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The Rise and Fall of 'Purity Culture' in the Land of Israel: A Historic Perspective

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This article aims at determining the turning point in the adherence to the Jewish laws of purity in the Land of Israel, considering the situation before 'the outburst of purity,' its decline and final cessation. Four different stages were distinguished regarding the practice of purification: (1) prior to the appearance of the ritual bath (*miqweh*), before the Hasmonean Kingdom; (2) the period of 'purity culture,' when purity was widespread, becoming a central religious phenomenon; (3) individual purity; (4) the final decline of purity. Once the 'purification water' became unavailable, halakhic immersion was observed only by women, while symbolic purification continued in Hasidic communities, albeit without a formal halakhic status. This article further discusses the impact of the struggles between the different religious-social groups on the distribution of purity.

Keywords: Purity, social development, miqweh, priests, Rabbis, sages, sects

Introduction

'Purity culture' is a situation when Jewish purity laws were regarded as extremely important, dominating discussions, determining social and religious affinities and frequently mentioned in the written sources. Every society has its regulations and norms; in religious societies, however, norms are the main rules to be lived by. That said, there was a difference between laws observed by *everyone* and laws that distinguished between *us* and *the other*. This is also true regarding the religious Jewish world. While the Sages claimed that all deeds (mitzvot) are equally important, they also said that one should be quick in performing a minor commandment as in the case of a major one (Mishnah, *Avot* 4:2), emphasizing that certain deeds *were* considered easier to observe than others. For generations, Jewish society has changed its perception of certain deeds. The deed of *Kashrut* (Kosher food), for example, was highly valued by Jews in the Middle Ages, dominating discussions in contemporary literature, whilst it was negligible in the halakhic literature of the Mishnah

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and Talmud. This is not to say that these laws were not observed, but that they were not considered the focus of religious practice.

The religious focal point of late Second Temple period Jewish society was the Temple; it was revered by all, acting both as an arena of conflict and the cause that incited it. Work at the Temple required to maintain a state of purity. Any person entering the Temple precints, e.g., in preparation for pilgrimage, had to be purified. The centrality of 'purity culture' is evidenced by the profuse halakhic discussions on this subject. Some of the sectorial conflicts revolved around the various laws of purity, and the preservation of purity became a factor in determining the social status of the different groups comprising Jewish society.

The thousands of ritual baths (*miqwa'ot*) in Israel, the abundance of stone vessels and the paucity of imported vessels are all impressive archaeological evidence of an adherence to purity laws. Although it is usually not possible to date ritual baths, and their dating is largely determined by their context, these installations are commonly understood to have first appeared in the Hasmonean period, mainly in the days of the Hasmonean Kingdom, approximately at the beginning of the first century BCE. The ritual baths are different from one another, their typology dominates the research (Adler 2011; Reich 2013). Notwithstanding the differences between the installatopns, they all share several traits, such as a uniform plan, minimal dimensions, a supply of running water and steps. It is evident that the ritual baths confirm to a predefined plan, which was unique to this purification facility (Adler 2022:55–69).

The research question addressed in the first part of this article is: how was purification performed in the pre-Hasmonean period, i.e., before the appearance of ritual baths? A simple answer would be that purity was not observed at all at this time and that whoever claims otherwise, must come up with tangible proof, in the absence of which it must be concluded that the practice did not exist. I am of the opinion that in any culture, a facility intended for social or ritual practice does not appear suddenly, but rather, it evolves in a process, eventually reaching its final shape. The phenomenon of multiple ritual baths therefore reflects a late stage of adherance to purity laws, a stage reflecting not only the fulfillment of a specific deed but a 'purity culture.' Therefore, the starting point of this research is how this deed was observed in pre-Hasmonean times, keeping in mind that purity observance may have been maintained without a specific facility.

THE PRE-HASMONEAN PERIOD

Biblical Evidence

The deeds pertaining to purification stemmed from the Book of Leviticus, Chapters 11–22, with certain aspects appearing elsewhere in the Pentateuch (e.g., Numbers 19). In all these verses, however, it is not stated how one should purify oneself, but only that purification requires the sprinkling of 'purification water'—water mixed with ash of a red heifer—and 'bathing' or 'rinsing' in water, and in the case of *zav* (gonorrhoea) and leprosy, bathing in

'living water' (מים חיים) is required. In biblical sources other than the Pentateuch, purity laws are hardly mentioned, as in the story of Naaman's immersion (see below). In all, there is only scanty information concerning deeds in the Bible (for sources from the Persian period, see below); however, it is noteworthy that all ancient religions required some form of purity.[2] Those who entered the Temple, or offered sacrifices in private houses, had to be in a state of purity. In most religions, the cause of impurity is not specified; however, it is evident that one had to be purified before entering a sacred place. The Torah speaks of specific causes for impurity (such as childbirth, *zav*, leprosy, dermin, corpse), but also of the purification of the altar on Yom Kippur through the sprinkling of blood (Leviticus 16:19), albeit without explaining how the altar became impure. The table and the menorah are also described as pure, but it is not clear how they were defiled or purified. While purity was practiced differently in different religions, each religion had a specific practice. The sensitivity toward purity is attested already in biblical times, as is evidenced by a short inscription on a clay bowl, reading טהר, 'pure,' in ancient Hebrew script (the letter ה written backwards; Peleg 2008). Therefore, the question how Jews practiced purity in the period before the appearance of the ritual baths is still debated, and it cannot be resolved simply by stating that purity was not practiced at all. Scholars attempted to find evidence for biblical purity (see, e.g., Faust and Katz 2017; Faust 2019); this issue, however, is beyond the scope of this article.

Archaeological Evidence

Our review of the archaeological evidence begins in the Persian period. The lack of purification installations before the establishment of the Hasmonean Kingdom is evident in a series of sites excavated in Judea, Samaria and Idumea, wherein no purification installations were found: in Judea—Bet El I, Tell el-Ful and Har Adar (Tal 2007:144–145), Ta'oz (Tal 2006:155), Khirbat er-Rasm (Faust and Erlich 2011) and several similar farmhouses (e.g., Gadot 2011; Dadon 1995; Baruch 1996; Hizmi and Shabtai 1994; Porath 1974; Reich 1992; Baruch 2006; Fisher, Roll and Tal 2008; Gadot 2011; Faust, Katz and Eyal 2015; Haddad et al. 2015; Har-Even and Shkolnik 2018); in Samaria—the city on Mount Gerizim, the farm near 'Eli and perhaps also Hellenistic Shillo (unpublished); in Idumea—Hellenistic Lakhish and a farm at Aderet (Yogev 1982; Seligman 2009). In the city of Maresha, ritual baths were uncovered—the earliest known—reflecting daily practices of the Idumaeans, or perhaps, of a Jewish community that lived there and observed the laws of purity (Stern and Alpert

[2] As the subject is widely discussed in ethnographic and ethno-archaeological studies, archaeologists sought for evidence of purity observance even in the biblical period (see, e.g., Faust and Katz 2017; Faust 2019). Of course, it is possible that no archaeological evidence of purity observation may be found due to the limitations posed by the finds and their interpretation. Usually, in foreign cultures, purification was required before entering a sacred precinct, or during a sacred time, such as a religious ceremony. In the latter case, purity was required by all performers of the ritual, regardless of previous specific impurity.

2014). This case has not yet been fully published in the scholarly literature, and therefore will not be elaborated on here.

The abovementioned sites may be identified as military forts or administrative centers; however, following Faust (2018; see also Kletter and Silverman 2021), they should probably be interpreted as fortified farms, as they do not have any military characteristics and do not conform to any formal 'Persian' architectural plan. Such fortified farms are known in the hundreds throughout the Roman Empire, comprising manor houses with agricultural installations. From the Persian and Hellenistic periods, only fortified farms have been exposed in rural areas, but almost no villages have been excavated. It does not seem possible that even though extensive archaeological work has been untertaken in this area, almost no small villages have been found, but only fortified strongholds. Therefore, it must be concluded that the rural settlement in the Persian and Hellenistic (pre-Hasmonean) periods included many fortified farms compared to other periods; the question whether regular' villages also existed remains unanswered.

The extent to which the deeds of purity were observed may be deduced from the absence of imported pottery vessels in Jewish settlements dating to the Persian and Hellenistic pre-Hasmonean periods (and until the end of the Second Temple period). This phenomenon is discussed in the scholarly literature (Berlin 2002),[3] and three main explanations have been offered: (1) a strong Jewish national identity and a wish of segregation, as reflected in Josephus' writings, who relates that the people of Israel avoided foreign relations and trade, especially with the Greeks (as opposed to their contacts with the Egyptians; *Against Apion* 10:12, 60–61);[4] (2) an impure status of all lands outside Israel that also rendered their pottery impure; (3) the high cost of imported vessels rendered them unaffordable for the local rural inhabitants (Safrai and Safrai 2015:423–425; for a detailed discussion, see Adler 2011:266–279). Adler, and Safrai and Safrai, considered the adherence to the laws of purity as the most likely reason for refraining from imported vessels in this period, whereas Berlin considered that national identity was the main reason for this. Although it is difficult to establish the real reason for this phenomenon, it should be stressed that a scarcity of imported ceramics was also attested in biblical times (Iron Age I–II; Faust 2006). According to Faust, the paucity of imported vessels reflects a general rejection of anything foreign and a sense of tribalism. While nationalism and tribalism share a similar meaning, the reasons may differ: A common behavior trait may not necessarily have an obvious reason, and it may be performed without Divine instructions. Moreover, purity is an integral part of Jewish nationalism (Regev 2000;

[3] Some imported pottery vessels were found in large estates and large cities. In Jerusalem and Gezer, there was a dramatic decrease in the number of Rhodian handles after the Hasmonean rebellion. When vessels stamped with Rhodian seals were used in affluent homes in Jerusalem, e.g., this was contrary to Halakha. It was probably only following the Hasmonean Revolt that the prohibition to use imported vessels spread among the circles of the Jerusalem elite.

[4] Although Josephus' description may be utopic, a similar observation is echoed by the Jewish Sages (Safrai 1994:304–315).

2023:10–30). Purity is one aspect whereby Jews distinguished themselves from 'others' (gentiles), and while segregation may not have been the reason for adhering to purity, it certainly was a direct consequence, even if unintentional. Jewish nationalism is imbedded in Jewish law (Halakha), simultaneously sustaining it. For a Jewish layperson of the period, purity was conceived as God's commandment, while nationalism was a side effect that may have gone unnoticed. It is possible that the leaders of the generation encouraged the people to maintain purity as part of a national process of segregation, but it is also possible that they were simply concerned with fulfiling the words of God as a means of worship.

The halakhic ruling that pottery produced outside the Land of Israel (ארץ העמים) is impure is attributed to Joshua ben Peraḥhya, who was active in the 80s of the first century BCE (BT, *Shabbat* 14b; JT, *Ketubot* 32c). Elsewhere, I suggested that this was as an example of a process whereby a prevailing custom formulates into a law (Halakha) (Safrai 2020:213). This is, however, only one opinion concerning the issue, while the Talmud suggests attributing this statement to Yossi ben Yoezer and Yossi Ben Yoḥanan, who were active one generation earlier (around the beginning of the Hasmonean Revolt). Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai suggested that this prohibition was already established at the time of the Returnees to Zion. These three traditions attest that the Sages did not consider this prohibition as a biblical decree.

The use of stone vessels began approximately in the second half of the first century BCE (Magen 2002; Geva 2006; Adler 2011:191–192). Although Geva's conclusion is not based on many excavation results, the first appearance of stone vessels in this period is evident. As it is clear that the stone vessels did not appear simultaneously throughout Judea, their absence from earlier strata in various excavations does not nullify the phenomenon. Recently, the excavators of Giv'ati Parking Lot, south of the Temple Mount, suggested that stone vessels appeared earlier in the Hasmonean period (130–110 BCE).[5] This would mean that the use of stone vessels preceded the appearance of ritual baths.

As we do not know when the the first ritual baths were built and it is not clear which phenomenon appeared first, the stone vessels or the ritual baths. Due to the research limits, the nomenclature used in the archaeological reports is "the beginning of the Hasmonean period" or "the beginning of the Hasmonean conquest," with no precise dating. In any case, the material evidence roughly coincides with the time when the the various sects were established. The Qumran sects are known to have named John Hyrcanus ('Jonathan') as the 'evil priest,' who fought against them, and the tension with the Sadducees broke out in his days. The possible connection between the widespead practice of purity and the rivilary between the various sects is further emphasized below.

[5] This site has been excavated under the direction of Doron Ben-Ami and Yana Tchekhanovets. Tchekhanovets expressed this idea in a lecture (see Zilberstein 2022).

Written Evidence

The Emergence of Purity

The phenomenon of purification is reflected in a few pre-Hasmonean sources (before the Hasmonean Kingdom).[6] The doctrine of purification was known to the Jewish public from the Pentateuch (Books of Leviticus and Numbers). Even if we assume that the Book of Leviticus was compiled in the Persian period, it must have been known and accepted by the late Persian period. The question whether the deeds mentioned therein were observed in daily life requires finding references to purification in the other Books of the Bible. One such reference is the purification of Naaman from leprosy (2 Kings 5:10–14); this, however, is not a halakhic purification. Although the verb 'to immerse' (Hebrew: טבל) is used in this context (contra to the verbs used in the Pentateuch), Naaman's immersion was not preformed according to the instructions of the Book of Leviticus, that is without prior healing or sprinkling, and he immersed specifically in the Jordan River. Therefore, this case is not related to the subject of our discussion. The Book of 2 Kings was compiled sometime in the Persian period, but it reflects earlier memories. Moreover, it is difficult to separate the writer's authentic memory from later additions and formulations at the time of writing.

The date of the Book of Ezekiel is more substantiated, dating to the time of the Babylonian exile, the eve of the Persian conquest. It includes a description of the future, when God "will sprinkle pure water upon you, and you shall be purified: I will purify you from all your defilement and from all your fetishes" (Ezekiel 36:25). Sprinkling water is an allusion to the 'purification water,' but purification here is required only after contacting gentiles. The distinction between regular or normal purity and purity from idolatry is emphasized below.

In the Book of Psalms (51:9) it is written: "Purge me with hyssop till I am pure; wash me till I am whiter than snow." This is the traditional transalation. Another possible translation is "Purge me with hyssop till I am pure; wash me with snow I will be white [pure]." Purification with hyssop is identical to sprinkling 'purification water,' and snow water is probably water that was not contained in a vessel (in halakhic terminology: 'living waters' [מים חיים], i.e., undrawn water).[7] The traditional interpretation of this verse is that the letter מ (*mem*) in the word משלג, from snow, means "more than", i.e., whiter than snow. The interpretation I propose may seem weak; however, a similar meaning appears in Job 9:30: "If I washed with snow water. Cleansed my hands with lye." It is noteworthy that in Job, purity is associated with righteousness, while in rabbinic literature, purity is a technical act not related to moral behavior. Even if the meaning of the word 'snow' in Psalms is not as proposed here, the Book of Job specifically mentions snow water, supporting the explanation that the term negates drawn water.

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[6] Adler (2017) addressed this issue. My conclusions are similar although some of the cited sources are different (see below).

[7] This interpretation assumes that the 'living water' may have been brought as snow, to which drawn water could be added. This would allow one to empty the *miqweh* and clean it.

In the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, purification is mentioned several times in connection with service in the Temple. In some cases, this is a symbolic act equivalent to a sanctification ceremony, and not a halakhic purification. Thus, after the expulsion of the gentiles (the sons of Tobiah), it is written: "I gave orders to purify the rooms, and had the equipment of the House of God and the meal offering and the frankincense put back" (Nehemiah 13:9). Here, purification is concerned with what Nehemiah considered to be idolatry, similar to purification of the Temple by Hezekiah (1 Chronicles 29:15–16), or the purification of the Temple by the Hasmoneans: "The priests and Levites purified themselves; then they purified the people, and the gates, and the wall" (Nehemiah 12:30).[8] From a halakhic point of view, it is not possible to purify gates and a wall, as a building does not contract impurity, nor can it be purified. Although a structure may be defiled by leprosy (צרעת בתים), this is not the issue here. The purification of an individual or a people are 'normal' acts of purification. Similarly, the verb 'to purify' (טהר) appears in the verse: "who kept the charge of their God and the charge of purity" (Nehemiah 12:45). Purification is the duty of those who serve in the Temple. The verse, "I gave orders to the Levites to purify themselves and come and guard the gates, to preserve the sanctity of the Sabbath" (Nehemiah 13:22), attests that those who served in the Temple were also in charge of purification of the city of Jerusalem. Purification is mentioned specifically concerning the Passover sacrifice: "The returned exiles celebrated the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, for the priests and Levites had purified themselves to a man; they were all pure. They slaughtered the Passover offering for all the returned exiles, and for their brother priests and for themselves" (Ezra 6:19–20). This description contradicts what is written in the Book of Chronicles, which describes Passover at the time of Hezekiah: "Since many in the congregation had not sanctified themselves, the Levites were in charge of slaughtering the paschal sacrifice for everyone who was not pure (לא טהור), so as to consecrate them to the Lord. For most of the people—many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun—had not purified themselves, yet they ate the paschal sacrifice in violation of what was written" (2 Chronicles 30:17–18). Here, 'sanctified' means 'purified.' The author of the Book of Chronicles recognizes the need for purification, but also relates that the majority of the people did not observe the deed. As the entire passage describing Hezekiah's Passover in the Book of Chronicles is not paralleled in the Book of Kings, it should probably be considered a later addition, or at least, a rewording thereof (Jafet 1977:8–15). The situation in which only Levites were purified is rendered in the Book of Ezra IV—which includes traditions similar to those in the biblical Book of Ezra, albeit with a different editor—in relation to Josiah's Passover (Ezra IV 6:10–11). In these verses it is also hinted that the process of purification is not a one-day practice but a long one, lasting seven days and requiring sprinkling, as in Halakha.

[8] In the past, the Books of Chronicles and Ezra and Nehemiah were considered to have been written by the same author; Jafet (1968), however, proved that they were composed by different authors.

Therefore, in the later books of the Bible, purity was not only a moral purity (of the heart), but also a halakhic act of removing impurity stemming from mundane actions. It is not stated what defiles, but it is clear that before service in the Temple one must be purified. In the Book of Ezekiel, most occurrences of the verb 'purify' (לטהר) carry the meaning of purity of the heart and charity, while in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, they take over a technical meaning. The mention of snow water perhaps alludes to purification with 'living water' (מים חיים), as required by later Halakha (in the Qumran and in rabbinic literature). In all these books, as well as in the Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the place of the Temple is strongly emphasized (see below).

The post-biblical Jewish literature dating from the pre-Hasmonean period is scarce. In the Book of Judith, purity occupies an important part; albeit only scarcely mentioned, Judith is praised for her preservation of purity. The Book of Judith mentions the prohibition to touch the priestly dues with one's hands (Judith 11:13), as well as the fact the Judith bathed (טבלה) in the morning (Judith 12:7), a practice that expresses her righteousness more than a fulfilment of the requirements of Halakha.[9] The verb used here is the Greek ἐβαπτίζετο, a verb that will later, in the Christian Church, be used as a technical term for ritual baptism. In the Septuagint translation, it did not have the meaning of baptism (see Appendix). The Greek verb is a translation of a Hebrew word (probably 'bathing'), and the translator, who was active in the Hasmonean period was influenced by the 'purity culture,' which was at its peak. The Book of Judith reflects the late Persian period, or at most, the early Hellenistic period (Grinz 1957:15–17; Zertal 2009).[10] The composition also emphasizes the place of Jerusalem as the capital and the Temple as the center; the connection to the Temple is related to purity.

In the Book of Ben Sira (34:26–27), the author writes: "A person who is immersed in water and returns and touches it, what will be the use of his washing? Yes, a person fasts with his sins and returns and walks and does these things." This section is missing from the texts found in the Judean Desert caves, but appears in the Greek sections. It is specifically about purifying after contracting corpse impurity.

In 1 Maccabees, there is a clear allusion to the deed of purity, and in 2 Maccabees, there are several possible allusions to it (1:36,[11] 10:6[12]). It is also rendered in 2 Maccabees (12:38)

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[9] A full-body bathing is mentioned in Judith 10:3; however, it may refer to a bath for aesthetic/hygiene purposes, as indicted by the use of the Greek verb Περιλύω, contra to the verb ἐβαπτίζετο that appears in Judith 11:8.

[10] There is a scholarly debate regarding the date when the Book of Judith was composed, some relating it to the Hasmonean period (Moore 1985:67–70) and even to the Roman period (Efthimiadis-Keith 2014). In my opinion, the earlier date is more probable based on the archaeological finds of Zertal, and the name in Aramaic or Hebrew Ochina (Acre) which is unusual, as in all contemporary Greek literature the city is named called Ptolemais.

[11] The fire that came down from heaven is termed 'Naftar,' which is translated as purification. Purification by fire is known from the *halakhic* literature in the purification of vessels and Samaritan purification.

[12] Alcimus, who became the High Priest, was defiled of his own accord, but apparently the reference is not to *halakhic* impurity but to general impurity resulting from idolatry.

that Judah camped near 'Adullam on the Sabbath day: "They purified themselves according to custom and celebrated the Sabbath there." In both books, the purification of the Temple occupies a central place (see below); however, it is doubtful whether this is evidence of the observance of the Jewish laws of purity and impurity, or a general impurity resulting from idolatry. In the third Sibylline Oracle (591–592), the author recounts the heydays of the Maccabees: "They raise their palms to the heavens in their bathing and always bathe their hands (or their bodies)[13] in water, when they faint...". The allusion is to purification following seminal emission, which according to Halakha is performed in the morning, and to the practice of immersion at dawn, which the Sages condemned. The Hasidic custom to immerse every morning stemmed from this Halakha; Judith too followed this Hasidic custom. The third Sibylline Oracle was probably compiled after the Roman occupation (Collins 1983:360–361), but preserves parts of an earlier source. In this case, the passage refers to the days of the victory of the Hasmoneans, and it seems that the description reflects an earlier stage before the Hasmonean Hellenization. This evidence, however, is dubious due to the difficulty in dating the passage.

The centrality of the Temple is also emphasized in the Letter of Aristeas, which alluds to the deed of purity (142), here too, specifically in the morning; the washing of hands is also implied (305). This composition purports to be early Hellenistic, but there is a scholarly debate concering its date, with suggestions ranging between the third century BCE and the first century CE (Gutmann 1928; Shutt 1985:8–9; Jelicoe 1993). In fact, there is no chronological peg in the essay, as the chronological framework that the author describes is imaginary and legendary.

In the Aramaic Levi Document there are instructions regarding the purity of the priest entering the Temple (Mali 2019). Some date it to the third century BCE; however, in my opinion, there is no basis for such an early dating. This document does not mention purity in the sense discussed in this article, as there is no evidence of the public's observance of purity in private houses on weekdays, or even before a visit to the Temple Mount. However, it is important to note that the author of the passage uses two Aramaic terms to describe full-body immersion of the High Priest before he performs in the Temple: 'Saḥi' or 'Saḥei' (סחי) and 'Yrḥa' (ירחע), to describe the washing of feet and hands only. This may testify to a linguistic distinction between washing and immersion.

Most of the passages cited above consider purity that is not halakhic, i.e, a behavior that is not obligatory according to the later rabbinical Halakha. However, all these practices are recognized by the Sages as extra ritualistic and Hasidic behaviors (Regev 2005), for example, purification before eating a meal, in the morning and before Shabbat. The question remains whether the Hasidic behavior preceded the formation of Halakha, or was later; if the former is true, the sources cited above may attest to a regular practice of purification.

[13] Translations vary according to the different versions.

Regarding the impurity of imported vessels (see above), the social behavior preceded the appearance of Halakha and attests to a time when deeds were observed by the general public not as a legal obligation but in an intuitive way (see our commentary on the Mishnah: Safrai and Safrai 2008:52–74; 2023:187–212). Each Jew interpreted the obligation 'to purify' and the causes of impurity, and only later did the Sages incorporate these actions in a legal corpus. Some of these behaviors entered the corpus and some did not, while others yet were even opposed by the Sages. The corpus of laws was gradually accepted and influenced the behavior of the laypersons.

Purification following 'Gentile Impurity' (טומאת נכרים)

Purification was required after contracting 'gentile impurity.' This cause of impurity has roots in ancient sources as, for example, Daniel, who did not eat gentiles' bread and oil (Daniel 1:8). Also, Seleucus Nicator is said to have given the gymnasium wrestlers the right to receive the oil grant in cash (*Antiquities* 12 [119]), a right later confirmed by the Roman rulers. The clearest expression of this impurity is the purification of the Temple in the Hasmonean period, which was in fact a purification from the impurity of 'gentile impurity' and idolatry. Alon (1957:121–147) collected much evidence concerninng the antiquity of these prohibitions; however, in my opinion, this kind of impurity is not consistent with the subject of this article. The rejection of gentiles is consistent with the birth of Jewish nationalism (Regev 2023:10–30), and therefore, the use of the terms 'purity' and 'impurity' in this context is inaccurate from a halakhic point of view. A gentile is not impure, as the deeds and prohibitions do not apply to him. However, later Sages (later Tannaim and Amoraim) discuss the question of what kind of impurity is 'gentile impurity'? what particulars of impurity will apply to a gentile? various suggestions are offered, such as *nidah* and *zav*. The meaning is that one who distiguishes himself from 'gentile impurity' may be purified as is the case with other impurities.

In light of the above, the halakhic definition of 'gentile impurity' must be understood as artificial, the Sages applying to 'gentile impurity' the special language of purity. After the language of purity had become widespread, the Sages tried in retrospect to express their disgust with idolatry by using legal terms adopted from the field of purity. Therefore, the early (i.e., pre-Hasmonean) existence of such anti-gentile conceptions is not an indication of the status of the laws of purity. On the other hand, the definition of the impurity of the 'Land of Nations' (the entire world apart from the Land of Israel; ארץ העמים) as meaning prohibition on imported pottery is formulated in halakhic-legal terms of purity, similar to other bodily impurities. Even if the reason for the impurity of the Land of Nations stems from 'national' reasons, it was formulated at the time that Halakha was formulated (at the beginning of the Hasmonean period, or at the latest, in the days of the second generation of the Hasmoneans) and was formulated in halakhic terms of purity (obligation of immersion and similar), and it had clear halakhic consequences. Therefore, this behavior is evidence of the spread of the deed of purity. If purification from 'gentile impurity' was meaningful, there would have been no point in declaring that the Land of Nations was impure.

Compositions Not Mentioning Purity

In contrast to what is implied from the sources mentioned above, purity is not mentioned in a series of other contemporary compositions, such as 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, Ben Sira, the Wisdom of Solomon or the Psalms of Solomon, and also, not in most Psalms. In the Book of Tobiah, also attributed to the Persian period, the Temple occupies an important place (1:6 in the short version and 5:14 in the long version), but there are no mentions of the laws of purity. The book, however, was written outside Israel, reflecting Jewish life in Babylon, and thus, one should not expect an explicit mention of purity laws.

The Septuagint translation reflects a time when there were no instructions for purification, and immersion was not distinguished from regular bathing; three verbs are used to describe mundane bathing and ritual immersion (see Appendix). This is also the situation reflected in the Bible, wherein the verb רחץ, 'to bathe,' is frequently used. The Sages later distinguished between 'bathing' (רחץ), i.e., washing in water, and 'immersion' (טבל), which was performed in the *miqweh*. The date that the Septuagint was edited is uncertain; however, it does not seem to have preceded the Hasmonean period.

Ancient Purity in the Writings of the Sages

The writings of the Sages were compiled in the third century CE, preserving traditions dating from the end of the Second Temple period; these, however, are few and imprecise, and their historicity is doubtful. There are almost no descriptions of the pre-Hasmonean period in these writings. Therefore, there is one saying that deserves special attention (Mishnah, *Eduyot*, 8:4): העיד רבי יוסי בן יועזר איש צרידה על איל קמצא דכן ועל משקה בית מטבחייא דאינון דכיין ודיקרב במיתא מסתאב וקרו ליה יוסי שריא, "Rabbi Yose ben Yo'ezer, a man (from) of Zereda, testified concerning the ayal-locust, that it is pure; And concerning liquid in the slaughter-house (of the Temple?), that it is pure; And that one who touches a corpse is impure. And they called him 'Yose the permitter'." The use of the Aramaic language attests to the early date of this Halakha,[14] as the Tannaite literature was composed in Hebrew, with only a few sayings in Aramaic, which (except this one) are part of the Agadah. Yose ben Yo'ezer comes from Zereda, in Mount Efrayyim, and lived in the Hasmonean period (Safrai 2023:52–53). To this Sage are attributed three 'lenient' sayings, at least the last two of which are connected to purity. There is a scholarly debate concerning the meaning of the last two sayings, the difficulty being that at least the last Halakha is apparently an explicit biblical instruction (Numbers 19:11). In my opinion, these are the most ancient allusions to the laws of purity, including important details that were later excluded from Halakha (Safrai 2023:347–355). If indeed the tradition is reliable, this is the earliest halakhic evidence from the Mishnah to render halakhic considerations in the realm of purity laws.

[14] The expression "Yose the permitter" seems to have been loaned from other Talmudic discussions and is not an original part of the saying.

The Babylonian Talmud (BT, *Shabbat* 14b) attributes to Yose ben Yo'ezer the Halakha that the 'Land of Nations' is impure, thereby rendering imported pottery and glass vessels impure. As abovementioned, this decree was also attributed to Yehoshua ben Peraḥya and the 'Great Knesset.' Thus, the Sages viewed this practice as a Halakha only at the beginning of the Hasmonean period, and therefore, still considered 'new.'

Another piece of evidence that must be taken into account are the purity laws pertaining to vessels in which priestly dues were cooked. According to biblical law, a vessel in which sacred food is cooked requires purification: "An earthen vessel in which it was boiled shall be broken; if it was boiled in a copper vessel, [the vessel] shall be scoured and rinsed with water" (Leviticus 6:21). The breaking action is clear, but the scouring (מריקה) and rinsing (שטיפה) actions require clarification. These verbs were further interpreted by the Sages: "… scouring is performed with hot water, and rinsing with cold water" (Mishnah, *Zevaḥim*, 11:7). One would expect that such vessels would have to be purified by immersion in a *miqweh*. For example, in the biblical rendering of the purity of the *zav* it is said that: "An earthen vessel that the one with a discharge touches shall be broken; and any wooden implement shall be rinsed with water" (Leviticus 15:12), and the Sages interpreted this act as immersion. Why did the Sages deviate from the interpretation of the verb שטף here? The very act is fundamentally different from purification as it may stem from other reasons and not related to purification. But there was reason to expect that the Sages would apply the practice of purification.[15] In the case of purifying gentiles' dishes, for example, the Sages applied a combination of practices: those concerning the purity laws (immersion) of vessels and laws concerning eating utensils of the Temple (Mishnah, *Avoda Zara*, 5:12). Even in discussing *kashrut*, the practice pertaining to the Temple utensils is applied. In general, the Sages tend to unify practices (BT, *Avoda Zara* 76a), but in this respect, the method is different. In my opinion, the Temple practices were established when it was founded in the fifth century BCE, and they are not equivalent to the halakhic purification laws. In Temple practice, there was no need for 'living water' (מים חיים) or immersion, but fire was used. It may be hypothysized that if a 'purity culture' in ritual baths (*miqwa'ot*) was practiced at the time that the laws of scouring and rinsing were established, there would have been some practical connection between these two similar deeds. Therefore, it seems that at the time

[15] It is generally accepted that the laws of scouring and rinsing were created in fear of leaving consecrated food (the prohibition of leftovers; BT, *Zevaḥim* 97a). This, however, is a later interpretation. There were certain Sages thought that even dishes used to eat tithes must be scoured and rinsed, so as to refrain from leftovers. There are indeed other sources where the Sages express the opinion that a holy place may also be defiled (Mishnah, *Yadayim* 4:5-6). In any case, tithes and a Torah scroll may be defiled, and the related laws are part of the *halakhic* framework of purity laws, as conceived by the Sages. Regardless of the question whether this is the correct interpretation of the biblical laws, it is possible that the Bible's intention was different (see Feder 2022). In biblical research, it is common to assume that the source of the laws of scouring and rinsing is different from the source of the laws of purity. Even if this conclusion is correct, it is not related to the subject under discussion. For the Jews of the Second Temple period, the Bible was understood as a single composition handed down by Moses on Mount Sinai.

when the practices of scouring and rinsing were introduced, the 'purity culture' had not yet prevailed and immersion had not yet been ascribed a fixed amount of 'living water'.[16]

Conclusions: Purity Deeds in the Pre-Hasmonean Period

It may be concluded that, at this early stage, purity as a religious theme already existed, and possibly, also an allusion to the law of 'drawn water' (מים שאובים), but not a 'purity culture.' That said, all contemporary compositions emphasize the centrality of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. It is hard to believe that Temple service and large-scale pilgrimage did not include a certain observance of the biblical laws of purity. However, in the Book of Chronicles and in Ezra IV, an interesting solution emerges, according to which the priests and Levites would purify, while the laypersons remained impure. Thus, the purity deeds existed, but not a 'purity culture.'

To determinine the state of purity in the pre-Hasmonean period (before the *miqweh* phenomenon), a more general picture must be considered. The Hasmonean Revolt brought about a burst of Jewish cultural activity. The archaeological evidence of the Jewish religion begins in this period (*tefillin, mezuzahs, Miqwa'ot*; Adler 2022), the appearance of literary writing, the appearance of sects etc. The rise in the centrality of the Temple led to a Jewish nationalism, ending in a period of temporary independence. This situation led certain researchers to the conclusion that all the abovementioned phenomena were rooted in the Hasmonean period.

I suggest that the Hasmonean Revolt broke out as a result of intense religious-nationalist feelings. By this period, the East had been ruled by empires for 500 years. National sentiment was largely numbed, the nations displaying only limited regional affinity. Rebellions were usually outbreaks of the local (Hellenistic) government against the central government.[17] In this sense, the rebellion in Judea, which was also aimed against the local Jewish Hellenized elite and the central government that supported it, was unusual, such a rebellion reflects deep religiosity.[18]

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[16] It is noteworthy that the vessels taken as booty after the war with the Midianites were also purified by fire (Numbers 10:23); this verse had no influence on the practice of purification. It may be concluded that the practice of immersion in a *miqweh* ran over and eliminated the practice of purification by fire. On the other hand, this practice is attested among the Samaritans, as in the journey of Antoninus the Martyr 8 (Limor 1988:207).

[17] This situation is general and true for most empires. Egypt is unique in this respect. The Egyptian people, isolated by the deserts, maintained a national identity, and indeed a rebellion broke out against the Ptolemaic rule (this information has not yet been published).

[18] Religiosity is a term that defines the intensity of religious feelings and the degree of observance of the deeds, in contrast to religion, which is the normative system of laws. The degree of influence of religion on everyday life depends on the degree of religiousness (Safrai 2020).

Purification Before the Appearance of Ritual Baths

After establishing that purity practice was observed by the Jewish public prior to the appearance of ritual baths, I would like to put forward an old-new proposal, which corroborates and promotes earlier proposals (Adler 2017; Tendler 2022). A clear allusion to the ancient practice before the spread of the phenomenon of ritual baths is found in the writings of the Sages and discussed in the scholarly literature (Ginzberg 1941, 3:219–222; Safrai and Safrai 2011 [*Berachot*]:137–140).

In Mishnah *Miqwa'ot* 3, 8 it is written: "If a man who had a seminal issue and was sick and nine *qavs* of water [approximately 18 liters] fell on him, or if there fell on the head or on the greater part of the body. And a pure person three *logs* of drawn water from one vessel or from two or from three: they combine together..." (see alsoTosefta, *Miqwa'ot* 3, 8; *Berakhot* 2, 12). According to the Mishnah, a man who experienced seminal emission may be purified by sprinkling nine *qavs* of water, even if the water was spilled (lit. fell) out of several vessels. According to this, immersion may also be accomplished by sprinkling ordinary water. This is, however, true only for someone who is ill.

In the corresponding Tosefta, it is written: "… and a man who had a seminal issue, and an ill man, on whom nine *qavs* of water fell, and a pure man who fell on his head or on the greater part of the body three *logs* of drawn water: Abba Yossi ben Hanan says of one vessel or two they combine, and of four there do not combine (Tosefta, *Miqwa'ot* 3, 8:655). Thus, the Halakha in the Mishnah should be attributed to Yossi ben Hanan, one of the early Tannaim who was active in the late Second Temple period, at the beginning of the Yavne Generation. It is also possible to deduce from the Tosefta that the Halakha mentioned in the Mishnah applies to every man who experienced seminal emission and every ill person, whereas in the Kaufmann Manuscript, it applies only to an ill person who experienced seminal emission, meaning that this kind of immersion is only for special cases; this interpretation, without the connecting letter *vav*, is also apparent from other versions of the Mishnah.

The Babylonian Talmud renders how the Halakha was taught (BT, *Berachot* 22a): "A man who had a seminal issue, on whom nine *qavs* of water fell, is pure. Naḥum from Gamzu whispered it to Rabbi Akivah [as a secret Halakha] and Rabbi Akivah whispered it to the son of Azzai and Rabbi Azzai walked out and taught it in the market [in public]." Two Amoraim in the Land of Israel, Rabbi Yosei bar Avin and Rabbi Yosei bar Zevida, disagreed as to the correct version of the incident. One taught: Ben Azzai taught in the market. And the other taught: Ben Azzai also whispered it to his students. The Talmud explains the rationale behind the two versions of this incident. The Sage who taught that Ben Azzai taught the law openly in the market held that the leniency was due to concern that the laws requiring ritual immersion would promote dereliction in the study of Torah, while the Sage who taught that Ben Azzai whispered the law (as a secret) held that the leniency was due to a concern that the Halakha requiring ritual immersion would interfer with conjugal relations.

The debate therefore concerns the question whether the pouring of nine *qavs* of water was a secret or semi-secret Halakha. The Talmud appears to view that publicising this

Halakha, attributed to Ben Azzai, would be irresponsible, thus testifying to the semi-secret character of the nine *qav* option. While the Halakha in the Mishnah sounds like all others uttered by the Sages, the Babylonian Talmud pictures it as a semi-secret Halakha that the Sages wanted to keep from the public. This story appears only in the Babylonian Talmud; however, its details and unusual approach testify to its historicity. The earlier Halakha is attributed to Nahum Ish Gamzu (from the village of Gamzu), an exemplary Sage who was Rabbi Akivah's teacher, that is, active in the late Second Temple period or at the beginning of the Tannaite period.

The Talmud continues to explain the reason for the secrecy concerning the arrangement of sprinkling nine *qavs* of water. This is not a continuation of a Tannaite discussion of a forgotten tradition, but an explanation provided by the later Talmud editors.[19] The wording implies that the explanation is offered as an answer to why the Sages permitted such a lenient arrangement in the first place, and did not require immersion. Further on in the Talmud, as well as in other passages of the Talmud, it appears that at least in the Land of Israel it was customary to fully immerse (in the *miqweh*), and there were even morning (*Shacharit*) dippers who immersed themselves daily for fear that they might have become unknowingly impure due to seminal emission at night.

In the Mishnah, however, the discussion is concerened only with an ill person, while in the Babylonian Talmud it is a common immersion. The Babylonian Talmud objects to the immersion in nine *qavs* of a man who experienced seminal emission for several reasons: so he will not have to refrain from studying Torah; not to overdue it with immersion; and not to encourage immersion without a *miqweh*. This is why this Halakha was not to be taught aloud. It is not explained here how one should be bathed in nine *qavs*: by immersion or only by sprinkling water as mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud. In any case, one cannot dip his whole body in nine *qavs* of water.

The Babylonian Talmud relates that Rav Huna said to the Sages: "Gentlemen, why do you disdain this immersion? If [it is because it is difficult for you to immerse in the] cold [waters of the ritual bath,] it is possible [to purify oneself by immersing oneself in the heated] bathhouses. Rabbi Ḥisda said to him: Is there ritual immersion in hot water? [Rav Huna] said to him: Rav Adda bar Ahava holds in accordance with your [opinion]. Rabbi Zeira was sitting in a tub of water in the bathhouse. He said to his attendant: Go and get nine *qav* [of water] and pour over me. Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba said to him: Why does my master [require] all of this? Aren't you seated in [water]? He said to him: Just as fourty *se'ah* [can only purify an individual through] immersion and not through pouring, so too nine *qav* [can only purify one who experienced a seminal emission] through pouring and not through immersion" (BT, *Berachot* 22a). Several conclusions can be drawn from this episode:

[19] In the research of the Talmud, it is common to distinguish between the words of the Amoraim and the *stama*, the continuation of the discussion that is not attributed to a specific Amora. Sometimes, the editor placed the words of the Amoraim out of the context in which they were said, as in this example.

(1) Rav Huna expresses a widespread reality of leniency toward a man's impurity following seminal emission, which he opposes; (2) the practice of using nine *qavs* only is part of a stricter policy; (3) the desire to observe purity led to permitting bathing (in hot water).[20]

As mentioned in Mishnah *Miqwa'ot*, and in the corresponding Tosefta *Miqwa'ot*, the permit is less comprehensive. Bathing in nine *qavs* is intended only for an ill person. In the Tosefta there is yet another, more restrictive opinion: "A sick man who experienced seminal emersion, upon whom nine *qavs* of water are poured may recite *Shema*, but can not fulfill the obligation of the public until he (immerses in) fourty *se'ah*. Rabbi Yehuda says fourty *se'ah* in any case" (Tosefta, *Miqwa'ot* 2:12).[21] According to this passage, Rabbi Yehuda does not consider nine *qavs* as immersion at all, and for the Sages, such immersion is permitted only for the ill, and even then, it is only sufficient for him to recite *Shema*; to completely purify, one must immerse in 40 *se'ah*. This implies that according to the editor of the Tosefta, Rabbi Yehuda also believes that a man who experienced seminal emersion cannot read the Torah until he has been immersed in 40 *se'ah*.

Also, a person who had intercourse and is ill must purify by this lighter version of sprinkling water, even if his life is endangered by it, as it is said: "About a sick person who had intercourse, Rabbi Ammi said: If he caused it by himself, let him immerse himself and die. But on the other hand it is said: if it was obliged, one does not bother him. Contra the words of Rabbi Ammi, a more lenient approach was brought forward: Rabbi Ḥaggai in the name of Rabbi Abba bar Zavda: One does not bother him in any case" (JT, *Berachot* 6c). A stricter approach was also mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud (BT, *Berachot* 22a):

> Rav Naḥman prepared a jug of nine *qav* [so that his students could pour water over themselves and become pure]. When Rav Dimi came [from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia,] he said: Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yehuda Gelostera[22] said: [The *halakha* that one who experienced a seminal emission can be purified by pouring nine *qav*] was only taught for a sick person [who experienced the emission] involuntarily. However, a sick person [who experienced a] normal [seminal emission in the course of marital relations, is required to immerse himself in] forty *se'ah*] Rav Yosef said: [In that case,] Rav Naḥman's jug is broken, [meaning it is no longer of any use, as few people fall into the category of sick people who experienced seminal emissions. Nevertheless,] when Ravin came [from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia] he said: In Usha there was an incident that [this problem was raised] in Rav Oshaya's chamber, [and] they came and asked Rav Asi. He said to them: They only stated [the obligation to pour water over one who is impure because of a seminal emission] with regard to a sick person who

[20] The premise of the Talmud is that if the water is hot, it is drawn. In the Land of Israel, under the conditions of organized bathhouses, this assumption was unthinkable. It reflects the living conditions in Babylon, where they did not know how to heat living water.

[21] That is to say that every man who experienced seminal emission must undergo full-body immersion, whether he is regular or ill. Ginzberg (1941:219) suggested that in any case it applies to every man who experienced seminal emission or any other immersion. This interpretation, however, is far-fetched.

[22] Glostera may be the name of a vessel.

experienced a normal [seminal emission,][23] but a sick person who experienced an involuntary [seminal emission is clearly] exempt from anything [and requires no immersion whatsoever.] Rav Yosef said: [In that case,] Rav Naḥman's jug is rejoined, [meaning that it is effective with regard to purification.]

A specific jug (חצבא) was used to pour the nine *qavs* of water. Rav Naḥman assumes that such a sprinkling is a proper halakhic substitute for immersion (at least for a person who experienced seminal emission). Rav Dimi is one of the Sages who frequently travelled from the Land of Israel to Babylon (רבנן נחותאי) to spread the teachings of the Land of Israel, and he explains that such purification is only effective in the case of a dangerously ill person who cannot undergo regular immersion in a *miqweh*; this naturally cast doubt on whether Rav Naḥman's vessel was useful (Rav Naḥman's jug was broken). Ravin, who is also one of the Sages who frequently travelled from the Land of Israel to Babylon, said that the decision to pour nine *qavs* of water had crystalized in Usha; however, the Sages of Babylon did not give up their stance. The introduction of the jug is evidence of the tendency to accept the sprinkling of nine *qavs* of water as a permanent purification.[24]

According to Mishnah *Mikwa'ot* 8:6, a man who experienced seminal emission is required to immerse in a *miqweh*; it does not state, however, that the *miqweh* should contain only 'living water' (Tosefta, *Mikwa'ot* 6, 1:656–657). We may summarize here five different approaches:

1. One must immerse only in a valid *miqweh* (containing 40 *se'ah* of 'living water').
2. Only a seriously ill man who experienced seminal emission may be purified by pouring nine *qavs* of water.
3. An ordinary ill person who is defiled (with any defilement) may be purified by pouring nine *qavs* of water.
4. The pouring of nine *qavs* is an acceptable way of purification, albeit less desirable.
5. Only a man who experienced seminal emission should purify himself by pouring nine *qavs* of drawn water.

In Babylon, the last three approaches were preferred,[25] and they were attributed to the early Tannaim of the Land of Israel. The different approaches reflect a lenient or stricter

[23] Another interpretation may be that normal (מרגיל) defines one who is used to immerses on a daily basis, as practiced in Hasidic communities, as if they had experienced seminal emission, whereas the formal *halakhic* reasoning for immersion is due to doubt. This immersion is beyond what is required from the formal Halakha, and it is likely that the immersion was required not because of a doubt, but a general symbolic purity, as there were people who immersed throughout the day (such as John the Baptist)). According to this interpretation, the word לאונסו refers to someone who experienced unconscious nocturnal seminal emission.

[24] A normal (רגיל) ill person is one who has marital intercourse, while an obliged (אנוס) ill person is one who experienced accidental seminal emission.

[25] For bathing in nine *qavs*, see Ginzberg 1941:219. Shmuel the Babylonian permits to eat dues offered from outside the Land of Israel in impurity, but not by someone whose impurity comes from his body (BT, *Bechorot* 27a), i.e., a man who experienced seminal emission. For the meaning of this Halakha, see Safrai and Safrai 2021.

purity process required of a man who experienced seminal emission. In Babylon, the Sages also favored a lenient approach toward a man who experienced seminal emission and wished to read from the Torah. It seems that the Sages of Babylon had reservations concerning strictures that were not in line with the usual halakhic policy. Why would the purity laws pertaining to someone who experienced seminal emission be stricter than those of another impure person? Since the laws of purity were not generally practiced in Babylon, the purity laws pertaining to a person who experienced seminal emission were more lenient as well. In the Tannaite literature, there are different approaches, and it seems that the Jerusalem Talmud is stricter in this sense compared to the Babylonian Talmud. Intermediate approaches also appear, such as in Mishnah *Miqwa'ot*. In the Jerusalem Talmud, only a short passage briefly mentions Mishnah *Miqwa'ot* (JT, *Berachot* 6c).

It seems that we have encountered an ancient practice that pushed the *miqweh* aside and rendered it controversial. It is hard to believe that a lenient approach would have advanced in a society that made sure to build ritual baths, and therefore, we tend to view it as an ancient practice. This is why this issue is not discussed in the Jerusalem Talmud. The Jerusalemites considered purity a basic principle, and the Sages strove to suppress the possibility of purification without immersion. In the Babylonian Talmud, the whole discussion is theoretical, making it is possible to preserve long-gone halakhic traditions. This phenomenon is evident in other cases as well (see Albeck 1943).

In the Mishnah, immersion in nine *qavs* is presented as a possibility reserved for a person who experienced seminal emission, but in our opinion, this is a late approach. This possibility was probabaly more general, but since immersion in ritual baths had spread, it remained on the margins of Halakha. This is also the reason why the immersion of a *zav* is presented as a late regulation (attributed to Ezra the Scribe), even though it is specifically mentioned in the Bible (Leviticus 15:16): "When a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body (רחץ את כל בשרו) in water and remain impure until evening." As abovementioned, all other duties of immersion also use the verb 'to wash' (רחץ). According to this understanding, the immersion of a person who experienced seminal emission was attributed to Ezra the Scribe to explain why in this case purification was accomplished by sprinkling and not by immersion.

At Tel Maresha, in the Judean Lowlands (Shephelah), a sitting tub was found with an arrangement for sprinkling water from above—it is small and unfit for a *miqweh* (40 *se'ah* = 520 liters)—alongside a standard *miqweh* (Kloner 2003:15–16). The installation dates to the second century BCE. During this period, Idumeans lived in the city, and they of course did not observe the Jewish Halakha. This may be an archaeological evidence of a sprinkling facility, or it may be a non-Jewish way of purification adopted by Jews.

Recently, Tendler (2022) published a series of bathtubs that were discovered in Judean farmhouses; similar facilities were also found on Mount Gerizim (Magen 2013; Fig. 1). Tendler suggested that these baths were used for purification, pointing out that while bathtubs were common in the Hellenistic period, not only in Jewish sites, those uncovered in the non-Jewish sites are found only in affluent homes, while those from Judea were

Fig. 1. Bathtubs on Mount Gerizim (Luza in Samaritan sources; photography: Y. Zer).

found also in homes of the lower social classes. Tendler does not discuss Mount Gerizim, but even in this city the baths are found in a series of domestic buildings. Luza, on Mount Gerizim, was probably a fairly small town, and the finding of many baths therein is certainly unusual. This type of bath was also discovered at Deir Ba'al, a mansion from the Persian period in Judea (Har-Even and Shkolnik 2018). Tendler's proposal adds further support to my suggestion that ancient immersion was by pouring nine *qavs* of living water, or another amount thereof (see below).

From time to time, surveys and excavations reveal plastered rock-cuttings that are not sufficient for immersion, such as those found at Susya (Fig. 2) and Kafr Manda (Gur 2016). It is possible that all these were used for purification by sprinkling (pouring of water); however, it is difficult to confirm this hypothesis. The Jerusalem Talmud mentions a water installation, known in Aramaic as '*gurna*' (or '*gorna*'), which was used to wash hands and feet (JT, *Megillah* 74a).

The first Mishnah discussed from tractate *Miqwa'ot* also includes the Halakha that one who wets his head and most of his body with three *logs* of drawn water (roughly 1.5 liters) becomes impure. The combination of these two laws—the purity of nine *qavs* and the impurity of the one who wets himself with a small amount of water—is also repeated in the Tosefta

Fig. 2. Bathtubs in Susya (photography: A. Itali).

(*Miqwa'ot* 3:8) and is attributed there to the early Tanna Abba Yossi ben Ḥanan (from the first generation of Yavne). This attests that there is a connection between these two laws. The law that a person who has three *logs* of drawn water poured on his head is impure, is repeated in several parallels (Mishnah, *Taharot* 5, 11; *Miqwa'ot* 2, 3; *Zavim* 5, 10).

The two Talmuds render that this issue is one of the decisions that were overrulled in the framework of the Eighteen Things (י״ח דבר). The Eighteen Things are a group of 18 decisions made in the late Second Temple period, according to Bet Shammai, following a violent confrontation between Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel (Mishnah, *Shabbat* 5, 4). The Mishnah itself does not mention the decisions, while both Talmuds enumerated them, resulting in two different lists. The differences between the lists indicate that there was not one reliable tradition. In any case, the two Talmuds (JT, *Shabbat* 3C; BT, *Shabbat* 13b) present the Halakha as the position of Bet Shammai.

This Halakha is difficult. Why should a person who gets wet from pure water (rainwater or stream water) become impure? The Babylonian Talmud justifies this with a far-fetched reasoning (BT, *Shabbat* 14a), and it is clear that this Halakha is unusual and does not correspond to the Sage's general line of thought. As we have seen that there was an ancient purification method of sprinkling water, it seems that this Halakha is polemic, emphasizing that sprinkling is not a way of purification, on the contrary, it defiles. Of course, those who believe that three *logs* (= half a *qav*) of water can defile, will surely not allow a man who experienced seminal emmision to be purified with nine *qavs* of water as the very act of purification will make him more severely impure.

Therefore, the prohibition of defilement by a small amount of water also attests to an early method of purification, which was rejected by the Sages. Also Bet Hillel were against it, but they did not decree that a person who does so would be defiled, and Bet Shammai were strict to keep the public away from this path. These sources also alude to an early halakhic practice that the Tannaim labored at uprooting.

Interim Summary: The Distribution of 'Purity Culture'

The pre-Hasmonean period is characterised by a distinct process of a widespread adherence to the laws of purity. In the first stage, in the Persian and early Hellenistic periods, purification was maintained by sprinkling water (nine *qavs*) or even by washing the body with small amount of water (three *logs*); in the second half of this period, wooden and stone baths were used for this purpose. At this early stage, the public refrained from using imported vessels, which were considered ritually impure; however, this may not have been on account of the laws of purity but due to a policy of segregation.

In the second stage, at the beginning of the Hasmonean Kingdom, the practice of purification in ritual baths (*miqwa'ot*) was widespread. Purity by sprinkling was relegated to an action contracted by one who experienced seminal emission only, which was a daily impurity and especially difficult to observe due to its frequency and the need to immerse in the morning. The formal reasoning for this was that impurity caused by seminal emission was prescribed by the rabbis (even though it has biblical roots). It is possible that the theological-rabbinic reasoning was meant to justify the use of a more lenient purification method. At this stage, the avoidance of imported vessels had formulated into a Halakha.

The third stage, at the beginning of King Herod's reign or earlier, envinced a widespread use of stone vessels.

In the fourth stage, the stringent standards of purity continued until after the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

The Period of 'Purity Culture'

'Purity culture' began in the Hasmonean period, a clear expression of which is the multitude of ritual baths and of stone vessels. This situation prevailed until the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

Naturally, scholarly research has concentrated on this period, and therefore this topic we will not be discussed in this article at length.

Judea and Galilee

At the end of the Second Temple period, and in the Yavne Generation, 'purity culture' prevailed only in Judea. The number of ritual baths in Galilee is extremely small compared to Judea. Reich (2013:314–317) lists 477 ritual baths in Judea and only 47 in Galilee (20 of which are in Ẓippori, dating approximately to the third century CE). Adler (2011:319–341) lists 110 ritual baths in Galilee (40 of which are in Ẓippori) compared to about 700 ritual baths in Judea (with no chronological division).[26] Judea is a larger region and was more intensively populated than Galilee; nevertheless, the quantitative difference is substantial.

There is a noticeable difference between the halakhic practice of purity in Judea and that in Galilee.[27] It is true that Judea is geographically closer to the Temple, but even Jews who resided in the southern Hebron Hills or in the Judean Lowlands (Shephelah) did not arrive at the Temple daily. Therefore, the proximity of the Temple is probably not the only reason for the widespread practice of purity in Judea relative to Galilee. The main reason is that Galilee was the periphery of Judea. The religious leadership of the Pharisees and the Qumran sects operated in Judea, where its influence was strong. This has implications for the concept of purity related in the Gospels: the descriptions of the preservation of purity among Jesus and his disciples, and the public, refer to the situation in Galilee and therefore, they should not be compared to the archaeological situation in Judea but to the archaeological situation in Galilee (for further discussion, see Kazen 2010; Tomsen 2010).

The Nature of the Process

The process that led to the 'purity culture' included the establishment of purity laws and their distribution. In the pre-Hasmonean period, purity was practiced mainly in the Temple and applied to the ones serving therein and to the many pilgrims. Among the general public, the number of people who observed purity daily was smaller. Also, the number of stone bathtubs available for this practice was extremely low. The avoidance of imported vessels was common among the laypersons, but not so by the social elite of the time. After the Hasmonean Revolt, purity was practiced by the masses, as is evidenced in the archaeological findings and supported by contemporary literature, which discussed

[26] The difference in the number of ritual baths is mainly due to the updating of the list.

[27] A few ritual baths were also found in Transjordan. It is difficult assess whether the scarcity of the ritual baths is due to the minority that maintained purity or the result of a small-scale research.

this subject in many essays and was a central debate among the different sects (see below). It seems that at the end of the Second Temple period, purity was the most important and most debated religious issue.

Why did 'purity culture' break out and why was it widespread? some scholars have suggested various social interpretations for this religious phenomenon (see, e.g., Regev 2023:10–30). And, while such explanations should not be rejected, one should also consider internal religious explanations. The Hasmoneans consecrated the one and only Temple. Jewish worship was centered in the Jerusalem Temple, leaving no room for individuals to express their religious feelings. Prayers were not yet obligatory, but they were established either after the destruction of the Temple (Fleischer 1990), or beforehand (Fox 1994), but not as early as the Hasmonean period. Therefore, in the Hasmonean period, purity and the observation of the Sabbath were daily and weakly religious practices.

At the end of the Second Temple period, there was a process of transferring practices from the Temple to the 'state,' such as the Priestly Blessings (ברכת כוהנים), *shofar* blowing and perhaps, also prayers. The diffusion of the purity laws from the Temple to the rest of the country (mainly in Judea) must be understood in this context.

Maintaining purity also had an economic aspect. Only produce that was kept pure was fit to be sold at the Temple. The Temple was an important economic factor and a consumption center of the Judean region. This explanation links to the fact that 'purity culture' prevailed mainly in Judea.

This religious explanation does not contradict other economic, social or political explanations, as a cultural process may have more than one explanation. Moreover, often contemporaries find it difficult to explain processes that take place in their time. The explanation for the process is almost always a guess, and even if the contemporaries attribute it certain reasons, researchers must question their validity.

Purity Laws as Part of the Inter-Sect Conflict

In the Second Temple period, three main sects were active—Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes—different from one another in various details, an important part of which concerns the laws of purity. The purity laws of the Sadducees and the Essenes were similar, although probably not the same. In addition, there were Hasidic traditions that became part of the deeds of purification, although they were not formally required. Such were the divided ritual baths, i.e., with a separation between those entering and those leaving, a strict use of stone vessels, the construction of ritual baths near cemeteries, a preference for using new pottery vessels that were preserved in a special ritual (Mishnah, *Parah* 5, 1), and perhaps also the construction of oil presses in caves. At this stage of research, no connection can be made between the different types of ritual baths (ordinary, with a separation, located within a cemetery, etc.) and the sectarian disputes, but it would not be surprising if indeed each sect had different strictures and regulations regarding this issue.

There is evidence in rabbinic literature concerning strictures on these matters, some of which had even entered rabbinic discussions.[28] For example, according to Pharisaic tradition, stone vessels do not contract impurity. This is a particularly good reason to use such vessels, although there is no halakhic obligation to do so. However, the rabbinic literature describes such vessels as specifically used for purification (especially for storing 'purification water') and also mentions a separation between those entering the ritual bath and those leaving it (although without offering a halakhic explanation). Attempts have been made by researches to find a halakhic basis for all these religious strictures. For example, Adler offered a halakhic reasoning for the construction of ritual baths in cemeteries (Adler 2011:106–109), while Safrai and Safrai (2021 [tractate *Parah*]:102) offered an intra-halakhic explanation for this. While one of the explanations (or both) may be correct, there would be reason to expect that an impure person would arrive at his home and be purified by immersion in the early evening in the nearest *miqweh* at a designated time. The decision to initiate an immediate immersion in the cemetery is a religious stricture. It must be stressed, however, that strictures were an integral part of 'purity culture': a central deed is expanded by strictures imposed by the laypersons as a consequence of religious awe and not as a result of halakhic sophistications.

According to the Pentateuch, the law of purity pertains only to the priests: "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: None shall defile himself for any [dead] person among his kin" (Leviticus 21:1). The Pharisees considered this commandment to also apply to them, not only to the priests. According to Halakha, the people of Israel were not required to be pure, but there were certain sacred actions that required a state of purity, such as heave offerings and entering the Temple. The Sages expanded the scope of the laws of purity and applied them to all people (see, e.g., Alon 1953, I:148–176; Aderet 1998:173–365; Furstenberg 2016:365). These laws, which were already established at the end of the Second Temple period, express a clear decline in the elevated status of priests, but not yet a strong opposition. This naturally triggered a competition over the 'resource' of honor and righteousness. The righteous is one who is purified, and thus, the Sages, who maintained purity, became like priests, even though they were not required to adhere to the laws of purity as did a priest serving in the Temple. The Sages, unlike the priests, were expected to assist in the burial of the dead (an action that caused impurity). It is possible that the main reasons for the expansion of the scope of the laws of purity were ideological, offering a promise for the afterworld, but in effect, they incorporated a twofold social meaning: a devaluation of the privileged status of the priests, and raising the status of the group of Sages—Ḥaverim (חברים) in Mishnaic terminology—in the community.

The laws of purity served as a major component of the inter-sect polemic, each sect claiming that its tradition was the 'genuine' one, using its political power to enforce it. The

[28] Many strictures were used regarding the carrying of the 'sinning water,' which formed part of the purification process (see Safrai and Safrai 2021).

Essenes were left outside this political conflict between the Sadducees and Pharisees, who held political power and influence. The Pharisaic law is generally more lenient, a fact that caused the Sages to 'apologize' for the concessions, but also to insist that their instructions were the true tradition. The competition over righteousness led the Sages to strictly observe the laws of purity (e.g., as in eating mundane foods in purity; see also Noam 2008). It was moreover suggested that the appearance of *Miqwa'ot* and stone vessels was connected to the struggle between the diferent sects.

Purification at the Time of the Mishnah and Talmud after the Bar Kokhba Revolt

The Decline of Purity

A change in the extent of the laws of purity occurred after the Bar Kokhba Revolt (see, e.g., Adler 2011:277; Reich 2013:231–232). While I do not disagree with this assumption, we do not actually have any archaeological evidence for the period between the Bar Kokhba Revolt and the third century CE, as almost no Jewish sites have been excavated in Judea from this period. As for the literary sources, we can definitely distinguish between sources compiled at the beginning of the third century CE (Tannaite literature) and those compiled in the fourth century CE (Jerusalem Talmud). All other chronological distinctions are doubtful. Also, we must always consider that, for example, a certain saying attributed to a Sage of the Yavne Generation (70–132 CE) is actually later, as it was formulated by the later editors of the third century CE; alternatively, a saying attributed to the Sages of the third century CE may have actually been a quotation of an earlier one. The Sages evidently also discussed theoretical issues, such as sacrificial laws, their actions providing a glimpse into their everyday lives.

The later sources also continue to discuss the sayings of their predecessors, including a discussion of laws pertaining to the Temple, even after it had long been destroyed. Therefore, one should be cautious about dating sayings based on the names of the Sages who are said to have uttered them, unless there is additional evidence. In any case, the preservation of names is partial and random, and most of the sayings are anonymous.

It is true that there is a notable decrease in the discussion of purity laws by Sages after the Bar Kokhba Revolt (Birenboim 2006); however, as abovementioned, the dating of these sayings is problematic. Cohen (1992) assembled stories refering to actions preformed by Sages of different generations, concluding that until the end of the Yavne Generation (70–132 CE), most of these actions were related to purity, while in the following period, after the Bar Kokhba Revolt, there was a steep decline in stories concerning actions related to purity. I agree that when it comes to social reality, a record of actions is better testimony than scholarly discussions. This seems to be good proof for the dating of the decline in the discussion of purity laws.

Based on the literary sources, the crisis is less acute than implied by the archaeological record. The Sages of the generation after the Bar Kokhba Revolt continued to discuss the laws of purity. Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yehuda, for example, define who is a *ḥaber* (חבר) who must refrain from trading with laymen (עמי הארץ) (see, e.g., Büchler 1968; Furstenberg 2016). The majority of the people are regarded 'laymen,' who are not required to observe purity, contrary to the Sages, who continued to observe the laws of purity. However, most of the discussions concerning purity are attributed to the Sages of the Yavne Generation, and only a minority, to the Sages of the Usha Generation, postdaes the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Therefore, the archaeological record can fill in the gap, making it possible to date this change in the community.

The archaeological evidence concerning the decrease in the number of ritual baths and the decrease in the number of stone vessels, lends further support to the decline in the public's commitment to maintain purity. This is also attested in the written sources, marking the end of the period of 'purity culture.' However, the act of purification did not stop following the Bar Kokhba Revolt, as is evidenced in the Talmudic stories and the existence of ritual baths, although in smaller numbers.

Why was there a decline in the observance of purity after the failure of the Bar Kokhba Revolt? One reason may be the weakening of the active Messianic concept. While the Jews living after the Bar Kokhba Revolt still believed that a day would come and the Temple would be rebuilt, they did not take action toward this end. There were, of course, other bursts of active messianism in the history of Israel in general, and in the Roman–Byzantine period in particular, but these were only isolated events. It is also possible that Jews wanted to express their despair that the Messiah would appear in their days and renew the service at the rebuilt Temple. But for theological reasons they could not admit to themselves that they do not believe in the Messiah; such a perception would exclude them from the People of Israel. There were probably many Jews whose despair drove them out of the Jewish community, but those who adhered to their religion had to believe that they would one day return to a full religious life (including a Temple and sovereignity). The disobservance of the laws of purity was a less dramatic expression of the rejection of the active Messianic concept.

According to this explanation, purity was maintained in the Yavne Generation to a large extent in the hope that the Temple would be rebuilt shortly (Aderet 1998:360–362). After the Bar Kokhba Revolt, the Messianic hope was shaken, gradually turning into a distant dream, a hope for a better future with the coming of the Messiah, and not a practical plan for which one needs to be realistically prepared.

It is also possible that the explanation for this phenomenon is geographical. After the Bar Kokhba Revolt, Judea was abandoned, a small Jewish settlement remaining only in the southern Hebron Hills. The drop in the number of ritual baths and in the centrality of the laws of purity may therefore also be a result of transferring the center of Jewish leadership to Galilee. As stated above, Galilee did not take part in the 'purity culture' of the late Second Temple period—although there were scattered ritual baths in this region,

as attested, for example, in the large-scale excavations at Gamla and at Kafr Kanna—and therefore, no change in this regard is to be expected after the Bar Kokhba Revolt.[29] After the Bar Kokhba Revolt, when the center of Judaism transferred to Galilee, the number of ritual baths dropped dramatically in accordance with the situation before the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

When Did the Laws of Purity Cease to be Observed?

In Galilean settlements where ritual baths were found, their use continued approximately until the fourth century CE, when many of the Jewish settlements were abandoned or destroyed. The Talmud preserves evidence of the observation of purity laws until the last generation of the Amoraim of the Land of Israel (evidence compiled by Sussmann 1969:306–316; Adler 2022:314–316). As we will see below, a sporadic observance of purity continued well into the late Byzantine period (the post-Talmudic era). Thus, the continuation of the laws of purity and the related laws of heave offerings at the end of the Jerusalem Talmud period (150–380 CE) are not revealing.

Purification After the Destruction of the Temple: Between Sages and Priests

The Sadducees and the Essenes disappeared following the destruction of the Temple. Of course, individuals of these two sects continued to act, but the public rivalry between these sects had lost the fervor of active controversy. At the same time, another competition had developed between the priests, who became a loyal opposition (Ben-Zion 2006). The dispute between the priests has been extensively studied (Kimelman 1983; Safrai and Safrai [Tractate *Shkalim*] 2021:299–340; Ben-Zion 2006). It took place mainly in the Yavne Generation, triggering a similar competition to the one that occurred at the end of the Second Temple period, over who was stricter in the observance of the laws of purity. The priests as a group continued to observe the laws of purity, a deed rewarded in this world—the right to eat from the priestly dues—and also in the afterlife. In doing so, the priests maintained their high social status. Some priests are known to have practiced the purity laws stringenty, far beyond the demands of the Sages (BT, *Bechorot* 30b), acting in disdain and distrust toward the Sages by not agreeing to give them pure foodstuffs (טהרות).

Additional evidence that the priests had their own Halakha concerning the observation of purity is recited in Tosefta, *Kelim-Bava Batra* (3, 7:593). In this case, the priests expressed a stricter view than the Sages, saying that even if the sides of a pottery vessel are defiled, the vessel must be destroyed. There is no halakhic reasoning here but rather a

[29] The phenomenon of the ritual baths of Ẕippori (Sephporis) is noteworthy, as the settlement was known as 'Jerusalem in Galilee'. The accepted explanation is that this quarter housed the extended priestly Family Yeda'aya. This neighborhood appears in the list of the 24 priestly extended families. Another concentration of ritual baths—attesting to a 'purity culture' from the time of the Talmud—was unearthed in the Jewish settlement at Usha (Yair Amitzur, pers. comm.).

stringent approach to prevent a negligent attitude toward purity laws, or for fear of liquid spilling from inside the vessel outside.

Another passage in the Tosefta (*Kelim-Bava Batra* 3, 4:592) relates that Rabbi Yehuda said that the priests did not refrain from placing the foot of a table atop unclean beverages, but they wiped it and it was pure, because of the habit of impurity (see Liebermann 1999:79). This attests to a lenient approach of the priests, which was accepted by Rabbi Yehuda.

It was the priests who sprinkled the 'purification water,' and again, they had their own laws for this: "Three things Rabbi Shimon ben Gamaliel said on behalf of Rabbi Shimon ben Kahana. In the days of priests they did not refrain from…" (Tosefta, *Parah* 12, 6:640). The first two laws are in accordance with the Mishnah (*Parah* 12, 2, ascribed to Rabbi Yehuda), attesting, *inter alia*, that the priests had formulated halakhic practices that did not stem from the rabbinic halakhic discussions. In this case, Rabbi Yehuda, a distinguished disciple of Rabbi Eliezer, disagrees with the lenient practice of the priests; his view was backed by the first Tanna, whose identity is unknown, but is likely to have been Rabbi Yehoshua, the traditional rival of Rabbi Eliezer, particularly in Tractate *Parah*.

The third Halakha concerns the issue of sacred foods (טהרות). Here too, the priests had a unique, lenient stand concerning the cracking of nuts with unwashed hands (ללא נטילת ידיים). In the Tosefta it is said that "the garlic, and the unripe (mainly unripe grapes) and the grain kernels that he squashed before daybreak,[30] Rabbi Ishmael says it will end as it darkens and Rabbi Akiva says it will not end, but the priests acted as Rabbi Ishmael said" (Tosefta, *Eduyot* 1, 9:455). Rabbi Ishmael was a priest, and the priests followed his directives concerning halakhic matters. As this case does not concern sacred foods (טהרות), it attests that his teachings reflected priestly law. However, based on the Jerusalem Talmud, this Halakha is also concerned with priestly dues. The Talmud quotes this Tosefta adding that "Rabbi Yaakov, the son of Rabbi Acha, (in the name of) Rabbi Shimon the son of Rabbi Aba in the name of Rabbi Hanunah, they did not argue about secular food (חולין). The priests were customary (only) about Terumah as Rabbi Yishmael" (JT, *Shabbat* 14c), attesting that the priests were stringent about eating priestly dues on Shabbat. The priests followed the teaching of Rabbi Yishmael regarding eating priestly dues; alternatively, Rabbi Yishmael may represent the priestly Halakha.

Another dispute concerns halakhic issues that touch upon the subject of priestly dues. There is a question whether a beehive is considered a vessel that contracts impurity, or whether it is connected to the earth (thus not contracting impurity). This has implications concerning several laws (purification, *Shevi'it* and Shabbat): "From the days of priests they did not refrain from being in need of them, and they return and extract honey from the beehive in purity. On which subject did they disagree? Only about Sabbath and *Shevi'it*, which Rabbi Eliezer says is like earth and Sages say it is like a vessel" (Tosefta, *Oktzin* 3, 16:689–690). Here too, the priests relied on Rabbi Eliezer's ruling, or Rabbi Eliezer applied the law of the priests to issues other than the priestly dues.

[30] On Shabbat evening. The question is whether it is permissible to complete the work on Shabbat day.

In the Babylonian Talmud, there is a discussion concerning the consumption of milk: "[With regard to] fat that is on the stomach, [the] priests used to permit it, in accordance with [the opinion of] Rabbi Yishmael that he says in the name of his forefathers. And [since there is a disagreement between the Sages with regard to this issue,] your mnemonic [to remember the lenient opinion is the idiom:] Yishmael the priest [generally] helps the priests" (BT, *Ḥulin* 49a). The Babylonian Talmud is aware that Rabbi Yishmael expresses the viewpoint of the priests, and it mentions this for the record and not as a factor for determining Halakha.

We also hear of a court of priests who proofreads the king's Torah book. This Halakha is from the sphere of the legend (Agadah), since a Jewish king was at this time a historic memory and a dream of the future. This testifies that the Sages recognized the possibility of a court of priests (Tosefta, *Sanhedrin* 4, 17:421). Such a court is also mentioned in the context of the declaring of the month (קידוש החודש) (Mishnah, *Rosh Hashana* 1, 7), but there the reference is probably to the Second Temple period and the court of Sadducees. A court of priests is also mentioned concerning the intermarriage of priests (Mishnah, *Ketubot* 1, 5), but in all these references the courts are concerned with regulations and not legeslations.

Three stories regarding halakhic debates between the Sages and the priests were preserved, in all of which the priests are described as being wrong about the Halakha; in two of these stories, it is proven from heaven that the Sages were right. The first story is about a debate between Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananiah, who was sent by Rabban Yochanan ben Zakhai, and someone who is described as a priest and Hasid from Ramat Bene 'Anat (*Avot Derabbi Natan*, second Version a 27:28b=29a). The Sage claimed that the observant priest was wrong about the Halakha, attesting that the priests considered themselves to be strictly observant, while the Sages accused them explicitly, or by implication, of halakhic ignorance (an ignorant cannot be a sin-fearing; Mishnah, *Avot* 2:5). This story conforms to the principle of "He who does not serve the Sages must die" (*Avot Derabbi Natan*, Version a 12:28a; Version b 28a), attesting to a confrontation on the subject of purity between a Sage and a priest/Hasid who is accused of distancing himself from the teachings and learning methods of the Sages. A similar response and identical arguments were put foward by the Sages in other social conflicts with other classes. This story is attributed to the Yavne Generation, between the First Jewish Revolt and the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

A second story appears in *Tana Deve Eliyahu* (14:66), which is a slightly later composition.[31] The story is about the custom of a priest considering one of the laws of impurity of women. The priest did not observe the laws of priestly dues as he did not study

[31] The place and time of *Tanna Deve Eliyahu* is controversial. Some consider that it dates from the ninth century CE and that it contains an anti-Karaite polemic, while others consider that it predates the Babylonian Talmud. I summarized my position in the commentary on *Mishnat Eretz Israel*, Tractate *Yadayim* (Safrai and Safrai 2021). Be that as it may, the ideas presented in it resemble those of Babylonian Judaism, including some sympathetic descriptions thereof. It also contains some Hasidic instructions, probably reflecting a teaching different from that of the Sages. In the post-Talmudic Halakha literature from the Land of Israel (Maa'sim Literature; see below) the ruling supports the position of the erring priest (See Rabinovitz 1972:283).

properly. The tone of the polemic points to social tension and mutual claims between Sages and priests. In the interpretation of *Mishnat Eretz Yisrael* Tractate *Terumot* 11:9 (Safrai and Safrai 2012:346–384), it was established that this law was not clear-cut and that the priest's lenient opinion was not so absurd, but similar to one of the opinions appearing in rabbinic literature. The story thus emphasizes that the priest was not aware of the laws of the Sages and, at the same time, it teaches us that the priests had their own practices concerning priestly dues. According to this story, the heavenly decree matched that of the Sages, and the priest who did not obey the 'law' was punished. This is despite the fact that the priest's opinion appears in the Halakha, like the other priestly laws mentioned above.

The third story is rendered in the Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate *Sota*. It appears as part of a long legend, which describes a sort of halakhic dispute between Haggai the Prophet and the priests. Haggai, obviously representing the Halakha of the Sages, and the legend criticize the priests who do not know Halakha and are either too strict or too lenient (JT, *Sota* 20b). It can be assumed that if the literature of the priests would have been preserved, these stories would have ended with the victory of the priests.

Thus, it is evident that priests had their own Halakha pertaining to purity and related issues. It is also possible to deduce from the extant evidence that the laws of the priests were not always strict or lenient; however, their laws are not consistent or coherent but rather legally unsystematic.

The public viewed the priest as responsible for the preservation of purity: Rabbi Yehuda says that a pit, into which a stillbirth is regularly thrown, is pure. Rabbi Yehuda told of an incident involving the slave girl of an important landowner (*Metzik*)[32] in Ramon, who threw a stillbirth into a pit, and a priest came and looked to see what had fallen (male or female). The incident came before the Sages, and they immediately purified it from a rat or a tigris who would drag him right away (Tosefta, *Oholot* 16, 13:614). The priest was the one to validate the gender of the newborn to determine the number of days that the mother would contract impurity. The Sages' response was that the stringent approach is excessive and the stillbirth is dragged (נגרר). This Halakha is controversial (end of Tractate *Oholot*), but it is presented as if it were simple within the context of the anti-priestly polemic in the story. It is, however, evident from the story that the priest was perceived by the public as the one who should determine the number of days of purification. It is also said: "How do you check a non Jewish house? Israel enters, and then a priest enters, and if a priest enters first, even if they find it paved with marble or mosaics–it is impure" (Tosefta, *Oholot* 18, 10:616), i.e., it is the priest who performs the test.

[32] *Mtzik* or *Mesik* is the owner of land that was expropriated from Jews, who employs Jewish workers. The *Metzik* is usually a gentile, but there were probably also Jewish collaborators who received land grants from the Roman authorities (for example, Flavius Josephus). According to the Sages mentioned, the story is from the Usha Generation (after the Bar Kokhba Revolt).

We also are informed that the priests knead the dough: "From the stage when water is added to the dough it could become impure, and the priests knead the dough so that the *challah*-bread may be offered in purity" (JT, *Damai* 23b). This attests that the priest also set aside dues and tithes for the laypersons (עמי הארץ). From the words of the Sages, it emerges that the landowner is a layperson who wishes to offer his dues in purity. A similar discussion appears in the Mishnah (*Terumot* 4:4), where a layperson is said to have offered dues on his houseowner's behalf. Safrai and Safrai (2012 [Tractate *Terumot*]:169–170) understood this person to be a special kind of agent, who specialized in offering dues on behalf of the houseowner; he was faithful to his instructions in fulfilling the deed. In addition, we learn from the rabbinic literature that laymen are trustworthy as witnesses: "So-and-so [the] priest rectified the pile [of grain] for me [by tithing it]" (BT, *Ketubott* 72a), or "It was prepared in ritual cleanliness in the presence of so-and-so who is a *ḥaber*" (*Gerim* 1:5). We have not found parallels for these two sources in the Tannaitic literature. According to our methodology, it can be assumed that those described as turning around the threshing floor (המחזרים על הגרנות) helped in offering dues, acting as experts.

It must therefore be understood that the public, as well as the Sages, gave up on competing with the priests, who continued to boast their maintenance of purity. It must be stressed that this compromise did not reflect a significant ideological transformation. All strictures on purity are considered Hasidic practices. A person who is not a priest does not need to be purified, but he is prevented from entering the Temple (which was already destroyed). It is understood that the public renounced this practice due to the difficulty in preserving it. It is also possible that this was due to the scarcity of 'purification water,' which was a dwindling resource, as at this time it was not possible to slaughter a red heifer and replenish the stock. However, according to Halakha, water could be added to existing 'purification water,' so there was no technical problem to increase its supply.

Alongside the decline in observing purity laws, a large-scale import of ceramic vessels is attested. It is not yet possible to determine exactly when this turning point occurred. Imported vessels were found in all third-century CE Jewish settlements, but so far no sealed level of a Jewish settlement dating to the end of the second century CE has been published. Concurrently, the use of stone vessels almost completely ceased. Although occasional fragments of stone vessels have been found, the widespread phenomenon ceased; no stone-vessel workshops from the period after the Bar Kokhba Revolt have been discovered. Ritual baths continued to operate, albeit only sporadically, attesting that the preservation of purity was not prevalent in Galilee in the period between the failure of the Bar Kokhba Revolt and the late fourth century CE (the sealing of the Jerusalem Talmud and the decline of the Jewish settlement in Galilee; Magen 2002; Adler 2022:190–200).

In the rabbinic literature, there is evidence of the practice of purity among the Sages. It is said that a Sage of the Yavne Generation had immersed in a random cave in Galilee (*Tefilin* 1:19), and the Tosefta (*Damai* 2, 13; JT, *Damai* 23a) discusses whether a senior Sage (היושב בישיבה) should be considered a *ḥaber*, i.e., someone who agrees to observe the laws of purity. It seems that not every Sage was considered a *ḥaber*, but a senior Sage

was considered a *ḥaber* and therefore, was not exempt from undergoing the ceremony of acceptance as a *ḥaber*. It can be concluded that the Sages considered themselves too exalted to go through the (gradual) acceptance ceremony of becoming a *ḥaber*, but expected a senior Sage to become a *ḥaber*. Concerning this situation, it is rendered in the Talmud that when the respected Amora, Reish Lakish (third century CE), would visit Rabbi Yanai's group, he would declare himself a layperson (עם הארץ), meaning that they viewed him as one who did not observe purity (JT, *Damai* 23a).

Rabbi Yanai's group was a unique group that lived in 'Akhbara in Galilee (Openheimer 1978). Rabbi Yanai was a priest and so were some (or all) of his fellowmen. The group practiced special hasidic practices. The story concerning Reish Lakish may have been an exaggeration; however, it reflects a polemic between the Sages and the priests, while stating that one of the Sages did not observe the purity laws. Therefore, the Sages seem to have given up on the prestige connected with the observation of purity.

Conclusion

Based on the archaeological and textual evidence, purity was less prevalent in the Talmud period; however, the offering of dues and immersion in ritual baths continued. Ritual baths were found in some of the settlements of Talmudic-period Galilee (e.g., Ẓippori, Usha), a large part of which were destroyed in the fourth century CE, resulting in the abandonment of the ritual baths. In the Jerusalem Talmud, there is evidence of a continuation of purity observance, albeit sporadic, until the last generation of the Amoraim.

From Halakhic Purification to Symbolic Purification

The decline of purity observance is reflected in the fact that the public ceased to offer priestly dues, as the priests themselves were considered impure. Purity observance may not, however, have ceased at once throughout the country, but rather in a gradual process. The archaeological evidence of this is problematic, as ritual baths continued to be used by women following menstruation (נידה), up until today. Furthermore, there were probably Hasids and others who wished to continue to observe the laws of purity out of religious piety. It is noteworthy, however, that purity observance requires a public effort of keeping the 'purification water' in a maximum state of purity. The number of later, late Byzantine- and Umayyad-period ritual baths is scarce, partly due to difficulties in dating the rock-hewn installations, and partly—to the relative paucity of finds from the Early Islamic period (Faust and Safrai 2015:290–293). Sometimes, such ritual baths were dated based on the ceramic material that accumulated in them; however, this methodology requires great caution, as a *miqweh* may have remained open for centuries, and soil mixed with various finds may have entered it, including from periods that preceded its construction.

There is no doubt that until the end of the Talmudic period (350–400 CE) purity observance continued sporadically. What was the situation in the Byzantine period, after the signing of the Talmud? Dozens of ritual baths were discovered in Susya (Reich 2023:32, 317), which

belong to the late phase of the city, comprising a main street, side streets and courtyards; each courtyard comprised a cave and at least one ritual bath. The dating of this phase is still shrouded in mist. Based on excavations conducted by Yuval Baruch, the synagogue and the entire infrastructure of the city date to the sixth–seventh centuries CE (Baruch and Reich 2018; Baruch 2009).[33] The number of ritual baths in Susya indicates a thriving culture of purity, although there is no certainty that they were contemporary with the city houses (see Baruch, this volume). Contra to this, at 'En Gedi, no ritual baths were uncovered despite the fact that two large residential quarters were excavated; it may be argued that the people of 'En Gedi immersed in the Dead Sea. It seems that these two settlements, both located in the region of Judea, demonstrate the uneven decline of purity observance.

Two ritual baths from the Early Islamic period were excavated at Mishmar David, and the excavator notes that these are the latest heretofore known (Yannai 2014). The fact that these were two adjoining ritual baths displays a certain continuation of the ancient purification culture in the region, and that it was not only intended for the purification of women. The ritual bath unearthed at the synagogue (public building) in Ḥorbat Kero'a near Qiryat Gat (Fig. 3; Paran 2016) cannot be dated with certainty, although most of the ceramic finds near it are dated to the late Byzantine–Early Islamic period. The ritual bath is

Fig. 3. The *miqweh* near the public house (synagogue) at Ḥorbat Kero'a (photography: Z. Safrai).

[33] Thank to Dr. Doron Sar-Avi for sharing with me this information.

stratigraphically related to a public building that functioned in two phases. The excavator is of the opinion that the ritual bath operated with the earlier phase of the building, which served as a synagogue in the Roman period; I consider that the ritual bath may have been connected with the later phase of the building, which may have also served as a synagogue. Another ritual bath was discovered at Ḥorbat Bira, near Lod, next to a late church, and served a Jewish population in the late Byzantine period, or in an earlier occupation phase (Dar and Safrai 1997:75). Another yet unpublished ritual bath was documented at the site.

In Galilee, late ritual baths were excavated at Arbel, in the context of a Byzantine-period residence (Mordechai Aviam, pers. comm.), and in Yeno‘am, where it was dated to the sixth century CE (Stern 1992:585).[34] At Ḥorbat Merot in Upper Galilee, the Byzantine-period synagogue sealed a ritual bath, while a hiding complex damaged the synagogue and put the ritual bath out of use (Damati 2023:96–101). At Ḥorbat Sumaq in the Carmel too, the *miqweh* went out of use in the mid-fourth century CE (Dar 1998:86); however, there is no certainty that the settlement remained Jewish after the fourth century, while there is clear evidence that foreigners settled there. The synagogue continued to function and menorah engravings were found, although it is possible that part of it was used as dwellings (Dar 1998:75). The sites at Ḥorbat Merot and Ḥorbat Sumaq attest to the cessation of the use of the *miqweh* after the mid-fourth century. The same date is provided from the excavation of Bet She‘arim, where an extensive residence, comprising a bathhouse, was built adjacent to the synagogue atop a *miqweh* that was destroyed, probably in the mid-fourth century CE (Fig. 4); however, the findings from this excavation remain unpublished.

In the post-Talmudic halakhic literature, the Book of Acts (ספרות המעשים),[35] the main theme is the laws of chastity (Newman 2011:95–104), indicating the decline of ‘purity culture’ as a central theme in halakhic discussions. However, deeds concerning the priestly dues, which required a state of purity, were still observed. In the Book of Acts 13, it is told of an androgynous (bisexual) priest, who was not allowed to eat priestly dues (Newman 2011:165). The priestly dues are also mentioned in other later laws (Epstein 1983:324, 352 [two *qavs*]; Margaliot 1973:18, 80; Mann 1939:14; Friedmann 1974:17; Immanuel 2019:147). The information is scanty, but it proves that in the period of the Book of Acts there were those who kept the laws of purity as in ancient times.

At this stage, the halakhic laws of purity were replaced by customs preserving and symbolizing them, such as the immersion of a man who experienced seminal emission and immersion before praying; both these immersions were symbolic as all people were ritualy defiled by corpse impurity. This practice is first attested in a *sidur* from the Cairo Genizah, dating from the sixth–eighth centuries CE (Margaliot 1973:132). Immersion is

[34] My thanks to Prof. Chaim Ben-David for this information.

[35] The halakhic literature of the Land of Israel is referred to as deed literature; the references here are according to Newman’s book from 1971. The time of this literature is from the sixth to the eighth century CE, relating to the time of the Islamic conquest, but also to the Byzantine period.

Fig. 4. A *miqweh* near the synagogue of Bet She'arim, the floor of the house blocked and abolished the *Miqweh* (photography: O. Maman).

said to have been practiced in simple installations, not a *miqweh*, in which a pottery vessel containing water was placed, probably similar to the niche found at the entrance to the synagogue at Susya,[36] or a more elaborate one, like the one found in the synagogue of 'En Gedi, dating from around the sixth century CE (Porath 2021:34–38). The practice of symbolic immerssion is a clear sign that hakakhic purification had ceased. The cessation of purification caused a social change: dues were still offered, but they were not given to the priests; defilement on account of 'gentile impurity' lost its meaning, etc.

Summary and Conclusions

Purity practice was probably observed from the beginning of the Second Temple period. There is evidence of this in the public's avoidance of imported pottery vessels. During this

[36] Beneath this synagogue is a valid *miqweh* (see Baruch and Reich 2018; Baruch, this volume).

period, purification was by sprinkling water (nine *qavs* or three *logs*) in bathing tubs, or in the field. After the Hasmonean Revolt, with the general religious revival, purification practices were introduced, including laws regarding the obligation of purification with 'living water.' In this framework, the architectural form of a purifying installation was determined as a stepped ritual bath (*miqweh*). Later, there were those who added resrictions, such as divided ritual baths, the use of new vessels, the use of stone vessels, etc.

'Purity culture' was initially connected with the Temple, but later on, it extended to the mundane sphere. On the inter-sect level, a kind of competition developed between the sects concerning who preserved the ancient tradition and who was stricter about it. Therefore, the Sages made effort to diffuse the obligation to purify also among the general public. The period of 'purity culture' mainly characterizes Judea, while in Galilee, purity was less widespread. Following the destruction of the Temple, 'purity culture' continued, probably due to the hope of its rebuilding. This led to a competition between the Sages and the priests for holiness and prestige. Also in this period, the 'purity culture' continued to be a characteristic of Judea; in Galilee, it was preserved to a lesser extent.

After the Bar Kokhba Revolt, with the setting of the Sages in Galilee, purity practice declined. The messianic tension faded and turned into a passive messianism, the hope for rebuilding the Temple was now marginal, especially in Galilee, where purity was observed to a lesser extent. The situation in Judea is not as clear. It is difficult to determine whether the extensive distribution of ritual baths in Susya is an exception or characteristic of the entire region. In any case, the Sages were less stringent about purity, whereas the priests continued to strictly observe it. The public was less concerned with purity as can be deduced from the multitude of imported ceramic vessels and the decline in the use of stone vessels. It is evident that the public generally did not maintain purity, but made an effort to offer the priestly dues in a state of purity.

The maintenance of purity continued throughout the period of the Mishnah and Talmud, until the end of the Byzantine period. From the halakhic literature dating to the late Byzantine period, we learn of a continuation of observance of the laws of purity, but also envince the introduction of a symbolic purification, a phenomenon reflecting the decline of halakhic purity. At some point in time, perhaps only after the final dwindling of the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel, purification observance came to an end in Israel, except for women following menstruation, and phenomena of symbolic immersion, such as men who experienced seminal emission, Hasidic immersion, etc.

APPENDIX: THE LINGUISTIC ASPECT OF ANCIENT PURITY

In the Tannaite literature, clear terms were established for halakhic purity. Purification is accomplished by 'immersion' (טבל), while the verb 'to wash' (רחץ) was usually reserved for mundane washing, although it may have also be used to describe immersion (Safrai and Safrai 2011:102–104). In the Judean Desert Scrolls, the Hebrew verbs רחץ and טבל are used interchangeably to describe immersion (e.g., 4Q274). This does not imply that the members

of the Qumran sect were not familiar with immersion in the *miqweh*. On the contrary, many ritual baths were found at Qumran, but at that time, the unique nomenclature for halakhic immersion had not yet been refined. Two explanations may be offered for the lack of a designated nomenclature for halakhic immersion: (1) a specific halakhic immersion has not yet been determined; (2) a specific halakhic immersion was known, but only for a short time, and therefore, explicit terms had not yet crystalized. Human history attests that special activies initially received a general name, and only over time, with their establishment, did they acquire special terms.[37] The same may be said regarding the term '*miqweh*,' which does not appear in the Judean Desert Scrolls, nor in Josephus' and Philo's writings, but it is prevalent in the later writings of the Sages.

It is likely that in the case of the Judean Desert sects, the second explanation is true, as at that time the special installations for immersion were introduced. In the language of the sages, a special term (*miqwa'ot*) had already been assigned to these installations, but the people of the Judean Desert sect were not aware of it.

The word '*miqweh*' does not appear in the Septuagint translation, of course, as it is not mentioned in the Bible. For purification by water, the Septuagint uses three main terms: νίπτω; λούω; βάπτω, the first two usually appearing with the prefix άπο, totaling five terms (Table 1).

In early Christian literature, the third root, βάπτω, became the usual term for halakhic immersion, and later, for the partial baptism of an infant or a convert to Christianity. The term βάπτω appears in the Septuagint as the usual translation of the biblical verb 'to immerse' (טבל), although it usually does not describe a full-body immersion; also Naaman's immersion is translated by this root, although his action had nothing to do with halakhic immersion. As for the other two verbs, it seems that here too the translators did not distinguish between halakhic immersion and other kinds of washing/bathing. The verb λούω is thus used to describe halakhic immersion, but also to describe the bathing of Pharaoh's daughter in the Nile. Therefore, it seems that as in the Qumranic literature, the Septuagint does not distinguish between halakhic full-body immersion and regular bathing/washing.

[37] Such is the title 'Rabbi.' In the Second Temple period, the term had not yet been determined, and the Sages were called 'scribes,' a general term that referred to different types of educated literate people. The Greek term 'teacher' was also a general term. In the Yavne Generation, with the intensification of the Torah study, a special term—Rabbi— was created for a teacher. Later, it became a more defined term, with ordination and appointment ceremonies. In the Middle Ages, the term continued to take shape.

Table 1. Washing/Bathing and Immersion Terms in the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint

Term	Bible (Hebrew)	Septuagint (Greek)
Regular washing/bathing	*Genesis 14:4* יֻקַּח נָא מְעַט מַיִם וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשָּׁעֲנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ	καὶ νιψάτωσαν τοὺς πόδας
	Genesis 24:32 וַיִּתֶּן תֶּבֶן וּמִסְפּוֹא לַגְּמַלִּים וּמַיִם לִרְחֹץ רַגְלָיו וְרַגְלֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ	καὶ ὕδωρ νίψασθαι τοῖς ποσὶν αὐτοῦ
	Numbers 2:5 וַתֵּרֶד בַּת פַּרְעֹה לִרְחֹץ עַל הַיְאֹר וְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ	κατέβη δὲ ἡ θυγάτηρ Φαραὼ λούσασθαι ἐπὶ τὸν ποταμόν
Immersion	*Numbers 29:4* וְאֶת אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת בָּנָיו תַּקְרִיב אֶל פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְרָחַצְתָּ אֹתָם בַּמָּיִם	καὶ λούσεις αὐτοὺς ἐν ὕδατι.
	Leviticus 14:8 וְכִבֶּס הַמִּטַּהֵר אֶת בְּגָדָיו וְגִלַּח אֶת כָּל שְׂעָרוֹ וְרָחַץ בַּמַּיִם וְטָהֵר	καὶ λούσεται ἐν ὕδατι
	Leviticus 15:8 וְכִי יָרֹק הַזָּב בַּטָּהוֹר וְכִבֶּס בְּגָדָיו וְרָחַץ בַּמַּיִם וְטָמֵא עַד הָעָרֶב	πλυνεῖ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ καὶ λούσεται
	Leviticus 15:13 וְכִי יִטְהַר הַזָּב מִזּוֹבוֹ וְסָפַר לוֹ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לְטָהֳרָתוֹ וְכִבֶּס בְּגָדָיו וְרָחַץ בְּשָׂרוֹ בְּמַיִם חַיִּים וְטָהֵר	καὶ πλυνεῖ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ καὶ λούσεται τὸ σῶμα
Washing of feet and hands	*Numbers 30:20* בְּבֹאָם אֶל אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד יִרְחָצוּ מַיִם	νίψονται ὕδατι
Naaman	*2 Kings 5:10* הָלוֹךְ וְרָחַצְתָּ שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים בַּיַּרְדֵּן וְיָשֹׁב בְּשָׂרְךָ לְךָ וּטְהָר	πορευθεὶς λοῦσαι ἑπτάκις ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ, καὶ ἐπιστρέψει ἡ σάρξ
	2 Kings 5:14 וַיֵּרֶד וַיִּטְבֹּל בַּיַּרְדֵּן שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים	σού σοι, καὶ καθαρισθήσῃ καὶ κατέβη Ναιμὰν καὶ ἐβαπτίσατο ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ
Immersion	*Numbers 12:22* וּלְקַחְתֶּם אֲגֻדַּת אֵזוֹב וּטְבַלְתֶּם בַּדָּם אֲשֶׁר בַּסַּף	λήψεσθε δὲ δέσμην ὑσσώπου, καὶ βάψαντες ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος
	Leviticus 4:17 וְטָבַל הַכֹּהֵן אֶצְבָּעוֹ מִן הַדָּם וְהִזָּה שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים לִפְנֵי ה' אֵת פְּנֵי הַפָּרֹכֶת	καὶ βάψει ὁ ἱερεὺς τὸν δάκτυλον
	Joshua 3:15 וּכְבוֹא נֹשְׂאֵי הָאָרוֹן עַד הַיַּרְדֵּן וְרַגְלֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים נֹשְׂאֵי הָאָרוֹן נִטְבְּלוּ בִּקְצֵה הַמָּיִם וְהַיַּרְדֵּן מָלֵא עַל כָּל גְּדוֹתָיו כֹּל יְמֵי קָצִיר	καὶ οἱ πόδες τῶν ἱερέων τῶν αἰρόντων τὴν κιβωτὸν τῆς διαθήκης Κυρίου ἐβάφησαν εἰς μέρος τοῦ ὕδατος τοῦ Ἰορδάνου

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