

**PURITY.** Matters of purity and impurity are a major concern of the sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls. The writer of *Miqtsat Ma'asei ha-Torah* (MMT) (4Q394–399), for example, states that because cultic and purity practices in Jerusalem did not follow precisely the teachings of the Torah, he and others have separated from the people.

The scrolls found at Qumran reveal a surprising amount of congruence on the subject of purity. Although these documents represent differences of authorship, date, and genre, they consistently champion a more stringent standard of ritual purity than was currently observed in Jerusalem. This sectarian emphasis on purity is supported by Josephus's descriptions of the Essenes and by the site at Qumran, where an ancient aqueduct connected many cisterns and immersion baths. Ritual baths have also been found at Masada. [See *Miqva'ot*.]

Comparison of the scrolls with the Mishnah reveals their uniqueness since the Mishnah represents another ancient Jewish interpretation of the same purity laws of the Torah. The rabbis of the Mishnah, successors to the Pharisees, often hold the views that the scrolls condemn.

Rabbinic literature reveals that purity concerns were central not only for the sectarians but also for the early sages. This is especially true in the time of the Second Temple and shortly thereafter (B.T. *Bekh.* 30b; J.T., *Shab.* 1.3). After the destruction of the Temple, the study of ritual purity replaced practice of those laws, which depended on the cult. The laws of the Mishnah, nearly 25 percent of which relate to purity matters, reflect the rabbinic expectation that the Temple eventually would be restored. Nevertheless, whereas the sectarians preferred a stringent interpretation of the Torah's purity laws, the rabbis tried to limit purity restrictions whenever possible.

The scrolls most relevant to this discussion are: Rule of the Community from Cave 1 (hereafter, 1QRule of the Community, 1QS), Rule of the Congregation (1Q28a), Damascus Document (4Q266–273, CD), Florilegium (4Q174), MMT (4Q394–399), Ordinances<sup>b</sup> (4Q514), Purification Rules A (4Q274), and Temple Scroll<sup>a</sup> (11Q19).

**Terms.** *Qodesh qodashim* ("holiest of the holy") refers to places, persons (e.g., the high priest), and items (usually food) that have been set aside exclusively for the service of God at the highest level of sanctity. *Qodesh* ("holy") refers to items of lesser sanctity. *Tahor* ("pure") is the absence of impurity; *tohorah* ("purity") can refer to all pure belongings of the community but usually refers only to the community's food and drink. *Tame* ("impure") and *tum'ah* ("impurity") refer to those items that threaten the pure status of Israel. [See *Tithing*.]

**Biblical Foundations.** The purity system of the Torah provides the foundation for all subsequent Jewish discussions of the subject. Purity is a state of being commanded

of all Israelites in order to enable a holy God to live among and protect them (cf. *Dt.* 23.14). God has made his house the sanctuary and from its inner room, the Holy of Holies, he has promised to speak to Israel (*Ex.* 25.22).

In order to guard the holiness of the sanctuary, purity had to be maintained in Israel. Purity restrictions were more severe the closer one was to the sanctuary that was in the center of the Israelite camp. Only pure priests could enter the sanctuary. Levites lived around it and worked in its courtyard. The rest of Israel live around the Levitical camp.

According to anthropologists, food laws maintain the lines of distinction between those within a culture and those outside it. The holier the person, the greater the food privileges as well as the restrictions. This is certainly true of the Torah. Israel, the chosen people, eats only certain pure foods. The Levites, the chosen tribe, are supported by a pure food tithe from the Israelites. The priests, the chosen family of Aaron, receive holy food, including tithes and sacrificial portions, from all Israel.

Impurities are those items and conditions that threaten the pure status of Israel. Sin, of course, is the greatest of impurities and must be expiated by repentance and sacrifice; otherwise the sinner must be expelled from the community. Some severe impurities, including scale disease and abnormal genital discharges, are considered curses for sin (*Lv.* 14.34, *Dt.* 28.27, *2 Chr.* 26.19). Repentance, healing, and sacrifices are necessary to restore the person to the community.

Most impurities (for example, menstrual blood, corpse contamination), however, are incurred in the normal course of life and are not the result of sin. They are easily purified, primarily by immersion in water and the passage of time.

Scholars have debated the rationale underlying the Torah's purity system. The most persuasive view is that items are impure because they are in some way connected to or representative of death (Milgrom, 1991). Corpse contamination is the most severe of all impurities. People diseased by the flaking of their skin or open sores visually illustrate the process of decay. Even the discharge of genital fluids represents a loss of life-giving forces. Most impure animals (carnivorous ones) have a clear association with death. Scripture teaches that obedience will lead to blessing and life, while sin leads to curses and death (*Dt.* 30.15–20). Hence, what is associated with death must be restricted and avoided because it is incompatible with the holy God who gives life.

**Purity in the Dead Sea Scrolls.** There is a tendency in the Dead Sea Scrolls to expand the Torah's categories of purity and to interpret the laws of impurity stringently. Impurity is regarded as a powerful enemy that can be neutralized only by greater holiness in Israel.

**Purity classifications.** The classifications of purity in the scrolls reveal a common desire to extend holiness in Israel. The Torah's categories are interpreted maximally. However, since the sectarians had no control over the Temple, much of the data represents only an ideal.

According to Temple Scroll<sup>a</sup>, the *godesh qodashim* is not just a single room in the sanctuary but the entire sanctuary, the altar area, the laver, and the stoa (11Q19 xxxv.8-9). With regard to persons, the authors of Miqtsat Ma'asei ha-Torah (MMT) and 1QRule of the Community understand *godesh qodashim* to include all priests, not just the high priest (4Q397 5.6-8; 1QS viii.5-6; ix.2-8; cf. 4Q400 1.19).

Just as the priestly area is interpreted maximally so is priestly food, *tohorat ha-Miqdash*. According to the Temple Scroll, Israelites must contribute all fourth-year fruit, animal tithes, and an annual tribute of birds, wild animals, and fish to the priests (11Q19 lx.3-4; xlvi.17; cf. 4Q396 3.2-4; Nm. 31.28-29). By contrast, the rabbis do not require any priestly tribute from birds, game, or fish, and they allow farmers to eat their own animal tithes (after priestly portions are given) and fourth-year fruit (Zev. 5.8, *Sifrei* on Numbers 6[9]). In addition, Temple Scroll<sup>a</sup> states that all slaughter conducted by anybody living within three days' travel of Jerusalem was to be carried out at the sanctuary with substantial portions of each sacrifice given to the priests (11Q19 lii.13-21; cf. Lv. 17.3-4). Levites too received a sacrificial portion, a gift not established by scripture.

The category of *godesh* is expanded as well. The authors of MMT and the Temple Scroll emphasize the holiness of the entire city of Jerusalem (4Q394 3.10-12; cf. 2.16-18). The Temple Scroll bars all bearers of impurity from the city and requires of them three days of purification, probably based on the holiness regulations of Israel at Mount Sinai (cf. 1Q28a i.26). Sexual intercourse is forbidden in the city according to both the Temple Scroll (11Q19 xlv.11-12) and the Damascus Document (CD xii.1-2).

Other Israelite cities are pure to a lesser degree than Jerusalem. The Temple Scroll states: "[And let] their cities [be] clean forever, and the city, which I will hallow by settling my name and [my] temp[le within (it)], shall be holy and clean" (11Q19 xlvi.3-4; cf. 4Q394 2.17-18).

In some sense every Israelite is *godesh* ("holy") according to the scrolls (4Q396 4.4-8; 1QS viii.5; ix.2-8). Jews are forbidden to marry gentiles or accept their food (4Q394 1.6-11; 4Q174 1.4; cf. Dt. 23.2-4, Josephus's *The Jewish War* 2.409-410, Zev. 4.5). The Temple Scroll further distinguishes between the *ish tahor* ("pure individual") who will observe greater purity, and the *adam mi-Yisra'el* ("[ordinary] Israelite").

Without control over the Jerusalem Temple, the com-

munities of the Dead Sea Scrolls could only approximate the holiness they desired. The Rule of the Community describes the standard of purity that was in practice at Qumran. Ordinary food was eaten in a state of purity. All members of the community had to bathe before eating the *tohorah*, the pure communal meal (1QS v.13; cf. *The Jewish War* 2.129). According to other sources, Community members changed into white clothing before eating it, and no physically impaired person could participate (*The Jewish War* 2.129-131, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.21; 1Q28a ii:3-10; cf. 1QM vii:4-6). Exclusion from the *tohorah* was a penalty for members who violated the community rules (1QS vii.2-21; viii.22-24; *The Jewish War* 2.143).

Candidates for membership in the community were put on probation and examined for an entire year before they were allowed to eat the communal food; at least two years of probation were necessary in order to drink communal liquids (1QS vi.17-21; *The Jewish War* 2.138; cf. CD xv.14-15). By contrast, according to the rabbis, ordinary food was merely invalidated if it became impure; no penalties applied.

Food terms reinforce the distinction between priest and Israelite. The food of the laity is called *tohorat ha-rabbim* ("pure [food] of the many"; 1QS vi.16-17, 25; vii.3) or *tohorat anshei ha-godesh* ("the pure (food) of the holy persons"; 1QS v.13; viii.17). However, *tohorat ha-godesh*, the "pure sacred food," required greater sanctity (Milgrom, 1992).

Levels of purity with regard to food are already present in the Bible. They are distinguished by the nature and purpose of the food (e.g., sacrificial, pure, ordinary) and the restrictions that are imposed. These determine which foods can be eaten, who can eat them, how much time is allowed for eating it, and the place of consumption (Lv. 7.16-18; 22.10-16). Holier foods will be under greater restrictions. According to *Leviticus*, the holiest of priestly foods could only be eaten in the sanctuary court by male priests (Lv. 6.11). At the very least, all Israel had to eat at a minimum level of purity which required draining animal blood properly so as not to ingest it, avoiding certain animals for food, and eating no suet (Lv. 7.23-27; 11.1-47; 17.10-16; cf. Dt. 12.23-25).

The Damascus Document may refer to the same community as the Rule of the Community. Candidates for membership in the group were inspected for one year (CD xv.14-15). Physically impaired persons were excluded because of the presence of the holy angels within the community (CD xv.15-16). Disobedient members were barred from the communal meal (CD ix.21).

The Damascus Document distinguishes between those Israelites who live in a camp of "perfect holiness" and those Israelites who live in the "camps" (i.e., cities of Is-

rael). The text has been interpreted to mean that the former were celibate (probably residents of Jerusalem and/or Qumran) and the latter were married (CD vii.4-7) (Qimron, 1992). Josephus may be referring to the same movement when he says some Essenes are celibate (*The Jewish War* 2.120; *Jewish Antiquities* 18.21) and others are not (*The Jewish War* 2.160). [See Celibacy; Marriage and Divorce.]

**Impurities.** The particular laws of impurity are largely compatible among the scrolls. Ambiguity in the Torah is settled by adopting an interpretation that meets all possible requirements, however strict (cf. Milgrom, 1989). The following impurities are discussed in the scrolls: corpses, scale disease, genital discharges, animal carcasses, and excrement.

The Qumran sect buried the dead outside the community in accordance with *Numbers* 5.2. The Temple Scroll bans all corpse-contaminated persons from Jerusalem and orders them quarantined in other cities (11Q19 xlv.17; xlviii.13-15).

The tent in which a person died and everything in it was impure for seven days according to the Torah (*Nm.* 19.14). The Temple Scroll includes all types of dwellings in its interpretation of "tent" (11Q19 xlix.5-6). In addition to the biblical rites of sprinkling a contaminated tent with special ashes and water, dwellings had to be cleansed even to the washing of locks and doorposts. Walls, doors, and floors had to be scraped (11Q19 xlix.12-16). Sealed or unsealed vessels of all types, including stone, were considered contaminated along with their contents (11Q19 xlix.8-15; as opposed to *Kelim* 1.1). Even nails and pegs in the dwelling wall became impure (CD xii.17-18; cf. *Kel.* 11.3).

Moreover, a woman carrying a dead fetus was considered as impure as a tomb because she contained a dead body. Anyone touching her, or in the same room with her, was contaminated for seven days (11Q19 l.11-16; as opposed to *Hullin* 4.3).

By contrast, rabbinic law allows the corpse-contaminated person after immersion to enter all but sacred areas. The definition of a tent in the scriptures is limited to structures not attached to the ground (*Sifrei* on *Numbers* line 129 [page 166 H. S. Horowitz edition]). Other susceptible items are limited to a few types of unsealed, usable vessels (*Kel.* 2.1).

Like the rabbis, the scrolls consider the *metSORA'*, a person afflicted with scale disease, to be a sinner (cf. T., *Neg.* 6.7; B.T., *'Arakh.* 16a). Fragments from Purification Rules A (4Q274) and the Damascus Document (4Q270) state that *tsara'at* ("scale disease") is induced by an evil spirit and that the *metSORA'* must plead for mercy as a sinner. The scrolls follow the inspection and purification procedures of *Leviticus* (4Q267 9.1-14; *Lv.* 13-14). According

to the Temple Scroll, special places are to be established for scale-diseased persons outside of all cities (11Q19 xlvi.16-18; cf. 4Q396 3.4-8; 4Q274). The Mishnah excludes the *metSORA'* only from walled cities (*Kel.* 1.7; cf. *Jewish Antiquities* 3.264, *Against Apion* 1.28).

According to the Temple Scroll, all persons discharging sexual fluids (menstrual blood or semen), are to be removed from Jerusalem and quarantined within ordinary cities (11Q19 xlviii.13-17). Serekh Damascus fragments (4Q265) reveal that women discharging blood after childbirth were impure for forty to eighty days, depending on the gender of the child (cf. *Lv.* 12.4-5). In Galilee a desperate woman with an abnormal discharge approached Jesus publicly (*Mk.* 5.25-27). This was a matter of some concern: abnormal discharges (e.g., gonorrhea) were considered curses for *sin* (Rule of the Community 4Q274).

The author of the Temple Scroll requires men who have had seminal emissions to leave Jerusalem until they are purified. Those who are approaching the city but have had sexual intercourse must bathe and launder their clothing, remaining outside the city in a special area for three days before entering (11Q19 xlv.11-12; cf. CD xii.1-2). By contrast, the rabbis consider such persons pure for all ordinary purposes after immersion and for all sacred purposes after sunset (*Tev. Y.* 2.2-3; *Sifra* Shemini Sheratsim 8.9).

Since the Temple Scroll does not mention installations in Jerusalem for women during their times of impurity, and since no sexual intercourse is allowed there, apparently no women were to live in the city (Yadin). It is possible that there were such installations in Jerusalem in the Second Temple period for women with fluxes (*Nid.* 7.4; *A.R.N.* 2.3; Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on *Lv.* 12.2; *Jewish Antiquities* 3.261).

The scrolls emphasize that the whole carcass of an animal not ritually slaughtered is defiling, even its skin and claws (11Q19 li.4-5; 4Q394; cf. *Lv.* 11.39-40). The rabbis claim that hides, horns, and hooves are not included in this injunction and do not convey uncleanness (*Hul.* 9.1; cf. *Sifra* Shemini Sheratsim 10.2; *Yad.* 4.6). According to the Temple Scroll and MMT, the hides of such animals cannot be brought into Jerusalem even as flasks (11Q19 xlvii.7-18; 4Q394). This view was actually put into law by Antiochus III (r. 223-187 BCE) one of the Seleucid rulers of Palestine.

According to the Temple Scroll, no "place for a hand," a latrine, was allowed in Jerusalem, but rather at a location 3,000 cubits northwest of the city (11Q19 xlvi.13-16; cf. 1Q33 7.6-7). This is based on the Deuteronomic law requiring soldiers to leave their camp to relieve themselves (*Dt.* 23.12-13). Yadin suggests that the Gate of the Essenes in Jerusalem was used by the sect to walk to their latrine area (Yadin, 1983). Josephus states that the Es-

senes even refrained from defecation on the Sabbath so as not to desecrate it (*The Jewish War* 2.147-149). By contrast, the rabbis do not regard excrement as impure in any context (*Tev. Y.* 2.1) and demand that latrines be set up in every city (B.T., *San.* 17b).

**Transfer of impurity.** Impurity is a more penetrating force in the scrolls than in the Mishnah. This is clear from the expanded categories of susceptible items discussed above. Additionally, anyone who touched either an impure person or an individual in the process of purification became impure and was not allowed to eat until after bathing and laundering his or her clothing. Josephus states that among the Essenes senior members would not touch junior members for fear of defilement (*The Jewish War* 2.150). Even objects on which the impure person had lain or sat or which he or she had merely touched could transmit impurity to other persons (4Q274; cf. CD xii.17).

As noted above, the scrolls are especially concerned with food and drink. Liquid not only receives but can transmit impurity (CD xii.16-17). If a liquid is poured out of a vessel onto an impure item, the impurity will be transmitted by the flow upward back into the vessel (4Q394 3.5-8). Even the food and drink of impure persons was a concern; impure persons had to bathe before eating (4Q514; 4Q274).

**Purification.** Purifications prescribed by the scrolls generally intensify the biblical instructions. As a minimum purification from any impurity, laundering, bathing, and waiting for sunset are required (4Q396 4.1; 11Q19 1.8-9). Only clean water could be used for purification, and it had to cover the whole person (4Q267 17.8-9; CD x.10-13). The rabbis require only bathing as a minimum purification; a person who has immersed is granted access to everything in the profane sphere and waits for sundown only to gain access to the holy.

The sectarians required immersion for ritual impurity as well as moral impurity. Sinners were instructed to immerse themselves in water in order to be purified. In fact, all their belongings were considered in some way (?) impure (1QS v.20; cf. 1QpHab viii.3-13). However, without repentance immersion was meaningless (1QS iii.3-9; v.13-15). The same view is endorsed by both John the Baptist, who baptized repentant sinners (*Mt.* 3.6-11), and Philo of Alexandria (*The Unchangeableness of God* 7-8).

**Rationale for purity.** The key to understanding the maximal interpretations of purity in the scrolls lies in the recognition that the writers were primarily priests (Schiffman, 1989; Schwartz, 1990). The responsibility of the priests was to ensure the sanctity of the sanctuary. The greatest threat to the sanctuary was not physical assault from outside but impurity resulting from within Israel. The priests had to be certain that God was pleased with

his house or else he would either depart, leaving Israel defenseless, or go to war against her (4Q267 2.8-9). Hence, ambiguity in the Torah was settled by stricter interpretation. Most rabbis, by contrast, were laymen. They too regarded the Torah's laws as sacred and inviolable. However, their interpretation reveals a bias in favor of the laity, restricting priestly gifts and limiting the purity regulations to the minimal requirements.

The authors of the scrolls looked forward to the messianic era when they would control the Temple and its cult. Focus on the future sharpened because of current failure to bring about desired holiness. The sectarians considered themselves a temporary substitute for the Jerusalem Temple, even referring to themselves as a "Temple of Men" (4Q174 1.6; cf. 1QS viii.5-9; ix.3-6). The laws discussed above forbidding physically impaired persons from the group, abstaining from sexual intercourse, and bathing before meals were incumbent on the priests on duty in the Temple. Since the community was a substitute for the Temple, the sectarians tried to enforce these laws among themselves.

Unlike the early Christians, the sectarians did not think of themselves as a permanent replacement for the Temple. Rather, the scrolls emphasize the necessity of observing all the ritual purity laws of the Torah. Jesus, by contrast, appears to marginalize the whole issue of ritual purity by teaching that only what comes from a person's heart will defile him (*Mk.* 7.14-23; *Mt.* 23.25; *Lk.* 11.38-40). In fact, Mark states that Jesus declared all foods clean (*Mk.* 7.19). According to *John*, purity comes by association with Jesus (*Jn.* 13.10, 15.3). The author of *Hebrews*, too, believes that Christianity has replaced the physical cult and its purity laws (*Heb.* 10.1-25).

[See also Cairo Genizah; Damascus Document; Ethics; Legal Works; Rule of the Community; Rule of the Congregation; and Temple Scroll.]

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**PYTHAGOREANS.** The religious and philosophical movement to which the Pythagoreans belonged was founded in the sixth century BCE by Pythagoras, a shadowy historical figure who was the subject of many ancient legends (see Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, 8.1–50; Porphyry, *The Life of Pythagoras*; Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*). Pythagoras probably was born c.570 BCE on the island of Samos but emigrated in approximately 529 BCE to Croton in southern Italy, where he inaugurated the so-called Italian school of ancient philosophy by founding the fraternity that bore his name. He is usually credited with teaching the theory of metempsychosis and the importance of numbers as the key to understanding the structure of the universe. His school, which had Apollo as its patron deity and "fellow God" as its slogan, was characterized by a strict ascetic discipline and a communal way of life. The closeness of his community (said to have numbered nearly three hundred) is indicated by the fact that Pythagoras is credited with having coined three of the most famous ancient maxims on friendship: "friendship is equality," "friends have all things in common," and "a friend is another I." Although Pythagoras and his followers ini-

tially achieved a high degree of success and wielded considerable political power, they soon faced fierce political opposition, and it is debated whether the early Pythagoreans survived the classical period.

During the Hellenistic period, however, a large number of Pseudo-Pythagorean writings were produced. Some of these may be as early as the fourth century BCE, but most scholars date the bulk of these writings to the first century BCE or later. These documents, which contain various Platonic and Peripatetic ideas, contributed to the rise of Neo-Pythagoreanism, which won the allegiance of men such as Apollonius of Tyana and Numenius of Gerasa. This revival of interest in Pythagoras and his teachings began during the period when many of the nonbiblical Dead Sea Scrolls were produced.

Even before the scrolls were discovered, scholars such as Zeller and Lévy had emphasized the importance of Pythagoreanism for the development of the Essenes, grounding their arguments in Josephus' assertion that they "practiced the way of life taught among the Greeks by Pythagoras" (*Jewish Antiquities* 15.10.4 sec. 371). Subsequent to the discovery of the scrolls and the standard identification of Qumran as an Essene community, a number of scholars have provided fresh assessments of the affinities between the Pythagoreans and Essenes/Dead Sea Scrolls. The degree of similarity in such comparisons inevitably depends not only upon the particular evidence employed but also upon the interpretation of that evidence.

It is commonly affirmed that both the people of Qumran and the Pythagoreans were ascetic groups who wore white linen, lived communally with no private property, devoted themselves to prayer and purifications, held sessions where the teachings of the group were expounded, and celebrated common meals. In addition, both groups seem to have required a solemn oath of initiation but otherwise prohibited or restricted the use of oaths. The observance of the sun's movements was also important to both groups, and some have argued that the solar calendar used by the sectarians was originally devised by the Pythagoreans.

Many of the affinities between the two groups are likely the result of their involvement in a similar enterprise, the general influence of Hellenistic culture (with its Pythagorean elements) in Palestine, and the sect's adoption of the legal form used by Hellenistic private and religious associations. Attempts to demonstrate a more pervasive or direct Pythagorean influence—such as Dupont-Sommer's (1955) interpretation of the Rule of the Community from Cave 1 at Qumran (1QS x.4) as a reference to the Pythagorean sacred number fifty—have proved to be either erroneous or unpersuasive. [See Rule of the Commu-