

THE EXEGETICAL INTERPRETATION  
OF LEVITICUS 19:1-18 AND THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWISH  
COMMUNITY IN THE POST-EXILIC PERIOD

By

BAESICK.PETER.CHOI

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We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

.....  
Büchner, Dirk, Litt. Thesis Supervisor

.....  
Broyles, Craig, PhD, Second Reader

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## MA THESIS ABSTRACT

The goal of this thesis is to look at the functions of the commands and laws in Leviticus 19:1-8 from the exilic to the post-exilic periods. There are three key issues that form the basis of this thesis: (1) the function of Leviticus 19: 1-18 in relation to the Holiness Code; (2) Leviticus 19:1-18 as an aid to the restoration of Jewish Community following the destruction of the First Temple (3) The Prophet Ezekiel's understanding of the Holiness Code and possible connections to Leviticus 19:1-18

In order to answer these questions, the thesis is divided into sections as follows:

Chapter 1 will present an exegesis of Leviticus 19:1-18. The meaning of the term 'holiness' will be investigated to trace how it was understood over the centuries. The general theme of Leviticus 19 and its composition will also be explored. Since Leviticus 19 is part of H, which in turn belongs to P, the relationship between these two sources will be discussed in chapters 1 and 2 in order to show the function of Leviticus 19 in relation to the other Pentateuchal sources.

Chapter 2 will examine the life of the Jews in the exilic period in terms of the information provided by H, P, and Leviticus 19. The relationship between H and P will also be explored.

Chapter 3 will present the ideas in Leviticus 19 against life in the exile. The Book of Ezekiel with its close relationship to H will also be brought into focus.

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## Introduction

Scholars have argued for many years about precisely how the Holiness code (hereafter H)<sup>1</sup> should be understood, expressing different opinions about H's structure and development. The traditional perspective is that H already existed prior to P and that redactors added H into P. However, those scholars who have come after K. Elliger believe that the redactor of H collected legal fragments from various older texts and incorporated them into P. They assert that H did not exist as an independent source, but was a collection of already existing fragments. Other scholars have argued that H was neither expanded nor edited, but that redactors *created* H by using legal fragments from various sources.

Scholars also take various positions concerning the textual context of Leviticus 19. One group considers that H consists of Leviticus 17-26, and therefore holds that Leviticus 19 is to be read as part of H.<sup>2</sup> They argue that Leviticus 17-26 uses a different literary style than Leviticus 1-16, and thus they see the source of 17-26 as an independent priestly code. Other scholars are sceptical about the existence of such a code in the first place and therefore do not consider Leviticus 19 to be part of H. For example, scholars such as Noordtjiz and Gerstenberger argue that H does not display evidence of independent content, and that if H were independent, it

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<sup>1</sup> Leviticus 19 is considered to be part of the Holiness Code (17-26). August Klostermann separated H from the Priestly Code (P) in terms of the repeated holiness theme in Leviticus 19:2; 20:7-8; 26:2, 6, 8, 15. Since H has a unique emphasis on the holiness theme, significantly H might have been influenced by independent sources. Wilfried Warning also notes that Klostermann coined the term "holiness law" while investigating Ezekiel's collection of laws for his thesis. He was the first to refer to Ezekiel's laws as holiness laws; subsequently, Holiness Code became the title of the section. See Wilfried Warning, *Literary Artistry in Leviticus* (Boston: Brill, 1998), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Jacob Milgrom sees chapters 17-27 as the Holiness source: holiness in H is extended from priests to all the Israelites, the sanctuary, and the land. He also sees H as the source that comes after P and as subsequently being a summary of P. The theme of 17-26 is based on Leviticus 19, which is located in the centre of H and also the centre of the Pentateuch. See Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible; New York: Yale University Press, 2008), 175, 212-245.

would have an introduction and conclusion. Additionally, unlike Exodus 24:2-7, H does not have the features of a covenant code. Gerstenberger notes,

The composition of the book of Leviticus apparently becomes more easily explainable if one assumes that Leviticus 17-26 was appended later as a self-enclosed block of older material. However, because the ‘theology of holiness’ also elsewhere includes the people of Israel as a ‘holy’ community (cf. Ex. 19:4-6; Leviticus 11:44f.; Deut. 7:6), the hypothesis of an original Holiness Code stands or falls with a certain understanding of the literary genesis of the Pentateuch.<sup>3</sup>

In H the theme of ‘holiness’ is not only limited to one area, but is extended to other sections. H has received attention from many scholars because understanding it correctly is critical for the Jewish community, especially in terms of recognizing the role of Leviticus 19 in H, the Pentateuch, and the Old Testament. Therefore, given these varying perspectives, a further investigation of H and its relationship to the exilic and postexilic periods can contribute to a scholarly understanding of the significance of this text for Leviticus 19. The focus in this thesis will be Leviticus 19, which reflects diverse moral laws that are related to the theme of “being holy.” God’s instructions to Israel in Leviticus 19 not only include a focus on holiness but also rules for conduct. Leviticus 19 provides instructions for the way Israelites should understand the meaning of worship, economic rules, and social laws, so they can be holy before God.

Leviticus 19 is also given much attention in the NT. Many of the verses in chapter 19 are quoted in the NT. For example, Jesus quotes Leviticus 19:18 (“You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD”) in Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34 and Luke 10:25-28. For the Christian interpreter, this creates inner-biblical continuity.

Therefore, Leviticus 19 is a central text for both Jews and Christians. The theme of holiness, as well as the theme of loving God and one’s neighbor, is of great importance to both

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<sup>3</sup> Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (Kentucky: John Knox, 1996), 18.

communities. The command of love emphasized by both the OT and the NT is central to the Decalogue, as well as to Leviticus 19 and to Jesus' teaching. Since the primary theme of Leviticus 19 is holiness, we will explore the way holiness functions and the implications that follow.

Chapter 1 will present an exegesis of Leviticus 19:1-18. The meaning of the term 'holiness' will be investigated to trace how it has been understood over the centuries. The idea of holiness in P and H extends the original meaning of holiness so that H requires a dynamic holiness among the chosen People. The general theme of Leviticus 19 as well as its composition will also be explored. Since Leviticus 19 is part of H and P, the relationship between these two sources will be discussed in chapters 1 and 2 in order to show the function of Leviticus 19 in relation to the other Pentateuchal sources.

Chapter 2 will examine the life of the Jews in the exilic period in terms of the relationship between H, P, and Leviticus 19. The relationship of these texts in both the exilic and postexilic contexts will be investigated in order to discover the reason why H is emphasized in the Jewish community. The exilic and postexilic periods were times of religious chaos for the Jewish community, and God's will for his people is demonstrated in the H material, as He continues to speak to them throughout the captivity. In terms of linguistic style, we will consider whether H is part of, or distinct from P. Therefore, Chapter 2 will investigate the relationship between P and H in terms of the exilic and postexilic contexts.

Chapter 3 will present the relationship between Leviticus 19 and life in the exile. Since Ezekiel and H have are closely related, they will be discussed first, followed by an examination of the theme and function of Leviticus 19 in relationship to H, P and the Pentateuch. Ezekiel seems to use locutions from H in many ways to support his arguments, yet the locutions are not preserved exactly as they read in H. Ezekiel uses the locutions from H with the purpose of

establishing the themes in his book, and the theme of H often seems to be extended in the Book of Ezekiel.

Finally, the purpose of Leviticus 19 will be discussed. Leviticus 19 is considered the centre of the Pentateuch and it is also regarded as being a small Torah. Therefore, Leviticus 19 will be investigated from varying perspectives to discover what its function and purpose are in H and P. This examination will consider whether the laws and commands in Leviticus 19 are God's punishments for His chosen people or rather His gifts to them.

## **1 An Exegesis of Leviticus 19:1-18**

### **The term "holiness"**

Understanding the theme of holiness in Leviticus 19 is not simple, because of the limited evidence for the etymology of the word "holiness." The etymology of the root  $\text{קדש}$  is not well known and is still debated among scholars, but examining its different usages will help us to understand and/or define this OT term.

The Semitic term for 'holiness' is derived from the root  $\text{קדש}$ ,<sup>4</sup> and this concept is found in various languages such as Hebrew, Akkadian, and Aramaic. In the D-stem of Akkadian, *quddušu* means both 'to purify' (persons, buildings, divine images, ritual appurtenances) and 'to clean'.<sup>5</sup> In the G- stem *qadāšu(m)* (stative only), it means "be/become clean." In Old Akkadian, the word may refer to being clean from the things of everyday life.<sup>6</sup> Originally, the term  $\text{קדש}$  does not seem to refer to human beings directly, but rather to gods and their relations. As Müller observes, "[t]he term *qdš* is used to describe the gods themselves as well as everything associated more

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<sup>4</sup> "The word 'Holiness' came from  $\text{קדש}$ , to consult with the document of Rabbi and Qumran," according to L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, "  $\text{קדש}$ " *HALOT* 3: 1072.

<sup>5</sup> Milgrom, "The Changing Concept of Holiness in the Pentateuchal Codes with Emphasis on Leviticus 19," in *Reading Leviticus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 65.

<sup>6</sup> W. Kornfeld, "qdš," *TDOT* 12: 523.



intimately with them, belonging to them in nature, or consecrated and thus associated with them by human beings.”<sup>7</sup>

However, the meaning of this term is different in the West Semitic languages. According to Müller, “In West Semitic inscriptions *qds* as a verb means ‘consecrate’ (yiphil, pael, aphel) or ‘consecrate oneself’ (hithpael), though not ‘clean, purify’ as in Akkadian texts.”<sup>8</sup> Once objects or human beings were consecrated, they were ready to be used to serve the gods. Thus, in the religious context, this term was understood to emphasize that persons, objects, and places were qualified to be related to the deity when they were purified (cleaned) or consecrated.<sup>9</sup> In other words, while the *physical* aspect of ‘clean’ is emphasized in the Akkadian language, in West Semitic languages, a spiritual sense has been incorporated into קִדְּשׁ. And “in the Canaanite texts from Ugarit, the basic meaning of the word group is ‘holy,’ and it is always used in a cultic sense.”<sup>10</sup>

Jacob Milgrom holds that in the Semitic languages, the boundary of the gods in Semitic polytheism was separate from, or transcendent to, the boundary of human beings, but in the Hebrew Bible, the term extends to humans as well. Milgrom points out that in the MT, when ‘holiness’ refers to God, the word is written in *scriptio plene*, but ‘holiness’ referring to the people is written in *scriptio defectiva*.<sup>11</sup> This practice underlined for the Masoretes the difference between God’s holiness and human holiness.

All the inhabitants of the created world could only become holy by obeying God’s commandments. David P Wright notes, “Holiness is not inherent in creation but comes by God’s

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<sup>7</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12:524.

<sup>8</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12:525.

<sup>9</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12:524.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas E. McComiskey, “qādash,” *TWOT* 2:789.

<sup>11</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22* (Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1606.

dictates.”<sup>12</sup> God is the origin of holiness and holiness resides in His nature and character. God is the one who enables His creatures to be holy.<sup>13</sup> Later, the term is applied to other things besides God, since objects and creatures related to God could also be holy. Hence, the term holiness is applicable to animals (sacrifices), space (the sanctuary), and people (priests). In the OT, its applicability ranges from the high priests to places. For example, “holiness terminology shows a gradation of different parts of the tabernacle. Technically, the adytum is called *qōdeš haqqōdāšim*, ‘the holy place,’ and the shrine, simply *haqqōdeš*, ‘the holy place’ (Exod 26:33-34; 1 Chr 6:34; cf. Heb *miqdāš haqqōdeš* of the adytum in Leviticus 16:33).”<sup>14</sup> Later the term was applied not only to the deity but to human beings as well, and it was broadened further to include animals, land(s), and objects. Jan Joosten suggests,

Where holiness is attributed to God, this root refers to his unspeakable nature. It is often collocated with forms of the root *kbd* which expresses the glory of God. When humans, objects, times or places are said to be holy, this puts them in the divine sphere. In this sense, holiness is a relational term; it means ‘belonging to God, consecrated to God’.<sup>15</sup>

Wenham introduces the relationship between holy, clean and common. He writes that “[e]verything not holy is common. Common things divide into two groups, the clean and the unclean. Clean things become holy, when they are sanctified and holiness is a higher meaning than cleanness. Clean things can be made unclean, if they are polluted.”<sup>16</sup> God’s sanctification is necessary to make objects holy. God asks His people to be holy, which means that there is no

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<sup>12</sup> D. Noel Freedman, *ABD* 3: 237. God sanctified His Sabbath and set His children apart from uncleanness; God’s intention is to maintain their holiness through disciplining them by laws and regulations.

<sup>13</sup> The request to be holy according to God’s commands includes humans, objects, places, and time. God commands not only His people to be holy but also the circumstances around His people to be holy.

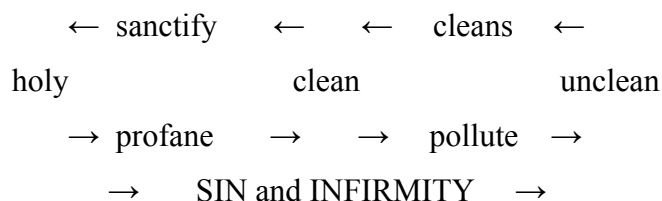
<sup>14</sup> Freedman, *ABD* 3:241. In the P source, the tabernacle which was used in the wilderness is divided into two rooms; the front room is called the shrine and the back room is called the adytum.

<sup>15</sup> Jan Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code: An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Framework of the Law in Leviticus 17-26* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 123.

<sup>16</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 19.

way to become holy without his intervention. God’s commands emphasize that the people needed to constantly make sure of their “cleanness” before they could be sanctified.

Wenham represents this process in the following diagram:<sup>17</sup>



According to Wenham’s view, the undifferentiated state of most things and persons is cleanness. Sanctification can elevate the clean into the holy, while pollution degrades the clean into the unclean.<sup>18</sup> Wenham explains that “holiness is a state of grace to which men are called by God, and it is attained through obeying the law and carrying out rituals such as sacrifice.”<sup>19</sup>

According to Baruch J. Schwartz,

The root *qds* in the Hebrew Bible has two distinct meanings. Some scholars, myself included, believe that they reflect two unrelated etymologies, distinct but identical Semitic roots which we might call *qds* I and *qds* II. The first and more familiar of the two has the sense of ‘separated,’ ‘belonging to,’ ‘designated for.’ It is this use which is approximated by the terms ‘holy’ and ‘sacred’ and their synonyms and derivatives. In reference to the deity, *qds* I expresses His transcendent divinity, namely the idea that He is altogether separate from the created world, ‘totally Other’.<sup>20</sup>

Schwartz perceives the idea of קדש as separation, belonging, designation, and purity.<sup>21</sup>

According to Kornfeld, the majority of scholars consider *qd* as the source of קדש; however, some scholars disagree with this view. But Koehler and Baumgartner in HALOT point out that

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<sup>17</sup> Wenham, *Leviticus*, 26.

<sup>18</sup> Wenham, *Leviticus*, 19.

<sup>19</sup> Wenham, *Leviticus*, 23.

<sup>20</sup> B. J. Schwartz, "Israel’s Holiness: The Torah Traditions," *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus* (2000): 47-59.

<sup>21</sup> See Schwartz’s article cited above. In the Priestly Code, the concept of קדש is applied to priests, tabernacle, and holy things, but in the H sources the meaning of קדש is expanded to refer to the entire community of the Israelites (see John G. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989, 32-33): Gammie notes that the holiness of Israelites in Leviticus 19:2 should not be understood as *imitatio dei*; rather, they become a holy people through obeying the laws and regulations.

*qd* cannot be a root of קדש and that its general usage was for human beings, only pointing to God in later forms.<sup>22</sup> Although קדש has no synonyms in the OT field, it is related to the word טהר, meaning ‘consecrated’ or ‘sanctified’ in terms of cultic acceptability and purity.<sup>23</sup> According to Kornfeld, Leviticus and P sources use קדש in the cultic sense, especially to do with the sanctuary, cultic utensils, priests, and sacrifices.<sup>24</sup> However, the character of קדש in Leviticus 19 is very active and practical, and in the context of Leviticus 19, the concept of קדש is mostly applied to human beings. Leviticus 19:2 commands Israel to be holy on the basis of God’s holiness. According to Schwartz, the meaning of קדש is classified into two categories: (1) separated, belonging to, and (2) clean, pure.<sup>25</sup> The sense of holiness is intended to be powerful and practical. Leviticus 19:2 commands the Israelites to become holy as God is holy. As the introduction points out, holiness carries the meaning of separation, purity, and consecration.

It is worth mentioning how the root קדש functions in the various Pentateuchal sources. In J, it is understood as ‘holy’, or ‘consecrated.’<sup>26</sup> When Moses and God have a face-to-face encounter, the place is considered holy because God resides there: “Moses may not approach the bush because the land about it is קדש, but the voice which speaks from the bush is Yahweh’s.”<sup>27</sup> In this particular passage, it is the presence of God that sanctifies the ground Moses stands on. At the same time, however, Moses’ obedience to God’s command – to remove his sandals from his feet – also allows God to work through Moses. Hence, God, through the obedience of His people, is also able to make objects holy. God is the foundation who makes material things holy; in order

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<sup>22</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *HALOT* 5: 1072-1073.

<sup>23</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12: 533-534.

<sup>24</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12: 533-534.

<sup>25</sup> Schwartz, “Israel’s Holiness,” 47-48. According to Schwartz, the meaning of holiness was applied only to the priests and tabernacle in the early P (the priestly sources), but it was expanded to the entire nation of Israelites in H. Leviticus 19:2 does not mean that the Israelites can become holy like God, but that they should separate themselves as chosen people through their obedience to God’s laws and regulations.

<sup>26</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12: 529.

<sup>27</sup> J. Muilenburg, "Holiness," *IDB* 4: 620.

to be holy, they need God. In D, קדש carries the meaning of ‘sanctify’ or ‘become holy.’ Yahweh is shown to be the holy God who the Israelites must follow and obey to become holy themselves.

The term קדש is used in P in association with holy items. McComiskey says that “P uses *qđš* primary in the cultic sense and especially in connection with the sanctuary, cultic utensils, priests, and sacrifices, developing in the process an impressive theology of the sanctuary regulating virtually everything associated with it.”<sup>28</sup> When this word is used in Leviticus, it usually means consecration. McComiskey adds, “In the Qal the verb *qādash* is used most frequently to describe the state of consecration effected by Levitical ritual.”<sup>29</sup> When קדש in the OT is in the *piel* form, its meaning is “bring something/someone into the condition of holiness/consecration according to the cultic regulations.”<sup>30</sup> It is used in both perfect and imperfect forms, encouraging the children of God to be consecrated in both the present and the future. The following can be consecrated: priests and their vestments (Ex. 29:21), everything in contact with the altar, the cultic utensils, any sacrificial materials (Ex. 29:37; 30:29; Leviticus 6:11, 20 [18.27]), the produce designated for the sanctuary (Dt. 22:9), and the arm bearers in a holy war (1 S. 21:6[5]).<sup>31</sup>

The idea of holiness in P is further associated with the social responsibility of the priests to maintain cultic purity. In this cultic community, Yahweh’s presence enables holiness in everything and every person associated with worship. The objects in the world are not holy—God alone is holy—but the holiness of God’s nature extends to His creatures through the agency of His will.<sup>32</sup> Milgrom also holds that the way certain things, such as land, persons, places, or

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<sup>28</sup> Muilenburg, *IDB* 4:533.

<sup>29</sup> McComiskey, *TWOT* 2: 787.

<sup>30</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12: 528.

<sup>31</sup> Kornfeld, *TDOT* 12: 527.

<sup>32</sup> J. Milgrom, *Reading Leviticus: A Conversation with Mary Douglas* (ed. J.F.A. Sawyer; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1996), 66.

time, become holy is through God's divinity within them.<sup>33</sup> The presence of God is representative of His will for common things in the world. As Bryan D. Bibb states, "In the priestly writings, holiness is 'that which belongs to the sphere of God's being or activity.'"<sup>34</sup> Holiness starts from God and influences the world by His presence.

Holiness in P emphasizes ethical commands, and as Ringgren states, "Leviticus 19 (H) concludes, 'you shall be holy, for I, Yahweh your God, am holy' (v.2). What follows are not regulations for cultic purity but ethical commandments, a rather peculiar sequence in the OT."<sup>35</sup> P distinguishes clearly what is holy from what is profane. The holy Yahweh commands His people to be holy through obedience to His commands. God commands His people to be holy before taking care of their neighbours with God's love. Their holiness is required before God commands them to live ethically. Examination of Leviticus 19 makes apparent that 'the Holy God shows himself holy (niph'al) by righteousness,' which refers to God's function as judge.<sup>36</sup> The meaning of the term holiness in P is related to that of separation and purity; "the concept of *qōdeš* ('holiness' in the Pentateuch is part of the comprehensive priestly worldview of separation ('dedication' or 'consecration' are both translations of *qōdeš*) and purity ('clean' and 'unclean')."<sup>37</sup>

But being holy is also a reflection of the creation order, and this concept can be directly applied to how the Israelites should live. The creation account ascribed to P reports that there was chaos before God created the world (Gen.1) and that the Sabbath ended this chaos and brought order. God brought order into chaos and rested at the end of his creative activity,

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<sup>33</sup> Milgrom, *Reading Leviticus*, 66.

<sup>34</sup> Bryan D. Bibb, *Ritual Words and Narrative Worlds in the Book of Leviticus* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 138.

<sup>35</sup> H. Ringgren, "E. D. Dtr History," *TDOT* 12: 535.

<sup>36</sup> Ringgren, *TDOT* 12: 536.

<sup>37</sup> J. K. Bruckner, "Ethics," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, 226.

establishing a principle for the Israelites to follow. Similarly, Leviticus 19 suggests that God re-creates His nation so that it will live within God's purposed order; the reference to keeping the Sabbath follows almost immediately after the command to be holy. God designed His people and nation to experience order. When God's people do not obey the commandments He puts forth, they live with the consequences of their actions. God's creation is based on order, but human disregard for its order results in chaos, which does not reflect God's holiness. As Bruckner points out, "The whole of Leviticus is dedicated to the restoration of purity (cleanness) from the state of uncleanness. Cleanness denotes an ordered relationship with God, creating capacity for holy character."<sup>38</sup> Disordered human society cannot maintain a good relationship with God because of the uncleanness and impurity of human lives. God wants to re-build His relationship with His children by endowing them with His holiness.

Examining the descriptions of holiness in P and H also reveals a relational emphasis between God and His people. On one hand, the notion of holiness in P is limited in terms of its cultic relations; P first applies this term to priests and then in a cultic sense to priestly-related items. The meaning of holiness in H is different from its meaning in P. H sees it as a word not only for priests in a cultic sense, but also applicable to a broader context. H extends the term "holiness" not only to priests but also to all the Israelites and the land. Therefore, the term holiness in H includes not only human beings but also God's creation. Milgrom points out,

The most important ideological distinction between P and H rests in their contrasting concepts of holiness. For P, spatial holiness is limited to the sanctuary; for H, it is coextensive with the promised land. Holiness of persons is restricted in P to priests and Nazirites (Num 6:5-8); H extends it to all Israel.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Bruckner, *DOT:Pent*, 226.

<sup>39</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16 : A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 48.

In addition, P's holiness is static while H's holiness is dynamic. H's idea of holiness requires an active response from the Israelites—for example, they must respect God's laws and obey them to become holy. They cannot merely listen to the law once and become holy; rather, sanctification for the Israelites and the priests is an ongoing process that takes place through their obedience to the laws and regulations (Leviticus 21:8, 15; 22:9, 16; 22:32).

According to Rudolf Otto, to understand the meaning of holiness, it is necessary to take into account the religious background of the Israelites. Otto notes, “the fact is we have come to use the words ‘holy’ [and] ‘sacred’ (*heilig*) in an entirely derivative sense, quite different from that which they originally bore. We generally understand ‘holy’ as meaning ‘completely good’; it is the absolute moral attribute, denoting the consummation of moral goodness.”<sup>40</sup> The meaning of Hebrew קדוש, Greek *αγιος*, and Latin *sanctus* include the meaning of ‘good’ or ‘completely good’, but in OT Hebrew, it has a different meaning from ‘good’: Otto argues that looking at the meaning of holiness without awareness of its original meaning could lead to misunderstanding. He concludes that its meaning is multiple and is based on God's character.<sup>41</sup>

Otto's approach provides wider understanding and also leads us to look for similar expressions for holiness in the O T. The concept of holiness in the OT falls into two categories: humans and material things. Leviticus 19 shows examples of the holiness that applies to human beings. The theme of holiness in Leviticus 19:2 is connected to the commands of ‘perfection’ in Deut 18:13, and the requirement to be perfect is also found in Matt. 5:48. In addition, the expression at the end of Leviticus 19:2, (Yahweh your God) “יהוה אלהיכם”, presents the relationship between God and the Israelites through comparison with 20:26, “קדשים ... להיות לי”.

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<sup>40</sup> R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational* (trans. John W. Harvey; London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 5.

<sup>41</sup> Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 5.



”והייתם לי.” Verse 2 indicates not only God’s command to be holy, but also His relations with His people. According to Otto, God’s purpose is first for His people to be holy and second to build a holistic community among the Israelites.

The book of Leviticus is composed of P and H; the theme of holiness is restricted to priests in P, but H expands holiness to include all the land of Israel. The first half of H (1-16) applies the theme of holiness to the priests, while the second half (17-26) expands the meaning of holiness. Holiness in H in Leviticus 17-26 is applied to people, articles, and objects, whereas in Leviticus 1-16 the theme of holiness is limited to human beings. Robert A. Kugler notes,

While the first half of Leviticus restricted holiness to persons and things associated with the temple, the second half is well--known for expanding the domain of holiness. The people are urged to be holy (Leviticus 11.44-45; 19.2; 20.7, 26), as their deity is holy (11.45; 19.2; 20.26; 21.8; 22.32). The name of God is holy (20.3; 22.2), along convocations (23.2-4, 7-8, 21, 24, 26, 36, 37). Leviticus 21-22 also acknowledges that God makes priests holy (21.15, 23; 22.9, 16). In short, the authors of this part of Leviticus think that holiness takes in all of Israel and its inhabitants.<sup>42</sup>

In the second half of H, the action of God for His chosen people is significant to sanctify them. While Leviticus 1-16 carefully avoids using the verbs derived from קדש to describe the actions of ordinary Israelites, Leviticus 17-26 applies it to them continually.<sup>43</sup> If God is made holy among people (22.32), the implication is that the people have a consecrating effect on God. The meaning of holiness is applied not only to God Himself, but also to human beings, who should honour God with their whole lives. This holiness is taught in detail in Leviticus 19.

Leviticus 19 reflects God’s purpose for His people. The connection between holiness and observance of the laws is evident at the beginning and end of chapter 19, appearing also throughout Leviticus 18-20. Related regulations and laws are found in Leviticus 18:2-5, 26-30

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<sup>42</sup> Robert A Kugler, "Holiness, Purity, the Body, and Society: The Evidence for Theological Conflict in Leviticus," *JSOT* 22 (1997): 3-27.

<sup>43</sup> Kugler, "Holiness, Purity, the Body, and Society," 3-27.

and 20:22-26, and these regulations support the theme of holiness central to chapter 19. Holiness is related to God's nature and His people; God wants His people to be connected to Him through obedience. Hamilton summarizes this concept by stating that, "basically chapter 19 is a collection of ethical and ritual laws...these laws are rooted in God and in His holy character."<sup>44</sup> God in Leviticus 19 is the model and root of holiness: the requirements of holy living are found in the detailed commandments and particularly in the command to love one's neighbour. Without being holy, humans would not be able to establish a God-designed community.

### **1. 1 The composition and theme of Leviticus 19**

According to Wellhausen, the commands and rules in Leviticus 19 possibly originated from older material that was reformulated into legal material before the exilic period; however, he acknowledges that there is no conclusive evidence for this assumption.

Martin Noth holds that the P-narrative or Pentateuch existed as an oral document, which means that the oral documents were transmitted to the Israelites as a legal written record. The written commands mostly deal with cultic worship in Israel. He notes, "Yet they were none of them composed or written down in the first place with a view to this arrangement, but existed previously in their own right. They have, moreover, no connection with the 'ancient sources'."<sup>45</sup> He considers the commands in Leviticus to be divine commands that God gave to Moses at Sinai. Leviticus 19 is part of H and contains God's commands to His people to maintain the holy life.

Some scholars see Leviticus 19 as the most significant chapter in the book of Leviticus. Douglas states that "[b]etween their paralleled repetitions [chapters 18 and 20] lies chapter 19, which must be considered to be central and of prime importance if only because of the way it is

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<sup>44</sup> V. P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 303.

<sup>45</sup> M. Noth, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 14.

framed by them.”<sup>46</sup> In addition, the laws and regulations in Leviticus 19 seem to address the people individually rather than as a group. Leviticus 19 provides specific commands about cultic worship. Douglas notes, “This chapter says a lot about personal attitudes, loving, hating, respecting, fearing, and not bearing a grudge, which again indicates that, unlike the preceding and following chapters, it is directed to the individual worshipper.”<sup>47</sup> It is significant that the laws specified in Leviticus 19 are governed by the declaration, “I am the Lord.” Leviticus 19 often employs the phrases “I am the Lord” and “I am the Lord your God.” These also indicate the centrality of chapter 19 to the book of Leviticus.<sup>48</sup>

Levine considers Leviticus 19 to be a small Torah which includes laws, regulations, and commands; and J. Milgrom sees Leviticus 19 as the climax and core of the Pentateuch.<sup>49</sup> M. Noth sees it as a collection of precepts with general importance. Noth points out that the majority of the precepts in chapter 19 are bound together in unity by style—‘thou shalt (or shalt not)’, ‘ye shall (or shall not)’.<sup>50</sup> These precepts were recited and memorized by the Israelites as a guide for living. It is true that Leviticus 19 does not establish a logical *sequence* of God’s commands, but it does re-emphasize them so that His people will obey them.

Fohrer sees Leviticus 19 as more concerned with rules of conduct than with actual law.<sup>51</sup> He considers the commands in Leviticus 19 to be rules which are fully approved by God. For him, God’s commands in Leviticus 19 are precepts which the Israelites should obey and follow to be children of God. Fohrer, therefore, understands Leviticus 19 not to contain laws but rather rules that proscribe the Israelites’ duty to God.

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<sup>46</sup> Mary Douglas, "Justice as the Cornerstone: An Interpretation of Leviticus 18–20," *Interpretation* 53 (1999): 341-50.

<sup>47</sup> Douglas, "Justice as the Cornerstone," 347.

<sup>48</sup> Douglas, "Justice as the Cornerstone," 347.

<sup>49</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1346.

<sup>50</sup> Noth, *Leviticus*, 137-138.

<sup>51</sup> Noth, *Leviticus*, 140.

On the other hand, Gordon J. Wenham views Leviticus 19 as a collection of God's laws and rules which the people must obey to be holy. He notes, "The diversity of material in this chapter reflects the differentiation of life. All aspects of human affairs are subject to God's law."<sup>52</sup> This view seems to be very justifiable since the origin of the Decalogue is God Himself. God is the source and origin of holiness; human beings cannot attain holiness without obeying his instructions.

Some scholars see Leviticus 19 as outlining the boundaries of daily life. For example, Hartley views Leviticus 19 as instruction given to the Israelites because living according to its regulations would prevent them from profaning God's holy name. Hartley notes, "the people are given daily patterns to follow in order to orient their thinking around the central theme: God is holy."<sup>53</sup> God's commands are intended to guide them to respect the nature of God's holiness; their worship should be conducted according to the regulations revealed by God because human beings cannot sanctify themselves on their own.

Douglas argues that Leviticus 19 is a holistic teaching built on the principles of justice and obedience. She suggests that the editors of Leviticus collected and recorded fragments and that this teaching was a tool to establish the cultic system. In terms of the reconstruction of Leviticus, Douglas notes,

The new version may have been first worked out intellectually by the writer of Leviticus, using very old fragments of laws, and subsequently applied to the reform of the cult. Alternatively, the laws could have emerged unsystematically in the course of organizing ceremonies and teaching, the practice first, and the ratiocination and the doctrinal synthesis afterwards.<sup>54</sup>

Douglas sees Leviticus as a collection of fragmentary laws that are not well organized because its writers collected writings about laws and regulations while lacking professional

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<sup>52</sup> Wenham, *Leviticus*, 264.

<sup>53</sup> J.E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC 4; Dallas: Word, 1992), 323.

<sup>54</sup> M. Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 7.

knowledge. Still, Leviticus emphasizes the significance of worshiping the deity through obeying the laws and regulations. As Douglas says, “Leviticus records instructions that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai about how to perform his cult and how to live together as a holy people.”<sup>55</sup> A number of scholars see God’s commands in Leviticus 19 as related to His people’s social ethics before they perform the rituals. Knierim sees Leviticus 19 as developing the theme of social life, and Knight reads it as expressing two themes: love and honest life. Bailey also reads it as presenting regulations for a better life. Levine, similarly, views Leviticus 19 in the light of both general and specific religious and secular laws, for instance, rules dealing with animals and lands.

Levine respects the close relationship between Leviticus 19 and the Decalogue, and he considers most of the regulations in Leviticus 19 to be related to Leviticus 19:2: the command to be holy. The nation of priests and of holy people in Exod. 19:6 (“But you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.”) are called by God not only to be holy, but also to declare God’s laws to the rest of the Israelites. To Levine, this verse directly reflects the theme of Leviticus 19,<sup>56</sup> that religious life and social behaviour should not be separated.

The theme of holiness in Leviticus 19 is not only related to ritual ceremony, but also to social activity. Levine notes, “Chapter 19 is the collection of laws modeled after the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments). It demonstrates interrelatedness of proper social behaviour and a meaningful religious life, two dimensions of life that were never meant to be regarded as separate.”<sup>57</sup> Levine notes that when God gave these commands to the Israelites, they were

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<sup>55</sup> Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 14.

<sup>56</sup> Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 124-125.

<sup>57</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, xv.

settling into Canaan. At Sinai, God gave Moses the regulations and asked him to declare them to the Israelites. These commands guide and instruct them in a religious way of living. Levine notes, “God communicated to Moses, and sometimes to Aaron as well, the regulations by which the Israelites were to live; this is how the community was governed.”<sup>58</sup> One of the reasons God gave these regulations to the Israelites was to command them to be holy and to live in the community holistically. Levine makes a further connection between holiness and the observance of Torah. He introduces Rabbi Akiba’s exegesis of 19:18, according to which the theme of love (love your neighbour as yourself) is a central principle in the Torah.<sup>59</sup>

Milgrom sees Leviticus 19 as a collection of laws and regulations; Leviticus 19 is a response to the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE criticism by Isaiah of the Israelites’ economic sins and insincere sacrifices. He notes, “the eighth century BCE was characterized by national prosperity, which brought in its wake urbanization, latifundia (the rich swallowing up the land of the poor), and other social injustices decried by the prophets and solved (in theory) by the priestly H.”<sup>60</sup> He sees H as intending to solve social problems in 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and he evaluates the commands in Leviticus 19 as the new Decalogue. To him, Leviticus 19 reconstructs these commands to fulfill the requirement for holiness. Milgrom notes that sacrificial ceremony is the poetry of religion that leads us into the supernatural moment of experiencing God’s holiness. The book of Leviticus introduces not only a sacrificial ceremony, but also ethics. Leviticus 19 shows how we should live with God, people, and nature. Leviticus 19 presents the relationship among these three.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, xxxi.

<sup>59</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, 130.

<sup>60</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2004), 217.

<sup>61</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics*. 217.

According to Noordtzij, Leviticus 19 includes varying themes such as religious and social life. He sees religious laws as a system that controls people's civic life. Religious and civil life cannot be separated in Leviticus 19 in terms of God's intention to build relationship with the Israelites. Noordtzij notes, "The whole was thus religious in character. The reality of this is determinative for the present chapter [Leviticus19] and is evident in the repeated reminder of the relationship that existed between the Lord and Israel."<sup>62</sup> Leviticus 19 uses the term, "I am the Lord, I am the Lord your God" to reveal the relationship between God and the Israelites. He also recognizes the connection between chapter 19 and the Decalogue by noting that "Commandments 1 and 2 thus reappear in verse 4, commandment 3 in verse 12, and commandments 4 and 5 in verse 13, commandment 6 in verse 16, commandment 7 in verse 29, commandments 8 and 9 in verses 11-16, and commandment 10 in verse 18."<sup>63</sup>

Noordtzij sees that Leviticus has the background of Moses' Sinai experience with God. The central idea of Moses' regulations is to keep the cultic worship in God's presence. Leviticus 19 develops the central theme of God's holiness to establish a God-designed community. He notes, "The cult was regarded not merely in our sense as the external manifestation of the inner life, but also as the creative source and the vehicle of religious powers."<sup>64</sup> For the ancient person, the cult was highly significant, and Leviticus 19 provides rules for the Israelites so that they could worship Him and serve others according to His instructions.

In sum, many scholars like Douglas, Wenham, Levine, and Milgrom see Leviticus 19 as a collection of laws and regulations. Levine sees it as a mini-Torah, because Leviticus 19 contains laws, regulations, and rules. The majority of scholars agree on this point. While scholars see the

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<sup>62</sup> A. Noordtzij, *The Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 189.

<sup>63</sup> Noordtzij, *Leviticus*, 190.

<sup>64</sup> Noordtzij, *Leviticus*, 17.

purpose of these laws from varying perspectives, they agree that the main theme of Leviticus 19 is holiness and love. However, they take varying positions on its purpose.

The theme of Leviticus 19 is declared in the command “to be holy.” In Leviticus 19, this command is related more to laws than to rules: God did not make being holy optional; ‘to be holy’ is God’s central command. The instructions in chapter 19 also use a command rather than a suggestive form: they are closer to laws than rules because those who disregard His commands can expect to be judged. All the regulations in Leviticus 19 are characterized as laws which the Israelites should not ignore; they are not general rules to merely elevate their behaviour to be moral. Rather, the Israelites should ruminate on the nature of God’s rules to be holy before God. The commands to be holy are then explained in practical terms, for example, obey your parents, keep the Sabbath, etc. God’s religious commandments are also related to civil laws: for example, in v 13, do not steal or withhold wages.

## **1. 2 Opening phrase: call to holiness (1-2)**

What needs to be considered in these verses is the relationship between **תמיים** and **קדש**. Verses 1-2 begin with two opening phrases: the one in verse 1 is a traditional expression that begins each chapter in the book of Leviticus.<sup>65</sup> Verse 2 contains an opening phrase that is only found in Leviticus 19: it provides information about the relationship between the ‘speaker’ and the ‘deliverer of the message’. Moses has received regulations from God and is to deliver them to the people. This opening statement of Leviticus 19 emphasizes that GOD is the speaker; the later repeated phrases, ‘I am GOD your God’ and ‘I am GOD’, indicate that the children of God have a religious duty to be holy so that they may build a relationship with God. In Leviticus 19, God invites His people into a relationship with Him, and presents His commands to the people.

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<sup>65</sup>The phrase ‘וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר’ is found in ch. 17-27 seventeen times and is used in Leviticus 19 only once.



The beginning of verse 2 shows textual variants: the word כָּל, ‘entire’ or ‘all,’ is very significant here. LXX omits ‘all’ (כָּל). This word is also missing in the Targums. Milgrom suggests that this is because of a simple haplography. The expression “The entire assembly of the sons of Israel” occurs in a few places in the OT: Exodus 16:9-10 and 35:4—for the tabernacle; and in Numbers 13:26 and 14:7—for the census. Milgrom also argues, “This unique heading in Leviticus provides one of the reasons why its author(s) wished to communicate the notion that this chapter is central to the entire book.”<sup>66</sup> This chapter was designated not only for priests, but for the entire people of Israel. The significant word ‘עדה’ in v. 2 may be defined as follows:

The original meaning of ‘עדה’ was probably ‘group, crowd’ (cf. Job 15:34). This basic meaning was developed in two directions. First, the word was applied to various groups of animals... Finally, the word entered the political sphere in the use of P and in early history, where it refers specifically to the general assembly of Israelite tribes.<sup>67</sup>

Significantly, in v.2 the combination of words produces a specific meaning. In the OT, the word עדה is combined with other words such as ‘Israel’ or ‘sons of Israel’. This word occurs with ‘Israel’ in four different expressions.<sup>68</sup>

Generally, the word עדה designates a community that is faced with the requirement of holy living. Milgrom asserts that in this verse עדה applies to the entire people of Israel. Therefore, God’s requirement is for the entire community of Israel to be holy.<sup>69</sup> This word appears a few times in Leviticus, but this particular form (all the congregation) is only present in 19:2. Verse 2 implies God’s intention of not excluding any group of Israelites from His purpose. It emphasizes

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<sup>66</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1603.

<sup>67</sup> Milgrom, "עדה," *TDOT* 10: 479.

<sup>68</sup> According to the apparatus of *BHS*, a fragment of a Hebrew codex found in the Cairo Geniza omits כל-יעד and LXX omits כל. And a similar expression, “all the congregation, the sons of Israel ( כל-יעדת בני-ישראל ),” is given in Exod. 16:1, 2, 9, 10, 17:1, 35:1, 4, 20, Lev19:2, Num.1:2, 8:9, 20, 13:26, 14:7, 15:25, 26, 17:6, 25:6, 26:2, 27:20, 18:1, 22:12. Likewise, “the congregation of the sons of Israel (יעדת בני-ישראל)” is seen in Lev 16:5, Num 1:53, 19:9, 31:12. All the community of the sons of Israel (כל קהל עדת בני-ישראל) is mentioned in Num. 16:9, 32:4 and the entire Israel community in Exod. 12:6. Levine translated בני-ישראל כל-יעדת as “the whole Israelite community,” and Milgrom translated it as “the entire Israelite community.”

<sup>69</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1603.

His intentional will that His entire people and nation should be holy through obedience to the laws that were given to them. In Leviticus 19, the term עֲדָה occurs in commission speech and it is used until the time the monarchy is established in Israel. Once the monarchy is settled, the term עֲדָה disappears.<sup>70</sup> The use of the term עֲדָה in Leviticus 19 clearly indicates that God commands the entire people of Israel to be holy.

Leviticus 19 may be viewed as having a circular structure involving verses 2 and 36. This structure seems to repeat the introduction of the Decalogue (Exodus 20:2). Exod 20:2 is used for both the beginning and the ending of Leviticus 19. Verse 2 uses the beginning of Exodus 20:2, and the last phrase of chapter 19:36 also quotes the same passage:

Ex. 20:2

אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים:

(I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery)

Leviticus 19:2

כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

(Because I, the Lord your God, am holy)

Leviticus 19:36

אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

(I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt)

Exodus 20:2 is re-created in the introduction to Leviticus 19, but the latter is distinguished by the added requirement of holiness. Leviticus 19:2 adds information about the nature of God's holiness and Leviticus 19:36 removes the phrase "out of the land of slavery" from Exod 20:2. Leviticus 19 emphasizes the theme of holiness by adding the aspect of God's own holiness as it is understood from Exod. 20:2. Leviticus 19 obviously emphasizes the word "holy."

God emphasizes a certain ownership of His chosen people. To be holy does not only imply that the Israelites should behave morally, but also that they are set apart as God's chosen

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<sup>70</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1603.

people. Davidson notes, “In the oldest use of the word [holy], even when applied to men, it expresses...a relation, simply belonging to Jehovah or the gods.”<sup>71</sup> Holiness means that God’s people belong exclusively to Him, through His command to be holy, and that the relationship between God and his chosen people will be established through their obedience to God’s commands. ‘To be holy’ in Leviticus 19 is both active and practical; holiness in the entire context of Leviticus 19 applies to human beings. In H, God’s commands to His people to be holy are very strict. Milgrom summarizes the significance of adding the term holy from Exod 20:2 into Leviticus 19 as follows: “the importance of this change cannot be overestimated: for H, the God of the covenant is demanding more than obedience to his commandments (v.37).”<sup>72</sup>

Scholars express various opinions about the meaning of holiness, but agree on the importance of God’s command to be holy. Müller understands the meaning of holiness in 19:2 in terms of moral purity,<sup>73</sup> while Douglas sees holiness as meaning ‘perfection.’<sup>74</sup> Many pericopes in Leviticus discuss perfection in priestly function—for example, sacrificial animals should be clean (Leviticus 22:17). The impurity of a priest makes the sanctuary unclean, so a person who acts as a priest is to be perfectly pure (Leviticus 17-21).

The expression of perfection (תמיים) is also found in Deut. 18:13: “you must be blameless (תמיים) before the Lord your God” (NIV). This expression is part of Deut. 18:9-14, which is the commandment that the Israelites should not follow detestable religious practices when they settle in the land of Canaan. The preposition עִם means ‘with’, ‘like’, ‘just as’, or ‘as well as.’ Thus, this verse can be understood to mean ‘you must be blameless like your Lord your God.’ The use

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<sup>71</sup> A.B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1968), 145.

<sup>72</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1606.

<sup>73</sup> H.P Muller, שָׁקֵט, *THAT* 2:599.

<sup>74</sup> M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 51-53: The principles about physical purity can be applied to social activity, especially in the camp of soldiers; the army cannot have victory without God’s help, which means the camp should be protected from impurity (Deut. 23:10-14).

of the imperfect form that is typical of the commanding style shows that Leviticus 19:2 is emphasizing the theme of holiness.

Douglas sees the meaning of ‘holiness’ in Leviticus 18-19 as perfection.<sup>75</sup> She points out that many texts in Leviticus state the perfection required of the sacrifices and priests; sacrifices should be flawless and priests should not have physical injuries, because imperfection makes the sanctuary unclean (Leviticus 17-21). Because holiness is related to perfection, God instructs the Israelites not to mix with others, an admonition which includes not only the people but animals and even plants (Leviticus 18:23, 19).<sup>76</sup>

The Hebrew word ‘תמים’, which is translated ‘perfection’ in Leviticus 18:23, 19, is also found in Deut. 18:13: “You must remain completely loyal to the LORD your God (תמים תהיה עם יהוה אלהיך).”<sup>77</sup> This verse is the part of Deut. 18:9-14 where God commanded the Israelites not to live like the people in Canaan because the latter did not respect God’s laws; it seems that the Israelites were living like the Canaanites because of their unfaithful religious activities and their unholy actions before God. The preposition *ע* can be translated as ‘together with’ or ‘as good as’<sup>78</sup>; if done so, this verse could be translated as ‘you shall be blameless like the Lord your God’ (Deut. 18:13).

Where the word תמים is used, the context emphasizes the theme of perfection; for instance, Deut. 18:13 uses its imperfect form and places it at the beginning. Deut.18:13 has a similar style to Leviticus19:2, which also expresses the command in the imperfect form and places the complement תמים before the verb, emphasizing the theme of ‘holiness.’ Another

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<sup>75</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 51-53.

<sup>76</sup> He sees the physical perfection as applied socially, especially in the soldiers’ camp. The army could not have victory without God’s help, so the army camp should be protected from uncleanness; any soldier who had disease could not enter the camp, just as he could not enter the sanctuary. Also the dead could not be brought into the camp (Deut. 23:10-15).

<sup>77</sup> According to *HALOT*, the meaning of תמים denotes what is complete, entirely in accord with truth and fact, having integrity—it refers to complete holiness of human beings.

<sup>78</sup> Ps 73:5; Eccl 2:16.

similar case is Psalm 18:26, which says, “With the loyal (עם־חסיד) you show yourself loyal; with the blameless (עם־גבר תמים) you show yourself blameless.” Ps. 18:26 requires ‘perfection’ from human beings on the basis of God’s purity and blamelessness. Ps 18:26 is therefore parallel to the command in Leviticus 19:2, which states that the Israelites are to imitate God’s holiness.

In sum, holiness in the Old Testament is demanded of the Israelites through their obedience to God’s laws and regulations. Likewise, the expectation for ‘perfection’ can be understood in the same context. The commands for holiness and perfection are based on God’s holy nature. Schwartz notes, “The message is clear: the indiscriminate and scrupulous compliance with every sort of law and statute is the means by which Israel is to fulfill the command ‘sanctify yourselves; be holy.’”<sup>79</sup> Holiness, in this case, is to be understood as God’s holy perfection: God’s holiness is the representation of His character as it is described in Isaiah (6:4, 54:5), and the concept of holiness is central to the whole theology of Isaiah (6:3).<sup>80</sup> When the theme of holiness is applied to the Lord, it is dynamic, not static.<sup>81</sup>

### **1.3 Rules similar to those in the Decalogue 1, 2, 4, 5 (Leviticus 19:3-4)**

#### **1.3.1 Honouring parents and keeping the Sabbath (v.3)**

The structure of v.3 shows that the command to ‘revere parents’ is parallel in form with the command to ‘keep the Sabbath.’ Milgrom points out that this verse combines an ethical command and a ritual command: it shows the ethical and the ritual as being of equal value.<sup>82</sup> When Leviticus 19:3-4 is compared to Exodus 20, it is significant that the Exod. 20 account of

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<sup>79</sup> Schwartz, "Israel's Holiness," 56.

<sup>80</sup> According to E. O. Procksch, "αγιος," *TDNT* 1: 93, when the OT describes God’s holiness and calls God’s name holy, the holiness in this context is equivalent to God’s reputation and glory; the holiness of God in Isaiah reflects God’s absolute sovereignty (Isa. 1:4, 5:19, 41:14, 60:9).

<sup>81</sup> See the confidence of God’s holiness from 1Sam. 2:2, 6:20, 2 Ki 19:22, Isa. 1:4, 5:16, 19, 24, 6:3, 10:20, 12:6, 17:7, 29:19, 23, 30:11, 12, 15, 31:1, 37:23, 40:25, 41:14, 16, 20, 43:3, 14, 45:11, 47:4, 48:17, 49:7, 54:5, 55:5, 57:15, 60:9, 14, Jer. 50:29, 51:5, Hab. 1:12, 3:3, Ps. 22:4, 46:5, 71:22, 78:41, 99:3, 5, 9, 111:9.

<sup>82</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1608.

the Decalogue highlights the noun clause ‘I am the Lord your God (NRSV)’ in v. 2 and describes the commands accordingly. On the other hand, Leviticus 19:3-4 reverses the order of the regulations. The beginning clause in Exod. 20:1 is parallel with the end of Leviticus 19:3, reversing the fourth and fifth commands in the Decalogue. Leviticus 19:3 describes ‘keeping the Sabbath’ and ‘respecting parents,’ but reverses the order of mother and father in the fifth command.<sup>83</sup> The expression ‘respect his mother and his father’ in verse 3 is very unusual because the OT mostly places the father before the mother when both father and mother are used.<sup>84</sup>

Verse. 3

Revere your mother and father (command) / Shall keep my Sabbaths (command)  
I am the LORD your God.(Noun clause)

Verse. 4

Do not turn (prohibition), to idols (preposition phrase) / gods of cast metal  
(object), not make for yourselves prohibition  
I am the Lord your God (noun clause)

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Verses 3-4 show differences from the Decalogue not only in style, but also in order. As Marlon Windt notes, “The order of commands referred to is reversed, moving from the fifth, to the 4<sup>th</sup>, and then to the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment. The order of the sentence is reversed (from *honour your father and mother* to *[each] his father and mother shall you fear*), Even the order of *his*

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<sup>83</sup> Abraham ben Meïr Ibn Ezra, *Ibn Ezra's Commentary on the Pentateuch* (Hoboken: Ktav, 1986), 100. Ibn Ezra comments, “The verse mentions the mother before mentioning the father, because a child at first recognizes only his mother. Later, he recognizes his father. Afterwards he recognizes the Sabbath (it is incumbent upon a child to observe the Sabbath unlike the remaining festivals)”

<sup>84</sup> Gen. 2:24, 28:7, Exod. 20:12, Lev 20:9, 17 (אִם בַּת־אָבִיו אוֹ בַת־אִמּוֹ a daughter of his father or a daughter of his mother), Deut. 21:18 (אִם בַּת־אָבִיו אוֹ בַת־אִמּוֹ the voice of his father and the voice of his mother), Deut. 27:22 (אִם בַּת־אָבִיו אוֹ בַת־אִמּוֹ the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother), Judges 14:9 (אֶל־אָבִיו וְאֶל־אִמּוֹ to his father and mother), 1 Kings 22:53 (בְּדֶרֶךְ אָבִיו וּבְדֶרֶךְ אִמּוֹ in the way of his father and in the way of his mother), Proverb. 30:11 (לֹא יְבָרֵךְ לֹא יְבָרֵךְ אָבִיו וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ curse their father and do not bless their mother)—most texts in the OT use the order ‘father and mother.’ One text similar to Lev 19:3 is Gen 44:20 (לְאִמּוֹ וְלְאָבִיו his mother’s and his father’s). Texts which include the expression “to his mother” without mentioning father are the following: 1Kings 3:27, 11:26, 15:2, 10, 13, 22:24, 2 Kings 4:19, 8:26, 12:2, 14:2, 15:2, 15:33, 18:2, 21:1, 21:19, 22:1, 23:31, 23:36, 24:8, 24:18, 2 Chron 12:13, 13:2, 20:31, 22:2, 3, 24:1, 25:1, 26:3, 17:1 19:1. This expression is found mostly in 1 and 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles; the circumstances are economic trouble (2 Kings 4:19), political chaos (2 Kings 8:26), or rebellion in society (1 Kings 11:26). In contrast, the expression “his father” is often used when referring to a peaceful time, or when introducing regulations (Judges 14:4, 1 Kings 7:14); in contrast, Leviticus 19:3 seems to consider the community of family more.

*father and mother* is altered to *his mother and father*.”<sup>85</sup> The reversed order in Leviticus 19:3 is much-debated, because it implies a challenge to the patriarchal authority of Semitic society. To name mother ahead of father is not the traditional Semitic way of writing. Windt sees this change as not accidental, but purposeful; thus in translating it, one should keep its order. Windt notes that the general idea in Hebrew society was that the father was the head of the family with extensive rights, but goes on to say that the Hebrew Scriptures do not ignore the role of the mother even though they emphasize the father’s role in the house.<sup>86</sup>

On the contrary, some critics regard the order in Leviticus 19 as insignificant and as making no difference.<sup>87</sup> Milgrom’s view is different; he sees honouring parents as the core concept of the command, not determining who is more important among parents. He sees the reason for the term mother preceding father as being that the mother has power to move the father with persuasive words. In addition, to place mother before father in Leviticus 19 helps readers understand that mother and father should be treated equally.<sup>88</sup>

Significantly, the Song of Songs does not mention a father figure, but rather highlights a dominant female figure. A. Brenner lists several applications of the Song of Songs: “equality in the love relationship, and predominance of the female figure; elements of matristic practices (power in the hands of women) and matrilineal practices (tracing male kingship and inheritance through the mother’s line) as against institutions of patriarchy.”<sup>89</sup> In two places, the female figure takes the initiative by taking the man “into my mother’s house” (3.4; 8:2). This phrase sounds

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<sup>85</sup> Windt, “‘Honor your father and mother’ or ‘Honor your mother and father?’ A Case Study in Creole Bible Translation,” in *The Bible Translator* (ed. S. W. Pattemore; Hong Kong: Hong Kong Bible Society, 2007), 57-64.

<sup>86</sup> Windt, “‘Honor your father and mother,’” 61.

<sup>87</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1608.

<sup>88</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1609.

<sup>89</sup> A. Brenner, *The Song of Songs* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 88. The MT explains the role of mother or father most simply, but its explanation is not really satisfactory. The Septuagint and Syriac omit it and the Scribes may misinterpret it.

very much like ‘house of my mother’, a phrase which reflects a matriarchal society. The phrasing of Song of Songs 8:2 (ESVS), “into the house of my mother who used to teach me” (אִמִּי תִלְמַדְנִי) (אֵל-בֵּית), captures our attention because the verb תִלְמַדְנִי could be translated as “you will teach me” and the verb is in the third feminine singular rather than a second masculine singular.<sup>90</sup> The term לְמַדְנִי produces various renderings, but mother is an important figure in this circumstance.<sup>91</sup> The subject is not the father, but the mother who has ability to teach her children. According to these ancient documents, the mother’s role is as important as the father’s role. While Leviticus 19:3 reverses the order of these commands, it shares a similar literary style with Exod. 20: Leviticus 19:3 places the important human commandments first and the Sabbath commandment later.

Milgrom claims that the change in order is a reflection of the mother’s early influence on a child; the reason the mother precedes the father in this verse is that a child is more afraid of his father, who teaches the Torah, than his mother.<sup>92</sup> Hence, to reverse the order actually equalizes the status of mother and father. The reversal of order does not change the stress on their roles; rather, the scripture weighs both of them equally.

Leviticus 19:3-4 is deeply connected with, and parallel to part of the Decalogue. The order in Exod 20 is first keeping the Sabbath (20:10-11), and then maintaining ethics (20:13-17), for example, honoring father and mother (20:12) The Decalogue prioritizes the command that the Israelites keep the Sabbath and then considers human ethics, because God would bless and consecrate the people through their obedience to ritual ceremonies (Exod 20:11). The order change of mother and father in Leviticus 19:3 does not change the meaning of the command.

Leviticus 19:3 also emphasizes ritual commandments that similarly appear in Ex and Deut. The phrase ‘אֵל-תִּפְנֶה’ in Leviticus 19:4 corresponds with the phrase ‘you shall seek’ (תִּבְקֶשׁוּ)

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<sup>90</sup> D. A. Garrett and P. R. House, *Song of Songs: Lamentations* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 248.

<sup>91</sup> C.D. Ginsburg, "Song of Songs and Coheleth," (1970). 184.

<sup>92</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1609.



in Leviticus 19:31, connecting with the first commandment of the Decalogue,<sup>93</sup> and the following requirement corresponds with the second commandment, which prohibits making idols.

Exod. 20: I am the Lord your God + the commands

Leviticus19: the commands + I am the Lord your God

Leviticus19:2 the holiness which is applied to human beings – God

Leviticus19:3 revere parents (with human beings)—keep the Sabbath ( with God)

Verses 3-4 reflect the Decalogue, but are reformulated in a unique style. The Sabbath commandment in Leviticus19 differs significantly from the Sabbath commandments of the Decalogue in Exod. 20 and Deut.5. Exod. 20:8-11 also mentions God’s creation of heaven and earth, and Deut. 5:12-15 describes the Sabbath in the context of the Sinai tradition in Exodus, while Leviticus 19:3 uses the plural possessive form ‘my Sabbaths (שַׁבְּתוֹתַי)’, emphasizing that the Sabbath belongs to God Himself. Holiness and its elements belong to the deity. The possessive forms in Leviticus19 are used in two categories: the holy and the common. They include not only ‘my Sabbaths’ in Leviticus 19:3, 30, but also ‘my name’ (12), ‘my sanctuary’ (30), ‘my statutes’ and ‘my rules’ (19, 37).<sup>94</sup> The possessive form emphasizes God’s ownership and the relationship between God and His Sabbath. This possessive refers to God directly. As well, the plural form “Sabbaths” shows God’s ownership of every kind of Sabbath.

Milgrom observes, “In these passages, [Sabbath] is always found with a suffix or as a construct. The first-person plural suffix always refers to God; one never finds the singular šabbattî.”<sup>95</sup> Verse 3 emphasizes that the relationship between God and human beings is restored when they obey these commands. Verse 3 indicates the covenantal relationship between a person

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<sup>93</sup> Milgrom suggests options for this meaning as follows: 1) to pay them attention (2 Sam 9:8), 2) literally, to look at them (it includes looking from the heart as well, Deut 29:17, 30:17), 3) to worship them with activity, and 4) to ask for help or blessing (Deut 31:16-20; Hos 3:1; Ps 40:5; esp. Isa 45:22). See Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22 : A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 1613.

<sup>94</sup> Poorthuis and Schwartz, *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus*, 53-54.

<sup>95</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1612.

and his parents, and also between Israel and its God, by using the terms *his* parents, *my* sabbaths, and *your* God.<sup>96</sup> The meaning of plural Sabbaths is significant in understanding v. 3. According to Milgrom, the plurality of “Sabbaths” refers to either the seventh day or the seventh year.<sup>97</sup> Milgrom notes, “In other texts, the plural occurs as an absolute, referring to only the seventh day, always in conjunction with months (e.g., Ezek 45:17; 46:3; Neh 10:34, 1 Chr 23:31; 2 Chr 2:3; 8:13; 31:3).”<sup>98</sup> The plural term in v. 3 clearly shows that God owns every seventh day and seventh year; He declares Himself as the one who should be worshipped. The Israelites should remember that to keep each Sabbath is God’s command, because the Sabbaths are God’s. According to Schwartz, the idea of Sabbath derives not from P itself but from the Decalogue. Once Moses received the commandments from God on Mt Sinai, the Decalogue informed P, and P added the sacred places, people and times later. P sees the Sabbath as a sacred time, which should be used for God.

P’s understanding of the Sabbath shows the significance of the relationship between the Israelites and God. Leviticus 20:26 uses the first-person pronoun to represent God, and depicts the Israelites as God’s chosen children. The second-person pronoun ‘your God’ in Leviticus 19:2 also demonstrates the relationship between God and His children (19:2, 3, 4, 10).<sup>99</sup> Leviticus 19:2 and Leviticus 20:26 correspond with each other, illustrating the relationship between God and the Israelites. Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Leviticus all contain commands that prohibit idols; the phrasing in Exod. 20:3-5 almost matches that of Deut. 5:7-9, so it is possible to say that Deut. 5 is derived from Exod. 20. In contrast, Leviticus 19:4 presents the same Decalogue commandment

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<sup>96</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1612.

<sup>97</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1611.

<sup>98</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1612.

<sup>99</sup> Leviticus 20:26 has a contrast in that God’s purpose is for His people to be holy in order for Him to possess them. “You should be mine (לִי לְהִיְתָה)”—God separates them from the world to become His possession. Leviticus 19-20 can be evaluated as expressing the relationship between God and the Israelites: God commands them to be holy to be His children (possession and sonship are similar).

as Exod. 20 in a simpler structure; this verse is one of the examples of Leviticus' reformulation of the Decalogue text in Exod. 20. The command for keeping the Sabbath is related to God's direct interest in the Israelites building a close relationship with Him.

#### **1. 4 The time after the first harvest (19:5-18)**

Verses 5-18 can be seen as four units (a-b-c-d).<sup>100</sup> The author emphasizes the last unit (vv.11-18), with v.18 providing the conclusion and solution for the issues raised in the previous units. The last unit (vv.11-18) is divided into seven sections<sup>101</sup>; it provides not only a solution but also explanations for the crisis of the society. The author starts with the process of making a peace offering, continues with social issues, and suddenly concludes with v.18.

The first unit (vv.5-8) has a distinctive style that has two independent clauses with a causal clause; v. 5 begins with 'and when (וּכִי)', and v. 7 begins with the conditional phrase 'and if' (וְאִם). These verses consist of rules and regulations for the peace offering. In addition, these two verses contain both positive and negative expressions. However, the first two verses (vv. 5-6) display more positivity, while the last two verses (vv.7-8) contain more negative expressions. In terms of tone, vv.7-8 express judgement, rather than the acceptance or reconciliation we witness in vv.5-6. In addition, vv. 5-8 introduce detailed regulations for the food needed in the peace offering process, and this process is explained according to a clear time frame concerning when the people are to eat the food.

Verse 5 gives information about the circumstances in which people are to offer the sacrifice for the peace offering (שְׁלָמִים). It includes detailed guidance for eating sacrificial

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<sup>100</sup> 19:5-8, 19:9, 19:10, and 19:11-18.

<sup>101</sup> 19:11a, 11b, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16-18 (19:16a, 19:16b, 19:17 and 19:18).

foods<sup>102</sup> (vv.6-8).<sup>103</sup> The author of chapter 19 places the peace offering at the beginning, and then he mentions the grain harvest (v.9) and the vineyard crop (v. 10a); the harvest is linked to vv.9-10 with provision for the poor and the aliens (v.10). Verses 11-17 mention serious social issues such as stealing, lying, and swearing falsely by God's name. After these issues are raised, the command to love your neighbour (v.18) is provided as a conclusion. The author seems to believe the command to love one's neighbour to be an apt conclusion for this section.

#### **1.4.1 Regulations for sacrifice (vv.5-8)**

In the OT, The peace offering brings reconciliation between God and human beings and among people; through performing the peace offering, people are restored in their relationship with God. From Levine's perspective, the peace offering is a valued expression of worship by God's chosen people in that it is offered at the beginning of new events, especially those that are very significant for the people's future.<sup>104</sup> The OT contains references to occasions when the peace offering was performed: 1. in a place chosen by the Lord (Deut. 12:11-14); 2. for seven full weeks (Leviticus 23:15-21, Num. 29:31-36); 3. when anointing a king (1 Sam. 11:15); 4. during consecration of the sanctuary or the time of a special ceremony (Num. 7:17, 23, 29); 5. following the disaster due to the census ordered by King David (2 Sam. 24:25). The above examples reveal the purpose of the peace offering: God has a relationship with His people, and if

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<sup>102</sup> These details can be compared with those in Leviticus 7:16-25 and 22:17-33: as stated in chapter 7, there are three kinds of peace offerings: a thank offering, a vow offering and a freewill offering. As well, the regulations for the timing of eating offered food are in agreement with the rules in 19:6-7. The rules for the peace offering, as noted in Deuteronomy 12:6-7 and 17-18, allow participation by sons, daughters, slaves and Levites (Deut 12:18: "...you together with your son and your daughter, your male and female slaves, and the Levites resident in your towns"). This inclusiveness is remarkable, with the weak and the isolated included in this ritual. Leviticus suggests that after the peace offering, the community was expected to share the food offered to God with everyone.

<sup>103</sup> The detailed information about this peace offering could be compared with Leviticus 7:16-25 and 22:17-33.

<sup>104</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, 126. (see Exod. 24:5, 32:6, Leviticus 3:1, 3:6, 17:5, 19:5, 22:21, 23:19, Num. 6:17, 15:8, Deut. 27:7, 8:31, 22:23, 2 Sam. 10:8, 11:15, 1 King. 3:15, 2 Chronicles. 30:22, 33:16, Prov. 7:14, Ezekiel 46:12)

broken, it can be re-established by an acceptable peace offering to God. It reconciles not only God to human beings, but also human beings to each other.

In chapter 19:5-8, the peace offering is connected to the harvest season, starting with the wheat harvest and moving to the vineyard harvest. The author of H seems to want to show that through the ceremony of the peace offering the community experiences Yahweh's joy. The author connects this offering to social issues (v.9) and social conflicts (vv.11-18a). But the author also does not ignore the farming calendar, which is at the center of the community's economy. When modern readers encounter this text, they are often not aware of the gap between these two harvest seasons, since the author refers to the harvest of the fields (קציר) (the first harvest of the wheat crop) and of the vineyard (כרם) simultaneously. The author does not seem to dwell on the details of the harvest itself because he wants to emphasize the community's responsibility to the marginalized.

In Leviticus 19, the author is encouraging readers or listeners to arrive at the solution offered in v.18 (the theme of love) through reconciliation. The social issues and events introduced in 19:9-17, along with the agricultural calendar and the description of the peace offering in vv.5-8, must all be viewed through the lens of v.18. Verse 18, therefore, is best understood as the author's main focus in this half of the chapter. If the author wanted to emphasize the agricultural calendar, it should have been placed before the instructions for the ceremony (vv.5-8). Milgrom suggests that vv.5-8 develop ideas from 7:16-17<sup>105</sup>, but Levine sees this passage differently. According to him, vv.5-8 is not a reflection of 7:16-17, a passage which shows the development of the priestly ceremony. Instead, he regards it as instructions for the Israelites rather than guidance for the priestly ceremony. He notes that "this is so because the

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<sup>105</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1330 and 1616; Milgrom considers the time difference in terms the explanations of the peace offering.

codes of Leviticus were arranged according to a topical order that was not meant to reflect the inner development of ritual but rather, to instruct the priesthood and the Israelites on proper procedures.”<sup>106</sup> The code of 7:11-34 seems to present the process of development and change for the offering, and 22:21f represents an earlier stage and does not subsume the תודה under the category of שלמים offerings.<sup>107</sup>

Levine’s view about the intention of the rules for the peace offering in chapter 19 seems more plausible than Milgrom’s. According to Milgrom, the sacrifices of meat were offered during the שלמים, as mentioned in Leviticus 7:17 (it shall be eaten on the first day). But according to Levine, chapter 7:16 is parallel to Leviticus 22:29-30, because the latter expresses the similar idea that the sacrifices should be faultless animals and that they should be consumed on the same day. Possible evidence for Levine’s view is that in vv.5-6 the author allows the people to keep the sacrificial food for a longer period of time before eating it. Verses 5-6 say that sacrifices can be consumed within two days, but 7:15 and 22:30 say that the sacrifices should be eaten in one day. The thanksgiving offering should be eaten on the same day as its sacrifice to God. Levine notes, “The *todah* occupied a special position in the rabbinic tradition because it symbolizes the pure expression of gratitude to God. It was not obligatory; nor was it occasioned by sinfulness or guilt, nor even by the motives that induced Israelites to pledge votive sacrifices when confronted by danger.”<sup>108</sup> The purpose of offering sacrifice to God is to maintain peace between God and human beings. The Israelites often restored the relationship between God and themselves by thanksgiving, תודה. The command to share the food that is used for the offering

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<sup>106</sup> Levine comments that the peace offering in Leviticus 7:11-34 is performed for one of three purposes: thank offering (תודה v.12), votive offering (נדב v.16), or freewill offering (נדבה v.16). see Levine, *Leviticus*, 126.

<sup>107</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, 126.

<sup>108</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, 43.

demonstrates that God wants them to restore their relationships – not only with God but also with human beings.

The sacrifices in 19.5-6 were less costly than those in chapter 7:15 and 22:30. Possibly, the time for eating the expensive food is limited because God wants the sacrifices to be shared with more people. The rule encourages the people to share the sacrificial food not only with their own community, but also with the marginalized, such as strangers and the poor. To accomplish a God-ordained loving community, the community needs to confront the social issues mentioned in vv.9-17; hence the author focuses on the theme of love in v.18.

When the peace offering is presented to God, it expresses the people's hope; through the offering, they try to find favour with God. In v.5, the word רִצֵּן is very important. According to HALOT, the word רִצֵּן expresses human action to find favour with God, especially when it is used in a religious context.<sup>109</sup> The word is also defined as the pleasure that God takes in blessing someone. This word is used with the general meaning of 'desire' in Ps 145:19 and 'delight' in Prov 16:13. The word רִצֵּן in Leviticus 19:5 can be understood especially in relation to sacrifice (compare Leviticus 1:3, 19:5, 22:19-21, 29, 23:11, Isa. 56:7, Jer.6:19-21, Ezek.43:27).

רִצֵּן is the main word that explains the acceptable way of presenting offerings in vv.5-6, and vv.7-8 explains exceptions that would render the offering unacceptable (לֹא יִרְצֶה): for example, eating the sacrifice on the third day when the food is no longer holy (קִרְשׁ) but offensive (פְּגִיל).<sup>110</sup> Hence, what is holy in v.8 has been given as sacrifice (material), and it belongs to God because God is pleased with it.

In Leviticus 19, time determines what is holy or offensive. The sacrificial material becomes offensive due to the passage of too much time. This principle is clear in Leviticus 19,

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<sup>109</sup> e.g. Lev 1:3, 22:19, 21, 29, 23:11. Isa. 56:7, 60:7.

<sup>110</sup> See Leviticus 7:18.

but not absolute throughout the OT. Ezekiel 4:12-14 gives an example of God asking the people of Israel to eat unclean foods. Considering these events, the holiness of objects depends on God's particular instructions; Leviticus 21:8 and 15 clearly indicate that God is the one who sanctifies the food and His people.

#### **1.4.2 God's purpose for the harvest rules (vv.9-10)**

Verses 9-10 consist of four negative commands and one positive command. These commands concern harvest rules, and this unit is concluded by the phrase **אני יהוה אלהיכם**. This is a highly patterned expression that is used uniquely in Lev19 and has a fourfold structure: the chapter contains four occurrences of the phrase **אני יהוה אלהיכם** (I am the Lord your God) and four of **אני יהוה** (I am the Lord). This pattern of phrases concludes one unit that is related to laws and ethics, and the whole pattern is repeated following the commands of the next unit. L. B. Paton notes that "In all these cases **אני יהוה** stands at the end of a group of closely related laws, indicating that a section of H is finished."<sup>111</sup> By using these phrases, which clearly identify the speaker of these commands, the writer emphasizes that God is the source of these laws. The repetition of "**אני יהוה**" shows the covenant relationship between God and the Israelites. God clearly indicates that His intention is not only to give them laws, but also to build a covenant relationship.<sup>112</sup> God brings the poor and alien into His holy domain. Whoever disobeys His laws desecrates His holiness. Only those who follow His lead can achieve holiness.<sup>113</sup> God chose the Israelites as a holy nation but this choice was not sufficient to make them holy. Levine notes, "In

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<sup>111</sup> L. B. Paton, "The Original Form of Leviticus xxiii., xxv," *JBL* 18 (1899): 35-60.

<sup>112</sup> C. E. Braaten and C. R. Seitz, ed. *I am the Lord your God: Christian Reflections on the Ten Commandments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 25.

<sup>113</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1624.



order to achieve a holiness of the kind associated with God and His acts, Israel would have to observe His laws and commandments.<sup>114</sup>

Verses 9-10 are parallel to Leviticus 23:22. Both texts begin with a plural but explain details using the singular. The grape harvest in vv.9-10 is not mentioned in Leviticus 23:22. Wenham explains that since the grape harvest season does not occur until mid-summer, it would have been logical to omit mention of it from v 10a.<sup>115</sup> H purposely inserts this information because God intended the landowners to understand God's sovereignty over the land and to be aware of his blessing on the land.<sup>116</sup> God cares for the poor and alien by commanding the Israelites to share their harvest with them. The people are directed to thank God with their first fruits and then to bless the poor and alien. Hartley notes, "God wants the landlords to be thankful for their harvest and to express their acknowledgement that God has richly blessed them by sharing some of the harvest with the unfortunate (Ruth 2)."<sup>117</sup> By using the formula, the text emphasizes that God is the owner of the land and wants the people to honour His commands. While the laws and regulations apply collectively to all the people, each person is required to individually obey them.

Leviticus 19:1-8 deals with religious duty and vv. 9-10 concerns ethical duty. God's command to the Israelites in vv. 9-10 is not only to perform ritual duties but also ethical duties. Vv. 9-10 states that they should manage the land according to God's instructions. While Vv.9-10 do not use the term 'holiness', in these verses the command is to consider the poor and alien, a requirement indirectly related to holiness. The plural (ארצכם) is used to refer to all of Israel, but

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<sup>114</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, 256.

<sup>115</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27* (Anchor Yale Bible; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 2010.

<sup>116</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2011.

<sup>117</sup> Hartley, *Leviticus*, 314.

the singular is used (שֶׁדֶךְ) when referring to the land belonging to one individual.<sup>118</sup> Each person must obey the law. The entire unit begins and ends with plural verbs; those in between are singular.<sup>119</sup> The command and imperative forms that come before the object in Leviticus 19:9-10 appear to be a priestly stylistic device emphasizing a novel law.<sup>120</sup>

In verse 9, God commands the community to not reap completely (כִּלְהָ) to the edge of their field. Milgrom explains that כִּלְהָ is found in the *Qal* (Exod 39:32) and the *Pi'el* (16:20; 19:9; 23:22); he asserts that its meaning can be either 'complete an act,' or 'destroy,' since the form has negative and positive meanings.<sup>121</sup> Verse 9 employs the *Pi'el* form (to be completed, finished). God wants the farmer to spare the edge of the field so that the poor and alien can harvest there. God's command in verse 9 is strongly related to the social ethic that God's people should remember the people who do not have enough harvest.

All the commands in vv. 9-10 are negative. Each negative command starts with not (לֹא); this structure generally implies an extremely restrictive command<sup>122</sup>, and it can be seen often in the Decalogue or other law sections. The term לֹא is used in vv. 4b, 7, 9a, 9b, 10a, 10b, 11a, 11b, 12a, 13a, 13b, 13c, 14a, 15a, 15b, 15c, 16a, 16b, 17a, 17b, 18a, 18b. In addition, vv. 9-10 use the imperfect tense five times. In Leviticus 19, the imperfect tense is used 64 times; the will of God in the law is firmly expressed through the imperfect form. The author repeatedly uses this tense to emphasize the importance of caring for the poor and the alien (v.10).

The author's intention in vv.9-10 is clear: it is not enough to share the sacrificial food with neighbours. He instructs God's children to share the rest of the harvest with aliens and the poor. In verses 11-17, the author enumerates the difficulties that prevent the Israelites from

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<sup>118</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1625.

<sup>119</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1624.

<sup>120</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1625.

<sup>121</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1625.

<sup>122</sup> J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew* (New York: Clarendon, 1979), 77.

caring for and loving one another. Leviticus 19 functions in the context of their agricultural economy; the community has abundance, so it is directed to share its wealth with the marginalized.

Verse 10, in particular, points out the necessity of caring for the poor and alien. The word גֵר refers to strangers who have left their own community and are staying in the land for a limited time. A גֵר is a man who (alone or with his family) seeks shelter and residence at another place because he has had to leave his home due to war, famine, or blood guilt, etc.<sup>123</sup> The Israelites did not have a human rights code to protect people like widows and orphans.<sup>124</sup> Verse 10 is focused on the weak and the poor in the society, but the target audience is actually the strong: v.10 proclaims the necessity for the rich to share their economic benefits. Wenham notes, “These people [the poor] rarely had land of their own, and had to rely on selling their labour to buy food. This law entitled them to a small amount of free food each year at the expense of the more affluent members of society.”<sup>125</sup> So this command is given to the rich in order to build a community where the poor and rich are in harmony with each other. The Jewish community needed to take these commands seriously in the land during their return from exile so that their society could be restored.

In verses 9-10, the phrases ‘your land (אֲדָמָתְכֶם)’ and ‘your vineyard (כַּרְמֶיךָ)’ refer to the possessions of individuals which they own and guard on behalf of their community. This command encourages the people to look after their community. It demands that the rich should consider the poor in terms of caring for their basic needs for daily life. God commands the rich

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<sup>123</sup> Koehler and Baumgartner, eds., *HALOT* 1:201.

<sup>124</sup> R. Martin—Achar, “גֵר,” *TLOT* 1:308-309. In some uses, גֵר refers to an alien or the poor person who has become prosperous so that the poor Israelites are sold to the alien; this situation appears in Leviticus 25:47, but it is an exception. In the OT law texts, the term ‘גֵר’ gradually comes to refer to Israelites, especially in the religious context (Lev 23:42; Jos.8:33; Ps.37:35)

<sup>125</sup> . Wenham, *Leviticus*, 266.

to leave a certain amount of the harvest in their land for the needs of the poor. The concluding phrase (אני יהוה אלהיכם) in vv. 9-10 is the evidence that God is revealing Himself in His relationship with the Israelites. God is concerned for the alien who has little income and little hope of earning during the harvest times. As the land belongs to God, He wants the landlords to be thankful for their harvest and to express their acknowledgement that that God has richly blessed them by sharing their harvest with the alien.<sup>126</sup>

### 1.4.3 Ethical duties (vv.11-12)

Leviticus 19 emphasizes not only laws for becoming holy, but regulations for becoming ethical children of God: vv. 11-12, which are composed of five prohibitions about dealing with neighbours, conclude with the phrase “I am the Lord (אני יהוה).” Verse 11 uses the word neighbour (עמית) and highlights relations to others. It expresses God’s heart for His people. The word neighbour in 19:11 appears twelve times in the OT: once in Zechariah 13:7 and eleven times in Leviticus (Leviticus 19: 11, 15, 17 use עמית and 13, 16, 18 use גר; they do not show differences in meaning). Also, Leviticus 18:20 uses עמית and 20:10 uses גר. These words are interchangeable; they have the same meaning in the text. The meaning of neighbour (עמית) is not clear; it seems to refer to both Israelites and resident aliens.<sup>127</sup> The laws in vv.11-12 clearly display the deeds that the Israelites should do in order to be holy.

Hence, verses 11-12 focus on the Israelites observing the regulations of God to establish their society in God’s manner. Verses 11-12 explain the purpose of sacrifices of well-being (שלמי) in v.5; Milgrom suggests that H did not invent the term שלמים (vv.5-8), but borrowed it from P (7:16-18). Likewise, H may have borrowed all of these commands from other sources and

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<sup>126</sup> Hartley, *Leviticus*, 314.

<sup>127</sup> Wenham, *Leviticus*, 267.

expanded them for use in liturgical ceremony.<sup>128</sup> Like the ethical commands, the commands about ceremony are meant to build a relationship between God and humans.

The first command in v.11, “you shall not steal” (לֹא תִגְנוֹב), uses the same words as the eighth commandment in the Decalogue (Exod. 20:15, Deut. 5:19).<sup>129</sup> The use of the prohibition of stealing in v.11 is related to the theft of money.<sup>130</sup> Milgrom and Schwartz see the first command as applying to all persons, but lying and deceiving as applying only to neighbours.<sup>131</sup> The first command about stealing is a generalization, while the following ones are specific examples.

The commands “you shall not deal falsely” and “you shall not lie” in v.11 correspond to the ninth command in the Decalogue. And Exod.20: 16 and Deut 5: 20 use the same phrase (לֹא-תַעֲנֶה בְרַעַךְ); the content of the laws in Leviticus, Exodus, and Deuteronomy are the same, but the word lie (שָׁקַר) is a noun in Exodus and Deuteronomy, while Leviticus19:11 uses the verbal form, you shall not lie (וְלֹא-תִשְׁקַר). The commands in vv.11-12 are also found in Deut. 5:20-26, causing many readers to doubt that Leviticus19:11 was actually written by the author of Leviticus. Deut 5:20-26 focuses on one theme, but Leviticus19:11-12 expands it into detailed categories. It seems that the H sources borrowed from the priestly writers’ ideas: hence the ritual ceremony and ethics are emphasized.

Leviticus19:11 uses תִּשְׁקַר (its root שָׁקַר means “to break faith with a covenant or with the community”<sup>132</sup>), which is translated by the LXX as στυκοφαντήσῃ, one of whose meanings is

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<sup>128</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1628.

<sup>129</sup> Exod. 20:15 and Deut. 5:19 uses the verb גָּנַב as Qal imperfect 2 masc. sing., but in Leviticus 19:11 this verb is used as plural.

<sup>130</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1630.

<sup>131</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1631.

<sup>132</sup> Koehler and Baumgartner, eds., *HALOT* 4:1647.

to “extort money (from someone) by false charges; blackmail, oppress.”<sup>133</sup> The ethical commands against stealing, falseness, and lying in v. 11 are prohibitions against abusing other human beings, but v.12 talks about abusing God’s name (בִּשְׁמִי); that is, it deals with the connection between God and human beings regarding falseness. The regulations in Leviticus 19 can be classified as either related to relationship with God or human beings, but vv.11-12 connect regulations concerning God with those dealing with human beings; that is, falseness in v.12 is connected with God and in v.11 is connected with human beings. This change shows that falseness is connected with both God and human community. The command in v.12, “do not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God,” is compatible with the third command in the Decalogue (Exod. 20:7).<sup>134</sup> Levine suggests that false swearing, improper sacrificial ceremony, and worshiping idols result in defiling the name of God, while obedience to the regulations and commands leads to making God’s name holy.

In the OT, these ethical commands are significant. An oath in the OT is based on human relationships within community. God is invoked as witness in these oaths (Exod. 22:10, 2 Sam 21:7, 1 Kings 2:43); this swearing is done in Yahweh’s name (Ps. 63:12, 102:9, Isa. 65:16, Dan.12:7). To swear in the name of Yahweh is often considered a confession of obedience to Yahweh Himself (Isa. 19:18, 45:23).<sup>135</sup> Hence, while swearing happens in the context of human relationships, it is automatically connected with the relationship with God; thus, false swearing can be interpreted as profaning the name of God (v.12). Economic transactions often involved swearing by God’s name, and deception and swearing false oaths were used to secure control of an associate’s property.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> LSJ, *συκοφαντήσσει* – blackmail, oppress.

<sup>134</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, 128.

<sup>135</sup> C. A. Keller, “שָׁמַע,” *TLOT* 3:1295-1296.

<sup>136</sup> Hartley, *Leviticus*, 315.

The injunctions in vv.11-12 are written for the community; they not only apply to relationships between human beings, but also to relationships between God and people. Therefore, there is no distinction between religious and social regulations. In the theology of Israel there is no true holiness/obedience without fulfilling ethical obligations.

#### **1.4.4 Regulations about treatment of the weak (vv.13-14)**

In verse 13, (v14 is different) God commands the community members to respect their fellow citizens and aliens as a mark of “fearing Him.” Verse 13 strongly demonstrates that God’s heart is with the needy and poor in the world. There were many kinds of workers in the Ancient Near East, such as slaves or daily laborers (שְׂכִיר), who were the poorest in the society. The laws in vv.13-14 inform the Israelites that they should consider the needs of these marginalized individuals.

One of the significant laws in v.13 is to respect the wages of the daily workers. The interpretation between the law in the NT and OT in terms of wages is a little bit different, but both emphasize that the workers should receive their wages promptly. The daily wage must be paid by sundown (cf. Matt 20:8) according to the NT, and v.13 implies that the wage must be paid by the morning. Deut. 24:13-15 also states that daily wages should be taken care of before sunset.<sup>137</sup> The daily workers were the poorest in the community and depended on their daily wages. God commands the Israelites not to withhold their wages until the next morning. Ramban, as quoted in Milgrom, announces that “both laws are identical, this one merely stating that the day’s wages should not be postponed until the morning and implying that they should be paid at sunset—that is, at the end of the workday.”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> “You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise, they might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt” (Deut.24:15)

<sup>138</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1638.

In the book of Leviticus, God encourages the Israelites to avoid enslaving their fellow-man if at all possible. When impoverished people want to sell themselves, God commands the Israelites to hire them as workers instead (Leviticus 25:39). God wants the Israelites to remember that he set them free from slavery in Egypt and that they were not allowed to keep their kin in perpetual slavery (Leviticus 25:42-43). God shows His strong will to protect the poor by reminding the Israelites that the poor are not slaves and that they should be respected. Wolff states, “Leviticus 19:13 categorically warns that the wages of a hired servant shall not remain unpaid until the next morning. Alongside this admonition stand warnings against defrauding and robbery! Though it may be unimportant to the master, the lawgiver thinks of the laborer’s needs.”<sup>139</sup>

Verses 13-14 consist of five prohibitions.<sup>140</sup> All the laws conclude with the phrase ‘you shall fear your God.’ The reason these commands conclude with God’s name is that they are not limited to a particular place or time. Milgrom notes, “in any event, it is clear that in the Decalogue, the use of God’s name is forbidden over a wide area, including oaths, prayers, curses, and blessings, if its purpose is worthless, false, magical—in the world, if its use is inimical to the revealed will of God. Here, however, the prohibition deals with lying oaths.”<sup>141</sup> The law in vv.13-14 is not only limited to a certain nation or people, but all the people who want to obey God should obey His laws in order to establish the community that God created for His people.

By giving these laws to the Israelites, God clarifies the responsibilities of the rich who rule the property and workers. The focus in vv.13-14 is that the Israelites live in community, helping each other. The three prohibitions in v.13 are concerned with care for the weak and

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<sup>139</sup> Hans Walter Wolff, "Masters and Slaves: On Overcoming Class-Struggle in the Old Testament," *JSTOT* 9 (1947): 259-72.

<sup>140</sup> These commands are: do not cheat, do not steal, do not withhold wages overnight, do not curse, do not trip the blind, and one positive command: you shall fear your God.

<sup>141</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1634.



poor—a similar focus as vv.9-10. Just as vv.9-10 focus on farming circumstances, v.13 is based on the relationship between employer and employee with regard to a different type of economic activity. These regulations are related to the weak in the community, but the target audience is those who possess money and power: the stronger people who could financially and socially oppress, cheat, and ignore the weaker.

Verse 13 describes economic dishonesty in a general fashion (v. 13a), and then discusses details about the wage-dependent labourer (v. 13b) or the handicapped person (deaf and blind: v. 14a). Gerstenberger notes, “The five prohibitions probably derive from a larger social context, and seem to presuppose a stratification into rich and poor, since they forbid the more powerful from economically exploiting their fellows in faith.”<sup>142</sup> This command is not an abstract dream of a future ideal society; rather, it is concrete and specific direction which the people can follow to create the society God intends them to have. God is informing the rich about the way they should serve the community with their benefits.

The term רע in v 13 can have several meanings in scripture, in phrases such as “his friends” (1 Sam 30:26), “friends like brothers” (Ps 88:19), or “speak peace with neighbours” (Ps 28:3). It is used four times in Leviticus 19: verses 13, 16, 18, and 20. Also, the term רע is used two times in the Decalogue’s ninth and tenth commands; it applies to the people whom the Israelites might meet daily, who live in their neighbourhoods. It is targeted at people who have abundant possessions and high social status.<sup>143</sup> Milgrom sees that the term רע can also refer to non-Israelites; the broader range is intended here, since hirelings are not limited to Israelites.<sup>144</sup> The term רע in v.13 has a broad meaning, which includes not only Israelites but also non-

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<sup>142</sup> Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 268.

<sup>143</sup> Kellermann, “רע,” *TDOT* 13:522-532.

<sup>144</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1637

Israelites. God cares not only about specific people, but for all the people who live under His authority.

The general meaning of עֲשֹׁק in the phrase do not cheat (לֹא-תֵעָשֶׂק) is “oppress, extort” (e.g., Jer 21:12; 22:3; cf. Deut 28:29, 33; 1 Sam 12:4; Hos 4:2; Amos 4:1); however, P has a more specific meaning in mind: the verb “cheat” refers to withholding of payment.<sup>145</sup> LXX interprets עֲשֹׁק by ἀδικήσεις, which has the more general meaning “to be unjust or deal unjustly;” this Greek word is connected with the economic and social situation. In v 13, the significance of cheating or withholding payment is more than being unjust or harming employees, but also about damaging their daily life economically.

It is significant that deferring payment to wage earners is prohibited. The meaning of עֲשֹׁק and גִּזַּל is the employers’ abuse of power and authority by delaying the payment of wages to the earners. Milgrom explains that עֲשֹׁק and גִּזַּל have different meanings: עֲשֹׁק means that a payment is continually withheld from the hired servant and גִּזַּל means I have (what is yours), but I will not give it to you.<sup>146</sup> God warns the Israelites that they should not oppress their neighbours and steal from the poor aliens. The first command is limited to the Israelites and the second command applies to all human beings.<sup>147</sup> The structure of verse 13 stresses the concern that one should not steal from others. The phrase ‘you shall not steal’ placed after the longer expression in the beginning of v.13 and the shorter phrase sets up the entire unit (vv.13-14). Hartley notes, “This practice deprives that laborer of the possibility of purchasing food for his family for the evening meal and for the following day (Deut 24:14-15; cf. Jer 22:13; Matt 20:8). An employer may not use for his own convenience and profit an accounting practice that works a hardship on

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<sup>145</sup> J Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1637. See also Mal 3:5.

<sup>146</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1637.

<sup>147</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1637.

his laborer's family.”<sup>148</sup> God's commands are expressed very firmly in v.14 by using the expression the “name of God.” Verses 11-13 are about deeds, while vv.11-12 may be referring to furtive deeds and v.13, non-furtive deeds. The commands in vv.11-13 inform the Israelites that these laws are not limited in terms of space or time.

Verse 14 is about exploitation of the handicapped, but is directed at people who are not handicapped. The laws in Leviticus 19, including vv.13-14, picture the kind of community that God has designed for His people. The strong and weak, the handicapped and not handicapped, and the poor and rich are all supposed to live and work together under God's commands. What “cursing the deaf” implies is that the handicapped might not be able to resist or defend themselves against injustice. Verse 14 ends with the expression ‘but you shall fear the Lord,’ and Milgrom comments that “although the deaf does not know he was insulted nor the blind who hurt him, God does know and will punish accordingly.”<sup>149</sup> This wording creates a similar position to Exod 22.23 where God hears the cry of the victims and offers them protection.

One additional command is found at the end of v.14: ויראת מאלהיך אני יהוה (you shall fear your God: I am the LORD). This command (ויראת מאלהיך) includes the preposition מן, a stylistic device which is also found in 19:32, 25:17, 36, and 43. The role of מן in v.14 is to communicate that the Israelites fear God not only as a concrete presence, but also as an omniscient presence. Milgrom comments that this preposition מן refers to the presence of God when God's people disobey His commands.<sup>150</sup> He also suggests that מן may imply that a crime committed in secret will be known to God and that the preposition stresses the nature of God.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Hartley, *Leviticus*, 315.

<sup>149</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1639.

<sup>150</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1641.

<sup>151</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1641.

Obedying the commands even when God is not immanently present provides the basis for building healthy community.<sup>152</sup>

The verb *סָרַח* means “to fear” and it could be translated as ‘to honour’ in terms of the relationship between God and human beings. In Mesopotamia, “the primary meaning of the verb [was] ‘be afraid’ of threatening situations in daily life, especially in battle; then it [came] to mean ‘treat with respect,’ ‘serve,’ ‘worship.’”<sup>153</sup> Fear of God is the central theme of the OT, and “fear of God becomes synonymous with reverence, worship, and obedience to God’s command.”<sup>154</sup> That the laws conclude with the admonition to fear the Lord implies that the Israelites must obey God’s commands with reverence and obedience. The fear of God was often understood as fear of God’s presence and His holy nature. It is dangerous for the people to directly encounter God’s nature, since they might die.<sup>155</sup> It is God’s command that the Israelites should obey if they want to protect their lives. The end phrase in vv.13-14 emphasizes remembering that the Israelites are under the authority of almighty God; God is the one who asks them to love one another. The commands remind them that the weak are under God’s protection rather than totally controlled by the strong. Milgrom explains, “That the verse ends with the admonition ‘but you shall fear your God’ implies that the weak and helpless, namely, the deaf and the blind, are under divine protection.”<sup>156</sup> The five prohibitions in vv.13-14 are related to the sixth positive command in v.14. This arrangement shows clearly that the right way of honouring God is to consider the weak and their situation in the community.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 269.

<sup>153</sup> H. F. Fuhs, “*סָרַח*,” *TDOT* 4: 299.

<sup>154</sup> Fuhs, *TDOT* 4:298.

<sup>155</sup> Fuhs, *TDOT* 4:301.

<sup>156</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1639.

<sup>157</sup> Leviticus 19:13-14 links honouring God with caring for the weak; likewise, the themes of honouring God and considering the situation of the weak are shown as equally important in Matthew 25; in the final judgement, through the process of separating sheep from goats, Jesus treats the unimportant and the powerful in the same way.

### 1.4.5 Regulations for judgement (vv.15-16)

Verse 15 is composed of three prohibitions and one positive command; v.16 is composed of two prohibitions. The first prohibition in v.15 uses the only plural verb in this unit (15-16). The difference between the plural verb in v.15 and the singular verbs is not just grammatical; rather, the specific commands after the first general prohibition are examples of what unjust judgement implies (עֲוֵלָה). The verbs in verses 15-18 are all in the singular, except for the first clause in v15 in which the MT has a plural verb, and this is followed by the LXX's ῥηθήσεσθε/ ποιήσετε. Verses 15-16 introduce the commands that the entire community should apply to their lives. Milgrom also agrees that this first prohibition is addressed to the entire community.<sup>158</sup>

The meaning of the term “injustice” in v.15 is “bad decision.” Milgrom sees the opposite of injustice as being good. The rich and/or rulers should not make unfair decisions; v.15 requires justice and righteousness (צְדָקָה) in every judgement. Jacob Milgrom cites the Rabbinic Midrash regarding the influence of injustice in judgement: “this crime ‘leads to five things: It pollutes the land, desecrates the Sabbath, removes the divine presence, defeats Israel by the sword, and exiles it from its land’ (*Sipra Qedoshim* 4:1).”<sup>159</sup> The commands in vv.15-16 concern the community, because obeying God’s laws will protect the land and the community. For the rabbis, obedience to God’s laws is very significant as God will bless the people by protecting their property. In the OT, the land is protected by the Israelites’ ethical behaviour because God has gifted the land to them. Their responsibility is to protect it by obeying and honouring God’s laws and regulations. C.J.H Wright notes, “Israel had a twin theology of land: it was theirs by Yahweh’s promise and gift, and it still belonged to Yahweh as ultimate landlord.”<sup>160</sup> Even if the Israelites possess the

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<sup>158</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1642.

<sup>159</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1642.

<sup>160</sup> B. T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson, ed. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (vol. 2; Illinois: Intervarsity, 2005), 260.

land, they still have the responsibility to listen to God's laws and should not ignore the poor such as widows, orphans, and aliens. It is important for them to honour God by sharing their harvest with the poor.

The last command in v.15, 'with justice you shall judge your neighbour,' emphasizes the theme of justice by placing 'with justice' before the verb. Verse 16 shows two kinds of violations that may harm people; the first violation is related to language, and the second to killing people. The phrase 'with justice you shall judge your neighbour' in v.15 uses קצ with the preposition ב; this style of phrase is shown in the texts where God or people act as judges (Leviticus 19:15; Ps. 9:9, 72:2, 96:13, 98:9; Is.11:4).

The theme of justice in the OT is applied to both God and human beings (God: Isa 5:16; Zec.8:8; Ps. 5:9; 119:40; human beings: Isa. 1:27; Prov.16:12; Isa.9:6; 1Kings 3:6). Enemies of the good cannot participate in God's justice (Ps.69:28). In these expressions, God's justice is understood as unlimited. Justice does not originate in human beings, but human beings can live in God's justice.<sup>161</sup> Regarding the term 'justice' in the OT, Moshe Weinfeld focuses on social and political justice; he compares the justice of Israel's kings with the accomplishment of *mīšarum* (justice) in Mesopotamia and the proclamation of freedom in Egypt. The meaning of righteousness and justice in the OT, according to Weinfeld, is to fulfill the commands to protect the poor and dependent. Justice does not apply only to the court; it achieves social balance through extending protection to the poor and weak.<sup>162</sup> The purpose of justice is to allow all the people in the community to live without discrimination.

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<sup>161</sup> B. Jonson. "קצ," *TDOT* 12: 251-255.

<sup>162</sup> M. Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995), 7-23. According to Weinfeld, the requirement of justice and righteousness is for rulers, but also for individuals; justice is required in treatment of neighbours (Eze 18:7-8, 12-13, 16-17; Isa 58:2-7, 61:1-2; Jer 9:3-5), and this requirement is also shown in the wisdom literature (Job 29:23-25). The theme that justice and righteousness are part of God's nature emerges in several parts of the OT: God's creation and His ruling the world (Ps. 96:10, 89:3, 33:5-6), God's redemption of the Israelites from exile (Exod. 20:2), God's laws (Deut. 33:4-5), redemption of His people

Weinfeld understands social justice in Leviticus 19:15 differently; ‘you’ in v.15 refers to the people of high status who judge others, and ‘neighbour’ in v.15 means those who are judged by the high standard. This verse includes all people through the expression of both the poor (ל) and the great (גדיל).<sup>163</sup> Therefore, in Leviticus 19 the neighbour in v.15 refers to all the congregation (כל-עדה), and the concept of congregation and neighbour could be understood as the basis of the community.

In verse 16, slander is prohibited. It is a significant crime as it damages a person’s reputation by gossip. Milgrom introduces one of the examples from the Mesopotamian context: “The slanderer is cursed by gods. He is described as one ‘who pointed (his) finger (accusingly) [behind the back of (his) (fellow-man) [who calumniated], spoke what is not allowed to speak...gossip.’”<sup>164</sup> In v.16, God’s commands are related to gossip; “You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people” (לא-הלך רכיל). The gossiper is described as a slanderer because he or she goes around from one person to another to tell tales.<sup>165</sup> Gossipers are understood as spies because they seem to gather information from people and spread it to others in negative ways. However, this interpretation is too strong, according to Rashbam. He notes, “When the text calls a gossip a ‘peddler’ the allusion is to the way in which a gossip disseminates stories (like a peddler) not the way in which a gossip might gather information (like a spy).”<sup>166</sup> The meaning of רכיל in v.16 is slander in the MT, but the LXX makes a distinction. In LXX, The word רכיל is understood as dishonesty (Jer 6:28), deception (Lev 19:16), duplicity (Ezk. 22:9),

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from their enemies (Judges 5:11; 1Sam 12:7), and the time of God’s redemption for the universe (Ps 67:5; Isa 2:1-4, 11:4).

<sup>163</sup>Hartley, *Leviticus*, 316.

<sup>164</sup>Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1644.

<sup>165</sup> Samuel Ben Me’ir, *Rashbam's Commentary on Leviticus and Numbers: An Annotated Translation* (ed. M.I. Lockshin; Providence: Brown University Press, 2001), 103.

<sup>166</sup> Me’ir, *Rashbam's Commentary on Leviticus and Numbers*, 103.

and falsity (Prov. 11:13).<sup>167</sup> The noun form of רכיל has action and it is often understood as ‘peddling.’ Similarly [the Aramaic phrase] in Daniel (3:8), אכלו קרציהון די יהודיא, means “they broadcast [slander about the Jews].” In all these varying sources, the meaning of רכיל refers to dishonourable activities.

Milgrom explains the phrase “you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbour” in four ways: 1) do not refrain from speaking when your neighbour is in danger—silence is not permitted if you are in a position to offer testimony on someone’s behalf; 2) do not kill your fellow; 3) do not profit by the blood of your fellow; 4) keep far from a false charge. Verse 16a prohibits slander, and v.16b provides the reason: slandering the neighbour might cause him or her to die.<sup>168</sup> This interpretation may be seen as a prohibition that is related to killing one’s fellows (directly or indirectly), and it corresponds with the sixth command in the Decalogue (Exod. 20:13, Deut. 5:17). Erhard S. Gerstenberger states,

The last two verses (vv.15-16) of the first main section are the crowning conclusion to everything that has been said about the welfare of one’s fellow human beings within community. This particular section has quite justifiably prompted considerable reflection within both Judaism and Christianity.<sup>169</sup>

The commands in vv.15-16 are significant in the Judeo-Christian tradition; all the people, especially the poor and weak, are under God’s protection, and God requires the strong to protect the needy with their available resources. Significantly, God emphasizes the responsibility of the strong rather than the weak; God provides almost no rules for the needy to obey.

#### **1.4.6 Regulations for attitude towards relationships (vv.17-18)**

Verses 17-18 each begin with a prohibition and end with a positive command. Verses.17-18 consist of two general commands and two detailed commands. The two general commands

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<sup>167</sup> Lipiński, *TDOT* 13:499.

<sup>168</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus* 17-22, 1645.

<sup>169</sup> Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 270.



present strong contrasts between what should and should not be done.<sup>170</sup> Verses 17-18 deal with the issue of the heart; v.17 commands ‘do not hate in your heart,’ and v.18 instructs ‘do not take vengeance or bear a grudge.’ Finally, vv.17-18 extend the range of sin by connecting sin with the heart. The word (אָח) in v.17 often refers to brothers who are connected as sons of the same mother (Gen 4:8-11, 25:26; Exod. 4:14); it is also used to denote the people of the same nation (Deut. 17:15, 18:15; Isa. 66:20), and it is often used with the word “neighbour” (רֵעַ) or used interchangeably (Leviticus 19:17; 2 Sam.3:8; Ps.35:14).

These expressions reflect the idea that the Israelites are not separate individuals, but one related family; thus, they should help each other when their brother or neighbour has trouble. To care for one another is a law rather than a regulation, according to both Leviticus 25:35 and Deut. 15:7-11. If members of the community become poor, others are expected to care for them and should not ignore them.

Verses 17-18 introduce a variety of Hebrew roots to refer to various community relationships. The term “neighbour” in v 17 is translated from אָמִית, and in v 18 it is translated from רֵעַ. These two words are related, and the word אָח (brother) also could be used to convey the same meaning as neighbour in the context of Leviticus 19. These three words and the word עַם (people) refer to the community that consists of Israelites. Regarding the characteristics of these four words in vv 17-18, Wenham understands them as purposefully highlighting vs 18 in both literal and theological terms.<sup>171</sup> This stylistic device intensifies the meaning of loving one’s neighbour. As the following chart shows, the passage from 11-18 uses those words with increasing frequency, with vv 17-18 using all four words to express the climax that loving one’s neighbour is the most significant of God’s commands.

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<sup>170</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus* 17-22, 1646.

<sup>171</sup> Wenham, *Leviticus*, 267.

11-12		אמית		
13-14				רע
15-16		אמית	עמ	רע
17-18	אה	אמית	עמ	רע

In verse 17, a communal understanding of sin is stressed, that is, sin is not only a matter of the individual, but of the community as well. The people in the community should take responsibility together. This idea is shown in Leviticus 4:3 (“If it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing guilt on the people...”) <sup>172</sup>; that is, the impact of the sin of the priests will be passed down even to the people who have not sinned.

Verse 18 simultaneously suggests both “do not take revenge” and “love your neighbour.” James L. Kugel understands the expressions about neighbour, brother, nations, and fellow as referring to people who belong to the same group and that the meaning of ‘love your neighbour’ in v 18 could be understood as requiring them to hate the people outside the group. <sup>173</sup> The expression “do not take revenge” in v 18 does not match the rules of Exod 21:23-25, Leviticus 24:20, and Deut 19:21. These texts present the necessity for revenge (*lex talionis*). Also this command to love one’s neighbour is a unique expression in the O T. The end of v 18 does not explain the reason for these regulations, but ends with the phrase “I am the Lord” (אני יהוה). This ending phrase establishes the authority of this command.

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<sup>172</sup> Leviticus treats the idea of the responsibility for sin and its serious consequences differently from Ezekiel 18:1-20, a passage which states that individual sin should be dealt with personally. These differences in perspective might be historical; the book of Ezekiel reflects the changed idea of sin and responsibility after the post-exilic period.

<sup>173</sup> James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 757. As an example, Kugel points to the rule of “love” and “hate” in the Qumran Community Rule 9:16-17, 21. J. P. Sampley sees that the theme of loving your neighbour in Leviticus 19:18 is embedded in Ephesians 5:21-33 (the command for both husband and wife to love). J. P. Sampley, *‘And the two shall become one flesh’- A Study of Traditions in Ephesians 5:21-33* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) 30-76.

The regulations in Leviticus 19 are detailed sub-regulations to accomplish the command for the Israelites to be holy. Holiness in Leviticus 19 includes sacrificial ceremony, religious activity, ethics and social morality.

## **2. Relationship between H, P, and Leviticus 19**

### **2.1 The life of the Jews in exile**

There are varying views concerning the circumstances that the Jews experienced during the captivity. Certain scholars suggest that they had some freedom to preserve their cultural identity. According to Wellhausen, the captivity was not akin to a slavery situation,<sup>174</sup> and likely the exiled Jews were not treated as prisoners. They were under no overt governmental pressure to assimilate into the Babylonian culture and thus could preserve their national identity in their various habitations.<sup>175</sup> J. Maxwell Miller & John H. Hayes note, “Deportees could continue to practice their national religion in the land of their exile, although there was also the tendency to combine this with some form of worship of the gods of the lands in which they dwelt.”<sup>176</sup> It was therefore not easy for the exiled Jews to preserve monotheistic worship of Yahweh during this religious crisis.

Even though some surviving documents describe the life of the Jewish exiles, they do not give much detail. Biblical texts such as Isa. 40-55, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Psalm 137 refer to the captivity. The Jews faced limitations on their religious freedom in Babylon, and Psalm 137 obviously laments the reality that they could not worship Yahweh as freely as they desired (Ps. 137:4). However, because of the limited evidence available, we should be careful to avoid

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<sup>174</sup> J. Wellhausen, *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions* (ed. James M. Scott; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 233.

<sup>175</sup> J. Maxwell Miller and J. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Louisville: John Knox, 1986), 494.

<sup>176</sup> Miller and Hayes, *History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 494.

generalizations. Accordingly, Peter R. Ackroyd wonders whether “a poetic utterance of distress such as Psalm 137 should be generalized into proof of anything.”<sup>177</sup> We should be careful not to assume that we can understand the nature of life in exile solely on the basis of the scriptures that refer to it. But regardless of the details of their lives, the Jews were undeniably aliens and outsiders in a foreign land. Middlemas describes the circumstance of the exile as follows: “a great rupture occurred in the political and religious establishment. The community was fragmented, with a population in the homeland recovering in the region north of Jerusalem, a community in Babylon settled in enclaves, and refugees scattered in Egypt and elsewhere.”<sup>178</sup> During the exilic period, the Jews experienced a national and religious crisis that placed the Israelite religion at risk of annihilation. Part of this situation was due to the Jews’ exposure to a mixture of foreign religious practices as they became at least partially assimilated into Babylonian culture. Many began to worship the deities of their conquerors<sup>179</sup> and would have been introduced to cultic forms of worship in Babylon. As Purvis states, not all the Jews were faithful to the religion of their parents; some did accept the Babylonian culture and religion.<sup>180</sup>

However, despite these foreign influences, many Jews retained hope that their community would be delivered from the calamity of the exile. And many did not compromise their beliefs and remained monotheistic. Throughout the captivity, priests responded to the challenges in their monotheistic religious system by urgently attempting to preserve the purity of the Jewish rituals so that their community could be restored to the relationship with God which had been established by their ancestors. In their displacement, the Jews needed to find a way to

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<sup>177</sup> Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century BC* (Philadelphia: John Knox, 1968), 33.

<sup>178</sup> Jill Middlemas, *The Templeless Age: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the "Exile"* (Louisville: John Knox 2007), 2-3.

<sup>179</sup> Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 41-43

<sup>180</sup> James.D. Purvis, "Exile and Return: From the Babylonian Destruction to the Reconstruction of the Jewish State," in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple* (Rev. ed.; Washington: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1999), 201-29.

worship Yahweh outside of the land of Judah and reclaim some form of the worship that had been disrupted by the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>181</sup>

The process of assimilation affected not only the circumstances of life but also the style of the Hebrew language. One of the major influences during the exile was the adoption of Aramaic script, which replaced the older traditional Hebrew script. Biblical Hebrew had been the main literary language prior to the exile, but “the exile mark[ed] the disappearance of this language from everyday life and its subsequent use for literary and liturgical purpose only during the Second Temple period.”<sup>182</sup> Due to the political and historical circumstances of the exile, the Jewish community experienced a degree of multilingualism; as a result Aramaic and a late form of the biblical language were used not only for writing but also for speaking.<sup>183</sup> During the exile, because of Persian influence, Aramaic became very significant. Bustenay Oded notes, “The Babylonian Jewish community adopted Aramaic as the spoken language and used the square Aramaic script for writing the letters of the alphabet, thus giving up the older tradition of Hebrew writing.”<sup>184</sup> The Jews also began to use Aramaic and Babylonian names for their children. As they assimilated into Babylonian culture, the exiles began to lose the religious practices they had inherited from their ancestors.

During the exilic period, the Jews were also impacted by the loss of the temple and their distance from Jerusalem. In exile, they had to find new ways to worship Yahweh. Jeremiah indicates that the Jews built synagogues during the exilic period. Jeremiah 41:5 states, “eighty men arrived [at Mizpah] from Shechem and Shiloh and Samaria, with their beards shaved and their clothes torn, and their bodies gashed, bringing grain offerings and incense to present at the

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<sup>181</sup> Middlemas, “*The Templeless Age*,” 3-4.

<sup>182</sup> Angel Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (trans. John Elwolde; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 52.

<sup>183</sup> Sáenz-Badillos, *History of the Hebrew Language*, 111-112

<sup>184</sup> J. H. Hayes and J. M. Miller, eds., *Israelite and Judaeon History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 485.

temple [בית] of the LORD.” This verse implies that cultic worship continued in the Babylonian period and that Mizpah seems to have been a location of worship for the Jews during the captivity. However, this worship does not seem to have included sacrificial offerings. The function of the house of God (or synagogue) in exile has not been clearly proven; either it was used for reading laws and prayers or for community activities. James D. Purvis notes, “Nor is it clear that its original purpose, functionally speaking, was to provide a place of worship for those who either did not have a temple or found it inconvenient to get to a temple.”<sup>185</sup> Although the synagogue may have provided a place to worship, it did not, however, fulfill the function of the temple that had been destroyed. Performing religious rituals outside the temple in Jerusalem was problematic because the temple represented God’s presence in Jewish belief.<sup>186</sup> Thus, in exile, the Jewish community lacked a stable religious system.

The absence of the temple significantly contributed to the process of the Jews abandoning their traditional religion and beginning to embrace the worldview of their conquerors. Although their religious rituals were weakened without the temple, worship traditions did not completely vanish. For example, Daniel prayed three times per day in solitude, and prayer is rooted in worship (Daniel 6:10-11). Although some Jews like Daniel remained faithful, others compromised their beliefs, worshipping other deities.

During the time in exile when the Jews lacked an institutionalized legal ritual system, many of their leaders came to believe that the presence of Yahweh was not limited to only the temple. This view is emphasized in the P material. Fretheim comments, “The impermanence of the dwelling place of Yahweh in P is expressed in the use of the word *miškān*. This word, as has often been pointed out, finds its essential background for Israel in the impermanent life of the

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<sup>185</sup> Purvis, "Exile and Return," 9.

<sup>186</sup> Jill Middlemas, *The Troubles of Templeless Judah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005), 2-3.

nomad.”<sup>187</sup> Fretheim also notes that “God’s dwelling place cannot be confined; even the heavens are not large enough to contain him.”<sup>188</sup> In P, Yahweh’s dwelling place is conceived of in terms of a tent, a concept linked to the early nomadic Israelite tribes, who had moved the tabernacle, the dwelling of God, from one location to another. By the pre-exilic period, the Mosaic institution of the tabernacle had been replaced by the temple. P uses the tabernacle as a substitute for the temple. For Middlemas, “the loss of the temple as a center for cultic activity and as a place of worship result[ed] in a reformulation of how to access Yahweh in a foreign land.”<sup>189</sup>

This religious crisis caused concern among the exiled Jews about whether their religious and cultural community would continue to exist. As a result, the desire for restoration of proper religious rituals became very significant. Some leaders began to realize that the restoration of rituals and community was necessary to prepare for a future after the exile. The priestly writers’ role in this process was very important. They re-interpreted and re-examined the life of the Jews in captivity to maintain rituals that would help to restore the Jewish community. However, the religious diversity generated by the exilic circumstances led to a variety of interpretations of scripture among the priestly writers. For example, the theme of Sabbath in Exod 20:8-11 was interpreted in relation to the creation, while the Sabbath in Deut 5:12-15 was interpreted quite differently, without reference to the creation narrative. The priestly writers emphasized the creation order in Genesis because they saw it as related to the restoration of the community.

In their attempt to restore the community and its relationship with Yahweh, the priestly writers recorded legal laws and regulations. Richard Donald Nelson notes, “Priests conserved and guarded Israel’s traditions, transmitting laws, songs, and rituals from one generation to another. Priestly authority was based, not on a charismatic call as in the case of the prophets, but

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<sup>187</sup> Terence E Fretheim, "The Priestly Document: Anti-Temple?," *VT* 18 (1968): 313-29.

<sup>188</sup> Fretheim, "Priestly Document," 323.

<sup>189</sup> Middlemas, *The Templeless Age*, " 26

on their knowledge of this professional lore (*daʿat*).”<sup>190</sup> The priests, who were specialists in rituals, had a crucial role in maintaining the Jews’ religious understandings and practices during the exile. P was written partially during the captivity and represents hope for the post-exilic period. Fretheim mentions that “P is a product of the exile in which the traditions of the past were reflected upon in the light of the history of Israel and Judah, and, in view of the lessons of this history, a programme was made for the restoration of the community.”<sup>191</sup>

The Jews required systematized rituals, especially in the absence of the temple, to provide stable religious practice. Nelson explains, “By being institutionalized, ritual performance becomes more stable, more routine, and more amenable to control and regulation by the powerful.”<sup>192</sup> The requirements for restoring a sense of being God’s community were, first, to restore order, and second, for the people of God to worship Him. Even though the Jews desired to restore the community, their broken trust in Yahweh had to be restored first. Ackroyd notes, “The earlier groups of laws, and even some formulation of them, may antedate the exile. But here we have the indication that the compilation was seen as providing a basis for the building up of the new community.”<sup>193</sup> The community would be purified and restored through their obedience to the laws. True restoration with Yahweh meant combining ritual with obedience and ethical obligation, all of which are found in the written law. The written law became God’s commands to the Jews during the chaos to help them restore their religious community. This system not only contributed to the holiness of the priests, but also served as a guide for the Jews who were being continually tempted to worship idols.

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<sup>190</sup> R.D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville: John Knox, 1993), 88.

<sup>191</sup> Fretheim, "The Priestly Document," 323.

<sup>192</sup> Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 2.

<sup>193</sup> Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 90.



During this dark period in both politics and religion, the urgent need was therefore the restoration of their historic religious heritage. Isaiah 40-55 and Ezekiel 40-48 spoke of a shift in divine intentions and provided a theological impetus for the return from exile. In addition, the prophetic activity of Haggai and Zechariah mentioned a future return, and “the law in Leviticus 17-26 (the Holiness Code) clarified ways to restore and maintain a covenant relationship with Yahweh.”<sup>194</sup> To the Jews, what was most significant was not only to be liberated from captivity, but also to remain God’s chosen people. Siegfried Herrmann notes, “the real life of Israel continued in exile, not in Palestine itself, which they believed to have been largely depopulated and devastated. They (the Jews in the exile) therefore saw the exiles as those who really handed down and preserved Israelite tradition.”<sup>195</sup> The inheritance of their religion from ancestors was very significant to the Jews. They were the chosen people of Yahweh.

Linked to the process of restoring the community through the practice of appropriate religious ritual was the desire to rebuild the temple once the exile was over, to once more provide an appropriate site for the worship of Yahweh. Both P and Ezekiel express this desire to rebuild the temple. P contains God’s commandment to build the heavenly temple. In Exodus 24:15ff, P tells of Moses’ ascent into the mountain to be instructed by God on how to build a dwelling place for Him.<sup>196</sup> Moses’s instruction for the tabernacle came directly from God. While the book of Ezekiel also emphasizes the building of the heavenly temple, its focus is not on the building of an earthly dwelling for God.

Hamerton-Kelly says that “Ezekiel’s famous vision in chapters xl-xlviii of his book portrays the true temple in heaven, where it will remain until the time appointed for its manifestation. In the eschatological age it will descend on mount Zion, and the glory of God will

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<sup>194</sup> Middlemas, *The Templeless Age*, 27.

<sup>195</sup> S. Herrmann, *A History of Israel in Old Testament Times* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 289.

<sup>196</sup> R.G. Hamerton-Kelly, "The Temple and the Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic," *VT* 1 (1970): 5.

once again take up a permanent dwelling there (xliii 1-7).”<sup>197</sup> Both P and Ezekiel clearly focus on the heavenly temple; however, “in P Moses is commanded to build a sanctuary on earth corresponding to the heavenly model, [whereas] there is no such command in Ezekiel.”<sup>198</sup> Both Ezekiel and P seem to share the priestly tradition of the temple (heavenly temple) and both documents relate it to the hope of building a new temple as part of the post-exilic restoration of the Jewish community. Martin Noth describes the situation after the exile in the city as follows:

But for the exiles, as well as for the tribes who had remained in the land and for other scattered groups of ancient Israel, the restoration of the Temple was a matter of basic importance, for the central federal cult which had been located in Jerusalem for so long was still the centre of an Israel which held fast to its traditions.<sup>199</sup>

During the exilic period, the Jews suffered not only physically but also religiously. It became evident that the Jews needed to restore their unique relationship with Yahweh by restoring the system of rituals. The situation in the exile forced them to recognize the necessity of restoring their relationship with Yahweh.

## **2.2 Circumstances in the Post-Exilic Period**

In 538 BCE, the pious Jews were allowed to return to Judah after Cyrus the Great issued a decree that permitted exiled persons to return to their homeland (Ezra 1:1-4). The returning exiles were to be given “silver and gold, with goods and with animals, as well as freewill offerings” (Ezra 1:4). Thus, the Jews received resources that would help them rebuild their community and the temple in Jerusalem.

However, when the exiled Jews returned to their homeland, they encountered a number of obstacles. The returning Jews considered themselves to be the chosen ones of God. They were

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<sup>197</sup> Hamerton-Kelly, "Temple and the Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic," 5.

<sup>198</sup> Hamerton-Kelly, "Temple and the Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic," 6.

<sup>199</sup> Martin Noth, *The History of Israel* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960), 307.

sure that there was only one God, and that this one God would enable his chosen people to build the new nation.<sup>200</sup> Many of the returning Jews had preserved their monotheism and it became a focal point in their plan for restoration. In contrast, many of the Jews who had remained behind in Judah had developed syncretic religious systems that blended the worship of other gods with the worship of Yahweh. Some of these Jews had also married foreign women; even some priests had made these kinds of alliances. In addition, they no longer strictly observed the Sabbath (cf. Neh. xiii, 15-22).

Due to these differences, the returning exiles found themselves at odds with their countrymen who had remained in Jerusalem and did not allow them to participate in restoring the temple and the community.<sup>201</sup> Norman H. Snaith notes, “the situation, then, in the first days after the Exile, is that the exiles who came back to Jerusalem separated themselves from those whom they found in Jerusalem and its immediate environs. They claimed that they, and they alone, were the People of God, and they acted accordingly.”<sup>202</sup> Freedom in post-exilic Yehud was not easy for all Jews. The separation from those who remained in Yehud during the exile became an issue that the returning Jews had to deal with to restore a unified community.

Although the returning Jews were now free from their captivity, their separation from the already existing society of Jerusalem made it difficult to restore the community. Smith notes, however, that “the returning exiles took every step possible to ensure that the exclusiveness of their claims was translated into actual practice. Experiencing the captivity had led the Jews to understand the importance of regulations and institutions for performing the rituals. They believed that respecting the laws of Yahweh was the way to restore the community. Thus, the

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<sup>200</sup> Norman H. Snaith, *The Jews from Cyrus to Herod* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1956), 62.

<sup>201</sup> See Ezra 4:1-3. The adversaries of Judah and Benjamin asked Zerubbabel and the heads of houses to build the house of God together with them but the chosen people of God refused.

<sup>202</sup> Snaith, *Jews from Cyrus to Herod*, 67.

returned Jews diligently worked to build their religious systems. According to Noth, “The impulse for a new order of life proceeded in the end from the exiles in Babylonia, who, in their foreign environment, probably kept more strictly to their fathers’ traditions and ordinances than did tribes who had remained in Palestine.”<sup>203</sup> In order to help unite the two groups, it was significant for them to obey the commands and laws and perform the rituals before Yahweh as one community.

### **2.2.1 The demand for ritual systems in the Post-exilic Period**

During the post-exilic period, the concern of the formerly exiled Jews to restore and institutionalize their rituals became even more significant than during the exile and was seen as a way to reunite the two divided groups of Jews into a single new community. James D. Purvis notes, “...when the Jews returned from Exile, they returned not with a king to re-establish the older political order, but with the Temple vessels to continue the cultic order that had allegedly existed in ancient times.”<sup>204</sup> Purvis argues that re-establishing the Temple and the cultic order were very significant. Davis states, “So to the post-exilic prophets and historians the glorious past in which Moses stood as center was a glorified present, the worship was similar, only more perfect.”<sup>205</sup> The Jews in Jerusalem, whether or not they had experienced the exile, had to be united through an institutionalized ritual system so that they could properly worship Yahweh. They relied on the priests to present and re-present the sacred principle<sup>206</sup> that would allow them to worship God. During this period, the priestly writers kept working on the P and H sources to provide a lasting religious model for the Jews.

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<sup>203</sup> Noth, *History of Israel*, 317-318.

<sup>204</sup> Purvis, "Exile and Return," 201-29.

<sup>205</sup> T. Witton Davies, "Milestones in Religious History: Or Tent Temple, Tabernacle, Synagogue, and Church," *The Biblical World* 10 (1897): 6, 10.

<sup>206</sup> A sacred principle, which is the command from God for human beings to be holy, was placed at the center of Judean society; obeying this sacred principle strengthened the Jews’ community and made the principle itself stronger.

Since the priests wrote H and P, understanding the role of the priests in the exilic and post-exilic periods is significant, especially because of the absence of the temple. In the pre-exilic period, the priests had been sons of Zadok, as mentioned in Ezekiel 40. George R. Berry notes, “The well-known fact has already been noted that while in the early history of the Hebrews anyone could be a priest, later this was limited to the tribe of Levi.”<sup>207</sup> According to the Book of Ezekiel, priests had various roles. Ezekiel refers to the priests as ‘keeper[s] of the charge of the altar’ and ‘the keepers of the charge of the house’ in 40:45-46.

The priests were also engaged in explaining the laws to the chosen people of God to help them live as children of God. Joseph Blenkinsopp observes that the role of the priests was like that of a judge or a lawyer who not only introduced the law itself but also explained it to the children of God.<sup>208</sup> He adds that “the legal scholars referred to by Jeremiah as ‘handlers of the law’ (Jer. 2:8) probably represented a specialization originally within the priesthood that evolved into an independent lay class of experts in jurisprudence.”<sup>209</sup> The significant function of the priests was to help the people to understand why they needed to be holy before God. According to Leviticus and Deuteronomy, priests were given the responsibility of distinguishing between what was clean and unclean and of teaching the people of Israel about the Torah (“law” or “instruction”; Lev. 10:10-11). Also, the priests were grouped together with the tribe of Levi, which, more generally, was given the task of assisting the priests in their roles.<sup>210</sup>

In the pre-exilic period, the temple had been the centre of religious practice. Although the Jews planned to restore the temple, in the interim their leaders needed to find a way to create a focus for their worship. Thus, the priestly writers in P replaced the earthly temple with a

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<sup>207</sup> George R. Berry, "Priests and Levites," *JBL* (1923): 227-38.

<sup>208</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel* (Louisville: John Knox, 1995), 82.

<sup>209</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet*, 82.

<sup>210</sup> Richard S. Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 194.

symbolic one. P describes the tabernacle as a representation of God's everlasting covenant with the Jewish people.<sup>211</sup> The central institution in the priestly source is the tabernacle, which is described in two sections (Exod 25-31; 35-39); in fact, the majority of the legalistic material is centered on it.<sup>212</sup> The description of the tabernacle in P contained a substratum of ancient and authentic tradition.<sup>213</sup> The tabernacle is described as a holy place (מִקְדָּשׁ) in Exod 25:8 and the priestly writers indicate that God dwells in this holy place. P is distinct from other OT traditions because in it the presence of Yahweh is not associated with any particular place.<sup>214</sup> P describes the presence of God as active and moving from one place to another. Fretheim says that "... while the tent was the dwelling place of Yahweh, it did not confine him to a definite place; it moved about in a way that was in consonance with their idea of an active God."<sup>215</sup> P was designed to help the Jews, who had lost their city and temple, understand that the presence of God was still with them.

The description of the tabernacle in P differs from that in the J and E sources. JE (or E) describes it as a tent that moved with the Jews as they wandered in the wilderness, but in P the tabernacle is described in more detail, including the organization of its structure. Witton Davies notes, "The *mish-kân* or tabernacle was constructed by Bezaleel and Aholiab and other skilful men on a most elaborate scale and in a style that is highly artistic. An immense quantity of wood and of different metals was used in its construction"<sup>216</sup> He continues, "The tabernacle is, in other words, not the prototype, but a copy of the temple; and it is a copy of the post-exilic temple, not

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<sup>211</sup> M. Haran, "Shiloh and Jerusalem: The Origin of the Priestly Tradition in the Pentateuch," *JBL* (1962): 14-24.

<sup>212</sup> Haran, "Shiloh and Jerusalem," 14-24.

<sup>213</sup> Haran, "Shiloh and Jerusalem," 14-24.

<sup>214</sup> Fretheim, "Priestly Document" 319.

<sup>215</sup> Fretheim, "Priestly Document," 316.

<sup>216</sup> Davies, "Milestones in Religious History," 6.

of the earlier one.”<sup>217</sup> The purpose of the tabernacle in P is to replace the temple in order to help the Jews to understand the presence of Yahweh. His presence had not disappeared despite the absence of the temple.

The tabernacle in P was not meant to be an actual replacement for the temple; rather, it functioned as an icon for the Jewish community. In view of the circumstances in the postexilic period, the imagery of the tabernacle was necessary for the Jews because they needed a mental space in preparation for regaining a physical space. Mark K. George views the tabernacle as a conceptual space, since accounts of the tabernacle do not describe the physical structure itself.<sup>218</sup> The tabernacle narrative helped the Jews cope with their social crisis. Losing the city and the Temple had completely disrupted their social life during and after the exile.

The worldview of the priests was deeply connected with the Temple and its related ritual performances. In general, priestly law and ritual are deeply tied not only to individuals, but also institutions. The priestly texts strongly command individuals to be pure, clean, and sanctified through obeying the laws. Also, the texts sanctify the community itself. Levine notes, “Priestly law presents a coherent program for the constitution of Jewish society in which cult and celebration, and the personnel and institutions pertaining to them, were to play a central role.”<sup>219</sup>

## **2.3 The Relationship between P and H**

### **2.3.1 The historical relationship**

The P source is considered a collection of laws and rules that focuses on regulating the rituals and the cultic system of the Jews. P’s style is very recognizable. Michael Grant states,

...P displays an easily recognizable style -- clear-cut, formal and precise:

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<sup>217</sup> Davies, "Milestones in Religious History," 6.

<sup>218</sup> Mark.K. George, *Israel's Tabernacle as Social Space* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 18.

<sup>219</sup> R. Rendtorff, R. A. Kugler, and S. S. Bartel, *The Book of Leviticus: Composition and Reception* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 17.

dignified, grandiose and often repetitious. A fondness for numerical reckonings, lists, measurements and genealogies is apparent. The historian's vocabulary, too, contains distinctive elements, including legal phrases.<sup>220</sup>

In addition to the legal material, the priestly writers also introduce basic ethical principles. The climax of P can be seen as the laws Moses received from God on Mt. Sinai. These laws established the unique relationship between the chosen people and Yahweh.<sup>221</sup> P also includes narratives from the ancient world but connects them to Yahweh. Grant notes, "The priestly writer's story is not a philosophical or scientific treatise. It is an unforgettable endeavour to explain the profoundest and most enduring problems by poetical imagination and imagery."<sup>222</sup> While Ezekiel announces divine judgment upon the nation and urges it to repent during the exilic period, Ezekiel also devotes himself to providing consolation and a prediction of restoration (Ezekiel 33-48).

P also includes the section of Leviticus known as the Holiness Code (H). The Holiness Code can be viewed as containing "the origins of the religious Institutions of Israel"—institutions which seeks to represent as eternally valid models not only for the past but for all time to come."<sup>223</sup> H consists of law and instructions related to both rituals and social activity. The themes of H can be understood as holiness and redemption. The first part of H emphasizes holiness and impurity (Leviticus 17-24), and the second section (Leviticus 25-26) focuses on redemption, with an emphasis on God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the context of the chosen land.<sup>224</sup> H presents a very concrete depiction of Yahweh. Middlemas suggests that "in H . . . the holiness of Yahweh is never an abstract concept distanced from historical reality. Each appearance of the holiness of Yahweh corresponds with legal regulations for the people of

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<sup>220</sup> Michael Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1984), 171.

<sup>221</sup> Grant, *History of Ancient Israel*, 171-173.

<sup>222</sup> Grant, *History of Ancient Israel*, 173.

<sup>223</sup> Grant, *History of Ancient Israel*, 171.

<sup>224</sup> Middlemas, *Templeless Age*, 129.



ancient Israel.”<sup>225</sup> H lays out not only laws but also ethical practices for the chosen people. The authors of H write with strong conviction to restore the people from the chaos of the exile into their inherited relationship with Yahweh.

The laws in H often emphasize that becoming holy through obeying God’s commands is the main requirement for the Jews. Being holy as God’s nation is deeply related to God’s creation order. The rituals performed by the priests often symbolically reflected God’s creation order as revealed through God, the world, and human existence.<sup>226</sup> Gorman observes that “the concern of the ritual is concern for the reestablishment of order, and the restructuring of the categories of order and chaos. Thus, the ritual reflects the need for an annual reestablishment of the order of creation, an order consisting of cosmic, social, and cultic categories.”<sup>227</sup> The community in the postexilic era... needed to be reconstructed in order to recover its God-designed world. Disobedience to the laws had resulted in chaos. The goal of H is to sanctify everything, from individuals to the cosmos, by teaching laws and rituals.

In discussing the historical relationship between H and P, Knohl provides a survey of scholarship from Wellhausen to the present. Wellhausen viewed H as constituting an intermediate stage between the J, E and D sources and the P source. Thus, H still contains some traces of earlier ritual worship, but also shows signs of the priestly institutionalizing of the rituals that was to reach its full consolidation in the creation of P.<sup>228</sup> J and E indicate that in earlier times, the priests performed the ritual ceremony without any specific written instructions. Scholars assume that before the exilic period, a written ritual manual was not available for religious leaders. However, while they were living in the exilic period, the Jews needed to

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<sup>225</sup> Middlemas, *Templeless Age*, 131.

<sup>226</sup> F. H. Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual: space, time and status in the priestly theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 60.

<sup>227</sup> Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 61.

<sup>228</sup> Israel. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 4.

recognize the reason for their captivity in Babylon. It was also important for them to worship Yahweh appropriately in both the exilic and post-exilic period. Therefore, they needed to be formally instructed on how to perform ritual ceremonies.

Wellhausen sees P as having been written right after the Babylonian exile. He and some other scholars believe that there is no real evidence of ritual ceremonies in the First Temple period. Rather, he argues that the systematized ritual ceremony emerged during the Second Temple period.<sup>229</sup> During the exile, without access to the temple, God's people needed systematic instructions about how to perform their religious ritual ceremonies. Although Wellhausen sees H and P as related to each other in terms of their content, he considers H to be earlier than P because of the systematized instructions for the ritual ceremony contained in P.

However, it is hard to separate the P and H sources, because of their similar ideas and purposes. Some scholars argue that H was written earlier and then later embedded into the text of P as a unit, but others argue that the evidence is not sufficient to offer any solid conclusions. Israel Knohl notes, "Many sections outside the Holiness Code that have hitherto been attributed to P are really part of the writings of the H school. We must therefore recognize the existence of two separate Priestly sources, P and H."<sup>230</sup> Even if the contents of the Priestly source and the Holiness Code are quite different, that does not mean that they were written for different purposes. Rather, we must view these two texts as helping and supporting each other. Nihan is of the opinion that "H was never composed simply in order to *replace* the earlier codes, but rather to *complete* them" [*italics original*].<sup>231</sup>

The debate regarding the timeline of H and P, and the literary relationship between these

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<sup>229</sup> Knohl, *Sanctuary of Silence*, 4

<sup>230</sup> Knohl, *Sanctuary of Silence*, 6. Knohl sees the documents of the HS (Holiness School) as written later than PT (Priestly Torah) and HS as having the responsibility to contribute to the work of PT: HS helped edit and rewrite the scrolls of PT and blend them with non-Priestly sources.

<sup>231</sup> C. Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 549.

two sources is ongoing. Other books such as Deuteronomy and Ezekiel have been utilized in an attempt to determine the date of H and P, but these examinations have not been able to offer a definitive time frame.<sup>232</sup> It is probable that the priestly writers received inspiration from Isaiah's prophetic account of ritual ceremonies.

### 2.3.2 The compositional period of the Holiness Code

Along with observing the significance of the law in H, it is equally important to trace the historical path of the Holiness Code, to help us see why H is in its specific place within P. In 1866, K. H. Graf attempted to distinguish H from other sources, and after him Klostermann made a pericope of H. Graf said that "Leviticus 18-26 was a law collection distinguishable from the rest of the book on the basis of certain characteristic expressions, such as the self-identification formula 'I am Yahweh [your God]' (e.g. 18:2, 30; 19:3, 25; 20:7, 24; 21:12, 30; 30; 23:22, 43; 24:22; 25:17; 26, 45, etc.) and the expression 'that man shall be cut off from the midst of his people' (e.g. 17:4, 9; 18:29; 19:8; 22:3; 23:29, etc.)."<sup>233</sup> Klostermann saw H as unique in terms of its language, tone, and contents. However, Klostermann's formulation of H did not satisfy all scholars. According to Middlemas,

[t]he Holiness Code retains a future vision with respect to restoration that would suggest *a date before the reconstruction of the temple*. In only one statement is an explicit declaration of Yahweh's future plans for the community made, and that is with reference to the land (Lev. 26:42).<sup>234</sup>

Some scholars doubt the independent nature of the Holiness code since it is indistinguishable from the surrounding legal material and does not have an introduction or a conclusion. Whether

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<sup>232</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 14.

<sup>233</sup> Quoted in Michael A. Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy: Ezekiel's Use of the Holiness Code* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 27.

<sup>234</sup> Middlemas, *The Templeless Age*, 128.

this particular code was influenced by or directly influenced other sources would depend largely on the date of its composition.

Over the last decades, various scholars expressed a variety of opinions in terms of the relationship between P, H, and Ezekiel. The table at the end of this section presents the various positions, beginning with Wellhausen in 1878 and ending with Milgrom in 2000. P, H, and Ezekiel demonstrate a close relationship not only in content but also in language.

Wellhausen and Klostermann both see close connections between P, H, and Ezekiel and believe these texts influenced each other since these sources have similar content and style. Also, since these documents focus mainly on the ritual system of the Jews, they consider P and H to be related sources rather than independent legal material. In contrast, Alt sees the Covenant Code and Holiness Code as independent sources. He believes that “they could also be distinguished so clearly from their context that they had to be regarded as independently formed literary units. But it seemed clear that each had first been set into one of the narrative works, after which the whole was incorporated into the Hexateuch as it took shape.”<sup>235</sup> Based on this assumption, we may conclude that the author of H had access to the law Codes that were written prior to his own time and that H seems to be a collection of laws from other various sources. This structure leads to the conclusion that the date of H comes after that of the other Codes.

H and P share many common themes. Since passages in P such as Ex 6:6-8; 31:13-17; Leviticus 11:44f; and Num 10:8-10; 15:38-41 are similar in style and content to H, Klostermann views H as being a collection of laws and as being older than P. He asserts that a priestly redactor must have taken the laws from H and inserted them into P.

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<sup>235</sup> A. Alt, *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (trans. R. A. Wilson; Sheffield: Sheffield Academy Press, 1989), 83.

In addition, Alt also considers the date for Deuteronomy to be the seventh century B.C.E and the date for the legal document in the ‘Priestly Writing’, whether H is included or not, as late sixth or fifth century B.C.E.<sup>236</sup> His rationale is that there were laws before H and that the laws in H have their own ritual and ethical functions for the community. H differs from other law codes in that the majority of its content is related to rituals. The redactors of H emphasized that the Jews should restore their relationship with God by obeying Him once again. Von Rad states that “if we try to find in the cultic vocabulary of the Old Testament a general formula answering to the significance of the cult for Israel, we can say that the cult brings Israel to the remembrance of Yahweh.”<sup>237</sup> Speaking of H as a distinct corpus does not imply that it is a homogeneous literary whole.<sup>238</sup> From the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until recently, the complexity of H has been noted. Since many scholars believe that the original H was edited by or in the spirit of P, scholars have tried to separate the P additions from H and to show how it was growing more complex.<sup>239</sup>

Von Rad’s understanding of H is based on the research of Wellhausen. According to Von Rad, P is a historical work that has re-formulated the old materials into a new theology. The purpose for this reformulation was to establish a cultic culture among the Jews. According to Von Rad, P is a collection of various materials, and he also sees H as a collection of varying sources, with its reformulation influenced by P. P has the longest historical scope stretching from the beginning of Jahwism to the destruction of the Temple. During this time, many changes likely occurred within the priesthood.<sup>240</sup> He notes, “P is utterly serious in wanting to show that

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<sup>236</sup> Alt, *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*, 83.

<sup>237</sup> G. Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions* (Louisville: John Knox, 2001), 243.

<sup>238</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 7.

<sup>239</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 7.

<sup>240</sup> Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 244.

the cult which entered history in the people of Israel is the goal of the origin and evolution of the world. Creation itself was designed to lead to this Israel.”<sup>241</sup>

During the chaos of the Babylonian period, the Jews became confused by their exposure to other deities. Therefore, the priests went back to the original source of laws and regulations—Mt. Sinai. At Mt. Sinai, Yahweh had established a cultic system with the Israelites, and the priests utilized this history to re-establish the cultic system. In P’s Sinai pericope, the first of God’s demands from the people was that they build a place for worship, and God also gave them instructions for how to worship Him solemnly.<sup>242</sup> P’s task, therefore, was to bring a revival of worship by (re-)announcing these commands to them. Von Rad continues, “The fact that this history of cultic institutions begins with the creation of the world shows the tremendous theological claim made by P. Obviously then the only appropriate way of treating the worship of Israel is to take it in the light of this background.”<sup>243</sup>

In order for scholars to try to find secure evidence for the date of H, they must consider P and H together. Joosten introduces Hurvitz’s investigation to determine the date of P and H by examining linguistic evidence, noting, “Hurvitz shows with regard to a number of linguistic pairs consisting of an early and a late mode of expression that P/H consistently uses the older form exclusively.”<sup>244</sup> Hurvitz’s investigation has helped to uncover objective evidence, but the debate continues. Joosten claims that the conclusions drawn from the investigation of linguistic evidence would be invalidated if there had been a talented exilic author who wrote in pre-exilic Hebrew at a later time.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 233.

<sup>242</sup> Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 234.

<sup>243</sup> Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 233.

<sup>244</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 15.

<sup>245</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 15.

Since the beginning of the investigation, scholars have considered H's date as prior to P's and have argued that the final date for H should be assumed as being before the post-exilic period. Yet Hurvitz concludes that the P source does not use late biblical Hebrew style but that the majority of the text is written in the standard biblical Hebrew style of the post-exilic period.<sup>246</sup> If we assume that the date of P is post-exilic and that H was written prior to P, then the date for H becomes early post-exilic or even earlier than the exilic period. The majority of scholars see the date of H as either the exilic or post-exilic period.

Most recently, Nihan asserts Leviticus to be a collection of laws drawn from the older material. He holds that Leviticus was not composed in an orderly process; rather, he thinks it is a collection of legal fragments from the older materials. If so, separating H from P or other older sources becomes very difficult. Nihan states that "the evolution of research on H in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also attests to this problem; gradually, a majority of scholars has concluded that there must have been a complicated interaction between P and H in order to account for the obvious connections between these two corpuses."<sup>247</sup> Nihan thinks that distinguishing between genuine H materials and those from other sources is not possible due to later priestly additions and P's editorial work.<sup>248</sup>

The following table sets out the various scholarly opinions about the relationship between P and H; the third column shows various scholars' positions on the date of composition.

Scholar	The Date of H	Compare
1878 Wellhausen	The end of Exile	Ezekiel > H > P > Ezra

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<sup>246</sup> Richard M. Wright, *Linguistic Evidence for the Pre-exilic Date of the Yahwistic source* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 9.

<sup>247</sup> Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 95.

<sup>248</sup> Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 396.

1893 Klostermann		H is a ritual source
1934 Alt		A is a collection of laws
1948 Von Rad		H is formulated by P
1961 Noth	Post-exilic	
1979 Fohrer	Pre-exilic to Exilic	P formulated H
1974 Hurvitz	Pre-exilic	H > P > Ezekiel > Chronicle
1989 Levine	Post-exilic	The Second Temple Period
1992 Hartley	Exilic	H is part of P
1995 Knohl	Ahab (743BCE) to post-exile <sup>249</sup>	H <sup>250</sup> constructed P; H also constructed J. E in P <sup>251</sup>
2000 Milgrom	8 <sup>th</sup> BCE-Exile	H constructed P
2007 Nihan		A collection of fragments.

The majority of the scholars conclude that H was written sometime between the exilic and the post-exilic period during the Babylonian captivity. The purpose of H is largely considered to be to aid the restoration of the Jewish community. Throughout the captivity, the priestly writers had a significant mission to preserve the laws and commands of Yahweh to restore the destroyed community. Considering the date of H as later than pre-exilic means that H

<sup>249</sup> J. C. Ross, *The Composition of the Holiness Code* (Leviticus 17-26), 31

<sup>250</sup> J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, Milgrom divides Knohl's H as follows: Gen 17:7-8, 14\*, 23\*, 36\*, Exod 4:21b, 6:2-7:6, 9:35, 10:1-2, 20-23, 27, 11:9-10, 12:1-20, 43-49, ch16\*\*, 20:11, 24:12-18, 25:1-9, 27:20-21, 28:3-5, 29:38-46, 30:10, 31:1-17, ch18\*\*, 32:15\*\*, 34:29-35\*\*, 35:40, Leviticus 1:1, 3:17, 6:10-11, 7:19b, 22-36, 9:16b, 10:6-11, 11:43-45, 14:31, 15:31, 16:29-34, 7-22, 23:2-3, 9-22, 28-32, 38-43, 24-26, Num 1:48-5; 10, 5:21, 27b, 6:21b(?), 22-22, 10:28, 13:1-7, 14:26-35, ch15, 16:1-11, 16-24, 26-27a, 35, 17-18, 19:2a, 10b-13, 20-21a, 20:1-13\*\*, 22-29, 25:6-18, 27:1-23, 28:2b, 6, 22-23, 30, 31a, 29:5-6, 11, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 38, ch31, 32:6-15, 33:52-53, 56, ch 35-36, Deut 32:48-52 (\* means part, and \*\* means JE re-constructed by H<sub>R</sub>)

<sup>251</sup> Joosten, *People and Land*, 15. Knohl considers the Holiness school (which is similar to H) as a tool that reconstructs P. He sees that there are many numbers in the Holiness school; ritual chapters in the book of Joshua are an example. Knohl sees the Holiness school as having final responsibility for selecting the materials of the Pentateuch over a long period of time; however, Joosten considers Knohl's opinion exaggerated.



can be understood as a product of the priestly writers' heritage and their theology. Wellhausen describes the nature of the priesthood during this time: "in the postexilic period, the picture of which is preserved in P, [is] a theocracy under priests and Levites with the Aaronid priests dominating, the Levities generally becoming temple servants, and the High Priest functioning as head of worship and heart of nation."<sup>252</sup>

### 2.3.3 What makes H distinct from P?

An investigation of the language of both H and P helps us to understand the date of their writing. P and H show differences in language, contents and intention. H uses formulaic language that is not used in other codes. Christophe Nihan states that "the entire collection is structured by the so-called 'formula of self-presentation' (*Selbstvorstellungsformel*, although *self-assertion* would be better), which can occur either in the short (אני יהוה) or in the long (אני יהוה אלהיכם) form and can be found both in the exhortations and in the laws themselves."<sup>253</sup> Laws in H are consistently conceptualized as being communicated through divine speech. This elevates the Jews' holiness. Nihan says that "the community which has been taught the distinction between clean and unclean (11-15) and which has been entirely purified (16) is now ready to learn a new set of rules by means of which it will become entirely consecrated to its God."<sup>254</sup>

H does not replace but harmonizes, supplements, and even revises P.<sup>255</sup> The legal law code in the beginning of P was later incorporated into the H document. In several areas, H has unique expressions such as, for example, בני-ישראל, which are not present in P. This term in H

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<sup>252</sup> Patrick D. Miller, *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology: Collected Essays* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 191.

<sup>253</sup> Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 397.

<sup>254</sup> Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 108.

<sup>255</sup> Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 616.

used to clearly define the target audience is considered a shorter version of an earlier longer term.

For example, Leviticus 18:2 reads,

דבר אל־בני ישראל ואמרת אלהם אני יהוה אלהיכם

(NRSV) Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: I am the LORD your God

In H, the expression בני־ישראל is the usual one used to refer to the people of Israel. Based on Basters, Joosten argues that “the difference between *b<sup>e</sup>nē yiśrā’ēl* and *yiśrā’ēl* alone can be explained by means of literary criticism: *b<sup>e</sup>nē yiśrā’ēl* is a mark of later, priestly or Deuteronomistic authors, whereas *yiśrā’ēl* is usual in the older source.”<sup>256</sup> Joosten argues that the expression *b<sup>e</sup>nē yiśrā’ēl* refers to man in ancient Israel and that the laws in H are addressed especially to men.<sup>257</sup> In H, the recipients of the law are the men who lead the family and society. The reference to men in H actually includes all the Jews, as is represented by the expression *b<sup>e</sup>nē*.

H also uses the term ‘the assembly’ *ēdāh* three times (Leviticus 19:2 and 24:14, 16). This term is very common in P as a reference to the Israelite community. In P, the related verb expression in 19:2, “תהיו קדשים (you shall be holy),” is purely cultic and religious.<sup>258</sup> Joosten considers the term *ēdāh* to have originated in the exile or earlier. H later adopted the term *ēdāh* to particularly refer to the cultic community. He notes, “the term therefore has the same referent as the expression *b<sup>e</sup>nē yiśrā’ēl*, but whereas *b<sup>e</sup>nē yiśrā’ēl* is the general term, *ēdāh* stresses the group acting concertedly.”<sup>259</sup> When H uses the term *ēdāh*, it simultaneously includes individuals, families, and society. Thus, in H the theme of holiness is applied to the community.

Another term in H is ‘the people of the land, (עַם הָאָרֶץ), in Leviticus 20:2, 4. This term usually refers to the inhabitants of the land (e.g. Gen 42:6; Num 14:9, 2Ki 15:5; 23:3) and to the

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<sup>256</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 30.

<sup>257</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 31.

<sup>258</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 35.

<sup>259</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 38.

free, land-owning men (e.g. 2Ki 23:35; Gen 23). The term is also used to distinguish the population of the province from that of Jerusalem (1 Ki 11:20; Jer 2:18).<sup>260</sup> In H, the term is used in a similar way. In Leviticus 20:2, this term specifically refers to the people of the land, who are given the responsibility to execute the man guilty of Molech-Worship.<sup>261</sup> The terms *am hā'āreṣ* and *ēdāh* share the common concept that the inhabitants should protect the holiness of the land and should execute those who follow other deities. Joosten argues that the term *am hā'āreṣ* in H should be understood in the historical context that resulted in the shift in meaning of this term.<sup>262</sup> He notes, “the Israelites of the desert are the Israel of his day: the *ēdāh* is the *am hā'āreṣ*.”<sup>263</sup>

H suggests that disobedience to the laws results in pollution not only of people, but also the land. In contrast, P's concept of pollution due to disobedience is narrower, and is limited to people and the sanctuary. H emphasizes that the people's iniquity (עוֹן) causes the land to be polluted.<sup>264</sup> H understands that the presence of God is not limited to the sanctuary, but present throughout the land.<sup>265</sup> Nihan notes, “Although the land is not yet conceived as being holy in H, most likely in order to preserve a clear distinction from sanctuary, H (as already observed in particular by Knohl) is much more sensitive than P to the effect of Yahweh's presence in the land.”<sup>266</sup> Therefore, H emphasizes that the aliens in the land should be treated as natives because the presence of God covers not only the chosen people of God but all the people in the land. H demonstrates a broader understanding of the land than P does.

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<sup>260</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 43-44.

<sup>261</sup> Lev 20:2, Lev 20:2 (ESV): “Say to the people of Israel, Any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones.”

<sup>262</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 46.

<sup>263</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 47.

<sup>264</sup> See Leviticus 18:25: “...and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.”

<sup>265</sup> Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 560.

<sup>266</sup> Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 560.

There are new cultic concepts in H that do not exist in P. Israel Knohl states that H centralizes worship in order to restore the relationship with Yahweh by offering sacrifices and prohibits the idolatrous sacrifice and worship of other deities (Lev. 17:1-9). Also, Lev. 20:1-8 describes interdictions of Molech worship and warnings against worshipping similar spirits. Its main emphasis is the requirement to worship only Yahweh. For Knohl, “this is also an innovation, because P does not deal at all with the question of contact with non-Israel cultures.”<sup>267</sup> In addition, the blessings and curses of Leviticus 16 are unique expressions: the curses do not mention the destruction of the land and the exile of its inhabitants to the land of the enemy.<sup>268</sup> Since many elements of the Holiness Code are missing in the priestly writings, Knohl thinks that H incorporated and edited elements from P and also from texts later than P.

The laws in H take great care to outline the ritual system. The meaning of holiness is very significant in H as the term includes implications for morals, ethics, and rituals. H demands holiness from the Jews in order to restore the religion of ancient Israel. John P. Peters is of the opinion that “[H] lays the greatest stress on ritual correctness and endeavors, with anxious care, to secure the ceremonial purity of the Jews.”<sup>269</sup> The theme of holiness in H emphasizes the authority of Yahweh and His nature to show that the Jews should worship only Yahweh.

Although H does touch on ethics and morality, most of it is related to rituals and ceremonies, more so than P. Middlemas notes, “The legal material that predominates serves as an indication of ways the people can live in a reverential special relationship (especially as it entails life in the promised land of milk and honey).”<sup>270</sup> P and H share ideas of ritual system and culture, but H focuses more on the relationship between people and Yahweh as well as Yahweh’s

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<sup>267</sup> Knohl, *Sanctuary of Silence*, 205.

<sup>268</sup> Knohl, *Sanctuary of Silence*, 205.

<sup>269</sup> J. Peters, "The Hebrew Idea of Holiness," *The Biblical World* 14 (1899): 344-55.

<sup>270</sup> Middlemas, *The Templeless Age*, 133.

ownership of His people. H believes that obeying the law is deeply related to restoring the relationship with Yahweh and that the cultic system is established by this relationship.

## **2.4 Studies of H and its social background**

H, like D and P, has the character of a sacred law code given by a deity to his people. It is similar to other codes given by deities to ancient societies but differs in that the other law codes do not contain the concept of relationship between the deity and people. As stated earlier, there are three law codes: the Deuteronomic Code, the Covenant Code, and the Holiness Code. Joosten states that “indeed, these three corpora share a number of characteristics: they are collection of laws, they are said to have been given by GOD to this people at Mount Sinai as part of the covenant he concluded with them.”<sup>271</sup> These three codes show that God is the source of the laws, and H especially uses the unique formula of God as the speaker who proclaims the laws to his chosen people in order to enter into a relationship with them.<sup>272</sup>

### **2.4.1 The origin of the Holiness Code**

Scholars have presented various views regarding the origin and authorship of H, and have not been able to come to an agreement about its compositional history. Many believe that H was edited and shaped continually throughout several centuries. Scholars like Milgrom and E. Otto agree that H combined and reworked materials from sources such as the Covenant Code, D, and P. However, others think that H has reformulated earlier legal materials and the Pentateuch.<sup>273</sup> Either way, H is always linked to other law codes such as the Deuteronomic Code and the Covenant Code.

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<sup>271</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 17.

<sup>272</sup> John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 300-301.

<sup>273</sup> Michael A. Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy: Ezekiel's use of the Holiness Code* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 28.

Though the theme of H is very clear, and some scholars thus consider it an independent Code, others feel that H lacks the structural formation that would qualify it as an independent Code. H. Sun notes, “The lack of structural integrity within Leviticus as a whole cannot be considered a decisive argument against the hypothesis of H as an originally independent legal corpus.”<sup>274</sup> However, H does not contain the introduction and conclusion that an independent code should have. Rather, it seems more like a systematically organized collection of fragments from various materials. Milgrom adds that “the book of Leviticus subsequently received relational adjustments: minor additions (such as 21:24; 24:4), and a more substantial exilic reworking by redactor (H<sub>R</sub>).”<sup>275</sup> It appears that H was continually edited and shaped by the priestly writers. H contains frequent repetition and duplication of material (Leviticus 18:6-23, 20:10-21). Therefore, it is not likely that H was written by one author or edited by one writer. Smith assumes that the editor or editors gathered collections from varying sources and incorporated them into this Code.<sup>276</sup>

## 2.5 Conclusion

During the exile and later also into the post-exilic period, the Jews encountered a crisis in their rituals and their community life. They faced religious chaos because they had not preserved their monotheistic religion. In addition, their covenant relationship with Yahweh was broken because of their disobedience. In response to this situation, H significantly contributed to the restoration of rituals and the community during the postexilic period.

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<sup>274</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 24-25.

<sup>275</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 27.

<sup>276</sup> J. M. P. Smith, *The Origin and History of Hebrew Law* (New Jersey: Clark, 2005), 76.

### 3. Life in the Exile and Leviticus 19

#### 3.1 Introduction

Since Ezekiel is regarded by many as having had a close relationship with H, this chapter will discuss the significance of Ezekiel in relation to the crisis facing the post-exilic community. We will first investigate the life in exile as presented through the lens of Ezekiel, which will establish an intricate web of connection between Ezekiel and the Holiness Code of which Leviticus 19 is a part. We will also comment on differing scholarly viewpoints while focussing on the structure and organization of each text in detail. This process will allow us to view Leviticus 19 within a comprehensive theological and historical context. The main themes of Leviticus 19 are holiness and Ezekiel's concerns about the name of a holy God. To the Jews, Babylonia seemed to have gained control over Israel's God, even if the Jews believed that God alone had ultimate control over all human events.<sup>277</sup> During the exilic period, the name of God had been despised, as well as the faith of his chosen people. Alex Luc notes, "A major teaching in the priestly circle where Ezekiel came from was the holiness of God, in which Yahweh's name and glory played a significant role. For Ezekiel, however, God's name was more important than his glory."<sup>278</sup>

As many scholars have argued, H has a close relationship with the Book of Ezekiel, due to their many similarities. Graf believes that the book of Ezekiel was connected with H and that Ezekiel the priest was the author of Leviticus 18-23 and 25f.<sup>279</sup> In order to clearly understand the significance of Lev. 19 for the Jewish community, it is important to understand the relationship between H and Ezekiel.

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<sup>277</sup> Alex Luc, "A Theology of Ezekiel: God's Name and Israel's History," *JETS* 26 (1983): 137-43.

<sup>278</sup> Luc, "A Theology of Ezekiel" 137-43.

<sup>279</sup> Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel I: A Commentary On The Book Of The Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 1-24* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 46.

Michael A. Lyons notes, “Ezekiel’s use of H is motivated by a desire for the survival of his community, and he believes that he can use material in H to lay out a plan for accomplishing this goal.”<sup>280</sup> H focuses on restoration rather than punishment. Ezekiel especially uses guidelines from H to protect the integrity of the Jews’ monotheistic religion. Lyons notes that Ezekiel “reasserts the authority of H’s ethical regulations, and he uses H’s covenant blessings as a paradigmatic blueprint for the future.”<sup>281</sup>

During the exile, as a priest and prophet, Ezekiel had to provide the Jews with organized rituals and laws so that they could worship God appropriately. Elliger is convinced that H and Ezekiel both contain a liturgy for the Autumn Festival, in Leviticus 26 and Ezekiel 34:25-31 respectively.<sup>282</sup>

Both Ezekiel and Leviticus 19 emphasize ritual regulations and encourage the Jews to obey them. These legalized regulations were necessary to help the Jews establish their new community during the exile in the absence of the temple. But as Andrew Mein comments, the concept of ritual was drawn from the regulations of the temple in Jerusalem and they influenced the exiled people.<sup>283</sup> He states,

In the book of Ezekiel, [in] which [regulations are] directly and explicitly addressed to the crisis of exile, we see the first steps towards a Judaism in which the rituals of the destroyed temple become the centrepiece of an ethical system which constantly looks back to the homeland for its symbolic coherence.<sup>284</sup>

Religious rituals serve to confirm the connection between people’s religious activity and their morality.<sup>285</sup> For the Jews, rituals and ethics were very significant for restoring their community so that they could continue their covenant with Yahweh. The book of Ezekiel often uses

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<sup>280</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 155.

<sup>281</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 156.

<sup>282</sup> Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 47.

<sup>283</sup> Andrew Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 137.

<sup>284</sup> Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 138.

<sup>285</sup> Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 139.



allusions from Leviticus to discipline the chosen people. Preston Sprinkle argues that the expression “walk in the statutes and keep the judgments by which they could live’ (Leviticus 18:5) is also a significant aspect of Ezekiel’s message to the nation of Israel.”<sup>286</sup> Ezekiel uses the nation’s disobedience to the laws and commands as a significant rationale for the destruction of the nation in the past. Therefore, leading the Jews to obey Yahweh’s statutes and laws is crucial in terms of restoring the Jewish community in the future.<sup>287</sup>

### **3.2 Ezekiel, the Holiness Code, and Lev. 19**

The general perspective among scholars is that H is a collection of older materials that were reformulated into a unit. H contains laws and regulations, but does not mention their future purpose. H also does not indicate the possibility of re-establishing the community in the future, but simply warns with laws and regulations. Ezekiel incorporates laws from H with the purpose of encouraging the Jews to re-establish their covenantal relationship with Yahweh by obeying these laws and regulations throughout the captivity. The priest Ezekiel was not satisfied with the broken relationship with God due to religious chaos in the Jewish communities at home and in exile. So Ezekiel introduced his new vision to the Jews to encourage them to keep His statutes and judgments to restore their destroyed community and their relationship with Yahweh. Ezekiel had a vision that a prince as the vicegerent of Yahweh will rule the new state of the Jewish community.<sup>288</sup>

For Ezekiel, the restoration of the relationship with Yahweh by teaching the Jews to keep the commands was crucial. He considered systemized proper worship as a basic step to rebuild the broken relationship with Yahweh. John Rothwell Slater notes that “... Ezekiel was, after all,

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<sup>286</sup> Preston Sprinkle, "Law and Life: Leviticus 18.5 in the Literary Framework of Ezekiel," *JSOT* 31 (2007): 275-93.

<sup>287</sup> Sprinkle, "Law and Life," 275-93.

<sup>288</sup> John Rothwell Slater, "Individualism and Solidarity as Developed by Jeremiah and Ezekiel," *TBW* 14, (1899): 172-83.

more of a priest than a prophet, and he entered with enthusiasm on the work of providing an outline system to take the place temporarily of the suspended temple service.<sup>289</sup> Keeping the Sabbath, fasting and synagogue were significant factors for the priest Ezekiel. He keeps asking the chosen people to return to Yahweh and to respect His statutes so that they will be forgiven.<sup>290</sup> The prophet Ezekiel had a clear vision of restoring the community by informing it of the necessity of obeying Yahweh's commands for the future. He lays out the reasons for destruction of the nation as follows:

Israel has not lived up to her covenant obligations and therefore does not have the "life" therein. Here in ch.20, Leviticus 18.5 is used to describe the giving of the Law at Sinai (v.11), the subsequent wilderness rebellion (v. 13), and the rebellion of the second wilderness generation (v.21). Israel through various stages and generations has failed to carry out the conditions of the covenant and thus has not received the blessing of "life."<sup>291</sup>

So the prophet Ezekiel addresses the future of the nation and announces to them that they must obey the commands. According to Leviticus 18:5, the nation did not live up to her covenant responsibility and therefore the nation was responsible for its present distress.<sup>292</sup> The book of Ezekiel incorporated this idea from H to protect the nation in the future. Ezekiel and H are related, sharing the intention to protect the chosen people of God. These two documents also share an emphasis on the requirement to obey the commands.

### **3.2.1 Similarities and possible dependence**

The similarities between H and Ezekiel have received much attention from scholars in the last several decades. Considering that the H source is a law code (collection of laws), in the past many scholars agreed that Ezekiel was likely to have been the author of the H source. However,

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<sup>289</sup> Slater, "Individualism and Solidarity," 172-183.

<sup>290</sup> "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," declares the Lord GOD. "Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin." (Ezek 18:30)

<sup>291</sup> Sprinkle, "Law and Life," 286-87.

<sup>292</sup> Sprinkle, "Law and Life," 287.

more recently, scholars have begun to assert that H was earlier than Ezekiel.<sup>293</sup> According to this view, Ezekiel had access to H in the form we have it today and collected fragments from H to include in his writing. For example, Jacob Milgrom shows evidence that Ezekiel borrowed nine examples of allusions from H that all point in one direction, from Leviticus 26 to Ezekiel.<sup>294</sup> He also says, “Thus there can be no doubt that Ezekiel had Leviticus 26 before him, at least vv. 3-39 (minus vv. 33b-35) where evidence of borrowing by Ezekiel has been demonstrated.”<sup>295</sup>

### 3.2.2 Ezekiel and the Holiness Code

Throughout the captivity, priests such as Ezekiel were concerned with ritual traditions because the Jews in Jerusalem had mixed their religion with other religions. Thus, pure rituals were needed for the Jews prior to the restoration of the community. Earlier, Israel had had no written laws or customs; thus the Jews now lacked material that would help them preserve the traditions of worship. Even though they had realized the significance of these legal materials, they were not recorded until the exilic period.<sup>296</sup> The post-exilic historical setting required that the priest Ezekiel record legal materials that would help to restore the community and to protect the Jews’ monotheistic religion. Risa Levitt Kohn notes,

Deuteronomy advances the process, but it is not until the Exile that the conduct of worship becomes written Torah. The prophet Ezekiel, concerned that Israelites traditions would be lost, was the first to take this step, and Ezekiel 40-48 comprises for Wellhausen the first thoroughgoing literary effort to record the ritual of Jerusalem.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 13.

<sup>294</sup> J. Milgrom, “Leviticus 26 and Ezekiel” in *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders* (ed. Craig Alan Evans and Shemaryahu Talmon; vol. 28; New York: Brill 1997), 61. See Milgrom’s article “Leviticus 26 and Ezekiel” he contends that Ezek 34: 24-28 borrowed from Leviticus 26. The expression that “you shall know I am GOD, whose laws you did not follow and whose rule you did not obey, acting instead according to rules of the nations around you” (Ezek 11:12) is based on Leviticus 26:3, 15, 43b, and Ezekiel 36:9-11 is an expansion and reworking of Leviticus 26:9. Ezekiel replaces the older formula of vertical retribution with his doctrine of individual retribution.

<sup>295</sup> Milgrom, “Leviticus 26 and Ezekiel,” 61.

<sup>296</sup> Risa Levitt Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile and the Torah* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 13.

<sup>297</sup> Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul*, 13.

Ezekiel did not just to borrow styles or characters from P and H, but rather incorporated laws from H. When Ezekiel was written, the form of P was not yet completed, and Ezekiel borrowed ideas from P and used them to complete his arguments. As a result, Ezekiel and P have both similarities and differences.<sup>298</sup> Risa Levitt Kohn cites Kaufmann as stating,

A beginning had been made of the Torah book (Deuteronomy), but the process was not yet complete. Ancient collections of priestly writings, marked by distinctive style, terminology, and ideas were in existence. Ezekiel's laws are part of this literature. He incorporated in his book an ancient priestly code which differs in detail from the Torah's P; this alone can account for similarities and differences.<sup>299</sup>

Although the book of Ezekiel incorporates many documents from H and P, it is not merely a copy of these older materials. The book of Ezekiel re-organizes the older materials to help the Jews restore their community. Unlike H, it does not include Moses' law from Sinai. Lyons notes, "such references are completely lacking in Ezekiel: there is no mention of Moses, no mention of the giving of the law at Sinai...."<sup>300</sup> Ezekiel's locutions from H apply strictly to his own audience. An example is the law concerning child sacrifice which Ezekiel 20:25-26 suggests was still effective even though P and the Holiness Code suggest a substitution for child sacrifice. Patton explains Ezekiel's reworked laws as follows:

It is clear that the author of Ezekiel knew some legal corpus in pre-exilic Israel. The indictments of chs. 18 and 22 assume a group of undisputed laws that Ezekiel uses in arguing for points less sure. To be sure, these laws resemble those in P, particularly in the Holiness Code, more often than their counterparts in Deuteronomy or the Covenant Code.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul*, 18.

<sup>299</sup> Yehezkel Kaufmann and Moshe Greenberg, *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 434-45.

<sup>300</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 112.

<sup>301</sup> Corrine Patton, "I myself gave them laws that were not good!: Ezekiel 20 and the exodus traditions," *JSOT* 21 (1996): 73-90.81.

The prophet Ezekiel knew the pre-exilic or exilic legal corps and used them to support his arguments. Ezekiel knew pre-exilic law, but whether this law was identical to any in the extant law codes is hard to determine.<sup>302</sup>

According to Ezekiel, failure to obey God's commands as laid out in H is serious, because these regulations are God's direct commands to His people, and their disobedience to the laws will result in punishment. Obedience to God's commands brings life, and disobedience to them will result in death. The proclamation of the laws in Yahweh's name is equally significant in H and Ezekiel. Preston Sprinkle states,

Ezekiel frequently uses a similar "statutes and judgements" formula and is most likely drawing it from H. For the most part, it seems that these "bound formulas" are used throughout Ezekiel to evoke the entire narrative complex of the phrase in H and exploit the covenant ramifications of these requirements.<sup>303</sup>

Lev. 18.5:

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אִתְּם הָאָדָם וְחַי בָּהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה :

You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.

Ezek. 18.9:

בְּחֻקֹּתַי יֵהַלֵךְ וּמִשְׁפָּטַי שֹׁמֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת אִמְתּוֹ צְדִיק הוּא חַיָּה יִחְיֶה

Walks in my statutes, and keeps my rules by acting faithfully—he is righteous; he shall surely live

Ezek. 18.17:

מִשְׁפָּטַי עֹשֶׂה בְּחֻקֹּתַי הַלֵּךְ הוּא לֹא יָמוּת בְּעוֹן אָבִיו חַיָּה יִחְיֶה :

...Obeys my rules, wand walks in my statutes; he shall not die for his father's iniquity; he shall surely live.

The book of Ezekiel uses allusions from H, especially when Ezekiel builds on a law-matrix. The priest points out that the nation did not obey the laws and rules and as a result destruction came upon their lives. Preston Sprinkle notes, "while the righteous (or penitent

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<sup>302</sup> Patton, "I myself gave them laws that were not good," 73-90.

<sup>303</sup> Sprinkle, "Law and Lifel,"280.

wicked ) person will enjoy the covenant blessing of ‘life’ by following the statutes and judgments, what Ezekiel 18 declares is that the nation has not done so.”<sup>304</sup>

However, Ezekiel’s historical context meant he had a different target audience from H. Lyons puts it this way: “Ezekiel’s use of H necessitates a transformation of *addressee*. This involves more than just a difference in audience (for H, those in the land of Israel; for Ezekiel, exiles outside the land).”<sup>305</sup> Lyons thinks that Ezekiel’s use of older materials is not an imitation of the older laws in H; rather, Ezekiel selects and combines these materials into a new format. Ezekiel 40-48 is missing many chapters from H and is not considered to be a law code.<sup>306</sup> Lyons also believes that H and Ezekiel had different historical settings and rhetorical goals; thus, the locutions from H had to be transformed in various ways before Ezekiel could use them in his arguments.<sup>307</sup> Ezekiel changed the style of the locutions, and he also changed the purpose of the laws from H. For example, in the book of Ezekiel, a single punishment in H (Leviticus 26:19, threatening Jews who violate the covenant) can be applied to the people in Jerusalem (Ezek 24:21), the remnant in the land after the destruction of the city (Ezek 33:28), and even the surrounding nations (Ezek 30:6).

Joosten believes that Ezekiel knew legislation of the exact type that we find in H and used legal materials in the composition of his book.<sup>308</sup> H preserves the older materials that were pre- or post-exilic, and Ezekiel re-organizes them so they can be better understood in his setting, since many commands in H would have sounded odd to the ears of his contemporaries.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Sprinkle, "Law and Life," 6-8.

<sup>305</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 144.

<sup>306</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 132.

<sup>307</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 144.

<sup>308</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 13.

<sup>309</sup> Leonard Elliott-Binns, "Some Problems of The Holiness Code," *ZAW* 67 (1955): 26-40. He comments that it provides equal penalties for the oppression of the poor and for the sowing of two kinds of seed in a field (Lev 19:13) and attaches more importance to the freedom of priests from physical defects (21:16ff) than to their moral character.

Ezekiel often expands the material from H not only in style but also in meaning. Elliott-Binns says,

Although the similarities are remarkable, even more are the divergences between H and Ezekiel. There is, of course, the matter of style, where alongside the compactness and vigour of H what we have in Ezekiel is much diffuseness and lack of originality. More serious and less open to dispute are differences in outlook and contents.<sup>310</sup>

The book of Ezekiel is closer in content to P than H, in that the author often ignores the contents of H such as rules about agriculture and sin and guilt offerings, and references to the Levites. Ezekiel designed the regulations and commands in chs 40-48 and his successors in the post-exilic period drew on them to meet the needs of their specific context.<sup>311</sup> However, Ezekiel and H share the common theme of restoring the rituals and community of the Jews. Ezekiel (40-48) is deeply focussed on the restoration of the temple (40-43), the rituals (44-46), and the land (47-48). Ezekiel incorporates the laws and regulations into his prophetic focus on the future.

The purpose of H is to help the Jews understand the laws and regulations while Ezekiel emphasizes the significance of the function of the laws. H is not recording past events, but rather shows the necessity of obeying the laws for restoring the community.<sup>312</sup> Elliott-Binns notes that “this is seen especially in the closing exhortation (Leviticus 26), in itself a species of prophetic utterance following the conventional scheme of sin, disaster, and the promise of restoration.”<sup>313</sup>

Lyons introduces five ways that Ezekiel uses H: accusation, judgment, hope, instruction, and the nation as witnesses.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Elliott-Binns, "Some Problems of The Holiness Code," 34.

<sup>311</sup> Elliott-Binns, "Some Problems of The Holiness Code," 34.

<sup>312</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 19.

<sup>313</sup> Elliott-Binns, "Some Problems of The Holiness Code," 39.

<sup>314</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 114-34.

### 3.2.1.1 Accusation

This section involves *transformation* of H's law into new literary form. Ezekiel uses the locutions from H to convince the readers of the validity of his argument. He uses locutions from H to warn the Jews to return to God (see Leviticus 18:4-5 and Ezek 20:13) and the list of commands from H to justify his prophecy for the future of Jerusalem.<sup>315</sup> From Ezekiel's perspective, disobedience to the laws has resulted in the destruction of the temple, and he emphasizes that the Jews are still not willing to listen to the laws and obey them. He accuses not only the earlier Israelites in the wilderness but also the present citizens of Jerusalem.<sup>316</sup> Lyons notes, "sometimes the transformation from law to accusation involves more than a simple change from 'you shall / shall not do x' to 'you have done x.'"<sup>317</sup> Ezekiel 24:7-8 and Leviticus 17:13 demonstrate this change:

Ezekiel 24:7-8 and Leviticus 17:13

Leviticus 17:13 describes the process of eating animals—he shall *spill its blood* and he shall *cover* it with *dirt* (ושפך את־דמו וכסהו בעפר)

Ezekiel 24:7-8 describe Leviticus 17:13 from a different perspective. Ezekiel 24:7-8 did not spill the blood and cover it with dirt rather place the blood on the bare rock (על־צוהיה) without spilling it on the ground (לא שפכתהו). Ezekiel uses the locution from H to express the wrath and vengeance by putting her blood on a bare rock without covering it with dirt.<sup>318</sup>

Although Ezekiel uses the locution from H in Leviticus 17:13, he is most interested in the situation of Jerusalem rather than the process of killing animals. He describes the situation in the city where humans shed blood like killing animals. Ezekiel adds two words "wrath" and

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<sup>315</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 115.

<sup>316</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 115. See Ezek 20:13, 16, 21, 24 // Lev 18:4, 5; Lev 26:43) and the Levites (Ezek 44:7-8 // Lev 22:9-10). Ezekiel also draws on H's regulations in Leviticus 18-20 to accuse the inhabitants of Jerusalem (22:2). These accusations are laid out here in order to justify the prophecy about the imminent destruction of the city.

<sup>317</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 116.

<sup>318</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 116.



“vengeance” (להעלות חמה לנקם נקם) to emphasize the results of disobedience. Ezekiel warns the Jews to be more careful to abandon their sinful ways if they want to avoid Yahweh’s judgments. Ezekiel uses the locutions from H to accuse the Jews of disobedience to the laws and regulations. He warns them of God’s final judgments.

### 3.2.1.2 Judgment

Ezekiel also uses locutions in his description of divine judgment. The people’s violation of the covenant by disobeying the commands is the reason for God’s judgment and punishment. Ezekiel sees that the Jews’ disobedience to the commands resulted in their captivity and that their future will not be better unless they repent and obey the commands. Lyons notes, “While Ezekiel often combines punishments from Leviticus 26 into clusters, he also takes into account individual judgments specified in the Holiness Code and develops these in new directions.”<sup>319</sup> Ezekiel expands the locution from H, warning that God will not only judge the rebellious people but also the surrounding nations. God’s judgment and punishment are very severe and without mercy. Lyons states,

The author accomplishes this by listing the punishments in order of increasing intensity, and by separating them, into groups with refrains that clearly state their restorative purpose: ‘if despite this you will not obey...’(26:18, 27); ‘if you continue to be hostile to me, and are not willing to listen...’(26:21); ‘if in spite of these you are not disciplined back to me...’ (26:23). However, when Ezekiel uses these threats from H, he argues that the judgment against Jerusalem is final and total: the punishments are not restorative, and there is no room for appeal.<sup>320</sup>

The judgment in Ezekiel declares strongly that God’s eyes do not have mercy and pity on the Jews (Ezek 5:11; 7:4, 9; 8:18; 9:5, 10), and Ezekiel also denies that God will listen to cries for mercy (8:18). The judgments in H urge the chosen people to repent in order to restore their relationship with Yahweh, but the judgments in Ezekiel emphasize that the rebellion and sin in

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<sup>319</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 120.

<sup>320</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 118.

Jerusalem were so great that the Jews could not save their lives and that the downfall of Jerusalem also influenced other nations. Lyons notes, “Ezekiel’s theology of the universal acknowledgement of God suggested to him that both Israel and the nations might be judged in the same way.”<sup>321</sup> Ezekiel seems to conclude that there is no hope for the Jews because of their disobedience. However, his purpose is to urge them to repent and turn to Yahweh because the sin in Jerusalem is so great that they cannot be restored without committed repentance.

### 3.2.1.3 Hope

Ezekiel uses locutions from H to explain there is hope for Israel. Both Ezekiel and H contain hope for the restoration of the Jews if they repent and obey the commands (Leviticus 26:40-45). Even though H and Ezekiel share the same theme of restoration, they approach this goal from different perspectives. H’s restoration is contingent on human repentance, while Ezekiel emphasizes that God will renew the people’s hearts. H requires human repentance, but Ezekiel sees that repentance is possible when God gives the people the gift of new hearts. Lyons notes,

Instead of simply projecting into the future H’s covenant, with attendant stipulations, blessings, and punishments, Ezekiel removes the punishments from the covenant and envisions a change that guarantees the covenant stipulations will always be kept. This change is one that God will perform in the hearts of the people.<sup>322</sup>

#### Comparison of Leviticus and Ezekiel

Leviticus

18:4 You shall follow *my rules* and *keep my statutes* and walk in them. I am the LORD your God.

20:8 *Keep my statutes* and *do them*; I am the LORD who sanctifies you.

Ezekiel

11:19 And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

11:20 *that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them.* And

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<sup>321</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 122.

<sup>322</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 123.

they shall be my people, and I will be their God.  
36:27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and *cause you to walk in my statutes*  
*and be careful to obey my rules.*

H requires following God's commands because they are able to sanctify the Jews when they obey them. Ezekiel does not accept this idea because he believes that human beings cannot repent unless God helps them to repent. In this section, Ezekiel uses locutions from H to encourage the Jews to restore their covenantal relationship, but does not include any threats, because in his estimation these are no longer needed<sup>323</sup> in the covenant relationship because God will change the hearts of the people and then they will listen and obey the commands. Ezekiel highly values God's role in the covenant relationship. Ezekiel also uses the conditional blessings of Leviticus 26 to describe a future covenant with no punishments and with unconditional blessings. God will sanctify his people and they will keep His commands and will not worship idols.<sup>324</sup>

#### **3.2.1.4 Instruction**

Ezekiel also uses the locutions from H to give instructions to the Jewish community. This instruction is very significant to Ezekiel's theology because the statutes and commands are related to the life of the people. If the chosen people of God obey His commands, then they will have life; however, disobedience will bring destruction to the nation and people. For example, Ezekiel creates unique expressions like "walk in the statutes of life" by condensing the locutions from Leviticus 18:4 ("my statutes...walk in them") and 18:5 ("my statutes and my ordinances which if a man does them, then he will live by them").<sup>325</sup> Ezekiel sees the statutes and commands as the source of life for the people of God. Ezekiel also disagrees with the idea of sin being

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<sup>323</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 124.

<sup>324</sup> Ezek. 37:23 states that "they shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God."

<sup>325</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 130.

transmitted from parents to children. He believes that each individual suffers for his or her own iniquity. According to Lyons, “Ezekiel claims that sin and punishment are not transmitted vertically from one generation to another: the sinful person will die only for his own sin (18:20).”<sup>326</sup>

Ezekiel borrows commands from H and transforms them as follows:

Ezekiel provides lists of positive and negative behaviour taken largely from the admonitions and prohibitions in Leviticus 18 (which deals with sexual activity), possibly Leviticus 19 (which deals largely with social justice), and Leviticus 25 (which deals with land tenure and redemption):

Leviticus 18:4-5 > Ezek 18:9, 17, 21:

“walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances”

Leviticus 18:19 > Ezek 18:6:

“do not come near a woman in her menstrual impurity”

Leviticus 18:20; 20:10 > Ezek 18:6, 11, 15:

“do not defile your neighbor’s wife”

Leviticus 19:13? > Ezek 18:18:

“do not oppress...do not rob”

Leviticus 19:15?, 35? > Ezek 18:24, 26:

“do not do injustice”

Leviticus 25:36 > Ezek 18:8, 13, 17:

“do not take interest or accrued interest.”<sup>327</sup>

Ezekiel sees these regulations of H as normative standards for behavior, and he understands these regulations as God’s response to the chosen people. To obey or disobey these laws is their choice, but they cannot avoid the consequences of their decisions. He sees that disobedience to these commands has resulted in the Jews’ difficult situation.

Ezekiel expresses his concern with the ritual crisis in Jerusalem in terms of the Jews worshipping idols after the captivity. Therefore, in ch. 40-48 Ezekiel applies many laws from H to urge them to understand His laws so that the community can be restored. Ezekiel does not just copy the laws but modifies and expands them to create a stricter standard of holiness. Lyons

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<sup>326</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 129.

<sup>327</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 129.

notes, “These expansions use locutions from the Holiness Code. These expansions consist of clarifications, the combination of existing arguments, and the extension of these arguments into new temporal settings.”<sup>328</sup> Ezekiel uses locutions from H to emphasize that God will give the chosen people a new heart to help them obey the laws.

### 3.2.1.5 The Nations as Witnesses

Ezekiel uses a locution from H, Leviticus 26:45, to present God’s desire to preserve His reputation and to emphasize the function of the nations as observers of God’s dealings with Israel.<sup>329</sup> However, he does not use the entire locution at once but uses parts of it in several places.

#### Comparison of Leviticus and Ezekiel

Leviticus 26:45

But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I *brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations*, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.”

Ezekiel 5:8, 20:9, 20:14,22

5:8 therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, even I, am against you. And I will execute judgments\* in your midst *in the sight of the nations*.

20:9 But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned *in the sight of the nations* among whom they lived, in whose sight I made myself known to them *in bringing them out of the land of Egypt*.

20:14 But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned *in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out*.

20:22 But I withheld my hand and acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned *in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out*.

Ezekiel points out that while Israel should be a model for other nations, Israel has not obeyed God. Ezekiel clearly explains the sin of Israel in 5:5-8, using a section of Leviticus 26:45 to correspond with his previous statements about Israel’s status. First, he explains how the city of Jerusalem has rebelled against Yahweh’s rules more than the surrounding nations by rejecting

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<sup>328</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 139.

<sup>329</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 135.

His rules and statutes (v. 5, 6). Next, Ezekiel warns the Jews in order to help them to understand God’s judgment on them (v.7). Then Yahweh announces his judgment on the Jewish nation in the sight of the surrounding nations, because of its rebellion against the rules (v. 8). Ezekiel is concerned with protecting God’s reputation throughout his book.

### 3.2.2 Ezekiel and Leviticus 19

Leviticus 19 and Ezekiel approach the theme of holiness from different perspectives. In Leviticus 19, ethical and civic issues hold centre stage and God requires the Israelites to be holy. The requirements for holiness are explained through a mixture of cultic and moral laws. Throughout the captivity, the Jews experienced the disappearance of the presence of God. Disobedience to the laws and commands resulted in the destruction of their religious life and the temple in Jerusalem. Leviticus 19 emphasizes that holy living is the first step to restoring the relationship with Yahweh. The issue the Jews face is that Yahweh’s presence should be restored in their reality. The Jews tended to look back to when they were in God’s protection instead of realizing the reality and restoration of the covenantal relationship. The basic structure of Leviticus 19 consists of two parallel panels, consisting of exhortation to holiness and demanding the people keep His statutes. Leviticus 19 begins with the requirement of holiness and ends with the practice of God’s commands.

This can be demonstrated in the following manner:

General exhortation to holiness (19:2αβ, b)	<i>Transition:</i> New exhortation: “Keep my statutes” (v. 19α)
↓	↓
(a) Fundamental Prescriptions: parents, the Sabbath, prohibition of apostasy and idolatry (v. 3-4)	(a) (α) Fundamental prescription: prohibition of mixtures (v. 19αβ.γ.b)
(b) Casuistic laws: sacrifice (v. 5-8) and cultivation of the land (v. 9-10)	(b) Casuistic laws: sacrifice (v. 20-22) and cultivation of the land (v. 23-25)
(c) Other prescriptions: loyalty to the fellow Israelites (v. 11-18)	(c) Other prescriptions: loyalty to Yahweh and the fellow Israelite, including the resident alien (v. 26-36)

↓  
Final exhortation: “Keep and practice *all* my statues and *all* my ordinances” (v.37).<sup>330</sup>

Leviticus 19 emphasizes holiness and then introduces statues and ordinances for the chosen people to put into practice. Social justice and proper performance of rituals are therefore a mark of holiness. Nihan says that “Leviticus 19 stands as a remarkable case of inner—biblical legal exegesis: *that is, it takes up several earlier laws regarded as exemplary in order to build a compendium of sorts illustrating the requirements of a holy life.*”<sup>331</sup> The holy life in Leviticus 19 becomes the centre of God’s requirement in the book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel’s concern is that the Jews should understand their reality and prepare for the future of God’s judgement. Alex Luc notes, “that the crisis was not to be considered a sign of God’s weakness is also seen in Ezekiel’s use of the recognition formula: ‘Then you (they) will know that I am Yahweh.’ It is characteristic of Ezekiel’s prophecy to resume his speeches after this formula...the formula is used in Ezekiel seventy-eight times.”<sup>332</sup> In Ezekiel, this formula is connected with Yahweh’s punishment of Israel (or other nations) or restoration of Israel. It is very significant for the Jews to understand Yahweh’s character in order to live in safety in the future (Ezek 28:26). Ezekiel expands Leviticus 19’s assertion that God’s judgements will be with the Israelites unless they repent and obey the laws. Their sin is the reason the chosen people are disconnected from God. Ezekiel emphasizes that the people should understand that God’s absence is because of their sin.<sup>333</sup> Before God’s judgements, He gave His commandments to His chosen people. The way He communicates with the people is by the commands. John Calvin notes that “Yahweh is a God who commands (*šwh*). The foremost mode by which Yahweh

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<sup>330</sup> Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 462.

<sup>331</sup> Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 466.

<sup>332</sup> Luc, "A Theology of Ezekiel", 140.

<sup>333</sup> Paul R House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 332.

communicates to Israel is by commandment (*mišwāh*), and Israel's crucial mode of engagement with Yahweh is by obedience (*šm*).<sup>334</sup> The form of God's commands indicates that there is no alternative option: either they obey or not. The commandment is understood as coming from a lordly sovereign who has authority to command, who expects rightly to be obeyed, and who has the legitimate power to enforce the commands.<sup>335</sup>

Therefore, it is necessary that Ezekiel inform the Israelites about God's judgement upon them if they do not obey Yahweh's commands. Paul R. House notes, "Ezekiel's theology combines his own background and his audience's needs. Their need to know that Yahweh is present with them coincides with his priestly interest in cultivating the holy presence of God as prescribed in the Law, and his prophetic calling aids his proclamation against contamination sins."<sup>336</sup> Ezekiel's mission is to establish God's commands because the Israelites, lacking written laws and rituals, seek guidance from prophets and idols (Ezek 13:1-14:15).<sup>337</sup>

Understanding Leviticus 19 in terms of Ezekiel, we see that while Ezekiel and Leviticus 19 both focus on the theme of holiness, Ezekiel expands this theme by focussing on future judgement and punishment. Ezekiel warns the chosen people to obey God's laws while they have opportunities or they will face Yahweh's judgement in the future instead of experiencing restoration. Ezekiel 40-48 introduces the vision that a New Jerusalem and temple will be established. Ezekiel emphasizes the responsibility of the Israelites to be a holy nation and presents a new plan for the future that will be accomplished when people feel a new beginning to be imminent.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> John Calvin and Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Hendrickson, 2008), 97-98.

<sup>335</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: testimony, dispute, advocacy* (Fortress, 2005), 182.

<sup>336</sup> House, *Old Testament Theology*, 328.

<sup>337</sup> House, *Old Testament Theology*, 333.

<sup>338</sup> Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 352.



Leviticus 19 (H) differs from the book of Ezekiel in terms of its post-exilic social context, since the Jews were already resettled in their land.<sup>339</sup> Leviticus 19 describes social problems such as lying, worshipping idols, and economic injustice (Leviticus 19:11-12, 29, 31). It contains laws and rules not only relevant for the people's current situation but also for their future lives. It also provides social solutions for issues related to the family and community, such as wages, judges, women, slaves, and economics. While Leviticus 19 (H) and Ezekiel seem to reflect the same social context, they are not based on the same social background. Lyons says that "Ezekiel lived in a time of social and religious crisis. His native country, which was a vassal of Babylon, had been invaded and conquered for rebellion. Jerusalem was captured, the temple destroyed, and many of its inhabitants taken to Babylon."<sup>340</sup> Ezekiel's concern was maintaining the Jews' traditional rituals and ethics for the restoration of the community. Nihan states, "Thus, in 19:11-18 also, the author of H has composed a small collection on interpersonal and social responsibility by reinterpreting some central prohibitions from the CC and D, especially in Ex 23:1-12 and Deut 22:1-12."<sup>341</sup>

God's announcement of His holiness in Leviticus 19:2 is not weakened throughout Leviticus 19; it becomes a central theme supported by all the commands. Knohl believes that the connection between holiness and *ethics* is an innovation that was associated with the rejection of unclean alimentary customs (Ex 22:30; Deut 14:21a).<sup>342</sup> The covenantal relationship between God and His people is not a one-time act of God; it is a process in which God's people continually obey His commands to complete this relationship. God's commandments were given to the chosen people, and obedience to these laws sanctifies the people. Knohl says that "there is

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<sup>339</sup> Verses 5 and 21 describe the sacrifice and farming activity which could be done when they were settled in a certain place. Leviticus 19 also shows the vision for the farming (Lev 19:11-12, 29, 31)

<sup>340</sup> Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy*, 146.

<sup>341</sup> Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 475.

<sup>342</sup> Knohl, *Sanctuary of Silence*, 180-186.

no one-time act in which God endows Israel with permanent holiness; there is, rather, a constant process of sanctification, which is realized through God's activities in the Temple and through the fulfillment of the commandments."<sup>343</sup> Leviticus 19 and Ezekiel share the common idea that the basic need for the restoration is holiness and that the commandments are applied to the people to help re-establish God's covenantal relationship with them..

Ezekiel considers the absence of Yahweh's presence among the Israelites as a significant issue which the people could resolve by obeying the laws. Holiness is not an imitation of God; rather, it is God's gift to His obedient people. In order to attain holiness, the chosen people of God must submit every domain of their lives to him.<sup>344</sup> Obedience to the laws and statutes is necessary to become holy and therefore this rule is dominant throughout Leviticus 19.<sup>345</sup> Joosten states that "by an ongoing process of putting the commandments into practice, they will adjust their lives to their requirement of GOD's holiness: they will be holy as he is holy."<sup>346</sup>

The book of Ezekiel insists that the chosen people should recognize God as a unique Deity. During the captivity, the Jews did not obey God, but worshipped idols. Ezekiel wants to cleanse religious impurity by announcing God's laws and regulations to the people. Thomas Renz notes,

Regarding its original function in an exilic context as reconstructed here, it is obvious that the book supports those that tone could be describe as the 'Yahweh-alone party' against those who brought more than one god from Judah and were probably inclined to include some Babylonian deities into their worship.<sup>347</sup>

God could not restore the nation without holiness and holiness must be accomplished by His restoring their spirits. The theme of holiness from Leviticus 19 is placed in the centre of the book

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<sup>343</sup> Knohl, *Sanctuary of Silence*, 183.

<sup>344</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 131.

<sup>345</sup> See Leviticus 19:19, 37: "You shall keep my statutes, and you shall observe all my statutes and all my rules, and do them..."

<sup>346</sup> Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 132.

<sup>347</sup> Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel* (Leiden: Brill 1999), 242.

of Ezekiel to stress Yahweh's plan for the future to restore his chosen people. Ezekiel's vision for a rebuilt nation accords with Leviticus 19's vision for a rebuilt nation worshiping as if they are in the ideal pre-exilic nation.

Leviticus especially focuses on holiness, rituals and social concerns. Leviticus 19 has unique explanations of ritual, social and ethical issues. Gerstenberger says of this chapter that it is "is unique within the Old Testament. Although there are many collections of ethical norms (cf. Ex. 20; Ezek. 18), none exhibits such a colourful variety and has presented such strong social and religious accents."<sup>348</sup> Leviticus 19 explains the way of restoration for the future by showing that the community is based on the family and on faith in God. This chapter is more concerned with ethics and rituals than political authority.<sup>349</sup>

### **3.4 Conclusion**

Leviticus 19 consists of laws that command God's chosen people to be holy. All the laws in Leviticus 19 are related to both God and human beings; their intention is to restore the relationship between Yahweh and His people by establishing a ritual system. The laws of holiness in Leviticus are related to ethical regulations. These ethical and religious regulations are not in contrast to each other, but belong together in an organic unity.

In Leviticus holiness is related to social ethics which become significant in the post-exilic period for restoring the community. The law begins by mentioning the honouring of parents and the Sabbath, and concludes with fundamental information about Jewish social life. In Babylon, the Sabbath was understood not only as a day to worship God, but as one of the great festival days of the month. God requires His chosen people to be holy and He is the one who makes His people holy. In H, God is described as sovereign over the people and the land. God blesses the

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<sup>348</sup> Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 258.

<sup>349</sup> Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 265.

land according to His chosen people's obedience to the laws. The theme of holiness is understood as the foundation for establishing rituals. The laws are concerned not only with the relationship between human beings and Yahweh but also with the relationships between humans and between humans and the land. God cares for His people by giving them commands to be holy in order to restore their relationships.

God outlines in Leviticus 19 what he expects from his chosen people. He is not capricious; that is, he does not require unreasonable tasks from His people. However, the commands in Leviticus 19 are concrete and clear in relationship to rituals and human ethics. Leviticus 19 starts with general commands "to be holy" and teaches the people how to be holy through following the commands. Leviticus 19 is different from other priestly pericopes: this chapter comprises of a variety of laws (ritual and ethical, apodictic and casuistic) directed to the individual and to the collective. Leviticus 19 starts from general commands and moves to specific requirements for individuals to encourage them to be holy. Ezekiel 22:6-12 criticises the people's disobedience to God's laws (from Leviticus 19) such as (1) humiliation of parents, (2) cheating strangers, (3) despising Sabbaths and sacred offerings, (4) depravity, (5) defrauding one's own kinsfolk, and (6) baseness.<sup>350</sup> Ezekiel re-organizes the contents of Leviticus 19. Ezekiel emphasizes that worshiping Yahweh without honouring and respecting His laws is not acceptable to Yahweh because worshiping and obedience are not separable.

The laws in Leviticus 19 are understood as God's gift to the Israelites. The laws in the Old Testament, including those in Leviticus 19, are often described as *God's good will* for his chosen people. Leviticus 19:18 outlines God's commands and emphasizes obedience to them by asking His people to keep the laws (19:19--שמרו--את-חקתי). Leviticus 19:37 reads, "And you shall observe all my statutes (כל-חקתי) and all my rules (כל-משפטי), and do them: I am the

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<sup>350</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, 125.

LORD.” This verse should be compared with Leviticus 18:4-5: 19:37 emphasizes the rules and statutes by adding “all כָּל .” Verse 37 applies to all the commands in both 18 and 19 and shows that they are God’s commands that the Jews should obey to restore their relationships.<sup>351</sup> It is very significant to note the beginning of Leviticus 20:22a: “You shall therefore keep all my statutes and all my rules and do them...” Leviticus 18-20 urges God’s people to obey the commands. Verse 20:22a concludes 18 and 19 with again asking them to obey all the statutes and rules.

In 20:11, Ezekiel divides God’s law into two categories: statutes (חֻקֹּתַי) and judgements (בְּשֻׁפְטַי). Ezekiel encourages God’s people to obey these statutes and judgements that focus on the two main aspects of worship and citizenship. These laws are divine and give the divine gift of life to God’s people. The Old Testament also emphasizes that God discloses his *divine will* through the laws and regulations. Obeying the laws allows human beings to be close to God through holistic living. The first priority of the laws is to preserve a holy nation to worship Yahweh. The demand to be holy is designed to not only provide humans with freedom from physical suffering, but also from spiritual bondage. God’s demand for holiness is related to a varied list of cultic and ethical obligations (19:2). Levitical holiness includes ethical and moral obligations as well as cultic and ritual ones. Within the context of this cultic covenant, the Jews could have the relationship with God that He had intended. For the post-exilic Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem, the theme of holiness was crucial since they needed to restore the community that had been destroyed during the exile.

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<sup>351</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1710.

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