

Purity in Ancient Judaism

Edited by
LUTZ DOERING,
JÖRG FREY, and
LAURA VON BARTENWERFFER

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Texts, Contexts, and Concepts

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Lutz Doering, Jörg Frey,
and Laura von Bartenwerffer

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Preface

Purity issues are a complicated field, but a field that is of central importance for discussing matters of identity and practical life in Ancient Judaism and in Early Christianity. During the last decades scholarship has made immense progress with regard to the interpretation of the purity-related texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls, to the archaeological investigation of numerous early synagogues, and to the discussion of the concepts and thought patterns behind ancient purity regulations. The present volume presents the contributions of a conference that aimed at a novel and up-to-date discussion of these matters in an international and interdisciplinary context.

The conference took place at the Katholische Akademie Schwerte in Germany from 10 to 12 February 2019. It was organized jointly by Jörg Frey (Zürich) and Lutz Doering (Münster) and kindly supported and hosted by the Katholische Akademie Schwerte, as the tenth event in a long series of conferences aimed at spreading knowledge about and promoting dialogue on the Dead Sea Scrolls and related issues. We are grateful to the Katholische Akademie Schwerte, in particular to Dr. Ulrich Dickmann, for the continuing support of these conferences for more than two decades.

The collection and editorial preparation of the contributions was done by Laura von Bartenwerffer (Münster / Essen), further support in the preparation of the manuscript was given by Dr. John Dik (Münster). We are grateful to Dr. Zhuen Wei (Zurich / Luxembourg) for compiling the index of ancient sources, and to stud. theol. Hanna Antensteiner (Münster) and stud. theol. Kolja Damm (Münster) for compiling the indexes of subjects and modern authors, respectively. The team of Mohr Siebeck publishers, primarily Elena Müller, Tobias Stähler, and Rebekka Zech, have accompanied the long production process with all their competence and friendly support. We are also grateful to the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) that has generously granted funding for the open access publication, so that the insights and discussions presented in this book can now be accessed anywhere for free.

We hope that the volume will promote a deeper understanding, and inspire further studies, of purity and issues related to it in Ancient Judaism and its world.

Münster / Zurich / Essen, October 2024

Lutz Doering
Jörg Frey
Laura von Bartenwerffer

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Purity in Ancient Judaism

An Introduction

Laura von Bartenwerffer, Lutz Doering, and Jörg Frey

1. Purity – Foundational Questions and Recent Research

1.1 *Setting the Scene: Distinctions, Complexities, and Open Questions*

Purity plays a central role in ancient Judaism. It is a prerequisite for the encounter with the sacred, for example, at the Jerusalem temple but also in the context of gatherings of communities that viewed themselves as sacred, as in the case of the meetings of the *yahad* mentioned in the texts from Qumran. However, ancient Jews also strove for purity far away from the temple, both in areas of the Land of Israel remote from Jerusalem and in their respective places of residence in the Diaspora, although means, procedures, and conceptualizations varied. While purity therefore seems to be “everywhere” in ancient Judaism, it is nevertheless not everywhere the same.

Purity, as well as its opposite, impurity, is a broad category. Purity is typically defined as the absence of impurity. The category of impurity, in turn, seems to encompass several forms or types, sometimes called “sources” of impurity. One important type is what is now conventionally termed “ritual impurity”.¹ Such impurity in ancient Judaism is generated, to a large degree inevitably, by certain events in the human lifecycle: childbirth, genital discharges – both regular (menstrual blood, semen emission) and irregular –, various kinds of skin-disease, death, and contact with certain animal carcasses. In the Hebrew Bible, these impurities are dealt with largely in Lev 11–15 and Num 19. They are typically temporary, can be cleansed with appropriate means, and are not normally reckoned to be sinful.

Another sub-category or type of impurity is “moral impurity”.² Based on Lev 18–20 and related texts (e.g., Num 35:33–34), chief examples of this type are sexual transgression, idolatry, and bloodshed. Impurities of this type are

¹ In earlier scholarship, the term “levitical impurity” was used; see, e.g., Adolf Büchler, *Studies in Sin and Atonement in the Rabbinic Literature of the First Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928) 212–374: 214.

² Büchler, *Studies*, 214 called this “spiritual” or “religious” defilement. For the terminology of

considered sinful and require expiation, in some particularly severe cases are punishable by death or extirpation, and may lead to the expulsion of the people from the Land of Israel. The distinction between “moral impurity” and “ritual impurity” has particularly been highlighted by Jonathan Klawans, who argued that it is only in the Dead Sea Scrolls that we find an integration of the two, while Philo of Alexandria, according to Klawans, creates an analogy between moral and ritual defilement, and Tannaitic literature compartmentalized the two.³

Another type of im/purity that may be taken as standing “between” these two types is addressed in the lists of clean and unclean animals in Lev 11 and Deut 14 – the dietary laws.⁴ These laws, defining, as it were, the animal kingdom, seem to overlap with both types and yet represent a unique form of im/purity. Christophe Nihan has supported a priestly origin for both ritual im/purity and the dietary laws, and suggested a plausible connection within Lev 11–15: while the purity laws of Lev 12–15 promote society’s control over biological events, Lev 11 takes purity as conformity to the creational order; in both, we find the development of a specifically Judaeon ethos.⁵

Purity is thus relevant for the relation between Judaeans or Jews with foreigners. A matter of considerable debate, against the background of different types of im/purity, is the question whether gentiles were considered ritually defiling during the Second-Temple period. It is clear that the rabbis later held a concept of “gentile impurity”,⁶ but the question is whether this was a full rabbinic innovation or had some precursor before 70 CE. Scholarship is divided on the matter: While Gedalyahu Alon claimed that there was a notion of “gentile impurity” before 70 CE,⁷ Adolf Büchler denied the ritual impurity of gentiles for the Second-Temple period;⁸ and while Alon has followers particularly among Israeli scholars,⁹ colleagues in North America tend to build on the ground laid

“moral” impurity, defilement etc., cf. Jonathan Klawans, “Idolatry, Incest, and Impurity: Moral Defilement in Ancient Judaism,” *JSJ* 29 (1998) 391–415, esp. 393–94.

³ Cf. Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴ Cf. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 31–32.

⁵ Christophe Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch. A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus*, FAT II/25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

⁶ Cf., e. g., t. Zav. 2:1; Sifra *mešora’ zavim* 1:1 [74b Weiss] (gentiles defile like *zavim*); on modes of defilement cf., e. g., m. Toh. 7:6; t. Toh. 6:11, 8:9; t. A. Z. 3:11.

⁷ Gedalyahu Alon, “The Levitical Uncleanliness of Gentiles,” in idem, *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World. Studies in Jewish History in the Times of the Second Temple and Talmud* (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1977) 146–189 (Hebrew: *Tarbiz* 8 [1936–37] 137–61).

⁸ Adolf Büchler, “The Levitical Impurity of the Gentile in Palestine Before the Year 70,” *JQR* N. S. 17 (1926–27) 1–81.

⁹ Cf., e. g., Hanan Birenboim, “Gentile Impurity in Ancient Judaism,” *Cathedra* 139 (2011) 7–30 (in Hebrew); Matan Orian, “Gentiles and the House of the One God in Jewish Sources from the First Temple to the Hasmonean State,” PhD thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2016 (in Hebrew); Eyal Regev, “Purity, Pottery, and Judaeon Ethnicity in the Hasmonean Period,” *JAJ* 12 (2021) 391–432: 393–99.

by Büchler.¹⁰ According to the latter approach, gentiles are considered morally, not ritually, defiling. In addition, Christine Hayes has argued that, following the innovation by Ezra, the avoidance of intermarriage with gentiles and the impossibility of gentiles becoming Jews according to certain Second-Temple texts reflect an own type of impurity, “genealogical impurity”.¹¹ It may, however, be asked whether these types of impurity can be kept apart so easily, and whether the rejection of the ritual nature of gentile impurity for the Second-Temple period sufficiently takes account of relevant New Testament texts, such as Acts 10 (esp. v. 28).¹² In addition, the distinction – yet, at the same time, common discussion – of outer and inner purity is present in New Testament texts, such as Mark 7:15, 18–23 par.; Matt 23:25–28.

Moreover, Klawans’s attempt to find a coherent “system” of purity, in which “ritual” and “moral” impurity can neatly be distinguished, has repeatedly been criticized by Thomas Kazen. Thus, Kazen points to instances, already in the Hebrew Bible, in which impurities affecting the body bear a relation to sin, e.g., in the case of Miriam’s “leprosy” as a means of punishment for the sin of her and Aaron’s questioning Moses’ authority (Num 12:9–15). In addition, Kazen suggests that the social isolation of people diagnosed with skin-diseases and irregular discharges was interpreted as punishment.¹³ Kazen, in turn, suggests that a foundational background of both bodily impurities and defilement by sins is the notion of disgust.¹⁴ Further criticism of a sharp distinction between ritual and moral im/purity has come from John Barton, who has suggested to consider impurity on a gradual spectrum from ritual to moral impurity, with mixed cases in between.¹⁵ In addition, Tracey Lemos has problematized the systematization

¹⁰ E.g., Sidney B. Hoenig, “Oil and Pagan Defilement,” *JQR* N.S. 61 (1970–71) 63–75; Jonathan Klawans, “Notions of Gentile Impurity in Ancient Judaism,” *AJS Review* 20 (1995) 285–312; Christine E. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), esp. 45–67.

¹¹ Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, esp. 27–34, 68–91.

¹² Building on Hayes, Thiessen has argued that Acts 10 maintains a “genealogical distinction between Jew and Gentile,” similar to what we find, e.g., in Ezra-Nehemiah or the Book of Jubilees; see Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion. Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 136. But it may be asked whether this is borne out by the verbs “associate with or visit” (κολλᾶσθαι ἢ προσέρχεσθαι; Acts 10:28). The former can hardly be limited to sexual relations (cf. Matt 19:5, rendering Gen 2:24), as it is used for close contact in Luke 5:15; Acts 5:3; 8:29; 9:26; 17:34; and the deployment of ἀθέμιτόν ἐστιν “it is forbidden” (on which Klawans, “Notions of Gentile Impurity,” 301 draws to argue that the issue is not defilement) needs to be read together with the following phrase κοινὸν ἢ ἀκάθαρτον “common or unclean.”

¹³ Thomas Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah. Was Jesus Indifferent to Impurity?* ConBNT 38 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2002) 207–11.

¹⁴ Cf., e.g., Thomas Kazen, “Dirt and Disgust: Body and Morality in Biblical Purity Laws,” in Baruch J. Schwartz et al. (eds.), *Perspectives on Purity and Purification in the Bible*, LHBOTS 474 (New York: T&T Clark, 2008) 43–64.

¹⁵ John Barton, *Ethics in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 187–200.

of purity constructions in the Hebrew Bible and has pointed to both shifting rituals and differing perspectives.¹⁶

Over the past decades, the practice of purity and purification has received increased scholarly interest. A number of studies have focused on the emergence, distribution, and function of stepped pools in the Land of Israel from around 100 BCE well into the second century CE. Many scholars have argued that these were used for ritual purification, although some have questioned their being labelled *miqva'ot* as anachronistic. What motivated the rise of such pools, and what does their persistence beyond the temple destruction tell us about the link, often made, between ritual purity and the temple? Similarly, what led to the use of stone vessels that came into use during the first century BCE and continued to be used in the second century CE?

Another open question is the form and understanding of purity practices in the Jewish Diaspora. Assuming that stepped pools and stone vessels were in use only in the historic "Land of Israel" (including the parts of Transjordan usually call Peraea), were there categorical differences in purity practices and concepts in the Diaspora? How do we make sense of the breadth of references to purity by writers such as Philo of Alexandria and of water installations connected with (often, late antique) synagogues in the Diaspora, which nevertheless look markedly different from the stepped pools mentioned above?

1.2 Some Perspectives of Recent Research

Dealing with the topic of purity in ancient Judaism, it is obvious that one cannot ignore the area of Qumran research. Both the archaeological finds from Khirbet Qumran and the contents of the Dead Sea Scrolls show the great importance the topic of purity played. Hence, it is not surprising that research in this area can look back on a broad discussion. After the fragments from Qumran Cave 4 had been made accessible in the 1990s, the discussion about purity at Qumran intensified. An overview of Dead Sea Scrolls dealing with purity is provided by both Hannah Harrington¹⁷ and Ian Werrett.¹⁸ But the approaches they take could not be more different. The earlier of the two works, Harrington's, after a general introduction and a brief overview of the textual sources, structures the evidence according to the sources of contamination, namely, corpse impurity, leprosy, bodily discharges, and outsiders. Thus, already the structure of the book points to clear differences in approach as compared with Werrett's monograph, which will be discussed later. The systematizing presentation of the evidence causes it to

¹⁶ T[racy] M. Lemos, "Where There is Dirt, Is There System? Revisiting Biblical Purity Constructions," *JOT* 37 (2013) 265–94.

¹⁷ Hannah K. Harrington, *The Purity Texts*, Companion to the Qumran Scrolls 5 (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

¹⁸ Ian C. Werrett, *Ritual Purity and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, STDJ 72 (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

appear as a unified “Qumran” position in which inconsistencies are levelled out. Methodologically, Harrington follows her mentor Jacob Milgrom¹⁹ in gap filling the purity laws. Thus, the evidence of the Scrolls on purity appears as a uniform position that can be compared to other views. Such a comparison had in fact been Harrington’s starting point regarding the issue of purity at Qumran: In her dissertation, she compared the Rabbis’ view of purity with that of the Qumran community.²⁰ Harrington describes four aspects as the main elements of this unified Qumran position on purity: the tendency to extend regulations of the Torah; the determination of impurity as a malicious agent; a focus on pure food and drink; and the blending of ritual and moral impurity.²¹ For this stricter interpretation, she finds three theological reasons that shape the profile of the Qumran community. First, Qumran views itself as a priestly community. Second, there is evidence of an apocalyptic orientation. And third, Qumran awaits a divine revelation. For all three aspects a higher purity level is required.²²

A striking contrast to this attempt to present a uniform Qumran position is provided by Ian Werrett. In his published dissertation, he distinguishes himself from Harrington’s approach by refraining from directly correlating the statements of various Qumran texts or other sources with each other. Moreover, the archaeological findings from Khirbet Qumran are not put into a direct relation with the texts. These features are also reflected in the structure of his book. The introduction explaining this approach is followed by the four main chapters, each dealing with one text or group of texts, that is, the Damascus Document, the Temple Scroll, 4QMMT, and Cave 4 legal texts; in each chapter, Werrett divides the purity rules into five major areas: diseases, un/clean animals, corpses, bodily discharges, and sexual misdeeds. This concentrated work on the respective individual texts is then briefly compared and summarized. Werrett traces explicit agreement and disagreement in the texts and concludes, on the basis of preponderant differences, that there is no coherent purity system in Qumran. Werrett’s preferred explanatory model is diachronic: following Klawans, he assigns the various texts to three chronologically different categories: protosectarian, composite, and sectarian. Werrett sees connections between the various texts only in similar methods of textual exegesis in the interpretation of the Torah. Unfortunately, this methodological approach, which is sensible in itself, in the absoluteness pursued by Werrett leads to important comparative texts being overlooked, especially rabbinic materials that could have furthered

¹⁹ As is well known, Milgrom attempted to show the consistency and rationality of the Priestly Source’s worldview including its purity laws. See Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), passim.

²⁰ Hannah K. Harrington, *The Impurity Systems of Qumran and the Rabbis*, SBLDS 143 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993).

²¹ See Harrington, *The Purity Texts*, 13.

²² See *ibid.*, 36–42.

understanding but are excluded from comparison due to their late composition. Furthermore, Werrett's approach may overemphasize differences and does not sufficiently elucidate the relationship(s) between the group(s) responsible for the composition and collection of the various texts found in the Qumran caves. Nevertheless, taken together, the systematizing approach of Harrington and Werrett's emphasis of difference provide a good introduction to and overview of the subject, so they are enlightening precisely in their distinction from each other.

The ideas of purity found in the Dead Sea Scrolls relate, of course, to a larger context and can thus be compared with, and distinguished from, other positions in the Second-Temple period. Such a demarcation of Jesus' position from those of his opponents, as presented by Thomas Kazen,²³ offers enlightening insights for the debate about the emergence of different purity concepts. For Kazen Jesus shows as an example how the purity discourse shaped the society in the Second-Temple period. He develops three main aspects that characterize Jesus' concept of purity, but which can also be applied to other groups to some extent. One important aspect for the question of purity is morality. Kazen, for many instances, questions a clear differentiation between ritual and moral purity because references between impurity and sin can already be found in the Hebrew Bible. In contrast, Kazen prefers to distinguish between inner and outer purity. Under the heading "Purity and Diversity", Kazen discusses the sociocultural situation of the Jesus movement in Galilee. The purity concept has to cope with different traditions and local customs. The third important aspect is the portrait of Jesus as an exorcist who drives out impure spirits. His eschatological orientation overcomes impurity without purification rituals. Kazen's work shows the complexity of competing purity concepts. These concepts cannot easily be described as either ritual or moral: the differences are much more subtle and complex. In his psycho-biological approach, Kazen defines the unifying element of the various impurity occurrences as the feeling of disgust.²⁴

In contrast to Kazen, Harrington, following her mentor Milgrom, argues that proximity to death²⁵ is the decisive rationale for impurity. This rationale is related to Harrington's focus on ritual impurity and is supported by the Rabbinic notion of the impurity of the dead as the highest category of impurities. Moreover, Rabbinic literature displays a complex system of different stages of impurity.

²³ Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*.

²⁴ See Thomas Kazen, *Issues of Impurity in Early Judaism*, ConBNT 45 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010).

²⁵ See Jacob Milgrom, "The Rationale for Biblical Impurity," *JANES* 22 (1993): 107–11. Modifying this approach, Matthew Thiessen has explained Jesus' attitude to ritual impurity in terms of an eradication of the forces of death as causes of impurity; see Matthew Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death. The Gospels' Portrayal of Ritual Impurity Within First-Century Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020).

However, already Second-Temple texts, upon closer examination, may show a graded notion of purity. Thus, for example, Cecilia Wassén has identified such a graded notion in the Qumran community meals.²⁶ The term *ha-ṭohorah* (“the purity”) used in some Dead Sea Scrolls likely refers to the communal meal. However, according to Wassén, this term is only used for special meals. These special meals require ritual purity while the common meals can be taken in a state of mild impurity. Thus, recent debate on purity has moved away from clear-cut assignments of ritual versus moral im/purity and even purity versus impurity, and has put greater emphasis on the grey zones that might already be identified in Second-Temple texts.

One study that takes both the wealth of material on im/purity and recent advances in scholarship into account is Yair Furstenberg’s monograph on purity and community.²⁷ While arguing that the blurring of the boundary between ritual and moral purity is also found outside the Qumran community, Furstenberg particularly focuses on the development of Pharisaic concepts and practices related to purity and contrasts them with the concepts of other groups such as that prevailing in the Dead Sea Scrolls (for which, *pace* Werrett, he views some coherence) or that championed by Jesus of Nazareth. Moreover, Furstenberg also traces the development of the Pharisaic approach into that of the sages represented in the Mishnah. Inter alia, Furstenberg suggests that Pharisaic handwashing before meals originated in Hellenistic table manner and was secondarily connected with ritual purity. Jesus’ rejection of handwashing according to Mark 7:15 therefore maintains the older approach.²⁸

In his work, Furstenberg draws on important archaeological work pertinent to ritual im/purity that has been conducted since the 1990s. An early study of stone vessels, deemed unsusceptible to ritual defilement in Second-Temple Judaism, was a monograph by Roland Deines, taking its cue from the “six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification” in John 2:6 (NRSV).²⁹ A detailed study of the stone vessel industry in Second-Temple Judaea was provided by Yitzhak Magen.³⁰ While both Deines and Magen claimed that the use of stone vessels was a Phar-

²⁶ See Cecilia Wassén, “The (Im)Purity Levels of Communal Meals Within the Qumran Movement,” *JAJ* 7 (2016), 102–22.

²⁷ Yair Furstenberg, *Purity and Community in Antiquity. Traditions of the Law from Second Temple Judaism to the Mishnah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2016) (in Hebrew), translated into English as *Purity and Identity in Ancient Judaism. From the Temple to the Mishnah* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2023).

²⁸ Cf. already Yair Furstenberg, “Defilement Penetrating the Body. A New Understanding of Contamination in Mark 7.15,” *NTS* 54 (2008): 176–200.

²⁹ Roland Deines, *Jüdische Steingefäße und pharisäische Frömmigkeit. Ein archäologisch-historischer Beitrag zum Verständnis von Johannes 2,6 und der jüdischen Reinheitshalacha zur Zeit Jesu*, WUNT 2/52 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993).

³⁰ Yitzhak Magen, *The Stone Vessel Industry in the Second Temple Period. Excavations at Hizma and the Jerusalem Temple Mount* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society et al., 2002).

isaic innovation, subsequent studies have widened the perspective. Thus, Eyal Regev has traced the notion of non-priestly purity in texts such as Tobit, Judith, and the Letter of Aristeas.³¹ More recently, Yonatan Adler has pointed to the wide use of stone vessels at Khirbet Qumran and has argued that both the Temple Scroll and the Damascus Document do not generally reject the insusceptibility of stone vessels to ritual impurity but do so only in the case of a vessel in a house in which a corpse is found.³² Moreover, stone vessels have increasingly been studied alongside another installation emerging slightly earlier, purification pools, often called *miqva'ot* in rabbinic parlance. Major studies of such stepped pools have been presented by Ronny Reich, Yonatan Adler, and Stuart Miller;³³ particularly the latter's book has made important contributions to the methodological question of the relation between legal texts and material culture. A question recently raised with respect to the initial endurance beyond 70 CE of purification pools and their later disappearance is the important question of whether the main motivation for ritual purification is to be sought in the temple or elsewhere.³⁴ A number of contributions to the present volume will engage with issues raised by the most recent research into the "archaeology of purity".

These archaeological findings and the textual evidence are also linked by Jodi Magness. In her monograph "Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit"³⁵ she asks for purity practices in everyday life of Jews in Palestine in late Second-Temple period. In her research, she examines what the dominant Jewish groups in Palestine (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and the Jesus movement) contribute to the debate, thereby looking at multifaceted practices of purity. With regard to the Diaspora, she notes that there is no evidence of sectarianism there, and material finds associated with purity practices are also absent before 70 CE.

Coming from the area of New Testament research, Christina Eschner is less focussed on material culture and examines also Greek texts of early Judaism to

³¹ Eyal Regev, "Pure Individualism. The Idea of Non-Priestly Purity in Ancient Judaism," *JSJ* 31 (2000): 176–202.

³² Yonatan Adler, "The Impurity of Stone Vessels in 11QT^a and CD in Light of the Chalk Vessel Finds at Kh. Qumran," *DSD* 27 (2020): 1–31.

³³ Ronny Reich, *Miqva'ot (Jewish Ritual Baths) in the Second Temple, Mishnaic and Talmudic Periods* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Yad Ben-Zvi, 2013) (in Hebrew); Yonatan Adler, "The Archaeology of Purity. Archaeological Evidence for the Observance of Ritual Purity in Erez-Israel from the Hasmonean Period until the End of the Talmudic Era (164 BCE–400 CE)," PhD diss., Bar-Ilan University, 2011 (in Hebrew); Stuart S. Miller, *At the Intersection of Texts and Material Finds. Stepped Pools, Stone Vessels, and Ritual Purity Among the Jews of Roman Galilee*, *JAJSup* 16 (2nd rev. ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019).

³⁴ Cf. Yonatan Adler, "The Decline of Jewish Ritual Purity Observance in Roman Palaestina. An Archaeological Perspective on Chronology and Historical Context," in Oren Tal and Zeev Weiss (eds.), *Expressions of Cult in the Southern Levant in the Greco-Roman Period. Manifestations in Text and Material Culture*, Contextualizing the Sacred Series 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 269–84.

³⁵ Cf. Jodi Magness, *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit. Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Chicago: Eerdmans, 2011).

understand early Christian practices and debates on food laws.³⁶ In considering this, she notes that the issues debated in early Christianity regarding dietary laws are already grounded in debate within the Jewish diaspora. Her work thus also indicates that it is worthwhile to focus on the specific Diaspora position on certain purity laws.

2. The Contribution of the Present Volume

Christophe Nihan and Julia Rhyder open the collection with their article “Purity and Pollution in the Hebrew Bible. The State of the Discussion and Future Perspectives”, in which they summarize the central aspects of research on purity in the Pentateuch by first addressing the problems of textual evidence and then examining important methodological approaches. A further conceptual contribution is offered by *Yitzhaq Feder* (“Reconstructing the Holy Camp. Qumran and the Evolution of Purity in Ancient Judaism”), who uses a linguistic model that distinguishes between embodiment and codes to shed light on the purity discourse of the Qumran community.

The following three chapters concern material evidence regarding purity practices. *Roland Deines* provides an overview of “Archaeological Finds as Evidence for Everyday Purity Practice in the Hellenistic-Roman Period in Judea and Galilee”, focusing on ritual baths and stone vessels. Deines traces the history of research and engages recent aspects of the debate, such as the distinction between ritual baths and water reservoirs, the relationship of ritual purity with the temple, and the persistence of purity practices beyond 70 CE. This is followed by *Joseph Scales* (“The Limits of Evidence. The Miqveh as an Indicator of Jewish Purity Practices in Second-Temple Period Galilee”), who examines *miqva’ot* in Galilee and uses Magdala as an example. He concludes from the weaker findings than, for example, in Jerusalem or Qumran that the use of the *miqveh* here was less anchored in everyday life. Next, *Carsten Claußen* turns to the Jewish Diaspora (“Purity Observance and Ancient Synagogues. Ancient Jewish Water Installations in the Diaspora”). The author shows that the water installations at the synagogues in Ostia and Delos are not comparable to the *miqva’ot* as we know them from the Land of Israel. He posits that although purity also played a major role in the Diaspora, the specific form of *miqva’ot* was not adopted there.

With *Andrej Petrovic*, we remain outside the Land of Israel but turn comparatively to Greek notions of purity. In his chapter, “Inner Purity, Ritual Purity, Conscience. Perspective of the Greek Ritual Norms (on LSCG 139)”, Petrovic

³⁶ Cf. Christina Eschner, *Essen im antiken Judentum und Urchristentum. Diskurse zur sozialen Bedeutung von Tischgemeinschaft, Speiseverboten und Reinheitsvorschriften*, AJEC 108 (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

examines Greek inscriptions concerning inner purity and shows that the purity of consciousness from Greek philosophy had an influence on Greek temple regulations.

Taking up the important conceptual question of the potential relation between purity and the Jerusalem temple, *Thomas Kazen* argues that, based material and textual evidence from the Second-Temple period and rabbinic literature, purity is not only a question of the cult and thus not only purely related to the temple, but also is also a concern of everyday life (“Purity as Popular Practice. Erasing the Anachronistic Divide between Household and Cult”).

The next five chapters deal, in one form or another with purity in texts from Qumran. *Cecilia Wassén* (“Purity, Impurity, and In-Between”) demonstrates a graduated understanding of purity in the Qumran writings. She describes this grey zone between pure and impure as the normal state. In his contribution, “Purity and Cult in the Qumran War Texts. A Reconsideration”, *Michael DeVries* specifically examines the notion of purity in the War Texts from Qumran and identifies their heightened purity requirements, which he links to the proximity of the eschatological battle to the cultic sphere, as perceived by the *yahad*. Next, *Ruben Bühner* (“Purity and Messianism. Some Observations and Surprises Based on the Contrast Between the Messianic Expectations in Pss. Sol. 17 and the Dead Sea Scrolls”) explores connections between messianic expectations and purity. While he cannot find any purifying activities of the Messiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls, he shows them to be in place in Pss. Sol. 17 in connection with a royal, Davidic Messiah. Two contributions address the question of gradual purification. *Yair Furstenberg*, in his chapter, “Principles of Gradual Purification in Qumran Law”, compares the principles of gradual purification found in texts from Qumran and those ascribed to the Pharisees. Apart from commonalities, he points out that the Pharisees tended to hold a soft transition from impure to pure, whereas in Qumran strict guidelines are found in all degrees of purity. Moreover, *Laura von Bartenwerffer* compares “First Day Ablutions in Qumran and Philo” and determines the similarities and differences between the two concepts of graded purity.

Continuing with Philo of Alexandria, *Michael B. Cover* (“Symbolic Purity and the Temple of the Soul in Philo’s Allegorical Commentary”) examines Philo’s understanding of purity, critically engaging the work of Jonathan Klawans, as one marked by halakhic eclecticism and spiritualization. Engaging recent research on purity, Cover discusses the specific contribution of a “symbolic” view of purity as presented by Philo.

The final two chapters of the volume address issues of purity in the New Testament and its Jewish context. *Milena Hasselmann* examines 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 for the use of purity semantics regarding identity formation. She identifies purity as a marker that clearly differentiates inside and outside the group (“Be separate said the Lord and I will receive you”. 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 as an Example of the Connection

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