MICHAEL B. HUNDLEY

Keeping Heaven on Earth

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50

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Keeping Heaven on Earth

Safeguarding the Divine Presence
in the Priestly Tabernacle

Mohr Siebeck

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For Susan

אעלה אתך מארץ מצרים
לתת לך ארץ זבת חלב ודבש

Preface

The present monograph represents, with light revisions, my Ph.D. Dissertation at the University of Cambridge submitted in September 2009. Most prominently, I have inserted many of the footnotes into the main text, provided further rationale for my focus on ANE comparisons instead of the internal Israelite development, and reinserted a chapter on Leviticus 4–5 and 12–15 that previously was cut for space. Chapters 2 and 4 were presented in modified form at the SBL International Conference in Rome 2009 as "God's Technicolor Coat: An Examination of Divine Glory in the Priestly Texts" and at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Divinity and Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Old Testament Seminar in 2009 as "Keeping God's House: Regular Divine Service in the Priestly Tabernacle" respectively and have since been slightly revised in response to the helpful comments I received.

   As with any such endeavor, many thanks are due. I am indebted first of all to Professor Richard Averbeck from Trinity International University, who introduced me to Israelite cultic texts and inspired me to plumb their depths. I had the great fortune of studying under Baruch J. Schwartz of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who challenged and refined my thinking and who, more than anyone else, informed my perspective on the Priestly texts. I am grateful for his support and encouragement, which have endured well after I left his care. Christophe Nihan of the University of Lausanne, whose monograph was a source of much inspiration, also provided helpful and encouraging comments during the final stages of the manuscript. My doctoral supervisor, Graham I. Davies, deserves a lion's share of the credit, since without his warm and judicious support this work never would have been written. Professor Davies was the ideal supervisor for me and my research project. He gave me far more leeway than most would dare and far more than I deserved, while preventing me from many a misstep along the way. When the scope of my project threatened to grow to unmanageable proportions and when tangents captured too much of my attention, he reined me in, helped me to focus, and guided me to complete my study in the allotted time. My only regret is that, with his impending retirement, more students will not be able to benefit from his excellent guidance.

My internal examiner Professor Robert Gordon and my external examiner Professor Walter Houston of the University of Oxford each offered valuable comments on my research and generated a challenging and helpful discussion that helped me to refine my thinking and writing. Thanks are also due to Mohr Siebeck and in particular to the theology editor, Henning Ziebritzki, and to the editors of the series *Forschungen zum Alten Testament*, Professors Bernd Janowski, Mark S. Smith, and Hermann Spieckermann, for accepting this work for publication. Tanja Mix also deserves credit for her technical supervision.

Finally, I owe the greatest debt to my family, without whom none of this would have been possible. My parents and parents-in-law, Timothy and Virginia Hundley, Charles David and Virginia Susann Jones, have provided invaluable financial and practical support throughout the course of my research. My daughters, Kaya and Evangeline, have been a source of great inspiration, joy, and at times great distraction. Above all, I would like to thank my wife, Susan. She has read and edited the manuscript several times in its various incarnations, immeasurably improving its style and content. More importantly, she has patiently and unflaggingly supported me throughout the highs and the lows of this arduous process, often to her own detriment. For all these reasons and many more, I dedicate this book to her with my love and gratitude.

Princeton NJ, September 2010   Michael B. Hundley

Table of Contents

Abbreviations

AA	*American Anthropologist*
AB	The Anchor Bible
ABD	*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman
AfO	Archiv für Orientforschung
AHw	*Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, W. von Soden.
ALASPM	Abhandlungen zur Literatur Alt-Syrien-Palästinas und Mesopotamiens
ANE	Ancient Near East/ Ancient Near Eastern
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. J. Pritchard, 3rd ed.
AO	collection of the Department des antiquités orientales, Musée du Louvre
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
apud	cited at secondhand from
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
ATSAT	Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BDB	*A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. F. Brown, S. R. Driver, C. A. Briggs
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BiOr	*Bibliotheca Orientalis*
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BOREAS	Boreas: Uppsala Studies in Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Civilizations
BS	The Biblical Seminar
BZAR	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, ed. J. Brinkman, et al.
CANE	*Civilisations of the Ancient World*, ed. J.M. Sasson
CAT	Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament

CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica. Old Testament series
cf.	*confer*, compare
CHD	*The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, ed. H. G. Güterbock and H. A. Hoffner
COS	*The Context of Scripture*, ed. W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger
CTH	*Catologue des textes hittites*, E. Laroche
D	Deuteronomy/ Deuteronomic Source
DCH	*The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, ed. D. J. A. Clines
ed(s).	editor(s), edited by
e.g.	*exempli gratia*, for example
esp.	especially
ET	English Translation
et al.	*et alia*, and others
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
f(f)	and the following one(s)
fig.	figure
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FS	Festschrift
GKC	*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautsch, ET A. E. Cowley, 2nd ed.
H	Holiness Legislation
HALOT	*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner and J. Stamm
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HB	Hebrew Bible
HBSt	Herders biblische Studien
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HK	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HSAT	Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testamentes
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
HUCASup	Hebrew Union College Annual Supplements
ibid	*ibidem*, the same place
id.	*idem*, the same (person)
i.e.	*id est*, that is
Int	*Interpretation*
IRT	Issues in Religion and Theology
IT	Incantation Tablet(s) in Walker and Dick 2001
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBTh	*Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie*

JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JEA	*Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JPSTC	The JPS Torah Commentary
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
KUB	*Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi*
KTU	*KTU: The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places*, ed. M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, J. Samartin, 2nd ed.
LAPO	Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
lit.	literally
l(l)	line(s)
MTZ	*Münchener theologische Zeitschrift*
n(n).	note(s)
NCB	New Century Bible
NEB	Neue Echter Bibel
NIDOTTE	*The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. W. VanGemeren
NJPSV	New Jewish Publication Society Version
NK	New Kingdom Egypt
Numen	*Numen: International Review for the History of Religions*
Num. R.	*Numbers Rabbah*
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
P	the Priestly texts, writers
pace	in respectful dissent with
passim	here and there
Pg	Priestly Grundschrift
p(p)	page(s)
Proof	*Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History*
Ps	secondary additions to the Priestly texts
RB	*Revue Biblique*
RBL	*Review of Biblical Literature*

RGG	*Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*, ed. K. Galling, 3rd ed.
RHR	*Revue de l'histoire des religions*
RlA	*Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, ed. E. Ebeling and B. Meissner
SAALT	State Archives of Assyria Literary Texts
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLWAW	Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
ScrHier	Scripta Hierosolymitana
SDB	*Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, ed. H. Cazelles and A. Feuillet
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SSN	Studia semitica neerlandica
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
STT	The Sultantepe Tablets
SubBi	Subsidia biblica
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren
TLOT	*Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. E Jenni and C. Westermann
TRE	*Theologisches Realenzyklopädie*, ed. G. Krause and G. Müller
TRu	*Theologische Rundschau*
TUAT	*Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments*, ed. B. Janowski and G. Wilhelm
UBL	Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur
Ug	*Ugaritica*
Urk. IV	K. Sethe. *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*
Utt.	Utterance from the Egyptian Pyramid Texts
VAB	Vorderasiatische Bibliothek
vs.	versus
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
v(v)	verse(s)
WbÄS	*Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, ed. A. Erman and H. Grapow
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZTK	Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche

Introduction

The intersection of human and divine is as central to religious studies and practice today as it was in ancient times. In the Priestly texts of the Hebrew Bible, this unnatural and precarious intersection is governed by strict cultic legislation to ensure its mutually beneficial efficacy. As its title indicates, my study examines this Priestly system designed to keep heaven on earth, more specifically, to secure and safeguard the divine presence at the heart of the Israelite community.

The Texts Examined

Since before Wellhausen, scholars have distinguished the Priestly writing (*Priesterschrift*) from the rest of the pentateuchal literature.[1] In order to examine the Priestly tabernacle system, we will focus on the portions that prescribe and describe the tabernacle construction and legislation, namely the Priestly portions of Exodus 25–Leviticus 16.[2] Other Priestly texts in Genesis and Exodus will be included where necessary to fill out the Priestly portrait. Leviticus 17–26 (27), identified as the Holiness Legislation (H),[3] and the so-called Priestly texts in Numbers will also occasionally feature. However, they will be treated as secondary to P, and will be used selectively to help fill in the gaps left by the Priestly corpus, especially in chapter 4. In chapters 3 and 7, H will also be used as a point of comparison with P.

Although convenient, my textual selection is not arbitrary. Although classically understood to pre-date P, the scholarly consensus about H seems

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[1] On the early debate about the Priestly texts, see Rogerson 1985; Graham 1990:117–151; Nicholson 1998:3–28. For a classic defense and delineation of the Priestly source (P), see Noth 1987:107–147.

[2] I.e., everything but the majority of Ex 32–34.

[3] Following the more neutral rendering of Schwartz 1999:17–24. Rather than enter into the debate on the extent of the Holiness Legislation outside of Leviticus 17–26 (compare Knohl 1995 with Milgrom 2001:1337–1344; id. 2003; see also Nihan 2007: 559–575), I will limit H to Lev 17–26, an ascription which most commentators agree upon. While I acknowledge that Lev 16:29–34 may very well stem from H, I will instead endeavor to read Lev 16 as a cohesive ritual text.

to be shifting in the opposite direction.[4] While H is in many ways distinct from P, hence its identification as a separate body of texts,[5] it nonetheless can be understood as a sequel to P and, in certain instances, as P's complement.[6] Thus, we may profitably use some H legislation to illumine the larger Priestly portrait that includes both P and H (e.g., when discussing the regular offerings [תמיד]). In other places, however, it is profitable to see how H responds differently to similar issues, expanding on the Priestly precedent (e.g., with regard to holiness and the pollution of the land).

The P-like texts in Numbers are the subject of some controversy. Traditionally attributed to P, they have nevertheless been the most difficult to isolate from the surrounding text and to situate in the Priestly narrative. Recently, there has been a tendency to date these texts after P proper. Knohl attributes to H many of the texts previously assigned to P in Numbers.[7] Achenbach goes even further, considering these texts to be part of a later theocratic revision (*theokratische Bearbeitung*), distinct from both P and H.[8]

Furthermore, the Priestly texts in Exodus 25–Leviticus 16 form the heart of the Sinai pericope.[9] Exodus prescribes and describes the construction of the tabernacle at Sinai (25–31, 35–40), prescribes its inauguration along with the priests and the cult (29) and describes YHWH's arrival (40). Leviticus 1–16 then provides the primary legislation for keeping YHWH in the tabernacle. After the H texts in Leviticus 17–27, Numbers 1–10 is composed with a view toward the wilderness wanderings.

In addition, since YHWH's abiding among Israel rests at the heart of the Priestly system, one could argue that the Priestly corpus climaxes at Leviticus 16 with the legislation necessary to safeguard the divine presence in

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[4] Elliger was the first to argue that H was conceived from the beginning as a sequel to the Priestly narrative (Pg) (id. 1959; id. 1966:14–20 and passim; followed by Cholewiński 1976:338; Kornfeld 1983:6; Preuss 1985; Kratz 2000:114). Wagner later contended that Leviticus 17–26 was composed as a sequel to 1–16 (1974: 307–316; see similarly Blum 1990:318ff; Crüsemann 1992:323–326; Albertz 1994:2.480ff; Ruwe 1999). Knohl and Milgrom take the argument one step further, contending that H both presupposes and is later than P (Knohl 1987; id. 1995; Milgrom 1991:13–42; see similarly Stackert 2007:15–16. See also Otto [1994; id. 1999], who regards H as post-P and post-D; so now Nihan 2007:545–559).

[5] See, e.g., Joosten 1996:6–7.

[6] Nihan 2007:546.

[7] Id. 1995 (see 104–106 for his delineation), followed, e.g., by Stackert 2007:57–68 in his attribution of Num 35:9–34 to H instead of P.

[8] Id. 2003:443–628; followed largely by Nihan 2007:554–555, 570–572.

[9] The Priestly Sinai pericope includes the beginning of Ex 19 and the end of Ex 24 (see, e.g., Noth 1948:17–19; Elliger 1952:121–122; Lohfink 1978:198 n. 29; Weimar 1984:85 n. 18).

the tabernacle.[10] If the P-like texts in Numbers are part of P, they may be understood as an appendix of sorts, filling out the details after the narrative high-point in Leviticus 16, providing narrative and legislation on safe-guarding the divine presence during the wilderness wanderings. Whether understood as from P, H, or the theocratic revision, we may safely conclude that they are secondary, and that in places they may be used to fill out the larger Priestly portrait (encompassing P, H and the P-like texts in Numbers).

A Synopsis of Scholarship on P[11]

In recent years, there has been a major shift in P scholarship, especially regarding the cultic legislation.[12] In the past, it was especially common to isolate the Priestly narrative (Pg [*Grundschrift*]) from the legal supplements (Ps [*sekundär*]).[13] Pg received the lion's share of the attention.[14] When studied, Ps was often dissected into various disparate parts,[15] many of which did not seem to cohere.[16]

Recent treatments of P have been far more numerous,[17] systematic, and synchronic, pursuing the inner logic of the Priestly corpus and particularly its ritual legislation.[18] Beginning with Mary Douglas in 1966 (especially in

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[10] Nihan even concludes that Lev 16 is the original conclusion to the Priestly account (2007:382; see before him, Köckert 1989:56–61).

[11] Because of its recent renaissance, many important works on P will be necessarily omitted from discussion; see esp. the helpful recent survey of Nihan 2007:1–19.

[12] Nihan (2007:15–16) claims that "it is not excessive to state that these studies have revolutionized the understanding of P's legislation in many ways, either by making a case for an integrative reading of these laws or by evincing the complex theological assumptions underlying certain laws which otherwise made little sense or even appeared arbitrary."

[13] This trend is especially pronounced in the works of Noth 1981:8ff (German original 1948) and Elliger 1952, who radicalized the distinction within P between the primary narrative and secondary ritual elements.

[14] Studies were concerned with isolating Pg as a discrete document and examining its primary characteristics (e.g., Lohfink 1978 [ET 1994]; Zenger 1983; Weimar 1984).

[15] The commentaries of Bertholet 1901; Baentsch 1903; Noth 1962 (ET 1965) and Elliger 1966 focused on the genesis of Ps in Lev 1–16. Elliger, in particular, posited a complex process of ritual additions to Pg that at times included more than ten layers (see, e.g., his analysis of Lev 13–14 on pp. 159–173). Following in his footsteps, Seidl (1982) posited an even more complex genesis to Lev 13–14.

[16] "Earlier scholarship [on P legislation] usually posited an erratic conflation of various pieces of distinct origin" (Nihan 2007:15); see esp. previous scholarship on Lev 5.

[17] See, e.g., Fabry and Jüngling 1999; Rendtorff and Kugler 2003; and Römer 2008 for various essays in various languages related to the books of Leviticus and Numbers.

[18] Priestly texts have indirectly been brought to the fore through another recent development. Since the existence of a pre-Priestly composition (J) that unites the patriarchal and Moses traditions has been called into question, many European scholars now identify

her analysis of the animal classification system of Lev 11), attempts have been made to understand the Priestly concepts of impurity, particularly as a symbolic system.[19] Jewish scholars (particularly Milgrom 1963, 1970, 1976, 1983, 1986, 1989, 1990, 1991, 2000, 2001 and Haran 1978; cf. from a different perspective de Vaux 1964; Levine 1965, 1974) have interpreted the "P legislation as a comprehensive cultic system, with a coherence and rationales of its own."[20] Milgrom's students have since followed in his footsteps (see especially Wright 1987, 1991, 1992 and Gane 2005). Gorman (1990), Jenson (1992), Gilders (2004), Janzen (2004), Bergen (2005), and Modéus (2005) have drawn from anthropology to analyze the Priestly cosmology, the theory of graded holiness, blood ritual, the social meaning of sacrifice, reading ritual in a postmodern context, and the *Šĕlāmîm* respectively. The systematic approach has migrated from America, Israel, and the UK to the European mainland (Marx 2005 in France; Rendtorff 1985 and Eberhart 2002 [cf. Jürgens 2001; Dahm 2003 on Lev 1–7] in Germany, and Schenker 2000 in Switzerland). There has also been a renewed interest in the structure of Leviticus as a book (Douglas 1995; Smith 1996; Warning 1999; Zenger 1999; Ruwe 2003; Luciani 2005; Nihan 2007; Bibb 2009). At the same time, scholars have become more interested in the latest redactions of the Torah and their contribution to its canonical form (Otto 2002; Römer and Schmid 2007). Nihan (2007) melds the two approaches, focusing on redaction criticism while giving the internal coherence of Leviticus significant attention. Such responses to the extremes of source- and form-critical analyses are a major step forward in analyzing the Priestly rituals.[21]

My work builds upon its systematic forbears but with significant differences. While others either have sought a unifying principle for the system or merely analyzed an aspect of it,[22] my study examines the system designed to keep YHWH on earth with a wider focus and through a broader interpretive lens.

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the Priestly writers as the first to combine the Genesis and Exodus narratives (see, e.g., Gertz, Schmid and Witte 2002; Dozeman and Schmid 2007).

[19] See Eilberg-Schwartz 1990, Houston 1993, Whitekettle (in a series of articles), Malul 2002, and Nihan 2007:301–339. Klawans 2006 has attempted to apply Douglas' symbolic approach to sacrifice.

[20] Nihan 2007:15.

[21] Cf. Nihan 2007:15.

[22] For examples of the former, see, e.g., Gorman 1990 and Jenson 1992; for the latter, see, e.g., Kiuchi 1987; id. 2003; Gane 2005 on the חטאת and Wright 1987 on the disposal of impurity.

Interpreting Ritual Texts

Although ritual theory has been profitably applied to biblical studies, the best theories are limited in scope (covering only certain aspects of rituals such as symbolism and purpose statements). To ensure fuller and more balanced results, I develop my own cumulative approach to ritual, combining several methods into three categories – structure, use, and ideology.[23]

In addition, many scholars have failed to distinguish between ritual texts and ritual practice.[24] As Watts has recently insisted, ritual texts do much more than simply describe (and explain) ritual action; they were also written for rhetorical purposes.[25] Building on this insight, my work argues that the Priestly Sinai account seeks to exalt YHWH and his system as preeminent, while ensuring participation and securing the privileged position of the priests as ritual authorities.

The Sinai narrative is set in the idealized past,[26] at the inception of the nation of Israel at a sacred location and with its most revered characters at the heart of the narrative. The legislation comes directly from the mouth of God, given to Moses, who then transfers ritual authority to Aaron, as the embodiment of the priesthood.[27] Since YHWH has designed the system as his ultimate solution for dwelling among Israel, and both he and Moses put it in the hands of the priests, none may question its or their legitimacy.

The authors of the text speak of Israel's founding moment to ensure that the legislation is understood to be eternally important.[28] Whatever the compositional present, the tabernacle is likely a thing of the distant past.[29] To communicate the authority of the system, the authors purposely distance their system from the compositional and redactional present.[30] They set their story in the timeless past to establish the timeless preeminence of YHWH and his system,[31] and the prominence of priestly authority.[32] Thus,

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[23] See chapter one for a much fuller treatment.

[24] See, e.g., Rendtorff 1985, Milgrom 1991, and Eberhart 2002. See Watts 2007:27–32 for a differentiation between texts and rituals; see also Gilders 2004:3–6; Bergen 2005:1–3.

[25] Id. 2007 with special reference to Leviticus; cf. id. 1999; Bergen 2005; Bibb 2009. Instead of simply trying to reconstruct the system, rhetorical analysis asks why does the text include what it does, how does it express what it includes, and what is it trying to communicate.

[26] Cf. Bibb 2009:18.

[27] Ibid. 82–85.

[28] Its esteem in Jewish and Christian circles testifies to its continued success.

[29] Watts 2007:28; cf. the odd theory of Friedman where the tabernacle rests inside the temple (1981; id. 1992).

[30] Bell 1997:145–150; Bibb 2009:57, 59.

[31] For the Priestly writers, his system is the same as their system.

the Sinai narrative sets an eternal precedent for the importance of the system and the ritual authority of its priests.[33]

Clarifications

Situating the Priestly texts more concretely in their literary context is a difficult task. Of course, historical signposts help the reader to understand the text. However, the date(s) of the Priestly composition and redaction(s), as well the date(s) of the Priestly source texts remain disputed.[34] In addition, although it is becoming increasingly clear that the Priestly system is more or less coherent, it remains unclear whether it describes actual practice, presumed past practice, innovations for future practice, the ideal presumed-lost but recently recovered (like the law book in 2 Kings), a vision for the ideal future grounded in the ideal past (cf. Ezekiel's temple vision and the Temple Scroll), or none of the above. The nature of the Priestly texts is also debated (source, redactional layer(s), or something else entirely).[35]

Since its compositional history is somewhat murky, we will examine the Priestly texts in their redacted form. Rather than simply skirting the issue, such an approach has positive purposes. The Priestly writers' deliberate choice to situate their account in the ancient past invites the reader to understand and interpret the text timelessly, i.e., without concern for the historical context of the composition.

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[32] It is also possible that Levinson's theory that the editors of Deuteronomy intentionally conceal the history behind the texts (1997) is at work here; namely, the Priestly innovations are more palatable when they are cast as ancient tradition.

[33] A similar rhetorical purpose may be applied to the tabernacle account. The Priestly authors/redactors responsible for the account were likely aware of the various inventories and construction reports of ANE temples. They seem to make use of and expand this precedent to produce the most comprehensive prescriptive and descriptive report in order to establish the authenticity of the tabernacle account. They include such painstaking detail to establish that the tabernacle was a real, historical structure, built during the foundational period under divine and Mosaic supervision. In establishing the authenticity of the structure, the Priestly writers establish the authenticity and (transferable) authority of its legislation. This theory holds whether the tabernacle is pure invention or whether it has some historical precedent. Instead of arguing with rival traditions, P casts its legislation as the historical foundational account to establish its supreme and supremely binding authority (The Temple Scroll seems to function similarly in contradistinction to the other DSS; see, e.g., Schiffmann 2008).

[34] For example, different scholars argue that P was composed in pre-exilic (Haran 1978:132–148; Hurvitz 1982), exilic (Cross 1973:323–324; Otto 1997:24ff), and post-exilic times (Fohrer 1970:185; Blum 1990:319–360).

[35] For P as source, see, e.g., Schmidt 1993:1–34; Gertz 2000; as redaction, e.g., Cross 1973:294–322; Blum 1984:420–458; id. 1990:229–285.

More importantly, interpreting the composite text is more in line with biblical and ANE perspectives than is reconstructing the text's multiple layers. Rituals practiced in the biblical and ANE worlds are often composite in nature,[36] especially given the ANE bent for accepting amalgamated approaches as more thorough, more important, and more effective. Even if the individual parts did not completely cohere, ancients had little interest in the history behind the text, only in correctly performing the composite ritual.[37] By interpreting the Priestly rituals synchronically (with a secondary interest in the text's genesis), we are in line with the intentions of the final redactors and the interpretations of those with the finally redacted text before them.[38] Finally, a timeless account does not altogether impede rhetorical analysis. Regardless of when it was composed, the text clearly communicates the preeminence of YHWH and his system and the priestly authority as its caretakers.

Comparison with Ancient Near Eastern Texts

Claims for preeminence are most persuasive when the system and its god resemble yet transcend those around them. Thus, a comparison with ANE deities and systems is especially profitable. However, although most scholars recognize the importance of such an endeavor and numerous works on ANE religion are available,[39] analyses of the Priestly texts often avoid such comparisons. For example, of all the works on P mentioned above on pages 3–4, only Milgrom and his students, Wright and Gane, pay adequate attention to the ANE parallels.[40]

When scholars do undertake ANE comparisons, they often do so in several limited ways: a) simple borrowing, establishing provenance and dependence, the classic expression of which is found in Friedrich Delitzsch's

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[36] See, e.g., Abusch's analysis of the Mesopotamian *Maqlû* series (1991; id. 1992; id. 2002).

[37] However, there is likely more flexibility among ANE ritualists than their Priestly counterparts. Since ritual procedure is often a secret in an ANE context, the ritualists could theoretically adapt it to serve their purposes with less notice from the people. By contrast, making ritual procedure public knowledge puts it under public scrutiny.

[38] Advocating a holistic reading of P is not the same as advocating a holistic reading of the Pentateuch. Clear boundaries exist between P and the rest of the Pentateuch such that its narrative and ritual texts should be read independently (esp. Ex 25–31, 35–40 and Lev 1–16).

[39] See esp. the helpful essays in Sasson's *CANE* and Johnston 2004; see also, e.g., Kratz and Spieckermann 2006.

[40] See also, e.g., Weinfeld 1983 and id. 2004; Janowski, Koch and Wilhelm 1993. In addition, there have been various studies on the Day of Atonement in light of ANE parallels (e.g., Tawil 1980) and other comparative studies such as Geller (1980) on the *Šurpu* incantations and Lev 5, and Watts on the עלה (2006).

Babel und Bibel lectures; b) identification of similar rites to establish antiquity and differentiation from those rites to establish superiority (see especially Milgrom); c) a comparison of selected ANE rites with selected Priestly rites in order to illumine the various Priestly rites or systems (see especially Wright 1987).

The first method has been largely abandoned as too simplistic. Milgrom's analysis and his model, however, are still often referenced uncritically and thus require a fuller critique.[41] Milgrom's examination is apologetic in nature and tone. Thus, in defending the Priestly position, he adapts the ANE material selectively to serve his purposes.[42] He uses ANE parallels positively and negatively, neither of which is entirely convincing. Positively, he argues that similar ancient practices establish the antiquity of the Priestly account. However, this need not be the case. The existence of similar ancient practices does not mean that those in P are old, only that they would not be out of place in the ANE if they were old (the Priestly rituals could be a later derivation of earlier practices).[43] For example, the long-standing importance of expiation and purification in the ANE does not mean that the חטאת and the אשם are especially ancient. At most, it indicates that they could be old. It is equally possible that they could be more recent innovations, since the עלה could have previously served these ends. In addition, such a conclusion does not adequately account for the (near) absence of such terms before P. Negatively, for Milgrom, ANE rites represent the primitive beliefs and practices from which Israel differentiates itself. Since he does not seem entirely convinced that the Priestly rites have intrinsic value (or he is responding to those with such a conviction), he finds value in their difference, in their being decidedly less primitive. Where embarrassingly primitive elements remain in P, such as mention of YHWH's food, Milgrom often dismisses them by calling them fossilized vestiges.[44]

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[41] As will be clear on nearly every page, I owe a great debt to the excellent work of Jacob Milgrom. The following correction in no way undermines the immense value of his work.

[42] His analysis of ANE practice is at times only a caricature, designed to defend the Priestly position often at the expense of the other ANE cultures. It often does not account for the sophisticated complexities of ANE religions. Of course, an exhaustive account of ANE practices and systems is not his aim. He uses ANE material for the express purpose of illustrating the Priestly system. Nonetheless, his selectivity and at times polemical tone can be misleading.

[43] See also Weinfeld 2004:42–47; Gane 2005:355–378.

[44] Regarding divine food, see Milgrom 1991:213. Although his argument against divine consumption of the bread of presence is more sophisticated, as we will see in chapter 4, it is likewise insufficient.

Wright's comparative approach and analysis are more productive. According to his method of contrastive comparison, "essentially similar phenomena in discrete cultures are studied in detail separately and then compared."[45] Such an approach is rightly careful not to import meaning from ANE cultures, while placing the Priestly rituals more firmly in their ANE context. However, while a comparison of similar rituals in different cultures is fruitful, it yields a superficial and selective portrait when isolated from the systems in which the rites are embedded.[46] If the Priestly writers construct their system in response to the various ANE systems, then the interpreter cannot fully understand the Priestly system without first understanding the ANE systems from which they emerge and to which they respond. More than simply responding to a selection of individual rites, the Priestly writers respond to the larger systems and their respective thought-worlds.

Without appropriate contextualization, it is unclear what roles the individual rites play in the larger system, whether they are primary or peripheral, in response to extreme circumstances or regular protocol. Rioting and looting after winning a football game provides a modern example. Without contextualizing the event, it would be unclear if this behavior is normal or an extreme version of the celebratory mob mentality. The ideology of the system itself is likewise unclear from a selective analysis (e.g., what is the nature of the gods and of their relationship to humanity and creation? How does each culture envision, elicit, and ensure divine presence? How do they envision and actualize divine service and damage control?). In addition, examining only the closest parallels to Priestly rituals provides merely a sliver of the larger picture, overlooking important areas where the two systems are unlike, and, thus, inhibiting a fuller understanding of the systems themselves.

Rather than comparing individual rites in isolation from their surrounding contexts, my research compares the systems (Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Hittite, Syro-Palestinian, and Priestly Israelite) in which the individual rites are embedded.[47] My study addresses how the various systems, reconstructed on the basis of archaeological and textual evidence from the ANE and the Priestly texts, are designed to work. I examine how they describe the nature of the divine presence (chapter 2), elicit that presence, prepare accommodation and servants for its arrival (chapter 3), and perform regular service (chapter 4) and damage control (chapters 5–7) – all to ensure max-

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[45] Id. 1987:8.

[46] Although Wright's analysis of Hittite purification motifs is rather systematic (1987: 31–45), it is not integrated with the rest of his argument.

[47] Cf. Hallo (1990; id. 1997), who focuses on judicious comparisons of individual texts and textual corpora rather than on comparisons of systems.

imum efficacy. This approach is beneficial on a general comparative level and, more particularly, to elucidate the primary contribution of the Priestly writers. The latter is especially germane, since the genius of the Priestly writers is not in their total originality, but in their ability to co-opt elements already present in the surrounding cultures and adapt them to serve their own purposes. In each context, the Priestly writers minimize the perceived weaknesses of other biblical and ANE approaches. They aim to construct a system that resembles its ANE counterparts enough to be recognizable, yet differs in certain key aspects to establish its preeminence.

Unlike Wright, I compare systems and the worldviews that inform and infuse them. I am especially interested in situating each rite in the context of its larger system, whether that rite is normal or anomalous. Unlike Milgrom, I am not interested in positing a specific (early) historical context for the Priestly writings, nor do I attempt to distance Israelite practice from the more 'primitive' surrounding cultures. Instead, I strive to situate the Priestly writings within their ANE context and to recover the underlying rationale of the Priestly differentiation from it, undertaken to distance Israel from and establish Israelite superiority over those cultures closest to them.[48] In other words, instead of making value judgments myself, I attempt to uncover the Priestly rhetorical message.

However, the presentation of an extensive analysis of each system in its own right and context goes beyond the bounds of the present work on the Priestly tabernacle system (That analysis is currently in preparation for publication). Instead, my presentation of ANE material in this study must be selective. Although merely a sampling, my work necessarily builds on and is informed by my fuller treatment, providing my analysis with a depth and breadth that it would not otherwise possess.[49]

In particular, brevity forces me to minimize the various geographical and chronological differences. However, since there is a striking overlap and conservatism among ANE religious systems,[50] the necessarily artificial amalgam presented here is nonetheless profitable.

In addition, I do not limit the Priestly texts to any one period or posit borrowing from any one culture. Instead, the consistency of ideas across

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[48] Priestly differentiation from their own Israelite context is equally important, as they seek to establish the supremacy of their system within in Israelite context over all rival claimants.

[49] Often, I can (ironically) only discuss individual elements, which, nonetheless, are analyzed and understood as part and in light of the larger system.

[50] For the commonality, see esp. my forthcoming analysis of temples and divine presence; regarding the religious conservatism, see, e.g., Lambert 1990:123 on Mesopotamia: "No major changes took place over history except in the organization of the gods into a pantheon, and except where cities completely died out and ceased to be inhabited." Regarding Egypt, see, e.g., Assmann 2001:129.