Divide and be different: Priestly identity in the Persian period

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The article focused on the Hebrew root בדל [divide] [*bdl*] in Priestly and post-Priestly material of the Pentateuch. In Genesis 1 God is the subject of the verb and often enough in the Holiness Code, but in many instances in Leviticus (e.g. 10:10 and 11:47) it is expected of priests to perform the same act. It was argued that in this regard priests were to imitate God. The article further argued that these texts helped us to describe Jewish identity in the Persian period as an identity of non-conformity, and they also helped us to describe the priests' own understanding of their role in maintaining this identity.

Introduction

In this article I will be examining the use of the Hebrew root בדל [divide] in the Pentateuch. My argument will offer two different lines of reasoning, which I hope to show are actually intertwined with one another. The one line of reasoning has to do with the fact that I think that the root בדל helps us to understand something about Judaic identity in the Persian period. The second line of reasoning helps us to understand something of how the priests understood their role in maintaining this identity. For them it was probably not only about Judaic identity, but obviously also about the power they held in this post-exilic society. Leviticus 10:10 will be a kind of pivot around which my arguments will be built, since this verse makes it very clear that priests were to imitate God, which obviously gave them a position of power. My engagement with the text could be described as mostly synchronic, but as always diachronic issues will feature from time to time.

Overview

One already encounters the Hebrew stem בדל in the first chapter of the Bible, in what has been known as the Priestly creation account in Genesis 1 in verses 4, 6, 7 and 14. These are used to describe the acts of Elohim in dividing the light from the darkness (v. 4, day one), and the waters above from the waters below (v. 6, day two). In these two acts Elohim is the subject of the two verbs. In verses 6 and 14 the expanse and the lights are the dividing agents.[1] The first creation narrative is often used to show how highly the priestly authors regarded order. As Collins (2004:76) says: 'In the Priestly creation, everything must be in its proper place'.

According to Becking and Korpel (2010:7–8), the verb בדל is usually used with a preposition such as מִן or בֵּין and in these cases it is translated as 'to separate' or 'to differentiate'. Without the preposition it is either translated as 'to select'[2] or as 'to split, cleave'[3]. Similarly Van Wolde (2009) described the functioning of the verb בדל as follows:

> The action designated by the verb הבדיל[4] always concerns two distinct elements and this is marked by the twice repeated preposition בין preceding these distinct entities. (p. 20)

Van Wolde is actually interested in the occurrences in Genesis 1, but what she describes here is true of most of the occurrences we will discuss below, although there are a few exceptions, where we find the preposition מִן, or no preposition at all, as pointed out by Becking and Korpel (2010)[5] above.

In the book of Exodus the root occurs only once, in 26:33, where it refers to the curtain (פָּרֹכֶת) in the tent of meeting which is to separate the holy (הַקֹּדֶשׁ) from the holy of holies (קֹדֶשׁ הַקֳּדָשִׁים).

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1. For a very recent attempt to identify different layers in Genesis 1, see Krüger (2011:125–138). For Krüger (2011:135) 'the accentuation of acts of "separation" (b-d-l, hip`il) in the process of creation' is part of a second layer, or what he (2011:134) calls the 'expanded creation account'.

2. The examples they refer to include Deuteronomy 4:41; Ezra 10:16; 1 Chronicles 23:13. See Becking and Korpel (2010:7, n. 25).

3. Becking and Korpel (2010:8, n. 26) refer to Leviticus 1:17 and 5:8.

4. Since the verb mostly occurs in the Hif`il, Van Wolde consistently writes it in that form.

5. One should also note that Becking and Korpel (2010) are actually writing in response to and against the arguments proposed by Van Wolde (2009). She argues that the root ברא in Genesis 1 should be translated similarly to the way we translate בדל. They disagree.

In the book of Leviticus the root is used twice (1:17 and 5:8) to refer to doves brought as sacrifices, which the priests are to tear open without severing (בדל) them. These are the only two occurrences in Leviticus where the verb is used without a preposition.

In Leviticus 10:10, after the 'strange fire', incident a new command is given by YHWH to Aaron to distinguish between holy and profane, and between unclean and clean. Thus, whereas Elohim or some of his agents have been the subject of this verb, it now becomes part of the job of Aaron and his sons. Just as Elohim divided water and land on the first few days of creation, they are now to continue this task of implementing divisions. The root also occurs at the end of the next chapter in 11:47, where the command to distinguish between clean and unclean is repeated as a kind of summary to that chapter, which is concerned with clean and unclean animals.

The next occurrence of this root is found in Leviticus 20:24–26, which is usually regarded as part of the parenetic frame[6] of the Holiness Code, where we find the root occurring four times. In the book of Numbers (8:14; 16:9 & 21) these terms usually refer to the special status of the Levites, although the text is clear that they are not as special as the priests. In 8:14 Moses is commanded to separate the Levites from the other Israelites. In 16:9 Moses addresses Korah and reminds him of his position of privilege in that Elohim had separated Korah and his fellow Levites from the rest of Israel. In 16:21 Moses and Aaron are addressed by Yahweh, who orders them to separate themselves from the community, so that He can destroy the community. This is still part of the same narrative about the rebellion of Korah. All of the examples I have mentioned up to now are in the Hif'il.

In the rest of the paper I will focus mainly on texts from the Pentateuch and especially Leviticus. For the sake of completeness I simply mention that one finds בדל in Ezekiel (three times),[7] and in the books of Ezra[8] and Nehemiah[9] it is mostly used with regard to the so-called 'foreign women' texts. Apart from these examples, the term is found a few times in Deuteronomy,[10] once in 1 Kings,[11] in Chronicles[12] and in Trito-Isaiah.[13]

Leviticus 10:10

In the final form of the book of Leviticus we find only two narratives. These are in Chapters 8–10 and 24:10–23.[14] The first

narrative describes the inauguration of the priests. Chapters 8 and 9 describe the ordination of the priests with an elaborate set of rituals being executed over a period of eight days. The end result is a cultic climax at the end of Leviticus 9, when the glory (כָּבוֹד) of the Lord appears to all the people (v. 23) and eventually fire comes from the Lord and consumes the burnt offering (עֹלָה) and the fat on the altar. Everybody seems happy,[15] which includes YHWH, Moses, the priests and the people who witness the ritual, who are in awe (v. 24). Some scholars have argued that this was the original ending of the so-called Priestly *Grundschrift* (P[G]),[16] but in the current form of Leviticus the narrative does not end here. It continues in Chapter 10 with the sons of Aaron bringing 'strange fire' to the altar and they end up like the burnt offering (עֹלָה) in 9:23, namely 'consumed'. After their bodies have been removed, YHWH speaks directly to Aaron[17] (Lv 10:9–11):[18]

יַיִן וְשֵׁכָר אַל־תֵּשְׁתְּ אַתָּה בְּבֹאֲכֶם וּבָנֶיךָ אִתָּךְ אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְלֹא תָמֻתוּ חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם:	[9] Drink no wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons, when you enter the tent of meeting, that you may not die; it is a statute forever throughout your generations.
וּלֲהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין הַחֹל וּבֵין הַטָּמֵא וּבֵין הַטָּהוֹר:	[10] *You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean;*
וּלְהוֹרֹת אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת כָּל־הַחֻקִּים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֲלֵיהֶם בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה: פ	[11] and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them through Moses.

Many explanations have been given on the question of what exactly the two sons of Aaron did wrong (Milgrom 1991:628–635), but it is clearly a case of 'ritual failure' (Bibb 2009:111).[19] We will take a closer look at one reason below, but one other important issue has been the unity of Chapter 10, which some have questioned. Thus Gerstenberger (1996) argues:

> Even a cursory reading reveals that Leviticus 10 has been put together by different tradents and groups. The chapter lacks any thematic or stylistic unity, and everywhere we notice breaks, gaps, and doubling. (p. 115)

Other scholars have identified a chiastic structure in this chapter. Hartley (1992:129) identifies an ABA' structure which divides the chapter into three parts, namely verses 1–7, 8–11 and 12–20. For Hartley the chapter does not

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6. See, for instance, Otto (1999:172–176).

7. See Ezra 22:26, 39:14 and 42:20.

8. See Ezra 6:21; 8:24; 9:1 and 10:8, 11 and 16. Ezra 6:21 refers to people who were not part of the Gola, but 'separated themselves from the pollutions of the nations of the land' in order to join the exiles. 8:24 is about Ezra setting 'apart twelve of the leading priests', whereas 9:1 and 10:11 are used to refer to the Israelites separating themselves from the nation in a broader context, that of marrying foreign women.

9. See Nehemiah 9:2; 10:29 and 13:3.

10. Deuteronomy 4:41; 10:8; 19:2, 7 and 29:20.

11. 1 Kings 8:53.

12. See 1 Chronicles 12:9; 23:13; 25:1 and 2 Chronicles 25:10.

13. Isaiah 56:3 (x2) and 59:2.

14. Some, like Smith (1996), have actually argued that Leviticus 16 should also be regarded as a kind of narrative. His argument (Smith 1996:25) is especially based

(Footnote 14 continues...)
on what he calls the 'important structural function' of the narrative in the book. Bibb (2009:132–133) has also described Leviticus 16 as a 'ritualized narrative'. Whether or not one understands Leviticus 16 as a narrative is not really relevant for my argument and I will therefore follow the more traditional view that there are only two narratives in Leviticus.

15. Hundley (2011:55) argues that joy is a 'seemingly ubiquitous feature' when it comes to the dedication of temples in the Bible and the Ancient Near East. He refers to the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8 and examples from Mesopotamia, Egypt and Ugarit.

16. See, for instance, the overview by Frevel (2000:148–180), who engages with the arguments of the late Erich Zenger. Or see Nihan (2007:20–31), who initially does not commit himself to a specific ending, but settles for an ending in the Sinai pericope. Later Nihan (2007:340) argues for an initial ending in Leviticus 16.

17. This seems to be the only place where YHWH speaks *only to Aaron* in Leviticus. Later YHWH does speak to Moses *and* Aaron in Leviticus 11:1; 13:1; 14:33 and 15:1. See Nihan (2007:602).

18. All Bible verses below are from the NRSV.

19. Milgrom's (1991:596–598, 628–635) opinion is that the priests used their own censers and that they used fire from a different source. See Bibb's (2009:119–120) criticism of Milgrom.

lack 'any thematic or stylistic unity', as Gerstenberger would have it. More recently Nihan (2007:602) has argued (against Gerstenberger) that Leviticus 10 'forms a complex yet coherent composition inserted by the final editor of Leviticus'.[20] He thus thinks that the chapter as a whole forms some kind of unit, which was added to the whole book of Leviticus. We are thus now moving from synchronic issues to diachronic issues. This article is not that concerned with Chapter 10 as such, but is more interested in how 10:10 is related to the rest of Leviticus and to the other בדל texts in the Pentateuch.

One could argue that 10:10 forms part of the final redactional layer of the book, since it already says something about the two collections which follow in the rest of the book. Leviticus 11–15 is concerned with clean and unclean, and Leviticus 17–26, better known as the Holiness Code, is concerned with holiness. This verse thus connects two fairly diverse collections into one single command given to Aaron. To read verse 10 like this also implies that it was written or added after 11–15 and 17–26 were already part of the book of Leviticus, which brings us to the other diachronic issues.

As mentioned above, Nihan (2007:576–607) has argued that Leviticus 10 as a whole was the last chapter added to the book of Leviticus. Nihan (2007:579) first presents arguments as to why one should read Chapter 10 as 'a complex, yet nevertheless coherent narrative, whose general theme is *the priests' observance of the law*, …' (*original emphasis*) and then he (2007:579–602) offers a 'close study' of the whole chapter in which he engages with most of the exegetical issues associated with this chapter (and there are plenty). He makes the observation that the 'strange fire' (אֵשׁ זָרָה) in 10:1 has to do with the censer offering brought by Nadab and Abihu. This kind of offering had not been ordered in Leviticus 1–9, as the last clause in verse 1 clearly says: לֹא צִוָּה אֹתָם [He did not order them]. The attentive reader would notice that in the only two other texts in the Pentateuch which refer to censer incense offerings are to be found in Leviticus 16:12–13 and Numbers 17:6–15 where '*the performance of this rite is always a competence reserved to the high priest*' (Nihan's italics) (Nihan 2007:582). Nihan (2007:584) mentions many parallels between Leviticus 10 and Numbers 16, and then concludes (2007:585) that 'the interpolation of Lev 10 is contemporary with the last edition of Num 16–17 which, as argued above, should be assigned to the "theocratic revision" identified in Numbers by Achenbach'.[21]

Numbers 16–17 is about a struggle for power between Korah, Dathan and Abiram, on the one hand, and Aaron on the other, a struggle clearly won by Aaron. Numbers 16 is also

one of the few places where the root בדל occurs in Numbers. Nihan (2007:602–607) argues that eventually Leviticus 10 became the 'founding legend of priestly exegesis.' Although Numbers 16 is a different issue, let us for the time being note that Leviticus 10 and Numbers 16 have more things in common[22] than simply the root בדל.

Yet one does not only have to link Leviticus 10 to later (meaning both later in the Pentateuch and younger), but also to earlier (meaning both earlier in the Pentateuch and older) texts. In the rest of the article I will attempt to describe some of the links between 10:10 and the two following collections (11–15 and 17–26) and I will attempt to show that these are all closely connected to the Priestly creation narrative in Genesis 1.

Leviticus 10:10, 11–15 and Genesis 1

Liss (2008:348) has recently argued that there are clear links between the commands in Leviticus 10:10, Leviticus 11–15 and Genesis 1. She puts it as follows:

> According to Leviticus 11–15, this outlining of the world's categories and particularities is one, if not *the,* priestly task. In this, the priestly task of separation (between tāhôr and tāmē, between counting 7 days of uncleanness up to an 8th day of purification etc.) becomes an *imitatio dei*, since one of God's major tasks during the act of creation was 'separation' of one entity from the other. (p. 348)

If Liss is correct then priests are being portrayed as (re)doing God's work by continuously repeating his acts in creation. Just as He created the world in a specific order, so it is their responsibility to maintain this order and make sure that everything is in its right place. Liss (2008:348) also specifically links Leviticus 10:10 with 11:47, where the command to distinguish between clean and unclean is repeated at the end of that chapter on clean and unclean animals. She also links it to Exodus 26:33, where it is the task of the curtain (פָּרֹכֶת) to keep the holy and the holy of holies apart.

With regard to Chapter 11 specifically, Nihan (2007:293) has argued that verses 2–23 made use of an original source or *Vorlage* which 'has been significantly expanded, and apparently partly harmonized with the P account on creation in Genesis 1'. Much later in his book, when he (2007:335–339) engages with the 'significance' of the dietary laws for Israel, he argues:

> The placement of the tôrâ on clean and unclean animals at the outset of the collection on impurities thus serves to connect this collection with the general theme of P, i.e. the restoration of the creational order and Israel's transformation in the 'priestly nation' among the other nations of the world. (p. 338)

For Nihan the connections between Leviticus 11 and the first creation narrative are clear, not only on the source critical level, but also in terms of the theological message of Chapter 11. The purpose of the chapter was to help Israel to conform to the creational order. Yet Nihan (2007:339) also argues that '*the tôrâ of Lev 11 sets apart those who practice it from the*

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20. Nihan's argument was extensively criticised by Otto. Otto (2009:117–118) agrees that the chapter has a chiastic structure, but he argues that the middle part (verses 8–15) is actually older. Where Nihan would thus attribute the whole chapter to a theocratic redaction, Otto argues that only the two outer parts (v. 1–7 and 16–20) should be attributed to this last redaction.

21. Nihan is referring to the work of Achenbach (2003:66–75).

22. See also Achenbach (2003:94).

rest of humanity' (Nihan's italics). Nihan (2007:383–394) dates this text to the first decades of the fifth century in the Achaemenid Period and one could thus say (with Meyer 2011:156) that 'an act of conformity to the cosmic order is an act of nonconformity to the Persian Empire'. The term 'nonconformity' is often used by the North American scholar Daniel Smith-Christopher (2002:137–162) when discussing Leviticus 11. Other scholars have argued similarly. Thus, Gerstenberger (1996) puts it as follows:

> They [*i.e. the laws of Lev 11*] serve to identify one's own group (confession) and to provide a delimitation in relation to the outside. This finds unequivocal expression in the two concluding explanations in Lev. 11:44–47.[23] (p. 145)

Leviticus 11 is thus clearly related to the first creation narrative and in the broader priestly world view, abiding by the rules of this chapter meant abiding by the order Elohim built into his creation, but it is also closely related to maintaining Jewish identity in the Persian Empire.

Yet, a scholar like Liss (2008:348–352) sees also further connections between Leviticus 12–15 and creation, and especially the command in Genesis 1:28 to be fruitful and multiply. She concludes:

> One could, therefore, say that the Priestly narrative portrays the installation of the cult and the laws of ritual purity as the initiation of the teaching of the categories the created world consists of. (p. 352)

It should thus be clear that it is not only about the priests of 10:10 doing what Elohim did in Genesis 1, but in priestly theology the law helped Israel to conform to that creation. What Liss means by 'cult' is not that clear from her article, but other scholars have made the link between cult and creation much clearer.[24] This line of thought also continues into what has traditionally been known as the Holiness Code, which is often regarded today as post-Priestly literature.[25]

Leviticus 10:10, 17–26 and creation

In a mostly synchronic study Ruwe (1999:90–97) has described the basic theme of the second part of the Holiness Code (chs. 23–25) as 'Sabbath', which also takes it back to the seventh day of the first creation story. The *Leitmotiv* of the first part is 'fear of the sanctuary' (Ruwe 1999:103).[26] Ruwe (1999:103–115) also has a larger argument that the

sanctuary functions as a kind of restoration of the creation, or what he calls a '*schöpfungsrestitutive Funktion'* [creation-restoring function]. In his argument he first takes a step back and looks at the description of the building of the Sanctuary in the second half of Exodus. Ruwe (1999:104–105) argues, for instance, that there are many '*Anspielungen'* [allusions] between the tent sanctuary in the second part of Exodus and creation. Ruwe (1999:106) argues that '*Schöpfungswerk'* [act of creation] and '*Heiligtumsbau'* [sanctuary building] are presented as parallel acts.[27] For Ruwe (1999:107) creation is at its heart a process of '*fortlaufender* Scheidung und Trennung und darauf basierender Zuordnung darzustellen' (*original emphasis*) [continuous separation and division and building of order based on that]. He (1999:107–110) also offers a thorough reading of Genesis 1 and then compares that text to the Priestly texts describing the building of the sanctuary:

> *Es ist gerade dieser Grundzug von Trennung/Scheidung und Zuordnung und die damit verbundene Einteilung der Welt in unterschiedliche Lebensräume, der auch ein zentrales Strukturelement des priesterlichen Zeltheiligtums ist.* [It is precisely this characteristic of division or separation and systematic arranging and the related division of the world in different living spaces, which is also a central element of the Priestly tent sanctuary.] (p. 111)

Just as Elohim created spaces to live in on the first three days of creation by the act of separation, so in a kind of parallel act the completion of a sanctuary leads to different ritual spaces (Ruwe 1999:111). The texts on which Ruwe is building his argument are Genesis 1 and the second half of the book of Exodus. As already said, for Ruwe (1999:115–120) the theme of the first part of the Holiness Code is fear of the sanctuary and the sanctuary has a 'creation restoring function'. The Holiness Code takes these principles and then applies them to ethics, or as Ruwe (1999) puts it:

> *Der erste Hauptteil des Heiligkeitsgesetzes zielt u.E. [unseres Erachtens] insofern darauf ab, die schöpfungsrestitutive Funktion des Heiligtums im Bereich der Ethik gleichsam fortzusetzen.* [The first main part of the Holiness Code aims in this respect to pursue the creation-restoring function of the sanctuary in the field of ethics.] (p. 115)

For Ruwe (1999:115–120) the theme of the first part of the Holiness Code is an 'ethic of the sanctuary', whereas the second part is an 'ethic of the Sabbath'. Although the root בדל does not occur in the laws of the part of the Holiness Code, the idea of keeping everything in its proper place seems to be prevalent. Just think of the laws against mixing in 19:19 (Ruwe 1999:116), or the prescription about whom priests may marry and whom not in 21:7–14 (Ruwe 1999:117). For Ruwe the cosmological concept of *Scheidung und Trennung* [separation and division] is the basic theme of many of these laws, derived from concepts going back to Genesis 1.

My argument up to this point has been that Priestly and post-Priestly (i.e. the Holiness Code) texts are embedded in P's initial creation narrative. Ruwe has pointed out that the building of the sanctuary in the second half of Exodus is a kind of parallel act to creation. The collection of clean and unclean

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23. In another work Gerstenberger (2005:382) describes these kinds of thoughts as 'die Konstruktion von trennender Andersartigkeit' [the construction of a dividing differentness].

24. Liss (2008) hardly discusses Leviticus 1–9, where sacrifices are described. In this sense she says very little of the cult and the purpose of the cult itself.

25. See, for instance, the work of Otto (1999), who is following Elliger (1966) and Cholewinsky (1976). The same goes for many of the other scholars referred to in this article such as Nihan (2007) and Achenbach (2003). Or more recently see Achenbach (2008).

26. Ruwe's (1999:98–105) argument is based on his reading of Leviticus 26:1–2. He argues that this is an '*Unterschrift*', by which he means a kind of concluding summary. Ruwe (1999:98–99) argues further that these two verses are not clearly connected to either Leviticus 25 or to the rest of Leviticus 26 and have therefore a different role to play. He (1999:102–103) then argues that the Holiness Code can be divided into two parts, namely 17:1–22:33 and 23:1–25:55. He also states that 26:2 has a double positive command: commanding 'fear of the sanctuary' and 'obeying of the Sabbaths'. For Ruwe the second command clearly refers to Leviticus 23:1–25:55, in which different festivals mostly based on the Sabbath feature. This then leaves us with 'fear of the sanctuary', which then becomes the theme of Leviticus 17:1–22:33.

27. For a similar argument, see Carr and Conway (2010:195).

in Leviticus 11–15 also shares many features with the first creation narrative as pointed out by Nihan and Liss. And the Holiness Code is also closely connected to the first creation narrative, either through the concept of Sabbath in the latter half, or through the motive of the fear of the sanctuary in the first half, as pointed out by Ruwe. One should also add to that the fact that Leviticus 10:10 links both of these collections (11–15 and 17–26) to the command given to Aaron by YHWH which (as mentioned before) is the only place in the whole Sinai pericope where YHWH directly issues a command to Aaron only. The command implies that the priests are to do what Elohim did in Genesis 1. Being a priest is thus not only about maintaining the cult, but actually about *maintaining creation*. In the rest of the article we need to look at the other examples of the root בדל in the Holiness Code.

Leviticus 10:10 and 20:24–26

לָכֶם אַתֶּם֙ תִּֽירְשׁ֣וּ אֶת־אַדְמָתָ֔ם וַאֲנִ֣י וָאֹמַ֣ר לָכֶ֗ם לָרֶ֤שֶׁת אֹתָהּ֙ אֶ֣רֶץ זָבַ֤ת חָלָב֙ וּדְבַ֔שׁ אֲנִי֙ יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹֽהֵיכֶ֔ם אֲשֶׁר־הִבְדַּ֥לְתִּי אֶתְכֶ֖ם מִן־הָֽעַמִּֽים׃ | **24** But I have said to you: You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey. I am the LORD your God; I have *separated* you from the peoples.

וְהִבְדַּלְתֶּ֞ם בֵּֽין־הַבְּהֵמָ֤ה הַטְּהֹרָה֙ לַטְּמֵאָ֔ה וּבֵין־הָע֥וֹף הַטָּמֵ֖א לַטָּהֹ֑ר וְלֹֽא־תְשַׁקְּצ֨וּ אֶת־נַפְשֹֽׁתֵיכֶ֜ם בַּבְּהֵמָ֣ה וּבָע֗וֹף וּבְכֹל֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר תִּרְמֹ֣שׂ הָֽאֲדָמָ֔ה אֲשֶׁר־הִבְדַּ֥לְתִּי לָכֶ֖ם לְטַמֵּֽא׃ | **25** You shall therefore *make a distinction* between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; you shall not bring abomination on yourselves by animal or by bird or by anything with which the ground teems, which I have *set apart* for you to hold unclean.

וִהְיִ֤יתֶם לִי֙ קְדֹשִׁ֔ים כִּ֥י קָד֖וֹשׁ אֲנִ֣י יְהוָ֑ה וָאַבְדִּ֥ל אֶתְכֶ֛ם מִן־הָֽעַמִּ֖ים לִהְי֥וֹת לִֽי׃ | **26** You shall be holy to me; for I the LORD am holy, and I have *separated* you from the other peoples to be mine.

These three verses are part of what some[28] have called the parenetic frame of the Holiness Code. This frame starts in Chapter 18 and is often characterised by Holiness language, as we also see here in verse 26, which is, of course, why it has been called the Holiness Code. According to Otto (1999:172), this frame consists of the following texts: Leviticus 18:1–5, 24–30; 19:1–4; 20:7–8, 22–27; 22:8, 31–33; 25:18–19, 38, 42, 55 and 26:1–2. The Holiness Language is not found in Chapter 18, it only starts in 19:2, but from the start there is an explicit link between adhering to the regulation or laws and living in the land. The text clearly states that if the addressees do not comply with these laws, the land will vomit them out (Hif, קיא), as it did with the previous inhabitants. This is already said at the end of Chapter 18. The root בדל is only used at the end of Chapter 20.

בדל is used in at least three different ways. In verses 24 and 26 YHWH is the subject of the verb and YHWH is separating the addressees from (preposition מִן) the nations (עַמִּים) around

them. In verse 24 we have a connection with the promise of land, which links it to what has previously been said about the vomiting out from the land, and in verse 26 the command to be holy, which has also occurred in Chapter 19. In verse 25 we find something rather similar to 11:47 and the first part of the command in 10:10 (preposition בֵּין), although it now seems that the addressees are the subject of the verb, whereas in 10:10 it was Aaron. In verse 25 the verb בדל is also used in a third sense where YHWH is the subject, but the object seems to be the species of animals deemed unclean. We have thus a kind of inclusion where verses 24 and 26 refer to YHWH separating the addressees from the nations, and in the middle the root is used with regard to clean and unclean animals, very much the kind of thing we had in Leviticus 11.

I have mentioned above that some scholars (i.e. Gerstenberger 1996; Nihan 2007; Smith-Christopher 2002) have argued that the purpose of eating correctly had a lot to do with identity issues during the Achaemenid period. I used Smith-Christopher's concept of nonconformity. The purpose of eating correctly was in fact to be different from the nations (עַמִּים). That was an interpretation of the laws in Chapter 11, but the fact that the editor of the Holiness Code here (in 20:24–26) combined right eating in verse 25 with being separated from others in verses 24 and 26 shows that that interpretation is the correct one. Leviticus 20 makes explicit what was implied in Leviticus 11. Thus in Achaemenid Yehud to distinguish between clean and unclean and being separated from others were two sides of the same coin. For many scholars the Holiness Code is a post-Priestly development which takes us towards the end of the fifth century BCE.[29] For Nihan, for instance, the only text that appears later in the book of Leviticus is Chapter 10.

Conclusion

After providing an overview of the occurrence and semantic possibilities of the Hebrew root בדל, I have argued above that Leviticus 10:10 is a pivotal text not only in Leviticus, but in the Pentateuch at large. Leviticus 10:10 points forward to Leviticus 11–15 which is concerned with clean and unclean and to the Holiness Code (17–26), but it also shows that these texts were imbedded in P's understanding of creation. I also argued (following Liss) that when the command was given to Aaron in Leviticus 10:10 it meant that priests understood themselves as imitating God and by maintaining the cult they were in fact maintaining creation. Furthermore, it was argued, especially in the light of Leviticus 20:24–26, that these texts (i.e. with root בדל) also said something about maintaining identity in Persian Period Yehud.

It should thus be clear that the priests had a special position of privilege and power within Achaemenid Yehud. They were doing God's work. Just as he ordered the world in six days by separating things which did not belong together, so the priests were to keep things apart which did not belong together. This clearly gave them a privileged position. As Olyan (2000) puts it:

28.See Otto (1999:172–176).

29.See, for instance, Nihan (2007:572–575), or Achenbach (2008:155).

The rhetoric of holy and common, of separation, of being brought near or encroaching, so central to biblical texts describing the function and organization of the cult, is a rhetoric charged with *social significance*. (p. 35) [*Emphasis in original*]

What he means by 'social significance' is that this kind of language is often used to justify the power of the priestly elite. A further question, which I have been avoiding up to now is, of course, exactly who were these priests who formed the elite and who had the power? Were the priests who added Chapter 10 to Leviticus, Aaronides or Zadokites? In this regard Old Testament scholarship is far from reaching any kind of consensus. Achenbach (2003:93–110) argues that what happens in Leviticus 10 reflects rather badly on the Aaronide Priesthood and is pro-Zadokite. Nihan (2007:606) disagrees with him. There is very little certainty on how the struggles between the Aaronides and Zadokites are reflected in Old Testament texts. There is obviously much more certainty that the priests who edited the Pentateuch were not Levites.

Recently Watts (2011:417–430) has engaged with the presentation of Aaron in the golden calf episode, in which he asked the question of why this incident was left to stand, although it apparently reflected badly on Aaron. Eventually Watts (2011:430) concludes that 'the faults of venerated cultural heroes do not detract from their standing'. His argument is obviously far more extensive and it is fairly open to criticism as relying too much on speculation, but still he could be correct. Could it not be a rather ancient case of 'any publicity is good publicity'? Similarly in Leviticus 10 the sons of Aaron err, but they are simply replaced by other sons and Aaron's position is untouched. What is more, in verse 10 Yahweh addresses Aaron and excludes Moses, and the command given to Aaron implies that he and his sons are to imitate God. The power of the priests seems to be greatly enhanced after the incident.

Be that as it may, executing sacrifices and declaring people clean and unclean were not innocent acts of maintaining a cultic system, but were acts expressing power. It should also be apparent that there were power struggles in Yehud between priests and Levites, and between Aaronide and Zadokite priests.[30] The winners of this power struggle produced the Pentateuch and the texts which we call P and post-P.

What should also be clear, though, is that separation from the peoples (עַמֵּי) was very much part of the identity developed in Persian-period Yehud. In this process of identity formation or negotiation, the priests, the final authors of the Torah, played a crucial but privileged role.

30.See also Schaper (2000:174–193) for a description of the possible struggle during the Persian Period between different priestly groups.

Acknowledgements

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