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BOOK REVIEW FORUM [Journal page **152**]

on

Mary Douglas's

Leviticus as Literature

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Response to reviews by ***Mary Douglas***

We are pleased to present the *Journal of Ritual Studies* Review Forum
Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern, Co-Editors *Journal of Ritual Studies*

Leviticus as Literature (Mary Douglas, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999)
Reviewed by ***Suzette Heald*** (Dept. of Human Science, Brunel University, Uxbridge)
[Journal pages **153-156**]

Mary Douglas never stops. Hers is a tireless questing. While for many readers, her 1966 masterpiece, *Purity and Danger*, remains the last word for a theory of pollution, for Douglas herself, the puzzles raised by purity rules have continued to drive her towards extending and modifying her original ideas. And, it is in this vein that she has returned to the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament which contain the teachings of Moses, and remain the keystone of Judaism. If, in her early works, her interest in the Pentateuch was for what it could illustrate about anthropological method and specifically about her pollution theory, this position is reversed in the more recent work. When she returned to the study of the Old Testament in the 1990s, she had a broader compass and a deeper scholarship. She now advances a radically new reading of the Pentateuch, building upon her established methodological principles but extending her interpretative range by a concentration on the form of the literary text itself. This is first expounded in her commentary on the Book of Numbers (*In the Wilderness*, 1993a and b) where her anthropological method is used almost as an archaeological tool, examining the evidential remains of an ancient culture, to propose vivid new ideas of their context. This, from an anthropological view, is a backwards task. Instead of using knowledge of a culture to comprehend a text, she uses the text to tease out and speculate upon the conditions of an ancient culture to derive new understanding and provoke debate.

Leviticus as Literature continues this project. The excitement in reading it comes in large part from the method and complexity of her arguments. In this beautifully crafted book, constructed almost as a detective story might be, Mary Douglas sets out a problem and works skilfully towards a final denouement. The argument is persuasive, every step leading Douglas to further extrapolation, to further insights into the nature of the ancient text and its underlying theological principles. In the course of this, she advances further novel hypotheses about how to read Leviticus as a literary text and about its priestly editors. Explicitly partisan, taking up the cause of the priestly redactors and arguing for the coherence of their text, this book is likely to have greatest impact in Biblical studies. For an anthropologist, hesitant to comment on the historical and theological issues involved, its interest is primarily to follow this remarkable anthropological voyage and Mary Douglas's new departure in analysing literary texts.

There is no way in which this review can adequately summarise the intricacy of the arguments but, since *In the Wilderness* and *Leviticus as Literature* are in effect companion volumes, let me begin with a synopsis of the 'plot' so far. Taken together, the two books illustrate the basic principles in Douglas's programme and, as always, how she is prepared to re-scrutinise her own earlier interpretations, jettisoning those that seem inadequate to the task in hand. To start with her theory of impurity. A key chapter in *Purity and Danger* was devoted to the issue of abominable animals in Leviticus, arguing that they evidenced a classificatory system notable for its rigidity, where all animals which crossed the dividing lines between the established categories were struck off the list of edible things. Anomalous equalled abomination. In two later essays of the early 1970s (1972a and b), she returned to this analysis in self-critical mode, taking on board critics who had argued that her analysis had contradicted her overall position, to wit, that such cosmological systems had to be understood in terms of the ways ideas emerge from the society which produces them. She then advanced the thesis that this abstemious system related to the position of the ancient Hebrews in maintaining a precarious identity, as a single chosen people among a melee of other vying groups. For such an enclave culture, the key boundary was that of Israel itself. This position, she has now modified twice more.

In her return to the issue of pollution in *In the Wilderness*, the purity rules are portrayed as something of an enigma in terms of her general theory of taboo since their punitive aspect is underplayed. They do not, she argues, yield a personal theodicy, and are refractory to an analysis where personal accountability is a major key to understanding them. To enquire deeper in this, she takes up the issue of authorship and

history. The source is generally taken to be a set of priestly scribes of the Levite line, and the timing for the redaction of the book of Numbers put between 5th and 6th centuries BCE. This assumes that it was begun during the period of exile in Babylon and completed on return, early in the period of the second temple in Jerusalem. Her initial concerns are to speculate on the political realities of the return, when Judah was in effect a province of Persia and divided both within and without. Using ethnographic analogies, she sees the priests and prophets as sharing the same religious vision, opposed to that of the political leadership, with the returnees' interests in reclaiming their land also set against those who now occupied it.

Here we have a familiar theme, as Douglas follows her Durkheimian line of exposition, with her own twist, positing that culture is always about argument, about a clash of claims, and the metaphysics can only be understood if it is seen as emerging from the political realities of the time, out of the human interests which it serves. This thesis is reworked initially in the familiar terms of her cultural theory, as first advanced in *Natural Symbols,* with different types of thought system sketched in, and the search - as in earlier work - to provide a sociological context for understanding cosmological variation. Where then do the priestly redactors stand? Her detailed examination of the historical record, uncertain as much of it is, and her interpretation of the purity code, allows her to speculate about their political outlook. Hierocratic masters of the temple cult, they are now seen as pursuing a liberal political line, an inclusionist ethic, designed to draw people into the cult and operating to counter any xenophobic tendencies present in other political interest groups. Their theology is not of the kind one would expect from a simple enclave, where rules would serve the interests of keeping the people of Judah separate from others. The purity rules are not concerned to demarcate different classes or races of people (apart from the distinction between Levite priests and others) but preach an egalitarian vision, which includes all creation. Pollution here becomes a universal, something to which all are liable, without necessarily incurring guilt.

This peculiarity of the Biblical system, with its aniconic monothesism, is again a central question which she takes up in *Leviticus as Literature* and, with it, she returns to the holiness code and the centrality of the temple cult. More interested now in its fundamental theological principles, she advances yet another interpretation of the forbidden animals. The God of Moses is the God of life and all living things belong to him, as does blood which is the essence of life. He stands opposed to death and corruption of all forms. All the purity rules are now seen as part of a unified vision based on the covenant. Abomination, as a translation for the forbidden animals, is, she argues, too value-laden and pejorative a translation for the context. To avoid or to shun would carry the technical force of the prohibition better. Far from being abominable, in its emotive sense, the animals too are part of God's creation, and they too come under his protection. The very rules which declare them unclean to the touch after death, and thus prohibit them as food, preserve their life.

But the refinements of her theory of pollution as it applies to the Old Testament, and her detailed analysis of its particular forms, is only one aspect of the complex argument in the two books. Another centres on the issue of literary form. Here she identifies complex forms of parallelism and chiasmus, in which the text is arranged in sequences which reverse at mid-point. The mid-point represents a point of climax, carrying the message of the whole sequence, or ring as Douglas terms it. This pattern can be clearly seen in small sections, and has been so identified by Old Testament scholars. The question is whether these forms can be so easily applied to whole books? In Numbers, she argued that the parallelism between narrative sections and rules provides the main key, with the text alternating between the two, so that, in structuralist style, the text can be read horizontally as well as lineally. For Leviticus, a different structure is proposed, though again small narrative sequences are seen to mark points of major divide.

The desert tabernacle is the central image which permeates the book and this, in turn, she argues, is constructed on an analogy with Mount Sinai, in whose cloudy heights God's presence is hidden. The text, Douglas argues, takes up this model, with its sequences forming a complex ring structure, of three parts of diminishing size. The first marks out the area of the outer court, the arena for sacrifice, and proceeds through the first screen to the first sanctuary and thence though the second screen to the holy of holies, which holds the ark of the covenant. The rules of Leviticus, far from being a haphazard piling up of

injunctions, follow this pattern, with an increasing emphasis on holiness and separation, applied first to the people and then to the priesthood.

The claim, thus, is that Leviticus exhibits a particular form of pedimental composition, in which form and content are closely bound together, and carry the same message. By postulating a single or set of highly educated priestly editors, well schooled in the literary forms of the ancient world, Douglas makes this complex structure by no means implausible. She invites us to see them constructing out of older materials a new and radical religious synthesis through the image of the temple, of which they are the chosen priests. Indeed, by this move, she has solved some of the problems which are posed by structuralist analyses more generally - those of authorship and consciousness. The text, she claims, is not a precipitate of some collective unconscious but a conscious, indeed crafted product of consummate artistry.

One intriguing question raised by this analysis is why has it been so obscure ever since? In a text which has been subject to centuries of learned exegesis why has such a literary structure not been recognised before? Douglas argues for a paradigm shift which has made such archaic forms of thought opaque to modern thinkers. The mode of reasoning, the thought style, she discerns in the text is one she now terms analogical, where analogies serve in place of a causal explanation, the one building on another. Thus the rules surrounding sacrifice, parallel those surrounding the body and those of the temple, and so on. Pattern is all, and meaning so deeply embedded that it does not need any expansive justification. This is not in itself a new aspect of her thinking. Indeed, one can trace it back to *Purity and Danger*, and to her use of Bernstein's social linguistics and of Levi-Strauss's structuralist analyses, both of whom she acknowledges again. In such modes of thought cosmic and social schemas are developed in forms of reverberating metaphors, with microcosm piled on microcosm. Such a thought style, she argues, is foreign to moderns, who, more used to dialogic reasoning, of Aristotelian logic, with content divorced from social experience, have simply failed to see the pattern. This argument is framed in the context of the relevance of anthropological readings of the complex symbolism she discerns in the text, but it applies equally to the text since this is presented also as evidencing a microcosmic pattern.

This reasoning only partially answers to the riddle of historical amnesia. A paradigm shift is rarely that thoroughgoing. She, Claude Levi-Strauss, Edmund Leach, to name a few - have found many echoes of concrete logic in our own cultural schemas. The same applies to the literary form, since the rhetorical devices she mentions are fairly universally employed, as she argues, in poetry and in prose from all over the world. The issue is really the systematic use of them to organise a whole and complex piece of prose. The question of how such a patterning should have been lost could, of course, be argued in terms of the nature of scholarly and theological interest. Mary Douglas is well known for her views on cultural bias (and thus blindness) but she does not choose to pursue this line of argument in this context and, given the lack of historical certainties, the question remains hanging. Douglas allows that the literary structure used might well have been archaic even at the time of the redaction. But, she also claims that readers of the text would have easy access to the structure, the book allowing them in effect to make a spiritual pilgrimage around the temple at a time when it was in fact non-existent. Who, then, were these readers?

Unfortunately, we don't know. Mysteries remain not only about the writing but about how the lore was transmitted to acolytes and to the faithful. The availability of the text both before and at the time of the redaction is unclear, though early in the second temple period it was taken up (or even discovered) to become part of the Hebrew canon (Haran, 1978). No liturgy is mentioned in the detailed description of temple services. Further, it is possible that prayers and readings only became incorporated into Jewish religious services centuries later, as synagogues replaced the temple, and liturgy replaced sacrifices, shortly before or following the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in 70CE (Bloom, 1999).

As an outsider, one is hesitant to enter the fray. But, if the book was initially an esoteric text, confined to a small sect of priests - indeed, Haran says, 'a guarded property of the priesthood' (1978:11) - the literary artifice remains altogether possible. With this, would follow Douglas's vision of these priests constructing a totally reformed religion, harking back to its origins, to keep faith with their God. That the form would have been more widely recognised outside such a cultic setting remains at least to this reader

a more doubtful hypothesis. It would have strengthened the case had the divisions of the text Douglas discerns corresponded to those made when rabbis divided the text into portions to be read as part of the regular form of service in the synagogues. It would attest to the cultural embeddedness of the chiasmic sequences. But, by the same token, the fact that they do not so correspond does not invalidate her interpretation and reading, given that rabbinical scholarship developed in very different circumstances and at a later historical period.

That a scholar of Mary Douglas's stature could have identified a unique structure in an ancient text is not in itself surprising. Similar literary structures building on chiasmus have been advanced by classical and biblical scholars, and she cites both Gutzwiller and Milgrom, but neither I think argue such a thorough-going case, with form and meaning so intricately woven together as Douglas has done. This could make her argument very specific as opposed to having more general relevance. Nevertheless, just as Levi-Strauss showed that the apparent chaos of mythological narratives could be reduced to order, demanding that other anthropologists take this imaginative leap, so too, I think, is Mary Douglas's implicit demand. She has developed a further method, working though the literary form itself in a way that extends structuralist analysis. The search should now be on for anthropologists willing to take up her challenge and look anew at the unruly oral texts with which they are familiar to see if, likewise, they evidence such patterning.

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Leviticus as Literature (Mary Douglas, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999)
Reviewed by ***Lester L. Grabbe*** (Theology, Univeristy of Hull, England)
[Journal pages **157-161**]

Mary Douglas is well known to specialists in Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) studies since she is one of the few anthropologists willing to engage herself directly in aspects of this rather different field. To be clear about my own views, I am a critical admirer of her. I have learned a lot from her writings while also being skeptical of some of her interpretations (see, e.g., Grabbe 1993: 56-61). Not many people have the courage to work in a field outside their own specialty, and one who does will naturally make mistakes. Some of the criticisms of Douglas by biblical scholars have arisen because of her lack of specialist knowledge (e.g., facility in using the original text of the Hebrew Bible), but she has persevered, learned from her mistakes, and come back to teach us all things in our own specialty that we would not otherwise have known.

Leviticus has not been a popular book, especially among Christians. A number of us who have written on this biblical book have had to address the problem of making it relevant—or at least interesting—to the readers. For Douglas to say that the book has meaning beyond a narrow dry catalogue of ritual directions is not new, but how she extracts meaning from it, as well as her general approach to the book, is not that expected of the run-of-the-mill biblical exegete. A second reading of the book has also enabled me to begin to understand and appreciate many things missed on the first reading. There are times when part of the fault for overlooking valuable insights is Douglas's: she does not always clearly highlight her main points. The key to a chapter might be given in a single sentence, which if missed, can leave the reader floundering. At times a significant insight or crucial observation seems to be buried in the middle of a paragraph and easily overlooked unless one is reading in a concentrated way. Ideally, this is the way we would read all our books, but most of us haven't the time or energy—indeed, the luxury—of being able to read in this fashion. One of the main lacks in this particular book is a good summary chapter of her main points and conclusions.

This review will focus on a number of specific issues, and much in the book will not be commented on, which does not mean that I regard these areas as wrong or uninteresting; on the contrary, I regard the whole book as a significant contribution not only to Leviticus studies in particular but also to biblical studies in general. For example, her discussion on the logic of the book (pp. 15-40) should be read by all biblical scholars who are unacquainted with the "rationality" debate among anthropologists.

My first point relates to the "language" of Leviticus. Douglas makes a fundamental observation on p. 44 when she states, "The possibility that Leviticus has been written in one style and read in another will account for many of the difficulties encountered in its interpretation." To me this is the crux of the issue: in order to grasp the message of Leviticus we have to understand its language. But how do we understand that language? There is no dictionary or grammar that we can go to, nor does Douglas point to one. There are some hints within the book itself, a verse here and there that shows concerns about ethics and morals, about right and wrong. Douglas uses those to point us in the right direction, but it is not clear how she deciphers this language. Part of the key seems to lie in her close observation of the book's structure.

Her explanations make sense in most cases, though one is left with the impression that a significant contribution is Douglas's own subjective and speculative interpretations. Perhaps the reason for the particular interpretation is obvious to an anthropologist, but it does not necessarily seem obvious to the poor biblical scholar. For example, why should the body of the sacrificial animal parallel the structure of the tabernacle/temple? The parallels drawn between the temple and the animal seem clear and compelling enough. Yet what is the point of seeing the temple printed on the victim's body? The temple where it is being sacrificed is there in front of the one making the offering: why should he or she find meaning in a connection between the symbolism of the two? If the priest were to point this out to the lay offerer (assuming there was a context for doing so), would the response be, "So what?"

More meaningful is reading the language as a reflection of the (unwritten) rules of society. "When he [the author of Leviticus] talks about virtue, honesty, and justice, he uses simple measuring examples" (p. 45). To me this is real insight. Of special interest is the way in which Leviticus 19 is marked by the book's structure as the central chapter, thus highlighting the ethical focus of the legal rulings that take up much of the text. I am also convinced by her argument that the book of Leviticus is laid out on the model of the tabernacle/temple. Her recognition of the significance of the two narrative sections as two prime markers in the text shows how her eye has spotted things that had been overlooked by centuries of students.

Finally, in this connection I would like to have seen more on the cosmological question. Douglas points out that the sacrificial system in many cultures relates intimately to their cosmology. This seems to me more important than seeing the sacrificial victim's body as only a model of the temple, but she in fact says very little about cosmology. Reference is made to Mt Sinai and the giving of the law, but where are references to the creation myth, to traditions of Yhwh's defeating the monsters of chaos, or to the *Urmensch*? Perhaps they are not there, but I would have liked more discussion on the question.

A major question is, what is being read or interpreted? Is it the text of Leviticus (or more widely, the text of P or even of the Pentateuch)? Or is it the historical situation of the exilic or post-exilic community? Douglas does not make this clear or, rather, she seems to flip back and forth between the two. A good deal of the book is a close and insightful analysis of the text and how it is structured. Here all literary devices are exploited, including wordplay and puns. At times she shows too much concern with "root meanings" or etymologies of words (e.g., pp. 159-63, 216-17) to try to ascertain the meaning of difficult passages. Unfortunately, such exegesis had been practiced even by some noted theologians and biblical scholars, until the trenchant but timely criticisms of James Barr (1961) more than 40 years ago, though I won't say that the practice cannot still be found among specialists. To be clear, I am not referring to paronomasia (which a literary author might well indulge in to make a point) but to trying to extract a "root" meaning from a Hebrew stem. This is not a major problem, but occasionally her interpretation depends fairly heavily on such an approach.

To return to the point at issue, much of the time she analyzes the text as text. On the other hand, there are periodic statements about the context of Leviticus in the defeat and destruction of Judah and its aftermath (e.g., pp. 102-7), i.e., statements about the historical society in which the book was written. This attempt to read the book historically has some unexpected (and unrecognized?) consequences. A central point in her argument is that Leviticus forbids non-sacral slaughter: any animal killed even for food has to be slaughtered at the altar (p. 68), which is indeed what the text says. But rather than deal with this as a textual statement, she moves to the historical society which she presumes created the text and goes on to argue that, since male animals were not castrated (can we be sure of this?), sacrifice was a way of keeping the ratio of males and females under control. Yet she skates over the problem that blemished animals were not allowed to be sacrificed on the altar, noting only that presumably "they were quietly eaten" (p. 140), again treating the problem as a practical farming question rather than as a literary one. If Leviticus's position on profane slaughter was the law in society, however, blemished animals could not have been used for meat at all. The point is that some of the laws of Leviticus would have been impossible to follow in actual society, as I have argued (Grabbe forthcoming); see also the article by Schwartz (1996) which not only confirms Douglas's view that Leviticus and the P code are independent of Deuteronomy but also agrees with my view that the P legislation is utopian (1996).

Once we recognize that the statements about slaughter are idealistic ones, the peculiar suggestion that Leviticus allows a multiplicity of sanctuaries (p. 93) loses its support. Granted, the argument that Leviticus does not presuppose a single central temple is not unique to Douglas but has also been argued—equally unconvincingly—by Jacob Milgrom. The context of Leviticus is the desert tabernacle of which there is only one. There is no suggestion of multiple altars. All references are to "the altar" (some eighty times or so), of which only one is ever described. I do not want to make too much of this issue since, as far as I can see, it does not really affect the central thrust of Douglas's argument. What it illustrates, though, is the uneasy relationship between the literary analysis and the sociological analysis.

They seem to me mixed up in a way that is methodologically unacceptable at times. By no means do I propose that the sociological analysis—in which Douglas is a noted expert—should be omitted but rather that it should follow what must be a literary analysis first carried out independently of historical and sociological considerations.

I was particularly interested in what Douglas would do with Leviticus 11 on clean and unclean animals, since this is one area where I have had criticisms of her early treatments (Grabbe 1993: 56-61). She makes no reference to her earlier work but expounds the chapter in the context of the thesis that one of the messages of Leviticus is concern for the welfare of animals (chs. 7-8). She reasonably argues that Leviticus should not be assimilated to the parallel passage in Deuteronomy (14:3-21). She then points out that the term used for land animals ("clean/unclean") is different from that used for the creatures of the water and air and those that "swarm" on the earth (they are not said to be "clean/unclean" but certain ones are "an abomination"). Her discussion through this whole chapter (ch. 8) is ingenious, even brilliant at times, involving a variety of terminology, leading her to conclude that the concern of the author is to address questions of animal welfare and fertility as part of a larger debate in the ancient Near East at the time (5th/4th centuries BCE).

I applaud her creative approach to the subject; she points out some patterns in the chapter that I had not noticed before and she gives a coherent explanation for them. Yet, in the end, I remain unconvinced (though this does not mean I have or have seen a better explanation). Her basic argument is that certain animals are forbidden for food because they represent fertility. One of the first problems is that a number of Hebrew terms are used in the chapter whose precise connotations still elude us; specialists in Hebrew language have not produced a consensus about their meanings. Although Douglas's explanations wisely builds on the broader context, it still depends on particular meanings of particular words and, as already noted, she depends in part on what I would call a fallacious argument from supposed "root" meanings of words. A second aspect of her argument is that "the whole world as it was known . . . was engaged in theological controversy about the right to take animal life" (p. 171). I suspect this is not seen by her as a major part of her argument, though she does not say so explicitly. Nevertheless, the examples all seem to be from outside the ancient Near East (India, Greece). I am not aware of evidence for any such debate in the literature of Judah's environment. Was the main message of Leviticus 11 in actuality a compassion for animals? I accept that animal welfare is partly a concern of the book but, like the apostle Paul in a different context, one has to ask, "Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written" (1 Cor. 9:9-10). A concern for animal welfare is certainly a topic that would endear Leviticus to many modern readers, but that may be a bit too convenient for those of us wanting contemporaries to recognize the value of the book.

Another consideration makes me question this interpretation of Leviticus 11, however. I hesitate to advance it, because it is based mainly on a "gut feeling", but I should be open about it since it may play a greater role in my reaction than I realize: Douglas's explanation of Leviticus 11 simply does not fit an agrarian society, in my opinion. A farmer—or someone who grew up on a farm, as I did—knows that animals are to be respected and treated well, but they are not to be sentimentalized or anthropomorphized (as is becoming more and more the case in our urbanized society). Farm animals are a part of or even the entirety of the farmer's livelihood; on the other hand, wild animals are usually viewed differently, especially if their interests conflict with those of the domestic livestock. (I am not accusing farmers of being interested only in profits; many are and have long been environmentally conscious.) I do not see Judean peasants being overly concerned about the many "creeping things" in their environment, nor worrying too much that shrimps or octopuses appear vulnerable. The book of Leviticus was probably written by a priest, and priests were not farmers, but any profession in an agrarian society will be closely tied to the land and have an agrarian outlook. The priestly writer was giving contemporary meaning to what were probably ancient food taboos among his people (as Douglas recognizes); that is, he is probably not coming up with new eating practices but only incorporating those already conventional in his society. The meaning suggested by Douglas, though, does not seem to me to fit the book's likely historical and social context.

A particularly perspicacious observation by Douglas is that Leviticus rejects divination from its perspective. On my first reading of her book, the importance of this did not strike me. The reason is that I have found a good deal of evidence that divination was quite important for pre-exilic Israel and Judah, including the priests, and this interest seems to have continued into the post-exilic community (Grabbe 1995: especially ch. 5), despite the denunciations of some passages (e.g., Deut. 18:9-14; Lev. 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27). What Douglas has recognized is that the sacrificial system would normally presuppose certain forms of divination as a matter of course (e.g., pp. 107-28). Thus, the complete silence of Leviticus about any sort of divination to determine what sin had been committed and what sort of offering was needed is extremely eloquent: the author has repudiated the past. (In reality, divination had by no means been abandoned in Jewish society, which is another reason for acknowledging that Leviticus's picture is sometimes utopian.) Douglas has noticed something quite important here.

I think more can be said on the subject of divination, however. Our description of the cult in the temple comes mainly from Second Temple (post-exilic) sources: the priestly source (including Leviticus), 1 and 2 Chronicles, some passages in 1 and 2 Kings and elsewhere. Most of these sources seem to be written in knowledge of what was happening in the temple in the Persian period (and possibly the Hellenistic period in some cases). Since temple ritual was probably conservative on the whole, what happened in the later period was by and large what had happened for centuries, with some exceptions. One of the insights of modern scholarship is the discovery of the office of cultic prophet (see Grabbe 1995: 112-13 for a discussion and sources). Although no office or function of cultic prophet is described anywhere in the biblical texts, enough hints remain that the institution of cultic prophet has been widely accepted in scholarship. Cultic prophets, however, could well have functioned much as diviners did in cults known from elsewhere in the ancient Near East.

Prophecy in my opinion is primarily a form of divination. One might argue that some sorts of prophecy do not fit this model very well, but much prophecy can be seen as a form of spirit divination (Grabbe 1995: 139-41). This would apply well to cult prophets who would have given God's ruling on various matters in the same way that *baru* priests/diviners did in Mesopotamia. We have evidence that the cultic prophets were being absorbed into the Levites during the early Second Temple period, but it may be that the Levites took over the function of finding out what sin had been committed or what sort of sacrifice must be offered. The point to be made is that oracles and divination may not have been needed because the Judean temple cult already had a parallel office to carry out these functions. Indeed, this may have been true even for the pre-exilic cult, with the priestly oracles of the ephod and the Urim and Thummim (Grabbe 1995: 120-21) having a supportive or even an entirely different function. It is an intriguing question that Douglas has recognized, but there may be more to be said on the subject if prophecy in general and cult prophecy specifically are taken into account.

One of the tests of a theory is how well it makes sense of a whole set of data. Here is where Douglas's book comes into its own. Whatever doubts there might be about some aspects of her interpretation of Leviticus, a significant strength of the book is the extent to which not only the various contents but their arrangement fit together into a seamless whole. The patterns, the parallels, the interlocking pieces of the book that tie it together into a well-structured entirety—and which bring out its message of ethics and morality—are splendidly teased out. Thus, for example, ch. 11 with its disquisition on edible and inedible animals is seen to have fertility as one of its key points, leading into chs. 12-15 in which fertility and life are the main themes, but also that both are under threat, culminating in ch. 16 in which the threats to the sanctuary are removed in the annual Day of Atonement ritual with the two goats and the entrance of the high priest into the inner-most part of the temple, the Holy of Holies. Each section of text is locked into place like an elaborate jigsaw puzzle, and the final product is a beautifully crafted masterpiece. More broadly, the entire book maps out the temple structure in exquisite detail. Her overall analysis of the book's structure is brilliant. Not many people have made Leviticus live in the way Mary Douglas has!

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Leviticus as Literature (Mary Douglas, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999)

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[Journal pages **162-168**]

Queries Towards a Cosmology of Leviticus

In *Leviticus as Literature*, Mary Douglas has crafted a conceptual tour de force, one that she refers to as a 'theology,' a theory of God. I prefer to address this work as a 'cosmology,' a more ramified term that links this oeuvre to more general issues of logics of cosmic organization. Douglas raises issues for cosmologists of social order, precisely because of her creative, imaginative endeavors, joined to her rigorous use of structuralist orientated thinking. Not a scholar of the Hebrew Bible, my own interests are less in whether the author is correct in her interpretations of the structuration of the Book of Leviticus and more in terms of how she cosmicizes cosmos through her understandings.

Leviticus contains a version, in Nelson Goodman's (1978) terms, of an ancient Israelite cosmos, of what I would call this forming of cosmic form. I take it that Douglas's explications of the Leviticus cosmos are viable - now I want to know more about their implications, raising the following. How is the Leviticus cosmos held together? Does causality (and, if so, what sort) have a role in the Leviticus cosmos? What is the logic of classification formed in the Leviticus cosmos? Given the context of this Forum, I allow myself conceptual leeway in speculating on these questions.

Holding Cosmos Together

Cosmology needs to address how any cosmic scheme is held together (Handelman and Shulman 1997, n.d.). One question in this regard is whether cosmic forces (of generation, organization, reproduction) are contained within and by cosmos or whether they have a different standing. The Israelite God of Leviticus is the creator of all, yet he himself is not contained within, is not integral to, his cosmos. He does not depend for his existence on that of his cosmos. He is all of the cosmos, but much more - an eternal force that never wanes nor wavers. He is a god who encompasses his cosmos, in the sense of Louis Dumont's (1970) use of the idea (but without accepting the necessity of Dumont's scheme of binary oppositions through which to constitute encompassment). The idea of encompassment is embedded in the Leviticus cosmos. In the English language, to encompass is to surround, to circumvent, to take in from without, to contain, to hold together from outside, as from an exterior. In-compassment has the same meanings. I am arguing here that through encompassment the Leviticus cosmos is held together first and foremost from its exterior.

God creates and holds together his cosmos from its exterior (pp. 77-78, 86, 134). This sense of containment from exteriority is well exemplified by Douglas's argument that in the Leviticus tabernacle there is the dual danger of impurity breaking in, but no less of holiness breaking out (p. 177). In Douglas's explication of the tripartite 'model' of Mount Sinai as cosmic space, God is present at the summit, the highest point, the fulcrum of cosmos, and in the deepest place, within the person, in a sense within the depths of the person turned inside-out, depths that lead inwards but also outwards, to the presence of God. On both these surfaces of near contact, God integrates cosmos from outside of itself. I would speculate that this kind of cosmic organization may relate to why, in part, much much later, God was said to have taken the Israelites out of the mythic, organic rhythms of the natural world, and to have put his people within history, that is, within time as evolution and eschatology. The processes of God's cosmos do not index his own evolution, his own exteriorization and exfoliation. Were there such indexicality, God would be quite contained within himself, perhaps as a force that waxes and wanes, and so, too, his cosmos would be self-contained, in keeping with these rhythms. The Leviticus God exists fully and full of intentionality outside of, apart from, his cosmos, his people. People change, morally, socially; God does not. In a similar sort of design, the concentric ring structure that Douglas discerns in

the Leviticus text is held together and latched, closed off, by and from its exterior. These points have implications for how cosmos is integrated.

Douglas argues that the cosmos of Leviticus (in my terms) is held together through analogical or concrete thinking. That is, through analogies added to and layered onto one another, thereby bringing macrocosm and microcosm into alignment. This synchronization enables the linking of the tripartite cosmic model of Mount Sinai to the tripartite body of the sacrificial animal, to the tripartite body of the worshiper, and to the tripartite division of the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting of the Israelite camp, in whose innermost sanctum God is present. Sacrificial animal, human body, and Tent of Meeting all reflect macrocosmic Mount Sinai, continuously re-orientating the Israelites in terms of this integration of cosmos and re-rotating them through these connectivities. Douglas contrasts the layered thickness and denseness of analogical, concrete thinking to the thinness of abstraction in modern Western thinking - thinking that is lineal in its relationships among variables, with causal direction in how these variables relate to one another.

Douglas's template of analogical thinking is taken from the ancient Chinese, especially from the Confucian patterning of correspondences and its intimate relationship to the idea of the exemplar, the perfect sage, the exquisite model for action, indeed, for praxis. This adoption problematizes the question of what holds the Leviticus cosmos together, and how this is done. The theory of correspondences in ancient China had a much broader cachet than Confucianism as such; moreover this understanding of cosmic patterning is more compatible with conceptions of an organic cosmos, than it is with conceptions of a cosmos held together from its exterior, by encompassment, as is the cosmos of Leviticus. The Leviticus cosmos is held together from outside itself; those of ancient China are held together from within themselves - and for the latter set of conditions and processes that emphasize integration through interiority we have no term in English, none that would parallel that of encompassment, yet be alien to this idea of integration from exteriority.

In terms of exteriority and interiority, the Leviticus cosmos and those of ancient China are quite unlike one another. Nonetheless they may have something important in common if one drops the argument that Leviticus exemplifies analogical thinking, and instead opts for what I think is a more powerful logic of connectivity and causation, that of homology. The distinction between analogy and homology is not that clear-cut, but it is worth considering whether homological connectivities characterize the Leviticus cosmos, and, if so, what the implications of this may be.

Homology and Causation

Homology focuses more on interiority, on an integration of cosmos from within itself, and makes degrees of this available to understanding the cosmos of Leviticus. I will argue this way for a bit, contrasting analogic to homologic thinking, introducing some additional materials from ancient China.

Analogy, like metaphor, specializes in bringing differences into alignment. Analogy relates difference to difference by bridging these through posited similarity. Analogy depends on differences that are made similar to one another (1). Homology, on the other hand, assumes that phenomena have the same identity in crucial respects, yet without insisting on their contiguity to one another. Homology is more an equation of identity rather than one of difference. This is that, even as 'this' retains its this-ness, and 'that' its that-ness. Relationships both of analogy and of homology may be understood as causal, no less so than the linear relationships of causality in the modern West, though different senses of causality will index basic differences in the organization of cosmos (Handelman 1998: 28-30). Yet homology, perhaps more than analogy, also may be characterized by an omni-directionality of cause and effect, and this is may be significant for theories of correspondence.

Departing momentarily from ancient China for ancient India, there relationships of homology were not only those of cause and effect, but homologous thinking pointed to a mutuality of relationship in which cause turned into effect, effect into cause. The Vedic cosmos was held together by relations of homologic identity "*bandhu*" that could be formulated as follows: 'X is so "bound" to Y that X is Y'

(Knipe 1975: 43; see also Smith 1989, 1994). Whatever their contents, X and Y (and other factors) were bound into omni-directional webs of mutuality, such that any change in one effected a change in all the others. Unlike analogy, homology does not have to go outside itself, as it were, in order to hold itself together. Homology generates integration within itself, through its very own identities. Relationships of homology, of identity, are their own integration. This is less so for integration through analogy, since each difference that is bridged, by virtue of its very difference, must go outside itself, as it were, in order to be joined to another difference. Indeed, this is a process of (metaphoric) bridging than can go on *ad infinitum*, without necessarily reaching any natural closure. In a sense, a relationship of analogy must continually mediate the opposition or contradiction that defines the relationship, and that the relationship must overcome, by going outside the opposition or contradiction, in order for cause to produce effect. Homology, on the other hand, since it depends upon identities rather than upon the bridging of contrasted difference, has multi or omni-directional causality embedded within the interiority of the relationship. If these distinctions between analogy and homology are viable, it is worth noting here that cosmic integration through analogy will tend to characterize a cosmos that is encompassed from its exterior, while cosmic integration through homology will tend to characterize a cosmos that is integrated through its relationships of interiority.

As in Vedic India, ancient Chinese conceptions of form intimated that formation within form was causal. For example, among the later Mohist followers (350-325 B.C.E.) of the philosopher, Moh Ti (5th century B.C.E.), the idea of mold or law (*fa*), cosmic and human, intimated the causality of formation. Graham (1978: 35) translated a passage of the later Mohists that defines *fa* as 'that in being like which something is so.' In this phrasing there are glimmerings of the logic of relationships of correspondence that later became so highly developed and elaborated during the Han Dynasty. Ancient Chinese correspondences were, I think, closer to relationships of homology, of identity, than to those of analogy, of difference (Henderson 1984: 6-9, 20-23).

What of Leviticus in this regard? It is one thing to argue that the tripartite model is a kind of map of process, so that analogies between the cosmic mountain, the sacrificial animal body, and the tabernacle thicken and concretize correspondences (pp. 76-81). Or that 'the body and the tabernacle are analogues of one another,' so that, 'Washing the body is an [analogous] *enactment* that [analogously] *replicates* atonement for restoring the sanctity of the tabernacle' (p. 188, my emphases). It is quite another matter to argue that the sacrificial animal body (homologically) *creates* or *generates* tabernacle and mountain, just as tabernacle (homologically) *creates* or *generates* mountain and sacrificial animal body, and so forth.

In the Mohist phrasing given above, 'That in being like which' implicates a causal homology with 'something is so.' Hu Shih (1968:94), in translating the same passage as Graham, above, explicitly links form to cause: 'A cause is that with the obtaining of which something becomes'. He insisted that for later Mohists cause and form were one and the same, only viewed from different standpoints (1968: 95). The Graham formulation of mold or form implicates the mutual, omni-directional effects of homology; while the Hu Shih formulation explicitly identifies cause with form (though some sinologists insist that Hu Shih grafted the aristotelian idea of formal cause onto Mohist thinking, thereby skewing his translation of the above passage). In any event, the intimation seems to be that whatever was placed within a form would be formed homologically in relation to that very form. In a sense, form generated its own homologies. In ancient China, form had the propensity (Jullien1995: 78, 88-89) to generate homologies of itself; or, more accurately, form had the propensity to generate homologic relationships within which it was related interiorly to the homologies it was a part of. Cosmos thereby was organically self-generating and self-sealing, closing itself from within itself, renewing itself from within itself. In a holistic cosmos constituted through homology there is no difference between microcosm and macrocosm. Though the Leviticus cosmos is not self-sealing from within itself, are its correspondences more homologous than analogous - so that microcosm generates macrocosm, and the inverse?

One may speculate that a cosmos constituted through homologous identities would emphasize the accomplishment of praxis, indeed of perfect praxis. The problematic of perfect praxis was a major dilemma for ancient Chinese political and moral thought. Chinese thinkers tried to accomplish perfect

praxis, such that there would be no discrepancy between ideation, or name, and practice. As one scholar puts it, 'Only when names correspond exactly to the things which they denote, can laws be correct and order be established' (Duyvendak 1928: 100). Thus, when conditions were right, relationships would actualize themselves in practice exactly as they were named in theory, or more accurately, exactly as they were named in classification. Again, form or name would generate and shape its homologic practice (Handelman 1995).

Not to put too fine a point on it, concrete thinking - analogous, homologous - puts the emphasis on praxis, more so than do abstract, linear causalities. Concrete thinking stresses the realities of the lived-in world in all their phenomenological immediacy, rather than the gap between the ideal and the real. To no small degree the religions of ancient India and China became religions more of praxis rather than religions more of belief - to practice was more central to these religions than to believe. Judaism too became a religion of praxis, but it also turned praxis through time and temporal rhythm into a central problematic which perhaps is not resolvable. The people of ancient Israel, and forever after, are never able to accomplish the perfect praxis that their God demands through his covenants and laws. Falling short over and again, they retrogress and are dashed into destruction, only to raise themselves once more, over and over, progressing towards the heights of perfect praxis. (Something of this tenor with regard to the relationship of the Jewish people to the land of Israel is argued by Gurevitch and Aran 1994).

(Cosmic) Classification

Classification has been at the forefront, and rightly so, of Douglas's understanding of Leviticus, from her earlier work (Douglas1966: 41-57) to the present. Yet the kind of classification that Douglas understands Leviticus to propound has its own implications for the cosmos embedded in this Book. This is so, even without going into the reasoning as to why the Leviticus classifications are as they are - though it is this reasoning that has occupied the discourse of scholars for centuries, and to which Douglas gives so much fruitful thought. However one also should ask about the kind of cosmic organization such classification implies. What logic of classification does God form in Leviticus?

The character of the boundary in schemes of classification shapes to a high degree the character of the classification, and the ways in which the categories within the classification relate to one another (2). The Leviticus classifications are formed by a certain kind of boundary which forms and separates the categories within a scheme of classification from one another. This boundary is utterly lineal in its properties of exclusion and inclusion. That is, each category of classification that is formed through the use of this boundary totally excludes the content of every other category and totally includes its own content. Nowhere are these boundaries within and between classifications fuzzy, shifting, overlapping, or moebius-like (Handelman 2001). If there are exceptions, they too are formulated through the same totalizing logic of exclusion and inclusion. Furthermore, these boundaries are organized in a hierarchy of classification, such that, 'Everything in creation is arranged in order; each thing on a lower rank to be kept apart from one above...' (p. 190).

This logic of classification may well have been honed by the 'totally reformed religion' of Leviticus, one from which the clutter, overlap, and mediation of kings, ancestors, seers, divination, magic, and healing were banished (pp. 5,107). For that matter, this honing of this kind of classification may have been a weapon for the reorganization of cosmos in the Leviticus mode. This is the kind of classification - exclusive and inclusive, organized in a hierarchy of categories - that has been called monothetic (Bowker and Star 1999), one that has dominated much of Western linear thinking about the making of order in the world since the Eighteenth Century (Foucault 1973). This is the logic of classification that I have called 'bureaucratic' (Handelman 1998: xxix-xlii)(3).

Yet monothetic logic is only one sort of cultural logic of classification (see, for example, Smith 1991, Needham1975, Rorsch et al 1976, Wittgenstein 1953) - especially if the cosmos in question is integrated from within itself by continuous processes of transformation, so that at least some of the

categories of classification are themselves hardly stable and solid, but instead are something of shape-shifters, turning within themselves from one category into another.

Circumcision, about which so much has been written, exemplifies the significance of the monothetic boundary in the forming of the people of Israel, and the relationship of this kind of boundary to encompassment. Douglas's interpretation, like that of others, is that circumcision is the sign of the covenant between God and his people (p. 5, 165). Circumcision is indeed the fruitful cut (Eilberg-Schwartz 1990: 141-176). The covenant is the cut itself, the cut that de-forms the infant and re-forms him anew (Goldberg 1996: 25), the removal of the barrier between God and man (Bernstein 1987: 19). The cut is both the separation of God from his people and their joining together in the hierarchy and inequality of the covenant. The logic of the cut is that of a cutting apart in order to re-join anew.

Yet what should be taken into account is the implication in the logic of the cut, that the cut is the creation of a boundary, one that is utterly hard and fast, one that is totalistic and absolutist, a boundary that cleaves through all else, a boundary between God on one side and the young male on the other; a boundary between God on the one side and his people on the other. A boundary that perhaps serves as a model for all other boundaries of classification, and that enables the special conditions under which the body of animal sacrifice (re) creates the tripartite model of cosmos, the cosmic mountain of Sinai within the Tent of Meeting. One can argue that this boundary connects even as it separates because its two sides are asymmetrical and hierarchical in relation to one another. This boundary, brought into existence by the cut of circumcision, indeed, created anew by every such cut, is a clear and uncompromising denotation of encompassment, of God containing his people from their exterior, as it were (4).

Douglas argues through a discussion of Genesis that God creates an ordered series of 'coverings', or layered protections, for the people of Israel - deep inside the body, in the thick covering of suet fat that protects the soft, tender kidneys and liver; on the surface of the body in the covering garments of skin that he first sewed for Adam and Eve to protect their exterior surface; on the clothed bodies covered by the dwelling, and so on (p. 247). So, too, in instances of impurity, layer after layer was to be taken off to be cleansed, exposing the layer beneath to scrutiny. The ark of the covenant in the Tent of Meeting was itself covered by the throne on which God sat. Circumcision, on the other hand, was perhaps an 'uncovering' followed by a 'covering' - the uncovering of the organ of fertility, divided and separated from its foreskin by the cut of the covenant, and then 'covered' (from its exterior) by the protection and obligation of the covenant and directed towards fruitfulness. Put otherwise, the male infant emerged from the 'covering' of the female body, the 'covering' of the womb, was 'uncovered' in itself, within the maleness of its body, and was 'recovered' by the covenant with God.

Douglas's work is another kind of fruitful cut, an explication that uncovers the fertility of the text, a text that is covered by her rich interpretations and powerful syntheses.

Endnotes

1. The use of analogy in zoology is to compare different organs (the trunk of an elephant, the hand of a man) because they have the same uses or functions (Bateson 1972:80)

2. I am not referring here to the distinctions that Douglas (1982) makes through her grid-group theory between external boundaries and internal lines, or to how these distinctions co-vary with different kinds of social organization. My concern is with the logic of classification, arguing that this is very much about the basic character of boundary, and so how this logic shapes categories of classification.

3. As an aside, is it overly far-fetched to perceive some seeds of 'proto-bureaucratic logic' in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, a logic that later flourished in and became central to Jewish religious law (*Halakha)*, a logic of forming form that likely made its way into other, more dominant, religious and political setups? Perhaps not.

4. Circumcision has some of the qualities of the logic of the scape-goat and the scape-bird (pp. 247-250). Just as one goat of the pair of goats and one bird of the pair of birds are chosen for sacrifice while the others of the pairs are set free to go into the wilderness, so the infant is chosen for the self-sacrifice (Bernstein 1987) - for the constraint and obligation of the covenant through the cut, while the foreskin is thrown away, in a sense, perhaps, sent to the wilderness.

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Leviticus as Literature
(Mary Douglas, Oxford University Press, 1999)

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[Journal pages **169-171**]

Mary Douglas among the Hebrews

Mary Douglas has been doing field work among the ancient Hebrews now off-and-on for most of her career. She has progressively willed herself into the past with more and more resolve until she produced *Leviticus as Literature*, in many ways the culmination of her Israelite "field-work." She takes her field-work experience among the Lele and others into the discussion of the Hebrews. The results are strikingly revealing of the ways in which the ancient Hebrews organized their lives.

Douglas defines two different ways of ordering experience. One way is discursively, through narrative. The other way is analogically, by similar structures. These two ways of thinking correspond quite closely with Levi-Strauss' attention to the metophoric and the metonymic, to the melody and the harmony of a musical composition. While narrative organizes experience in a linear way, similar structures provide a harmonic whole and express important aspects of experience through analogical means. Although there is some narrative in Leviticus, the basic way in which it conveys its meaning is through an analogical method.

For example, Douglas devotes chapter 3 to the rules of sacrifice in Leviticus. She first points out that there is nothing barbaric in sacrifice. Indeed, compared to a modern slaughter-house, religious sacrifice seems far more humane, allowing animals to die with dignity and meaning, and providing a meditation on the death of the body (p. 67). So in spite of widespread detestation of animal sacrifice as a primitive rite, there are aspects of sacrifice which are humane by comparison with modern practice. After outlining some of the possible structures that exist with regard to African sacrifices and Greek sacrifices, Douglas shows that the sacrifice itself makes reference to a variety of other systems in Hebrew thought. The concentric circles of holiness that make up the space around the Temple and Tabernacle are defined by purity laws. The holiness is pointed up by means of more and more costly furnishings. This is already well known. Using information gleaned from slaughter houses instead of book depictions, Douglas also points out that the animal itself is divided up into three areas. These structures separate the carcass into three zones, and the fat and offal forms the central and most sacred part of the sacrifice, devoted to God alone. Douglas suggests that this is a spatial analogy with the Temple itself where the central area is most sacred, an order which is paralleled and created by the Tabernacle and its relationship with Mt. Sinai in the Levitical system. Along with the articulated formula not to eat blood is the unwritten formula not to eat fat or leftovers of the sacrifice, which are all classified as sacred, like blood. It is ingenious but not necessarily as ingenious as the explanation of the long lobe of the liver, which is also forbidden. Is this a metonym for the saved remnant of the North? At this point, the anthropologist asks whose order it is, the ancients or the modern anthropologist's? "The long lobe as the holy remnant--is it not too inventive? But whose ingenuity, the priestly writer's or the modern anthropologist's"? (p. 85). This is the methodological crux of structural explanations. Sometimes they are not well marked in the culture; they must commend themselves to us as the best appropriate ordering of the data, even though there is no particular marking in the material to recommend it. It is courageous to point out the limits of methods so forthrightly. Actually, to me, the rejected functional interpretation that it prevents use of the liver for divination seems just as likely. But Douglas leaves the reader knowing when there is not enough evidence to decide.

In view of Douglas' practiced eye when looking at rituals of the Hebrews in the context of her broader knowledge of religious rituals around the world, it is especially praiseworthy that she is also able to enter into the rather arcane and very difficult body of exegetical scholarship of the

Hebrew Bible. She is able to survey the underlying documents of the Pentateuch and make important judgments of the age and underlying issues inherent in each one.

For instance, she has a position on the relative agendas of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy does have an interest in centralizing worship at the temple in Jerusalem but she shows that this unification leaves no evidence in the Levitical material. Instead, she offers a truly novel hypothesis, that Leviticus' analogical method is devoted to a totally reformed religion, both before and after the exile. Her reasoning is exemplified in her extremely important analysis of the cult of the dead.

There are several laws in the codes which seem designed to prevent priests from taking on the role of necromancer. Leviticus ordains that priests can only attend the burials of their close kin (Lev. 21:1-5). They should not indulge in ornate rituals of grief, appearing with disheveled hair, rent garments, shaven heads, or gashed flesh (Lev. 10:6, Lev 19: 27-8). The High Priest is enjoined to even higher standards (Lev. 21). These all seem designed to prevent the priesthood from serving in too prominent a way in rites for the dead. As Mary Douglas says:

> Mediumistic consultation with the dead was to be punished by stoning (Lev. 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27). The dead could neither help nor be helped. Any form of spirit cult was rejected. Seers, sorcerers, witches, and diviners, any who cross the divide between living and dead, were denounced as evil-doers. The Pentateuch did not just ignore its ancestors. It violently hated to be in communication with them. And this too is in line with the prophet Isaiah: 'O house of Jacob, come let us walk in the light of the Lord. For thou hast rejected thy people, the house of Jacob, because they are full of diviners from the east and of soothsayers like the Philistines ...' (Isa 2:5-6). The surrounding peoples in the Mediterranean and Aegean regions all had cults of the dead, Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia, Ugaritic kings and commoners, and Canaan. But in the Pentateuch there is no sign of it. If it had been deliberately removed before the books were edited, why? (1).

This seems a true mystery until one considers the mind-set of the returning exiles. They see failure to heed the prophets as the cause of the exile. The main point is that YHWH does not allow it, though there are many Israelites who naturally think that their God not only allows it but sanctions it as a way to find out His will. Instead of finding food for the dead, the dead themselves, and the people who practice necromancy will themselves go hungry, for they have deeply offended the LORD. Having dead around haunting the living would be a disaster.

The only question is: At what point in Israelite history does God actually forbid it and how many people hear the prohibition? There are precursors to the exilic campaign in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. For Mary Douglas, the radical change comes with Leviticus, which she describes as "a totally reformed religion"(2). We have already seen that there were voices in the prophets and the earlier documents that strove for the surety which was achieved by the priestly redactors of Second Temple times (534 BCE-70 CE). Since both Deuteronomy and Leviticus have pre-exilic roots, the process begins there and equally in the prophets which are listed above. Douglas's formulation of a "totally reformed religion" is the culmination of a process that has been developing in a variety of places throughout the First Temple period.

In all of this discussion, Douglas's knowledge of the possibilities of sacrifice world-wide, of the relationships that obtain between sacrifice and divination, how divinations work and what they do individually and socially, as well as some of the reasons why any culture might give up divination or a cult of the dead are invaluable, not because she draws a direct parallel with Israel's religion but because she has real knowledge of the various technologies of religion to which these actions can be put. She knows that the best comparison can be contrast and so can easily critique others' simplistic assumptions about the religion of Israel. She uses all of this knowledge to show how radical is the approach of the Levitical writer. After this, she reviews, reprises, and reconsiders her

previous work in the dietary laws set out in Leviticus. For instance, I find her inquiry into the meaning of the word *toevah* (abomination) to be most interesting for the study and understanding of these laws. Her contrast between the rational, analytic, bureaucratic covenantal approach to change in the Deuteronomic document and the symbolic, ritualized reform of the Levitical legislation will be appreciated in the field. The anthropological context into which she puts all of Leviticus' system is brightly illuminating, even when she offers a contrast between Leviticus and other nearby systems or systems of similar symbols elsewhere in time and space. She points out how effective the Levitical Code is as religion and convinces us that it is not mere legal*istic* formalism. The meat of her sacrifice will be feasted upon for many years in scholarship.

That is not to say that Douglas is always right (as if we can discover this by comparing her work with some simple standard). As she points out, certain arguments depend on how well they explain things to us, not necessarily because there is a critical test for them in the data. And most historical arguments, in the end, depend on our own abilities to use them to explain and describe historical causation. For my part, I have been very impressed with the historical arguments of Daniel Smith in his book, *Religion of the Landless*, that the return to the land of Israel made for enormous changes in the religion (3). Many of the choices that Smith outlines as observed in the case of diaspora and forced exile could have but did not obtain in the Israelite case. On the other hand, the anxiety that God had punished them for their sins of idolatry in the First Temple period is a long-understood motivation of the Second Temple period. This may help Douglas understand how the Levitical laws helped allay that doubt and was built into the symbolic structure of Israel.

Of course, it would not explain why prophets and the royal bureaucracy opposed the cult of the dead in pre-exilic times. But Douglas has, I think, put her finger on that problem with the needs of state making and of delegitimizing the forces that lead to regionalization. Every practice that validates and legitimates family and clan and tribal hierarchy tends to diminish the powers and abilities of the central government. But then there are the "moral" objections of the prophets and they need to be considered as well. So we have still more work to do. These considerations seem to me to complete the new picture of Leviticus which Douglas has given us.

In short, Douglas's book is not only an achievement in itself but it is also a fertile ground for new research into the history of religion in the biblical period.

Endnotes

1. Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 99.
2. Chapter 5, pp. 87-108.
3. *Religion of the Landless* (Bloomington: Merrystone Press, 1989).

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Leviticus as Literature

(Mary Douglas, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999)

Review Article by ***Ronald S. Hendel*** (University of California, Berkeley) [Journal pages 172-185]

Analogy in Priestly Thought

A native thinker makes the penetrating comment that 'All sacred things must have their place.' It could even be said that being in their place is what makes them sacred for if they were taken out of their place, even in thought, the entire order of the universe would be destroyed.

Claude Lévi-Strauss[i]

In 1979 two tiny silver amulets were discovered in a burial cave near Jerusalem. The amulets date to the late seventh-sixth centuries B.C.E., and both contain the following blessing:

> May Yahweh bless you and keep you,
> May Yahweh shine his face upon you,

The larger amulet breaks off at this point, and the smaller continues:

> And may He give you peace.

This remarkable find is a slightly shorter version of the Priestly Blessing of Numbers 6:24-26, which God gives to Aaron and his sons to bless the children of Israel.[ii] These amulets, presumably worn by those buried in the cave as their final blessing, are the earliest extrabiblical attestation of verses found in the Hebrew Bible. They testify to the importance of the Priestly Blessing in the waning years of the First Temple period.

The style of this blessing is graceful, rhythmic, and terse. It expresses itself through divine invocation ("May Yahweh bless you"), then turns to the liminal scene of blessing ("shine his face upon you") - alluding to the cosmic light of Yahweh's cultic presence [iii] and finally to the experienced result of the blessing ("give you peace"). The repeated object "you" (4x) provides a rhythmic focus on the worshiper who experiences the blessing. In its powerful words and ritual context, this priestly discourse is performative in accomplishing what it invokes - joining Yahweh and the worshiper in the nexus of divine blessing. The priest's words to the Israelite are, in this instance, sublime and spiritual.

The bulk of priestly discourse in the Pentateuch is, in contrast, somewhat less sublime. The difficulty of this discourse - and of the purity system that is its ideological core - is the problem I wish to address, drawing inspiration from a recent book by Mary Douglas. The following is a representative sample of difficult priestly discourse,[iv] from the instructions on diagnosing and treating a house afflicted with mold or fungus:

> Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: "When you come to the land of Canaan that I am giving you as a possession, and when I afflict a house of the land of your possession with scaly skin disease and the owner of the house comes and tells the priest, saying: 'It seems to me like an affliction on the house,' the priest shall command that they clear out the house before the priest comes to examine the affliction, so that whatever is in the house will not become impure. Afterward the priest will come to examine the house. He will examine the affliction, and if the affliction on the walls of the house consist of greenish or reddish eruptions and its appeareance is beneath the wall, the priest shall go out of the house to the entrance of the house, and he shall quarantine the house for seven days. The priest shall return on the seventh day and inspect, and if the affliction has spread on the walls of the house, the priest shall command that they remove the stones on which is the affliction and take them outside of the city to an unclean place. He shall have the house scraped throughout and have them take out the plaster that they scraped outside the city to an unclean place. They shall take other stones and put them in place of the stones, and take other plaster and plaster the house. And if the affliction returns and spreads in the house after he has removed the stones and after he has scraped the

> house and after plastering, the priest shall come back and inspect, and if the affliction has spread in the house, it is persistent scaly skin disease in the house; it is impure. He shall break down the house - its stones, its timber, and all the house's plaster -and bring it outside the city to an impure place. Whoever enters the house during the days of its quarantine shall be impure until evening. Whoever lies down in the house shall wash his clothes. Whoever eats in the house shall wash his clothes. (Lev 14:33-47)

This is typical priestly discourse - repetitious, inelegant prose, filled with precise detail but lacking explanation or persuasive diction. It is priestly instruction for priests, a specialized discourse for specialists, which seems hermetic and strange to modern ears. Why, after all, is so much attention lavished on the problem of houses with "scaly skin disease", a medical term that here refers to mold or mildew? The significance of this elaborate instruction is obscure. It probably seemed obscure to the early rabbis also, as evidenced by the comment: "A stricken house has never come into existence and is never going to come into existence."[v]

The problem of priestly thought, particularly in the cultic instructions in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, is that it is so difficult to penetrate. In the eyes of many nineteenth and early twentieth century biblical scholars, the priestly writings were a collection of "dead works" - the decline and detritus of a once vibrant religious culture.[vi] We have learned since to read the text without such antinomian lenses (stemming from anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic biases), but it remains forbidding. Jacob Milgrom, a major figure in the modern reevaluation of the priestly writings, argues that

> Theology is what Leviticus is all about. It pervades every chapter and almost every verse. It is not expressed in pronouncements but embedded in rituals. Indeed, every act, whether movement, manipulation, or gesticulation, is pregnant with meaning.[vii]

Yet even if Milgrom is correct (and I find his explication of the rituals largely convincing), the significance of the ritual acts does not directly address the problem of the literary discourse. Why is the priestly theology "not expressed in pronouncements," as Milgrom observes? Why is the priestly style of thought - the dry descriptions, the absence of explanation, the inexplicable transitions - so impenetrable? Stephen Geller rightly observes:

> The problem of P is not so much that he is reticent, as the intimation one receives, in view of the obvious complexity and sophistication of his editorial endeavor, that this reticence is somehow willed, in some peculiar way intrinsic to his message.[viii]

Perhaps priestly discourse doesn't want or need explanation - it guards its difficulty closely. Perhaps, like Job, we are not intended to understand.

Styles of Thought

In her recent illuminating book, *Leviticus as Literature*,[ix] Mary Douglas returns to the biblical book that she explored in her anthropological classic, *Purity and Danger*.[x] Building on her recent studies and the substantial anthropological literature on "modes of thought,"[xi] she proposes a theoretical model for understanding the nature of priestly discourse in Leviticus. She details the style of thought that she calls "analogical" or "correlative," which contrasts with the more familiar mode of "rational-instrumental" thinking. The latter is the style of modern critical discourse:

> Our logic ... organizes experience in theoretical terms. Rational construction based upon it always goes in a direction away from the concrete particular towards the universal .... For example, rational construction creates contexts in which 'human nature,' or 'human rights,' or 'equality under the law,' can be invoked.[xii]

This analytical style of thinking, which in our culture descends from classical Greece and Enlightenment Europe, tends to flourish in a social context in which argument and persuasion are valued and politically effective: "The main precondition of this movement is the liberation of enquiry, a world made open to question and doubt, and the resulting high value set on persuasion."[xiii] Such was the world of the ancient

Greek polis and the individualist world of modern urban society.

In contrast, analogical or correlative thinking operates by a more associative logic:

> It is not based on dialectical principles, its arguments do not run on a linear, hierarchical model. It is based on analogical association, "it is 'horizontal' in the sense that it involves the association of concrete experienceable items." [xiv]

Analogical thought is found in many times and places, but it seems to flourish in social contexts that are highly ordered, in which people know their place, and where inherited structures of authority rather than personal persuasion are the primary locus of political power. The dense and nested structures of analogical thought seem to do best in an environment in which social interactions are themselves dense and nested, in which a word or gesture are sufficient to communicate meaning, rather than a comprehensive explanation. This fits the highly structured world of the priests of Leviticus and provides a key to their style of thought:

> Leviticus' literary style is correlative, it works through analogies. Instead of explaining why an instruction has been given, or even what it means, it adds another similar instruction, and another and another, thus producing its highly schematized effect. The series of analogies locate a particular instance in a context. They expand the meaning. Sometimes the analogies are hierarchized, one within another making inclusive sets, or sometimes they stand in opposed pairs or contrast sets. They serve in place of causal explanations. If one asks, Why this rule? the answer is that it conforms to that other rule. If, Why both those rules? the answer is a larger category of rules in which they are embedded as subsets or from some of which they are distinguished as exceptions. Many law books proceed in this concentric, hierarchical way. In Leviticus the patterning of oppositions and inclusions is generally all the explaining that we are going to get. Instead of argument there is analogy. [xv]

By clarifying the different conceptual forms and the supporting social contexts of these styles of thought, Douglas explains why it is so difficult for us to read Leviticus with empathy and understanding. For those of us who live in a social world of persuasion, free inquiry, and competition, Leviticus "belongs to a now obsolete and completely foreign order of thought."[xvi] We need to learn to follow the intricate analogical ordering of Leviticus:

> As we read any part of Leviticus we see that the rules build up verbal analogies: the consecration of a priest has a pattern of points in common with the consecration of the altar. We should read them as projections of one another and learn from each something more about what consecration means. The same applies to analogies drawn by the ritual of consecrating a priest (Lev 8:23-4) and the ritual cleansing of a cured leper when he is to be brought back into the community (Lev 14:14). The anointing says something, but is it something about the meaning of cleansing? Or about the meaning of leprosy? Or about the meaning of priesthood? Only the whole system of analogies in which it nests will show how it is to be read. [xvii]

Douglas offers a fresh and powerful perspective on how to read priestly discourse and follow its distinctive style of thought. In the following I wish to return to the house stricken with mildew, and to demonstrate how it can be comprehended as a piece of analogical thinking within the larger correlative structures of Leviticus and priestly thought. [xviii] Most of the details I will note are familiar (at least to specialists in Leviticus), but the way of approaching and synthesizing them is not. It is, as Douglas urges, a rational-instrumental path into analogical thought.

Scaly Skin Disease and Analogy

The immediate literary context of the mildewed house is a sequence of priestly instructions on the diagnosis and ritual purification of scaly skin disease. This word, which most translations incorrectly render as "leprosy," refers to a class of skin disorders characterized by flaky or ulcerating skin and subcutaneous lesions. From the perspective of modern medicine, the diseases which best fit this symptomology include certain types of psoriasis, eczema, seborrhea, and also a type of severe malnutrition (Kwashiorkor, a protein deficiency). [xix] Leviticus 13-14 contain instructions on the diagnosis

and disposition of scaly skin disease in humans, garments, and houses. The literary structure of these chapters intersperses in parallel the human and non-human instances of this condition: [xx]

diagnosis of human scaly skin disease (Lev 13:1-46)
    diagnosis and disposition of garment scaly skin disease (Lev 13:47-59)
purification/reincorporation of human healed of scaly skin disease (Lev 14:1-32)
    diagnosis and purification of house scaly skin disease (Lev 14:33-53)

The whole section ends with a concluding summary: "This is the instruction for all diseases of (human) scaly skin disease ... and scaly skin disease of garments and houses ... to teach when it is unclean and when it is clean - this is the instruction of scaly skin disease (Lev 14:54-57). The envelope structure of this summary ("This is the instruction ... this is the instruction of scaly skin disease") corresponds well to the interleaving structure of the instructions.

Clearly in this section a number of different phenomena are analogized to each other. As commentators observe, mold or fungus on houses and clothes are quite different things than human skin diseases. But the priestly writer uses the same name for all three types of conditions, thereby classing them together. This linguistic and compositional/redactional [xxi] move creates an explicit analogy between body, garments, and house, focusing on the skin or surface of each as subject to the stain of impurity. Each instance of scaly skin disease in these analogous domains is subject to similar diagnostic procedures and, when not malignant, ritual purification. Douglas notes that this analogical series "signals a return to the body/temple microcosm."[xxii] Where body and house are correlated in the "body logic" of Leviticus, particularly in the context of ritual pollution and purification, it is plausible to see a connection with other prominent bodies and houses in their relation to pollution and purification.

A body/temple microcosm is richly encoded in the analogies of the scaly skin disease texts of Leviticus 13-14. Not only are the healed body and house purified by similar rites (compare 14:3-9 with 14:49-53), but so too is the sacred Tent of Meeting in Leviticus 16. The Tent does not have scaly skin disease, but is polluted invisibly by the accumulated transgressions of the Israelite people, including the sins of priests and other leaders. [xxiii] To remedy this metaphysical disease, the high priest performs a ceremony to purify the holy place and the people. The most striking similarity in these rites of purification is the use of two animals - a pair of birds for the human and house and a pair of goats for the Tent - one of which is sacrificed and its blood applied to the site, and the other released in the wilderness. [xxiv] Note the similarities in the scenes of purification:

Purification of person healed of scaly skin disease
The priest shall order that two clean wild birds be brought for the person to be purified from scaly skin disease ... And the priest shall order that the first bird be slaughtered ... And he shall sprinkle (its blood) on the person to be purified from scaly skin disease seven times. When he has thus purified him, he shall send the wild bird to the open fields. (Lev 14:4-7)

Purification of house healed of scaly skin disease
He shall take for the purification two birds ... And he shall slaughter the first bird ... And he shall sprinkle (its blood) on the house seven times, and he shall purify the house with the bird's blood ... And he shall send the living bird out of the city to the open fields, and he shall cleanse the house, and it shall be purified. (Lev 14:49-53)

Purification of Tent of Meeting
He shall take two goats and stand them before Yahweh at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting ... He shall slaughter the goat of the purification offering ... And he shall sprinkle (its blood) on the the cover of the Ark and in front of the cover, and he shall cleanse the holy place from the pollution and transgressions of the Israelites, all their sins ... And he shall sprinkle it (viz. the altar) with the blood seven times with his finger. Thus he shall purify it and sanctify it from the pollution of the Israelites. ... And he shall present the live goat ... And he shall send it by the hand of an appointed man to the wilderness, and the goat shall bear on it all their transgressions to a barren land, and he shall send the goat to the wilderness. (Lev 16:7-22)

These scenes of purification are not the same, but they have an analogical relationship. Human scaly

skin disease and house scaly skin disease are analogous to the pollution that afflicts the Tent of Meeting. The afflicted skins or coverings are also analogous. The purifying rites - involving the two animals, one slaughtered and its blood used as a ritual purifying agent, and the other cast out into the wilderness - are also clearly analogous in these details. [xxv] There are, of course, also many differences in the rites, such as the types of animals (birds vs. goats) and their ritual status (the slaughtered goat is a purification offering, and the slaughtered birds are not). By situating these scenes in a correlative relationship, the processes of pollution and rites of purification are exemplified and reciprocally intersignifying.

In this analogical sense, the person with scaly skin disease and the house with mildew stains are exemplars or microcosms of the metaphysically stained Tent of God, whose periodic purification is necessary for Israel's continued existence. The bodies and houses impure from scaly skin disease serve as concrete metaphors (what T. S. Eliot called "objective correlates") of the holy Tent afflicted with the invisible disease of human transgression.

To borrow Milgrom's literary metaphor for the priestly system of purification and atonement, the bodies and houses with scaly skin disease are Priestly pictures of Dorian Gray.

> On the analogy of Oscar Wilde's novel, the priestly writers would claim: sin may not leave its mark on the face of the sinner, but it is certain to mark the face of the sanctuary, and unless it is quickly expunged, God's presence will depart .... the sinner may be unscarred by his evil, but the sanctuary bears the scars. [xxvi]

The sanctuary bears its scars invisibly, while its analogical projections - the bodies and houses with scaly skin disease - are tangible and ghastly exemplars of impurity. In this respect the "leper" is the projection of the defiled body, and the "leprous" house a picture of the defiled sanctuary.

The body/temple microcosm implicit in the scaly skin disease sequence - human, clothing, house - extends not only forward in Leviticus to the purification of the Tent of Meeting, but also backward to the purification of the priests. [xxvii] In Leviticus 8, shortly before the instructions about the person with scaly skin disease, God instructs Moses on the rites that Aaron and his sons must undergo in order to become the sacred officiants at the Tent of Meeting. Among the rites of passage that the initiates undergo, Moses applies sacrificial blood to their right earlobes, thumbs, and big toes:

> He slaughtered (the ram), and Moses took its blood and put it on Aaron's right earlobe, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. And he approached Aaron's sons, and Moses put the blood on their right earlobes, and on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet. (Lev 8:23-24)

The same curious rite (though with a different animal and a different type of sacrifice) occurs in the purification of the person healed of scaly skin disease:

> He shall slaughter the lamb of the reparation offering, and the priest shall take the blood of the reparation offering and put it on the right earlobe of person to be purified from scaly skin disease, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toes of his right foot. (Lev 14:25)

The analogy of the initiate priest and the person purified from scaly skin disease is clear in the similar application of sacrificial blood to their right ears, thumbs, and big toes. Nowhere else does this curious rite recur. Just as the body and house with scaly skin disease are analogical exemplifications of the polluted Tent of Meeting, so the person being purified from scaly skin disease is an analogical exemplification of the initiate priest. [xxviii] Both are transformed from a state of impurity to purity in their respective rites of passage, though the priests are transformed a step further to a state of holiness. [xxix]

Significantly, as part of the process of purification each must remain for seven days either outside or at the threshold of a tent:

> *Priestly initiate*
> "You shall dwell at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, day and night, for seven days" (Lev 8:35)
>
> *Person healed of scaly of skin disease*
> "He shall dwell outside of his tent for seven days" (Lev 14:8)

Only after the seven day period of the rite of passage is the person reintegrated into society, whether the Israelite community or the priestly guild. The person purified of scaly skin disease can now dwell in his tent, among his people, just as the purified and consecrated priest can now serve at the holy Tent of Meeting with his fellow priests. The body/temple microcosm is confirmed by these ritual acts.

A lacuna in the analogical ordering thus far is the position of the garment with scaly skin disease. It holds an intermediate place between human and house scaly skin disease in the literary sequence of Leviticus 13-14, but is less explicitly analogous to the situation of the Tent of Meeting or the initiate priest. I would suggest that that there is nonetheless a possible analogical relationship with Tent and priest. The garments subject to scaly skin disease are made of wool, linen, or leather (Lev 13:47-48). The garments of the initiate priests - which are sprinkled with oil and sacrificial blood in order to consecrate them (Lev 8:30) - are made of fine linen and dyed wool. [xxx] The exterior "cover"of the Tent of Meeting is made of leather (Exod 26:14), and the "cover" over the entrance is made of linen and dyed wool (Exod 26:36). [xxxi] In sum, the garments of the priests and the coverings of the Tent of Meeting are vulnerable to scaly skin disease, providing an analogy of coverings, garments, and skin. [xxxii] The case of garment scaly skin disease exemplifies the vulnerable "skin" of the Tent of Meeting as it does the sacred vestments of the priests.

Priestly Revisionism

Seen as an example of priestly analogical thought, the instructions on scaly skin disease impurity gain a greater degree of intelligibility. This is not a random class of disease - note that no other diseases are covered in the priestly instructions - but a specific set of conditions that fits into the analogical ordering of the purity laws of Leviticus. A question that arises from the analogical significance of scaly skin disease in priestly discourse is whether and to what degree this represents a break with previous concepts of this malady. Scholars have argued that it exemplifies a conceptual rupture that is foundational for the priestly purity system, but they disagree on what type of departure it represents.

The priestly instructions on scaly skin disease do not trace its cause to a fault of its victim. As Milgrom observes regarding garment scaly skin disease, "The nexus between malady and sin has been severed."[xxxiii] The analogy of garment, house, and human scaly skin disease may suggest that the human malady too is independent of personal guilt or liability. This is remarkable in view of the treatment of this disease in other biblical texts and elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Karel van der Toorn describes the traditional view in Mesopotamia and Israel:

> Illness stands out as the traditionally most unambiguous indicator of sin .... Leprosy was felt to be a punishment from God or the gods more particularly than other ailments, necessitating the banishment of the afflicted from the palace and the temple. [xxxiv]

In the Bible scaly skin disease is often moblized as a divine punishment in accordance with this traditional view. The following are the clearest examples (all from non-priestly texts):

> 1. When Miriam and Aaron complain about Moses' authority: "Yahweh was angry with them ... and behold Miriam was stricken with scaly skin disease like snow .... And Aaron said, "... we have been foolish and have sinned" (Num 12:9-11).
> 2. David curses Joab: "Let there never be lacking from Joab's house someone with genital discharge, someone with scaly skin disease, someone who holds the spindle, someone who falls by the sword, and someone who lacks bread" (2 Sam 3:29).
> 3. Elisha curses his unfaithful servant Gehazi: "'Let the scaly skin disease of Naaman cleave to you and to your seed forever.' And he went out from before him stricken with scaly skin disease like snow" (2 Kgs 5:27).
> 4. King Azariah/Uzziah: "Yahweh smote the king, and he had scaly skin disease until the day of his death" (2 Kgs 15:5). (In 2 Chr 26:16-21 the fault of the king is specified as an attempt to enter the Temple to burn incense.)

In each of these examples, scaly skin disease is used forensically as a punishment for a sin or crime.

In each case God is involved, implicitly or explicitly, as the divine judge who dispenses the disease as punishment. Probably related is the case of Job, who is afflicted with "terrible boils from the sole of his foot to his head" (Job 2:7). In his case the term scaly skin disease is not used, but the same forensic conception is involved, since both Job and his comforters assume that he is being punished by God. To Job this punishment is unjust, since he has not sinned. But while Job questions God's justice, he never questions the causal nexus of skin disease and divine punishment.

Priestly discourse in the purity laws of Leviticus appears to abandon this nexus. This is a significant departure from precedent. As Douglas observes, "no sin has caused the impurity, leprosy is not a punishment any more than a nocturnal emission [Lev 15:16] is a sin." [xxxv] There are other places in priestly narrative where God does dispense disease as punishment - in the Egyptian plagues (Exod 9:8-11), the plague after the sin of Korah (Num 17:13-14), and the plague after the sin at Peor (Num 25:8-9) - but notably not scaly skin disease. The priestly purity laws may diverge in this respect from priestly narrative, or it may be that scaly skin disease is a special case. [xxxvi]

The situation is comparable in the case of house scaly skin disease. While there are no other examples from the Hebrew Bible, there is mention in Mesopotamian omen literature of house fungus as a sign or portent of evil. Samuel Meier comments: "The *katarru*-fungus is an omen which normally indicates that evil is on the horizon. If the sign can be destroyed, then the evil it points to can be short-circuited." [xxxvii] In Mesopotamia, house fungus is a divine sign, a portent of fate and the intention of the gods. As such, it participates in the model of disease as a signifier of divine displeasure. But, as Meier notes, in Leviticus 14 "it is the fungus itself which is destructive [viz. polluting - RSH] ... no hint of the fungus being an omen." [xxxviii] In priestly discourse, house fungus is a source of impurity with no obvious connection to the nexus of sin and punishment. [xxxix]

Milgrom notes that there is an implication that the condition of human scaly skin disease pollutes the sanctuary, since the person healed of scaly skin disease must offer a purification sacrifice. [xl] But this need not be a matter of the sufferer's sin, it is more likely the function of a basic principle that Milgrom enunciates: "impurity displaces an equal amount of sanctuary holiness." [xli] Milgrom also notes that since the healed person must offer a reparation offering, there is a possible implication that he committed an unwitting sacrilege, even though "his disease is not traceable to sancta [trespass] or for that matter to any other cause." [xlii] The significance of the reparation offering is unclear in this context. [xliii] Although it may acknowledge the possibility of inadvertent sin, it seems that the priestly system has effaced, or at least radically attenuated, the earlier forensic model which highlights scaly skin disease as a punishment for sin.

Milgrom attributes the decoupling of the priestly rites from the model of sin and punishment to a symbolic reinterpretation motivated by a priestly aversion to pagan demonology: "In large measure, the priests succeeded in excising, and failing that in blunting, the most blatant pagan elements of the rite." [xliv] It is, Milgrom argues, a rejection of "demonic impurity," viz., the idea that demons cause impurity. [xlv] This may be true in other instances of impurity, but in the above cited biblical examples of scaly skin disease, it is not demons who afflict scaly skin disease, but God. [xlvi] The priestly break is not from foreign or demonic models of disease, but from traditional Israelite and Yahwistic understandings.

The priestly break or reinterpretation of earlier concepts of scaly skin disease and the nexus of disease and sin is plausibly connected to a wider trait in priestly thought that Baruch Halpern has called "the elite redefinition of traditional culture." [xlvii] The innovations in priestly thought are, in many cases, revisions of the practices and beliefs of earlier Israelite culture. Halpern lists briefly some of the Priestly reforms:

> P set out to correct the distortions in anthropomorphism and distributed sacrifice found in the old national literature. He even provided a new, central shrine of the collective ancestors, the patriarchs, suppl[anting] the place of the old clan section shrines. P rewrote the folk history of JE, suppressing all mention of angels... As mere representations, epiphenomena of the One, the gods and nature were alienated from Yhwh and identified as alien, as against the old theology, which lived comfortably with their stewardship of other nations in subordination to Yhwh. [xlviii]

In a striking example of Priestly revisionism, the "heavenly host" - formerly the lesser divinities of Yahweh's heavenly entourage - becomes in the priestly creation account a term for inert nature: "Thus were completed heaven and earth and all their host (Gen 2:1). [xlix] The lesser gods are naturalized, nature is depersonalized, and God is de-anthropomorphized. The structures of traditional religion are loosened

and recast, "rationalized" in Weber's sense. [l]

The uncoupling of scaly skin disease from the traditional model of malady and divine punishment is part of a wider reformulation in priestly thought of the relationship between God and humankind. God is more transcendent, religion less anthropocentric. The concept of scaly skin disease is shorn of its forensic import and is now a type of what David Wright calls "tolerated impurity." [li] Victims of this condition are not guilty of sin, they are merely susceptible to impurity, as is every Israelite. As Wright observes, "impure conditions are so numerous and natural that such debility is taken for granted and made part of the system."[lii] Disease becomes something like a natural condition rather than a supernatural consequence. In priestly thought it is not demons that are exorcised, but rather a degree of the "enchantment of the world." According to this implication of the priestly system, divine punishment is no longer the necessary cause of human malady. [liii]

Conclusion: Priestly Silences

Priestly thought is dense and obscure. It does not explain. Mary Douglas astutely connects the silence of the priests with their highly structured social context and their analogical mode of thought. In such conditions,

> sometimes silence is more powerful than speech.... Meaning depends on shared knowledge about the logical relations of objects in time and space. Meanings are not carried primarily through verbal channels, but conveyed obliquely by reference to established analogies. [liv]

Priestly discourse, ordered by analogical relations among its parts, is a densely textured "science of the concrete," to use Lévi-Strauss' term.[lv] The place of the analogical sequence of human, garment, and house scaly skin disease is as a set of signifiers in a larger analogical discourse about pollution and purification, whose focal points are the priest and the house of God, both of which are holy and vulnerable, and whose ritual interaction sustains the cosmic order.

Milgrom argues that the prominence of scaly skin disease in the priestly purity system has to do with its symbolic function as a signifier of death.

> The main clue for understanding the place of scaly skin disease in the impurity system is the fact that it is an aspect of death: its bearer is treated like a corpse. This equation is expressly stated by Aaron in his prayer on behalf of Miriam when she is stricken with scaly skin disease: "Let her not be like a corpse" (Num 12:12) [lvi]

He suggests that "the wasting of the body, the common characteristic of all biblically impure skin diseases, symbolizes the death process,"[lvii] and that "the purificatory rites for scale-diseased and corpse-contaminated persons ... symbolize the victory of the forces of life over death."[lviii] In this view, the priestly purity system is situated between the opposition of life and death and resolves it - at a theological and performative level - in its effective rites. [lix]

I would qualify Milgrom's view by noting that life and death are themselves symbolic operators in biblical thought. As Johannes Pedersen acutely observed, life and death in biblical discourse often refer to poles or phases in a continuum:

> Life and death are not two sharply distinguished spheres, because they do not mean existence or non-existence. Life is something which one possesses in a higher or lower degree. If afflicted by misfortune, illness or something else which checks the soul, then one has only little life, but all the more death. He who is ill or otherwise in distress may say that he is dead, and when he recovers, he is pulled out of death. [lx]

A case in point is the person with scaly skin disease, who is banished from the community and must engage in rites of mourning (Lev 13:45-46). This person is in a state of social death, cut off from human society and from the ritually available presence of God. [lxi] "All the days the disease is on him, he shall be unclean - he is unclean. Alone he shall dwell, his dwelling shall be outside the camp" (Lev 13:46). His solitude, his ritual state of mourning, his marred appearance, and his cry, "Impure, impure" provide a vivid portrait of Dorian Gray, of the symbolic death that is the negative correlate of the priest officiating at the holy of holies. The person with scaly skin disease is not only the inverse of the sanctified priest,

but his condition of exile and social death is a symbolic correlate of the outcome should the delicate balances of the priestly purity system collapse. [lxii]

Moreover, the condition of scaly skin disease is not entirely "an aspect of death," for it can be healed and purified, and one can return from it. It is certainly death-like in some respects, condemning its victim to a pitiful existence outside the vital world of the living. But it is ambiguous in that it is reversable, and the purified victims - unlike the dead - can return to their tents. The condition of scaly skin disease is therefore ambiguous with respect to the opposition of life and death, since it can be resolved either way. It is therefore an apt symbolic operator or mediating term *between* life and death. In some respects scaly skin disease is like the condition of sin - it can destroy, or it can be cured and purified. The dangerous effects of sin on God's Tent are, I have argued, correlated with scaly skin disease in the analogical structures of priestly discourse. Sin and scaly skin disease mediate between life and death, between impurity and holiness, since they change the status of persons and tents between these crucial domains. And for both, to restore the fullness of life requires the interventions of priestly ritual.

While the subtle valences of life and death, and the correlated states of holiness and impurity, are certainly basic to priestly thought, they are not the only motivations. Douglas argues that purity laws in most cultures have social impact as instruments of power:

> [W]here lines of abominability are drawn heavy stakes are at issue. The classification of the universe is part and parcel of social organization, and the categories are useful in defining who can be admitted where, and who comes first and who comes second or nowhere at all. [lxiii]

The conceptual categories of priestly thought should have practical and political ramifications, and not be simply a play of abstractions. She observes that the purity system "applies well enough, in fairly obvious ways, for the cult of the tabernacle and the dignity of the priesthood .... [and] draw[s] a boundary round the people of Israel against outsiders." [lxiv] She further suggests that a salient social function of the priestly purity laws may have been to eliminate or reduce the force of impurity accusations:

> Ritual contagion, usually a punishing accusation, has been defanged, its claws are drawn, it is rendered helpless for defence or attack. The systematization of sin in Leviticus makes all human creatures unavoidably liable to defilement .... In the priestly books uncleanness is a sacred contagion whose conditions are independent of intention. [lxv]

This is a plausible social motive - the reduction of social strife by neutralizing accusations of pollution - and may be related to the broader reformulations of traditional culture in priestly thought. The traditional view would be that represented in the psalms of lament and in Job, where the victim's friends and enemies alike condemn the victim as morally culpable and either abandon or attack him.[lxvi] In the priestly system impurity is not a term of moral condemnation, but a condition of human existence. Yet even as impurity is to some degree universalized and defanged, the priestly system reserves for itself the political power implicit in accusations (or diagnoses) of impurity. According to the priestly rules, ordinary Israelites cannot marshal effective impurity accusations, but priests can. The story of King Uzziah (2 Chron 26:16-21), removed from kingship by priestly diagnosis of scaly skin disease, is a case in point. [lxvii] An egalitarian doctrine of impurity is qualified by a priestly monopoly over its social power. [lxviii]

The priestly writings are silent on the rationale for the purity laws. [lxix] In the foregoing I have tried to draw closer to their rationale by extending Mary Douglas' study of analogical thought in Leviticus to the details of the priestly instructions on scaly skin disease and the analogical networks that sustain and channel their meanings. Douglas argues that "microcosmic thinking uses analogies as a logical basis for a total metaphysical framework."[lxx] The priestly discourses on scaly skin disease, in this respect, provide an entry into priestly metaphysics. The purity laws are sustained not by persuasion or argument, but by the subtle linkages among such concrete things as bodies, garments, houses, priests, and the Tent of Meeting where God's presence rests. The order of the universe depends on the analogies that weave these seemingly dissimilar things into a complex and harmonious whole, held together by priestly rules and holy rites. [lxxi]

Endnotes

[i]C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966) 10.

[ii]See G. Barkay, "The Priestly Benediction on Silver Plaques from Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem," *Tel Aviv* 19 (1992) 139-92; A. Yardeni, "Remarks on the Priestly Blessing on Two Ancient Amulets from Jerusalem," *Vetus Testamentum* 41 (1991) 176-85; B. Levine, *Numbers 1-20* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 236-44.

[iii]See M. S. Smith, "'Seeing God' in the Psalms: The Background to the Beatific Vision in the Hebrew Bible," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50 (1988) 171-83; J. D. Levenson, "The Jerusalem Temple in Devotional and Visionary Experience," in A. Green, ed., *Jewish Spirituality from the Bible through the Middle Ages* (New York: Crossroad, 1988) 43-46.

[iv]In George Steiner's terms (*On Difficulty and Other Essays* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978] 27-28) this is an instance of "modal difficulty," in which "[w]e have looked up what there is to look up, we have confidently parsed the elements of phrase - and still there is opaqueness. In some way, the centre, the rationale of the [text's] being, holds against us."

[v]Tosefta Nega`im. 6:1; cited in J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* (New York: Doubleday, 1991) 868.

[vi]Most influential in this tendency was the great nineteenth century scholar Julius Wellhausen; see L. H. Silberman, "Wellhausen and Judaism," *Semeia* 25 (1982) 75-82.

[vii]Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 42.

[viii]S. Geller, "Blood Cult: An Interpretation of the Priestly Work of the Pentateuch," in Geller, *Sacred Enigmas: Literary Religion in the Hebrew Bible* (London: Routledge, 1996) 66.

[ix]M. Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[x]M. Douglas, "The Abominations of Leviticus," in Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966) 41-57.

[xi]On Douglas's oeuvre, see the incisive study of R. Fardon, *Mary Douglas: An Intellectual Biography* (London: Routledge, 1999). On the anthropological studies of this issue, see R. Horton and R. Finnegan, eds., *Modes of Thought* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973); M. Hollis and S. Lukes, eds., *Rationality and Relativism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982); S. J. Tambiah, "Multiple Orderings of Reality: The Debate Initiated by Lévy-Bruhl," in Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 84-110; and M. Douglas, "Raisonnements circulaires: Retour nostalgique à Lévi-Bruhl," *Gradhiva* 30/31 (2001/2), 1-14.

[xii]Douglas, *Leviticus*, 15.

[xiii]Douglas, *Leviticus*, 15.

[xiv]Douglas, *Leviticus*, 16, quoting D. Hall and R. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: SUNY, 1987) 124.

[xv]Douglas, *Leviticus*, 18.

[xvi]Douglas, *Leviticus*, 15.

[xvii]Douglas, *Leviticus*, 20.

[xviii]In my usage "priestly" refers to the writings of the P source. The Holiness Code (H), found primarily in Leviticus 17-26, provides a number of explicit rationales (i.e. rational-instrumental thought) in its development of priestly thought; see Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22* (New York: Doubleday, 2000) 1371-75, and below, n. 69.

[xix]D. P. Wright and R. N. Jones, "Leprosy," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 4. 277-82. On Kwashiorkor in the ancient world, see D. A. Chase, Starvation (Kwashiorkor-Marasmus) in Atra-hasīs," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 39 (1987) 241-46.

[xx]Douglas, *Leviticus*, 177.

[xxi]Milgrom (*Leviticus 1-16*, 62, 808) argues that an earlier text dealing only with human scaly skin disease has been supplemented with the instructions about garment and house scaly skin disease. If this is so (and it is quite plausible), then the literary structure and the analogical sequence are attributable to the priestly redactor, which does not materially affect my argument about the analogical nature of priestly thought.

[xxii]Douglas, *Leviticus*, 177.

[xxiii]See Lev 16:16, 21; and Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 254-61.

[xxiv]On the rites of these paired animals, see D. P. Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987) 15-86.

[xxv]Wright (*Disposal*, 78) notes: "These bird rites have a striking similarity to the two-part purification rite on the Day of Atonement. This leads to the supposition that the bird rites and the Day of Atonement ritual may have a common background and origin." While a common background is certainly plausible, my emphasis is on their analogical relationship within priestly discourse. In methodological terms, I would note that the coherence of a semiotic system does not detract from the fact that the system and its elements have prior histories.

[xxvi]J. Milgrom, "Israel's Sanctuary: The Priestly 'Picture of Dorian Gray'," in Milgrom, *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology* (Leiden: Brill, 1983) 83.

[xxvii]It is certainly possible, as Milgrom notes (*Leviticus 1-16*, 62) that an earlier version of Leviticus went from ch. 10 to ch. 16 (note Lev 16:1, "Yahweh spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron..."), and chs. 11-15 are a later insertion. In this case, the dense analogical ordering of these chapters is attributable to redaction *and* composition rather than simply the latter.

[xxviii]I should add that the polluted Tent is also an exemplification of the body and house with scaly skin disease, and the initiate priest exemplifies the person purified from scaly skin disease. Analogy works both ways, that is, each term of an analogy is modified or semantically enriched by the other.

[xxix]On the similar structure and details of these two rites of passage, see F. H. Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990) 103-39, 151-79; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 529, 566-69, 853.

[xxx]Most priestly garments are fine linen (Exod 28:39; 39:27-28); the high priest's ephod, breastplate, and sash, and the ordinary priest's sash are a mixture of linen and dyed wool (Exod 28:6, 15, 39; 29:29); the high priest's robe is entirely blue wool (Exod 28:31; 39:22); see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 501-2; M. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) 165-74.

[xxxi]One of the leathers is called "*tāhāš* skins," perhaps a type of beaded leather, see S. Dalley, "Hebrew *tahas*, Akkadian *duhsu*, Faience and Beadwork," *Journal of Semitic Studies* (2000) 1-19; on the other fabrics in the Tent, see Haran, *Temples*, 160-63.

[xxxii]See Douglas, *Leviticus*, 54: "[Leviticus] uses the simple idea of covering to build up a series of analogies for atonement (Lev 12-16): from the skin covering the body, to the garment covering the skin, to the house covering the garment, and finally to the tabernacle: in each case when something has happened to spoil the covering, atonement has to be done."

[xxxiii]Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 808. Milgrom allows for "the possibility that scale disease may be a product of moral misdemeanor" (*Leviticus 1-16*, 822) because of the series of sacrifices offered at the purification ceremony; see further below.

[xxxiv]K. van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia: A Comparative Study* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1985) 67, 73.

[xxxv]Douglas, *Leviticus*, 188.

[xxxvi]The non-mention of scaly skin disease in priestly narrative and the non-mention of other diseases in priestly law makes it difficult to adjudicate this issue.

[xxxvii]S. Meier, "House Fungus: Mesopotamia and Israel (Lev 14:33-53)," *Revue Biblique* 96 (1989) 190.

[xxxviii]Meier, "House Fungus," 190.

[xxxix]Yahweh's statement in Lev 14:34, "when I afflict a house of the land of your possession with scaly skin disease," leaves open the question of why this affliction occurred. Milgrom notes (*Leviticus*, 867): "The remarkable thing about this pericope is that although God is explicitly included as the author of this injunction, nowhere is it stated or even intimated that the infection comes as a punishment for sin."

[xl]Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 889.

[xli]J. Milgrom, "The Priestly Laws of Sancta Contamination," in M. Fishbane and E. Tov, eds., *"Shaarei Talmon": Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992) 142-43; idem, *Leviticus 1-16*, 857.

[xlii]Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16***,** 856.

[xliii]So G. A. Anderson, "Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings (OT)," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5. 881; similarly B. A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord: A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1974) 110-11; A. Schenker ("Die Anlässe zum Schuldopfer Ascham," in Schenker, ed., *Studien zu Opfer und Kult im Alten Testament* [Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1992] 65) plausibly argues that the function is "restoration of the integrity of the community between God and man."

[xliv]Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 888.

[xlv]Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 889.

[xlvi]Moreover, in the case of the Mesopotamian counterpart of scaly skin disease, it is generally the moon-god Sîn who causes the disease; see van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction*, 72-75.

[xlvii]B. Halpern, "Sybil, or the Two Nations? Archaism, Kinship, Alienation, and the Elite Redefinition of Traditional Culture in Juda in the 8th-7th Centuries B.C.E.," in J. S. Cooper and G. M. Schwartz, eds., *The Study of the Ancient Near East in the Twenty-First Century* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996) 291-338.

[xlviii]Halpern, "Sybil," 333.

[xlix]See the divine "heavenly host" in 1 Kgs 22:19; 2 Kgs 6:17; 7:6; Isa 13:4-5, Joel 4:11; Hab 3:8; Ps 68:18; on their demythologization in priestly thought, B. Halpern, "The Baal (and the Asherah) in Seventh-Century Judah: Yhwh's Retainers Retired," *Konsequente Traditiongeschichte: Festschrift für Klaus Baltzer zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. R. Bartelmus, et al.; Fribourg: Éditions universitaires, 1993), 145. Another aspect of this revision is P's references to the Israelites as the "hosts of Yahweh" (Exod 7:4, 12:41, cf. 6:26, 12:17).

[l]See M. Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964) 28-31, on the effects of a specialized professional priesthood on "the rationalization of religious life."

[li]D. P. Wright, "The Spectrum of Priestly Impurity," in G. A. Anderson and S. M. Olyan, eds., *Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991) 150-65.

[lii]Wright, "Spectrum," 178.

[liii]The idea of unmerited suffering is an ancillary to this direction of thought, which receives fullest treatment in the book of Job.

The priestly "rationalization" of traditional Yahwistic religion on this issue is, of course, quite different from Job's radical critique.

[liv]Douglas, *Leviticus*, 39.

[lv]Lévi-Strauss, *Savage Mind*, 1-33, e.g. p. 9: "The real question is not whether the touch of a woodpecker's beak does in fact cure toothache. It is rather whether there is a point of view from which a woodpecker's beak and a man's tooth can be seen as `going together' (the use of this congruity for therapeutic purposes being only one of its possible uses), and whether some initial order can be introduced into the universe by means of these groupings."

[lvi]Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 819.

[lvii]Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1002

[lviii]Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 46.

[lix]I have given Milgrom's interpretation a decidedly Lévi-Straussian turn in this description.

[lx]J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (2 vols.; London: Oxford University Press, 1926-40) 1. 153. See also C. Barth, *Die Errettung vom Tode in den individuellen Klage- und Dankliedern des Alten Testaments* (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1947); G. von Rad, "`Righteousness' and 'Life' in the Cultic Language of the Psalms," in von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966) 243-66; and recently G. A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1991) 87-91.

[lxi]See Anderson, *Time to Mourn*, 87 n. 81; S. M. Olyan, *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) 56-57.

[lxii]Compare the curses of Lev 26:14-38; and B. A. Levine, "The Epilogue to the Holiness Code: A Priestly Statement on the Destiny of Israel," in J. Neusner, B. A. Levine, and E. S. Frerichs, eds., *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 10: "the most awful threat is exile, bringing with it the danger of collective extinction in hostile lands."

[lxiii]Douglas, *Leviticus* vii.

[lxiv]Douglas, *Leviticus* vii.

[lxv]Douglas, "Sacred Contagion," in J. F. A. Sawyer, ed., *Reading Leviticus: A Conversation with Mary Douglas* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) 96-97; also idem, *In the Wilderness: The Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 25-26, 158-59.

[lxvi]See, e.g., Psalms 38, 41, and 88, lament psalms of an individual suffering a serious illness, and cf. Job 19 and passim.

[lxvii]The Chronicler's story, which is probably unhistorical, ought to at least express a possible understanding of priestly prerogatives; on this passage see S. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993) 877, 884-88; H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982) 338-41.

[lxviii]For other aspects of the priestly exercise of political/economic power, see Olyan, *Rites and Rank*, 117-19.

[lxix]The Holiness Code states as the rationale: "You shall be holy because I Yahweh your God am holy" (Lev 19:1; cf. 11:44, 20:7, 21:8), a motive of *imitatio dei* (see above, n. 17). This arguably represents an interpretation or revision of the priestly system; see Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1397-98; I. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); though the relationship betweeen H and P remains contested, see A. Ruwa, *"Heiligkeitgesetz" und "Priesterschrift": Untersuchungen zu Leviticus 17,1 - 26,2* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1999).

[lxx]Douglas, *Leviticus*, 25.

[lxxi]My thanks to Mary Douglas, Jacob Milgrom, and Dina Stein for their insightful comments on a previous draft.

Response to Reviews of ***Leviticus as Literature***
Review Forum, ***Mary Douglas*** (University College London)
[Journal pages **186-191**]

Vote of Thanks

First, I thank the editors of the JRS for planning and organizing this singular honour. All of the comments dazzle and delight me. To have these five thinkers focus attention on my book is an extraordinary privilege. Three Bible scholars and two anthropologists, each coming from a different perspective, all of them much too generous and kind in what they say – they bring matter enough to stimulate my love of Leviticus for many years to come.

The panel of the Bible scholars is impressive. Alan Segal and Ron Hendel are both used to cross-disciplinary work, the first a leader in Biblical sociology and history, and the second a Genesis man who keeps up to date with archeological research in Israel. I am happy that they gave their separate blessings on my most cherished speculations. No one will dare to disagree with me if they back the idea that the book is structured on the tabernacle building, and that divination has a role in ancient sacrifice, and my explanation of why the cults of the dead disappear. The third, Lester Grabbe, has actually written a book on Leviticus (1). I cherish his comment for its being openly critical. He even gives me a laugh at God's trendy concern for the environment and animal welfare. Most of the time he is perfectly right: it is true that I have not given a summary chapter to help the non-anthropologist to understand what it is all about, and true that I tend to glide too quickly over gaps in the argument. True that I didn't explain the idea of microcosm, but I am not very contrite because it led him to approach the difficult concept of 'meaning' with an unforgettable cartoon picture: the priest who tries to explain to a member of the congregation that the animal's body is equivalent to the tabernacle gets the 'So what?' reply. (Actually I would suppose that the worshipper is <u>not</u> baffled by the equivalence because he/she thinks habitually in analogical terms).

I myself have recently tried to work out the idea of microcosm more fully (2). The answer to 'So what?' lies in the consequences of getting the microcosm wrong. When Jesus told a Jewish congregation that if the temple were destroyed he could raise it up in three days some of his followers understood that he meant his own body, but others were scandalized, thinking he meant the building literally, and we know the rest of the story (John, 2.18-21). Body and temple are common microcosmic equivalents all over the world.

One anthropologist, Don Handelman has been reflecting on the idea of a cosmos, and on analogy as a form of thought, for decades. His comment introduces us to his own ideas on kinds of cosmology. His essay on analogy leaves me gasping for its scope and profundity. It comes as a surprise to students of Leviticus to hear about the Chinese cosmos. Finding it quite opaque but longing for more, I am sure that his focus on the different meanings of 'equivalence' in analogy opens up an important topic which must interest Lester Grabbe too..

The other anthropologist, Suzette Heald, coming from the Department of Human Science in Brunel, claims (incredibly) to be a complete outsider to this kind of discourse. If this is so, she pays me the greatest possible compliment by closely reading a book which has nothing directly relating to her own interests. She read it so well that I am stunned by the cogency of the synthesis she has made, putting together just what I was trying to say. Evidently I have been talking anthropology, anthropologists understand me, and evidently, as Alan Segal's comment shows, it is not so arcane as some make out. If anybody has got me wrong, as for example on my current view of the Mosaic dietary laws, I can ask them to consult what she has written here.

So much for introducing the contributors. They have picked up different problems. A really clever response would pit one reviewer against another. I could refer Lester Grabbe to Don Handelman and Ronald Hendel for a reply to the questions that he has raised about how a cosmos can be built on a system of analogies. I could ask Alan Segal to lay aside his doubts about my subjective interpretations of symbolism by explaining the 'methodological crux' of structural explanations. I would also hope Alan Segal could defend me against the charge of trying to find a 'root meaning' of a word, a sin which I have often inveighed against. When I was looking for the meaning of *toevah* in Deuteronomy, or of another word, I was hoping it would be clear that I was not trying to peel off the outside philological layers to reach some inherent meaning underneath it all. I was just looking to see what other usages the word gets

in the Bible, to open the possibility that a subjective editorial bias has selected a mistaken translation.

I have to admit that Alan Segal has put his finger on a weak spot - my interpretation of the prohibition against eating the long liver lobe is decidedly fanciful. In return, I am at a loss to see why he backs the idea that it was prohibited to prevent it being used in divination, as in other nearby religious practice. Wouldn't not eating have the opposite effect, since sacrifice would leave plenty of liver lobes around for the diviners' use?

I will mention some other questions of detail later. At this stage it is best to take up some major issues, important in Bible studies and important for me.

A Utopian Book?

Several of the comments have touched on the theme of Leviticus as a radically reformed religion. Is this sacred book, as it claims to be, about cleaning up a real religion once handed down from Moses and Aaron, and practiced for many generations? Or is the more disturbing possibility more likely? Does the book describe a religion that never was and never could be? Is it utopian? Myself, I can't make up my mind. It would be perverse to hold against Leviticus that the consummate literary quality of the writing militates against its being about a religion actually practiced. And I know that religious writing has many genres. So I keep the matter open.

Lester Grabbe warns us that he is leaning toward that negative view and will defend it in a forthcoming book. Alan Segal is convinced that the Levitical Code is not mere legalistic formalism, it is an effective religion.

Theodicy

Suzette Heald and Ron Hendel have each taken up my interest in the lack of forensic potential in biblical purity rules. I want to ask, Is my hunch correct? Is it true that every other system of purity on record gives members of the pure society opportunity to accuse each other of impurity, and so of ruining their neighbour's reputations, exacting fines and compensations, and escalating tensions and anger within the community? Ronald Hendel has actually gone to Chronicles (2 Chr.,16-21) to find a case of priests accusing a king, (not a resource to use to explain Leviticus, but intended here as a general resource for the Bible as a whole).

The full answer would have to consider the role of demons in focusing or dispersing blame, and we note that demons are also excluded from the cosmos of Leviticus. It means that theodicy is not much employed in this religion to understand misfortune. This lack of religious explanation for individual sorrow and disease may count as one of the items that suggest a utopian religion that never existed (3). It is quite another aspect of theodicy, different from the very conspicuous consciousness of communal sin and idolatory for which the religion of Judaism is famous. It may be that some of the questions an anthropologist is tempted to ask about other people's cosmologies would be illegitimate.

Forbidden Animals

The forbidden animals of the Mosaic dietary code is another topic dear to me. I am very grateful to Suzette Heald for dealing with it so thoroughly, and taking the trouble to look up my scattered notes of self-criticism over the 30 years since *Purity and Danger* (1966). She is right: by the time I had got to writing about the Book of Numbers I had unrecognizably developed the unsatisfactory cognitive theory about a general dislike of anomaly. The stimulus for rethinking it came largely from seeing it misquoted as a general cognitive law, and applied as if the standpoint of our own culture was capable of distinguishing the anomalous anywhere. Even in 1966 I had insisted that the idea of anomaly cannot stand alone, but must always be generated by a classification system. Only when I started researching for the book under review did I study the whole animal life to which the dietary laws of chapter 11 applied. As Lester Grabbe said, the people of Israel were allowed to eat only a very few animal kinds.

I now believe that the whole system of unclean animals is much simpler than it had seemed at first. I had been rereading Leviticus itself again, following Milgrom's perception that uncleaness is only incurred by land animals -- water animals and air animals are not unclean, they are only abominable. Among the land animals, the only ones that the people of Israel are allowed to eat are their own flocks and herds.

These domestic livestock come under the covenant. An analogy of servant and master works out so that their flocks and herds are to their owners as the herdsmen are to the Lord of the covenant. There are other land animals which are neither clean nor unclean, horses, dogs, and they are all excluded from the kitchen knife on two morphological criteria, hooves, cloven, stomachs, ruminant. There are also some land animals they are allowed to hunt and kill and eat, but not to offer as sacrifice, they are the wild counterparts of the clean animals, with the right hooves and stomachs. It is the fact of ownership that makes the difference. Then there are the little land animals that scutter along the ground and raise huge families; I am struck with how often they are mentioned and protected in Genesis. The belly-runners are not raised by human hands, they are blessed and told to go forth and multiply; God's rule that no one may touch their carcases is undeniably a protection. Since they cannot come under the covenants God made with the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, I argue that they come under the covenant he made with the animals after the flood, and when he gave his blessing on their abundant fertility.

Lester Grabbe has taken from his rustic childhood the idea that farmers, and country folk in general, are hardened to the sufferings of their livestock. That may be so, though in the worst times of the foot and mouth disease a few years ago grieving farmers came on to the English TV screens and told us another kind of story. But we should not forget the farmer's mundane need to protect his animals from marauding humans, good husbandry is what farming is all about. There is nothing sentimental in proposing that the law for the untouchable animals is the law of the good husbandman. Canaanite religions made some emphasis on fertility, they are sometimes called agricultural religions. Is it unlikely that the Levitical laws should have had a small place for honouring fertility? The God of Leviticus is a good husbandman. What a pity I can't stage a discussion between Lester Grabbe and Suzette Heald on the animals in chapter 11.

Cosmogony and Cosmology

I am happy that Alan Segal accepts my view of a cosmology of covering and containing, of being under the protective hand of God, resting in the shade of his covenant. Lester Grabbe agrees, but he would like to see this aspect of the cosmos connected with the myths of origin. He suggests that stories of creation and of the origins of the world might be central to an account of the cosmology. Unfortunately it is not possible to do much about this in the present state of the art. He has reached back to one of the watersheds in the history of religious anthropology. In James Frazer's version of comparative religion, mythology was the religion. It was the counterpart of doctrine. The living and significant part of the religion was intellectual and verbal, the performance of rites was a superficial and transient décor. Ritual was doomed to keep becoming irrelevant, dried-up priest craft. William Robertson Smith reversed the judgement, the rites, he taught, are the central expression of religion, and the stories mere decoration. Whereas rites were not closely studied before Robertson Smith, and mythology got all the close scrutiny, after *The Religion of the Semites* (4) the positions were reversed. Ever since, rituals have been receiving increasingly close attention as an aspect of performance. The study of mythology went into decline until Claude Lévi-Strauss revived it as a prime site for developing structuralism.

Lester Grabbe is obviously right to be interested in what is now called 'cosmogony' (5), but unfortunately a way of finding a systematic relation between the tales of creation and the formal structure of society and the cosmos has not been established. Even making an objectively robust classification of the items of myth is too difficult, to say nothing of items of social relations. Psychology is freer, depths that seem murky to the social anthropologist do not scare those in quest of insights into individual psychic development. The problem bristles with difficulty, and I prefer to leave it on one side until we know more about social structure.

Analogy

Cosmologies can be more or less abstract, more or less articulated. Essentially a cosmology is constructed from ground assumptions about the universe and the human place in it. It does not have to be codified. To my joy, the three Bible scholars accept much of my version of temple sacrifice as a geometrical plan for God's all-enveloping cosmos. As Don Handelman notes, to build a cosmos upon a system of analogies does more than make it conceivable, it makes it performable in dramatic rituals. He draws a comparison between two kinds of cosmos, one which is constructed analogically, and one that is

constructed in causal terms. The causal thinking endows its construct with a system of cause and effect. The analogically constructed cosmos is held together by an external factor. In the case of Leviticus the basic cosmic model is one of coverings covered by more coverings until all is finally contained and kept in place by the power of God.

Ronald Hendel illustrates the analogical cosmos with a telling example of how analogy makes an argument. His example, the biblical rites to cleanse from human skin disease, mildew in a house, and a rotting garment, uses the analogy of skin, garment, roof, to demonstrate analogical thinking about the covering, protective role of God. The likeness between the ceremony of inauguration of a priest and the ritual cleansing of a cured leper leads to some speculation on the underlying theology, (and I applaud his leaving the interpretation a little bit open there).

Handelman, who has drawn a strong contrast between two kinds of cosmos, asks how the cosmos of Leviticus is held together? what energizes it? how does it work? In his view the contained cosmos, the one that is held together by external pressure, passively receives energy and action from outside. God is external, everything is explained by God's action. Another kind of cosmos (Chinese) can be described, which generates change and movement internally by the interaction of the elements. I think he is gently saying that I could do better justice to the Leviticus cosmos if I could think more seriously about the very idea of a cosmos.

Has he not drawn the contrast too absolutely? Surely analogical systems include causal relations? A cosmos that rests on analogies can be constructed out of analogous causal systems. For example, the medical thinking of the Lele of the Kasai (6) rests in part on an analogy between the body and other kinds of containers. If the patient loses consciousness the healers diagnose it as a case in the class of leaking calabashes. The human life-spirit is in danger of leaking out if the body is too weakly supported by its outside covering. This is a kind of medical metaphor corresponding to Don Handelman's idea of a cosmos kept together by external containment. The Lele diagnosis is appropriately in terms of containment analogies. They cure a leaking calabash by strengthening the walls with gum, or sewing its breaks with raffia sutures. The parallel therapy for a human starts with blocking bodily apertures and tying the patient's hair into a knot to stop the life-spirit escaping. The analogies generate explanations and guidance to action.

We have been given an inverted pair, beautifully symmetrical except in one respect. The cosmos that is organized from inside has an explicit principle of action, it can seek explanation on a more comprehensive scale than the cosmos that is organized from without. Presumably the people who live by that latter cosmos have a smaller range of questions about what causes what, and fewer explanations.

Equivalence and Sameness

In the history of our constructing our causally energized cosmic system we have learnt to make a strict distinction between ontology and epistemology. It seems like a necessary refinement for reasoning, but it locks our enquiry on to the separateness of individual existences. Our own thought system based on cause-and-effect defeats our enquiries into two kinds of thought. We can say that one kind of thinking is causal and analytic, and the other kind analogical and metonymic (have I got it right?), but we are stuck there unless we can find a new instrument for the analysis. Handelman produces one by suggesting that we pay attention to the meanings of the term 'equivalent'. Analogy makes two things that are different 'equivalent' by imposing similarity upon them. Homology depends on identities, analogies upon bridging contrasted differences. Homology finds a shared existence between two things, which makes it possible for them to be 'equivalent' in the sense that they are the same kind. A system built on homology has its causal system embedded within its internal relations. The laws which govern the relation of things to each other are the same as the laws that define the things in the first place.

I find that, all unawares, I have described the Leviticus cosmos as a system characterized by boundaries within a closed system, a cosmos without internal processes of transformation, its elements are passive, action comes from outside itself. If I took aboard the difference between analogy and homology I could understand how the Leviticus cosmos works. This I sincerely believe, but I have some difficulty in following the distinction. It is obviously important and I will pore over it till I feel more confident that I have grasped what it means. Meanwhile I can see that Handelman refines my ideas about the Leviticus cosmology. I was focusing on the difference between our own lineal reasoning, causal and unidirectional, and analogical reasoning. I had been puzzling about what a thorough-going analogical and

omni-directional cosmos would need to do about establishing a practical, reliable usage for 'reality'. If anything can be equivalent to anything else, chaos would ensue. I would have thought that the system of equivalences has to be precisely defined by the laws of God. The people just have to learn the equivalences from prophets and priests, and enact them.

On one point I would venture to demur: I am not convinced that my description of the Leviticus cosmos is so passive and closed. Though Don Handelman has said effectively that 'a cosmos constituted through homologous identities is self-closed and self-generating from within', he has not allowed enough weight to the power of ritual to activate a cosmos of the other kind. The Leviticus cosmos goes through its active processes, energized by the sacrificial rituals which mime the basic analogies. It is known through the analogies that hold between the laws. In effect, enclosed and activated from outside as it undeniably is, the biblical cosmos is also activated internally by rituals which mime the great principles of the universe. By the rites the basic analogies are acted out, the analogies are kept alive, made visible and credited with power to change events. The ritual enactment is endowed with cosmic power. Are not the believers who perform the rites actively participating in the cosmic action? The rituals are powerhouses which energize the system from within. The rites derive their authority and power from the human brain which organizes the world by analogies from how its own structure operates and according to structures learnt in the course of living. Shared performance brings the persons into harmony with their own minds, with each other, with the universe, and with God, however external he may be.

The Evidence of Circumcision

I am not sure, either, that we need to accept the definitive exteriority of the God of the Bible as suggested by Don Handelman's analysis of circumcision. As the primary sign of the covenant, circumcision can take any amount of interpretation that the texts suggest. Although he says, 'The logic of the cut is that of a cutting apart in order to re-join anew', he goes on to emphasize the separation of God from his people and to de-emphasize the re-joining anew. He concludes, 'the cut is the creation of a boundary, one that is utterly hard and fast, one that is totalistic and absolutist, … a boundary between God on one side and his people on the other' (p.5). This interpretation upholds the idea of the Jewish God as being utterly external to the cosmos he had made and governs. It is congenial to the idea of this cosmos being quite unlike the Chinese or Vedic one. But I could easily confound the implication with many examples of Leviticus' God's closeness to his people.

In the article by Harvey Goldberg, (cited by Handelman) there is another option for interpreting circumcision. Harvey Goldberg is arguing that the rite of circumcision makes another kind of kinship, parallel to, or equivalent to the natural kinship of humans, kinship between God and humans. In that perspective the analogical meaning of the rite is about divine closeness, not externality. Other people's Gods lived at a great distance from their worshippers, on tops of high mountains or actually in the sky, but this God wanted to live among his people. Hence all the problems of keeping the temple pure, the rules of purity were because God was so near, not so far. Every now and again his glory would leak through and they would see it in full view. In order to join this conversation I must become fluent in the language of homology and analogy, and reach for the new vistas that I dimly glimpse.

To conclude, my own mistakes cannot be set aside. Even so, there is the inspiriting sense that all of the reviewers have received a good impression of the extraordinarily fine and complex structure of Leviticus itself. For that, this exercise has heartened me more than I can say.

Endnotes

1. Grabbe, L., *Leviticus*, Sheffield Academic Press, 1993
2. Douglas, M., *Jacob's Tears*, in press, OUP
3. John, 2. 18-21.
4. Robertson Smith, William, *The Religion of the Semites*,1889
5. *Cosmogony and Ethical Order, New Studies in comparative Ethics*, Edited Robin Lovin and Frank Reynolds, U of Chicago Press, 1985.
6. Douglas, Mary, *The Lele of the Kasai*, International African Institute, 1963.