

Jewish Spirituality and Divine Law

EDITED BY

Adam Mintz and Lawrence Schiffman

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The Orthodox Forum Series
is a project of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary,
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THE ORTHODOX FORUM

The Orthodox Forum, convened by Dr. Norman Lamm, Chancellor of Yeshiva University, meets each year to consider major issues of concern to the Jewish community. Forum participants from throughout the world, including academicians in both Jewish and secular fields, rabbis, *rashei yeshiva*, Jewish educators, and Jewish communal professionals, gather in conference as a think tank to discuss and critique each other's original papers, examining different aspects of a central theme. The purpose of the Forum is to create and disseminate a new and vibrant Torah literature addressing the critical issues facing Jewry today.

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Series Editor's Preface

We are delighted to introduce the 10th volume in The Orthodox Forum Series, *Divine Law and Human Spirituality*, edited by Dr. Lawrence Schiffman and Rabbi Adam Mintz. The editors of the volume have skillfully guided the formulation and exploration of the spirituality theme across a wide range of disciplines.

The Orthodox Forum Series has become a significant resource for scholars, advanced students and serious laymen seeking clarification of major intellectual and theological questions facing the Jewish people in the modern world.

At a time when Jewish identity and commitment are being challenged by apathy and ignorance of primary sources, it is critical that clear exposition of our classical values be widely disseminated by knowledgeable leaders in a thoughtful and engaging manner.

We are confident that the community will warmly welcome this timely volume.

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Robert S. Hirt

Introduction

Adam Mintz

In 1989, the Orthodox Forum was established by Dr. Norman Lamm, then President of Yeshiva University, to consider major issues of concern to the Jewish community. Academicians, rabbis, *rashei yeshiva*, Jewish educators and communal professionals have been invited each year to come together for an in-depth analysis of one such topic. This group has constituted an Orthodox think tank and has produced a serious and extensive body of literature.

In the spirit of its initial mandate, the Forum has chosen topics that have challenged Jews and Judaism throughout history. One of the themes addressed in this series is the numerous confrontations that have existed, both in past eras and in the present time, between the central principles of Orthodox belief and practice, on the one hand, and the widely-accepted values of the contemporary secular society. In the 1992 Orthodox Forum, which examined the tension between rabbinic authority and personal autonomy, Dr. Moshe Sokol pointed out that this tension between authority and personal autonomy which is a central problem for Western religions gener-

ally “can be a particularly sharp problem for Jews who maintain a commitment to the observance of *halakhah*.”¹

Similarly, spirituality, the topic of the conference held in the year 2000, presents, on first consideration, an apparent clash between spirituality and law and breaches the divide between the subjectivity inherent in the one and the objective requirements of practice and belief essential to *halakhah*. In addition, the seeming New-Age faddishness of spirituality stands starkly against the deep historical roots of the Jewish tradition. In a passage quoted by several of the volume’s contributors, Dr. Lamm formulated the delicate balance between law and spirituality:

The contrast between the two – spirituality and law – is almost self-evident. Spirituality is subjective; the very fact of its inwardness implies a certain degree of anarchy; it is unfettered and self-directed, impulsive and spontaneous. In contrast, law is objective; it requires discipline, structure, obedience, order. Yet both are necessary. Spirituality alone begets antinomianism and chaos; law alone is artificial and insensitive. Without the body of the law, spirituality is a ghost. Without the sweep of the soaring soul, the corpus of the law tends to become a corpse. But how can two such opposites coexist within one personality without producing unwelcome schizoid consequences?²

The risks of producing the “ghost” and the “corpse” and the need for coexistence and integration are issues that have confronted Jews for centuries.

The primary purpose of the conference and this resulting volume has been to demonstrate through a spectrum of diverse views, that spirituality and Orthodox Judaism are actually not hostile to one another, but, to the contrary, complement and enrich one another.

¹ Moshe Sokol, “Preface”, in *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy*, edited by Moshe Sokol (Northvale, NJ, 1992), p. xii

² Norman Lamm, *The Shema: Spirituality and Law in Judaism* (Philadelphia, 2000), p. 6.

other. The issue is first approached from a historical perspective, in essays dealing with ancient Judaism, the medieval period and the contemporary period. The following essays then consider the interplay between spirituality and traditional Judaism in synagogue art and in prayer. Essays by Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein and Dr. Chaim Waxman frame the discussion and present an overview of the wide-ranging philosophical and sociological implications of the topic.

In an attempt to guarantee that our society's current search for spirituality is not overlooked, a colloquium was added to the conference to address the role of spirituality within our synagogues and *yeshivot*. Rabbi Daniel Cohen, Cantor Sherwood Goffin, Rabbi Nathaniel Helfgot, Dr. David Pelcovitz and Prof. Suzanne Last Stone explored the possibilities for spirituality in our institutions focusing on the "Carlebach phenomenon" and the perceived need for enhanced spirituality in Orthodox institutions. While the intention was not to produce a written record of the colloquium, it served to enhance the conference and helped to maintain the delicate balance required between the theoretical and the practical.

In the first essay of this volume, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein defines both the values and the risks of spirituality and law. He utilizes Maimonides' distinction between law, which relates to the public sphere, and spirituality, which is highly personal, as the basis for his understanding of the terms. According to Rabbi Lichtenstein, while we must abandon neither, we also must achieve the proper balance between the two. Spirituality provides expression for the *halakhah* while *halakhah* prescribes necessary forms and constraints to our spiritual impulses. We have to prevent our commitment to the minutiae of law from robbing our actions of meaning and feeling just as we must be careful not to allow our desire for spirituality to cause us to ignore those laws considered non-spiritual.

Rabbi Lichtenstein concludes his paper with an analysis of the contemporary Jewish scene. He sees the risks inherent in the move toward excess spirituality both in the realm of prayer and Torah study. He writes, "I'm afraid, however, that votaries of current spirituality often tend to erode the status of *yirah* (awe); and, together with it, the status of the very essence of *yahadut*: *kabbalat*

ol malkhut shamayim (acceptance of the yoke of heaven) and *kabbalat ol mitzvot* (acceptance of the yoke of commandments).” Is this fear reasonable or is this critique of contemporary spirituality too harsh? The remaining articles in the volume provide the necessary background to consider this question.

Professors Lawrence Schiffman and Yaakov Elman explore the uses of spirituality in the ancient period, concentrating on the eras of the Bible and second temple and of the Talmudic period. Professor Schiffman focuses on the approach to religion, which centered on the Temple and its service and how this religious expression evolved as people began to move away from the Temple. Professor Elman examines human spirituality as it was construed in the rabbinic era through a study of specific incidences and testimonies of key Talmudic figures.

Professors Brill and Lasker examine spirituality in medieval literature. Professor Brill argues that the study of Kabbalah is crucial in order to add meaning to *mitzvot* and Torah. He takes issue with those who exclude Kabbalah from the canon of Judaism or advocate for finding certain aspects of Kabbalah outside the normative framework of Judaism. Professor Lasker begins his paper by stating that, “Medieval Jewish philosophers did not have a specific concept of human spirituality in its modern usage.” He goes on to present two models of medieval philosophy’s understanding of the soul and its place in establishing a relationship between man and God. The ability to frame spirituality in the world of medieval terminology and thought allows us to begin to formulate a definition of spirituality that is relevant in different historical and cultural settings.

Professors Fine and Mann further expand the scope of the discussion with an exploration of spirituality and the arts. Professor Fine examines the mosaics found within synagogues of the fourth through sixth centuries CE. While the use of mosaics was common in public places during this period, the presence of these mosaics in synagogues and the later opposition to this artistic representation in the synagogue points to a spiritual aesthetic that was both communally and culturally driven. Professor Mann traces the rabbinic attitude towards Jewish ceremonial art. While rabbinic opposition

points to the potential distractions caused by these works of art, certain rabbis were also sensitive to the spiritual value of decorative ceremonial objects especially within the synagogue setting. These surveys broaden our appreciation for the role of spirituality beyond the intellectual world.

Having presented a picture of the historical, intellectual and cultural images of spirituality, the challenge remains how to understand these images and how to transmit them to others. Rabbi Moshe Sokolow and Erica Brown explore the experience of teaching spirituality. Rabbi Sokolow presents a model for the introduction of spirituality in Jewish day schools and yeshiva high schools. Spirituality must play a role in the formulation of the school's vision as well as in its curriculum and teacher's training programs. Ms. Brown looks at the field of adult education and points out a unique educational problem – namely that adults tend to be interested in acquiring new information and are not especially interested in seeking the spiritual value of this information. She shares with us her experiences in the field and her strategies for overcoming this obstacle and transmitting this spiritual essence to a class of adults.

The challenge of transmitting spirituality is particularly relevant in the arena of prayer. Professor Hyman explores the Maimonidean position on prayer and concludes that according to Maimonides, spirituality is part of the process of prayer but that ultimately it plays only a minor role in the complex halakhic and philosophic definition of prayer. Professors Bleich and Lowenthal trace the evolution of spirituality and prayer in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Professor Bleich looks at the Reform innovations to the synagogue service and the response of the Orthodox who attempt to maintain the tradition while incorporating the needs of the spiritual. Professor Lowenthal examines the innovations of the Hasidic community in the realm of spirituality as a response to the potential encroachment of the modern world into the Jewish community. His emphasis on the value of spirituality for the youth, especially the girls in the early days of the Bais Yaakov movement and in the Chabad community, provides an important perspective on the relevance and importance of spirituality in pre-war Eastern Europe. Professor Carmy concludes

the discussion on prayer and spirituality by posing the question, “Can thinking about prayer improve the quality of our prayer?” He goes on to examine prayer in the context of the religious and halakhic philosophies of both Rav Kook and Rav Soloveitchik.

The final essay in the volume by Professor Waxman is entitled “Religion, Spirituality and the Future of American Judaism” and explores the sociology of spirituality in America today. He claims that spirituality is a manifestation of the privatization of religious practice today in which people are moving away from institutions and looking for personal expressions of religious observance. This phenomenon has served to weaken the traditional institutions of Judaism. Waxman argues that what is needed is for our institutions to provide avenues for spirituality thereby enabling the quest for spirituality to be realized within traditional Judaism and not outside of it.

Professor Waxman’s paper provides an appropriate segue from our discussion of the past to the necessity of developing a plan for the future. Contemporary Jewish society has much to gain from an appreciation of this subject as seen through the variety of vantage points presented in this volume. Yet, at the same time, modern culture introduces its own challenges and unique personality that must be addressed by the committed Jew. Rabbi Lichtenstein articulates this challenge at the conclusion of his paper:

This brings us, finally, back to our primary problem: How to attain optimal fusion of divine law and human spirituality, committed to both while eschewing neither. We live by the serene faith that it can be done. We refuse to believe that we are doomed to choose between arid formalism and unbridled sensibility... The apocryphal remark attributed to an anonymous *hasid*, גישט – נישט, חסידים דאווען – אין צייט; מתנגדים דאווען נישט – אין צייט (Misnagdim daven not, but on time; H~~ä~~asidim daven, but not on time) is both facile and tendacious. It is also false. It is our mission to assure that legalists and spiritualists both pray – on time.

The volume has been compiled with the hope that it will contribute to the realization of that mission.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge those people who have been instrumental in the completion of this volume. The project has been spearheaded by Dr. Norman Lamm, Chancellor of Yeshiva University and convener of the Orthodox Forum. My own spiritual development is a product of his many years of leadership and I am honored to participate in this project. Rabbi Robert Hirt, Senior Advisor to the President, Yeshiva University, is deeply committed to the mission of the Forum and the dissemination of its material. Rabbi Hirt has provided guidance and direction for me since my first day at Yeshiva College and his invitation to participate in the Orthodox Forum and to co-edit this volume is just one of the many things for which I am grateful. Mrs. Marcia Schwartz's gracious assistance has made this job significantly easier and I am thankful to the members of the steering committee for their involvement in developing and formalizing this challenging topic. Miriam and Yonatan Kaganoff served as editorial assistants and were instrumental in the preparation of the manuscripts for publication. Finally, it was a pleasure to co-edit this volume with Professor Lawrence Schiffman; his passion, expertise and experience made this process an enjoyable and enlightening one for me.

2

Jewish Spirituality in the Bible and Second Temple Literature

Lawrence H. Schiffman

INTRODUCTION

The topic this paper seeks to investigate can theoretically be understood in various ways. Whatever approach may be taken to this topic, it is a given that the “spiritual,” in any phase of the history of Judaism, must be intimately related to the commandments which stand at the center of Jewish life.¹ These commandments, in all periods of Jewish history, ought to be seen as the platform upon which the spiritual or religious experience must be built. What we seek to understand is how the spiritual dimensions of meaning or significance impact on the individual Jew as he or she participates in a variety of religious or

¹ Cf. G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, trans. R. Mannheim (New York: Schocken, 1965), pp. 5–31.

even mundane activities. We hope to show that the spiritual aspects of Jewish life are deeply imbedded in the biblical tradition, and that these same trends were continued into Second Temple times and further developed, thus forming an essential aspect of the conceptual framework that is evident in classical rabbinic literature.

But such a study requires that we attempt to better define what we mean by “spirituality.” Let me try my hand, in the hope that my definition can serve as the basis for the paper that follows:

Jewish spirituality involves the quest for a meaningful religious life, involving both the distinctive belief system and required halakhic observances which together constitute the authentic Jewish experience. The quest for spiritual fulfillment in a Jewish context is an attempt to experience a connection with the divine through the application of theological beliefs to the observance of the commandments and to all phases of daily life. It is the self-transcending aspect of our Jewish life, in which we attempt to develop greater and greater sensitivity to the presence of God as it can be manifested in ourselves, our community, the Jewish people, our fellow humans, and the natural world. The true seeker of the spiritual will necessarily feel a sense of progress in his or her religious life as it becomes increasingly transcendent.²

This working definition should make clear that we do not intend to treat here the complex phenomenon of biblical prophecy or the nature of mystical experience, which in the Bible are overlapping categories but which are clearly separate in Second Temple times. Prophecy and mysticism are essentially elite phenomena which represent a bridging, to some extent, of the gap between humans and God. In prophecy, the bridge is traversed by God who searches out His creatures with whom He seeks to communicate.³ In mysticism, it is lowly mankind that attempts to transcend its earthly existence

² Contrast A.E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 1–7 which deals also with the differences between spirituality and mysticism.

³ A.J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1962), pp. 439–46.

and come closer to God.⁴ We seek, however, to investigate the religious – better, spiritual – paths that are open to average Jews and which form the core of their religious life.

This “spirituality” is what Max Kadushin called “normal mysticism,” by which he meant the average Jew’s experience of God.⁵ This experience he saw as private and incommunicable to some extent. In his view, the experience of God takes place through belief in fundamental Jewish concepts and practices which endow with holiness our everyday existence. Such experiences of God are non-theurgic in character and are tied to ritual occasions.

While such experiences are available to all Jews, some individuals will have greater appreciation of the divine. But an awareness of God is expected to be attained by all Jews. One of the functions of *halakhah*, in his view, is to level the playing field, making such experiences available to every Jew – not only to the elite.⁶

“SPIRIT” IN BIBLICAL AND SECOND TEMPLE LITERATURE

Spirituality is seen by some as a foreign import into traditional Jewish discourse, probably because of its trendy nature in our society. But in fact, it has deep roots in biblical tradition. Let us not forget that the medieval term *ruhaniut* (“spirituality,” as opposed to *gashmiut*, “materiality”) has as its basis the use of *ruah*, “spirit,” in the Bible and later Jewish literature. This aspect, as we hope to show, is intimately connected with the manner in which the Bible describes the non-physical aspects of the human being.

This is an area that has been greatly misunderstood. It is commonplace in most modern scholarly literature to state that the biblical person was a corporate entity, and that there is no division of

⁴ G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1941), pp. 3–14.

⁵ M. Kadushin, *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1952), p. 194.

⁶ Kadushin, pp. 201–14.

body and soul in the Bible.⁷ Such a division is said to exist only in Second Temple literature, and is said to be due to Hellenistic influence. Whereas the notion of a body/soul duality – in which body and soul vie for control over one another – is indeed Hellenistic, the notion of a spiritual aspect of the corporate person is already very clear in biblical times.

A variety of biblical passages testify to the notion that the soul is an entity in and of itself. The soul itself (*nefesh*) was assumed to be in the blood (Lev. 17:11) or was identical to it (Gen. 9:4–5; Deut. 12:23). The soul was understood to be the seat of the animal functions as well as affections or emotions, such as love or fear, and of desire – hence of the individual conscious life. Hence, *nefesh* can denote the personality or even the person. Upon death the soul leaves the body but retains a degree of self-consciousness and knowledge after death.⁸

Additional passages speak of a more complicated “anthropology.” This view is based primarily on Gen. 2:4–3. Here, material form, when animated by the spirit, becomes a living soul. When God breathes the *nishmat adam* into man, he becomes *nefesh hayyah*. The *nishmat hayyim* is also called *ruah hayyim*, the spirit. This spirit – the essence of life, is part of the human corporate personality. Thus we have a *ruah*, the power of life, which when joined to the body, leads to the presence of a *nefesh*, a soul, the personality of the individual. If the *ruah* leaves, as at death, the soul ceases to be a living soul and continues its existence in the netherworld, *Sheol*. The *ruah*, the life force, however, returns to God.⁹

Essentially, when the *ruah* and *nefesh* are conceived as one, we arrive at the first body/soul conception that we described above. Hence, in some texts *ruah* is essentially identical with *nefesh*.¹⁰ It should be apparent that doctrines of resurrection such as appear in Ezekiel (37:1–14) and Daniel (12:2, 13), presuppose the afterlife of the soul and its immortality. While the nature of these concepts is

⁷ P.W. Porteous, “Soul,” in *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, pp. 428–9.

⁸ R.H. Charles, *Eschatology* (New York: Schocken, 1963), pp. 37–40.

⁹ Cf. Charles, pp. 41–3.

¹⁰ Cf. Charles, pp. 44–7.

beyond the scope of this paper, we note that they are very different from the cognate concepts of the Greeks.¹¹ It was the biblical conception of the spirit that lay at the root of Second Temple period developments, not the Hellenic notions.

These concepts underwent considerable development in Second Temple times. Josephus (*War* 2:162–4; *Ant.* 18:14–16) testifies to differences of opinion about the idea. He says that the Pharisees accepted the idea, whereas the Sadducees rejected it.¹² He also states that the Essenes believed in the immortality of the soul (*Ant.* 18:18, *War* 2:154–158),¹³ as did the Dead Sea Scrolls.¹⁴

It was in the Hellenistic domain, especially, that the soul and the body became competing elements, a concept somewhat at variance with the biblical notion. In this view, found in 2 Maccabees¹⁵ and extensively in the works of Philo, one meets an almost neo-Platonic view in which the soul struggles valiantly against the physical body to attain virtue, in our case observance of God's law.¹⁶ This approach had great influence on the entire subsequent history of Judaism,¹⁷ but for our purposes, we should note that it leads to the corollary notion that spirituality can be attained best by restraining

¹¹ Charles, pp. 142–56.

¹² He claims in *War* 2:163 that the Pharisees believed in transmigration of the souls of the good and eternal punishment of those of the evildoers after death. But in *Ant.* 18:14 he states that all souls are subjected to subterranean reward or punishment depending on their deeds.

¹³ In *Ant.* 8:154–7 he puts forward a very Hellenic notion of the afterlife, assuming that the souls of the good rise up out of the prison of the body for eternal reward, while those of the evildoers are punished in a Hades-like existence.

¹⁴ See E. Puech, *La croyance des Esséniens en la vie future: Immortalité, résurrection, vie éternelle? Histoire d'une croyance dans le Judaïsme ancien*, vol. II (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1993), pp. 327–692.

¹⁵ Puech, vol. I, pp. 85–92.

¹⁶ Cf. H.A. Wolfson, *Philo, Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), vol. I, pp. 360–423.

¹⁷ J. Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism, The History of Jewish Philosophy from Biblical Times to Franz Rosenzweig* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964), pp. 84–133.

the physical aspects of existence.¹⁸ Such concepts became prominent among various Second Temple groups, most notably in the Essenes as described by Philo and Josephus.

In the Dead Sea sect (whom most scholars identify with the Essenes), the *ruah* of the individual takes on a different role.¹⁹ It is essentially identical to what the Rabbis call the *yezer*, following Gen. 6:5.²⁰ Two *ruhōt*, good and evil, operate both within each individual and within the cosmos, competing with one another for dominion.²¹ This is totally different from the Hellenistic approach. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, body and spirit are one, and both together are either good or evil. Even with the radical ethical dualism²² and the concomitant notion of predestination²³ present in the sectarian scrolls, the spiritual is never cast as an opponent of the physical.

The concept of spirit or soul in biblical literature, as we have seen, developed in various ways in Second Temple literature, to some extent under Hellenistic influence. It was this soul/spirit that was the forum for the individual's experience of God and holiness as it was understood and described in early Jewish literature. When we speak of spirituality, we deal with the intersection of this aspect of human existence with the divine. The soul, the essence of human

¹⁸ We have not included asceticism in the study that follows. For a survey, see S.D. Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism," in *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 1, *From the Bible through the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Green (New York: Crossroad, 1989), pp. 253–88.

¹⁹ A.E. Sekki, *The Meaning of Ruah at Qumran* (SBL Dissertation Series, no. 110; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), pp. 95–144, 193–219.

²⁰ Cf. G.F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 479–93; E.E. Urbach, *The Sages, Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979), vol. 1, pp. 471–83.

²¹ J. Licht, "An Analysis of the Treatment of the Two Spirits in DSD," in *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. C. Rabin and Y. Yadin (Scripta Hierosolymitana 4; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1958), pp. 88–100.

²² Cf. H. Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran: Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, trans. E.T. Sanders (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), pp. 68–80.

²³ Cf. E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism, A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 257–70; J. Duhaime, "Determinism," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, vol. 1, pp. 194–8.

spirituality, would experience God's closeness in a variety of ways, and it is to them that we now turn.

VISITING THE TEMPLE

Much of the religious experience of the Jew in First and Second Temple times was connected with entering the Temple precincts. Visiting the Temple took place for the average Jew at festivals, sometimes but not always, and on special occasions, such as to give thanks or offer an expiatory offering.²⁴

In the period of desert wandering, the camp of the children of Israel surrounded the Tabernacle. This geographical arrangement must have done much to foster the notion that the divine presence was truly dwelling (*ShKhN*) in the midst of the people (Exod. 29:42–46). The entire camp was arranged so that the most holy area was the Holy of Holies, in the middle, surrounded by the Tabernacle, then by the camp of the Levites, and then by the camp of the tribes of Israel, the outermost of these concentric areas. In fact, the purpose of the Exodus itself is not simply the entry into the Promised Land, but rather the intimacy with God which is provided by the Tabernacle and later, the Temple. “The endless rendezvous in the portable Temple is the teleological consummation of the history of redemption.”²⁵

When the First Temple was built, the architectural plan shifted from one of concentric squares to one of increasingly inner and more sanctified areas. This meant that the worshiper was “climbing a spiritual ladder” as he or she entered the Temple area.²⁶ One entered the Temple precincts and then proceeded through the gates into what was later termed the women's court, since women were allowed only this far. Further in, males could enter the small strip of the inner *azarah* called the “Court of the Israelites.” The fact that

²⁴ On pilgrimage to the Jerusalem Temple, see S. Safrai, *Ha-Aliyah la-Regel bi-Yemei Bayit Sheni* (Tel Aviv: Am Hasefer, 1965), pp. 145–9.

²⁵ J.D. Levenson, “The Jerusalem Temple in Devotional and Visionary Experience,” in *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 1, p. 37.

²⁶ In the Second Temple the worshiper physically ascended while proceeding to areas of greater sanctity.

only priests entered further, and that access to the Holy of Holies was reserved for the high priest on Yom Kippur, heightened the sense of sanctity for the worshiper.²⁷

This sense of sanctity was no doubt increased by the beauty and grandeur of the sanctuary as well as by the costumes of the *kohanim*. Descriptions of the high priest from several Second Temple period sources (*Ben Sira* 50:1–21, *Ant.* 15, 3, 3 (51–52); *War* 1, 22, 2 (437)) indicate that he was truly perceived, because of his appearance and his vestments, as if he were part of the divine retinue. His very appearance helped to foster the numinous experiences of those who saw him in the Temple.²⁸ All of this created the mood that the worshiper was truly in a holy place. That he or she actually experienced the feeling of closeness to the divine of a type not usually felt outside the sanctuary, can be inferred from a variety of biblical passages (Ps. 73:29, 145:18).

The importance of the Temple is as a vehicle for the meeting of God and man. From the Temple, blessings flow in reciprocal fashion, both from God to His people and from the people to God. Psalm 134 illustrates this reciprocal blessing as part of the liturgy of the Temple. Here we find, “Bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord,” and “May the Lord, maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion.” The blessings flow from Zion, the capital of the spiritual world, and are received all over the world. God dwells in His heavenly palace and in His earthly Temple simultaneously (Ps. 11:4; 79:1).

If the Temple is the dwelling-place of God on earth, then it seems logical that it has to be a place fit for God to inhabit. Only if it is a place of purity and sanctity can God continue to abide there. Indeed, God’s presence, and therefore His closeness to His people, was seen as conditional upon human obedience to the covenant (1 Kings 6:11–13; Ezek. 43:8–9). Thus, the neglect of *mizvot* and the

²⁷ Cf. L.H. Schiffman, “Architecture and Law: the Temple and its Courtyards in the Temple Scroll,” in *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism: Intellect in Quest of Understanding, Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox*, ed. J. Neusner, E.S. Frerichs, and N.M. Sarna (BJS 159; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), vol. 1, pp. 267–84.

²⁸ C.T.R. Haywood, *The Jewish Temple: A Non-biblical Sourcebook* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 29–30, 34–5, 38–84.

breach of the covenant between God and humanity can result in the destruction of God's House. Psalm fifteen sets forth the entrance requirements for the Temple: "Lord, who may sojourn in Your Tent, who may dwell on Your holy mountain? He who lives without blame, who does what is right..." (vss. 1-2).

In this context the righteous visitor to the Temple longs "to see the face of God," an idiom which means to worship at the Temple (Deut. 16:16; Psalm 11:4-7).²⁹ In particular, this term seems to refer to a level of intimacy with God's presence which was available to the worshiper in the Temple. *Panim* here means "presence" in a variety of passages and to appear *lifne ha-Shem* or *et penei ha-Shem* (after the *nifal* of the root *R'H*) refers not only to the physical worshiper in God's Temple, particularly at pilgrimage festivals, but also to the attendant religious experience. It was the availability of this experience, often resulting in "joy" (on which see below), that led people to pray for the opportunity to spend time in God's holy House. The term *panim* here does not imply a physical appearance, and in any case, we exclude visionary appearances of God from this study as they properly belong to the domain of mysticism, not to the spirituality of the average worshiper.

That entry into the Temple stirred spiritual feelings in Second Temple times can be seen in *Letter of Aristeas* 99 where it is said that anyone who sees the Temple and its priests "will come to astonishment and indescribable wonder, and will be stirred in mind by the holy quality which pertains to every detail."³⁰ The author apparently saw the Temple service as a revelation on earth of the heavenly world.³¹

Temple service is, to some extent, also described in Ben Sira's well-known description of the high priest. While this text clearly shows the impression that the high priest himself made, it also gives

²⁹ Both Abraham and David had visionary experiences at the place where the future Temple would be located (Gen. 22:14; 2 Chron. 3:1; 2 Sam. 24:15-25). Cf. E.R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines, Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 13-33.

³⁰ Trans. Haywood, *The Jewish Temple*, p. 30.

³¹ Haywood, p. 37.

some information about the people's reaction to the ceremonies in the Temple. We read there (50:17) that all assembled prostrated themselves before God, that (vs. 19) all the people shouted with joy in prayer before God and (Hebrew text, vs. 20) received the priestly blessing, again prostrating themselves (vs. 21).³² Clearly, the Temple service made a beautiful and inspiring impression on the Israelites who participated.

To Philo,³³ the Temple was representative of the entire universe. The specifics of its construction symbolized various aspects of the manner in which the soul was to dominate the body.³⁴ By entering the Temple one comes to appreciate the role of God as creator of the universe, the nature of the universe, and the manner in which the spiritual world must dominate the physical. The virtuous individual, freed from the passions, is symbolized by the Temple and its service, and the virtuous are, so to speak, a Temple unto themselves.³⁵ In essence, then, the Temple for Philo, when entered by the worshiper, taught through its physical form the quest for communion with God and the life of virtue that made this possible. Further, the greatness of the universe created by God was taught by the very design of each detail. The Temple, then, had as its purpose – even its architectural details – the inculcating of the highest of spiritual teachings.

SACRIFICE

Of course, the primary reason to visit the Temple was to offer a sacrifice. Sacrifice in biblical Israel may be primarily classified as several types: Some sacrifices function primarily as expiatory rites, intending to provide atonement (*kapparah*) for one who has transgressed, mostly unintentionally. Other sacrifices provide a sort of shared meal, in which the Deity joins the community or family in “partaking” of the offering. This second type of sacrifice has as its purpose establishing a close relationship with God. Other offer-

³² The sacrificial service is also described in 45:6–22 (Hebrew).

³³ See Haywood, pp. 109–41.

³⁴ Haywood, pp. 120–7 regarding the furnishings of the Temple.

³⁵ Haywood, pp. 140–1.

ings provide praise of God or thanksgiving, whether in connection with communal, i.e. historical events, or individual good fortune or salvation.³⁶ These types of sacrifice, as well as the various ancillary offerings and additional acts performed in the Temple, were all highly spiritually meaningful to biblical Israel.

Expiatory rites are essentially sacrifices of substitution. A human being is aware of his or her transgression and expiates it by offering an animal whose life is taken and which is offered up as a substitute for the guilty party. In bringing such a sacrifice, and in reciting the required confessional formula over the animal,³⁷ the person is acutely conscious of his own failings and of the opportunity for a new start. The combination of repentance and a sort of transfer of his transgressor status to the animal (similar to the Yom Kippur ritual of Leviticus 16), provides the worshiper with a deeply religious feeling of having been granted forgiveness by God in His holy place, the Temple.

The *shelamim* offering provided the experience of a shared meal. This type of offering emphasizes communion with God, and the almost familial relationship of God with the one who offers the sacrifice and with his family who share in eating it together with him. Participation in such offerings served not only to provide a feast in the presence of God, but also inculcated a feeling of a personal relationship with the Deity in Whose House, the Temple, the shared meal occurred.

Participation in thanksgiving or festival sacrifices provided an opportunity to render to God thanks and appreciation for His bounties to humanity. Here the dominant human emotions were

³⁶ For a survey of the phenomenon of sacrifice in religious studies, see J. Henninger, "Sacrifice," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 12, pp. 544–57. See also R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960), pp. 447–56; Y. Kaufmann, *Toledot ha-Emunah ha-Yisra'elit* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute; Tel Aviv: Dvir, n.d.), vol. 1–3, pp. 560–74, who emphasizes the differences between the religious meaning of Israelite sacrifice and the magical and demonic basis of pagan sacrifice.

³⁷ On confession, see J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible 3: Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1991), pp. 301–3.

gratitude for God's gifts and awe at His power to save, in the personal context as well as in the national history of Israel.

All in all, therefore, the sacrificial system inculcated the notion that God was a close, almost familial God, we might say an immanent God, but also One Who demanded obedience, and therefore expiation, when His law was violated. At the same time, His transcendence was manifest in the great deeds He had done on the stage of national history, and it was He Who had the power to grant the individual gifts for which thanksgiving offerings had to be rendered.

That these theological notions were inherent in the sacrificial system is evident. But can we be sure that in biblical times they were in the minds of the worshipers so that the act of sacrifice and participation in it was truly a spiritual experience? When we take into consideration the overall aspects of the religious significance of a visit to God's Temple, as well as the pomp and ceremony of the rituals performed there, we can see that worshipers must have truly had a feeling of God's presence there. But specific aspects of the rituals, like the laying on of hands (*semikhah*) and the recital of confessions, were intended to foster such feelings. We can be sure that the individual Jew would have felt the significance of his sacrifices and would have been drawn closer to God and His way of life by this experience.

For Philo, thanksgiving is one of the central purposes of the Temple service, which expresses the thanksgiving of the entire universe.³⁸ The universe as a Temple is somehow equivalent to the divine logos,³⁹ and correspondingly, the rational soul of each person functions as a Temple.⁴⁰ The Temple worship therefore symbolizes the unity of heaven and earth, with the high priest functioning as the unifier of the two realms, symbolizing the divine logos and the

³⁸ Hayward, p. 110.

³⁹ On Philo's theory of the *logos*, see Winston in *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 1, pp. 201–11 and H.A. Wolfson, *Philo*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1947), pp. 200–82.

⁴⁰ Hayward, p. 111.

rational human soul.⁴¹ The sacrifices were intended to remove sin from the soul and control the passions, as well as to offer thanksgiving to God. The rituals teach that the soul must serve God completely, and purify itself of lusts and appetites so that the offerer will rise from earth to heaven and meditate on the one God and unite with Him.⁴² Other offerings reassure the penitent that he is forgiven. The soul is purified by sacrifice and brings the person to self-knowledge as he comes into the divine presence.⁴³

Thus, to Philo, the act of offering a sacrifice was itself an action which, by its very nature, purified and elevated the soul, if undertaken with an understanding of its symbolism. To him, spirituality consisted of an ascent of the soul in virtue, which led to an almost mystical union with God. This spiritual journey was effected, in his analysis of biblical symbolism, by participation in the sacrificial service.

PRAYER

Theoretically, there are a variety of ways in which to understand prayer, and, for that matter, various other rituals. One can imagine situations in which prayer takes place either out of obligation, fear, or just plain need. In such a situation, the worshiper might have no more emotional involvement in placing his or her requests before the Deity than he or she might have making similar requests of a human sovereign. Such prayer could not be seen as a spiritual experience. But Deuteronomy makes clear that the human relationship to God should be one of love,⁴⁴ and so it is reasonable to imagine a very different kind of prayer. In this situation, requests are not the only form of prayer, but thanksgiving plays an important role.

⁴¹ On the symbolism of the priestly garments, see Hayward, pp. 114–6.

⁴² Cf. Winston, pp. 211–5.

⁴³ Hayward, pp. 116–8; cf. Winston, pp. 216–7.

⁴⁴ Cf. W.L. Moran, “The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25 (1963): 77–87. Moran sees the fear of God as required by the command to love Him. Cf. also G.A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), pp. 9–10.

Furthermore, prayer of this kind presumes a different relationship of the worshiper to God and to the prayer experience.

In this approach, prayer, based as it is on the love of God, becomes a spiritual experience. The human being feels him or herself to be in a relationship with God which is fostered by the act of prayer, not to mention by the specific words he or she says. In prayers of thanksgiving, gratitude merges with request and with joy, and this kind of prayer produces a feeling of closeness to God and attendant spiritual fulfillment. This relationship with the divine can be understood as theurgic, as it is in Jewish mysticism; the individual seeks to attain a special feeling of one who sees him or herself communing with God as in some way, as it were, in the Holy of Holies.

Although many biblical prayers may be classified entirely as petitions, the second type, entailing a spiritual dimension, underlies much of the biblical prayer experience.

Sometimes it is associated with the act of sacrifice as in Ps. 54:8: "Let me offer up a willing sacrifice to You and greatly praise Your name, Lord." (Cf. also 27:6; 54:6; 116:7; and 141:2). In these instances there is no outpouring of sudden emotion; rather, there is a link between the praise of God and the offering of sacrifice. In fact, praise and sacrifice are both referred to as *avodah*, "worship." Praise, petition, and sacrifice are all presented together in the inauguration of Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 8), and praise of God is often located specifically in the Temple (Ps. 29:9; 84:5; 100:1; 134:1; 138:2).⁴⁵

It is usual to divide prayer in the Bible into two types, structured and spontaneous.⁴⁶ It is often said that only spontaneous prayer can be spiritual, or truly a religious act in the full meaning of the

⁴⁵ J. Kugel, "Topics in the History of the Spirituality of the Psalms," in *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 1, pp. 113–44. Kugel notes that the biblical texts which describe the sacrifices and the festival calendar never mention the role of praise, hymns, or psalms to accompany the sacrifices. These psalms were apparently more flexible and seen to be more tailor-made to the specific situation than the prescribed sacrificial offering.

⁴⁶ On prayer in the biblical and Second Temple periods, see S.C. Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer: New Perspectives on Jewish Liturgical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 22–52.

word. But in reality, biblical prayer comes in three varieties. In one, the prayer is totally spontaneous. In a second, standard formulae are adapted to the particular circumstances. In the third, the worshiper uses an already existing composition to express his or her prayers.⁴⁷ But when it comes to true religious meaning, in our view, these categories do not hold. No matter what the origin of the prayer texts, spontaneous, formulaic, or totally fixed, depending on the fundamental axiomatic attitudes brought to the prayer experience, it can be a fully mechanical experience or one of great spiritual meaning. Often the same prayers can be said in either way. But prayer in the Bible is clearly intended to foster a feeling of closeness to God beyond that normally experienced when not engaged in prayer.

That such an experience did, indeed, occur seems to be shown by the use of terms for joy which often appear in contexts of prayer in the Bible. It is true that various biblical passages discussing joy in a ritual context refer simply to a ritual act of rejoicing,⁴⁸ but such rituals are intended to produce precisely the type of experience we have been describing. Over and over the book of Psalms, certainly biblical Israel's greatest collection of individual, Levitical, and communal prayer, terms as "joy" the religious satisfaction – the normal mysticism – connected with the experience of prayer before God.⁴⁹

A few examples of the use of "joy" to designate this spiritual satisfaction which results from prayer can be cited here. Psalm 16 is a prayer for protection. The author places his complete trust and faith in God, indicates that he will bless Him, and then declares, "Therefore my heart is happy and my being (*kavod*) has rejoiced." Ps. 104:34 declares, "I will rejoice in the Lord." Upon seeing the works of God, the righteous will rejoice in God and take refuge in Him (Ps. 64:11). The hearts of those who seek God will rejoice (Ps. 105:

⁴⁷ M. Greenberg, *Biblical Prose Prayer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). Cf. M. Greenberg, "On the Refinement of the Conception of Prayer in Hebrew Scriptures," in *Studies in the Bible and Jewish Thought* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995), pp. 75–108.

⁴⁸ Anderson, pp. 37–45.

⁴⁹ We ignore here references to joy resulting from God's fulfillment of one's prayers, a material, rather than spiritual, joy.

3). The psalm exhorts listeners to seek God and His strength (*uzo*), really His presence, and to “seek His face,” another term for the same, then to “remember His miracles and great deeds” (vss. 4–5). Clearly some kind of closeness to God and attendant religious experience are meant by rejoicing here. Similar is Ps. 69:33, referring to an occasion of thanksgiving and praise (vs. 31), which states, “The meek saw, let them rejoice, the seekers of God, and let their hearts come alive.” Ps. 5:12 concludes its prayer, “Let all those who take refuge in You rejoice, let them sing eternally, and give them shelter so that those who love Your name may rejoice (*ve-yaalezu*) in You.” “You, God, surround the righteous with Your favor like a shield (vs. 13).” Joy also comes with praise of the Lord in Ps. 32:11, 34:3, 86:4, 92:5, 97:11–12. Ps. 4:7–8 speaks of joy in the heart immediately after “the light of Your face, O Lord.” Certainly, therefore, some sense of an experience of the numinous was associated with prayer in the Psalms. Further, the Psalms often accompanied sacrifice, and the ritual of sacrifice was also expected to provide such a spiritual feeling.

Prayer continued in this role into Second Temple times, but it was enlarged for a number of reasons. In general, throughout Second Temple times prayer was expanding in its role as a central institution of the Judaism of each individual, so that the full system of daily and festival prayers would be in place by the time of the Temple’s destruction. But even earlier, in communities that separated themselves from the Temple, such as the Qumran sect that collected the Dead Sea Scrolls, prayer functioned as the primary vehicle for spiritual experience.⁵⁰

The basic prayer times observed by the Qumran sect are presented in the Rule of the Community.⁵¹ The text refers to prayers recited evening and morning (Rule of the Community 10:1–3), on the New Moon, and the festivals (10:3–8). In addition, we know that they

⁵⁰ L.H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: The History of Judaism, the Background of Christianity, the Lost Library of Qumran* (Philadelphia and Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1994), pp. 289–301.

⁵¹ See L.H. Schiffman, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Early History of Jewish Liturgy,” in *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity*, ed. L.I. Levine (Philadelphia: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1987), pp. 33–48.

recited the *Shema* each evening and morning (10:10). Some of the liturgical expressions in the Rule of the Community parallel those of the *Shema* and the *Amidah*. Prayers for the festivals from caves 1 and 4, like the rabbinic liturgy, expressed the joy of the festivals and the wish that the exiles be gathered once more to the Land of Israel.⁵² These prayers from the Qumran caves provide evidence that prayers were recited as a substitute for the sacrificial rites even before the Temple was destroyed.⁵³

Further parallels exist between the Qumran materials and the rabbinic liturgy. A supplication remarkably like the *Taḥanun*, called Lament, was found in cave 4.⁵⁴ It emphasizes the destruction of the First Temple. A similar composition is the Words of the Luminaries, which reflects notions of sin, destruction as a punishment from God, the mercy that God shows, and prayer for repentance and purification from sin.⁵⁵ The supplications were designated for specific days of the week, including a version for the Sabbath, which avoided the mention of certain subjects about which it was inappropriate to speak on the Sabbath.⁵⁶

For Philo and the Jews of Alexandria, physically separated as they were from Jerusalem and the Temple, prayer and the synagogue were central institutions already in the Second Temple period. For this reason, we should not be surprised that prayer is discussed extensively by Philo.⁵⁷ He saw prayers of thanksgiving as emanating from love of God and, therefore, as a higher form than prayers of petition, which were seen as based on fear.⁵⁸ Over and over he

⁵² 4Q509 frag. 3 (M. Baillet, *Qumrân grotte 4, III (4Q482-5Q520)* (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert 7; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 186.

⁵³ B. Nizán, *Qumran Prayer and Religious Poetry* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1994), pp. 47-87.

⁵⁴ 4Q501, Baillet, pp. 79-80.

⁵⁵ 4Q504-506, Baillet, pp. 137-75. Cf. M.R. Lehmann, "Be'ur Ḥadash le-'Divrei ha-Méorot' shel 4Q," *Masot u-Masa'ot* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1982), pp. 169-73.

⁵⁶ Nizán, pp. 84-116.

⁵⁷ See D. Winston, "Philo and the Contemplative Life," in *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 1, pp. 217-20.

⁵⁸ Cf. BT *Sotah* 31a.

speaks of the obligation to give thanks to God, as everything comes from Him and belongs to Him.

Petitionary prayer in Philo tends not to be the request of humans that God grant them material goods, but rather, these prayers aim at knowledge of God and spiritual perfection. Such prayers are really self-exhortations for spiritual growth, asserting that all spiritual achievement is really a gracious outflow from the divine. In this respect Philo seems to be following the model of the Greek philosophical tradition from which he appears to have derived the idea for such prayers.

To Philo, the highest form of prayer is contemplative or intellectual prayer. This kind of wordless prayer is part of the soul's journey to God and is unencumbered by any direct requests. It results in the cleaving of the soul to the "Alone Existent." In order to allow this cleaving, words need to be abandoned so that thought can cleave in absolute purity to God (*On Flight*, 92). The inadequacy of language is actually a Greek philosophical notion.⁵⁹ It is harnessed by Philo to conclude that the soul in contemplation of God is the highest form of prayer.

Indeed, for Philo, the soul's unification with God is the highest achievement possible. Scholars have debated whether this is a mystical, or only an intellectual, contemplative relationship.⁶⁰ But there can be no question that, for Philo, prayer was a mechanism to spiritual elevation and appreciation of the divine. For biblical, sectarian, and Hellenistic Judaism alike, prayer was seen as an experience of connecting with God. The ritual and cognitive aspects were crowned with the spiritual dimension of feeling a closeness to God not otherwise attainable.

RITUAL PURIFICATION

One particular area in which the spiritual dimension needs to be stressed is the process of ritual purification. The biblical purification

⁵⁹ Winston, p. 219.

⁶⁰ Winston, pp. 223–6, who sees Philo as a "theoretical mystic;" cf. E.R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935) who argues that Philo was in reality a mystic.

rites have been subject to different kinds of interpretations throughout the years, both traditional and modern. Some of these have seen purification in either mechanistic or magical ways, failing to understand the underlying dimension of spirituality. The various forms of defilement detailed in the Bible fall into two types. One can become defiled by experiencing or coming in contact with that which interrupted the normal life forces, such as death or bodily fluxes, or one can become impure by touching that which was sacred or consecrated in some way.

To be sure, some of these impurities are similar to taboos known in other societies, including some of the neighboring civilizations of the ancient Near East. But, these notions have been totally turned upside down in the Bible. What may have been taboo in other systems of thought are here occasions for emphasizing the consecration of people, objects, and places to God. Essentially, ritual purity and impurity for Judaism, already in the biblical period, is a way of taking occasions of transition – even of fear or of tragedy – and making them opportunities to emphasize God’s intimate relation to the life of His people, as individuals and as a group.⁶¹

Purification rituals generally involved sacrifices and lustrations. Sacrifice is dealt with elsewhere in this paper. We will concentrate here on ritual immersion. Over and over the Bible commands “washing” (*KhBS*) or “bathing” (*RHZ*) which was understood from earliest times to refer to ritual immersion, in which the entire body is submerged under the “waters of creation”⁶² so as to allow the ritually impure individual to return to his or her naturally pure state. But these rituals have often been looked at by outsiders as if they were

⁶¹ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 460. For a review of theories put forth by modern biblical scholars to explain ritual impurity, see D.P. Wright, “Unclean and Clean (OT),” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 6, pp. 739–41. Wright stressed the non-demonic character of biblical purity laws (p. 739), following Kaufmann, *Toledot ha-Emunah ha-Yisre’elit*, vol. 1–3, pp. 539–45.

⁶² The term *mikveh* for “pool” is used in Gen. 1:10 as a term for the waters that God had to gather together to create the dry land. The use of the term for “immersion pool” is clearly based on the relationship of immersion to the primeval waters of creation.

a mechanical ritual in which the feelings of the purificand played no part in the efficacy of the ritual. In other words, the specifically spiritual character of these rituals is often assumed to be lacking.

The proof of the meaningful spiritual character of biblical purification can be seen outside of the Torah's codes in the figurative references to purification rituals in the Prophets.⁶³ Several passages refer to bathing as an image for religious repentance (e.g., Is. 1:16), but some texts clearly are using images of hygienic bathing, as in Is. 4:4. Jer. 4:14 has the root *KhBS* referring to the purification of the heart. This same verb appears in Ps. 51:4, David's plea for repentance after the visit of Nathan the prophet. In vs. 4, the psalm explicitly associates ritual cleansing with repentance from sin. The mention in vs. 9 of hyssop and the root *HTA*, meaning "to purify," shows that the reference is to the red-heifer purification which is understood here as an experience of repentance and atonement. Vs. 12 asks for the creation of a pure heart (*lev tahor*) and the gift of God's spirit (*ruah kodshakha*). Without such repentance, the expiation rites are useless.

Since the sprinkling of water played such a large role in the purification rituals, we should not be surprised to find that it is also understood as a process of repentance. Ezek. 36:25–28 speaks of the waters of purification, purifying by creating a new heart and a new spirit (*ruah hadashah*). There the passage specifically tells us that God will implant his spirit (*ruah*) in the midst of Israel, thereby causing the people to observe God's laws, live in the land of their fathers, and be His people as He is their God, an image of God and Israel in a close relationship. We take these passages not as reinterpretation intending to give meaning to mechanical rituals, but rather as an accurate reflection of how sophisticated and learned Jews in biblical times understood and taught that ritual purification was indeed an inner spiritual experience.

In Second Temple literature there is no question that there is an experiential and penitential side to the rituals of purification. Speaking of the "men of iniquity," whom the Dead Sea sectarians

⁶³ The passages are listed in Wright, p. 738.

wanted to avoid at all costs, the Rule of the Congregation (1QS 5:13–15)⁶⁴ states that such a person may not (or shall not) enter the waters of purification, the *mikveh*, as they will be unable to purify him unless he repents. Here the biblical idea has been taken further. If repentance is the purpose of ritual purification, an unrepentant sinner may as well not even undergo the ritual. For the sectarians, the *mizvah* of ritual purification required the *kavvanah* (intention) of moral and religious purification.

It is no doubt that for the same reason the sectarians developed prayers to be recited as part of the ritual of purification. Several prayers existed for the third and seventh days of ablutions for various impurities, and they were to be recited by the person undergoing purification. The text is very fragmentary, but survives in three manuscripts which do indeed appear to be the same text. It includes also specific halakhic instructions for the rites. Some prayers were intended to be recited before immersion, and others afterwards. Most prayers seem to have included the motifs of confession, forgiveness, and, finally, thanksgiving for being purified by God.⁶⁵ The Ritual of Purification reads: “and he shall bless and recite: Blessed are You, [O God of Israel, Who saved me from all] my transgressions and purified me from the nakedness of impurity...”⁶⁶ Another passage quotes a prayer to be recited after immersion: “Blessed are You, O God of Israel, for from that which issues from Your lips, the purification of all has been explained,⁶⁷ in order to separate from all impure people according to their guilt, so that they not be purified by the waters of washing.”⁶⁸

We take these prayers as expressing not a sectarian approach to purity, but rather a widespread understanding of the function of ritual purification as a religious experience in the Second Temple period. As these texts show, purification was to be accompanied by

⁶⁴ Cf. also 4Q414 (Ritual of Purification A) 2 ii 3, 4 line 8.

⁶⁵ E. Eshel, in J. Baumgarten, et al., *Qumran Cave 4, xxv: Halakhic Texts* (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert 35; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), pp. 176–7.

⁶⁶ 4Q512 29–32 vii 6–8, M. Baillet, *Qumran Grotte 4, III*, p. 265.

⁶⁷ The Torah prescribes the specific regulations for purification.

⁶⁸ 4Q414 2 ii 3, 4 lines 5–8 (= 4Q512 42–44 ii), Eshel, p. 141.

a process of repentance and personal redirection, and then, after its completion, by a feeling of emergence anew into the state of purity and, hence, connection with God. It is the spirit of the person that is purified and now able to renew and intensify its relation to God.

One particular aspect of Second Temple spirituality seems to have little real background in the biblical period, although it is based primarily on biblical laws. This is the widespread pattern of adopting the standards of Temple purity as requirements for the eating of meals (*ḥullin al ṭohorat ha-kodesh*). This phenomenon is best known from three separate sets of sources: the tannaitic descriptions of the *ḥaverim* (Mishnah *Demai* 2:2–3; Tosefta *Demai* 2:2–14),⁶⁹ Josephus's descriptions of the Essenes (*War* 2:137–142), and the Qumran regulations for the conduct of sectarian life (*Rule of the Community* 6:13–23).

That this pattern was in effect among such diverse religious elites, as well as among the Sadducean priesthood which had to observe these laws in connection with Temple offerings, is indicative of the central role such purity laws played in Second Temple times. For those practicing these rules out of a Temple context, the basic purpose was to elevate the eating of non-sacral food to an experience close, if not identical, to the eating of the priestly emoluments. While this appears to be a matter of ritual stringency (*ḥumrah*) at first glance, it is really an attempt to bring sanctity into the home, family, and community.

One of the inherent problems in a sacrificial system of Temple worship is its non-democratic nature. The “kingdom of priests and holy nation” (Exod. 19:6) is not provided with total access to the sancta reserved for the real priests. By imitating priestly purity in one's personal life, an act not required by the Torah, one extends that sanctity, and participates in it, and, in so doing, democratizes access to holiness. Such steps are clearly intended to increase spirituality – closeness to God and His holiness.

The groups that we mentioned have very similar rules for admission to their pure meals.⁷⁰ After progressing through initiation

⁶⁹ Cf. JT *Demai* 22d–23a; BT *Bekhorot* 30b–31a.

⁷⁰ Cf. C. Rabin, *Qumran Studies* (Scripta Judaica 2; Oxford: Clarendon Press,

rites, members are considered to be ritually pure, that is, maintaining the standards of priestly purity, and are admitted to the meals.⁷¹ The feasts are not true sacred meals, in that the food eaten is never considered sacral, but the atmosphere of these meals mimics that of the eating of sacral food. For the Essenes, these meals may have served as substitutes for Temple ritual,⁷² while for the Qumran sect, they were eaten in imitation of the messianic banquets in which they expected to participate, believing as they did that they were living on the verge of the *eschaton*.⁷³

In the case of the Qumran sectarians, the purpose of establishing such purity rules and using them to define the limits of the community (the “true Israel”) is directly stated. For them the entire community was a replacement for a Temple which they abjured, seeing it as defiled by the faulty halakhic views and practices of its priests and leaders. They described their own group as “an eternal planting, a holy Temple (lit. ‘house’) and as a council of the Holy of Holies for Aaron, true witnesses for justice, and the elect of [God’s] will to atone for the land and to pay back the evildoers their deserved punishment” (1QS 8:5–7). For this reason they separated from the mainstream (line 13). Instead, they saw themselves as a “chamber of the Holy of Holies for Aaron...to offer a sweet savor and a Temple (lit. ‘house’) of perfect truth in Israel” (lines 8–9).

The *ḥaverim*, unlike the sectarians, did not see their group as representing a virtual Temple. However, we can assume that even though the *ḥaverim* participated in official Temple worship, they too would have agreed with the attempt to infuse the home and community with the holiness of the Temple, so that meals became quasi-sacrificial experiences. This process certainly represents

1957), pp. 1–21; S. Lieberman, “The Discipline in the So-Called Dead Sea Manual of Discipline,” *JBL* 71 (1951): 199–206; reprinted in S. Lieberman, *Texts and Studies* (New York: Ktav, 1974), pp. 200–7.

⁷¹ L.H. Schiffman, *Sectarian Law in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Brown Judaic Studies 33; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), pp. 161–5.

⁷² J.M. Baumgarten, *Studies in Qumran Law* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), pp. 39–74.

⁷³ Schiffman, *Sectarian Law*, pp. 191–210.

a spiritualization of normal life, and is an attempt, in some small measure, to bring God, the object of sacrificial worship, into the home and community.

CONCLUSION

Biblical Israel received and fostered an approach to its religion which understood that it was the soul that ultimately entered into the closest relationship with the divine. Through the performance of various rituals, visiting the Temple, offering sacrifices and prayers, and following the rules of ritual purification, individual Jews experienced the relationship of God and Israel in their own lives, feeling His presence in their sanctuary and community. In Second Temple times, a variety of developments took place which led to a strengthening of these approaches to spirituality, even as the concept of the soul became increasingly Hellenized in some segments of the Jewish community. As some groups withdrew from the Temple, and others seemed to prepare unknowingly for its eventual destruction, the spiritual aspects of prayer and the fulfillment of purity regulations outside of the Temple sphere became more and more significant. After the Temple was destroyed, Judaism would continue to develop approaches to spirituality which had taken shape originally during the Second Temple period.