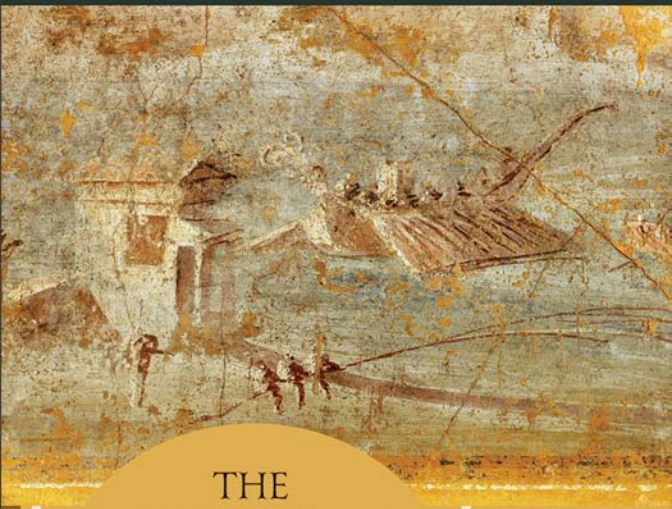

THE WORLD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts

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Jewish Identity, Beliefs, and Practices

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The four issues addressed here—circumcision, Sabbath, food, and purification rites—are inherently linked to the theological debates that took place in the Second Temple period and the early Jewish Christian community. At the heart of these debates is the issue of "sectarianism" in Palestine prior to and during the emergence of Christianity in the first century AD. Disputes between the "sects" were due in part to the Jerusalem temple, the mainstream institution of the society. From the heart of the city, those in control of the temple established policies for the function of the cult and the daily ritual practices of Jews. As a result, the various sects who left behind literature—Qumran, the church, and the rabbis—sought to establish their own rules to govern the practices by either reinterpreting or rejecting the temple rules.

Each of the issues discussed here played an important role in maintaining Jewish identity (Neusner, "Purity," 17). Laws governing the Sabbath, circumcision, food, and purity were interpreted by the sects as boundary markers that normally served to separate Jew and gentile but now differentiated between those considered insiders and the outsiders of each sect. Jewish sectarianism began to emerge in the Maccabean period (second century BC), when changes in Jewish life were rapidly taking place. (Some argue that sectarianism began earlier, during the Persian period, 539–334 BC; see Grabbe, *Judaic Religion*, 207–9.) Several factors contributed to

these changes to Jewish life in Palestine, including (1) the introduction of Hellenism, beginning with the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great in 334 BC; (2) the persecution by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who sought to abolish the temple cult and outlaw Jewish laws (cf. 1 Macc. 1:44–50); (3) the successful revolt by the Maccabeans against these decrees in 168–164 BC (cf. 1 Macc. 1–4); and (4) the establishment of a semiautonomous state under the Hasmonean dynasty.

The resulting authority of the Hasmonean dynasty displayed inconsistency in its attitude toward surrounding cultures; despite leading the rebellion against the Seleucid rulers, they showed a particular affinity to the Greek culture. In their ensuing disappointment, the sectarians recognized that a life of purity was needed to protect their way of life from the gentiles and also from Jews who demonstrated unfaithfulness to God.

Christianity emerged in this period with a similar sectarian mind-set (Nickelsburg, *Ancient Judaism*, 182–84), though Jesus and the leaders of this Jewish sect took a different approach to interpreting the laws of the Sabbath, circumcision, food, and purity—an approach that could be described as less rigid or even liberal in relation to other groups, such as the Pharisees or the Essenes. In addition, contrary to other Jewish sects, the early Christian community offered an open door to gentiles, while claiming exclusivism by defining itself around the messianic identity of Jesus of Nazareth rather than Torah. Similarly, each of these somewhat pious Jewish sects claimed that it was the true Israel and that its interpretation of the laws in question was the divinely inspired interpretation (Talmon, "Internal Diversification," 31).

The commandments governing these issues are established in the biblical tradition. The Sabbath is first mentioned in the creation account in Gen. 2:2–3. The covenant marker of circumcision is called for in God's covenant with Abraham in Gen. 17:10–14. Food laws are introduced in Lev. 11:1–47 and Deut. 14:2–20, although other OT texts speak to the issue. The fourth issue, purity laws, is central to the discussion of the other three subjects. Any debate or rulings put forth in the Second Temple period concerning the Sabbath, circumcision, or food hinges on their affect on the purity of an individual or the nation. The implementation of purity rules was necessary to allow continued participation in worship and to prevent pollution of holy places or objects. Leviticus offers the basis for governing the purity issues—for example, unclean animals (Lev. 5), clean animals and how they are to be used in the sacrificial cult (Lev. 11; 17), purification after childbirth (Lev. 12), illness and bodily discharges (Lev. 13; 15), and sexual relations (Lev. 18).

Circumcision

Circumcision in Second Temple Judaism had its origins in Gen. 17. While establishing a covenant with Abraham, God promises him that he will be the father of many nations. The sign of agreement to this covenant is the physical circumcision

of every male in Abraham's family, including the household servants. In addition God tells him that every male should be circumcised on the eighth day throughout the generations of Abraham's descendants. Further support for the eighth-day requirement may be suggested from the Qumran scroll 8Q1 Genesis (frg. 4). This fragmentary text contains Gen. 17:12–17, and the suggested reconstruction of the text indicates it may have contained the phrase "on the eighth day" from Gen. 17:14 (Thiessen, "Genesis 17:14").

The practice of circumcision was not exclusive to the Israelites. Archaeological evidence suggests that during the Egyptian Sixth Dynasty the practice was carried out among the Egyptians (their reasons for circumcision appear to be quite different from those of the Israelites). Illustrations from the tomb at Saqqara (2350–2000 BC) depict a circumcised carpenter. A relief discovered at the tomb of Ankh-ma-Hor at Saqqara depicts the circumcision of two puberty-aged boys. A second figure depicts a similar action performed by a second priest. In addition, a twenty-third-century BC stele from Naga-ed-Der indicates that circumcision was performed in a mass ritual. The author states, "When I was circumcised, together with one hundred and twenty men, there was none thereof who hit out, there was none thereof who was hit, and there was none thereof who scratched and there was none thereof who was scratched." Notice that Gen. 17:23–27 recounts an event very much like the stele text (Wilson, "Circumcision," 326).

Further evidence of the practice by the Egyptians is provided by Herodotus, who reports that the Egyptians "practice circumcision for cleanliness' sake; for they would rather be clean than more becoming" (*Hist*. 2.37; A. D. Godley, LCL). He also notes:

> The Colchians, the Egyptians, and the Ethiopians are the only nations that have from the first practiced circumcision. The Phoenicians and the Syrians of Palestine [the Jews] acknowledge that they learned the custom of the Egyptians; and the Syrians [Jews] of the valleys of the Thermodon and the Parthenius, as well as their neighbors the Macrones, say that they learned it lately from the Colchians. These are the only nations that circumcise, and it is seen that they do just as the Egyptians. (Herodotus, *Hist*. 2.104; A. D. Godley, LCL)

Additional archaeological evidence was discovered in an eleventh-century BC relief from Megiddo that portrays a procession coming before a ruler. Included in the group are two naked prisoners who are clearly circumcised and appear to be Semites. According to Jer. 9:25–26, other Semitic groups were practicing circumcision in the seventh century BC—including Edomites, Ammonites, and Moabites. Others—such as the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Philistines—were not circumcised; in fact the Philistines are called the "uncircumcised" in a derogatory fashion.

Scholars have suggested that there is a threefold purpose for circumcision in the HB: metaphorical, ethical, and ritual (Williamson, "Circumcision"). As a ritual,

circumcision was demanded in order for a male to be a part of the covenant community. By performing this ritual on one's son, an individual was passing on the privileges and ethical responsibilities to the next generation. In addition it was used to assimilate individuals into the nation and covenant who were not ethnically or biologically related to Abraham.

Circumcision is also used metaphorically in the biblical text. Several passages describe an uncircumcised heart as a heart that does not repent as God requires (Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; 30:6; cf. Jer. 4:4; 9:25–26). Exodus 6:12 and 30 describe uncircumcised lips as those unsuitable for speaking divine communication; Jer. 6:10 suggests that uncircumcised ears are unable to hear divine communication. The issue of unsuitability may be the reason behind the physical human ritual among the Israelites. With physical circumcision, one was identified as suitable for entering into covenant with God.[1]

The ethical significance of circumcision is closely tied to its metaphorical usage. An uncircumcised heart means an individual is unfaithful to God (Deut. 10:16–17; 30:6–7). Leviticus 26:40–42 suggests that Israel must repent of its uncircumcised heart in order for God's covenant to be restored. Jeremiah uses the image of an uncircumcised heart (9:24–26) to compare Israel with the unclean/uncircumcised gentiles. Each significant aspect of circumcision in Israel (metaphorical, ethical, and ritual) was tied theologically and spiritually to covenant obligations and privileges.

During the Second Temple period circumcision was a point of dispute among the Jews. With the Hellenization of Palestine, many Jews became enamored by the Greek culture and customs. Many would take part in the Greek gymnasium, in which exercises were performed in the nude; many Jews became aware of the physical "deformity" of their circumcision and chose to undergo a "de-circumcision" procedure. First Maccabees 1:15 states that a Greek-style gymnasium was constructed in Jerusalem and many Jews "hid their circumcision and abandoned the holy covenant" (author's translation). Josephus reports that "they also hid the circumcision of their genitals that even when they were naked they appeared to be Greeks" (*Ant*. 12.241; author's translation). The difficulty with this practice was that during this period faithful Jews thought that covenant and circumcision were synonymous—that is, anyone who tried to hide the sign of the covenant thus denied his place in the community.

In the ensuing years, Antiochus IV Epiphanes outlawed circumcision along with other identifiably "Jewish" customs, resulting in the Maccabean revolt in the mid-second century BC (cf. 1 Macc. 1:44–49, 60–63). As a result, the faithful in Palestine issued a polemic against the Jews who rejected circumcision (cf. 1 Macc. 1:13–15; Josephus, *Ant*. 12.241). One can thus see the importance that circumcision held in Second Temple Judaism. In the revolt, the Maccabeans defeated the Seleucids and established the Hasmonean Kingdom in Palestine, immediately enacting a ruling requiring mandatory circumcision for Jews and those they subjugated, the

1. John Goldingay, "The Significance of Circumcision," *JSOT* 88 (2000): 3–18.

Idumeans and Itureans (1 Macc. 2:46; Josephus, *Ant*. 12.278; 13.257–58, 318–19). Other Jewish texts from the period stress the continued covenant role of circumcision. *Jubilees* 15.11–14 underscores the magnitude of the ritual by claiming that even the angels were circumcised at creation. As a result circumcised Jews are able to stand in the assembly of the angels. *Jubilees* 15.22–34 states that those who fail to circumcise are identified as "sons of Beliar" or "sons of destruction" and no longer members of the community. The importance of the ritual is also clear from the DSS. According to $1QH^a$ 14.20 the uncircumcised may not walk on God's holy path, and 4Q458 (frg. 2 2.4) declares that the uncircumcised will be destroyed in the last days. Several scrolls continued the biblical tradition of a metaphorical use of "uncircumcised"—for example, 4Q434 (frg. 1 1.4) affirms that God will save his people with a circumcision of the heart (see also 1QS 5.5, 26; 4Q504 3.11; $1QH^a$ 10.18; 1QpHab 11.13).

However, when one approaches the NT, a clear shift becomes evident as to the relevance of the ritual of circumcision in the early church. While Jewish believers were allowed to continue the practice, according to Acts 15:1–11; 21:25 new gentile believers were not required to be circumcised. Rather, for Paul and other early church leaders, it is the uncircumcised heart that must be circumcised as a sign of the covenant (Rom. 2:25–5:5; 1 Cor. 7:17–20; Gal. 5:1–15; 6:11–18; Eph. 2:11–12; Phil. 3). It may be argued that water baptism replaced physical circumcision, thus allowing for proper recognition of both males and females in the covenant (Gardner, "Circumcised"; Martin, "Circumcision").

Food Laws

From the quantity of biblical texts dedicated to instructions concerning food and its consumption (e.g., Lev. 11:1–47; Deut. 14:2–20), it is clear that the contents of the Israelite diet were extremely important to God's people (Eidelman, "Food"). However, this is an issue not simply of dietary health but also of covenant purity. In these texts a close link is established between what the people should eat and what was required in the sacrificial cult of the temple.

Leviticus 11:1–47 and Deut. 14:2–20 identify what living creatures may and may not be eaten. These laws are expounded in the *Letter of Aristeas* (142–71) and in Philo (*Spec*. 4.95–131). Characteristics are offered for those animals considered clean: they must part the hoof (i.e., have cloven feet) and chew the cud. Both features must be present; otherwise the animal is considered unclean (Lev. 11:4–8). Also, an Israelite is forbidden to touch the dead carcass of any of these creatures. Leviticus 11:9 states that any water creature with fins and scales may be eaten. A list of seafood considered unclean and inedible follows (vv. 10–12). Verses 13–19 identify species of birds that are detestable and should not be eaten or their carcasses touched. Verse 20 begins a list of detestable insects to be avoided. Verses 20–47 identify creatures that will render an individual unclean, along with

cooking practices that result in the ritual impurity of a vessel or an individual. Leviticus 11:45 (not found in the listing in Deut. 14) holds the key to all the food laws of the Pentateuch: "For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall be holy, for I am holy." The food laws are given in order to establish further purity guidelines for the people.

Some dietary laws may have been discarded by Jews in the Diaspora in an effort to assimilate (Barclay, *Jews*, 434), although some literature suggests the general Jewish population remained diligent in keeping the food laws (see Philo, *Migr.* 89–93). Although eating with gentiles was taboo, it seems to have been tolerated if a Jew hosted the dinner or brought his own food to the gentile's house (see Jdt. 12:1–4, 19; Add. Esth. 14:17; Josephus, *Life* 14; Rom. 14:1–2). During these meals one would dispense with the prayers and libations of the gentiles (*Let. Aris.* 184–85) and would often sit at a separate table with distinct food (*Jos. Asen.* 7.1). Gentiles saw adherence to the food laws as misanthropic, suggesting that this separation was a common practice (e.g., Philostratus, *Vit. Apol.* 33; *Let. Aris.* 139–42, which describe the setting up of walls between the Jews and gentiles due to food laws; 3 Macc. 3:4 describes how Jews are hated by others due to the religious distinctions). But for the Jews, the food laws bound the community together by solidifying their ethnic identity on a daily basis.

Sabbath

The observance of the Sabbath was the clearest marker of ethnic identity of the Jewish community in the Second Temple period. However, there appears to have been no uniform way for Jewish observance of the Sabbath (Doering, "Sabbath and Festivals"). Practices varied concerning many issues, including marital sex, saving human life, conducting warfare, fasting, travel, and work. According to John Barclay, granting these variations in practice, for Jews the Sabbath was the most important of the Jewish feasts; it was "so regular, so noticeable, and so socially problematic, affecting . . . not only personal but also financial, legal, and political relationships." Gentiles despised the Jews for this practice, calling it "stupidity or laziness or both" (Barclay, *Jews*, 440). They found it remarkable that Jews should neglect work for one day during the week. However, Sabbath observance, like circumcision and observance of the food laws, was an issue of purity for Jews.

The origins of the weekly Sabbath observance are debated. Exodus 20:8–11 establishes the commandment for the Israelites to keep the seventh day holy. Verse 11 suggests that the author of Exodus understands the roots of this commandment to originate in Gen. 2:2–3 and the creation narrative. Exodus 31:14–17 stresses the need for Israel to keep the Sabbath as a sign of the covenant, with further mention of its origins in the creation narrative. The author makes it clear that anyone who profanes the Sabbath with work is to be put to death. Further, Exod. 35:2–3 emphasizes observing the Sabbath and the threat of death to those who do

not. In addition, the Day of Atonement in Lev. 16:31 is described as Sabbath rest that is an eternal statute. Furthermore, Lev. 23–26 and Num. 28 describe various sacrificial rites to be performed on the Sabbath.

Despite the limited evidence as to its origins, the Sabbath is a well-established feast by the early Second Temple period (cf. Isa. 56:2; Neh. 13:15–22). Herold Weiss argues that the Jews gave the Sabbath significance during the Babylonian exile in the sixth century BC (*Day of Gladness*). It is possible that the feast was firmly established by Ezekiel and the Priestly authors and editors of the Pentateuch (Andreasen, *Sabbath*). The end result established a dominant covenantal identity marker for the Jews. Further evidence of the Sabbath's importance is found in the Elephantine papyri that record concerns for the Sabbath among a Jewish community in Egypt during the fifth century BC. The issues raised reflect the question of work that could be performed on the Sabbath. We discover similar questions in Palestine during the same period. Nehemiah records that there were many violations taking place in Jerusalem concerning conducting business on the Sabbath. Nehemiah 13 presents the actions necessary to reestablish the nation's commitment not to profane the Sabbath.

During the Hasmonean and Roman periods the Sabbath held a central position in the ideology of the Jews in Palestine (and the Diaspora). In very much a negative sense the Sabbath served as an identity marker of the Jews among the gentiles. As a result many Jews felt a great deal of pressure to hide or neglect its observance in order to assimilate to the surrounding cultures. Many argue that this was the first step in the process of the apostatizing of the nation. Philo states:

> Moreover, it is only a very short time ago that I knew a man of very high rank, one who was prefect and governor of Egypt, who, after he had taken it into his head to change our national institutions and customs, and in an extraordinary manner to abrogate that most holy law guarded by such fearful penalties, which relates to the seventh day, . . . was compelling us to obey him, and to do other things contrary to our established custom, thinking that that would be the beginning of our departure from the other laws, and of our violation of all our national customs, if he were once able to destroy our hereditary and customary observance of the seventh day. (*Somn.* 2.123)[2]

During the Greco-Roman period, several Jewish texts note the necessity of a variety of Jewish communities to maintain a stringent observance of the Sabbath. This practice often required a strict separation from their gentile neighbors in order to prevent a violation of the Sabbath, which, as noted above, resulted in a negative view of the observant Jews and the Sabbath practice among the Gentiles. The *Damascus Document* states that, on the Sabbath, Jews were supposed to remain distant from their gentile neighbors (CD 11.14b–15a). *Jubilees* 50.8 calls

2. C. D. Yonge, trans., *The Works of Philo of Alexandria* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 396.

for the death penalty for those who violate the Sabbath (CD 10.14–11.18 does not take such a harsh stance against a violation). The Gospels also suggest that such a prescription was being enforced during the time of Jesus. Mark 3:1–6 and John 5:1–18 mention the desire of the Pharisees to kill Jesus after his violation of the Sabbath. In these texts, the point of contention for Jesus may have been Pharisaic halakah, not a rejection of the Torah or its commandments per se. Several scholars argue that Qumran and related documents offer stricter sectarian rulings concerning Sabbath observance (Weiss, *Day of Gladness*, 15); others maintain that the so-called stricter rules of Qumran are not sectarian but are the normative Jewish tradition at an early stage (see Josephus, *J.W.* 2.145–49).[3] The Essenes appear more particular about Sabbath observances than do other Jewish groups (cf. CD 10.14–11.18).

Several points of contention concerning the Sabbath were apparent among various Jewish groups during the Greco-Roman period. The most prominent issue appears to be the adoption of the Hellenistic calendar by the high priest (cf. Dan. 7:25), which may have established the mainstream Jewish feast dates, including the Sabbath. The Hellenistic calendar was a luni-solar model of 354 days in a year with intercalary months added when necessary. The calendar was first introduced in 167 BC at the Jerusalem temple. In conflict with the Hellenistic calendar, the Jewish solar calendar contained twelve thirty-day months and an additional four intercalary days—one every three months. This solar calendar would fall short of the 365¼ days of the astronomical calendar (see Dan. 7:25; 1 Macc. 1:59; 2 Macc. 6:7 may suggest that the solar calendar was in use during the Second Temple period). The solar calendar had exactly fifty-two weeks, allowing the days of the month to be fixed, and thus the feasts and Sabbaths were fixed days of the year. It was of absolute importance for the feast days and the Sabbath days to fall on the same day as those celebrated in the heavenly court; otherwise the whole nation could be found in violation of the Sabbath.

With the victory by the Maccabeans in 165 (or 164) BC and the cleansing of the Jerusalem temple, many thought the Jewish solar calendar would be reinstated. However, in 150 BC Jonathan the high priest (appointed in 153 BC; see 1 Macc. 10:1–46; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.35–61) reaffirmed the use of the luni-solar calendar, resulting in many faithful Jews abandoning the temple due to the untimely keeping of the festivals. Those who followed the Jewish solar calendar claimed that the Sabbath began at Saturday sunrise and ended at Sunday sunrise, while those who followed the temple's luni-solar calendar claimed that the Sabbath began at sundown on Friday and ended at sundown on Saturday. Scholars have argued that this dispute may have resulted in the establishing of the Qumran community (Talmon, "Internal Diversification," 35–43; VanderKam, *Calendars*). Still others suggest that this was only one of several reasons the covenanters abandoned the temple.[4]

3. S. T. Kimbrough, "The Concept of the Sabbath at Qumran," *RB* 5 (1966): 483–502.

4. Philip R. Davies, "Calendrical Change and Qumran Origins: An Assessment of VanderKam's Theory," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 80–89.

Josephus records that the Jews were granted religious rights that included Sabbath observance (see *Ant*. 13.52; 14.226–27, 242, 244–46, 256–58, 262–64; 16.162–63, 167–68). Several of these passages describe the failure of the Jews to defend themselves in war because they refused to take up arms on the Sabbath (cf. 1 Macc. 2:29–38). On several occasions their enemies may have used this as a military tactic, including the invasion by Nebuchadnezzar (Johns, "Military Strategy"). Josephus argues that some thought that keeping the Sabbath was a weakness on the part of the Jews in that it allowed Ptolemy to take Jerusalem on the Sabbath without a fight (*Ant*. 12.4–6; *J.W.* 2.517–18). After the deaths of Jews who refused to defile the Sabbath by fighting, the Maccabees took an oath to fight on the Sabbath to assure the continued existence of the Jewish people (1 Macc. 2:39–41). Josephus, however, argues that the laws against work on the Sabbath must be observed, and that Sabbath observance is both a measure of piety and an identity badge for those who keep it faithfully. He identifies the Essenes as devoted, pious Jews for their Sabbath observance (*Ant*. 1.33; 3.91, 281; 12.4, 274; 13.252; 14.63; 18.318, 359; *J.W.* 2.456; *Ag. Ap.* 1.212; 2.174).

Proper observance of the Sabbath continued to be a central issue in early Jewish communities, including the Jewish Christian communities.

Purity

Within the HB we find the development of distinct strategies for defining, achieving, and maintaining purity. These include the priestly program presented in Leviticus and also those found in Ezekiel and Deuteronomy. Each of the programs has a certain focus on the tabernacle/temple cult, and particularly on the priests. Bruce Chilton contends that "all laws of cleanness are Israel's means of maintaining solidarity of sacrifice with God, apart from which the land may not be retained" ("Purity," 875). Leviticus 18:24–30 makes it clear that the previous inhabitants of the land were expelled because of their failure to keep rules of purity concerning the land.

Hannah Harrington defines "purity" as "the state of cleanness effected by physical purification rituals required for lay participation in the cult" ("Halakah," 79). Jacob Milgrom defines "impurity" as an "active, malevolent force that grows in strength unless checked and reduced through ablutions" ("Ablutions," 570). For the Qumran community the ablutions (based on Gen. 35:2) must accompany repentance (1QS 3.4–6). These characterizations provide working definitions of purity rites in the Greco-Roman period.

Purity laws varied among Jewish groups in the Second Temple period. The group that stands out the most is the Qumran community. The strict degree of purity imposed at Qumran is likely due to the group's connection to the priesthood. The lifestyle they kept was similar to that of the Zadokite temple priesthood (Sanders, *Judaism*, 359; see the *Temple Scroll* for rulings concerning purity in the

temple). In fact, the Qumran community considered itself the temple; as such, all forms of impurity, according to the priestly code, prevented an individual from entering the community. The purification rites that were performed allowed one to participate again in the temple cult activity following defilement.

The archaeological evidence at Qumran suggests the ritual bath (Hebrew *mikveh*; pl. *mikva'ot*) was a centerpiece of the purity rituals of the community (thus far, approximately three hundred *mikva'ot* have been discovered from the late Second Temple period). This feature may be due to the priestly nature of the occupants. It was a priestly ritual to bathe after touching anything unclean or anyone less pure. They treated their meals as holy food eaten outside of the temple by the priests. They abstained from wine because wine was not consumed in the temple. They strictly avoided sexual intercourse due to the impurity issues caused by semen.

The issue of purity and sexual relations is raised in several Qumran documents. The *Damascus Document* prohibits any sexual relations within the city of Jerusalem due to the holiness of the temple (CD 12.1). Biblical law requires the priest to immerse following sexual relations prior to entering the temple (Lev. 15:18); CD 10.10–13 expands this ruling to the entire city: the priest must be completely immersed prior to entering Jerusalem.

For the Qumran community, holiness went hand in hand with purity. According to the *Temple Scroll* (11QT^{a} 45.12–14), the *War Scroll* (1QM 7.3–5), and the *Halakic Letter* (4QMMT B42–57), physically impaired persons (blemished) were not allowed within the entire temple city or the war camp (in 1QM). This restriction goes beyond what is mandated in the HB, which requires physical perfection only for the officiating priest (Lev. 21:23). It may be proposed that the goal of the Qumran legal material was the achievement of maximum holiness (Harrington, "Halakah," 80–81, 86). The desire for this "pure holiness" is due in part to the presence of the holy angels in the community; this divine presence required a community that strictly adhered to the Torah (1QM 12.1). Some may argue that Jesus also goes beyond the Levitical standards of Torah; in Matt. 5:27–28 Jesus states, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Jacob Neusner maintains that the idea of purity in ancient Judaism suggests that there is no difference between moral and ritual impurity. He states, "The impurity of the menstrual woman and that of the arrogant person are not distinguished in any way. . . . For the *yaḥad* [i.e., members of the strict Qumran community], one cannot distinguish between cultic and moral impurity" (*Purity*, 54). Purity and impurity are closely identified with the anthropology of the period in that it was thought that individuals who were considered sinners had a "spirit of impurity" that could only be cleansed by a spirit of holiness (see esp. 1QS 4.20b–22a; also, more broadly, 1QS 3.13–4.26). The *Rule of the Community* at Qumran indicates that sinners participate in the same ritual immersion as one who has a ritual

impurity (1QS 3.6–11; 5.13–14). This does not suggest that all who were considered impure were sinners—for example, menstruation was not a sin; burying the dead was not a sin; the burning of the red heifer results in the priest's becoming impure, but not by sin. Leviticus 11:32 and Num. 19:14–15; 31:23 declare that objects that have become impure by contact must be immersed to be cleansed. Impurity that is not related to sin is easily purified by immersion, while two categories of impure individuals first require a physical healing and then a period of impurity from which they must be cleansed. These individuals include the leper (Lev. 14:3) and the *zāb*, that is, one suffering from an abnormal genital discharge (Lev. 15:3; Harrington, "Impurity").

For Jews living in this period, to be unclean meant to belong to the realm of death. Any acknowledged impurity must be kept away from the sacred, because what is holy is distinct from the ordinary, the profane, or the unclean. The concept of impurity in the first century AD affected three primary activities for the individual—eating, procreation, and attendance at the Jerusalem temple. (The rules of impurity did not apply to participation in the activities of the synagogue.) The temple priests were required to eat under the conditions of cultic cleanness. All Israelites were required to abstain from foods deemed unclean in the Torah. All Israelites had to abstain from sexual intercourse when the woman was in her menstrual cycle. Any Jew wishing to participate in the temple cult first had to pass through a ritual bath. This was especially true during the festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles and during the Sabbath. Uncleanness came about through liquids related to the human body—blood, semen, or the viscous gas of a corpse. The impurity was reversed and cleanness restored through immersion in the natural flow of water in the correct volume.

The Qumran community reflects some of the more stringent regulations concerning purity and uncleanness in the Second Temple period. The legal texts contain a multitude of laws centered on purity issues. There are at least twenty-three legal passages in the *Damascus Document*, and other references can be found in 4QMMT, 4Q159, 4Q513, and the *Temple Scroll* (Harrington, "Halakah," 78). Several regulations are specific to the Sabbath and perhaps deserve special note (Doering, "Purity Regulations"). 4Q512 (frgs. 33+35 4.1–5) identifies the "ritual purification on the eve of the Sabbath" as involving water "to sanctify oneself" and is typical of purification rituals in the DSS, which usually include references to "in water" and "to sanctify oneself." Sanctification takes place in ritual immersion (1QS 3.4–5, 9; 4Q512 frgs. 1–6 12.10; $1QH^a$ 11.10–11). The authors of these Qumran texts may be drawing from the immersion tradition found in Exod. 19:10, 14–15, where Moses is told to sanctify the people in order to prepare them to come before the Lord at Sinai.

Second Maccabees 12:38 offers a similar incident concerning the Maccabean army's ceremonially purifying themselves "according to the custom" in order to prepare for the coming of the Sabbath. The purification rite may be due to the bloodshed from battle (cf. Num. 31:19), but Num. 31 suggests contact with a

corpse, which is not in the text of 2 Maccabees. In CD 11.3–4 and 4Q265 6.2–4 it is specified that, in addition to washing the body for the Sabbath observance, the member will also launder his clothes or at least wear fresh clothing (cf. Num. 31:20). It is likely that "soiled garments," found in both texts, signifies a purity issue. The term "soiled" equates to feces, which of course was a matter of impurity among the Essenes (Josephus, *J.W.* 2.149; see Doering, "Purity Regulations," 603).

The issue of purity played an important part in differentiating between two sects during the Second Temple period—the Qumran *yaḥad* and the Pharisaic *ḥavurah* (an association for the promotion of ritual purity). As a result, one must ask what the Israelites understood as pure and impure and how these ideas were developed into a ritualized set of commandments. It appears that those connected to the priesthood focused on things directly relevant to the temple cult. The language of purity comes to prominence beginning in the late second century BC through the first century AD, in particular in the writings of the Qumran sectarians, Josephus, Jesus' polemic against the Pharisees, and Paul. From these texts we can see that the issue of purity arose due to sectarian conflict within the Jewish community at large.

The idea of purity is typically used as a metaphor in the Second Temple period for such issues as sexual intercourse, idolatry, evildoings, and purity in connection with the cult. Philo uses the purity metaphor for moral purity and addresses the biblical commandments concerning impurity. In Christian literature the main sources of uncleanness are food and sexual intercourse. In the Gospel accounts, impurity becomes a source of the demonic, while a ritual of purification can drive off the spirit of impurity or remove the effects it has on the individual. Purity was a major point of contention between Jesus and the various Jewish sects in Palestine.

Conclusion

In this brief discussion of circumcision, Sabbath, food laws, and purity we have seen that during the Greco-Roman period significant influences, both internal and external to Judaism, resulted in a strong sectarian atmosphere in Palestine. As a result, we can identify various levels of observance for each of these issues due to the level of piety within various Jewish groups.

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