text is both physical and moral. It is ascribed to the opponents and seen to be caused by their sinful refusal to submit to the purity law of the Community. Outsiders cannot be purified. Still, the polemic against outsiders is linked to a pan-Israelite perspective.⁵⁷ Just as in 4Q284, this text combines the perspective of the group with that of all Israel. Unlike 1QS, which advocates strict separation from outsiders, 4Q284 and 414 reflect openness towards Israel as a whole, comparable to CD.⁵⁸

In explicitly referring to the sin of the praying 'I, the blessing 4Q512 29–32 stresses the moral dimension of the purificatory process. The text says:

May you be blessed, [God of Israel, who] 9 [forgave me al] my sins and purified me from the shame of impurity (ערוות נדה)/and atoned (תכפר)/so that (I) can enter (לבוא).⁵⁹

In interpreting both physical and moral purity with regard to human constitution, the blessing, as can be seen from 1QH 9, 1QS 3:3–12 and 1QS 11 especially, reflects Essene anthropological thinking. The moral side is expressed in the motif of forgiveness of sin, the physical dimension in the term 'shame of impurity'.⁶⁰ As in other Essene texts, the comprehensive purification of the individual appears to be the presupposition of cultic access to the presence of God and/or the angels.⁶¹

The pan-Israelite perspective of the Cave 4 purification liturgies seems to correspond to the social structure of the group behind them. 4Q414 7 8–9—and similarly 4Q512 9 3—reads: "... in Israel's purity to e[at and drink in the cities of] 9 [their dw]ellings [and to be a holy people". The text of 4Q414 is followed by a reference to a "female and the menstruating woma[n] (l. 11), whereas 4Q512 9 3 is preceded by mention of a man purified from discharge (l. 1) and followed by a reference to "his wife" (l. 4).

⁵⁷ Cf. the inclusive terms 'God of Israel' (l. 6) and 'purity of all' (l. 7). The latter term is a strong indication that the author has Jews rather than non-Jews in mind, since the purity laws in biblical and early Jewish thinking apply to Jews only; cf. 4Q266 11 9–14.

⁵⁸ For details, see Holtz, *Gott*, 318–25.

⁵⁹ Translation according to García Martínez, Tigchelaar, *Scrolls*, 1039, with the exception of the rendering of ערוות נדה.

⁶⁰ As in 1QH 9:21–24, ערוות and נדה here represent the physical dimension of humans (see above, p. 523); also see Harrington, "Nature", 614. According to Himmelfarb, "Impurity", 36, נדה implies the aspect of 'condemnation' as well, which points to a moral dimension.

⁶¹ See above, n. 31.

The community that emerges in these texts is part of the Jewish people both geographically and religiously, though a separate part.⁶² Similarly to CD, the group visible in the purificatory liturgies comprises men and women and most probably lives in families in the cities of Israel. Its main purificatory rituals are physical in nature. Whether the group observed distinctly moral rituals we do not know. As can be seen from some of the prayers accompanying the physical rituals of immersion and sprinkling, however, in articulating their sinfulness those reciting the blessings add the moral dimension of purity to the physical one.⁶³ This specific balance between physical and moral impurity may thus be assumed to reflect the lifestyle and social structure of this part of the Essene movement.

1QS and the purification liturgies of Cave 4 represent two different forms of purity practice in the realm of the Essene movement. To both groups purity has a ritual-physical and a moral dimension, but the importance of these aspects in each case differs. In 1QS the moral dimension dominates, in the liturgies the ritual-physical one. The differences in the ritual practice of both groups seem to reflect their specific social structure and place within the whole of the Jewish people.

To summarize: (1) The relationship between ritual-physical and moral purity in the non-legal texts of the community is best described in terms of both aspects existing side by side; though intimately linked, they still remain distinguishable. (2) What in these texts is often described as 'moral purity' is rather to be understood as 'constitutional purity', since 'moral' acting here is the result of the innate constitution of human beings, not of the free will of the moral subject. This dimension of purity is first to be found in wisdom texts from the Hebrew Bible. (3) The diachronic model developed by Klawans to illuminate the relationship between ritual-physical and moral purity is based on chronological classifications of the relevant texts from the DSS that meanwhile have been strongly refined. Whether diachronic models based on such refined chronological classifications can be made, further research will have to show. What seems to be clear, however, is that non-chronological explanations, among them,

⁶² For a further pan-Israelite tradition, see 4Q284 1 3–6 and Baumgarten, *Tohorot*, 94–95, and idem, *Liturgy*, 125.

⁶³ Apart from 4Q512 29–32 9, see 4Q512 28 4 and 4Q512 34 3 (according to the counting of García Martínez, Tigchelaar, *Scrolls*, 1036–41).

not least, literary form and social structure,⁶⁴ can contribute to the understanding of the different perspectives in the DSS on the relation between ritual-physical, moral and, as may now be added, constitutional purity.

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⁶⁴ Further explanatory models have to be taken into account as well. As regards the differences to be observed in the purity halakhah of the DSS, Werrett, *Purity*, 301, suggests that they might better be explained by exegetical reasons than by differences in chronology. Furthermore, he considers them to reflect "legitimate disagreements" between *different groups*. This suggestion comes close to the proposal forwarded in the present paper. Differently from Werrett, however, the textual basis here, in re-examining the texts interpreted by Klawans, is mostly in the field of non-legal texts.

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PURE STONE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR
JEWISH PURITY PRACTICES IN LATE SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM
(MIQWA'OT AND STONE VESSELS)

Jürgen K. Zangenberg

1. THE PROBLEM

Material devices of identity formation and group delineation are some of the most controversial topics in the current debate about the character of the material culture of ancient Palestinian Judaism. Among the most prominent examples are those elements that seem directly indicative of specifically 'Jewish' religious practices and beliefs, such as stepped pools (miqwa'ot) or stone vessels. The fact that these objects only seem to occur at sites that are otherwise known to have been inhabited by 'Jews', and the fact that their very specific function invites connections with (nearly) contemporaneous religious literature, makes them examples *par excellence* for speculation about their roles in delineating and defending Jewish identity in practice.¹

As is so often the case, the debate rages less over cataloguing and describing the objects themselves (they are well-known, although of course even the largest number of items and types is never big enough) than over *interpreting* them: exploring and determining how to put them into a functional (how were they used, by whom and for what purpose?) and ideological (what did people express about their identity and their worldview when they used these objects?) context.

In this respect, recent authors have rightly warned against falling into two traps:

- a) What sort of Judaism are we talking about? Of what sort of Judaism are these objects indicative? While some authors see 'common Judaism' at work without referring to group-specific habits, others stress that miqwa'ot and stone vessels originally were products of halakhic

¹ Meyers, "Aspects of Everyday Life"; Meyers, "Jewish Culture"; Berlin, "Jewish Life" on the connection between Jewish presence and stone vessels/miqwa'ot. On the textual aspects, see the contributions by B. Ego, G. Holtz and I. Werrett within this volume.

decisions of a single group that came to be representative of a theological and practical position most Jews would have accepted. A prominent advocate of the former model is E. P. Sanders,² and of the latter, Martin Hengel and Roland Deines, who are convinced that the Pharisees, with their 'pietistic' program of applying ideals of priestly purity to common people, were the single most influential group in Second Temple Palestinian Judaism.³ According to this view, stepped pools (often taken to have a religious function and consequently used synonymously with *miqwa'ot*) and stone vessels can consequently be taken as evidence that the vast majority of Jews would have sympathized with the Pharisees and followed a more-or-less Pharisaic practice in their daily dealings. Other elements of material culture (e.g., ossuaries or particular forms of burial) have been taken by other scholars as indicative of other groups mentioned in Second Temple literature, attempts of which I myself am rather skeptical.⁴

- b) What *objects* are we talking about? Were all stepped pools used for ritual purposes? Are all products of the Second Temple stone industry, or even all stone vessels for that matter, signs of a widespread interest in purity ideals? Or must one differentiate between objects of seemingly similar form (pools with steps) or the same technological background (craters, bowls, cups, table tops, ossuaries, etc., from the same industry) on the one hand and their respective purposes on the other? Might the large number of different objects not rather speak in favor of a multiplicity of purposes as well?

I therefore want to begin my considerations with a quotation from an archaeological study that should warn us against drawing premature conclusions based on textual and archaeological data, and vice versa: "Interpretation is insidiously ubiquitous. There are always choices and judgments being made even in the most mundane and apparently empirical activities".⁵ Material remains are no less in need of interpretation than texts; neither of them is self-evident or plainly 'objective'.

² Sanders, *Judaism*; cf. Meyers, "Common Judaism"; Zangenberg, "Common Judaism" on alleged 'group-specific' elements of material culture. See the important modification of Sanders' concept by Miller, "Complex Common Judaism".

³ Hengel and Deines, "Review Article"; Deines, *Steingefäße*; Deines, "Pharisees".

⁴ See Zangenberg, "Common Judaism".

⁵ Shanks and Hodder, "Interpretive Archaeologies", 8.

Rather than using stone vessels and stepped pools as illustration for certain passages from the literature, like John 2:1–12, *m. Kelim* or *m. Miqw.*, or immediately taking refuge in texts when interpreting these objects (thereby constructing connections *a priori* that may or may not be there in the first place), I want to pursue a different path and demonstrate how *diverse* the material evidence is, how *unclear* these objects' functions were and how *cautious* statements about purpose and ideological context necessarily have to remain.

2. PURITY

Next to monotheism, circumcision and Sabbath observance, purity regulations were the most obvious characteristics of ancient Judaism in the Mediterranean world. The Hebrew Bible, especially the Pentateuch and within it the Priestly Code, are full of regulations of Jewish life and practice (dietary laws, skin diseases, prohibition of certain animals, etc.); later generations added to them, changed them and specified what was in need of careful attention, creating a dense net of 'halakhah'. Given the vagueness and complexity of many biblical commandments and the rapid transformation of Palestinian Jewish society in the Hellenistic age, it is no surprise that debates about halakhah did not necessarily and always produce consensual positions on the basis of what Stuart Miller calls "complex common Judaism".⁶ One disputed issue was how to restore and preserve purity. While the vast majority of Palestinian Jews very likely considered keeping and restoring purity an important element of their religious identity, debates about details in purity halakhah were equally essential in the formation of groups and tendencies in Palestinian Judaism⁷ until the Jewish War and the destruction of the temple shook the very foundations of Palestinian Jewish society and initiated a transformation of halakhah, too.

⁶ Miller, "Complex Common Judaism", modifying Sanders, *Judaism*; on the material aspects, see also Meyers, "Common Judaism"; Zangenber, "Common Judaism".

⁷ For a first, brief orientation, see, e.g., the comparative chart on biblical, Qumranic and rabbinic purity regulations in Harrington, *Purity Texts*, 134–38; Sanders, *Judaism*; Wise, *Miqwa'ot and Second Temple Sectarianism*; Miller, "Complex Common Judaism"; Miller, "Monolithic Miqwe", on the relation between 'common Jewish' and 'sectarian' positions. Although much more difficult to restore, opinions about Samaritan purity halakhah could also be added.

(D)ivine holiness is perfection and power. When it is mediated into the human sphere it easily encounters imperfection and impurity and is repulsed or brings dire results. Thus, as its literal meaning implies, holiness must be protected by separation and prohibition.⁸

Purity is the only quality that favorably relates to God, the source of all holiness (Lev 11–16 esp., e.g., 11:44a; 20:26; 1 Sam 2:2; Isa 6:3); consequently, God's holiness does not tolerate impurity. Maintaining purity was essential for securing access to the temple, and because whoever was impure was banned from coming into contact with the holy and therefore was a source of contamination to others, purity was also essential for maintaining social relations. Since priests, by birth and office, have constant access to the temple, it was first and foremost this group that had to maintain purity most strictly and who had themselves to be protected from impurity conveyed by others.

According to halakhah, immediate sources of impurity were ubiquitous: corpses—the most prominent source of contamination (Num 19); cemeteries; impure animals; impure food (Lev 11; Deut 14:3–21); idols, their worshippers and what is connected to them; discharge of human fluids like semen (Lev 15:1–18, 25–30) or blood from childbirth (Lev 12:1–8), wounds or menstruation (Lev 15:19–33); and skin diseases (Lev 13–14) were all perceived as different means of status transition. “People affected by these major changes of status, which have to do with life, death and reproduction, were to stay away from what was holy”.⁹ Since impurity is contagious and mobile, it spreads from one object to another (vessels, furniture, etc.) and from one material to the other (e.g., food) by mere touch or vicinity (e.g., entering the shadow of an impure object)—only to be restrained by objects made of material that is explicitly said to be unsusceptible to impurity.

Impurity, however, has no moral connotations per se and should consequently be carefully distinguished from ‘sin’:

Most impurities were not forbidden and (...) a majority of purity laws affected only entrance to the temple and handling or eating ‘holy things’. It was not wrong to contact semen, bury the dead, have a child or menstruate.

⁸ Harrington, *Holiness*, 147; see in general esp. 11–44; on Leviticus in general, see, e.g., Milgrom, *Leviticus*.

⁹ See Sanders, *Judaism*, here 217. The literature on purity is vast and cannot be discussed here in any extensive way. See, e.g., Harrington, *Purity Texts*; Poorthuis, *Purity and Holiness*. On impurity of corpses see recently Hieke, “Unreinheit”.

These caused impurity, which one must not convey to the sanctuary, but in and of themselves they were right, good and proper.¹⁰

Many people in Second Temple Palestine considered purity a desirable state irrespective of whether a person was to enter the temple or not,¹¹ and thus even people not planning to enter the temple would actively try to preserve purity and remove impurity. On the basis of Josephus, *Antiquitates* 3.262, Sanders even speaks of a “tendency to make purity a positive commandment, with the consequence that remaining impure was regarded as a transgression”.¹²

Depending on its kind and origin, impurity can be removed in different ways, ranging from simple passage of time (sunset) to ritual bathing and presenting of sacrifices. Many consider stepped pools and stone vessels the most important material means of assistance in keeping and restoring purity. We will now turn to them.

3. STEPPED POOLS (MIQWA’OT)

Water was essential for removing many kinds of impurity by immersing the body or the impure object. Securing sufficient and suitable water, however, is difficult in a region where few people had access to water from springs or rivers. Instead, pools, into which water could be channeled and kept available for immersion, were dug into the ground.¹³

Ever since Yigael Yadin discovered the first examples of such pools during his excavations on Masada in 1963–1965, and Rabbi David Muntzberg and Rabbi Eliezer Alter confirmed that these fulfilled the requirements of halakhah and could consequently be called proper miqwa’ot, these installations have played a major role in the discussion of Jewish religious practice in Second Temple Palestine. In the wake of Rabbis Muntzberg and Alter’s judgment, the question of what allows us to call a stepped pool a miqwe has not ceased. According to the latest studies by Jonathan Lawrence and Stefanie Hoss, more than 600 examples of miqwa’ot are known today from Hellenistic to Byzantine Palestine, more than twice as many as Ronny Reich had available for his still-unpublished Hebrew

¹⁰ Sanders, *Judaism*, 214. See also Harrington, *Holiness*, 173–80.

¹¹ Sanders, *Judaism*, 218.

¹² Sanders, *Judaism*, 219.

¹³ On washing in general, see, e.g., Lawrence, *Washing*, esp. 23–154.

University dissertation from 1990.¹⁴ Katharina Galor has made important clarifications about the etymology and function of *miqwa'ot* from Qumran and Sepphoris.¹⁵

Muntzberg's confirmation that the pools on Masada are halakhically suitable suggested a uniformity that has served more to obstruct a differentiated view than to help it—as if conformity with Mishnaic regulations were the only criterion to call a stepped pool a *miqwe*. Standardization, however, is a late phenomenon intended by the Mishnah but not fully achieved even in the post-Mishnaic period. While regulations about impurity are quite elaborate in the OT, they are often sparse when it comes to methods of purification (Lev 11:36). Especially limited is the level of practical information that these early OT texts contain, e.g., about where and how to immerse and how exactly a purification basin should look. Consequently, there was both a great need and enough room for experts to interpret these passages, fill in gaps, answer practical questions and so make the fundamental OT regulations workable. We can assume that intensive discussions took place in the period “between the Hebrew Bible and the Mishnah” about when, by whom and where certain purification rituals should be held, but little of that debate left any traces in contemporaneous literature. The ‘invention’ and early development of using stepped pools for ritual purposes, therefore, went largely uncommented upon and remained more or less an anonymous process. The oldest sources about purification in pools are archaeological, representing a piece of ‘halakhah in stone’.

The result of these debates and developments was a wide variety of stepped pools, often not much different from normal cisterns (which also began to be plastered at that time) but clearly on the way towards a new and distinct architectural style. Most of these pools shared common features: “cut into bedrock, deep enough for complete immersion, steps leading to the bottom, filled by means of channels that carried rain or spring water”¹⁶ (Figs. 1–4). But individual installations could vary dramatically.

¹⁴ Berlin, “Jewish Life”, 453, mentions the number 300. On the evidence, see Lawrence, “Washing”; Wright III, “Jewish Ritual Baths”; Hoss, *Baths and Bathing*, 4–5; 104–19, and her “Selective Catalogue of *Miqwa'ot* in Roman and Byzantine Palestine”, 179–96.

¹⁵ Galor, “Plastered Pools”, 291–92 and 316–17; Galor, “Sepphoris Acropolis”, 201–3.

¹⁶ Sanders, *Judaism*, 223; Hoss, *Bath and Bathing*, 114–15, on “components of the *miqwa'ot*”.

Seeing the variety of forms that could exist side by side, it is difficult to claim that this development was systematic.

Not before the Mishnah do we find detailed discussions about the form, capacity and use of stepped pools suitable for ritual. It is likely that some of these regulations date back to the period before 70 CE, but the clear tendency to name criteria for 'pure' (i.e., suitable) and 'impure' (i.e., unsuitable) stepped pools reflects the rabbinic desire to collect, systematize and standardize older *tradition* rather than actual pre-70 *practice*. In fact, it is interesting to see that standardization 'on the ground' lagged somewhat behind the uniform picture presented by 2nd c. and post-2nd c. rabbinic texts.

But the method of purifying in stepped, plastered pools is not only a product of learned textual exegesis and halakhic debate. It is just as much a result of technologies that only became available during the Hasmonean period (plastering).¹⁷

The oldest miqwa'ot date from the time of Alexander Jannaeus, i.e. the early to mid-1st c. BCE (Fig. 5-7), and are therefore roughly contemporaneous with the first clearly dated Palestinian synagogues and about two generations earlier than stone vessels.

Large accumulations of stepped pools, some of which certainly served as miqwa'ot for ritual purification, are known from, e.g., Masada, Jericho, Qumran, Jerusalem and Sepphoris.¹⁸ No stepped pools for ritual washings are known from outside Palestine, the examples from Transjordan quoted by Lawrence requiring reexamination.¹⁹ Apparently, diaspora Jews used other means such as large fountains to purify or wash hands before entering a synagogue (cf. Sardeis, Ostia).

Most miqwa'ot were half built-up with stones and mortar and half sunk into the ground, were connected to an inlet and outlet for water and were carefully plastered. Form, size and capacity, however, vary considerably.²⁰ Not all pools were connected to a water pipe; some were supplied by drawn water from a nearby cistern, others through rain water from the

¹⁷ Porath, "Hydraulic Plaster"; Galor, "Sepphoris Acropolis", 202-3.

¹⁸ Galor, "Sepphoris Acropolis" (Sepphoris); Grossberg, "Ritual Baths" (Masada); Galor, "Plastered Pools" (Qumran); there are no equally systematic studies on stepped pools in Jericho and Jerusalem, but cf. the summary discussion in Hoss, *Baths and Bathing*, 179-96; on the Bethesda pool and Jewish purification practices, see Gibson, "Pool of Bethesda".

¹⁹ Lawrence, *Washing*, 168-72.

²⁰ Hoss, *Bath and Bathing*, 114-15, on "components of the miqwa'ot".

roofs (Sepphoris). Some pools had a small settling pool attached to them, some had a low plastered wall dividing the steps; the number of steps was far from standardized and pools with steps could be used for non-ritual purposes, such as a collecting basin or part of an industrial installation, as well. It is therefore likely, though not proven, that some pools may have been used for ritual *and* secular purposes.²¹

The architectural context of these pools equally varies.²² While some pools were integrated into normal domestic buildings (Sepphoris) and sometimes were even part of a sophisticated bathroom with a normal pool for hygiene nearby (Upper City in Jerusalem), others lacked such luxuries. Pools were found near private homes (Fig. 8–10), synagogues (Fig. 11), potters' kilns (Fig. 12–13), industrial (Fig. 14)²³ or agricultural (Fig. 15–18)²⁴ installations, tombs (Fig. 19–20),²⁵ or were built as public pools.²⁶ Judging only by sheer size and architectural context, some pools were clearly intended to serve large groups of people, others only a family.

It is especially interesting that *miqwa'ot* occurred not only in Jerusalemite Jewish contexts but also among a second Palestinian group closely related but in fierce competition with Second Temple Judaism: the Samaritans. If Yitzhak Magen is correct that the bathtubs in the Hellenistic city on Mount Gerizim (destroyed by Johannes Hyrcanus in 110 BCE) were (also) used for ritual purification, we have evidence for parallel developments that predate the oldest Samaritan halakhic texts by many centuries. These bathtubs are found in many luxurious homes of the Gerizim elite (possibly priests; Fig. 21–23) and strikingly resemble examples found at Delos and other Mediterranean sites from the Hellenistic period.²⁷ I am therefore very skeptical that the tubs only served purificatory purposes. Clearer is the situation at Qedumim, where *miqwa'ot* were already being built next to wine presses in the 1st c. CE (Fig. 15–18).²⁸ These data suggest

²¹ Rightly emphasized by Galor, "Plastered Pools"; Galor, "Sepphoris Acropolis". Exemplary is the heated debate about the character of the stepped pool from Sepphoris; see Eshel, "Note on 'Miqvaot'"; Eshel, "Pools of Sepphoris"; Meyers, "Pools of Sepphoris"; Reich, "Great Miqve Debate".

²² See Lawrence, *Washing*, 179–83; Berlin, "Jewish Life", 453.

²³ See, e.g., the dense, often hardly discernible mixture of industrial and ritual pools in the industrial area F north of Herod's Third Palace; Netzer, *Palaces at Jericho II*, 39–144.

²⁴ See, e.g., Adler, "Agricultural".

²⁵ See, e.g., Adler, "Adjacent to Tombs".

²⁶ See, e.g., the discussion on the large public pools near the Temple Mount in Regev, "Temple Mount" and Adler, "Temple Mount".

²⁷ On pools from Gerizim, see, e.g., Magen, *Mount Gerizim II*, 24; 33; 38.

²⁸ Magen, "Immersion".

a parallel development in 'practical halakhah' between Palestinian Jews and Samaritans. Sanders is right, therefore, when he writes:

The use of immersion pools was common to one and all: aristocrats, priests, the laity, the rich, the poor, the Qumran sectarians, the Pharisees and the Sadduceans.²⁹

Unlike stone vessels, to which we turn now, *miqwa'ot* continue to be in use down to this very day.

4. 'STONE VESSELS'

Stone vessels were hardly noticed before the 1960s, when intensive excavations in Jerusalem by Kathleen Kenyon (Ophel), Magen Broshi (Citadel), Nahman Avigad (Jewish Quarter), Yigal Shiloh (City of David) and Benjamin Mazar (Temple Mount) began to turn up large quantities in different types and forms. Delay in publication of these excavations hampered research for quite some time, but since the 1990s sufficient material from current excavations and a couple of systematic studies have become available: Jane Cahill made the first large corpus of material available for research (City of David) and proposed a first detailed typology.³⁰ Shimon Gibson and Yitzhak Magen added to it substantially by refining typology and publishing production sites.³¹ In the meantime, more corpora have been published (e.g., Masada, Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem)³² and other important ones are in preparation (Qumran, Sepphoris). Since 2002, Yitzhak Magen's systematic study of the production techniques, types, find places and ideological background presents the evidence

²⁹ Sanders, *Judaism*, 223; Moreover, Galor, "Sepphoris Acropolis", 211, assumes that "it is not unlikely that most people continued to immerse themselves in natural, rather than artificial installations". This could be the reason why no *miqwa'ot* have been found so far in Capernaum. Berlin, "Jewish Life", 452, follows a different path compared to Sanders: "I would not identify Second Temple period observance from later legal protocols, and I hold that differing find spots of *mikva'ot* may signify varying behaviours and concerns". This, however, is not necessarily a contradiction: while not all stepped pools should be taken as ritual baths (Berlin), it cannot be taken for granted that the known ritual use of some pools is a result of Pharisaic piety (Sanders).

³⁰ Cahill, "Chalk Vessel Assemblages", but cf. Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry 1988* (if not otherwise stated I quote from the larger, 2002 English edition; see also Deines, *SteingefäÙe*, 49–60, as an example for early classification).

³¹ Gibson, "Stone Vessels"; Magen, "Jerusalem as a Centre"; Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*.

³² So far, only the 'stone mugs' from Masada are published; see Reich, "Masada", 195–206; Reich, "Stone Vessels"; Geva, "Stone Artifacts".

conveniently.³³ Fortunately, these joint scholarly efforts have pushed stone vessels from an often-overlooked piece of material culture to one of the best-known and most intensively discussed indicators of Jewish religious practice in Second Temple period Palestine.

Chronology and Geography

The widespread use of stone vessels is amply demonstrated by the large number of sites in Jerusalem, Judea, the Jordan valley, Jewish-inhabited parts of Perea, Galilee and Western Golan where such vessels were found, while only very few have come to light in Samaria (is that only a result of less intensive research in this region?).³⁴ Only a few stone vessels have been found in graves,³⁵ and no comparable examples are known from the diaspora. The current state of publication unfortunately does not allow us to identify “regional variation between assemblages of vessels derived from different parts of the country, nor has petrography been employed in studies”.³⁶

So far, stone vessels have largely been dated to the ‘Herodian Period’, during which they were certainly in wide use. Despite a great number of finds, it has not been possible to identify or define broad typological changes, although at least at some places minor developments can be discerned.³⁷ Precisely when stone vessels came to be used is still unknown. What is clear is that they are absent from late Hellenistic sites such as the early stages of the Hasmonean palaces at Jericho.³⁸ From the late 1st c. onwards, stone products rapidly spread into all segments of Jewish Palestinian society, apparently reaching a climax in the three or two decades before the outbreak of the First Revolt.³⁹ The destruction of Jerusalem, “the center of chalk vessel production, marketing, and use”,⁴⁰ led to the decline of the industry. Often, the destruction of the temple is seen as the reason for a

³³ English version of Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*.

³⁴ On the distribution, see Cahill, “Chalk Vessel Assemblages”, 196–97; 225–31; Gibson, “Stone Vessels”, 300–1; Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 148–62 and 167–73. Recently, Yitzhak Magen published “a number” of limestone craters (one of which very obviously resembles a metal vessel) that for stratigraphic reasons can only date before 110 BCE and whose *qallal*-like form clearly demonstrates their luxury character (Magen, *Mount Gerizim II*, 210; 216 Fig. 289).

³⁵ Geva, “Stone Artifacts”, 219.

³⁶ This statement in Gibson, “Stone Vessels”, 300, still holds.

³⁷ Geva, “Stone Artifacts”, 218–19.

³⁸ Gibson, “Stone Vessels”, 301–2; Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 162.

³⁹ Gibson, “Stone Vessels”, 302; Geva, “Stone Artifacts”, 218, speaks about “more than 100 years of production”.

⁴⁰ Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 162.

reduced interest in purity, but this is not necessarily the case.⁴¹ That the interest in purity could remain strong even without a functioning priestly caste is demonstrated by the Mishnah, which collected, commented on and expanded many purity-related traditions. The social consequences of the catastrophe were equally devastating; many artisans and customers were killed, and large groups of the population were displaced or exiled. It seems rather that the social basis for these objects had broken away. In any case, the use of lathe-turned vessels seems to have ceased earlier than circulation of hand-made vessels. After the Bar Kokhba Revolt, interest in stone vessels seems to have ended entirely, no such objects occurring in contexts dated after the mid-second century.

Stone vessels were mass produced at locations where raw material (hard *mizzi*, medium or soft *nari* limestone) could easily be quarried. Six such sites are known, five of them in the vicinity of Jerusalem—“probably the largest center for the production of stone vessels in the Early Roman period”⁴²—near the Golden Gate, on Mount Scopus, at Hizma, Jebel Mukaber and Tell el-Ful, as well as Reina close to Nazareth. In addition, stone material cut out of the hundreds of tombs in the Jerusalem necropolis might also have been used as raw material for such products.⁴³ Miller therefore sees a direct connection between building activities and the rise of the stone-vessel industry.⁴⁴

In addition to production at quarry sites, cut stones and half-products could have been transported to towns in order to be fully processed and sold there; Jerusalem and several sites in the Galilee, such as Capernaum, Sepphoris or Nabratein, as well as Gamla in the Golan, provide evidence of such intramural workshops.⁴⁵

Proper stone vessels were never the only objects produced at quarry sites; they were only part of a much larger output of the late Second Temple stone industry, in which ‘measuring cups’ were produced next to *qallals*,

⁴¹ See, e.g., Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 162: “Upon the devastation of the Temple the purity laws lost their focal point”. Against this opinion Miller, “Observations”; Reich, “Stone Vessels”, 263: “The reasons for the sharp decline in use of stone implements in Jewish settlements in Galilee, Golan, the Shephela and southern Hebron Hills after the destruction of the Temple are not entirely understood”.

⁴² Berlin, “Jewish Life”, 430; Gibson, “Stone Vessels”, 300; on Hizma see Gibson, “Hizma”; Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 5–17.

⁴³ Gibson, “Stone Vessels”, 289–91.

⁴⁴ Miller, “Observations”, 414; Miller, “Complex Common Judaism”.

⁴⁵ Avigad, “Jerusalem Flourishing”; Magen, “Jerusalem as a Centre”; Berlin, “Jewish Life”, 430.

geometrically decorated table tops, ossuaries, architectural elements or sun dials, all objects of the refined lifestyle of an increasingly prosperous elite that readily adopted elements of Hellenistic decorative language. Next to these ‘domestic consumer products’, large quantities of regular building stones were hewn out of the same rock by the same workers. All products were either sold on the spot or transported to towns and villages to be marketed there.⁴⁶

Forms and Functions

Two basic types of stone objects can be distinguished: hand-cut and lathe-turned. Both methods allowed mass production and document the high and effective technological skills of the producers.⁴⁷ Hand-cut and lathe-turned types can each be divided into several sub-types ranging from small cups to veritable architectural elements or specialized objects such as sun-dials or ossuaries.⁴⁸ On the basis of the combined finds from Hizma, the Temple Mount and the City of David, Magen lists the following types:⁴⁹

I. *Lathe-Turned Vessels*

1. Small vessels turned on a small lathe:
 - A. Bowls
 - i. Small bowls
 - ii. Small, shallow open bowls
 - iii. Large, shallow open bowls
 - iv. Deep open bowls
 - v. Mortar bowls
 - vi. Hemispherical bowls
 - B. Cups
 - C. Goblets
 - D. Inkwells
 - E. Spice bowls

⁴⁶ Gibson, “Stone Vessels”, 289; examples for pieces of architecture in Reich, “Stone Vessels”, 271–74; Geva, “Stone Artifacts”, 228–29.

⁴⁷ Gibson, “Stone Vessels”, 294–300; Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 116–31.

⁴⁸ For details, see the increasingly detailed typologies in Cahill, “Chalk Vessel Assemblages”, esp. 190–91 and *passim*; Gibson, “Stone Vessels”, 291–94; and finally Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 63–115 (on the finds from the Temple Mount) and systematically (Temple Mount, Hizma and City of David), 174–80.

⁴⁹ Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 174–80.

- F. Lids
- G. Stoppers
- H. Debitae
- I. Cores
- J. Lathe-turned/hand-carved cores
- 2. Large vessels turned on a large lathe
 - A. Trays
 - B. Kraters (several sub-types)
 - C. Holemouth jars
 - D. Large lids
 - E. Rounded tabletops
- II. *Hand-Carved Vessels*
 - A. Mugs
 - B. Pitchers
 - C. Bowls
 - i. Large bowls (four forms)
 - ii. Small bowls (two forms)
 - D. Lids
 - E. Trays
 - F. Basins
 - G. Rectangular tables (tabletop, pillar support, column support, table base)
 - H. Pressing vessels
 - I. Grinding vessels
 - J. Gaming boards
 - K. Sundials
 - L. Ossuaries

Cups, bowls, stoppers and lids are especially frequent elements of domestic assemblages, either whole or in fragments. Also very common were small, lathe-turned or hand-cut, mug-like vessels (type II A) with or without handle, which are often misleadingly called 'measuring cups' (Fig. 24 and 25).⁵⁰

The only container type that is not relatively widespread is the large jar (*qallal*), whose sheer size, material value and transportation must have made it quite an expensive item. It is widely assumed that *qallal*

⁵⁰ Reich, "Stone Mugs", 201–6, rejects the idea that 'stone mugs' were used as measuring devices.

jars imitate Hellenistic crater/calyx forms made of bronze, granite, marble, alabaster or other kinds of stone known from outside of Palestine as representative and decorative containers for liquids like water or wine. In late Second Temple Palestine, such craters/calyces were copied and produced from the only material locally available: the usual soft *nari* limestone. Apart from Jerusalem, small numbers of mostly fragmented examples were found in Judaea (e.g., En Feshkha) or Galilee (e.g., Tiberias or Sepphoris). The question is whether Palestinian *qallals* were used for the same purpose as craters/calyces in Hellenistic culture, namely the preparation of wine for consumption by mixing it with water or spices. If John 2 refers to *qallals*, such use indeed seems to be the case (Fig. 26). Reich discusses the question of whether *qallals* “contained ordinary water, drawn from the cistern and kept in the house for domestic use, or were related to the rites involving sin-offering water. Unfortunately, we have no information concerning the dispensing of this means of purification”.⁵¹ In any case, their elaborate form and large size suggest that *qallals* were predominately used by wealthy families.⁵²

A couple of observations may be useful when it comes to the tricky question of the functional context of stone vessels. While some stone vessels resemble ceramic types and demonstrate something like a ‘duplication’, at least in certain segments of the typological spectrum (especially bowls), other types are only attested in a single kind of material. Mug- and cup-like types, e.g., largely occur in stone, while stone vessels are predominantly confined to open types; closed vessels like cooking pots, jugs, juglets or lamps are rare or totally absent from the stone corpus. The reason may well be that such forms are difficult to carve out of the soft limestone. While the vast majority of stone vessels are small and come from domestic contexts, no large stone vessels are known that could be connected to storage and transport. To protect the contents of storage vessels from impurity, jars usually seem to have been sealed with a lime, gypsum or clay cover. At least this is how Magen interprets a number of sealed storage jars from Qumran.⁵³

⁵¹ Reich, “Stone Vessels”, 267.

⁵² Cahill, “Chalk Vessel Assemblages”, 207–9; Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 81–90; Deines, “Steingefäße”; on *qallal* as an elite object, see Reed, “Stone Vessels”, esp. 392–99, and Miller, “Observations”, 418; Reich, “Stone Vessels”, 266–67. This is also suggested by the early specimen from the temple city on Mt. Gerizim; see Magen, *Mount Gerizim II*, 210; 216 (Fig. 289).

⁵³ Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 139–40; skeptically, Miller, “Observations”, 415.

In contrast, stone and ceramic vessels are usually found together in the same domestic contexts, so they were very likely also used together. Much to the contrary, 'dug vessels' are so far known only from Masada, and nothing is known of 'earthen vessels'. But how exactly clay and stone vessels would have been used together is rarely discussed and largely remains unclear.⁵⁴ How do I picture the use of stone vessels alongside ceramic dishes in an average household? Did stone vessels supplement or occasionally replace ceramic vessels? Perhaps, but when would people turn to a stone vessel in place of a ceramic one? Some forms are indeed suitable for bringing liquids into contact with pure water for purification (see above). Were they used to scoop up and consume foodstuffs that needed to remain pure? Would fruit—for example—have been kept on stone plates to keep it pure? Were stone vessels given to people of unclear purity status to enable them to take part in the same meal? Were 'measuring cups' used to pour water when washing hands? Perhaps. Questions like these are almost impossible to answer only on the basis of archaeological finds, and textual evidence is of no great help either.

Information about possible functions of vessel types is necessary, however, to asking *when* people would have turned, e.g., to a stone bowl instead of using a ceramic bowl and *why* that might have been the case. The uncertainty about the factual use and functional relation of the most frequent stone vessel types to ceramic vessels in the context of everyday household life impedes us in coming up with clear answers to the last and most widely discussed question: what was their ideological context?

Purity Purpose?

The geographical distribution of stone vessels suggests that they were made and also predominantly used by the Jewish population of Palestine. During the period of production of these vessels, Palestinian Jewish society underwent dramatic transformations: economic growth, social differentiation, increasing Mediterranean influence on material and immaterial culture and the gradual loss of political independence after the end of the Herodian dynasty.

⁵⁴ See Berlin, "Jewish Life", 429: "There is (...) neither textual evidence for nor scholarly agreement on how and in what specific circumstances many of these stone vessels were used, and thus no real insight on what inspired and sustained demand for the precise array of vessels produced".

In the context of these developments, Eyal Regev sees stone vessels—next to stepped pools—as the most important indicator for the concept of ‘non-priestly purity’ spreading across Jewish society after the late 2nd c. BCE, i.e., the quest in non-priestly circles to attain priestly standards of purity in everyday life.⁵⁵ Regev emphasizes that priests used stone vessels when preparing and spreading the ashes from the Red Heifer during temple service (*m. Parah* 3). This was—according to Regev—the motivation for pious laypeople to likewise use stone vessels when they wanted to avoid impurity in daily life.

While biblical texts only list information about vessels that attract impurity: metal, wood, leather, bone and ceramics (Lev 11:32–40; Num 31:22–24), the Mishnah is more specific. Vessels that maintain their purity and do not attract impurity are mentioned in the Mishnah: dung vessels, stone vessels, earthen vessels (*m. Kelim* 6:2; 10:1; cf. further *m. Parah* 5:5; *m. ‘Ohal.* 5:5; *m. Yad.* 1:2; *t. Šabb.* 16:11).⁵⁶ As stone does not transmit impurity, vessels made from this material can protect liquids contained in them from impurity and therefore limit its expansion (*m. ‘Ohal.* 5:5). There are also traditions stating that impure water can be purified by pouring it into a stone vessel (such as, e.g., a cup) and bringing it in contact with pure water in a miqwe: then its status changes, it is purified and is ready again for consumption (*m. Bešah* 2:3).⁵⁷

Why stone was associated with this quality is not entirely clear, but it may have to do with the fact that it does not change its material characteristics and consistency in the process of production. The advantages of this material, however, are evident: Since stone vessels and the liquids and foodstuffs contained in them are protected from impurity, impure and pure individuals can use the same vessels and share from the same meal without violating the laws of non-priestly purity.

⁵⁵ Regev, “Non-Priestly Purity”, 229; similarly, Deines, *Steingefäße*, esp. 1–23; Hengel and Deines, “Common Judaism”; Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 163.

⁵⁶ Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 138–41. On ‘dung vessels’, see Bar-Nathan, *Pottery*, 235–43. Two very special kinds of objects associated with ritual purity were found in zealot contexts on Masada: one complete example of a ceramic hand basin (plus three more fragments) for washing hands and a number of crude ‘dung vessels’ (handmade from animal dung and clay) that are almost without parallel so far and were used for storage and as stoppers. It is likely that these objects need to be seen in connection with the strict purity observance of this radical group, but the lack of parallels from other sites should prevent us from seeing this as a more widespread phenomenon.

⁵⁷ Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 141–44.

I doubt, however, that this was the only or even the decisive reason for the use of stone vessels in late Second Temple Palestinian Judaism. Their widespread distribution all over Jewish Palestine does not support the assumption that stone vessels were used by only one group, such as priests or Pharisees:

Attempts to link such vessels specifically with priestly families living in Jerusalem and in its hinterland, or with Pharisaic groups that were supposedly imitating the purification practices of the priests, must remain matters for speculation.⁵⁸

Moreover, the general designation of the wide array of types and forms as mere 'stone vessels' obscures more than it clarifies. I doubt if such a complex set of evidence can simply be lumped together into such an unspecific category only on the basis of the material used. By no means were all objects produced from *nari* limestone directly connected to purity halakhah. It makes no sense, e.g., to store bones in a stone ossuary to hold back impurity.⁵⁹ *Qallals*, some bowls, tabletops, spice bowls and sundials were easy to decorate with fashionable patterns and were in increasing demand by an elite that gradually opened up to Hellenistic style and taste, replacing much more expensive metal or imported fine-ware equivalents.⁶⁰ Such objects belong to a more utilitarian context, rather than being connected with purity concerns, but they also convey a message:

Stone dishes were (. . .) recognizably local, made from the land itself, and—most obvious and important—of a material that was religiously privileged. Stone vessels would have communicated ethnic pride and attentiveness to Judaism. Their appearance demonstrated conspicuous religious solidarity.⁶¹

Equally important for the use of *nari* limestone, therefore, was that it was readily available and easily workable. In contrast, some very purity-sensitive vessel types were never produced in stone: cooking pots, casseroles, jugs, jars and lamps.

Other forms, such as certain types of deep jars and the ubiquitous handled or non-handled mugs, however, were new and are not attested in any material but stone. These "may be plausibly connected with specific religious uses: holding water for purification rites (. . .) and, probably, hand

⁵⁸ Gibson, "Stone Vessels", 302; see also Miller, "Observation"; Miller, "Complex Common Judaism"; Berlin, "Jewish Life", 431.

⁵⁹ See, e.g., Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 132–37.

⁶⁰ Berlin, "Jewish Life", 431.

⁶¹ Berlin, "Jewish Life", 433.

washing".⁶² I therefore follow Jonathan Reed, Stuart Miller and Shimon Gibson and do not consider stone objects as general evidence for an all-encompassing quest for purity.⁶³ The fact that the same material was used for all these objects is not sufficient reason to assume that they are motivated by one and the same purpose.

Chronology is also important. At locations in Judea that were already abandoned in the Hasmonean period, no stone vessels were found (Tirat Yehuda, Bet-Zur, Nebi Samwil). The oldest specimens come from the late Hasmonean phases of the palaces in Jericho, but the number is still very small.⁶⁴ In fact, stone vessels did not become widely used before the Herodian period, in the 2nd half of the 1st c. BCE. Eyal Regev remarks that this date overlaps with the lively debate on purity between Hillel and Shammai in the time of Herod and takes it as evidence for the connection between stone industry and a supposedly growing awareness of purity matters under Pharisaic leadership, but the question is if this is more than a coincidence. Regev himself emphasizes, however, that the quest for purity is older than the debate between Hillel and Shammai, so the two rabbis cannot be the impetus for such a widespread regional phenomenon. It rather seems that international contacts, growing prosperity and the increasing internal social differentiation of the Herodian period provided Palestinian Jewish society with the artistic and material means to give traditional religious needs new ways of appropriate expression. The booming limestone industry was one example of how to satisfy a growing market of common and luxury goods; some of its products were status symbols for the better-off, while others may well have been used by others to fulfill halakhic purposes.

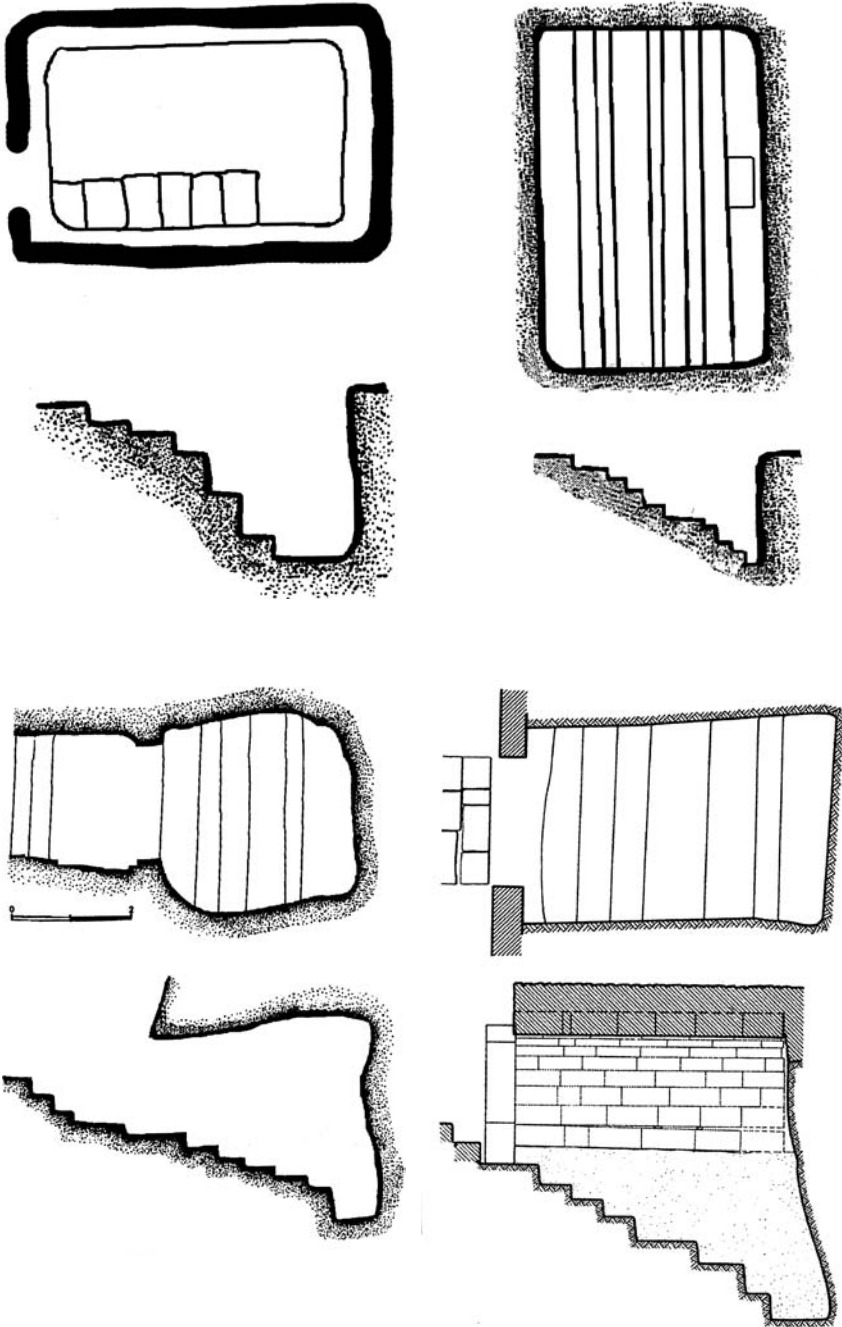
If there was anything like a common quest for non-priestly purity, it seems that it existed without stone vessels for quite some time and even continued when the use of stone vessels decreased and eventually ceased during the 2nd c. CE, just at a time when textual sources begin to speak about stone vessels with increasing intensity.⁶⁵ While there was obviously a continuum of common Jewish tenets such as purity, we lack a corresponding continuum in the field of material culture.

⁶² Berlin, "Jewish Life", 431.

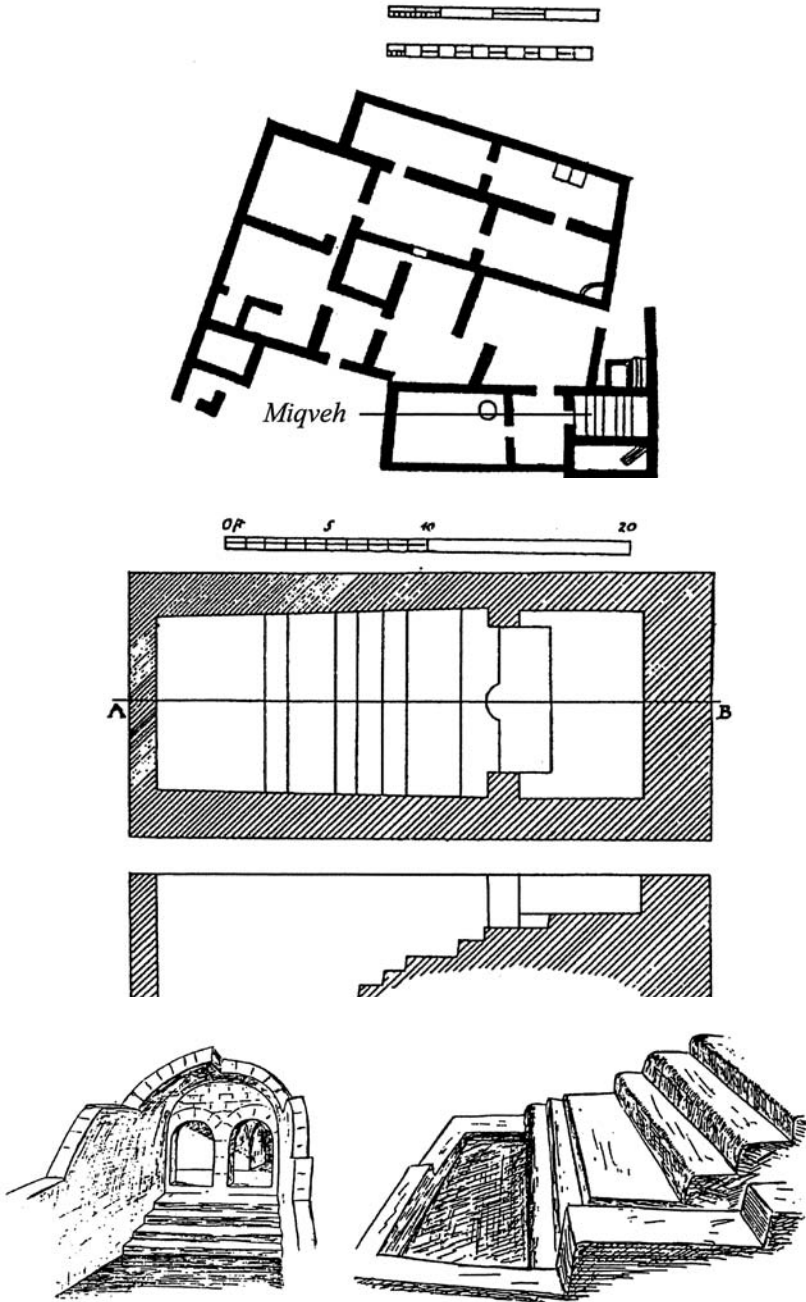
⁶³ Reed, "Stone Vessels"; Miller, "Observations"; Gibson, "Stone Vessels"; see also Zangenberg, "Common Judaism".

⁶⁴ Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 162.

⁶⁵ On that important phenomenon, see Miller, "Observations".



Figs. 1-4. Types of Miqwa'ot. Hoss, Baths and Bathing, M Cat. Nr. 1.



Figs. 5-7. Stepped Pools from Gezer. Hoss, Baths and Bathing, M Cat. Nr. 9.



Fig. 8. Stepped Pool A(L)350 from Herod's Second Palace at Jericho. Netzer, Palaces I, 217, Fig. 311.

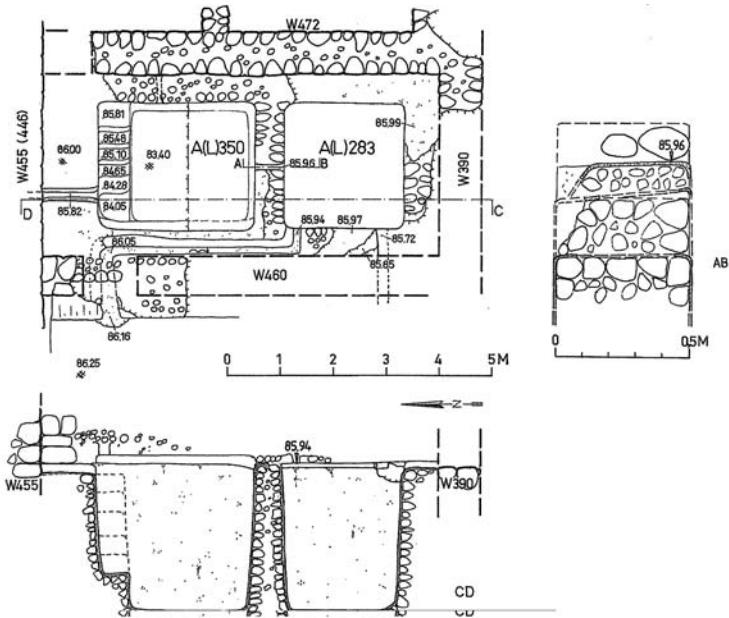


Fig. 9. Detailed Plan of Stepped Pool A(L)350 from Herod's Second Palace at Jericho. Netzer, Palaces I, 216, Fig. 310.



Fig. 10. Plan of Area R in Gamla: Miqwe in Domestic Complex. Hoss, Baths and Bathing, M Cat. Nr. 6.

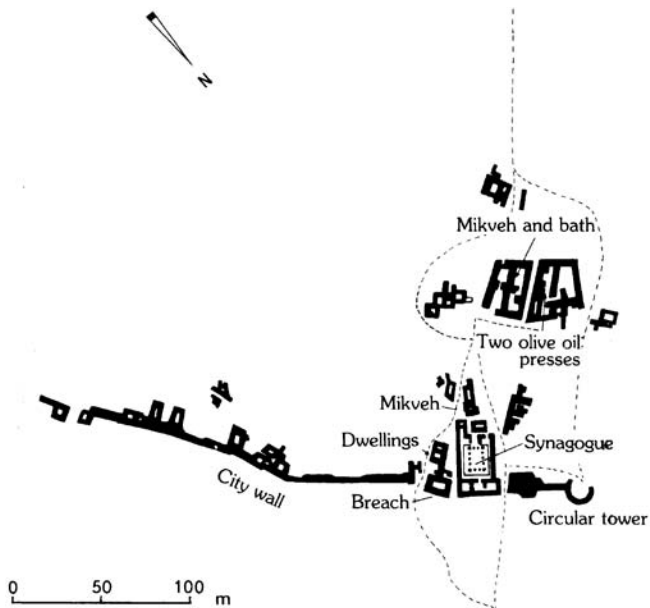


Fig. 11. Stepped Pool next to Synagogue in Gamla. Stern, *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological excavations in the Holy Land*. Vol. 2, 459.

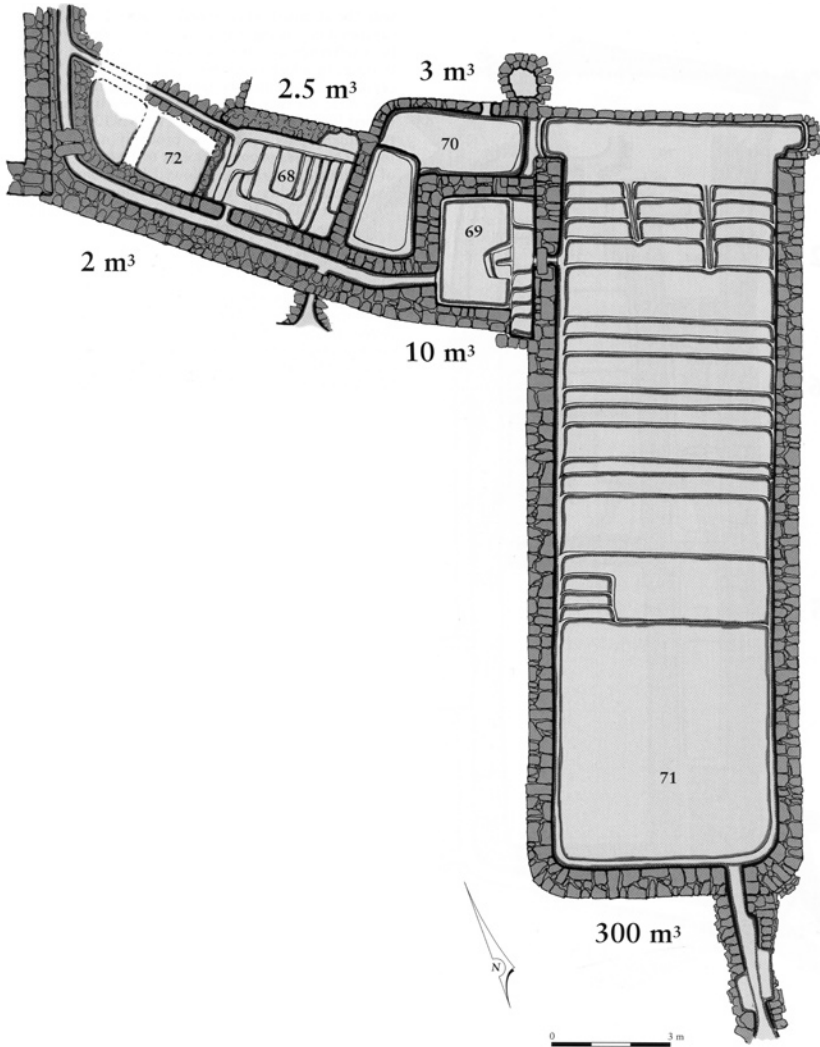


Fig. 12. Pools from the South-East Annex at Qumran. Galor, *Plastered Pools*, 313, Fig. 25.



Fig. 13. Western Half on Industrial Building FB1 with Pottery Kiln and Stepped Pools at Jericho Palaces. Netzer, Palaces II, 84, Fig. III.

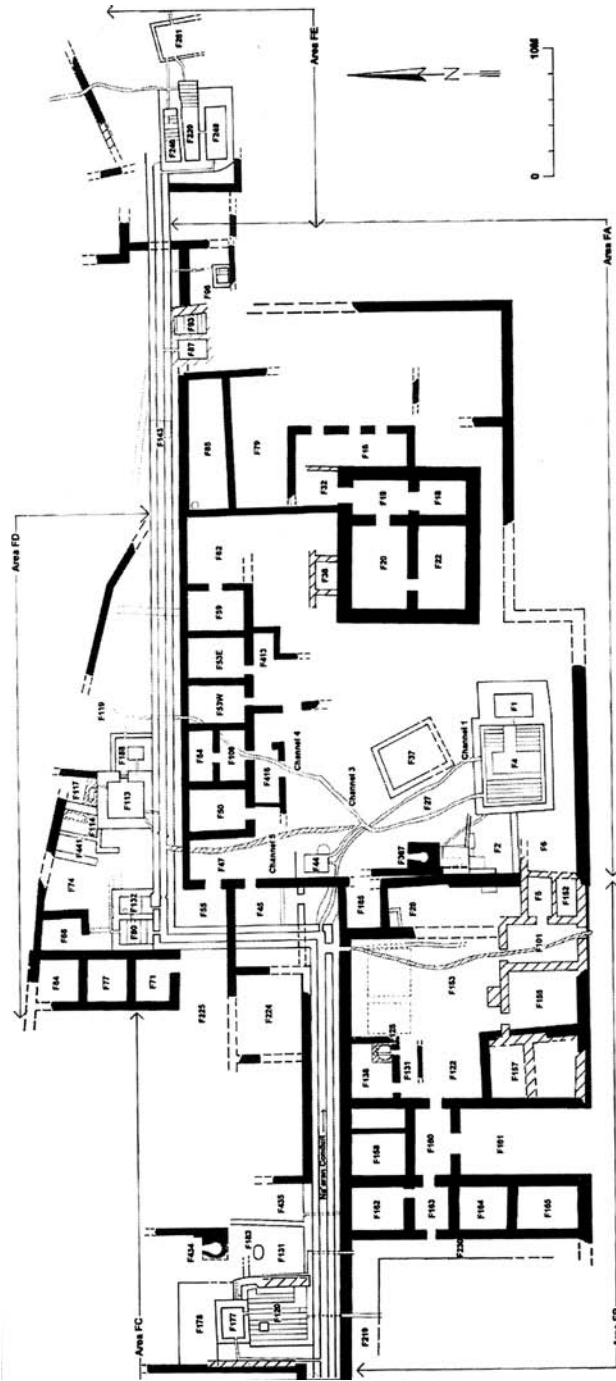


Fig. 14. Schematic Plan of the Main Industrial Building in Zone F during Phase 3a at Jericho. Netzer, Palaces II, 132, plan 21.

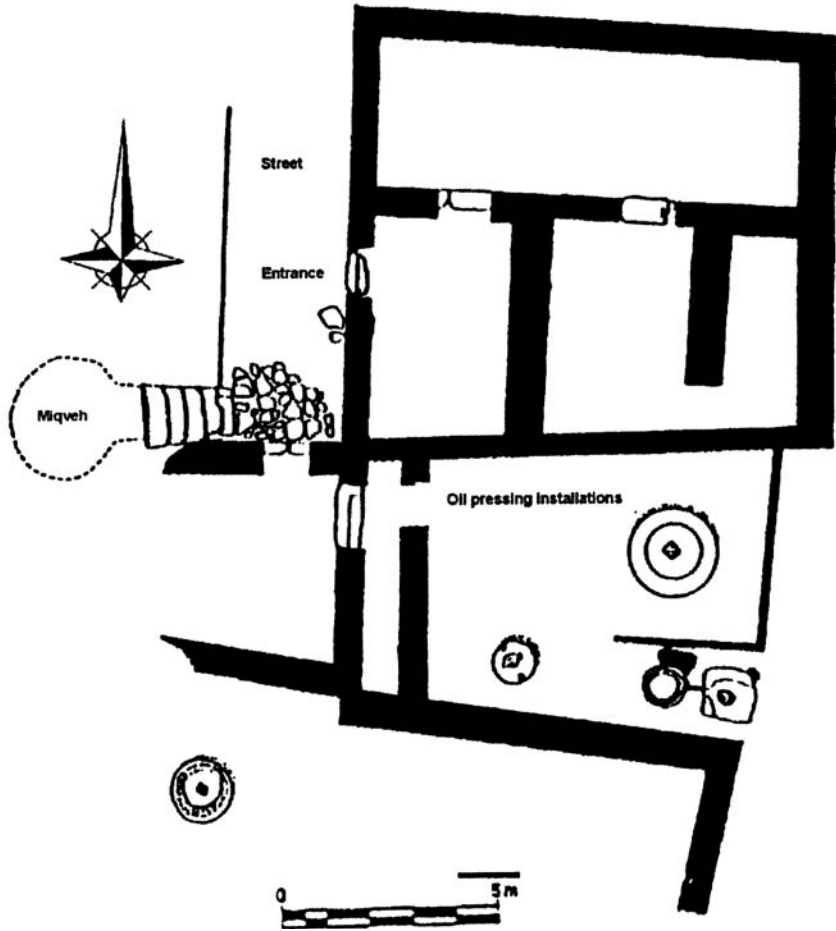
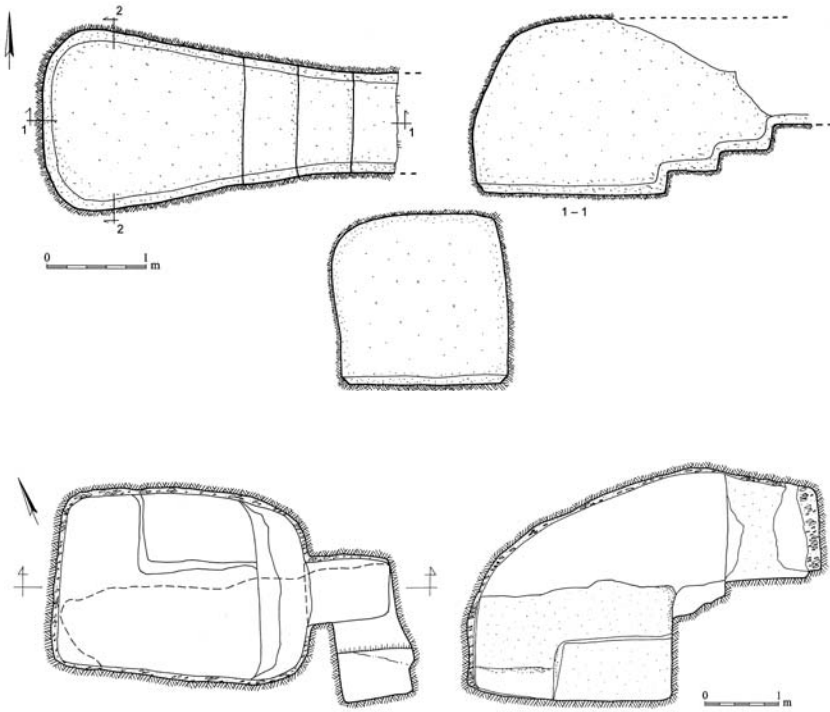
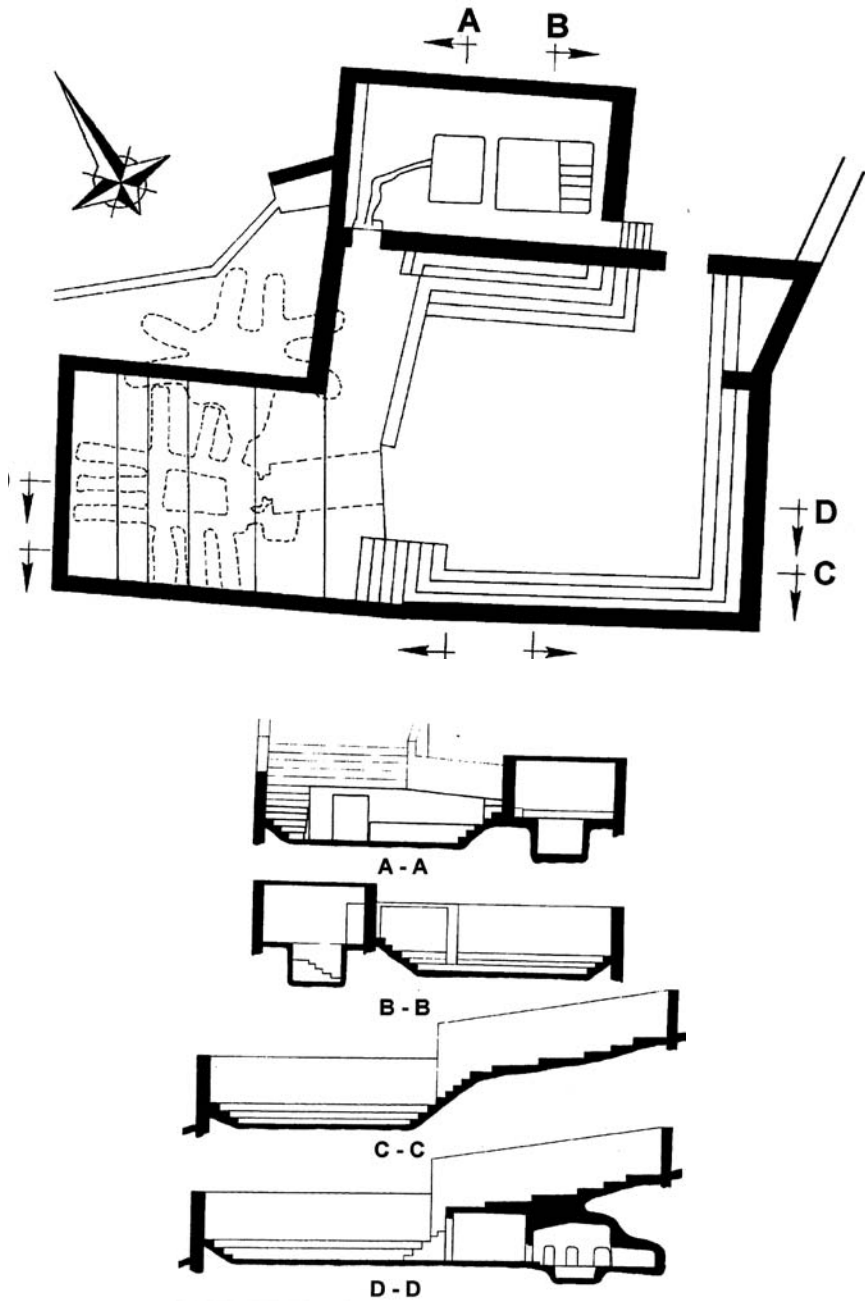


Fig. 15. Stepped Pool next to House and Oil Press in Qedumim/Samaria. Hoss, Baths and Bathing, M Cat. Nr. 30.



Figs. 16–18. Stepped Pools in Qedumim/Samaria. Magen, *Immersion*, 188, fig. 3–5.



Figs. 19–20. Mourning Enclosure with Stepped Pool in Jericho Herodian Necropolis. Hoss, Baths and Bathing, M Cat. Nr. 12.

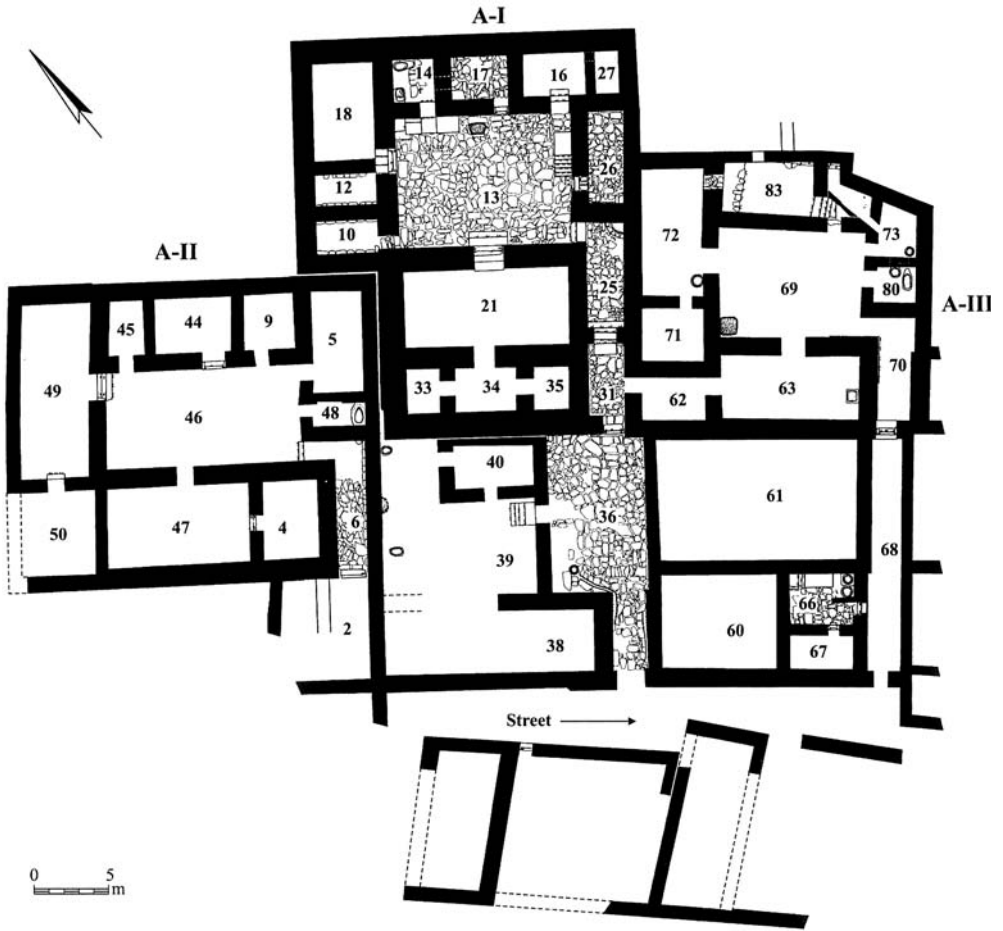


Fig. 21. Domestic Quarter on Mount Gerizim: Plan of the North-Western Block of Western Quarter with Bath Tubs. Magen, Gerizim II, 29, fig. 46.



Fig. 22. Bathroom L-14 in Building A-1 (see Fig. 21). Magen, Gerizim II, 33, fig. 54.



Fig. 23. Shoe-Shaped Stone Bathtub in Bathroom L-14 of Building A-1 (see Fig. 21). Magen, Gerizim II, 33, fig. 55.



Fig. 24. Chalk Kraters (*qallal*) and Mugs from the Jewish Quarter Excavations at Jerusalem. Magen, Stone Vessel Industry, pl. 13a.

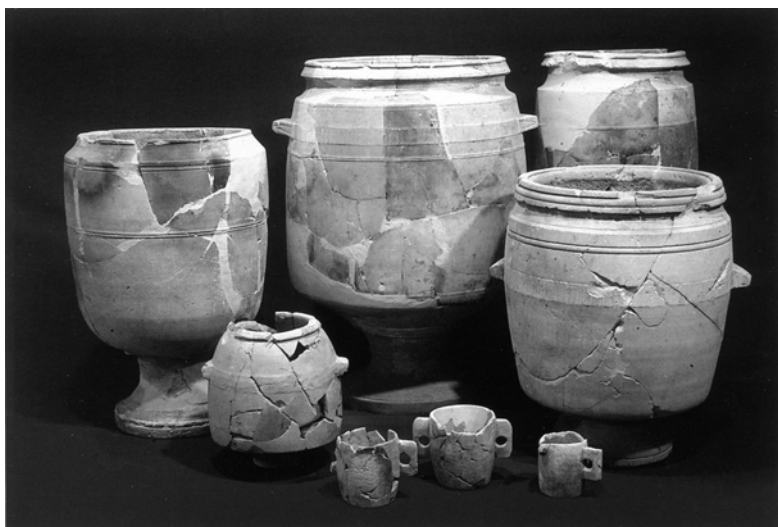


Fig. 25. Chalk Vessel Assemblage from the Excavations near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Magen, Stone Vessel Industry, pl. 9.



Fig. 26. Kraters from the Jewish Quarter Excavations at Jerusalem. Magen, Stone Vessel Industry, pl. 13b.

5. CONCLUSION

Differentiation is necessary when it comes to contextualizing stone vessels and stepped pools in Jewish culture of Greco-Roman Palestine. The vagueness of OT commandments on how to *practically* regain and maintain purity inspired lively discussions and technological innovation, partly inspired by Hellenism (e.g., hydraulic plaster, turning lathe); and growing prosperity during the late Hellenistic ('Herodian') Period provided Palestinian Judaism with the means to practically fulfill the demands of purity through material objects or installations. It would be too restrictive, however, to subsume all stone vessels and stepped pools under the rubric of products used in a common quest for purity.

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