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The Biblical View of Purity and Holiness

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the biblical concepts of purity and holiness, primarily through the disciplines of anthropology and history of religion. Both purity and holiness are related to systems of order. Purity is a physical order, ordained by God, within which Israelites must remain. The general concept of purity, as well as the biblical concept, is elucidated by Mary Douglas, British social anthropologist, who sets the conceptual model for the first chapter. For Douglas, impurity is anything which is out of place, that is, which goes against the system to which humanity subscribes. She demonstrates that Genesis is the basis for the biblical system and that purity means corresponding to that system. Holiness refers to any time, person or persons, object or place which corresponds to temporal, physical, social or spatial order created by God. Any thing, person, etc. which is consistent with this order may enter a productive relationship with God.

Three theories of holiness, those of Rudolf Otto, Mircea Eliade and Quentin Smith are discussed and critiqued. The author concludes that holiness is a term that designates something as being of ultimate (Godly) significance. Its significance is derived from its being consistent with the physical, social, temporal and spatial order of the universe as ordained by God. This order comprises the self-evident truths and world view of the biblical author. By remaining consistent with this world view, the relationship between God and Israel remains positive and Israel is made to prosper.

The appendix contains some thoughts and considerations for teaching the concept of holiness and purity to older students. Sample lesson plans are included.

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PREFACE

My work on holiness actually began two years ago while working on a Masters of Arts in Jewish Education. The final project was a fully articulated ten unit curriculum on the topic of holiness. I chose holiness because it seemed like an interesting but innocuous topic. Religious leaders often make reference to adding holiness to our lives, making times and places holy and being holy like God. There are the many references to holiness (*kedusha*) throughout Jewish thought and liturgy: *kiddush, kaddish, kedusha, kiddushin, kiddush hashem,* just to name the most obvious. The challenge became to explain what holiness actually means, since, ideally, one must understand a topic before teaching it. After months of reading I found my level of confusion rising much faster than my level of understanding. Furthermore, I found that the myriad of people who were invoking "*kedusha*" like a chant also had no clear understanding of what it meant. They realized that it was important and that it was related to God, but they simply were not able to articulate a definition. The more the term was invoked, the more frustrated I became with the repeatedly demonstrated lack of understanding. As time went on I became mildly obsessed with the study of holiness. Unable to adequately write a curriculum on holiness and yet feeling personally challenged to do

so, I decided to devote my rabbinic thesis to the topic.

My studies took me into disciplines of which I had absolutely no knowledge, namely anthropology, and specifically, the study of myths, rituals, symbols and social structures. These became the concepts which allowed me to frame my study of holiness and to add the closely connected study of purity. (The concept of purity was never mentioned in anything I had previously read about holiness. This fact demonstrates the dearth of understanding in most Jewish sources.) I have also spent some time studying the history of religions, which has recently gained numerous insights from anthropological studies. My studies have come to suggest that scholars have over emphasized the text as topic of study, and under emphasized (to the point of exclusion) the people for whom these texts were ultimate self-evident truths. Or worse, they have caricatured them as being so simplistic as to be totally irrelevant to us. Scholars viewed laws and rituals as means of comparing one group to another rather than as an expression of a sophisticated religious life. The biblical myth was historicized, viewed almost exclusively as a repository of factual information rather than an admittedly quasi-historical self-perception. Anthropology's gift to the study of religion is that it frames what would otherwise be considered extraneous or "primitive" phenomena in the language and conceptual constructs of Western thinkers. Consequently,

we were able to enter into the world of the "primitive" non-Western religion and see meaningful patterns.

Anthropology's real benefit came, however, when anthropologists turned their methodology and insights inward on Western society. They demonstrated (and continue to demonstrate) that the difference between "primitive" societies and "advanced" societies is only a matter of detail, not sophistication. We are currently in the midst of this process. For the modern religionist who felt estranged from the Bible, the true benefit is that we can now examine aspects of biblical religion that was previously held to be extremely problematic and appreciate its beauty of form and function. We can even see that those same functions are being met in our society in other forms. We still have laws of purity, holy sites, times and people. This should free us to see these laws as creations of social conditions rather than of superstitious fear. For biblical priests, the social conditions were harsh and defensive; for us they are less so. However, unlike the priests, we can exert some self-conscious control over our own social conditions. We can create a community or culture which will tend to encourage religious rituals and myths. We can put forth a world view (in which we really believe) that can dictate what is pure for us, and what is impure, what is holy, and what is profane. We can create our own myths which set our truths into a religious context that actually makes

sense. We have the ability to revitalize Judaism if we do so with the artful eye of a committed religious person and the knowledge of an anthropologist.

The purpose of this thesis was not to set out a plan of action for modern Jews. (Anyone interested in this sort of analysis should read Larry Hoffman's book, *The Art of Public Prayer*). It is really just an intellectual pit-stop, a photograph of the level of my thinking at the time of writing.

My hope is that it might encourage continued reflection on the similarities between our modern religious lives and our ancient manifestations of religious life rather than on the differences. In this way I believe that we will be able to recapture the Bible and biblical concepts as part of our living mythology rather than relegating them to the sacred ash pile of religious history.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have imagined writing this thesis even two years ago. The fact that I have anything at all is a tribute to the many people who have helped me in my writing and my thinking about the topic.

To Dr. Richard Sarason who has been more than generous with both his time and his intellect. He is not so much a teacher as a guide.

To Dr. David Weisberg who understands that creation only happens through *tzimtzum*.

To Richard Doss and, *al echat kama v'chama* to Beverly Doss who argued picayune point after picayune point. They are talmudists to the very end.

To Nathaniel and Micah who remember that I am the parent with the beard.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wife Debbie who has taught me more about the *kedusha* of *kiddushin* than any book or scholar.

CHAPTER I - PURITY

METHODS FOR STUDYING THE BIBLE

When embarking on a scholarly study, a scholar may find himself in one of two largely different but importantly similar situations. The differences reside in the variety of data-gathering and analytic tools available to the scholar. The similarity emerges in the possible results, both in quantity and in quality, of the study. Early in human history people wondered about the cosmos. They could only gather data that was available to them without the use of data-gathering tools. If we think of data-gathering tools along a spectrum from simple, the naked eye, to complex, microwave dishes, gargantuan telescopes and infra-red cameras, we can easily see that the proto-astronomer worked at one end of the spectrum. He lacked neither intellect or ability, only the tools. In contrast, the modern scholar resides at the other end of the spectrum with data-gathering devices and analytic and methodological tools which would astound his predecessor. There are obvious differences between the proto-astronomer and the modern astronomer but one that is often overlooked is the fact that the early scholar had no choice of tools available to him while our modern scholar has a wide range of data-gathering and analytic

devices. The modern scholar chooses a particular device depending upon the specific astronomical feature under study. And his choices can greatly affect the results of his study, either adversely or beneficially. The study of astronomy, with its spectrum of tools and methods, is analogous in some important ways to the study of the Bible.

Early biblical scholarship was an exclusively religious endeavor. The absolute divine authorship of the Bible was the prevailing belief, and the study of its contents was the way to derive meaning and direction for human life. With the advent of the Renaissance of the late middle ages, the process of dealing with the biblical text from a critical and humanistic perspective began. This process flourished in the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century when scholars raised numerous doubts about the divine authorship of the Bible, leading to a fundamental shift in the assumptions of biblical scholarship.[1] The study of the Bible was shaped by the forces of history. The traditional belief that the text we now possess was given by God to Israel was replaced in the minds of most biblical scholars by the belief that the text is, at least to some degree, a human document and open to historical processes. This change in perspective marked a

[1] For a discussion of the shifts in the current academic study of Judaism, see Jacob Neusner, *Paradigms in Passage: Patterns of Change in the Contemporary Study of Judaism* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988).

paradigm shift of epoch proportions. This shift led to the development of new methods of biblical scholarship, each asking different questions about the text. Like the astronomer who must choose the proper method of research for a specific astronomical feature, the biblical scholar is also faced with a number of choices. He must choose the tools and analytic methods that are most appropriate for examining the particular biblical phenomenon under consideration.

Traditional Methods in Biblical Studies

Two major approaches to biblical studies have been used: the diachronic approach which includes the methods of source, form and redaction criticism, and the synchronic approach which uses the tools of literary criticism. Each approach asks very different questions of the text.[2] Although biblical research and criticism is usually dated from the eighteenth century, it would be naive to assume that no critical biblical work was done by early and medieval scholars. Much of the intellectual development in the medieval world centered on biblical study. The philological insights of Sa'adiah Gaon, the rational exegesis of Maimonides

[2] For an excellent non-technical discussion of the different methods see Joel Rosenberg, "Biblical Narrative," in *Back to the Sources*, ed. Barry W. Holtz (New York: Summit Books, 1984).

and the contributions of Rashi and Abraham ibn Ezra demonstrate both a rational and critical interaction with the biblical text.[3]

The Diachronic Approach. The beginnings of the modern critical study of the Bible is identified with several scholars in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), the celebrated jurist, wrote a series of *Annotations* on the books of the Bible, attempting to identify the problems of authorship and date in some of the books of the Bible. Two philosophers, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and Baruch de Spinoza (1632-1677), also sought to explain the problems of authorship and date as well as determine the purpose and occasion of writing various books. Spinoza argued in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* that Job was probably the work of a Gentile author who wrote in a language other than Hebrew and he thought that dates in the Maccabean period could be assigned to Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Chronicles.

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[3] Binyamin Zeev Benedikt, "Bible: Biblical Research and Criticism," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, Ltd., 1971) is an excellent general introduction to the problem of biblical criticism and research. See also: S. J. De Vries, "History of Biblical Criticism," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. A-D (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 413-417; Samuel Terrien, "History of the Interpretation of the Bible: Modern Period," *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. I (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), pp. 127-141.

Source Criticism. The first attempt at a systematic source criticism is found in the work of Jean Astruc, an eighteenth century French court physician. Astruc pointed out in his study of the book of Genesis the repeated narratives of events like the creation and the flood, the different uses of the terms for God, and the chronological confusion in the documents.[4]

J.G. Eichhorn expressed the enlightenment belief in the importance of human reason when he suggested that the principles uses to study the Bible should be the same principles used to study any piece of literature.

The climax of this process is found in Julius Wellhausen's *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (1882), in which he proposes that the biblical text is a compilation of many smaller textual units, woven together, each representing different periods of Israelite society.[5] Building on the work of K. H. Graf and the Dutch scholar Abraham Kuenen, Wellhausen attempted to demonstrate that the connection between the succession of the legal codes and the progressive development of religious practices in

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[4] Kendrick Grobel, "Biblical Criticism," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. A-D (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 408-413.

[5] Binyamin Zeev Benedikt, "Bible: Biblical Research and Criticism" and Rudolf Smend, "Wellhausen, Julius" *Encyclopedia Judaica*, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971). See also: Cuthbert A. Simpson, "The Growth of the Hexateuch," Interpreter's Bible, vol. 1 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), pp. 185-200.

Israel could only be compatible with a late date for the (P) priestly document. Wellhausen utilized an Hegelian view of history, attributing the earliest documents as representing a rudimentary form of religion, containing sacrifice and legalism, while the later texts, those of the prophets, as representing Israel's highest religious form. However, it is the so-called "documentary hypothesis" for which Wellhausen is best known. He synthesized the work of previous scholars and identified the major sources of the Pentateuch as J (Jehovistic) dated in the ninth century B.C.E., an independent E (Elohist) document dating from the eighth century, the basic content of the book of Deuteronomy, the D (the legal or Deuteronomist document) assigned to the time of King Josiah (c. 640-609 B.C.E.), and a P (priestly) source from about the fifth century B.C.E. The documentary theory in this classic form is the major contribution of source criticism and has proved to be an important tool for gaining insight into the questions of authorship and date of the biblical materials. While the Hegelian element has been discarded or modified by most biblical scholars, Wellhausen's insights into the divisions of the original texts and the order in which they were assembled is generally accepted. A major modification of Wellhausen's view is the notion that the texts

developed linearly. This has been replaced by the conviction that many texts developed concurrently, but in different places.

Form Criticism. A new critical approach to biblical material was developed by Hermann Gunkel, a method now known as *formgeschichte* or form criticism, a term coined by Martin Dibelius, but a method first used by Gunkel.[6] Gunkel thought that Wellhausen's attempt to isolate the biblical sources in chronological and biographical terms was inadequate and that a more appropriate method was to classify the sources into literary categories or forms. Gunkel's principle thesis was that each text must be interpreted in terms of its context or *sitz im leben*, the "life setting," and that a *gattung* or "form" could be found in the context. Gunkel primarily applied his method to the Psalms and to the sagas of Genesis, but his followers attempted to apply it to other books, particularly Martin Noth in his commentary on the book of Exodus.[7]

Redaction Criticism. A further extension of the work of form criticism is found in the practice of redaction criticism, a procedure in

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[6] See Zev Garber, "Gunkel, Hermann," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971).

[7] A clear introduction to the methodology and practice of "form criticism" is found in: Klaus Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition*, trans. S. M. Cupitt (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969).

which a written text is interpreted against the background of its specific literary type, its *sitz im leben*, and its specific transmission history. Redaction criticism emphasizes the important role of the redactor whose work is different from that of the author or writer. Originally used with a negative connotation, the work of the redactor has come to be seen as vital in the transmission history of most biblical texts.[8]

The Synchronic Approach. The synchronic approach is based on the work of literary criticism. In its broadest sense, literary criticism studies the Bible through the tools of literary analysis: rhetorical and linguistic form, psychological questions concerning the origins of the material, sociological and political analyses of the literary material and more recently, feminist criticism. "Attention focuses upon an intrinsic reading of the text in its final form."[9] Literary criticism may explore themes of the text, how it functions as a unity, or how a detail is utilized. The focus

[8] Norman Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

[9] Phyllis Trible, "A Daughter's Death: Feminism, Literary Criticism and the Bible," in *Backgrounds for the Bible*, ed. Michael Patrick O'Connor and David Noel Freedman (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987) reprinted from *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

on how the text relates its message leaves it open for interesting and creative subjectivity.

Biblical Methodology and the Study of Purity

The topic of this chapter, the biblical concept of purity has been studied using all the methods I have just discussed. The question of method is an important issue, one which must be clarified. The issue to be dealt with is not which method *can* be used, but rather, which method *should* be used to yield the most fruitful results. A problematic factor with all these methods except literary criticism is that they focus their attention on the text *qua* text rather than attempting to understand the content of the text. Even literary criticism is concerned with how the *text* functions rhetorically, without adequately explaining the meaning of a specific concept or idea in the text. It is my view that concept such as purity have not been successfully explored using these methodologies. My argument, then, is that it is to the content of the text rather than to the text-as-text, that we should turn our attention for the most fruitful analysis of the biblical concept of purity.[10] Once we make this shift, we face a new set

[10] See Lawerence A. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), especially chapter one.

of problems. We are no longer examining narrative texts, but religious law. And fundamental to this study is the realization and acknowledgement that biblical religion, for all intents and purposes, is a totally foreign religion with foreign concepts and alien intellectual categories.[11] Failure to acknowledge this point leads the scholar to the error of interpreting phenomena using his own culturally determined categories of thought rather than those of the religion under investigation. To mitigate, if not altogether avoid, the danger of committing this error, I believe the methods use by anthropology are the most appropriate for the study of the laws and rituals of a foreign religion.

ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

The Evolutionary Approach

In many ways early anthropology, especially in its study of the Bible, held a basic Hegelian or social Darwinian ideology which saw the present as an irreversible evolution of belief and ritual. Religions progressed irreversibly in two ways: from simple to complex, and from simplistic to sophisticated. There was an underlying belief that as religions progressed

[11] Jacob Neusner, *First Principles of Systemic Analysis,* (Lenham: University Press of America, 1988); Alvin J. Reines, *Polydoxy,* (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1987).

chronologically, they also improved qualitatively, ultimately reaching some sort of climax of perfection. According to 19th century German-Christian scholars such as Wellhausen, the ultimate synthesis which grew out of these two historical trends was the love found in Christianity. This love (*agape*) was the pinnacle of religious expression.

In anthropology, Robertson Smith championed the notion of the progressive nature of religions. Smith believed that all religions had an essence which could be revealed.[12] He searched for a seed of "true" (Christian) religion which "primitive" religion contained. That seed had been covered with a debris of ancient beliefs, myths and cosmologies which were ultimately discarded in the formation of modern religions. In among this debris were rituals such as sacrifice and purity. Through the very narrow definition of religion as "the established church which expresses community values,"[13] Robertson Smith separated religion from magic and magicians, which he described as "beliefs, practices and persons not operating within the communion of the church and often hostile to it."[14]

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[12] William Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956).

[13] See Mary Douglas *Purity and Danger*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966) p. 20. Chapter 1 lucidly follows the modern study of religious purity.

[14] As quoted by Douglas

This definition excluded from all religion segregated all forms of ritual belief and practice, effectively delegitimizing the study of purity as a religious phenomenon. Smith's definition was later adopted by Sir James George Frazer in the *Golden Bough*.[15] Frazer developed extra-religious explanations for these rituals, including the belief, still held by some today, that these magic rites were a form of primitive hygiene.[16] Common to both these approaches is the equation of modernity and progress and the setting of their own beliefs as the paradigm by with which other religion should be measured.

The Structural Approach

An important strength of anthropology in studying a religious concept such as purity lies in its theories and its allowance of cross-cultural comparisons. Unlike Smith and Frazer, whose beliefs seemed to imply a simplicity of thought and mind on the part of ancients or

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[15] For an excellent critique of Frazer's methodology see Jonathan Z. Smith, "When the Bough breaks" *History of Religions*, vol. 11, no. 1: 67-90, reprinted in *Map is Not Territory* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), pp. 208-239.

[16] As an example, "Historic Judaism always laid heavy stress on cleanliness. We have already noted its insistence on the washing of hands before the breaking of bread. The hygienic design in the dietary laws may well be another case in point. This preoccupation with cleanliness stands forth the more remarkable whereunder dirt was not only acquiesced in but was sometimes regarded as a concomitant of saintliness." Milton Steinberg, *Basic Judaism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1947).

"primitives," modern anthropology has many theorists who no longer view logical processes as essentially different from our own.[17] They reject the notion of progressive sophistication and truth and generally believe that all humans, regardless of culture, era or location have certain specific shared modes of reaction to and classification of similar experiences. These social structures are common to all communities.

> [I]n ethnology as in linguistics, it is not comparison which lays the foundation for generalization, but the reverse. If, as we believe, the unconscious activity of the mind consists in imposing forms on content, and if these forms are fundamentally the same for all minds, ancient and modern, primitive and civilized--as the study of the symbolic function, as it expresses itself in language, demonstrates so clearly--it is necessary and sufficient to attain the unconscious structure underlying each institution and each custom to obtain a principle of interpretation valid for other institutions and other customs, on the condition, naturally, that one is able to carry the analysis far enough.[18]

Anthropologists have developed theories about such social structures as culture, kinship and marriage, including notions about how they are created, reinforced and changed. While these theories are developed by

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[17] See Steven Lukes, "Some Problems about Rationality," in *Rationality*, ed. Bryan Wilson, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970) and Ninian Smart, *The Science of Religion & the Sociology of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), especially chapter 5, "Religion and Rationality."

[18] Claude Levi-Strauss, "History of Ethnology" in *Structural Anthropology*, (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 155.

closely observing particular existing cultures, the theories themselves are general and not culture-specific, that is, not specific to any one culture only. Because they are always tested against many diverse cultures, they are less apt to be distorted by preconceptions or prejudices of one particular (usually Western) culture, like those found in Wellhausen.

> Yet the educated person is not just procedurally educated. He also has a view about various things, and a host of known cultures in him. Substances swim in his conceptual space as well as forms. He has been given certain beliefs about the world and has picked up values in his practical and intellectual voyage through life. For this reason, he does not have a pure rationality but one which is contextually and to some extent culturally dependent. This is very relevant to the reactions of Westerners to other cultures, in particular primitive ones...The cure for superficially imposing one's own norms of rationality upon another culture is of course immersion in that other culture, the life in effect of the anthropologist.[19]

Many historical explanations which attempt to construct the development and meaning of religious phenomena do propose a theory which takes into account much or most of the data, but they rarely examine the theory itself to determine it validity. In order to do that they would have to move beyond the confines of a particular data-pool and would have to attempt to apply the theory to other situations. This is especially difficult for

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[19] Ninian Smart, *The Science of Religion & the Sociology of Knowledge*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 108.

biblical historians who only have one cultural pool from which to draw. Anthropology, with its huge data pool of hundreds of ethnographic studies, allows for a theory to be examined as general a principle which may also be applied to biblical culture. Aside from the theoretical advantages of the anthropological approach, cross-cultural comparisons also offer the advantage of allowing modern scholars from a (temporally) foreign culture to understand and appreciate, at least intellectually, ancient practices by relating them to similar features in their own culture. So, while we may find the abstention from eating pork to be strange and archaic, we may find that it is not substantively different from our aversion to eating puppy pâté. Anthropology shows us that there is less that divides us than we may think.

ASSUMPTIONS RELATING TO THE STUDY OF PURITY

Generalizability of Symbols

Another assumption from which modern anthropology proceeds is that culture-specific interpretations of symbol systems should not be applied cross-culturally. Many attempts at understanding symbol systems fail because they assume that symbols are understood uniformly in

different cultural contexts. A snake, for instance, which, for obvious Freudian reasons, may represent male sexuality in one culture, may represent resurrection (because it dies, sheds its skin and is reborn) in another culture.

The Human Need to Organize

A further assumption, which is at the heart of any discussion of purity, and which derives from several disciplines including anthropology, sociology and psychology, is that human beings have a basic human need to create order out of chaos. People set objects, persons, places, even ideas into categories through which they can comprehend the massive amount of data that continually bombards their senses. Cognitive psychology is based on the premise that we create and maintain intricate knowledge structures in our minds which act as our mental maps of the world. "Categorization is an *essential* function of the cognitive system, one that is vital to memory, reasoning, problem solving, and language."[20] We only "know" (as opposed to experience) something through these mental constructs. For instance, if we were to examine the concept "car," we would find that it fits under the conceptual structure "vehicle," which is a

[20] A.L Glass & K. Holyoak, *Cognition*, 2nd edition (New York: Random House, 1986), p. 151. Italics mine.

sub-category of "mode of transportation." Each piece of knowledge fits into a conceptual structure of knowledge. Thus, knowledge is the structuring of our perceptions into a meaningful and useful order. Order is at the root of understanding. The very purpose of science is to separate naturally occurring phenomena into meaningful and predictable elements. The taxonomist, for instance, divides the plethora of animals into conceptual units: phylum, kingdom, family, etc. Mammals all have hair, bear live young and are warm-blooded. Reptiles are cold-blooded, have scales or horny plates and breathe through their lungs. These categories are externalizations of our own internal mental constructs. They help scientists to understand, discuss and make predictions about the world in which they live.

> "[T]he world in which Science is interested is not that of our given concepts or even sensations. Its aim is to produce a new *organization of all our experiences* of the external world, and in doing so it has not only to remodel our concepts but also to get away from the sense qualities and to replace them by a different classification of events."[21]

This process of categorization is repeated for every branch of science and every possible phenomenon.

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[21] Friedrich August von Hayek, *The Counter-Revolution of Science* (Indianapolis: Liberty*Press*, 1979), p. 38. Italics mine.

People also create meaning out of the world by projecting categories of value/non-value on their world. These categories take on a reality of their own and echo back a meaningful context in which people live their lives. Concerning the measuring of supernatural (religious) sourc^U^^*^U^]18* ^\3ng, Peter Berger writes:

> [T]hey must be analyzed as are all other human meanings, that is, as elements of the socially constructed world. Put differently, whatever else the constellations of the sacred may be 'ultimately,' empirically they are products of human activity and human signification--that is, they are human projections.[22]

Victor Frankl has created an entire form of psychotherapy based upon the idea that every person needs meaning in his life to survive, and that it is the job of the therapist to help his patient find meaning (even if it means creating meaning).[23]

Knowledge, meaning, perhaps even sanity depend on some form of categorization; it is a human need to maintain the integrity of the categories created by the mind. Therein lies a serious problem. No system of classification can accommodate all of the data. But, as one taxonomist put it, "Scientists do tolerate uncertainty and frustration, because they

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[22] Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1967), p. 89.

[23] See Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (n.p.: Beacon Press, 1969).

must. The one thing that they do not and must not tolerate is disorder."[24] Some phenomena are bound to be left outside the system. And to that situation there are two possible responses: discard the categories and develop a new system, or group the aberrant phenomena together. While abandoning or at least revising a particular system of categories seems like a logical strategy, it does not happen without significant social costs. The systems represent the very way that we conceive of and find meaning in the world. By rejecting previous categories *en toto*, one may rightly believe that everything that he once stood for or even knew was incorrect. Berger argues that societies' categories take on an objective reality of their own and are reinforced by the society itself in the form of socialization.

> All socially constructed worlds are inherently precarious. Supported by human activity, they are constantly threatened by the human facts of self-interest and stupidity...The fundamental processes of socialization and social control, to the extent that they are successful, serve to mitigate these threats. Socialization seeks to ensure a continuing consensus concerning the most important features of the social world.[25]

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[24] George Gaylord Simpson, *Principles of Animals Taxonomy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 5.

[25] Berger, op. cit., p. 29.

Socialization, for Berger, is the way that societies attempt to maintain the conceptual order of their world. On the level of the ideational categories themselves, it is common for people to place aberrant data in another category which could be labeled "impurity," or, more precisely, "those things that are impure." The purpose of this category is to maintain the viability of their prevailing system of categories. It is another strategy for "world maintenance." This miscellaneous category of impurity allows one to bracket and successfully categorize information that could not otherwise be coherently categorized, and that would, therefore, tend to undermine the prevailing set of categories. While socialization acts to inculcate one into a particular system of categories, the category of "impurity" functions to maintain the integrity of the system.

PURITY, MAINTAINING ORDER

Purity, at its most basic, is the system through which we create and maintain order out of chaos. Impurity is the chaos that threatens the order.[26]

[26] Douglas, op. cit. pg. 2.

> A native thinker makes the penetrating comment...'All sacred[27] things must have their place.' It could even be said that being in their place is what makes them sacred for if they were taken out of their place, even in thought, the entire order of the universe would be destroyed. Sacred objects therefore contribute to the maintenance of order in the universe by occupying the places allocated to them. Examined superficially and from the outside, the refinements of ritual can appear pointless. They are explicable by a concern for what one might call 'micro-adjustment'--the concern to assign every singe creature, object or feature to a place within a class.[28]

Concerning the symbol system of dirt (or impurity), Mary Douglas writes:

> Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity.[29]

Impurity and dirt are essentially the same phenomenon, both being something which is not in its proper place. A goat in a barn presents no problem; however, a goat in a living room does. A weed, by definition is a plant that is grows where it is not wanted. It is a plant not in its proper

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[27] Purity is a necessary condition for sacredness. Therefore, this comment about the nature of the sacred can also pertaining to purity as well. The relationship between purity and sacredness will be discussed in the second chapter.

[28] Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 10.

[29] Douglas, op. cit. p. 35.

place; it is where it does not belong. Its presence is an assault on the order which humans impose upon a plot of ground.

Unlike categories in general, purity is only directed at things which disturb an order in relation to people.[30] This may include any area of existence in which humans create order. Human order is seen in mundane form, such as a garden, or in the loftier form of human social order.[31] People are not concerned if an animal remains ritually pure except when it comes into contact with human order. As we shall see, human consumption of blood is defiling, but there is no concern about an animal's consumption of blood unless a human wants to eat that animal.

In the physical sciences, categories are the means by which objects and physical phenomena are defined, the means by which they are set into a coherent structure of the universe. According to anthropology, the use of categories of purity is the way by which humans define what it means to be human, or at least what it means to be a part of a particular group. In both cases, one is placed into relation with the structure of the world. At one time, part of what it meant to be a Jew was to be born of a Jewish

[30] This point is make explicit in L. William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed and Sex* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 12.

[31] See Berger, op. cit.

mother or to be converted according to Jewish law. One of the characteristic behaviors of a Jew was to refrain from eating pork or shellfish. Both of these are issues of purity. Anyone who did not meet the genealogical definition or who did not convert according to the law, was categorized as a non-Jew, as not belonging to the Jewish people. This desire to control who may enter the body of the Jewish people was externalized to what food may enter the body of a Jewish person. Thus, people who ate the improper foods were acting contrary to a person belonging to the people. "Dirt is what lies outside the system, what is perceived as not belonging in association with people of this particular society, whether as unfamiliar, irregular, unhealthy, or otherwise objectionable."[32]

Mary Douglas, a cultural anthropologist who wrote the most widely accepted work on purity, believes that purity laws are a reflection of the degree to which a society feels a need to protect its social and ideological borders. A society which feels attacked or at risk of losing its physical, social or religious identity builds strong walls of purity through which it

[32] Countryman, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

can maintain itself. The greater the threat, the greater the need for rules of purity.

Douglas also believes that the body (and its orifices) becomes a metaphor for the society in general.[33] If the members of a society are concerned about the danger of people entering and exiting their group, they will tend to be concerned about the danger of anything which enters or exits their bodies including: blood, food, semen, spittle, discharges, etc. This insight is crucial to recognizing the connection between the many area which purity laws regulate.

The Difficulty with Studying Laws of Purity

Studying purity is an inherently difficult task because our own purity beliefs are so deeply rooted that we accept them as being self-evident truths. The choice of the foods we eat often derives from our a particular culture's rules of purity. No one, as a product of Western culture would think of eating human flesh, or a dog, or even dirt, because of our purity rules. When we encounter another culture with another purity system, we often react with revulsion at behaviors so at variance

[33] Douglas, op. cit., p. 121.

with our own. It is difficult for us to consider cannibalism, for instance, as anything but disgusting and contemptible.

In studying purity, Americans have a secondary problem in that we no longer have a coherent purity system. It is no longer a major value of American life. As purity decreased as a value, as it did in the late 1960s,[34] it was replaced by other concerns: aesthetics, hygiene, philosophy, etc. Many attitudes which developed out of a sense of purity have now been reinterpreted as having derived from these other issues. People who cannot understand how eating a particular food helps to maintain a person's view of societal and world order, often substitute other explanations based upon their own preeminent values. This may be the reason why the laws of kashrut are thought to be health laws, or why the laws of incest are thought to have been instituted to guard against genetic

[34] Countryman posits that this is due in large part to the social forces bearing upon our country and culture. In the 1950's with the threat of communism, there was a perceived threat of attack from the outside and inside as typified in the hearings of the House Unamerican Activities Committee led by Joseph McCarthy. During this same time, purity rules in the form of sexual mores were extremely powerful, influencing public and private behavior. As the social reality changed, women gained new control of their reproductive system, individuals were willing to leave their social group by climbing the social ladder and/or moving to the suburbs and large numbers of individuals (rather than families) began to exert a social force, our conception of purity changed as well. Morality increasingly became a matter of individual choice within very broad parameters.

inbreeding. The following is an example of just such an interpretation of the laws of kashrut:

> Modern research, too recognized that certain animals harbor parasites that are both disease-creating and disease-spreading. Their flesh is consequently harmful to man. Such animals are excluded from the Hebrew diet. Furthermore, as it is in the blood that the germs or spores of infections diseases circulate, the flesh of all animals must be thoroughly drained of blood before serving for food...Statistical investigation has demonstrated that Jews as a class are immune from, or less susceptible to, certain diseases; and their life-duration is frequently longer than that of their neighbors. Competent authorities have not hesitated to attribute these healthy characteristics to the influence of the Dietary Laws....Although much remains to be discovered to explain in every detail the food-laws in Leviticus, sufficient is known to warrant the conviction that their observance produces beneficial effects upon the human body;[35]

These explanations are so appealing because they bring the concerns and modes of thought of the biblical writer and modern reader in line with one another. For many Americans, health as a motivator is very difficult to argue against, not because it explains the data better, it does not, but because, for us, health is a self-evident motivation. It should be noted, however, that if the laws are based upon maintaining health, one would think that other dangerous foods such as poisonous plants would also be

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[35] J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1960), pp. 448-449.

prohibited; furthermore, one might expect to find methods to purify food so as to make it safe to eat.[36] Remaining healthy would seem to be a cogent and reasonable explanation for dietary rules, yet it is never mentioned in the biblical text.

It is a particularly difficult for many progressive Jews, who wish to see themselves as religiously related to biblical, talmudic and rabbinic Judaism, to come to terms with an interpretation of much of Judaism's religious foundation based upon a foreign concept like purity. While many Americans will interpret the data according to whichever concept seems to make the most sense, progressive Jews have a vested interest in certain values they hold dear. Data, such as purity laws, which can be explained according to shared modern values is emphasized, while data which contradicts their values is simply ignored. The difference in approach between the average American non-Jew and a modern Jew is that the American has little vested interest in interpreting the data. He is only constrained by the lack of mental constructs, while the modern Jew has a vested interest in ascribing his values to the text.

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[36] George Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eedrmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 169.

THE ISRAELITE (PRIESTLY) PURITY SYSTEM

A majority of the literature regarding the Israelite system of purity is found in the Book of Leviticus, which, as its name suggests, was probably written by one or more priestly authors. It could accurately be referred to as the Priestly system. This, however, should not be taken to imply that there were no competing systems. In fact, we know that there were competing systems, and the Essene system of purity is a prime example.[37] However, whether due to the skill of a single author or to the skill of a redactor, the biblical system seems to be remarkably uniform in its substance and goals and in reflecting a single social reality.

Biblical Social Reality

Several themes run through the biblical narratives which describe Israel's social condition. First, Israel's hold on the land is tenuous and hard-won. This can be seen from the later chapters of Joshua which belie the easily won victories of the earlier chapters.[38] Difficulty in controlling the land is a recurrent theme throughout Israelite history. Whether it was the

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[37] Jacob Neusner, *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity*, vol. 6, *A History of the Mishnaic Law of Purities*, vol. 23, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), pp. 37ff.

[38] cf. Joshua 12 to Judges 2.

Canaanites, Hittites, Jebusites, Philistines or Babylonians, territorial integrity was in no way guaranteed. Marriage between Israelites and people from other tribes was a known and, perhaps, common occurrence. However, this was clearly seen as problematic and to be discouraged: note Abraham's demand that Isaac not marry a wife from Canaan; the trouble caused to Solomon by marrying foreign wives; and from the story of Samson, who, among the other laws he transgressed, intermarried. There is a clear theme of political and religious danger and corruption through intermarriage,[39] which, time and time again led to "whoring" after other gods. It seems fairly clear that Israel lived at the crossroads of kingdoms and cultures, leaving it open to physical attack and social erosion. These are, in fact, the characteristics one would expect to find from a culture with as distinct and well defined purity system as Israel's. If Douglas is correct, the threat of physical and social incursion should lead to rules which protect the social and physical borders and promote rules which protect the bodily borders as well. Further, I believe that the purity system of such a society would add that the purity system will also attempt to define the theological borders between God and humanity.

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[39] See Edmund Leach, "The Legitimacy of Solomon," *Genesis as Myth and Other Essays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969). cf. Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," *Implicit Meanings* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 271.

A Proposed Rationale of Biblical Purity

An assumption of many cultural anthropologists is that societies have social structures which are patterned and explainable, purity rules being one form. The task of the anthropologist is to identify the underlying logic for these patterns of behavior. These structures, however, can be understood at two levels. At a meta-level, we can describe the social forces which leads to a social phenomenon. This we have done by associating purity rules with the maintenance of group integrity. At another level, we can explain the internal rationale of the rules, the symbol system. The question may be stated: What is the conceptual basis for this particular purity system and how does it understand its own symbols of purity and impurity? As we have seen, this question has led to some fascinating and imaginative answers, as we have seen regarding the impurity of particular animals. Mary Douglas comments:

> Interesting and imaginative as these other attempts at symbolic interpretation are, they are best partial, covering only part of the data and at worst whimsical and capricious. There seems to be no criterion for preferring one interpretation to any other. Biblical exegesis without controls is apt to run away into total subjectivity.[40]

[40] Wenham, op. cit., p. 169.

Following Douglas' point, notwithstanding the interesting and imaginative qualities of the answers regarding the impurity of particular animals, they are constructed out of context and, therefore, run the risk of committing the mistake that she warns of.

Instead, the symbols must be viewed as an entire unit which is born, not in isolation, but of a particular people in a particular time with particular political and social concerns. The constellation of concepts and categories, especially that of purity and defilement, cannot be separated from its parent culture. Douglas goes on to say,

> Defilement is never an isolated event. It cannot occur except in a view of a systematic ordering of ideas. Hence any piecemeal interpretation of the pollution rules of another culture is bound to fail. For the only way which pollution ideas make sense is in reference to a total structure of thought whose key-stone, boundaries, margins and internal lines are held in relation by rituals of separation.[41]

Because defilement is never an isolated event, Douglas began to search for some clue around which Israel's purity symbol system is organized. She began her search with the rules regarding permitted and prohibited animals, noticing that many of the rules regarding fit an unfit animals relate to what they eat and to their extremity of locomotion: hooves, fins,

[41] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, op. cit. p. 41.

etc. Both of these issues, she found, were addressed in the first creation story which is, in fact, attributed to a priestly author. There are four significant aspects of the story. They are: 1) the earth is organized into three realms, 2) specific types of animals were assigned to each realm, 3) those animals have a specific mode of locomotion and diet, 4) particular physical features characterize each trait.

1) THE EARTH IS ORGANIZED INTO REALMS

A fundamental aspect of priestly theology is that God imposed order on a chaotic "unformed and void" universe and that this order extends from the physical world, through the animal world and into the human world. The order of the physical world may be seen in God's division of the chaos into air, land and sea.[42]

2) SPECIFIC TYPE OF ANIMALS WERE ASSIGNED TO EACH REALM

The order which God imposed upon the earth extends to the animals (and as we shall later see to Israel) as well. Thus, within the tripartite structure of the physical world, specific types of animals belong to each

[42] For a good description of this cosmology see Tikvah Frymer-Kensky, "Biblical Cosmology," in *Backgrounds for the Bible*, ed. Michael Patric O'Connor and David Noel Freedman, (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987).

realm. The whole world is filled with God's all-encompassing design. The physical and animal world can be charted out as follows:

REALM	Genesis
Air	**1:20** Let the *birds* fly over the earth on the in the heavens. **1:21** and every *winged fowl* according to its kind.
Land	**1:24** And God said: Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind, *cattle*, and *creeping thing* and *beast of the earth* according to its kind **1:25** And God made the *beasts of the earth* according to its kind, and *cattle* according to their kind, and every thing that *creeps* upon the earth according to its kind.
Sea	**1:20** And God said: Let the waters bring forth abundantly the *swarming creatures* that have life... **1:21** And God created the great *sea creatures* and every *crawling living creature* that the waters brought forth according to its kind.

and again,

> And God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the *fish of the sea*, and over the *fowl of the air*, and over every living thing that *moves upon the earth*. (Genesis 1:28)

> And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every *beast of the earth*, and upon every *fowl of the air*, upon all that *moves upon the earth*, and upon all the *fishes of the sea*; they are given to you. (Gen. 9:2)

and with respect to diet:

> And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creeps upon the earth wherein there is a living breath (I give) every green herb to eat. (Gen. 1:30)

3) ANIMALS IN EACH REALM HAVE A SPECIFIC MODE OF LOCOMOTION AND DIET.

THE SKY:

Locomotion: To the sky, God assigned birds which are also referred to as winged fowl. Animals with wings like that of a bird are, thus, the model of "sky animals." While not explicitly stated, we shall later see that walking or hopping on two legs may also be an acceptable mode of locomotion for winged fowl.

Diet: In Gen 1:30 it clearly states that fowl of the air, i.e. birds, are to be herbivores.

THE LAND:

Locomotion: Land animals are supposed to "creep" which seems to mean walk upright on four legs, much like cattle.

Diet: Same as for winged creatures.

THE SEA:

Locomotion: Fish are a special problem given Douglas' theory because they are not specifically mentioned in this first passage of Genesis. The characteristic locomotion of animals from this realm is swarming and crawling. In Genesis 1:28 and 2:9, however, only fish are mentioned as living in the sea.

Diet: No diet is prescribed.

4) PARTICULAR PHYSICAL OR BEHAVIORAL FEATURES CHARACTERIZE EACH TRAIT.

Douglas believes that each mode of locomotion or prescribed diet has physical or behavioral traits which allow one to identify an animal belonging to a particular realm.

THE AIR: Air animals are expected to be herbivores. This presents a problem because no physical characteristics are mentioned, and only a list of prohibited species are listed specifically. While it is difficult to identify each bird with certainty, a general pattern does occur.

> The following you shall abominate among the birds--they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, and the black vulture; the kite, falcons of every variety; all varieties of raven; the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull; hawks of every variety; the little owl, the cormorant, and the

> great owl; the white owl, the pelican, and the bustard; the stork; herons of every variety; the hoopoe, and the bat.[43]

Most of these flying animals are carnivorous, catching their prey in their talons and eating it later, or, like the sea gull and the pelican, catching their prey in their mouth. Almost all of the air creatures in this list share the characteristic of eating other animals, thus contradicting the order which God created in Genesis. Regarding the characteristics for exclusion for the list of edible birds, the Mishna concurs:

> But the Sages have said: Any bird that seizes food in its claws is unclean; and any that has an extra talon and a craw and the skin of whose stomach can be stripped off, is clean. Rabbi Eliezer ben Zadok says: Any bird that parts its toes evenly is unclean.[44]

This disagreement between the sages and Rabbi Eliezer concerns the trait which best exemplifies the characteristic herbivore; seizing food in a claw is clearly contrary to being an herbivore, and a bird that parts its toes unevenly has a talon which could be used for grasping prey. On the other hand, the existence of an extra toe and a craw which can be peeled are both characteristics of herbivorous animals. The mishnaic understanding

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[43] Translation taken from *The Torah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1962).

[44] Hullun 3:6. Herbert Danby, trans., *The Mishnah*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 518.

of the purity of birds as possessing physical traits which indicate their being herbivorous is consistent with Douglas' theory.

The ostrich and the bat were probably not excluded because of their diet. The ostrich lacked one characteristic central to any bird, the ability to fly. The bat is problematic because it lacks the physical characteristics common in all other birds: feathers and two legs on which to walk or hop. The latter trait is probably the more significant since this is what allows an insect such as the locust to be considered pure.

THE LAND: Regarding land animals Leviticus states: "These are the creatures that you may eat from among all the land animals: any animal that has true hoofs, with clefts through the hoofs, and that chews the cud--thus you may eat." (11:3). Hooves with clefts and chewing cud are two characteristics of grazing land animal, the biblical ideal. The former physical characteristic precludes other types of locomotion such as scampering like a squirrel, slithering like a snake or scurrying like a lizard, leaving only animals which "crawl." The latter characteristic has to do with diet. Rumination is a reliable sign that a particular animals is, in fact, herbivorous.

THE SEA: While God does create sea creatures which "swarm" and those which "crawl," only fish are listed as being under humanity's dominion. All creatures which are produced in or from the sea are described with the word "sheretz" or "swarm". The physical characteristics needed to swarm (or school) are fins (and generally) scales. These seem to support the idea that swarming is the ideal form of locomotion for sea creatures. There is never a mention of the diet of sea creatures in Genesis and, predictably, no characteristics based upon diet are mentioned in Leviticus.

Wholeness, Completeness and Normalcy as the Rationale for Impurity.

As discussed earlier, the general purpose for purity systems is to maintain social, conceptual, theological and territorial boundaries. From the above description of animal purity, however, Douglas attempted to discovered the specific rationale for the Israelite system so as to explain other examples of purity. According to Douglas, the two rules of Israelite purity are 1) *every individual (be it animal, person or object) should be a whole, complete* or *normal self-contained specimen of its kinds.* 2) *kinds*

should not be mixed.[45] In the case of animal purity, an individual animal must have all the physical and behavioral traits of an animal living in a particular realm. Further, if an animal has traits of an animal from another realm, such as a lobster which lives in the ocean but has legs like a land animal, it is impure. Douglas believes that other aspects of the purity system may be explained by appealing to these two rules.

Given Douglas' system, the notion of "wholeness," "completeness" or "normalcy" works at two levels. First is the level, explained above, in which a particular kind of animal is classified as structurally fit or unfit. Animals that are members of unfit species can never be structurally fit; they are always impure. A second level is an animal which is structurally fit, that is, it has all the characteristics of an animal from its realm, but it has some physical abnormality which disqualifies it from being pure. These include a broken leg, crushed testes, a wen on the eye, a boil, etc. This is, in essence, an expansion of the physical requirements of a fit animal and applies to animals which are eligible to be used for sacrifice. Not only must the animal have the proper characteristics of locomotion

[45] This formulation of Douglas' rules was taken from Countryman, op. cit. p. 26.

and diet, it must also have a complete set of physical characteristics of animals in general. It must be a proper specimen of its kind.

This same distinction between being structurally complete and individually complete exists for the priests performing the sacrifice as well as for the animal being sacrificed. A priest is "structurally" fit in that he comes from the family of Aaron which was chosen by God to be the priestly family. While there are no physical characteristics which marks a son of Aaron from other people, the requirement does reflect an order which God imposes upon the world. God designated one family as the family of priests just has God designated one type of animal, with certain physical characteristics, as the animal of a particular realm. The individual physical abnormalities which disqualify a member of the family of Aaron from being a priest are almost identical to the physical characteristics that disqualify an animal from being a sacrifice. The following disqualifies both:[46]

[46] This comparison is take from Baruch Levine, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 141.

Priest	**Sacrificial Animal**
Blindness	Blindness
A broken arm or leg	One injured or maimed
Scurvy	Scurvy
A boil-scar	A boil or scar
A limb too short or too long	A limb extended or contracted
Crushed testes	Crushed, bruised, torn, or cut testes
A growth in the eye	A wen

There may be symbolic significance in this particular list of abnormalities but, for our purposes, the abnormalities listed seem to be consonant with Douglas' theory.

A powerful piece of evidence for completeness as a rationale for purity lies in the laws of *tzara'at* (incorrectly called leprosy.)[47] The text often states that if a patch of *tzara'at* breaks out on a person's body, the body is examined by the priest to determine if it is, in fact, the infliction. A positive diagnosis calls for the person to be sent outside the camp or

[47] For a discussion of the translation of leprosy for the Hebrew *Tzara'at* see George Wenham, *Leviticus*, op. cit. pp. 194-197 and Bernard Bamberger, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary, Leviticus*, pp. 115-16.

town, and rechecked in seven days to see if the disease has abated. One would thing that if a small patch renders one impure, a larger patch would be a more serious problem, and if it covered the person's entire body, he would be in serious trouble. However, this is not the case.

> But if the eruption spreads out over the skin so that it covers all the skin of the affected person from head to food, wherever the priest can see--if the priest sees that the eruption has covered the whole body--he shall pronounce the affected person clean; he is clean, for he has turned all white. (Lev. 13:12-13)

It seems that the impurity caused by *tzara'at* may not be the disease itself, but becoming multi-colored.[48] If this explanation is correct, it is unclear why people with birth-marks are not mentioned.

Douglas argues, with limited success, that social obligations which are not completed may also render one impure. The only place where this may be seen is in the Israelite army camp, itself a holy place which must be guarded from all types of impurity.

> When you go out to encamp against your enemies, then keep yourselves from every evil thing. If there be among you any man, who is not pure by reason of impurity that occurs at night, then shall he go outside of the camp, he shall not come within the camp...for the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you, and to give up your enemies before

[48] This insight was revealed by Countryman, op. cit., p. 25.

> you; therefore your camp shall become holy: that he see no impure thing in you, and turn away from you.[49]

Along with these clear impurities which endanger the safety of the camp by offending God's presence in the camp, soldiers are asked to leave the camp for other reasons as well.

> And the officers shall speak to the people, saying, What man is there that has built a new house, and has not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in battle, and another man dedicated it. And what man is he that has planted a vineyard, and has not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it. And what man is there that has betrothed a wife, and has not taken her? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.[50]

Douglas argues that these are all incomplete social obligations which render the soldier impure and, thus, destructive to the purity of the camp. There are a number of problems with this explanation. First, it never mentions the word impure, *tame,* or abomination, *toavah,* in relation to these incomplete obligations. Second, the expressed fear is of someone else fulfilling the individual soldier's obligation which he began, not of endangering the safety of the camp. Third, sending a person home to complete an obligation is not a form of purification attested to in any other

[49] Deut. 23:11-12, 15.

[50] Deut. 20:5-8

biblical text. A better explanation for this passage is that these people would not be whole-hearted in battle because their minds would be on their incomplete obligation waiting for them at home. This makes even more sense when it is seen in the light of the next verse where the faint-of-heart are also sent home so as not to affect the other troops. Both prevent the contaminating effects of preoccupation and doubt, not of impurity.

The purity rules of bodily emissions, such as the rules concerning a menstruating woman, a man or woman with a genital emission or flow, and the impurities against death are harder to explain through the ideas "wholeness," "completeness" and "normalcy." Countryman[51] has argued that the rules regarding menstruation must be understood in the context of the times. For women who had no birth control and whose entire lives may have been spent pregnant or nursing, their natural state is to be non-menstrual. If we accept this (a big IF), then menstruation can be viewed as an abnormality, and, therefore, a reason for impurity. By applying that logic, however, it would also have to be argued that the normal state for men is to be non-ejaculatory. Therefore, the act of a man having sex, that

[51] Countryman, op. cit., p. 26.

is, of ejaculating, should function in the same way as having any other emission: it should render him impure. While it is true that ejaculation renders a man impure, there is no biblical evidence that ejaculation or menstruation is at all abnormal. With regard to dead animals, Countryman argues that "[t]he cloven hoofed ruminant is defined as clean for eating, [this] means that it is part of a process which concludes with its being slaughtered by human beings and its blood being returned to God".[52] The premature death of the animal renders the process incomplete and the animal impure. Returning to the matter of the menstruating woman, given Countryman's interpretation, her abnormality renders her impure *and* contagious. If abnormality renders one contagious then why does an animal with a broken leg or a boil, both of which are abnormalities, render them contagious? It is also difficult to accept the notion that animals were created just so that they could be sacrificed on the altars and have their blood returned to God, especially because many pure animals may not be used as a sacrifice. Rather, it is the physical

[52] Ibid., p. 27.

integrity of the animal or person which renders it pure.[53] Instead, these may have another rationale for their being impure.

Life, Death, Purity and Impurity.

Douglas' theory of equating impurity with abnormality leaves a number of difficult questions unanswered. Why, for instance, does sexual intercourse defile?[54] Sexual intercourse was never viewed to be abnormal, nor does it diminish a person's completeness (they almost always end up with the same number of parts as when they began). The answer may be found in the ultimate defilement, death.[55] Biblical religion clearly considers the death to be an extremely serious form of

[53] One may argue that a priest is considered pure by virtue of the class "priest" being created for service in the Temple. This confuses the relationship between holiness, being distinguished for a particular formalized relationship with God, and purity, remaining within the physical order which God created. This will be discussed further in chapter two.

[54] Countryman answers this for the man: the ejaculation is abnormal (see above). This question was also addressed by George Wenham "Why Does Sexual Intercourse Defile (Lev 15:18)?," *Zeitschrift* 95 (1983): 432-434.

[55] Even today death remains impure. As one author explains: "Death has become the new obscenity and the literature of death the new pornography. In polite society we are prudish about death, making it taboo [impure] that is disgusting and immoral and not to be talked about." Richard W. Doss, *The Last Enemy* (New York, Harper and Row, 1974), p. xiii.

defilement,[56] necessitating one of the most elaborate and urgent purification rituals. If we accept abnormality as the reason for impurity, then death is the greatest abnormality. Impurity can then be interpreted as the degree to which something is close to death. With regard to sexual intercourse, as well as menstruation, seminal fluids, etc., these all may be regarded as life fluids, as is blood (Lev 17:11,14). The loss of any of these fluids, regardless of the reason, places one closer to death and, thus, renders one impure.

Using life and death as the two opposite poles within which the purity system is understood, we now have an ability to set all of the phenomena on a single continuum. At one end is death or anything approaching death. Any impurity connected to this category pollutes whatever comes into contact with it. At the opposite end of the spectrum is life, which must be understood as having three different classifications. The lowest form is abnormal life and corresponds, in Douglas' model, to what I called structural impurity. Abnormal life is not defiling to the touch because it is not in the realm of death. It is, however, in the realm of a life that is contrary to the order which God has created. Farther

[56] The Mishna calls it *av hatumot*, the highest form of defilement. This seems to be in concert with the biblical conception.

along the continuum is normal life which corresponds to structural purity. At this locus are animals, people, objects and places which correspond to the order which God has imposed upon the universe. Animals in this realm are edible. A subset of normal life is elevated life, which designates potential candidates for participation in the Temple service. The final category, a subset of normal life, is perfect life. Its members are animals, people, etc. which have everything physically in tact, they are without blemish. The levels could be charted out like this:[57]

[57] This chart is adapted from Wenham, *Leviticus*, op. cit.; Wenham, "Why Does Sexual Intercourse Defile (Lev. 15:18)?," op. cit.; and Douglas, *Deciphering a Meal* and is augmented by the author.

Life=Order	Place	Person	Animal	Term
Perfect Life	Alter - place of sacrifice	Priest - performer of sacrifice	Suitable for sacrifice	Holy[58]
Elevated Life	Temple	Blemished priest	Blemished sacrifice	Pure
Normal Life	Camp - The Land	Israelite	Edible	
Abnormal Life	Outside the camp/The Land	Non-Israelite	Inedible	Impure, but not contagious
Death = disorder	Sheol	Dead people	Carcasses	Very impure, contagious

Maintaining God's Order - Israel's Responsibility for Purity

The above chart addresses the first of Douglas' rules, that purity relates to the level of wholeness, completeness and normalcy of an animal, person or place. Wenham's understanding of normalcy as life does not undermine Douglas' original understanding. Her second rule of Israelite purity, not mixing kinds, provides an even clearer example of the function of purity laws as a means for maintaining a particular conceptual order. Douglas demonstrated that animals are supposed to have certain characteristics depending on the realm in which they live. An animal

[58] As will be discussed in chapter two, it is not correct to place holiness along the same continuum as purity. However, it is correct in associating the continuum of purity-impurity, life-death and order-disorder.

which has physical characteristics from a realm other than its own is considered impure because it is a mixture of categories. Some examples are a duck-billed platypus: which seems to have characteristics from all three realms, a ostrich: because it has the form of a bird but it exists on the land, a monkey: because it has many physical characteristics of a human, a bat: which has fur like a rodent. The categories mentioned do not always have to be the ones mentioned in the Creation account. These, however, are examples of God's creations which are somehow mixed. For the most part, the rule about mixing kinds refers to actions done by humans.

The prohibitions against mixing is one of the clearest examples of purity laws functioning as a means of maintaining categories. The purity laws maintain the boundaries between plants and animals, animals and humans, humans and God. Plants are not allowed to be mixed together in the same field (Lev. 19:19). According to Jean Soler,[59] the prohibition against *shatnez*, "you shall not put on clothes from a mixture of two kinds of material." (Lev. 19:19) may be better explained in Deuteronomy 22:11 "You shall not wear a mingled material, wool and linen together." The

[59] See Jean Soler, "The Dietary Prohibitions of the Hebrews," *The New York Review of Books*, June 14, 1979.

mixture of wool, an animal product, and linen, a plant product, renders the product a mixture offensive to God's order. Rules against interbreeding (Lev. 19:19) maintain the distinction between types of animals. So, too, the prohibition against yoking two different types of animals together, Deut. 22:10. The division of animals and humans may be seen in the laws against bestiality. The regulation against homosexuality as well as the prohibitions against cross-dressing (Deut. 22:5), may also relate to the mixing of men's and women's roles. According to Countryman, the rules against incest can be attributed, in part, to the son's mixing his roles as his father's son and sexual rival.[60] He also notices that the prohibition against bestiality is juxtaposed to worship of other gods. "You shall not permit a sorceress to live. Whoever lies with beast shall be put to death. Whoever sacrifices to a god other than the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed" (Ex. 22:18-20). Countryman suggests that in the minds of the Israelite authors, bestiality may have been associated with the worshiping of other gods, perhaps because it was a religious act for neighboring religions. This theological distinction may have been expressed socially in the prohibitions against Israelites marrying non-Israelites. Finally,

[60] Countryman also believes this is connected to status of women as property of the man. See his chapter eight: *Dirt, Greed & Sex.*

according to Soler, one of the central distinctions which the dietary laws make is between God and humanity. He argues that flesh is God's food. After God destroys humanity because of their evil and then decides never to destroy them again "for the creative nature of humanity's heart is evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:21), God allows meat to be eaten as a concession to their evil inclination. Now that flesh no longer stood as a symbol of the distinction between humanity and God, a new symbol, blood, was substituted, "But flesh with its soul, that is, its blood, do not eat." (Genesis 9:4). In a sense, there is a logical progression from the story of the Tower of Babel, in which humanity tried to eliminate the distinction between God and humanity, to the story of Noah in which the distinction between humanity and God was reinforced.

CONCLUSION

A purity system is a way in which human beings can organize and maintain their world. Purity systems maintain a particular world view by assigning aberrant data to the category "impure" and by proscribing actions which threaten the order. The greater the forces which assault a particular order, the more stringent the purity regulations. Societies

universally express need for order by regulating what enters or exits their bodies. Thus, purity rules often relate to the human body.

The biblical (Priestly) order is based upon the notion that God created a clear and definite order at the time of creation. That order must be adhered to by the food one eats, the clothes one wears, the gender of the person one marries, etc. By maintaining this system and staying within this Godly order, Israel in general, and the priests in particular, are able to approach God's presence by maintaining the order implied in holiness. It is to the meaning of holiness that we now turn our attention.

CHAPTER 2 - HOLINESS

THEORIES OF HOLINESS

The concept of holiness, in some form, does exist outside of Judaism. Scholars who are interested in cross-cultural comparisons believe that it is possible to give a general definition of a religious phenomenon, applicable to most or all religious traditions.[61] The three following writers, Rudolf Otto (phenomenology of religion), Mircea Eliade (phenomenology/history of religion) and Quentin Smith (philosophy of religion), all write about the concept of the holiness. These authors believe their understandings of holiness to be universal, based upon their use of cross-cultural examples which illustrate their theses. Smith seeks to abstract the concept of holiness from culture and religion, divorcing it from any theistic overtones. He attempts to proscribe (or perhaps describe, he is not entirely clear) the use of holiness in general, secular parlance.

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[61] The ability to make cross-cultural comparisons is still debated among scholars. Early attempts at cross-cultural comparisons, such as those of James Frazer (*The Golden Bough*) have been criticized for drawing significance out of every conceivable similarity between religious forms. (See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* Chap. 1 and Jonathan Z. Smith "When the Bough Breaks" in *Map Without Territory* for a critique of "parallelamania" as it is sometimes called). Carl Jung and Mircea Eliade subscribe to the notion of archetypes which is a pattern of thought and symbolism inherent to humanity (see C. Jung *Psychology and Religion* p. 103.). Similarly, Claude Levi-Strauss, following the linguist R. Jakobson, searched for the innate human patterns which formed the process by which humanity developed language, myth and culture.

This first section will examine each author's concept of holiness and critique its applicability to the biblical understanding. A general theory of holiness should organize and explain an entire class of religious phenomena across many different cultures. In the first chapter we saw that anthropology was a valuable tool in the study of purity because it provided a conceptual framework and language missing from many other discussions. However, it is not the only tool which can be employed. We shall see that a new era of framing religious concepts was ushered in with the popularity of religious phenomenology.

Rudolf Otto

The name Rudolf Otto is synonymous with holiness. His book, *The Idea of the Holy*, opened a new chapter in the study of holiness and in the understanding of religious experience in general. While he is primarily a theologian (he was professor of Theology at the University of Marburg), his method of inquiry is phenomenological, examining human religious action as its primary data while bracketing questions of the ultimate truth of religious claims. In a sense, phenomenologists study the religious rather than a religion.

Otto opposes the systematic theologians who attempt to define and describe attributes of God through rationality. Any attribute of God can only be an analogy to human concepts and is, thus, inherently inaccurate.

> "An object that can thus be thought of conceptually may be termed *rational.* The nature of deity described in the attributes above mentioned is, then a rational nature;"[62]

These concepts can by grasped and analyzed by the intellect. Otto argues, however, that if one were to describe God using all of God's essential (rationally derived) attributes, one would *not* know the "true" nature of God because these concepts are ultimately reductions and analogies; God cannot be comprehended through these concepts. Reductionism, the explaining of phenomena through constituent parts or causes (psychological, historical, sociological, etc.), destroys the true understanding of phenomena. Otto suggests that we do in fact ignore much of what is most central to religions by overemphasizing the rational and deemphasizing the non- or supra-rational. But, he claims, it is by way of the non-rational that we have a clue to the reality which lies beyond rational categories and concepts. Otto shares with Kant the belief that "prior to experience there are certain categories of the mind which

[62] Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924).

predetermine, in forms common to all men, the way experience is organized (time, space, etc.)."[63] He argues that people respond in set emotional patterns to the experience of God and that we can infer something about God's nature from these patterns. Otto's study of the holy is really a study of people's reactions to God's holiness (although the term is not yet fully understood).

Rudolf Otto begins with the theological presumption that there is a transcendent power which humans can experience. Religion, to Otto, is the response of humanity to this encounter. One does not need to posit a transcendent power for phenomenological inquiry. Rather, one could argue that a person can have a response to something without claiming that that entity has an independent existence,[64] a social reality;[65] Otto,

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[63] Mac Linscott Ricketts, "The Nature and Extent of Eliade's 'Jungianism,'" (paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Boston, 1969). As quoted by Guilford Dudley III, *Religion on Trial* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), p. 64.

[64] For a discussion of current phenomenological methods, see Ninian Smart, *The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), especially ch. 3 "The Nature of Phenomenological Objects of Religion".

[65] The idea that social phenomena is externally real discussed by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Irvington Publishers Inc., 1980), and can be seen as an extension of Dirkheim's thought. Otto argues against the sort of reductionism that explains religious behavior psychologically or sociologically.

however, does not claim this. For Otto, this transcendent power is existentially real.[66]

Otto dissociates the term "holy" from what he believes to be inaccuracies:

> "We generally take 'holy' as meaning 'completely good'; it is the absolute moral attribute, denoting the consummation of moral goodness...But this common usage of the term is inaccurate."[67]

Instead, he proposes, what he considers a more neutral term for the experience of the deity: numinous (from the Latin *numen* meaning mysterious"). The numinous is a state of mind which one has when encountering the deity and, as a state of mind, it is indefinable and irreducible to any other category. Otto believes that it may, however, be discussed, considered and evoked into consciousness, but that is as far as one can "understand." "In other words our X [a numinous experience]

[66] Otto presents himself and is often conceived of as a theologian. His purpose is to learn about God. The question of the existence of God is, for Otto, mute. In this sense his position is consistent with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in assuming that one can neither confirm nor deny faith through reason. His starting point is the experience that people have of deity. This position, "arguing for experience and commitment as a primary datum," is known as religious existentialism. (Willard G. Oxtoby. "Holy, Idea of the". Encyclopedia of Religion, ed. Mircea Eliade, MacMillian Publishing Co. New York, 1987 p. 431). However, it would be anachronistic to assign that designation to Otto.

[67] Otto, op. cit., p. 5.

cannot, strictly speaking, be taught, it can only be evoked, awakened in the mind; as everything that comes 'of the spirit' must be awakened."[68]

The primary religious emotion which a numinous encounter evokes, Otto calls *mysterium tremendum*. By closely examining the meaning of these two terms, we are able to peer through an emotive window and better understand the nature of God. The adjective, *tremendum* has three elements which comprise its meaning: awfulness, overpoweringness and energy.

The word *tremendum*, from the Latin, meaning "divine spirit or localized power," for Otto is the sense of awe a creature has in the presence of overwhelming power. While related to its analog, fear, awe is wholly distinct from being afraid. The Hebrew, *norah* is a better approximation of the emotions associated with something so inconceivably grand and imposing. This response of awe rather than fear better explains some of the otherwise incongruous attributes of a holy (in the moral sense) God.

> But as regards the 'Wrath of Yahweh', the strange features about it have for long been a matter for constant remark. In the first place, it is patent from many passages of the Old Testament that this 'Wrath' has no concern whatever with

[68] Ibid., p. 7.

> moral qualities. There is something very baffling in the way in which it 'is kindled' and manifested. It is, as has been well said, 'like a hidden force of nature', like stored-up electricity, discharging itself upon anyone who comes too near. It is 'incalculable' and 'arbitrary'. Any one who is accustomed to think of deity only by its rational attributes must see in this 'Wrath' mere caprice and willful passion. But such a view would have been emphatically rejected by the religious men of the Old Covenant, for to them the Wrath of God, so far from being a diminution of His Godhead, appears as a natural expression of it, an element of 'holiness' itself, and a quite indispensable one. And in this they are entirely right.[69]

The understanding of God as being a loose and loaded cannon ready to fire, and a wrathful God, "incalculable and arbitrary" is seen through the emotion of awe and is inherent in the term *tremendum*.

The second element of *tremendum* is "majesty" which Otto describes as "absolute overpoweringness." This feeling comes from the consciousness of being a creature of God. He disagrees with Schliermacher's description of "creature-feeling" or "createdness" which comes out of a feeling of dependence, because it is too rational. Createdness suggests that a person is a creature of a divine act. Deseribing God has acting in this way is a conception based upon human acts of creation. Rather, Otto prefers a

[69] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

consciousness of "creaturehood" which is the realization "of absolute superiority or supremacy of a power other than myself."[70]

The final element of *tremendum* is the element of "energy" or "urgency" which is expressed symbolically as "vitality, passion, emotional temper, will, force, movement, excitement, activity, violence." These characteristics are often ignored by philosophers of religion as "sheer anthropomorphism," but it is this very experience of God which Otto does not wish to dismiss.

Tremendum is the reaction one has to the *mysterium*. The mystery is that which is "wholly other" than ourselves. It is that which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar. Therefore, it falls quite outside the limits of the "canny" and is contrasted with it, filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment. God as "wholly other" is at the heart of Otto's conception of deity.

Critique of Otto

There are three critiques of Otto which can be made regarding holiness in the Bible. Otto believes that there is a "core" to religions which

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[70] Ibid., p. 22.

usually remains half-concealed, but is clearly expressed in Christianity and especially Christian mysticism, that of the numinous experience. Further, he believes that that religious core reflects an objective reality which lies beyond our rational ability to explain or describe. However, it is circular to argue that some undefinable experience is the basis for all notions of the holy. It simply defines all expressions which do not include a sense of *mysterium tremendum* as being non-religious. Otto offers no methodological grounding through which this presupposition can be evaluated. It is simply his subjective opinion, which, we have seen, is grounded in his own Christian theology.

Otto makes no distinction between the mythology of the Bible and the concept of the holy for the Israelite. For him, they are one and the same. Otto, and other phenomenologists who focus on the Bible, assume that the emotions described in the text are *the* emotions of the adherents. This is a dubious assumption. If a religion's mythology is meant to present a representation of the thoughts and emotions of its adherents, then that might justify Otto's assumption. However, the purpose of mythological writing cannot be so easily defined and may not be an

accurate account of a people's emotional relationship with their deity.[71] In fact, a myth may deliberately distort emotions if it suits the myth-writer's purpose. Therefore, it is a mistake to describe Israel's emotive response to Sinai as paradigmatic for a particular Israelite's response to God.

Otto totally disregards any sort of behavioral reaction to the holy. For Otto, there are no particular demands made upon a person who experiences the holy. Emotion rather than a God-imposed duty is the sole content of the reaction to the holy.

> In every highly-developed religion the appreciation of moral obligation and duty, ranking as a claim of the deity upon man, has been developed side by side with the religious feeling itself. Nonetheless, a profoundly humble and heartfelt recognition of 'the holy' may occur in particular experiences without being always or definitely charged or infused with the sense of moral demands. The 'holy' will then be recognized as *that which commands our respect, as that whose real value is to be acknowledged inwardly.*[72]

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[71] There is a great deal of debate as to the nature and function of myths. (It is my contention that at least parts of the Bible should be viewed as mythology). Jung, for instance, views myths as expressions of "widespread primordial ideas." (Carl Jung, *Psychology and Religion: West and East* (Princeton: New York, Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 573) while Levi-Strauss views myths as the expression of unsatisfactory conflicting ideas, (David Greenwood, *Structuralism in the Biblical Text* (New York: Mouton Publishers, 1985), p. 111). Smith, drawing partially on Levi-Strauss, views myth as a self-conscious category mistake, a deliberate incongruity which allows individuals or groups to deal with problems which threaten their world order (Jonathan Smith, *Map is Not Territory* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), p. 299).

[72] Otto, op. cit., pp. 53-54. Italics mine.

This takes phenomenological bracketing to a new extreme by bracketing not only the truth-value of the actual statements, but of much of the data itself! Otto simply ignores the demands which are the invariable result of an encounter with God. Purity, for instance, is described as the melding of our natural horror at certain phenomena (such as the flowing of blood) and the feelings of the numinous.[73] Disgust + numen = purity/impurity. Nowhere in Otto is there any hint that God demands purity from his people or that holiness and purity may actually be a way for negotiating the power of God's *tremendum*. In this regard, Otto is pure Christian theologian and not religious exegete.

Finally, Otto ignores the lexical meaning of the Hebrew, *k-d-sh*, as "separate." One wonders how Otto understands the prohibition against eating the meat of certain sacrifices that have been sanctified, that is, that are holy. Is the meat having a numinous experience? Or does one have this experience when eating this meat? Does the property, when dedicated to the Temple, become holy? Do people make donations to the Temple because of a numinous experience? If that is the case, why is the object

[73] Ibid., pp. 127-128.

described as holy and not the giving? Otto simply does not concern himself with these manifestations of the holy.

Mircea Eliade

Rudolf Otto considers the numinous to have objective reality and describes the emotional reactions of religious people who experience it. The numinous is a "wholly other," something which is utterly distinct from everything else in existence. It is this otherness that Eliade sees as his meeting point with Otto.

> All the definitions given up till now of the religious phenomenon have one thing in common: each has its own way of showing that the sacred and the religious life are the opposite of the profane and the secular life.[74]

This dialectic between profane and sacred forms the basis of Eliade's thought. The crucial principle of dialectical thinking, "That ultimately negation is affirmation, that the opposites coincide, that the acts of radical negation and radical affirmation are finally two poles of *one* dialectical movement."[75] occurs in a profane form in Hegel, Marx and Freud, and is

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[74] Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Meridian Book, 1974).

[75] Thomas Altizer, *Mircea Eliade and the Dialectic of the Sacred* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963).

inherent in all religious thought of the sacred. Ultimately, the sacred is the coincidence of being and non-being, absolute and relative, temporal and eternal, wholly other and its opposite. Herein Otto and Eliade are in concert. The difference between them lies in Otto's focusing on humanity's natural ability to experience the holy and Eliade's focusing on humanity's natural tendency to experience the holy through patterned, oppositional structure.

Humanity tends to identify the sacred as some type of objective or absolute reality. Cultures possess certain markers in space or in time which identify some absolute reality. Those occurrences of absolute reality "breaking through" into an otherwise subjective, chaotic, non-real world are called "hierophanies." A hierophany is a manifestation of the sacred. The irruption of this absolute reality allows the rest of the chaotic world to be set in relation to this absolute reality, just as some standardized form of measurement, such as the famous platinum meter in Paris, allows the entire metric system of weight, volume and distance to be formed.[76] While the platinum meter standard is somewhat arbitrary, that which is

[76] The meter is the absolute standard of length. One hundredth of a meter, a centimeter, when cubed, is equivalent to one milliliter, the basis for volume. The weight of one milliliter (cubic centimeter) of water is equivalent to one gram. Thus, from length we derive volume and width.

revealed in a hierophany is not. To be set in relation to a hierophany is to know one's place in existence.

Hierophanies occur in particular places, defining sacredness in space, or are historical, defining sacredness of time. Sacredness of space is a point at which reality breaks through and opens a spatial window into truth. "Every sacred space implies a hierophany, an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different". Profane space is homogeneous, without particular meaning while sacred space is the point at which reality can be perceived. It is often depicted as the Center of the world or the navel which was either the beginning point of creation or the point of nexus between humanity and God.

Sacred time, on the other hand, is the point in history where significance enters into the world. It may or may not be synonymous with the creation of the world, but it often involves the creation of some institution of significance: the giving of Torah at Sinai as the creation of the People Israel, the birth of Christ as the beginning of redemption. Sacred time has the characteristic of being "cyclical" and "reversible," that is, the significance of that time, the actual hierophany, can be repeated. Each Rosh Hashanah, the significance of the creation of humanity is

reexperienced,[77] each time the Torah is read, it is as though it is given anew on Sinai.

In both cases, the sacredness of time and the sacredness of space, significance is (re)established through setting one's personal or communal self in relation to the sacred time or space. These become the paradigmatic models by which all other actions will be judged real: "an object or an act becomes real only so far as it imitates or repeats an archetype. Thus, reality is acquired solely through repetition or participation; everything which lacks an exemplary model is 'meaningless,' i.e., it lacks reality."[78]

Critique of Eliade

Most of the critiques of Eliade are levied against his methodology as a whole rather than any particular aspect of it. The far reaching nature of his theory and method make piece-meal evaluations less important than global criticisms. In this vein, Eliade is most harshly criticized for what

[77] Rosh Hashanah is the day upon which humanity was created in the world and set within the world's structure. Therefore, part of the role of Rosh Hashanah, according to Eliade, might be to reactualize the creation of humanity and reassert humanity's place in the cosmos.

[78] Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), p. 34

is believed to be his reliance on intuition and his lack of empiricism. Like those of Levi-Strauss or Freud, Eliade's theory makes presumptions about the nature of humanity which cannot be "proven" but are crucial to his heuristic methodology. Eliade is generally accused of developing a theory and only then amassing any and all ethnographic data, regardless of its quality, to provide support for his theory. It is often difficult to evaluate his assertions, even those which do make sense of the text. For example, shabbat is clearly a point of sacredness in time; it clearly recurs on a regular basis. It seems to be associated with a cosmogonic beginning, but how does one evaluate whether or not it is an example of "absolute reality" irrupting into profane time? Does shabbat represent existence and the rest of time non-existence? While these categories may resonate to the modern reader, it is difficult to project these categories back to the biblical mind or to that of the religious man of the shtetl who scurries back from work early on Friday afternoon to "reactualize the mythic time."

Nonetheless, Eliade's theories continue to provide useful models through which the biblical data can be organized and explained. His concept of a cosmological beginning which acts as a model for living within the world can be seen directly in the relationship Mary Douglas ascribes between purity and creation (see Chapter 1). Mythic time as recurring or

mythic space as being in relation to some point of hierophany seem to organize much of biblical and later Jewish data, including, for instance, the custom of facing our bodies and houses of worship toward Jerusalem when praying.

In some ways Eliade is closer to Dirkheim than to Otto in that Otto posits the *numinous* as an objective category to which people respond in predictable ways, whereas Eliade begins with the organizing of reality as his objective. Dirkheim believes:

> all known religious belief, whether simple or complex, present one common characteristic: they presuppose a classification of all things, real and ideal, of which men think, into two classes or opposed groups, generally designated by two distinct terms which are translated well enough by words *profane* and *sacred*. The division of the world into two domains, the one containing all that is sacred, the other all that is profane, is the distinctive trait of all religious thought.[79]

Rather than taking God's *mysterium* as the object of study, he attempts to describe the ways in which groups organize their reality into sacred and profane as primary categories of significance.

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[79] Emile Dirkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Live* trans. Joseph Ward Swain, (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p. 52.

Quentin Smith

Smith argues that holiness can be understood outside of its religious association, as a general abstract concept which does not necessitate positing the existence of a deity. He rejects the notion that holiness is a "single and simple property uniquely exemplifiable by the divinity"[80] and thus an essential attribute. He dismisses the Ottoian view that holiness cannot be analyzed because of its inherent 'otherness.' He believes that it does not express a single property but rather several different and analogous properties. Further, each of the analogous properties is composed of other properties, constituents of the larger concept.

Holiness, for Smith, "is an evocative designation of an intuitively felt property of an item, and...the analogical and decompositional analysis of this evocative designation represents (to different degrees) precise explications of the phenomenon evoked." He contrasts an evocative designation, such as an emotional response with a scientific or technical designation to a response: describing a sunset as energizing as opposed to describing the electromagnetic energy and the meteorological precipitates which causes the colors of a sunset. Both elements, the electromagnetic

[80] Quentin Smith, "An Analysis of Holiness," *Religious Studies* 24, num. 4 (1988).

energy and the meteorological conditions are described, albeit non-technically, in a reference to a beautiful purple-blue sunset. Thus, holiness is the non-technical way we describe a phenomenon each of which is supreme of the highest possible order of its class and composed of a number of sub-elements. Smith intuitively delineates four different classes of phenomena which can have a supreme model: persons, moral phenomena, cherished phenomena and existence. These, he argues, are classes of phenomena which are already of a higher order than other classes. Moral perfection, for instance, is of a higher class than mechanical perfection. Only when something is supreme in these categories may it be called holy.

The first class, that of persons, he calls "religious holiness".

> The religiously holy being possesses the most excellent personal properties. Persons have such excellent properties as consciousness, agency, and capacity for happiness, love and moral goodness; the very highest kind of person has the personal properties in their perfect mode: omniscience, omnipotence, omnibenevolence, perfect happiness, perfect freedom and perfect loving. The bearer of these properties is God, the divine person.[81]

Smith contrasts a 'true' understanding of religious holiness with the "mistaken" conceptions of some other cultures. Because other religious

[81] Ibid., pp. 514-515.

gods suffer from some defect: limited knowledge, limited power, imperfect love, etc., they should not be considered holy. "They mistakenly ascribed the property of being the supreme kind of person to these persons and consequently their religious worship was misdirected."[82]

The second category, moral holiness includes moral duties, laws, acts objects and characters. A morally holy duty is an unconditional duty for which everything should be sacrificed if need be. A morally holy law is one that is unconditionally imperative; it cannot, under any circumstances, be violated. A morally holy act is one that belongs to the highest order of moral excellence, etc. "Supreme moral value is not logically dependent upon the existence of a supreme person."[83]

The third holy class is that of cherished existence, something that is supremely cherished by people.

> It is not possible that anything could be more cherished by the person: the phenomenon is unconditionally cherished in that the person would not forget or be indifferent to it under any condition and would not sacrifice it for anything else he or she cherishes.[84]

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[82] Ibid., p. 515.

[83] Ibid., p. 517.

[84] Ibid., pp. 517-518.

This cherishing is not necessarily in relation to its religious, metaphysical or moral holiness; it is purely subjective.

An entity which is metaphysically holy is supreme in the class of existence. There are five properties which something must have if it is to be metaphysically holy: permanence, independence, logical necessity, indispensability and reflexivity. Permanence may be understood as eternity or omnitemporality, "existing at each temporal present." Independence means that its existence is not contingent on any logical existent. Logical necessity means that it is logically impossible for this entity not to exist. No logically possible world could exist without this entity. Indispensability suggests that there could be no other existence without this entity. Finally, reflexivity means that the existence of this supreme entity is the highest form of existence, in fact, the existence of this supreme entity is equivalent to existence itself.

Critique of Smith

Smith explains that he is attempting to construct a definition of holiness which does not necessitate positing a god. The unanswered questions are: Is this abstract definition supposed to apply to all religious traditions or is he explaining how holiness is (or perhaps should be) used

in a modern society in which God is not always presumed? If it is the latter, then he does an admirable job, although it is of questionable use. If it is the former then he fails abysmally.

Smith's definition of religious holiness has God as a "divine person" (see above) in what is clearly a Christological understanding of Jesus as human/God. This idea of God being the divine paradigm to which humans must aspire, *imitatio dei*, is not a universally held belief. Realizing this, Smith dismisses applications of the term "holy" to non-perfect beings as "mistakes" and "misdirected worship." This, again, is confusing. Is he suggesting that their understanding of holiness is different than our own? If so, would it not be more appropriate to label them as different rather than mistaken? It seems that he intends his definition to be universal. When he confronts a usage inconsistent with his definition, he rejects the usage as incorrect or abberant rather than restricting his definition to take the problematic usage into account. This methodological *chutzpah* is reminiscent of assigning aberrant data to the category "impure" in order to maintain the integrity of the system. It seems perspicuous that this is exactly what Smith has done. In a great show of irony, Smith claims "The philosophical discipline in which the complete study of religious holiness is carried out is in the philosophy of religion." If this is the case, then

Smith's article represents shoddy scholarship. As a philosopher of religion he shows intellectual dishonesty in setting out his ostensible goal as description while smuggling in his own prescritive agenda.

A similar objection may be levied against Smith's other categories as well. He considers a morally holy law one that is unconditional, for which everything should be sacrificed. This seems to be consistent with the rabbinic ideas of murder, sexual immorality and idolatry, for any of which one must sacrifice his life rather than transgress. He is further supported by the understanding of sanctifying God's name sacrificing one's life for these laws. However, it does not account for the rest of Jewish law which is holy according to Jewish tradition, but is not, according to Smith. It is also questionable to use the term "moral" in the sense of laws affecting relationships between people, especially since, according to the Priestly documents, the laws which maintain purity were the more significant (and dangerous).[85]

[85] Given Smith's distinction that a morally holy law is one that cannot be violated under any circumstance, can we also assume that any law for which the punishment is immediate death is also a morally holy law? It definitely cannot be violated under any circumstance (without paying the price of life). In which case, would touching the holy ark in an impure state (which warrants immediate death) be considered a morally holy law?

Equating holiness with "cherished existence" seems to be a continuation of Smith's colloquializing the term, which may have value for lexicographers of the English language, but is hardly the role of philosophy of religion.

BIBLICAL HOLINESS

The previous section outlined three abstract concepts of holiness across cultures and ideologies (or so they claim). These concepts give rise to the questions of whether or not these theories apply to the biblical understanding of holiness, or whether or not they are better left in the abstract. In fact, both are partially true. None of the theories adequately explain the complexities of the biblical system. However, they do reveal particular ideas which may be used as constituents of a conceptual framework for describing the system as a whole.

Etymology

A standard methodology of any discipline is definition of terms in the discourse. In a sense, this is the whole purpose of this study. Many disagreements can be averted by adequately defining the terms of the argument. In biblical studies, it is the role of the philologist to accurately

describe how the terms were used by the authors. The philologist is cognizant of the fact that languages do not generally grow *ex nihilo* but are often influenced by social and intellectual conditions of the surrounding cultures. It is helpful, therefore, to investigate the etymology of particular words in those cultures which provided an intellectual context for biblical religion. This is not to say that understanding the etymology of a term is equivalent to understanding the concept; it is not. However, it is a logical place to begin an inquiry.

The root *k-d-sh* is attested to in Phoenician, Akkadian, Old Babylonian, Ugaritic, Arabic and Ethiopic. There are several proposed etymologies for the root *k-d-sh*, most of which understand it to mean either "to separate" or "to shine."

Scholars who associate *k-d-sh* with the meaning of separation[86] pose a hypothetical primitive root *k-d*, from which the work *kdkd* or "crown of the head," "hairy crown" and inferentially "cutting" could be found. In this case, *kds* would be related to *chadash* "to be new" ("cut off"), in the same way that *chetzev* is related to *ketzev*, *chataf* to *katzaf* and *chatzer* to *katzer*. Each of these cases includes a sense of "separation."

[86] For a list see James Muilenburg, "Holiness," *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 616.

Other scholars[87] associate it with the root *kadhadh* " to cut off, to separate."

The second theory[88] attributes the Hebrew root to the Akkadian *kadashu*, or to the Arabic and Ethiopic *kada* (Assyrian *kuddushu*), the former meaning "to be bright" or "to shine" and the latter meaning "to be pure, clear." This meaning fits the associative connotation of *k-d-sh* to "fire" and "glory." Baruch Levine points out that *kadashu* connotes an effect or a process.

> They describe the brilliance or aura surrounding gods and kings, or characterize processes relevant to cleansing and purification. These forms do not signify inherent mana...[M]onothesitic writers in ancient Israel found the root *q-d-sh* particularly appropriate for characterizing the God of Israel, for the very reason, perhaps that it did not inevitably denote physical properties.[89]

This last point will become important later.

There is a whole class of meanings for *k-d-sh* related to professional titles, especially of priests and priestesses. In Ugaritic administrative lists,

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[87] Fleisher, Delitzsch and Baudissin as quoted by Rudolf Kittel, "Holiness of God," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* ed. Samuel Jackson (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1909).

[88] Ibid.

[89] Baruch A. Levine, "The Language of Holiness," in *Backgrounds for the Bible* ed. Michael Patrick O'Connor and David Noel Freedman, (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987), pp. 242-243.

k-d-sh-m had the sense of "priest or cultic servitor." In Old Babylonian, *kadishtu* (Heb. *kedesha*) is a class of priestess. However, the same term in Akkadian and Hebrew signifies a prostitute; this may have become an epithet deriving from the role of a priestess in orgiastic rites of fertility cults.[90] Later, the meaning seems to have been expanded to divine beings, holy persons, sacred places, cultic objects, rites and celebrations. In Ugaritic *m-k-d-sh-t* has the same sense of the Hebrew word *mikdash*, that is, tabernacle or temple, while *k-d-sh-t* means "goddess" or "holy one." This is attested to in Hebrew where *k-d-sh* is in poetic parallelism with the word *el*, "deity."[91] Thus, the appellation "*Kadosh Yisrael*" may mean "deity of Israel."[92] Unfortunately, the usage of *k-d-sh* referring to place, person or object does not help us to uncover its etymology, since they are both "set apart" and "pure, clear."

We can come to no firm conclusions from the etymological evidence. Both meanings: "set apart" and "shine" seem to have possible linguistic and semantic connections. The meaning of *k-d-sh* as "deity" is clearly attested

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[90] See Baruch Levine, "Kedusha," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1973) p. 870.

[91] Hosea 11:9.

[92] As in II Kings 19:22 and Jeremiah 51:5.

in the Bible, but this may be derivative from one of the other meanings. It may also reflect, as I shall later argue, the understanding of YHWH as being the exclusive god of the Israelite people. Therefore, God (usually YHWH) being the *kadosh* of Israel, may mean that Israel may have an exclusive relationship with YHWH.

Bearing the previous evidence in mind, we turn our attention to a discussion not only of the term *kedusha,* but to the meaning born out of the religio-cultural context.

A Relationship with God

Otto believed that humanity was forever unable to comprehend God, only to apprehend God in *numinous* experiences. The emotive result of such an perception is the feelings of *mysterium tremendum.* Otto describes *mysterium* as the sense of a Wholly Other, a being which is totally separate and different from anything in our world. This leads to a problem inherent in the biblical text as well. How could a being which is so totally 'other' interact with the finite world?

The problem can be expressed differently. Many religions in the Ancient Near East conceived of their gods *and their gods' power* as immanent, while God in the Bible was primarily conceived of as separate

from creation and nature. For example, one would expect to find at a theophany, such as that of the "burning bush," that God would be portrayed as immanent. However, even here we find God described in transcendent terms:

> The story makes it clear that God is totally distinct from the bush out of which he chose to speak to Moses. God happened, as it were, to sojourn there; but he is altogether transcendent, and there is nothing but a purely situational, ephemeral relation with the bush. An ancient Mesopotamian would have experienced such a confrontation very differently. He too would have seen and heard numinous power, but power of, not just in, the bush, power at the center of its being, the vital force causing it to be and making it thrive and flourish. He would have experienced the numinous as immanent.[93]

Baruch Levine points out that the issue of God's transcendence is more than simply academic. Israel's success in the world is a direct result of their positive relationship and access to God and God's power. For if God is separate from Israel (or the world in general), does humanity benefit from God's power? Levine writes:

> Because power is viewed as transcendent, not immanent, its presence or availability cannot be taken for granted. For power to be present, God must be present. To a limited degree, the same dynamic operates even within the framework of immanence, but when access to power is restricted to one,

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[93] Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976) as quoted in Baruch Levine, "The Language of Holiness," in *Backgrounds for the Bible* eds. Michael Patrick O'Connor and David Noel Freedman, (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987), p. 249.

> transcendent being, there is bound to be more anxiety about securing it![94]

This anxiety derives from the belief that without God life is incredibly precarious, be it present life in the form of rain and cattle or future life in the form of progeny. In this sense, God's power is like water in a desert, a scarce resource, precariously obtained and maintained. Access to power can often mean life and order, alienation from power, death and chaos.

According to this view, holiness can have two meanings. First, holiness can be synonymous with divine power. Holy objects, people or places are somehow imbued with this dangerous but life-giving divine power and must be deftly treated.

> Holiness is a term for power...These manifestations of power are without specific moral content, yet in course of time the conduct of man is inseparably related to his understanding of how he is to deal with the Holy, with that revelation of power in his midst the reality of which is indubitable.[95]

This interpretation is understandable, given that mere contact with or proximity to holy objects can be lethal. For instance, after God's fire comes out and consumes Nadav and Avihu for, presumably, approaching holiness with some "strange" or "foreign" fire, God says, "I will show myself

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[94] Levine, *The Language of the Holy* op. cit., p. 249.

[95] W. Taylor Smith & Walter J. Harrelson, "Holiness," in *Dictionary of the Bible* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), p. 387.

holy among those who are near me."[96] Further, when Uza prevents the ark from falling by grabbing it (presumably while in an impure state), he is immediately killed.[97] Otto acknowledges these seemingly amoral irruptions of power and classifies them in the experience of *mysterium*. These irruptions of power may be understood as raw, undirected power which, if not properly channeled, is incredibly dangerous.

Holiness can also be understood as *the method* through which humanity can safely interact with God's power. While Eliade would substitute "absolute reality" for divine power, he would agree that holiness can only be understood as part of a system for setting oneself or community in relation to God. It seems, however, that biblical holiness is concerned more with power than "absolute reality." Thus, as a system,

> [Holiness] draws a circle around the people so that they are grouped apart from other peoples; but it also distances them from God. In part, as with a nuclear reactor, one is both drawn to God because of his power, because of his mystery, yet also one is inclined to turn and move away for self protection.[98]

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[96] Lev. 10:1-3.

[97] II Samuel 6:6f.

[98] Thomas M. Raitt, "Holiness and Community in Leviticus 19:2ff," *Proceedings, Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies* 4, 1984.

The paradox of holiness as a system for relating to God's power is that it both distances the people from power while allowing them access. If, however, holiness is a system, then why would shabbat be considered holy? How does it maintain the relationship between Israel and God? This challenge will force us to slightly adjust the above definition of holiness. However, any definition of holiness must contain this idea of maintaining a positive relationship with God.

Both Mary Douglas, in her discussion on purity (chapter 1), and Mircea Eliade, in his distinction between the sacred and profane, acknowledge that these systems are social constructions, that is, they are a projection of the condition or values of Israelite society. This being the case, the biblical system of holiness clearly suggests that interaction between Israel (perhaps humanity in general) and God must take place through a specific set of social relations: the social organization of the Temple Cult and priestly class. However, this was not always the case.

The term holiness is hardly used in the Book of Genesis, although our ancestors regularly communicated with God and generally had a positive relationship. However, after the experience of servitude in Egypt

and the creation of the People of Israel at Mount Sinai, a formal system of interaction was established.[99]

> The transactions of holiness in Exodus mark the beginning of religion, by contrast to the heroic relation to God prior to religion that is the principle of transaction in Genesis. The historical moment of the alienation of humankind from unmediated relationship to reality--the Egyptian servitude and consequent multiplication of the people--requires the reconstruction of that relationship within a system of mediation towards a God whose name is being itself.[100]

With the creation of Israel, God created a social organization through which fruitful interaction was possible. Just as the purity system grew out of the creation of the world and taught Israel how to exist within the God-created order, holiness is the mode for a God-created people to relate to God. The central purpose of the cult was to be able to approach God and bring a sacrifice to maintain or repair the relationship between themselves and God. This interaction with the Divine often required the sacrifice of an animal (in place of a person[101]) performed by the social hierarchy,

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[99] It should be kept in mind that the historicity of this sequence is not significant to this discussion. This mythic understanding explains how and why the current (biblical) system was created the way it was. It is a story about meaning, not chronology.

[100] Allen Grossman, "Holiness," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought* ed. Arthur Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr (New York: The Free Press, 1987) .

[101] For a discussion of the role of the "Binding of Isaac" as a paradigm of Israelite sacrifice, see Jean Soler, "The Dietary Laws of the Hebrews," *New York Review of Books*, (June 14, 1979).

established at Sinai, of priests and Levites. While sacrifice was established as a means of human-divine interaction through the paradigm of the near sacrifice of Isaac, the social hierarchy of priests and Levites was established at Sinai as the primary vehicle of relationship.

The Role of Priest as Holy Intercessor

The Sinaitic social order created a class of people--the priests--through whom Israel could safely approach (and influence) God. Their role was to bring Israel's (and sometimes foreigners') sacrifices to God and thus maintain a positive relationship. Because of their holy status, priests had the exclusive right/responsibility to come into proximity to God and offer the sacrifice. Therefore, they had to remain in a state of purity. The priest, in a sense, was the primary conduit for human reconciliation with the Divine. Another fundamental priestly function was to maintain the purity of the Temple, the place in which God dwells. As mentioned in chapter one, God's presence in the community was a sign of favor and a source of blessing for the community. If God became estranged from the

Israelite community and chose not to dwell in the Temple, disaster may have ensued.[102]

The priest had the role of remaining close to God for the benefit of Israel. Similarly, Israel had the role of remaining close to God, and in that sense, acted as priest for the rest of the world. The external social order which places Israel at the center allows/demands Israel alone to have proximity to God and access to God's power. Thus, the appellation "nation of priests" was not simply rhetorical hyperbole. Israel had to maintain a pure Temple and land in which God could dwell, and thereby benefit the world. By maintaining the positive relation between the nations of the world and God, the world continues to receive blessing from God. "By your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."[103]

Exclusivity in Relating to God

Neither Israel nor the Levites are given a choice as to their ordained roles. It is simply part of the new divine social order. Implicit in the

[102] Consider the narrative describing the "glory of the Lord" filling the tabernacle (Ex. 40:30-38) where Israel did not move until the cloud (representing God's presence) dwelt in their midst. Further, In Deut. 23, soldiers are warned against becoming impure because God "walks in the midst of the camp" and impurity is offensive and alienating to God.

[103] Gen. 22:18

meaning of holiness is a sense of exclusive relationship, almost ownership. If Israel is holy then she is, in a sense, God's people; God has exclusive "rights" to her in *exactly* the same way that a man traditionally had exclusive rights to his wife (thus the rabbinic term *kiddushin* for marriage).[104] Consider the translation for Deuteronomy 7:6: "This nation is chosen, in distinction from all the peoples of the earth, to be a special possession of the Almighty." Israel's holiness consisted fundamentally in her having been set apart to the specific purpose of God in the world. She is to be God's people and He is her God.[105]

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PURITY AND HOLINESS

The rules for purity are derived from the order which God imposed upon the physical world at Creation (see Chapter One). Order was created by distinguishing realm from realm, immobile from mobile.[106] One can reasonably ask how we know that the physical creation has ended, that the

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[104] For a discussion of rights of ownership as the basis for many biblical sexual laws see William Countryman, *Dirt Greed and Sex* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989).

[105] cf. Ezek. 37:22

[106] Compare the first three days of creation with the last three days. I gained this insight from my late professor of Bible Dr. Stanley Gevirtz (z"l). These distinctions are also discussed by Edmund Leach in *Genesis as Myth*, although he does take the insights of binary opposition to an extreme. For a critique, see Michael Carroll "Leach, Genesis, & Structural Analysis: A Critical Evaluation," *American Ethnologist* 4, (1977): 663-677.

act of making distinctions has stopped. This was achieved by creating another distinction, one that was temporal rather than physical. The day of shabbat (cessation) acknowledges that God completed the physical creation and that it was good. Unlike the spatial order, which is the basis for purity, the temporal order is not what is good; it only signifies that the physical order is good. A divinely distinguished temporal order is described as being holy to God. At that point, God set a mark of holiness which distinguishes this day from the previous days in which creation (the making of divisions) was taking place. Holiness is a mark of distinction, a *hechsher* (a symbol that something is fit) which designates the object, person, place or time as meeting the ideal. In the case of shabbat, God marked a day in which all distinctions ceased. Creation was said to be "very good." For something to become holy it must correspond to the order of God's creation *and* contain no new creations, no hybrids, no animals; everything must be exactly as God intended. Only then may an object, person, place, time, be distinguished by God as corresponding to God's will. Purity means corresponding to the order of creation. Once something corresponds to creation it has the possibility of being holy. Purity is always a prerequisite for holiness. Something which is pure may be set in a special exclusive relationship to God and, therefore, benefit

from God's power. When something is set in this exclusive relationship, it is called holy, that is, God claims exclusive rights to and approval of this thing. If someone else uses something which has been given to or claimed by God, and is, thereby, holy, that person has stolen from God's property, an extremely dangerous practice. For priests, being holy (which always has the presumption of purity) means that they are allowed to safely approach God. This is also true for animals which are then allowed to be sacrificed on the altar.

The Danger of Becoming Impure While in a Holy State

For a person, animal or object to become holy, it must first be in a state of purity. In the first chapter we established that purity meant conforming to the order set by God at the time of creation. If something does not correspond the order, it must either remain clear of holy places or become purified.

There are several methods of purification, including exclusion from the community, sacrifice, washing in flowing water, and heating in fire. The latter two methods may be explained as a disordering of the impure person or object in order that a new, Godly order can be reestablished. An example of the use of water as a means for reintroducing disorder (and

thus death) can be seen in the Flood story. It must first be understood that creation actually takes place as a separation of the chaotic primeval waters (*t'homot).* Land, the middle of the three realms, actually occurs in the space between the upper waters (heaven) and the lower waters (the depths). While they are restrained, life occurs, but when they are released as they were at the time of the Flood,[107] life ceases to exist. By releasing the waters of heaven and the depths, chaos reentered the world, usurping the place of the order, and destroyed God's world. The use of water as an agent of chaos is common.

> Immersion in water symbolizes a return to the pre-formal, a total regeneration, a new birth, for immersion means a dissolution of forms, a reintegration into the formless of pre-existence; and emerging from the water is a repetition of the act of creation in which form was first expressed.[108]

This suggests that by the placement of an object in water, a certain amount of disorder can be imposed on it (without the item being destroyed by the process); with its exit from the water, its order is reestablished.

A similar process may also be employed in the purification of metal. When collecting metal for use in the tabernacle, the people looked to war

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[107] Genesis 6:11; "the fountains of the great deep" and the "windows of heaven" are allusions to holding back of the primordial waters of chaos.

[108] Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Meridian, 1974), p. 188.

implements as an obvious source. However, these implements, because they had been used in connection with death, were impure and they could not be sanctified. In order to purify the metal the soldiers were ordered to pass their weapons through fire, that is, to melt them. The process of melting is equivalent to removing the old, undesirable order and creating a new order appropriate for the tabernacle of God. In both cases, however, disorder was reimposed so that a new order could be effectuated.

When something is holy, especially if it is being used in the presence of God, it is expected to be in a state of purity. What would happen if something that is impure comes into contact with God? Either God becomes alienated and leaves Israel or God purifies the impurity. The association of fire with holiness derives from God's purification of objects *or people* that are in His presence but deviate from His established order. Unfortunately, the reordering of a human being by divine fire has the unpleasant side-effect of his immediate death. Thus, the divine power which strikes out in the story of Nadav and Avihu, and Uza is the power of order in the presence of their chaos.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT BIBLICAL HOLINESS

Holiness as an attribute of God

One of the most common definitions of holiness in scholarly literature is that it is a characteristic of God. Usually basing their claims on Leviticus 19:2 "You shall be holy for I, the Lord your God, am holy," scholars describe holiness as an attempt at *imitatio dei*. For example:

> Seldom is the quality of holiness [in primitive religions] ascribed to the deity. In biblical religion, on the contrary, holiness expresses the very nature of God an it is He who is its ultimate source and is denominated the Holy One.[109]

> A fundamental element in the distinctive nature of God as revealed in Scripture and a basic response to His grace on the part of the people of God as they become molded into His likeness.[110]

> For unlike other creatures man was made in the image of God and capable of reflecting the Divine likeness. And as God reveals Himself as ethically holy, he calls man to a holiness resembling His own (Lev **19** 2).[111]

These are but a few instances of interpreters' often made equation of holiness with an aspect of God's nature. To them, Leviticus 19:2 is perfectly clear in demanding that Israel be holy *like God*. Should we

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[109] Baruch Levine, "Kedusha," in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing Company Ltd., 1971), p. 872.

[110] Everett F. Harrison, "Holiness; Holy" in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Exeter, England: The Paternoster Press, 1982), p. 725.

[111] J. C. Lambert, "Holiness," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915), p. 1404.

accept this interpretation? Does Leviticus really demand that Israel model itself after a divine attribute?

The imitation of God is properly interpreted as follows: We are like God in that both we and God are unlike chaos or disorder. However, from this shared element we cannot infer that our order is necessarily the same as God's order. It may be or it may not be, but there is no evidence to suppor either conclusion. There is, rather, no evidence at all.

The interpretaión of "*imitation dei*" must, therefore, be a limited, impoverished one. It is limited to the shared characteristic of being ordered in *some way*. We know how we are ordered. So our order *is* specified. We do not, however, know how God is ordered. God's order is *unspecified*; it is a mystery.

An alternative explanation is that we do share a characteristic with God, that we mutually separate the other from members of its kind; We separate God from other gods to enter into an exclusive relationship with Him, and God separates Israel from other peoples to enter into a(n exclusive)[112] relationship with God. As we have seen, maintaining an

[112] It is not clear whether God intened to have an exclusive relationship with Israel. If we use marriage (*kiddushin*) as a model of holy relationships, the groom does not have to have an exclusive relationship with his wife, however the wife does have to have an exclusive relationship with her husband. If we use the relationship between a (continued...)

exclusive relationship is associated with holiness. The concepts of chosenness and holiness are, thus, integrally related. Israel is *holy* in that it has been separated from all other peoples to have an exclusive relationship with this God. Conversely, God is *holy* because He has been separated from all other Gods to have a(n exclusive) relationship with Israel. "For you are a people sanctified to the Lord your God, and the Lord chose you to be His special people from out of all the peoples that are on the earth."[113] The notion that Israel is expected to maintain an exclusive relationship is dramatically portrayed through the prophet Hosea's marrying a harlot, as a metaphor for the relationship between God and Israel. God, the husband, shows unwarranted patience toward His people who remain unfaithful by "whoring" after other Gods. The exclusive rights that a husband had for his wife was understood to apply to the relationship between God and Israel.[114]

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[112](...continued)
suzerain power and a vassel (For a discussion of this model of relationship between God and Israel see Stanley Gevirtz, "Circumcision in the Biblical Period." in Brit Milah in the Reform Context, ed. Lewish Barth. (N.P: Bereit Mila Board of Reform Judaism, 1990). In this relationship, the suzerain power may have relationships with numerous vassels even if one of those relationships is special.

[113] Deut 14:2

[114] Perhaps Rabbi Akiba was right in pronouncing that Shir HaShirim is metaphoric for the relationship between God and Israel when it says "My beloved is mine and I am his." (Shir HaShirim 2:16).

It must be noted that these two explanations are not mutally exclusive. The interpretation of *imitatio dei* can accomodate, without contradiction, both elements shared by God and Israel, namely, being ordered and being separated from others of one's kind for a special relationship with another entity.

Holiness as the Highest Form of Purity.

Many scholars[115] view holiness in a hierarchy arranged from impurity to purity and finally to holiness. Thus, holiness and impurity are taken to be two opposite ends of the same hierarchic continuum. While the claim that holiness and puriy are related to one another is unproblematic, the claim that their only difference is a matter of degree is indeed problematic. They are definitely connected, but is it correct to view them simply as qualitative degrees apart from each other? No, instead, it would be more accurate to view purity as a necessary but not a sufficient condition for holiness. Purity is a requirement of the relationship and the proximity between Israel and God. In typical midrashic fashion, it is helpful to draw an analogy to royalty (*mashal*

[115] Notable are Mary Douglas and Jacob Neusner who view impurity as the opposite of holiness, or George Wenham who views holiness and purity as along the same continuum between life/order and death/chaos (see the chart at the end of chapter one.).

l'melech basar vadam). When one is invited to have an audience with a person of power, a king or queen, the president, the Pope, there are strict rules of etiquette and protocol which must be followed, certain things which one must say and certain things one may not say, certain clothes which are appropriate, and certain clothes which are inappropriate, etc. It would not be appropriate for a person in such an audience to come dressed in a wet tee shirt or, God forbid, a lime-green polyester leisure suit. For an audience with royalty, for example, it would be rude, or at the very least bad form, to have dirt under the finger nails or mud in the hair. Any of these social faux pas may be interpreted as a threat to, or even an attack upon, the institution of the monarchy. These social requirements are applied only in cases when people are in special and close proximity to the monarch. When a person is nowhere near the monarch, he is free to go around in grubby clothes and ill kempt hair. Even a ruler's property must reflect the status and standing of the ruler. (This may help to explain why the life-styles British royalty, who have no real political function, are maintained at such a high level.) Thus, purity is the explicit system of requirements which fall upon anyone who is sanctified, and, thus, allowed to be close to God's presence, or who has God's stamp of approval. Both must reflect the order God created in the world and

expressed in the purity system. Thus, purity is a requirement of holiness, not a degree of holiness.

The Contagiousness of Holiness

Transmutability has been one of the characteristics often associated with the concept of holiness. This implies that if one comes into contact with a person or object considered holy (especially objects, such as the ark, which come into direct contact with God's presence) the person or object will, itself become sanctified to God. This is based mainly upon the verse, *kol hanogea bam, yikdash*, (Ex 29:37; 30:29 Lev. 6:11, 20), which can be rendered, "All who touch (the ark, altar, objects used in Temple worship), shall be holy." Inherent in this translation is an ambiguity also found in the Hebrew. Does this mean that one who touches these objects *becomes* holy by virtue of the touching, or does this require that any or all people and objects which come into contact with these items must already be holy? The former interpretation presumes the contagiousness of holiness. There is little or no clear evidence to support this position. The notion of contagious holiness only makes sense if holiness and purity are not adequately distinguished, since purity associated with death is clearly transmittable. Baruch Levine suggests that the statement requiring people

touching these most sacred objects be holy themselves is a result of the general volatility of holiness. "Defilement may virtually undo the effects of sanctification. To protect what is holy requires that the clergy be consecrated, because to handle sacred objects or stand in holy places one must be holy."[116]

CONCLUSION

Holiness relates to order and organization. Objects, people, places and times which have been distinguished by God as reflecting the divine order and thus appropriate for some special relationship or purpose are holy. Purity refers to something which is consistent with the divine physical order. Shabbat, for instance, as an example of holy time, marks the completion of that divine creation process and, thus, the stabilization of order. The priests reflect the divine social order ordained at Sinai and are, thus, eligible to approach God. Animals which reflect the divine order may be consumed by all Israelites and some of those may even be as a sacrifice in the Temple.

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[116] Baruch Levine "The Language of Holiness," op. cit., p. 246. Also, for a discussion of the contagious nature of holiness see Menahen Haran, "The Priestly Image of the Tabernacle," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 36, (1965): 191-226.

According to Eliade, God represents absolute reality which protrudes onto profane ground. The order which God established throughout the Bible is the world view of the biblical author. For the biblical author, it is not necessarily an arbitrary order any more than our own sense of what is ultimately significant is self-consciously arbitrary. That may, in fact, be the case that our sense of what is right and appropriate is ultimately arbitrary, but for us it simply is the way things are. For instance, most people from Western cultures have the general belief that people have the right to own property (if they can afford it) and use it to their own benefit. It is a conditional right, to be sure, but the general principle holds. That is a constituent of our world view in the same way as is the constituent belief that certain animals may not be eaten by Israelites. In both cases an ultimate, self-evident value guides our sense of what is ultimately significant, that is, what is holy and pure. Holiness does, in fact, relate to order, but that order ultimately derives from what is self-evidently true to the biblical author.

The goal of the biblical system of holiness and purity is to remain consistent with God's order (which, for them, was self-evidently true) and, in so doing, to maintain a positive, productive relationship with God. In the very same way that a person would not serve a steak dinner to his

vegetarian friend, at least not if he wanted to remain friends, Israel wants nothing more than to remain within God's system. By doing so, not only will God be assuaged, God will also grant rain in its season, an abundance of crops and cattle and many children. These are the highest joys of the authors and their ultimate goal. Holiness and purity are the direct means to prosperity and happiness.

CHAPTER 3 -- CURRICULAR CONSIDERATIONS

The original purpose of this thesis was to research the topic of holiness for a high school curriculum. In order to provide some sense of closure, I am including the introductory sections of that curriculum and two sample lesson plans. In so doing I hope to provide an example of how something as esoteric as purity and holiness in the Bible can be translated (I hope, with some success) into an actual Reform Jewish institution. I have included a short background of the topic for teachers with little experience in this subject, and have suggested a sequence of topics.

As I began to write these ideas into a curriculum, it quickly became clear that the topic is much more encompassing than I had initially thought it to be. In order to teach about holiness and purity, one also has to touch on the subjects of myth and ritual, sign and symbol. This lands one squarely in the domain of anthropology, which, I believe, has the most to offer in illuminating these subjects. For the person who is unfamiliar with these areas, my first suggestion is to read two books by Lawrence Hoffman: *Beyond the Text* and *The Art of Public Prayer*. The first book is the more technical of the two, but gives a good overview of the themes of categorizing ideas (which I also mention in chapter 1) and Jewish myths

(which are equivalent to world views). The second book is an extremely interesting and accessible book about religious practice and ritual. It applies much of the anthropological material in an easily understood presentation. I draw heavily upon his chapter on rituals. He also provides an excellent reading list for those who are interested in reading further in these subjects. And what are these subjects?

The purpose of this thesis, as well as this curriculum, is to offer another way of viewing the world. I am offering another world view: one which holds that rituals, myths, "magical" formulae, all those things which Westerners have arrogantly mocked as a simplistic religious husk hiding the seed of "truth", are actually practices followed by every person in this world. We all have our myths, we all have our rituals and we all have "magical" formulae that give us a sense of peace, comfort and meaning. And it is from our myths that we recognize and affirm those times, places, people and objects which are holy and pure. It is our job, as modern Reform Jews, to develop a different and compelling myth that we can fully affirm as true, and offer to others as our belief. Further, we must also develop our own set of symbols and rituals, retaining what we need, innovating where we must, which portrays our myth in our every word

and deed. It is my hope that this curriculum will be one small step in fulfilling this lofty goal.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The psychiatrist Viktor Frankl says that "the striving to find meaning in one's life is a primary motivational force in man."[117] It is also the purview of religion. According to Frankl, an existentialist, people are responsible for creating their own meaning. For religionists, however, meaning is determined by the way we understand God. The purpose of this curriculum is to help students to explore how Jews have understood God and what they have considered to be meaningful. In so doing we will shed light on two of the most important concepts in religion, purity and holiness.

At one level it may be helpful, and perhaps even necessary, to discuss these concepts in religious terms such as holiness, purity. It is equally important, however, to try to explain them in religiously neutral language which can later be translated into religious idiom. The reason for this dual approach is the intellectual groundwork which is the basis for

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[117] Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy.*

this thesis (and its understanding of holiness and purity). It was done outside the exclusively religious framework, in the fields of anthropology, history of religions, sociology and psychology. Only after we understand these abstract concepts fully can we apply them to Judaism and finally to the classroom.

Everyone has a particular world view, which is built upon ultimate self-evident values (U-SETs). One of my U-SETs may be that everyone has the right to determine his own future. No one needs to prove that to me; it is self-evident (although it is probably gleaned from the host culture's values), and it is an absolute truth. Other U-SETs to which we may assent are: people should not be wantonly tortured, people have a right to refuse to have sexual intercourse with someone, people have a right to own property. Although there can be exceptions and qualifications made to all of these, they are generally acceptable to most Western thinkers as true. These single U-SETs are joined by other beliefs to make up a person's or culture's world view. A world view is simply the way in which one understands and interprets the world in which ont lives. One modern world view is that people must be responsible for themselves--they must "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" if they are to succeed. Success is almost guaranteed to those who persevere. Once this world

view is adopted, many things that may have otherwise been ignored become meaningful. Charity becomes undesirable, since it only rewards a lack of appropriate behavior. People who work exceedingly hard are lauded as cultural heros and held up as examples of proper behavior. Not only is there proper behavior for a person who holds this view, there are also places, times and objects which represent this view. For instance, a bus may be an example of a meaningful symbol of this world view because it demonstrates the frugality of a person attempting to become successful through hard work and self-reliance. The welfare office may be a negative symbol of someone who "freeloads" off of the hard work of others. What should be clear is that a person's U-SETs and world view influence those things, people, places, etc. which are significant and meaningful.

All groups have world views and, emanating from those world views, they have objects, people, places, times (I'll just call them "entities") which are significant. For a person who views sports as intrinsically important, the his favorite team's home stadium may be a significant place, a game a significant event. Religions also have world views, although their world views are believed to be revealed by God (or some other power) as truth. This is the case for the Torah at Mount Sinai. From this religious world view come these significant entities which are very meaningful because

they relate to truth. These entities are either called holy or pure. For example, it is believed that God set up a certain place on earth from where humanity can communicate with God on a regular basis. Part of what derives from this world view is a great significance to that certain place, the Temple in Jerusalem. True to form, this place is considered holy because it is consistent with the world view which God established. Purity refers to things that are significant because they correspond to a physical order. God created animals, such as birds, as herbivores. Therefore, carnivorous birds are considered impure (not kosher).

The purpose of this curriculum is to explore the world views of past Jewish cultures in order to learn what was pure and holy for them. Further, the curriculum explores modern Jewish world views and their concept of holiness and purity. Finally, it explores the world view of the students themselves with the hope of assisting them in their formation of their own concepts of holiness and purity. This curriculum has a major deficit which cannot be ignored. While we can look at what was significant for Jews of past and present, this will not necessarily engender a Jewish sense of holiness for Jews of the future. They may know what the Jewish view of holiness was or is to others, but they will not thereby necessarily have a deep sense of Jewish holiness for themselves. In order

for our Jewish youth to have an appreciation and sense of the holy, they must come to accept a world view which we would believe is Jewish. I am not going to try to define "proper" modern Jewish world view, but I would suggest that from this a sense of holiness and purity is derived. It may be possible to offer an alternative world view (at least I hope it is), and if it is, it would definitely take place in a community. World views are developed and passed on in a community, through rituals, liturgy, symbols, myths and shared experiences. Only in community can we create a modern Jewish sense of holiness. Thus, this curriculum can be viewed as a chiefly cognitive exploration and should, ideally, be utilized in conjunction with some type of Jewish communal experience.

Definition of Terms

U-SET - Ultimate Self-Evident Truth, core values which a person or community holds to be of extreme concern or worth.

World View - A constellation of U-SETs which form a method for judging the significance of something.

Pure - Some person or object which is consistent with a world view.

Holy - Some entity which is imbued with meaning and significance because of its relation to a U-SET.

FLOW OF THE LESSONS

General Goals for each lesson.

1. Models of Significance - U-SETs and World Views

An exploration into the notion of U-SETs and world views. How world views define what times, places, events and people are significant, that is, imbued with meaning.

2. Modern Jewish U-SETs

Explore some familiar modern Jewish U-SETs and world views with which the students may be familiar. Discover how these are expressed in modern "holy" entities.

3. Biblical World View

Explore biblical U-SETs and world views. What was the goal of biblical life and how did these significant entities facilitate that goal?

4. Rabbinic World View

Explore the rabbinic U-SETs and world views. How did they change after the destruction of the Temple? How did the rabbis interact differently with God?

5. The Physical Order of the World Deriving from these U-SETs

Compare and contrast the three physical views of the world and how they are expressed in different concepts of purity.

6. The Temporal Order of the World

Explore the significance of holy times such as Shabbat, holidays, life-cycle celebrations, etc.

7. The Spatial Order of the World

Explore the significance of Jerusalem, the Temple, Mount Sinai, the synagogue as ways of relating to God as ultimate truth.

8. The Social Order

Explore how the social order of priests, levites and rabbis facilitate(d) a sense of the divine presence.

9. The Students World View

Help students to systematically present their world view and those things which are "holy" to them.

10. Increasing Holiness

Explore how meaning and significance are created in community and how they can develop/increase a sense of holiness in their lives.

LESSON 1 U-SETS AND WORLD VIEWS

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES: By the end of the lesson, students will be able to (SWBAT):

- Define and give examples of a U-SET, World View.
- Explain how entities of significance drive from a particular world view.

SET INDUCTION:

What are you willing to go to jail for? fight and possible die for?

Anticipated Responses: Safety, personal, family (this is the idea that familial bonds are strong and meaningful; democracy; land; freedom to vote, choose; nothing (I am the highest value, non-violence is the highest value, everything is of equal value).

Write the answers on the board.

For how many people are these answers self-evident, that is, they are so obvious that you don't even have to justify them.

Quickly go through them and have the students raise their hand to show assent.

I would like to give a name to these clearly understood and obvious values: Ultimate Self-Evident Truths or U-SETs.

Is Ultimate Self Evident Truth a good term to use for these values? (This question is meant to help them think more deeply about the concept of some values being accepted without questioning its validity.)

Let's look at some U-SETs.

Distribute Worksheet 1.1

We can build a chart that moves from U-SET to world view to some action that results from that world view.

Leave some of the cells blank so that people can fill them out.

Fill in the chart together.

Remember that these answers are only suggestions. They may have answers that are equally, if not more, correct.

Let's look at a very simple U-SET and world view.

Write on the board:

U-SET: My girl/boy friend is a truly wonderful person.

World View: My relationship with him/her is one of the most important things in my life and I will do whatever I can to maintain it and keep it strong.

Pretending that this was their personal U-SET and world view:

1) Name one *location* which exemplifies that U-SET or world view.

2) Name one *time* (during the year) that reminds you of that U-SET/World View.

3) Name one *object* that exemplifies that U-SET or world view.

4) Name one *activity* that reminds you of your U-SET or world view.

Write them on the board under the headings TIME; PLACE; OBJECT; ACTION; (These are mundane examples of holy entities. They should be entities which are filled with significance because of what they represent about the U-SET or world view).

Examples:

TIME: December 17th, the first time that I kissed my girlfriend; rainy winter days, it reminds me of walks we used to take on rainy days.

PLACE: The duck farm that we would always visit to feed the ducks; The place we met.

OBJECT: An inscribed ring that I gave to my boyfriend; the jacket I was wearing when we fell in love.

ACTION: Leaving one white rose on her door step; talking on the phone every evening; dressing in elegant clothes and going to dinner and dancing.

Have volunteers share one or two of their answers.

Now look at the U-SETs and world views on worksheet 1.1. Give an example of a time, place, object, action and person that is important to someone who has this U-SET or world view.

For examples see Worksheet 1.2

CLOSURE

Each of these entities are meaningful and significant because they derive from our U-SETs and world views. The religious word for something that is significant and meaningful is *holy*. Over the next nine lessons, we are going to look at the U-SET and world views of Jews throughout history and our own, and explore how they are expressed in the Jewish ideas of holiness and purity.

LESSON 2 MODERN JEWISH U-SETS

OBJECTIVES: SWBAT
- Describe several American Jewish U-SETs.
- Describe a typical American Jewish World View
- Explain the purpose of a ritual
- Create a ritual based upon a specific world view

SET INDUCTION

If I were going to use a dog as a metaphor for the United States, I may say:

The dog's fur - this is our police force which protects us from our enemies.

The dog's fleas - our worst enemies are our drug dealers.

The dog's feet - this is what supports our country--our working middle class.

The dog's brain is our government.

The tail (which sometimes wags the dog) represents special interest groups which influence our country's policy and direction.

Divide the group into smaller groups.

I am going to give each group an object. I want you to describe the Jewish Community in America using the object as your metaphor.

(Objects may include: a computer, a car, a telephone, a radio, a house, a rifle, a cow, etc.)

Have the groups present what they produce. Write their answers on the board under the heading "American Jewry".

Ask them if there is any other description of the American Jewish World that they would want to add.

Important ideas you may want to bring out using questions are: The connection Jews have to Israel, the fear of anti-semitism, the concern with the continued survival of the Jewish people.

Distribute worksheet 1.3 and have each student choose a few of the modern U-SETs and fill in the rest of the chart, explaining some of the significant places, actions, objects, etc. of the American Jewish community.

We are going to focus on the column that says actions.
What is the word that religions might use for an action that is of great significance?

A ritual

Let's look a little deeper at what rituals are so that we can better understand how they express our world views.

To do so we have to define a few other terms.

SYMBOL

What is a symbol? It is some object, person, place or time that evokes an emotion when I see it, hear it or even think about it.

Example: a swastika, a wedding ring, a family portrait

Are any of the people, places, objects or times on the sheet you distributed examples of symbols? How are they symbols?

What is a ritual? It is a set procedure for acting out some special time.

Example: thanksgiving dinner, dating, wedding (and party afterwards).

Give some other examples of rituals.

Does every object in a ritual have to be a symbol?

No.

What is the purpose of a ritual? To maximize the desired emotions associated with an event. (If the event is a wedding, the purpose is to maximize the joy of seeing a new family in the community; for a funeral, the purpose is the experience the loss and sadness; for a baseball game, the purpose is to reinforce the importance of the game in society (singing the national anthem) and increasing the excitement of the game.)

We are going to look at one ritual to see what makes a ritual successful.

The following is a list of mini-rituals that occur as a part of the larger wedding ritual. It is called "The Wedding Party"

What do you think the purpose of a wedding party is? Many possible answers available. Accept all of them as worth testing out. Offer these as possible answers if the students don't: Wedding parties are meant to reinforce the institution of marriage, to joyfully introduce the couple to the community as a new family unit, to acknowledge their new intimate relationship, to gingerly enmesh two families together.

Distribute worksheet 2.1

With these possible reasons in mind, let's try to imagine what the possible meanings might be.

Have students offer their reasons for the rituals. Any reasonable answer is acceptable as long as it acts like a ritual in that it increases the feelings of the event. Appropriate feelings are derived from the world view of the couple/community.

Possible answers might be:

People dress in formal clothes

Dressing in formal clothes emphasizes the importance of the event. Nice clothes=important.

Bride and groom enter the room and are announces as a new family.

This reinforces the fact that a new family was created before the eyes of all the guests. There is a sense of closure for the guests to see the couple publicly being announced as a family.

Lots of good food is served

At Jewish rituals, food is a sign of a significant event. The more food and the higher the quality of food, the more important the event. Different cultures view food differently as a symbol. At some Protestant functions, it is not considered a sign of joy to have an overwhelming amount of food.

Bride and groom cut the cake

This may be a symbolic act of the bride and groom cutting their cake and feeding, first to each other (as a sign of mutual affection and dependence) and to the rest of the guests (almost as a sign of welcoming people to their home).

Speech and toast by best man, maid of honor, parents

These are formal acknowledgements of the couple by their immediate community: family and friends.

Special dances groom/bride, bride/father, groom/mother, bride/father-in-law, groom/mother-in-law, parents-in-law

These often show the positive intermeshing of the two families. They also show how each family mutually accepts the child-in-law into the new family.

Bride tosses bouquet of flowers

This acknowledges the positive view of weddings of all the members of the community who are not yet married (the person who catches the bouquet is supposed to be the next to marry) and it is a way for the bride to spread her good fortune.

Groom tosses garter

This as a similar meaning as tossing the bouquet except that it publicly reinforces the groom's right to place his hands in what would otherwise be an intimate area.

Friends toss their cookies

Although not a formal ritual, there is still a connection between imbibing alcohol and enjoyment of a celebration (although it is not as strong in the American Jewish culture). For some, drinking to the point of puking is a sign that the party was enjoyed.

Family/Friends decorate the bride and groom's car

This may be a way for the entire community to know that these two people have just gone through a change of status and should be treated as special.

CLOSURE

Now that we have looked at the function of rituals, let's look back at our list of modern American Jewish U-SETs and world views and at the objects, places, people, etc. Design a ritual which either occurs at a significant place, with a significant object or involving a significant person. Remember you first have to decide what type of emotion you want to have as the result of the ritual.

HOMEWORK

1. Describe one daily ritual that you do with our family and friends. Describe the world view that it reinforces and the emotions it tries to engender.
2. Do the same thing for any Jewish ritual that you or your family does.

Worksheets 1.1 (With possible answers)

U-SET	World View	Action
Animals have an intrinsic value close to that of humans	Humans don't have the right to use animals.	Refuse to eat meat
Winning is extremely important	Personal pride and status is connected to the team winning. "When they win, I win."	A person pays $500/ticket to see the Super Bowl.
The individual is of primary importance.	Everyone must do what is best for themselves.	Children decide to marry someone even though their parents disapprove.
People have a right to determine their future.	Democracy is the only acceptable form of government.	A country fights against a dictator.
Each person is but a small cog in a big machine. Everyone must play their prescribed role.	People cannot always do what they would like to do since they have a responsibility to the other people around them.	A person chooses factory work, giving up his dreams of going to college because he must earn money to support his family.

Worksheet 1.1

U-SET	World View	Action
Animals have an intrinsic value close to that of humans	Humans don't have the right to use animals.	
Winning is extremely important		A person pays $500/ticket to see the Super Bowl.
	Everyone must do what is best for themselves.	Children decide to marry someone even though their parents disapprove.
	Democracy is the only acceptable form of government.	
	People cannot always do what they would like to do since they have a responsibility to the other people around them.	

Worksheet 1.2

U-SET - World View	Time	Place	Object	Action	Person
Animals have rights.	Spring when tuna fishermen catch and kill porpoises in their fishing nets.	The city pound, where unwanted animals are kept.	A piece of scrimshaw (taken from the ivory of an innocent elephant.	Saying or neutering their own pets at home.	Betty White & Bob Barker, two animal rights advocates.
The importance of winning.	Fall, when the world series is played.	The stadium where your favorite team plays.	An autograph from the MVP of the winning team.	Going to the a big game: the world series or the super bowl.	One of the players from a successful sports team.
The right of individuals to do what they want without feeling guilty.	When they reach 18 and the don't have to obey others' rules.	A friend's house or hiding place where a person could do what they want to do.	The keys to their own apartment (where they make the rules).	Saying "no" to their parents.	Their therapist who helped them find the courage to do what they wanted.
Democracy is the only acceptable form of government.	Independence day.	The building where the government meets.	The constitution which garuntees their right to vote.	Voting	The leader who commanded the revolution which led to democracy.

Worksheet 1.3

U-SET World View	Time	Place	Object	Action	Person

Worksheet 2.1

The Wedding Party Ritual

People dress in formal clothes

Bride and groom enter the room and are announced as a new family.

Lots of good food is served

Bride and groom cut the cake

Speech and toast by best man, maid of honor, parents

Special dances groom/bride, bride/father, groom/mother, bride/father-in-law, groom/mother-in-law, parents-in-law

Bride tosses bouquet of flowers

Groom tosses garter

Friends toss their cookies

Family/Friends decorate the bride and groom's car

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