

Going Up to Jerusalem: Purity, Pilgrimage and the Historical Jesus

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1. Introduction

It has become common in recent years to categorize the modern “quest” for the historical Jesus into three stages: (1) the first quest, initiated in the eighteenth century by Reimarus, in which Jesus was represented as a teacher of eternal ethics whose message conformed with the liberal and rational ideals of contemporary Europe,¹ (2) the post-Bultmannian “new quest” of the mid-twentieth century with its focus on reconstructing the authentic sayings of Jesus using various criteria,² and (3) the current “third” phase that is characterized primarily by its placement of Jesus in his Jewish context.³ This latter approach paves the way for interdisciplinary studies in which historical Jesus research can be conducted within the larger framework of Second Temple Jewish studies.

¹ The first quest could be characterized as a backlash against (Catholic) church authority during the Enlightenment. Its proponents were mostly Protestant Christians, including Hermann Samuel Reimarus, David Friedrich Strauss, Albrecht Ritschl, Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer. This phase of the historical Jesus debate ended in the first half of the twentieth century when Rudolf Bultmann argued that historical research on Jesus was theologically insignificant. For a convenient anthology of the first quest, see Gregory W. Dawes, ed., *The Historical Jesus Quest: Landmarks in the Search for the Jesus of History* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999).

² It was Rudolf Bultmann’s student, Ernst Käsemann, who reopened the question in 1953 with a speech delivered to former theological students in Marburg. He insisted that scholars should look for “the distinctive elements in the earthly Jesus,” and proceeded to outline the principle that would become known as the criteria of dissimilarity. This second phase of the historical Jesus debate ended gradually as the direction of research began to change course, sometime in the 1970’s or 1980’s. See Ernst Käsemann, “The Problem of the Historical Jesus,” in *Essays on New Testament Themes* (trans. W. J. Montague; SBT 41; London: SCM, 1964), 15-47; repr. in Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Quest*, 279-313. On the criteria of authenticity see Donald L. Denton, *Historiography and Hermeneutics in Jesus Studies: An Examination of the Work of John Dominic Crossan and Ben F. Meyer* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 193-209; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (3 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1.167-195.

³ Depending on the approach, the Jewish Jesus has been portrayed in a variety of roles, including that of wisdom sage (e.g. John Dominic Crossan, Robert Funk, Burton Mack), saviour (e.g. N.T. Wright), social prophet (e.g. Richard Horsley, Gerd Theissen, Marcus Borg) and eschatological prophet (e.g. E.P. Sanders, John P. Meier, Paula Fredriksen). Telford identifies four major trends in the study of Jesus during the 1980’s and the early years of the following decade: (1) the tendency to ask broader questions, (2) the attempt to set Jesus within the wider context of the Jewish and Hellenistic world, (3) the emphasis on the Jewishness of Jesus, and (4) the adoption of a sociological perspective. Drawing attention to the lack of uniformity of methodologies and the diversity in the results, he also questions whether the scholarly activity that began in the 1980’s should be regarded as a third quest. In his view, the recent developments in historical Jesus research might be viewed as being broadly in continuity with the New Quest. See William R. Telford, “Major Trends and Interpretive Issues in the Study of Jesus,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of Current Research* (eds. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans; Leiden: E. J. Brill), 33-74; cf. James Carleton Paget, “Quests for the Historical Jesus,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus* (ed. M. Bockmuehl; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 138-155.

Within the socio-historical framework of first-century Galilee, Jesus may be characterized as a Jew who, like other Galilean Jews, maintained *some* level of observance of the laws of Israel.⁴ Evidence that Jesus was concerned with the law can be found throughout the New Testament. One of the clearer examples of Jesus' attitude towards the law is found in Q 11:42 (Matt 23:23 || Luke 11:42).⁵ Here, Jesus is portrayed as criticizing the Pharisees for tithing mint, dill and cumin, but neglecting the weightier matters of the law. It is not suggested that the Pharisees should have dispensed with the "lighter" laws in order to devote more attention to those laws that were presumed to be more important, but rather, that they should have attended to *all* legal obligations. The underlying assumption is that observance of the law is not negotiable.⁶ This concern for the law is not an isolated case in point. Luke indicates that the women at Jesus' tomb observed the Sabbath, resting "according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56). Moreover, Acts assumes in its narrative that the temple cult was valid for apostolic Jews (e.g. Acts 3:1-10).⁷ These latter two examples point to a continuity between the practices of Jesus and those of the movement that continued to develop after his death.

It is within this general context of concern pertaining to legal issues that we might take into account Jesus' attitude to the purity laws. In recent years, several studies have considered whether Jesus observed the purity laws, but there has, as yet, been no consensus of opinion. Paula Fredrikson reads the gospel traditions within the historical framework in which they were written. She argues convincingly that Jesus was "truly a Jew of his own time" and that he took the purity laws for granted "as fundamental to the worship of God."⁸ For her, there is no question that Jesus observed the purity laws. Another perspective is offered by Roger P. Booth, who uses Mark 7:15 as his point of departure for understanding Jesus' attitude towards the purity laws: "there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile."⁹ Booth's analysis of this logion leads him to the conclusion that Jesus treated ritual

⁴ On Jesus and the law, see e.g. William R. G. Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law: A Study of the Gospels* (WUNT 97: Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990); Robert Banks, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

⁵ I follow the reconstruction of Q in James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann and John S. Kloppenborg, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French Translations of Q and Thomas* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000). My position on the synoptic problem is that I accept the two-source theory, recognizing Markan priority and Q as an explanation for the double tradition. There is some scholarly discussion on whether the special material of Matthew reflects a single source, but for the purposes of this paper this issue is of little consequence. On the likelihood of M as a single source for Matthew, see Robert E. Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 2000), 143-148.

⁶ Regarding the Jesus movement as it developed after Jesus' death, Saldarini insists that the Matthean community operated well within the framework of first-century Judaism, and that the Matthean Jesus and his disciples were fully observant of the Jewish law. See Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 124-164: cf. Alan Segal, "Matthew's Jewish Voice," in *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches* (ed. David Balch; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 3-37. In a similar vein, Loader contends that there is underlying assumption in both Luke and Acts that Jesus, those who surround him and those who later follow him are faithful to Torah (Loader, *Jesus' Attitude*, 379-382).

⁷ Mark Nanos and Anders Runesson recently coined the term "apostolic Judaism" to designate Christ-belief within the context of first-century Judaism. Anders Runesson, "Re-Thinking the Parting(s) of the Ways," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Philadelphia, Pa., 19 November 2005).

⁸ Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (New York: Random House, 1999), 203; cf. idem, "Did Jesus Oppose the Purity Laws?" *Bible Review* 11/3 (1995): 20-25, 42-47.

⁹ Roger P. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity: Tradition History and Legal History in Mark 7* (JSNTSup 13; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 219.

impurity as being of much less gravity than the moral impurity caused by sin.¹⁰ A third position is attested by Thomas Kazen, who interprets Jesus' attitude towards impurity within the framework of the Second Temple Judaism. He suggests that Jesus was part of a moral trajectory which placed relative importance on social justice and morality, and did not allow the purity law to take precedence over issues of table fellowship and community.¹¹ Kazen contends that Jesus somehow remained within the framework of the purity paradigm, yet at the same time, he disregarded impurity in a way that may have been perceived as threatening.

For the most part, the debate on Jesus' attitude towards impurity has failed to address issues related to the purity laws as they pertain to the festivals.¹² According to the gospel accounts, Jesus' travels to Jerusalem always coincided with the Jewish festivals, when Jewish men were required to make pilgrimage to the temple. Whereas the synoptic gospels mentions only one journey to Jerusalem prior to Passover (Mark 11:1-11 [Matt 21:1-11 || Luke 19:28-40]), the Gospel of John refers to four such pilgrimages: twice at Passover (John 2:13; 11:55), once for the celebration of an unspecified feast (5:1) and once for Tabernacles (7:10).¹³ If we consider the testimony of the gospels with respect to Jesus' travels to Jerusalem within the socio-historical context of the late Second Temple period, we can be reasonably certain of two things. First, even if Jesus did not participate in every pilgrimage festival, it is clear that he made pilgrimages to the temple in Jerusalem on at least some of these occasions. Second, it is evident that Jews entering the temple on the festivals or on any other occasion were required to be ritually pure.¹⁴ Between these two poles of certainty, however, there is a question that remains unanswered by the texts: When Jesus made pilgrimage to the temple, did he purify himself prior to entering?

The present study attempts to shed light on the practices of Jesus with respect to purity and pilgrimage by using textual and archaeological evidence to reconstruct pilgrimage patterns and purification rituals in the late Second Temple period. The intent is to cast as wide a net as possible, relying on a variety of textual sources including the Hebrew Bible, Pseudepigrapha, New Testament, Philo, Josephus and the Tannaitic traditions. In considering direct evidence about Jesus, I reject the minimalist approach advocated by those who would adopt the criterion of dissimilarity to determine the authentic traditions. Rather, my tendency is to follow the example of Gerd Thiessen, who employs the criterion of historical plausibility to demonstrate a positive connection between the Jesus traditions and the Jewish milieu of first-century Galilee and Judea.¹⁵ Essential to the task of placing Jesus in his Jewish context is the interpretation of

¹⁰ Klawans distinguishes between two types of impurity: *ritual* defilement, a contagion that temporarily excludes the individual from participating in temple rituals, and the more permanent *moral* defilement caused by sin, a form of impurity that is not related to temple worship (Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2000], 22-38).

¹¹ Thomas Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah: Was Jesus Indifferent to Impurity?* (ConBNT 38; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2002), 347; cf. James D. G. Dunn, "Jesus and Purity: An Ongoing Debate," *NTS* 48 (2002): 465.

¹² See, however, Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 205-207; cf. Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 249-250.

¹³ In the latter instance, Jesus remained in Jerusalem from the autumn feast until the winter celebration of the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22), which commemorates the Maccabees' purification of the Temple. This extra-biblical feast is not to be confused with the three biblical festivals for which Jewish men were required to make pilgrimage to the temple (Deut 16:16).

¹⁴ According to levitical law, those who are in a state of ritual impurity are prohibited from entering the sancta or coming in direct contact with holy foods (Lev. 7:20-21; 15:31; 22:3-7).

¹⁵ Gerd Thiessen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (trans. J. Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1998), 115-118.

literary sources in conjunction with an evaluation of material remains.¹⁶ The identification of Jewish ethnic markers such as stone vessels and *mikvaot* is not only essential to establishing a Jewish context in the regions under consideration, it also constitutes indisputable evidence for the observance of purity practices in specific locations.¹⁷ Also pertinent are geographic surveys and remains of ancient highways, which provide clues to various aspects of ancient pilgrimage, including travel routes, length of journeys and road conditions. The synthesis of this material evidence with information gleaned from the textual sources will provide a contextual framework for a discussion of Jesus, the Jewish pilgrim.¹⁸

We shall begin with a discussion on Jewish pilgrimage in the first century C.E., including issues concerning the pilgrims, the journey and the destination. This is then followed by an analysis of purity practices during the same period, with emphasis being placed on the use of stone vessels and *mikvaot*. Special consideration will be given to the purity concerns of pilgrims such as corpse impurity as it relates to the Passover feast. Taken together, the discussion on pilgrimage and purity practices will provide the background for reconstructing Jesus' pilgrimages to the temple in Jerusalem.

2. Jewish Pilgrimage in the First Century C.E.

The origin of Jewish pilgrimage can be traced to the biblical injunction found in the book of Deuteronomy, "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place that He will choose" (Deut 16:16).¹⁹ The Israelite male was thus required to bring a sacrifice on the three specified feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. The purpose of these festivals was to commemorate the Exodus and express gratitude for the harvest.²⁰ In this sense, the pilgrimage was very much a communal experience, one that enhanced group identity and affirmed the relationship between Israel and her God.

Although there is no record of when pilgrimages to Jerusalem began, it is evident that the practice increased significantly in the Second Temple period.²¹ By the first century, there were a large number of pilgrims arriving in Jerusalem on the festivals, especially the festival of Passover which was considered the most important.²² Josephus offers an exaggerated estimate

¹⁶ Cf. Freyne who adopts the criterion of historical plausibility to determine Jesus' social context, while simultaneously using archaeological evidence to reconstruct first-century Galilee (Sean Freyne, *Jesus, a Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus-Story* [London: T&T Clark, 2004], 1-23).

¹⁷ Reed identifies four archaeological indicators of Jewish religious identity: (1) stone vessels, (2) *mikvaot*, (3) secondary burial with ossuaries in loculi tombs, and (4) bone profiles that lack pork (Jonathan L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A Re-examination of the Evidence* [Harrisburg, Pa: Trinity Press, 2000], 42-49).

¹⁸ Here I follow the example of Crossan and Reed, who do not prioritize one kind of evidence over the other, but insist upon an integration of textual sources and material remains (John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts* [revised ed.; San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001], xvii – xxi).

¹⁹ This law, dated to the seventh century B.C.E., is part of the deuteronomistic reform that marks Israel's transition from a tribal confederation to a centralized monarchy. On the dating of this reform, see e.g. Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11* (AB 5; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 69-74.

²⁰ Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia/Jerusalem: JPS, 1996), 152.

²¹ F. E. Peters, "The Holy Places," in *City of the Great King: Jerusalem from David to the Present* (ed. Nitza Rosovsky; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 41, n. 8; cf. Hunt Janin, *Four Paths to Jerusalem: Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Secular Pilgrimages, 1000 BCE to 2001 CE* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 2002), 46.

²² For a recent discussion on the numbers of pilgrimages in Jerusalem, see Lee I. Levine, *Jerusalem: Portrait of the City in the Second Temple Period (538 B.C.E. – 70 C.E.)* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2002), 250-251.

that on one Passover the pilgrims numbered 2.7 million (*B.J.* 6.425), and on another no less than 3 million (*B.J.* 2.280). One rabbinic source calculates the number to be as high as 12 million (*t. Pesahim* 4:15). Scholars have recognized that these numbers are inflated and have used various methods to calculate more realistic figures. Joachim Jeremias, for example, bases his estimate on a Mishnaic tradition that the people who brought the Passover sacrifice filled the Court of the Israelites three times over.²³ After determining the court's area, estimating its capacity and taking into account that there were at least ten people per sacrifice, Jeremias comes up with a figure of about 125,000 people. A slightly higher number of 300,000 to 500,000 is suggested by E. P. Sanders, who uses an estimate of the Jewish population in the land of Israel as his point of departure.²⁴ Yet another approach is taken by Lee Levine, who begins with an estimate of the permanent population of Jerusalem and suggests that it is reasonable to suggest that this number was doubled, tripled or perhaps quadrupled during the pilgrimage festivals.²⁵ He specifies a range of 125,000 to 300,000 people, which varied with the specific festival, as well as with the political-religious climate at the time.

2.1 The Pilgrims

Pilgrims came to Jerusalem not only from within the land of Israel, but also from the farther reaches of the Diaspora.²⁶ According to Philo, "countless multitudes from countless cities come, some over land, others over sea" (*Spec.* 1.69). Luke also claims that Pentecost was a time when Jews from every nation gathered in Jerusalem, including:

Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians (Acts 2:9-11).

Although only the men were required by the law to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the textual evidence indicates that it was common for the whole family to make the journey. At Passover, "all the people streamed from their villages to the city and celebrated the festival in a state of purity with their wives and children" (*A.J.* 11.109). Counted among those travellers were the parents of Jesus who, according to Luke 2:41-42, "went to Jerusalem every year" at this time. Presumably, Jesus routinely accompanied them on this journey.²⁷

²³ *m. Pesahim* 5:5-7. See Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 77-84.

²⁴ E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE*. (London: SCM Press/Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 125-128.

²⁵ Levine, *Jerusalem*, 251.

²⁶ Philo, for example, comments in passing on his pilgrimage from Alexandria to the "ancestral temple" in order to "offer up prayers and sacrifices" (*Prov.* 2.64). Similarly, the Gospel of John (12:20) makes reference to two Greek pilgrims who were in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover feast.

²⁷ The Greek text is somewhat ambiguous: Καὶ ὅτε ἐγένετο ἑτῶν δώδεκα, ἀναβαινόντων αὐτῶν κατὰ τὸ ἔθος τῆς ἑορτῆς. Commenting on the awkwardness of the Greek, Marshall indicates that "the story does not necessarily imply that this was Jesus' first visit to Jerusalem" (I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978], 126-127). The opposite view is held by Safrai, who interprets this passage as indicating that Jesus made his first pilgrimage at the age of twelve (Shemuel Safrai, "Pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the End of the Second Temple Period," in *Studies on the Jewish Background of the New Testament* [eds. O. Michel, et. al.; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1969], 18).

Luke's reference to Jesus' parents participating in an annual pilgrimage is significant, since it suggests that the commandment to "appear before the Lord" three times a year was not being strictly observed. This apparent laxity in practice is attested in various sources. The Book of Tobit recounts how the God-fearing Tobit, who always walked in the ways of truth and righteousness, made pilgrimage from Assyria "often" or "several times" (Tob 1:6). It does not indicate that he attended *every* pilgrimage feast.²⁸ Another pertinent example is that of Philo, who places significant emphasis on the temple and Jerusalem in his writings. In his explication of Deut. 16:16, however, Philo is more concerned with determining the true allegorical meaning of "appearing before the Lord" than teaching his fellow Jews how to fulfill their obligation (*Leg.* 3:11).²⁹ In addition, it should be pointed out that in his vast corpus of writings, Philo makes only one reference to a pilgrimage of his own (*Prov.* 2.64). It seems that in terms of ritual practice, pilgrimage was not a priority for Philo and that he did not travel to the temple on a regular basis.³⁰

It is likely that only a small percentage of Jews living in the land of Israel, and an even smaller percentage of Diaspora Jews went up to Jerusalem for every pilgrimage feast.³¹ This modified observance probably emerged as a response to practical issues of feasibility with respect to time, economic resources and physical capability.³² The commandment to make pilgrimage thus became an indeterminate one, which was kept by each individual according to his piety, his strength and his means.³³

²⁸ Safrai, "Pilgrimage to Jerusalem," 17-18.

²⁹ Alan Mendelson, *Philo's Jewish Identity* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1988), 18-19.

³⁰ Kerkeslager suggests that neither Philo nor the Therapeutae believed that it was absolutely necessary to make pilgrimages to the temple in Jerusalem (Allen Kerkeslager, "Jewish Pilgrimage and Jewish Identity" in *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* [ed. David Frankfurter; Leiden: Brill, 1998], 107).

³¹ So Safrai, "Pilgrimage to Jerusalem," 19. Elsewhere, Safrai notes that our literary sources make no reference to pilgrimage from the Diaspora to Jerusalem in the period before Herod (Shemuel Safrai, *Pilgrimage at the Time of the Second Temple Period* [Tel Aviv: Am Hasefer, 1965], 55 [Hebrew]). Commenting on this, Goodman suggests that this silence is not accidental. He indicates that prior to Herod's time pilgrimage feasts only involved Jews from the land of Israel, and that their contemporaries from the Diaspora only began making the journey after Herod's massive expansion of the temple. Citing economic reasons, Goodman further contends that Herod probably made a concerted effort to attract these pilgrims from beyond the Land of Israel. See Martin Goodman, "The Pilgrimage Economy of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period," in *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (ed. Lee. I. Levine; New York: Continuum, 1999), 69-76, esp. 71-75.

³² As Sanders points out, it would have been a significant hardship for Jews living far from the temple to make frequent journeys to Jerusalem. According to his calculations, a person living one hundred miles (one hundred and sixty-nine kilometres) from Jerusalem, walking at a pace of fifteen miles (twenty-four kilometres) a day, would require seven or eight days to travel to their destination. Assuming that he stayed a week in Jerusalem before embarking on the return trip, the total time commitment would be three weeks. If he attended all three festivals, he would spend nine weeks per year away from home. See Sanders, *Judaism*, 130.

³³ Safrai indicates that the Tannaitic literature does not mention any obligation to make a temple pilgrimage three times a year. Rather, the commandment fell into the category of "a command which has no limit." That is, it was considered to be a positive commandment which was encouraged but not demanded. I would be very cautious in applying halakhic constructs from rabbinic law to ritual observances of the Second Temple period. Safrai's observations are useful, however, in offering insight into later developments in the interpretation of Deut 16:16. We can assume that sometime between the codification of the law in the seventh century B.C.E. and the closing of the Mishnah at the beginning of the third century C.E., a non-literal interpretation of Deut 16:16 emerged. Given the textual evidence cited above, it is likely that such an interpretation was well in place by the end of the Second Temple period. See Shemuel Safrai, "Temple," in *The Jewish People in the First Century* (ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern; 2 vols; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974-1976), 899-900.

2.2 The Journey

Prior to the festivals, there would have been thousands of pilgrims travelling on the roads to Jerusalem. It is likely that most of the travellers made the journey on foot, although there is some evidence for travel by donkey or ass.³⁴ In normal terrain, a traveller can cover some twenty-four to thirty-two kilometres per day on foot.³⁵ The pace would be somewhat slower on toilsome slopes. Since the choice of possible routes to Jerusalem was limited by the topography of the region, it is possible to reconstruct the paths that the pilgrims would have taken, using both literary and archaeological evidence.³⁶

The ancient city of Jerusalem was located near the main mountain road junction where routes from the four points of the compass meet.³⁷ Josephus indicates that the quickest route from Galilee to Jerusalem is a three-day journey through Samaria (*Life* 269).³⁸ The distance from Xaloth, the southern most point of Galilee (*B.J.* 3.39), to Jerusalem is approximately one hundred kilometres measured aurally, further by ground. This would require a very brisk pace of thirty-five kilometres or more per day.³⁹ The more popular route for pilgrims, however, was via the rift valley alongside the Jordan River.⁴⁰ This longer journey may have taken a week or more, since it required an initial detour to the east and then, once past Jericho, there was an arduous ascent westward through the Judean hills to Jerusalem.⁴¹ A third route was through the foothills of Mount Ephraim, from Kefar Othnai to Antipatris and then to Jerusalem.⁴²

³⁴ For a brief discussion on the use of animals for pilgrimage, see Safrai, *Pilgrimage*, 113-114.

³⁵ These distances, measured in kilometres, are an approximation of Casson's original estimate of fifteen to twenty miles per day. See Lionel Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), 189.

³⁶ Fischer contends that there was an extensive road system in place during the First and Second Temple periods. It was not until the First Revolt, however, that the construction of a paved network of Roman roads began in Judea. Because of the limitations of the topography, these Roman highways were constructed on pre-existing roads leading to Jerusalem. An archaeological investigation of the regional road system around Sepphoris confirms a similar situation in Galilee. According to Strange, the second-century Legio-Sepphoris road was founded on a known but unpaved route. In addition, there was an alternate (pre-Roman) road that by-passed Sepphoris and led to villages and hamlets to the west. This latter route may very well have been part of a larger infrastructure of local roads/paths that connected one village to another. See Moshe Fischer, Benjamin Isaac and Israel Roll, *Roman Roads in Judaea II: The Jaffa-Jerusalem Roads* (BAR International Series 628; Oxford: B.A.R., 1996), 2; James F. Strange, "First-Century Galilee from Archaeology and from the Texts," *SBL Seminar Papers, 1994* (SBLSP 33; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1994), 84-85.

³⁷ On the convergence of roads at Jerusalem, see Menashe Har-El, "Jerusalem & Judea: Roads and Fortifications," *BA* 44 (Winter 1981): 8-19.

³⁸ This route would have passed through Ginaea on the border between Galilee and Samaria (*B.J.* 2.232; *A.J.* 20.118). From there, the road would have continued south and then veered eastward through the mountain pass between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim to the Samaritan city of Sychar (John 4:5), situated some sixty-five kilometres north of Jerusalem. Turning southward again, the mountain road twisted through the valley of Levona and continued through Gophna and Gibeah (*B.J.* 5.50-51) to Jerusalem.

³⁹ Steve Mason, *Life of Josephus: Translation and Commentary* (vol. 9 of *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*; ed. Steve Mason; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 120.

⁴⁰ It is likely that pilgrims took the longer route to avoid travelling through Samaria. Josephus relates an incident in which Jewish pilgrims from Galilee were attacked by Samaritans while travelling near Ginaea (*A.J.* 20.118). A memory of Samaritan animosity towards the Jews is also preserved in L. According to this tradition, Jesus was not received in a Samaritan town because "his face was set toward Jerusalem" (Luke 9:53).

⁴¹ Mason, *Life*, 120. Although the distance between the two ancient cities is only about twenty kilometres, there is a significant change in elevation from 250 meters below sea level to 750 meters above. Wilkinson reports that it took seven hours and forty-nine minutes for his group to travel on foot from Jericho to Jerusalem, and estimates that it would take about six hours for the return trip (John Wilkinson, "The Way from Jerusalem to Jericho," *BA* 38 [March 1975]: 10-24, esp. 11, 24).

⁴² Safrai, "Temple," 901.

Approaching from the south, pilgrims from Beersheba would have travelled to Jerusalem along a main road through the rough terrain of the Hebron Mountains. The eighty-four kilometre route would have taken them through Hebron and Bethlehem. Those who travelled to Jerusalem from the west may have taken one of two major routes leading from the port city of Jaffa on the coastal plain, through the Shephelah into the Judean Mountains.⁴³ The first road would have been a sixty kilometre journey through Lydda, Modi'in, the Ayyalon valley, Lower Beit Horon, Elyon and Gibeon. This road has only one steep section, which is located between Lower and Upper Beit Horon and is a little over three kilometres in length.⁴⁴ After this point, the road to Jerusalem follows an easily negotiated plateau formation. The second route that pilgrims followed was sixty-six kilometres long, and was by way of Lydda, Gezer, the Ayyalon valley, Emmaus, Mazad, Abu Ghosh, and Givat Shaul. This road crosses difficult terrain, and is the most arduous of the routes between Jaffa and Jerusalem.⁴⁵ Pilgrims who arrived by ship at Caesarea Maritima would have followed the coastal road to Lydda and then turned eastward to Jerusalem on either the Beit Horon or Abu Ghosh road.

Travel along these ancient roads was both difficult and dangerous. While the terrain was not easily negotiated at the best of times, it was often more precarious during the Passover pilgrimage when roads and bridges could be damaged after the winter rains.⁴⁶ In addition, pilgrims had to guard against the perils of ancient travel, including attacks from wild animals and bandits. The concern for banditry, in particular, is addressed frequently in the ancient literature.⁴⁷ Josephus, for example, indicates that a long convoy of pilgrims from Babylonia helped to protect the delivery of the temple tax to Jerusalem from raids of the Parthians (*A.J.* 18:313). In another place, he relates the story of how Herod established Zamaris and his Babylonian settlers in Batanaea in order to protect both the local population and the pilgrims from Babylonia against the banditry from Trachonitis (*A.J.* 17.26). There is no evidence, however, that Herod took similar measures to protect pilgrims in the land of Israel.

Pilgrims on route to the temple in Jerusalem often travelled together in large groups. We might imagine that when whole cities of Jews made a festival pilgrimage, such as the city of Lydda in 66 C.E. (*B.J.* 2.515), the journey became a communal endeavour. More direct evidence

⁴³ Har-El lists a total of eight roads that run from Jaffa to Jerusalem, five of which followed the Ayyalon valley. Two of these routes are identified by Fischer as being the most practical: (1) the Beit Horon road, which was used by Cestius Gallus on his march to Jerusalem in 66 and for his disastrous withdrawal (*B.J.* 2.513-2.555), and (2) the alternative southern road from Lydda to Jerusalem through Abu Ghosh. See Har-El, "Jerusalem," 14; Fischer, *Roman Roads*, 6-21.

⁴⁴ A passage in the Babylonian Talmud attests to the difficulty of the Beit Horon ascent: "Two camels which ascent the *ma'alot* [steps] of Beit Horon and meet each other; if they both ascend [at the same time], both will fall off; [but if they go up] one after another, both can ascend" (*b. Sanhedrin* 32b). According to Har-El, steps were actually hewn out of this ascent sometime during the Second Temple period ("Jerusalem," 16). For a detailed description of the Beit Horon road, see Fischer, *Roman Roads*, 70-83.

⁴⁵ For a description of this route, see Fischer, *Roman Roads*, 87-98.

⁴⁶ The Tosefta makes reference to the damaged roads: "On the fifteenth day of [Adar] agents of the court go out and repair the paths and roads which were ruined in the rainy season, a month before the festival [of Passover], toward the time [in which] the festival pilgrims come up, so that they should be prepared for the three festivals" (*t. Sheqalim* 1:1; cf. *m. Sheqalim* 1:1).

⁴⁷ In his discussion of banditry in the Roman Empire, Blumell indicates that bandits usually engaged in theft as a part of a group, sometimes using violence against the owner of the property. Moreover, banditry was predominantly associated with rural areas, most often occurring along the roads and highways outside of city walls. See Lincoln H. Blumell, "'Beware of the Bandits!' The Perils of Land Travel in the Roman Empire" (paper presented at the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, London, Ont., 31 May, 2005), 5. For references to banditry in Josephus, see e.g. *Vita* 126-127; *B.J.* 2.125; *B.J.* 2.228-230; c.f. *A.J.* 20:113-117.

comes from Josephus, who reports an incident in which a Galilean from among a large company of pilgrims is murdered on the road to Jerusalem (*B.J.* 2.233). Similarly, Luke indicates that Jesus and his parents travelled in a large group (συνοδίῳ) when they made their Passover pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Luke 2:44). Indeed, he offers us a rare glimpse into the turmoil that must have been associated with mass travel, when he relates that the parents travelled a full day's journey towards home before they realized that Jesus was not among their band of travellers.

It is important to consider how these large groups of pilgrims were able to sustain themselves while on the road. In the absence of direct evidence, we might speculate that travellers took refuge in cities and towns along the road to Jerusalem, stocking up on provisions and making use of local facilities such as cisterns and wells to provide them with water for washing and drinking.⁴⁸ An analysis of the distribution of cities, towns and villages in the land of Israel using "central place theory" lends support to this supposition.⁴⁹ According to Ian Hopkins, major urban centres such as Jerusalem, Jaffa, Caesarea and Scythopolis were surrounded by towns which served a smaller territory and population.⁵⁰ Within the area served by these towns, but at some distance from a city, were rural centres consisting of large villages with marketing and administrative functions. This ancient settlement pattern spaced urban and rural centers within a reasonable walking distance from one another, presumably to facilitate local marketing functions as well as other types of commerce. A prime example of this pattern may be found in the area surrounding Jaffa. Moving away from this major urban center, there is a clear sequence of urban settlements spaced at sixteen to nineteen kilometre intervals. Each ring of cities is a similar distance to the next, approximately a half-day journey. A similar pattern can be discerned in the area of Jerusalem. The urban centers of Jericho to the east and Bethel to the north were each a half-day journey away, while Hebron to the South and Gezer to the east were a full-day walk. Depending on what route the pilgrims were taking, they may have stopped at one of these minor urban centres, or at any one of the satellite towns along their way.

2.3 The Destination

Pilgrims began arriving in Jerusalem several days before the feast and most remained for the full duration of the festival.⁵¹ Many of the worshippers slept in tents on the outskirts of the city (*A.J.* 17.213-217). It is likely that they were concentrated near the three sources of water in the city: the Pool of Siloam to the south, the Pools of Bethesda to the north, and the two aqueducts to the west.⁵² Other pilgrims found accommodation in hostels, inns and homes in the city or in nearby villages (Mark 11:11 [21:17 || Luke 21:37]), for which they paid in cash or in

⁴⁸ An early rabbinic text makes reference to the repair of cisterns and wells prior to the Passover pilgrimage (*t. Sheqalim* 1:2).

⁴⁹ Central place theory conceives that "a region has a major urban centre surrounded by a hierarchy of lesser centres with a smaller population, but each ranking of settlement is seen as consisting of places of similar size and importance. See Ian W. J. Hopkins, "The City Region in Roman Palestine," *PEQ* 112 (1980): 19; Agnes Choy, "The Travelling Peasant and Urban-Rural Relations in Roman Galilee" (paper presented at the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, London, Ont., 31 May, 2005), 11-12.

⁵⁰ For a complete discussion on settlement distribution in the land of Israel in the Roman period, see Hopkins, "The City Region," 19-32.

⁵¹ On pilgrims in Jerusalem see Goodman, "The Pilgrimage Economy," 70; Levine, *Jerusalem*, 250-253; Safrai, "Temple," 903-904.

⁵² Yoram Tsafrir, "Jewish Pilgrimage in the Roman and Byzantine Periods," in *Akten des XII internationalen Kongresses für christliche Archäologie* (2 vols.; Munster, Germany: Aschendorff, 1995), 1:371. The inspiration for this suggestion comes from Josephus, who describes three camps of pilgrims who converged on Jerusalem for the festival of Shavuot (Pentecost) in 4 B.C.E. (*B.J.* 2.44).

kind.⁵³ Pilgrims also stayed in synagogues established to serve members of particular Diaspora communities (Acts 6:9).⁵⁴ In addition to lodgings, visitors to the city required food, drink and other personal provisions, which they purchased in Jerusalem.⁵⁵ The numerous shops along the street also provided facilities for changing money and purchasing animals for the required sacrifices.⁵⁶

The highlight of the pilgrimage was undoubtedly the visit to the temple.⁵⁷ The main approach to the Temple Mount was from the south, where there were two main gates.⁵⁸ The eastern Huldah Gate was used for entering the temple precincts, while the western gate, with its monumental staircase, served an exit. According to the Mishnah, these gates were used to facilitate the circulation of pilgrims (*m. Middot* 1:3).⁵⁹ Once inside the temple precincts, pilgrims could congregate in the outer court, a huge trapezoid-shaped *temenos*, which was built to accommodate a large number of people.⁶⁰ On three sides of this so-called “Court of the Gentiles” there were porticoes, about nine meters high, and on the fourth there was an immense basilica hall. Towards the center, was a raised mound upon which the temple and its sacred courts stood.⁶¹ It was within these sacred precincts that pilgrims offered their sacrifices.

The offering of individual sacrifices took place on all the festivals. Passover was the only time, however, that the pilgrims actually participated in the ritual slaughter. Groups of ten or more individuals shared in the slaughter of a paschal lamb (*B.J.* 6.423). As was customary, the sacrificial meal that followed was consumed in households and courtyards within the boundaries of Jerusalem.⁶²

An essential feature of these rites was the requirement of ritual purity. One could not enter the temple or participate in the sacrificial meal in a state of defilement. Pilgrims were therefore required to purify themselves prior to the festival. What were the appropriate ritual ablutions? When and how were they performed? A discussion of purity practices in the first

⁵³ One rabbinic tradition insists that it was forbidden to charge rent in the city of Jerusalem, since the houses belonged to all the tribes (*t. Ma'aser Sheni* 1:12). In lieu of money, pilgrims would make a gift of the skins from the sacrifice.

⁵⁴ The Theodotus inscription describes a synagogue that had several rooms for lodgers as well as water facilities. See the discussion below.

⁵⁵ Sanders indicates that according to Deut 14:26, there was an obligation to spend “second tithe” money (the value of ten per cent of the year’s crop) in Jerusalem (*Judaism*, 113, 128-129).

⁵⁶ Pilgrims converted their own currencies into the half-shekel coin in order to pay the required temple tax.

⁵⁷ By all accounts, the expansion of the temple during Herod’s reign resulted in a structure unparalleled in size and magnificence. On the physical structure of the temple, see Levine, *Jerusalem*, 219-243.

⁵⁸ There were also four gates on the west side of the temple.

⁵⁹ According to Levine, evidence for the direction of the flow of traffic can be found in the monumental staircase outside the western Huldah Gate. The larger staircase was required for a large number of people who would all exit at the same time when the ceremonies came to an end (*Jerusalem*, 230, n. 53).

⁶⁰ Tsafirir, “Jewish Pilgrimage,” 1:372.

⁶¹ According to Josephus, the stone balustrade that surrounded these sacred precincts had signs posted in Greek and Latin, warning gentiles not to enter the temple area (*B.J.* 5.194; *A.J.* 15:417). This is confirmed by the discovery of at least two Greek inscriptions which preserve the warning. The first was published by C. Clermont-Ganneau, “Une stèle du temple de Jérusalem,” *RA nouvelle série* 23 (1872): 214-234, 290-296 + Pl. X (= *CIJ* II 1400 + photo). A second fragmentary inscription found in 1935 was published by J. H. Iliffe, “The ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ Inscription from Herod’s Temple: Fragment of a Second Copy,” *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine* 6/1 (1936): 1-3 + 2 plates. For a description of the temple, see Levine, *Jerusalem*, 238-239.

⁶² Deut 16:1-8 legislates that the celebration of Passover take place in Jerusalem. Safrai indicates that it was the practice for pilgrims in this period to remain in Jerusalem to eat the sacrificial meal (“Temple,” 892).

century will shed light on these issues and provide a framework for understanding the relationship between purity and pilgrimage.

3. Purity Practices in the First Century C.E.

The laws pertaining to impurity find their origin in the priestly strata of the Pentateuch. Ritual impurities include those defilements that arise from certain phenomena such as childbirth (Lev 12:1-8), scale disease (Lev 13:1-14:32), genital discharges (Lev 15:1-33) and death (Lev 11:1-47; Num 19:10-22). There are no prohibitions against contracting these impurities, nor are they considered sinful. They do, however, convey an impermanent contagion through contact with other individuals or objects, which may be alleviated through purificatory procedures.⁶³ On most occasions, purification involves waiting a prescribed period followed by ritual immersion in a natural body of water or a *mikveh*.⁶⁴ In the case of corpse impurity, the most virulent of the contagions, the purification process is more complex. According to the law, those who contract this form of impurity are rendered impure for a period of seven days, during which time a two-part purification process takes place. The afflicted are sprinkled with a combination of red heifer ashes and water on the third and seventh day. After the final sprinkling, they wash their clothes and ritually immerse in order to complete the purification process (Num 19:14-20).⁶⁵

It is a basic tenet of the biblical purity laws that those who are in a state of ritual impurity are prohibited from approaching the sacred precincts or partaking of holy foods, such as sacrificial meat (Lev. 7:20-21; 15:31; 22:3-7). In particular, the law emphasizes a specific concern with respect to individuals with corpse impurity participating in the all-important paschal meal. Those who have been in contact with corpse impurity must abstain from the regular Passover celebrations and make their offering a month later during the second Passover (Num 9:10-12).

The biblical legislation concerning impurity was subject to a variety of interpretations among Jews in the late Second Temple period. Underlying these diverse opinions, however, was a fundamental accord pertaining to the essential nature of the purity practices. This is confirmed by the archaeological record from first-century Galilee and Judea, which indicates the widespread use of *mikvaot* for ritual immersion, as well as the utilization of stone vessels for eating and drinking in order to prevent the transmission of impurity. In addition, there is significant textual evidence that supports the prevalent observance of the biblical purity laws in the land of Israel during this period.⁶⁶

3.1 Stone Vessels

Stone vessels or Herodian stoneware are ubiquitous in Jewish sites throughout the land of Israel, including Jerusalem, the Judean hill country, the Judean Desert, Galilee, the Jordan

⁶³ On the characteristics of ritual impurity, see Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 23-26.

⁶⁴ The prescribed amount of waiting time depended on the nature of the impurity. For major impurities such as genital discharge or scale disease the duration is seven days, whereas for minor impurities, including those contracted secondarily through touching an impure individual or object, the individual is required to wait only until sunset.

⁶⁵ For a discussion on corpse impurity, see Jacob Milgrom, *JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 158-163, 438-447.

⁶⁶ Sanders suggests that most Jews living in the land of Israel in the first century observed the biblical purity laws (*Judaism*, 229).

Valley, Golan and the coastal plain.⁶⁷ They are dated to the first century C.E., and fade out of use after the Bar Kokhba revolt of the early second century. Most of these vessels are small domestic mugs, pitchers and bowls which were used for holding liquids and foods for daily meals. The presence of these stone vessels in domestic space is related to the observance of purity laws. According to the halakhah of rabbinic sources, these vessels are impervious to ritual impurity (*m. Kelim* 10:1).⁶⁸ The use of Herodian stoneware therefore has important social and ritual implications, as it enabled both pure and impure people to share the same vessels without neglecting the observance of the purity laws.

The abundance of stone vessels throughout the land of Israel in the first century points to a heightened interest in ritual purity among Jews of this period. Recent excavations have confirmed that this concern with impurity was not limited to the priestly class, but was associated with all social and economic levels of society.⁶⁹ While the use of stone vessels crossed geographic, social and economic boundaries, it is not surprising that the centre of both manufacture and consumption remained in Jerusalem, where there were increased purity demands associated with the temple.⁷⁰ A large quantity of these vessels was discovered in proximity to the Temple Mount, especially in the vicinity of Robinson's Arch, along the southern wall and on the eastern slope of the western hill. A typological analysis of these vessels indicates a significant quantity of mugs, bowls, cups, goblets, lids, jars and stoppers – utensils that were used for eating and drinking.⁷¹ It may not be possible to determine whether these stone vessels were used by priests, levites or laypeople. Yet, given the location and quantity of these stone vessels, we might speculate that they were left behind by the large number of pilgrims who congregated in Jerusalem for the festivals.⁷²

⁶⁷ Yitzhak Magen, *The Stone Vessel Industry in the Second Temple Period: Excavations at Hizma and the Jerusalem Temple Mount* (ed. Levana Tsfania; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2002), 148-164; Yitzhak Magen, "Jerusalem as a Center of the Stone vessel Industry during the Second Temple Period," in *Ancient Judaism Revealed* (ed. Hillel Geva; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 244-256; Eyal Regev "Non-Priestly Purity and its Religious Aspects according to Historical Sources and Archaeological Findings," in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus* (eds. M. J. H. M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz. Leiden: Brill, 2000), 229-234.

⁶⁸ Cf. *m. Ohalot* 5:5 *m. Parah* 5:5; *m. Yadayim* 1:2. These rabbinic texts indicate that in addition to stone vessels, cattle-dung vessels and earthen vessels were also considered to be unsusceptible to ritual impurity, probably because they were made from materials originating in the earth. It is significant that the material remains pertaining to stone vessels are consistent with the rabbinic traditions pertaining to purity. This convergence of evidence implies a connection between rabbinic Judaism and common Judaism, in which certain rabbinic practices were shared by other Jews in the late Second Temple period. Whereas we cannot assume that rabbinic observances were normative or that rabbinic law was authoritative across different groups, we can, in certain instances, use rabbinic texts to shed light on common Jewish practices of the period. Indeed, it is likely that in the course of developing their halakhah, the rabbis acknowledged as valid, many of the laws and customs that were already in existence among the majority of the population.

⁶⁹ Yitzhak Magen, "Ancient Israel's Stone Age: Purity in Second Temple Time," *BAR* 24:05 (Sep/Oct 1998): 46-52, esp. 48.

⁷⁰ Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 163.

⁷¹ A stone stopper securely fitted to the rim of a jug or jar made of pottery prevented the vessel from contracting impurity (*m. Ohalot* 5:5). For a typological analysis of stone vessels discovered near the Temple Mount, see Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 63-115.

⁷² Along the same lines, Regev suggests that the large quantity of stone "measuring cups" discovered near the Temple Mount may have been used by pilgrims, as well as priests and levites ("Non-Priestly Purity," 231).

3.2 *Mikvaot*

The process of purification requires immersion of the whole body in water from a natural source such as the sea, a spring or a river. Alternatively one could use a *mikveh* – a specially designed ritual bath in which there is a direct flow of water from a natural source.⁷³ Remains of hundreds of *mikvaot* have been discovered throughout the land of Israel, the majority of which are dated to the Second Temple period.⁷⁴ That these ritual baths were a central component to Jewish life is evidenced by their presence in every type of Jewish dwelling from urban palaces to rural farmhouses.⁷⁵ In addition, they were associated with many public facilities, including wine and oil presses, synagogues, bath-houses and cemeteries. Regardless of whether they were intended for public or private use, these *mikvaot* all shared several common characteristics.⁷⁶ They were cut into bedrock, had steps leading to the bottom and are plastered to prevent linkage. Moreover, they had sufficient capacity to hold a minimum amount of forty *se'ah* of water (*m. Mikwa'ot* 1.7) and were deep enough to allow for full immersion of the body.⁷⁷

The most common type of *mikveh* found in the hill country of Galilee and Judea were gravity-fed pools, which were filled by channels that carried rainwater, spring water or runoff from a roof or courtyard. Less frequently, a *mikveh* was built with a secondary pool adjacent to it, called an *otsar* (“treasury”).⁷⁸ At times when the water levels were low, hand-drawn water would be added to the larger pool and a conduit between the two pools would be opened. The pure water in the smaller pool would effectively purify the water in the larger pool upon

⁷³ According to the Mishnah, the water of a *mikveh* cannot be “drawn water” but must come from a natural source (*m. Mikwa'ot* 2.4).

⁷⁴ In his study of ancient *mikvaot*, Reich evaluates 306 installations that were excavated by the late 1980's. He dates 280 of the installations to the Second Temple period and 26 to a later period. See Ronny Reich, *Miqwa'ot (Jewish Ritual Immersion Baths) in Eretz-Israel in the Second Temple and the Mishna and Talmud Periods* (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1990), 62-81 [Hebrew]. In the years following Reich's study, David Amit has compiled data on 35 additional *mikvaot* in the Hebron Hills as well as 64 ritual baths located in other parts of the country (*Ritual Baths (Mikva'ot) from the Second Temple Period in the Hebron Mountains* [M.A. thesis, Hebrew University, 1996] [Hebrew]). Another study conducted by Boaz Zissu resulted in the discovery of several more *mikvaot* that had mistakenly been identified as graves, cisterns, silos, etc. (Boaz Zissu, *Rural Settlement in the Judaeian Hills and Foothills from the Late Second Temple Period to the Bar-Kokhba Revolt* [Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 2001][Hebrew]).

⁷⁵ I am grateful to Boaz Zissu for pointing this out to me (private communication, May 2005).

⁷⁶ On the architectural characteristics of a *mikveh*, see Reich, *Miqwa'ot*, 5; Ronny Reich, “The Synagogue and the *Mikveh* in Eretz-Israel in the Second-Temple, Mishnaic, and Talmudic Periods” in *Ancient Synagogues: Historical Analysis and Archaeological Discovery* (eds. Dan Urman and Paul V. M. Flesher; vol 1; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995) 289-297; Sanders, *Judaism*, 223. It should be noted that there has been considerable scholarly debate on the criteria for identifying a *mikveh*. Wright, for example, challenges Reich's methodology when he suggests that similarity of form does not necessarily lead to identity of function (Benjamin G. Wright III, “Jewish Ritual Baths – Interpreting the Digs and the Texts: Some Issues in the Social History of Second Temple Judaism,” in *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present* [eds. N. A. Silberman and D. Small; JSOTSup 237; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997], 204). See also, the controversy over the ritual use of the baths discovered in Sepphoris in Hanan Eshel, “The Pools of Sepphoris: Ritual Baths or Bathtubs? They're Not Ritual Baths,” *BAR* 26:04 (Jul/Aug 2000): 42-45; Eric M. Meyers, “Yes, They Are,” *BAR* 26:04 (Jul/Aug 2000) 46-48; Hanan Eshel, “We Need More Data,” *BAR* 26:04 (Jul/Aug 2000) 49; Ronny Reich, “They Are Ritual Baths: Immerse yourself in the ongoing Sepphoris *mikveh* debate,” *BAR* 28:02 (Mar/Apr 2002): 50-55.

⁷⁷ The minimal volume forty *se'ah* of water is in accordance with rabbinic standards and is estimated as being in the range of 0.5 – 1 m³ (Reich, *Miqwa'ot*, English Abstract, 13). It should be noted that all the *mikvaot* that have been discovered in the land of Israel to date comply with this minimum requirement. The consistency of this evidence may be an indication that the rabbis, in formulating their laws, accepted the common Jewish practice of the time.

⁷⁸ This type of *mikveh* has been found at Masada, Herodium, Jericho, Sepphoris and Jerusalem. See Reich, *Miqwa'ot*, English Abstract, 4; idem. “They Are Ritual Baths,” 53.

contact.⁷⁹ This is in accordance with the rabbinic provision that any body of water which is connected to the waters of a *mikveh* have equal status with those waters (*m. Mikwa'ot* 6.1). Another type of *mikveh* consisted of a single pool built near a cistern, such as those found in Sepphoris and in private houses in Jerusalem. As long as a minimum of forty *se'ah* of pure water was maintained in the *mikveh*, drawn water from the cistern could be added.⁸⁰ The underlying premise is that the water of the *mikveh* has the power to purify. Just as it purifies people or utensils, it can also render pure the small quantities of drawn water that are added (*m. Mikwa'ot* 2.3).⁸¹

Mikvaot dating to the first century have been found in a variety of locations throughout Judea and Galilee, with the highest concentration being in Jerusalem. Whereas many *mikvaot* in Jerusalem are associated with domestic space, the vast majority have been found in the area of the Temple Mount.⁸² Excavations of this important site have revealed dozens of *mikvaot* dating to the Herodian period. Most of these *mikvaot* have a single entrance on the broad side of the structure, with stairs that are divided by a low parapet in the center. Others have a double entrance as well as the partition on the stairs.⁸³ These double staircases facilitated the use of the ritual bath by several individuals at a time. One side of the stairs would have been used by the impure to descend into the water, while the other side was utilized for ascending the stairs after immersion. The divided staircase was thus helpful in preventing transmission of impurity through physical contact.⁸⁴

Two *mikvaot* from the Temple Mount excavations are especially pertinent to this enquiry. First, there is the discovery of a *mikveh* under the eastern Huldah Gate. The location of the *mikveh* and its original alignment on a northwest-southeast axis suggest that it was originally associated with a Second Temple period dwelling. The residence was destroyed during Herod's expansion of the temple. The *mikveh*, however, was left intact beneath the staircase leading to the Hulda Gate, and may have been used later by pilgrims entering the temple.⁸⁵ Second, a large rectangular *mikveh* was found near the Ophel road in the south-eastern area of the excavations. This bath is unique in its configuration both because of its size and because of the fact that it is surrounded on all four sides by steps leading down to the pool. Moreover, there are no partitions

⁷⁹ The use of such a conduit is described in *t. Mikwa'ot* 5.5.

⁸⁰ "Every immersion-pool which contains forty *se'ah* of water is suitable for receiving further [drawn] water [if need be]" (*t. Sheqalim* 1:2).

⁸¹ So Reich, "They Are Ritual Baths," 53-54.

⁸² An excavation on the eastern slopes of the Upper City conducted by Meir Ben-Dov revealed a residential area in which almost every house on the slopes of the western hill had a *mikveh*, *otsar* and cistern. At the time of publication he had excavated a total of forty-eight *mikvaot* of various types. This is roughly one third of the one hundred and fifty *mikvaot* discovered in Jerusalem. See Meir Ben-Dov, *In the Shadow of the Temple: The Discovery of Ancient Jerusalem* (trans. Ina Friedman; Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1985), 150-153; Reich, *Miqwa'ot*, English Abstract, 6.

⁸³ Eilat Mazar, *The Complete Guide to the Temple Mount Excavations* (trans. D. Glick and N. Panitz-Cohen; Jerusalem: The Old City Press, 2002), 61.

⁸⁴ Reich identifies a "Jerusalem type" *mikveh* (also found at Qumran), which can be identified by (1) its relatively large entrance on the broad side of the structure, (2) steps that alternate with wider and narrower treads, and (3) a double entrance and/or a small partition built down the center of the stairway. See Reich, "They Are Ritual Baths," 54-55; cf. *idem*, *Miqwa'ot*, 34-39.

⁸⁵ Ronny Reich, Gideon Avni and Tamar Winter, *The Jerusalem Archaeological Park* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1999), 37.

dividing the stairs. It is likely that this *mikveh* was built to serve the large number of pilgrims who visited the temple during festivals.⁸⁶

Another related find from the Temple Mount excavations is the famous Theodotus inscription, which attests to the existence of a first-century synagogue in Jerusalem that had guest rooms and water facilities associated with it:⁸⁷

Theodotus, the son of Vettenos, priest and *archisynagogos*, son of an *archisynagogos* and grandson of an *archisynagogos*, built the assembly hall (τὴν συναγωγὴν) for the reading of the Law and for the teaching of the commandments, and the guest room, the chambers, and the water fittings, as an inn for those in need from foreign parts, (the synagogue) which his fathers founded with the elders and Simonides.⁸⁸

In addition to its assembly hall, this synagogue had several rooms for lodgers as well as some sort of water facilities. It is not evident from the inscription whether these water facilities were used for ritual purposes or to meet other needs of the visitors. Given that the synagogue was founded by a priestly family, however, we might speculate that these facilities included a *mikveh* along with other facilities for drinking and washing.

The large number of *mikvaot* in Galilee and Judea point to widespread purity practices in the late Second Temple period. Within this larger context of this ritual observance, it is significant that the greatest concentration of these pools is found in Jerusalem, and especially near the Temple Mount. Presumably, these *mikvaot* were used for ritual purification prior to entering the temple. On the pilgrimage festivals, in particular, numerous facilities for purification would have been required to accommodate the thousands of people converging on Jerusalem.

We might imagine that a large number of pilgrims who were living in tents on the outskirts of the city would have made use of the dozens of “pilgrimage” *mikvaot* to the west and south of the temple mount, which were built with partitions on the stairs to accommodate a steady stream of people entering and exiting the pool. Others may have preferred to use the large *mikveh* at the southeast corner of the Temple Mount, with its easy access from all four sides. Not every pilgrim, however, would have made use of these public *mikvaot*. Those who had found accommodation in synagogues, hostels or inns may have used ritual bathing facilities provided by these establishments. Similarly, those who lodged with residents of Jerusalem or in nearby villages may have had access to private *mikvaot* associated with these households.

Pilgrims living in Jerusalem or the surrounding area would probably have performed their ritual ablutions in their own homes or communities prior to their departure. It is likely that even those living farther away may have stopped during their journey to immerse in a river, stream or roadside *mikveh*. The discovery of a *mikveh* complex near Alon Shevut on the main road leading from Hebron through the Judean Hills to Jerusalem is particularly significant, especially since there is no evidence of a settlement in the vicinity.⁸⁹ The complex consists of two exceptionally large installations, which are separated by a distance of ten meters. The western *mikveh*, which is the smaller of the two, has two arched openings with parallel staircases divided by a massive

⁸⁶ Mazar, *The Complete Guide*, 61. In addition to being used by pilgrims, this *mikveh* may have also facilitated the purification of large household objects. See Reich, *Jerusalem Archaeological Park*, 21.

⁸⁷ On the dating of the Theodotus inscription to the early first century, see John S. Kloppenborg, “Dating Theodotus (CIJ II 1404),” *JJS* 51 (2000): 243-280.

⁸⁸ As translated by Kloppenborg, “Dating Theodotus,” 244.

⁸⁹ See David Amit, “A *Miqveh* Complex near Alon Shevut,” *Atiqot* 38 (1999): 75-84; Yuval Peleg and David Amit, “Another *Miqveh* near Alon Shevut,” *Atiqot* 48 (2004): 95-98.

stone partition.⁹⁰ The larger *mikveh* to the southeast has a similar entrance. Taking into consideration the size and location of the *mikvaot*, as well as the similar typology to the ritual baths found in the immediate vicinity of the Temple Mount, one can only conclude that these are pilgrimage *mikvaot*. They were built for the purpose of purifying a large number of people quickly on their journey to Jerusalem.⁹¹

Several *mikvaot* of the type found near Alon Shevut have been found in the Hebron Hills, from Hebron north to Jerusalem.⁹² That these ritual baths were used by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem is substantiated by early rabbinic literature which alludes to the maintenance of the *mikvaot* prior to the Passover festival: “On the fifteenth day [of Adar] agents of the court go forth and dig cisterns, wells and caves, and repair immersion-pools and water channels” (*t. Sheqalim* 1:2).⁹³ Just as roads and bridges were repaired, so too were ritual baths prepared for the use of the pilgrims (*m. Sheqalim* 1:1).

3.3 Corpse Impurity

The textual evidence indicates that the laws concerning corpse impurity were observed in the Second Temple period. According to an early rabbinic tradition, the demand for purification from corpse impurity was so great during this period that the purificatory waters were made available in twenty-four districts in the land of Israel (*t. Parah* 3:14).⁹⁴ Whether or not these waters were used on a regular basis throughout the year cannot be corroborated.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the sources indicate a particular concern for corpse impurity prior to Passover. According to the Gospel of John, the Jews from rural areas went up to Jerusalem prior to the festival to purify themselves (John 11:55).⁹⁶ This is substantiated by Josephus, who indicates that the pilgrims had already congregated in Jerusalem a week before Passover (*B.J.* 6.290). The most explicit testimony, however, comes from Philo who indicates that prior to offering a sacrifice an individual must undergo a purification procedure that lasts seven days (*Spec.* 1.261).

While these sources point to the observance of the biblical rites concerning corpse impurity, there is other evidence indicating alternative practices. In the Diaspora, we have the example of Tobit, who purified himself with water immediately after burying a corpse (Tob 2:5 [codex S]).⁹⁷ Moreover, Philo indicates that only those who wished to enter the temple were required to undergo the seven-day purification process. All others purified themselves immediately after contact with a corpse using “aspersions and ablutions” (*Spec.* 3.205). This apparent laxity in the interpretation of the law was probably a matter of practicality, since those who lived outside the land of Israel would not have had access to the appropriate waters of purification. In contrast, there is evidence for added stringencies among those living in Judea. Most interesting are the legal texts from Qumran, which add to the biblical requirements by

⁹⁰ Amit attests to the uniqueness of this particular partition (“*Miqveh Complex*,” 78).

⁹¹ Amit, “*Miqveh Complex*,” 82-83; Peleg, “Another *Miqveh*,” 97-98.

⁹² David Amit, “Ritual Baths (*Miqva’ot*) from the Second Temple Period in the Hebron Mountains,” in *Judea and Samaria Research Studies: Proceedings of the 3rd Annual Meeting, 1993* (eds. Z. H. Erlich and V. Eshel; Kedumim - Ariel: The College of Judea and Samaria, 1994), 157-189 [Hebrew].

⁹³ The cisterns and wells provided water for drinking and washing during the long journey, while the *mikvaot* were used for ritual immersion.

⁹⁴ So Milgrom, *Numbers*, 161.

⁹⁵ It is possible that this rabbinic tradition represents an idealized version of what actually happened.

⁹⁶ Cf. Acts 21:26-27 which also mentions the seven days of purification prior to making a sacrificial offering.

⁹⁷ καὶ αὐτῇ τῇ νυκτὶ ἐλουσάμην καὶ εἰσῆλθον εἰς τὴν αὐλήν μου; “And that night I washed myself and I went to my courtyard.” Text and translation from Frank Zimmerman, *The Book of Tobit: An English Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 56-57.

mandating first and third-day ablutions for anyone who has contracted corpse impurity (11QT^a xlix 17-20; cf. 4Q414):

וכול אשר בא אל הבית ירחץ במים ויכבס בנדיו ביום הראישון וביום השלישי
 יזו עליהמה מי נדה וירחצו ויכבסו סלמותמה ואת הכלים אשר בבית וביום
 השביעי יזו שנית וירחצו ויכבסו בנדיהמה וכליהמה ויטהרו לערב מהמת ...

As for the people, whoever has been in the house or has entered the house shall bathe in water and shall wash his clothes on the first day. On the third day they shall sprinkle purifying water on them and shall bathe. They shall wash their garments and the utensils in the house. On the seventh day they shall sprinkle (them) a second time. They shall bathe, wash their clothes and utensils and shall be clean by the evening of (the impurity contracted) from the dead...⁹⁸

According to Jacob Milgrom, the required immersions on the first and third days removed successive layers of impurity, thereby providing for a gradual purification process.⁹⁹ While not permitted to enter the temple until the seven days were completed, the individual could still participate in other activities such as eating and drinking without causing major defilement to ordinary food.¹⁰⁰

The discovery of *mikvaot* in association with first-century tombs supports the practice of gradual removal of corpse contamination beyond Qumran. In Jerusalem, *mikvaot* have been found in the Tomb of Helene of Adiabene (“Tomb of the Kings”) and next to several tombs on Mt. Scopus.¹⁰¹ Most pertinent is the “Goliath Family Tomb” in the Jericho cemetery, which also has a *mikveh* associated with it.¹⁰² According to Rachel Hachlili, several factors point to the possibility that the Goliath family belonged to the large community of priests that resided in Jericho and served the temple in Jerusalem.¹⁰³ These include the unusual monumental tomb, the use of names that were common among priests, and the recurrent use of a single name over three consecutive generations, as was the custom among prominent families.¹⁰⁴ If the Goliaths were a priestly family, they most certainly would have practiced the seven-day rite for corpse purification. That they maintained a *mikveh* at their family tomb indicates that they would have also performed first-day ablutions as part of a gradual purification process.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ As translated by Esther Eshel, “4Q414 Fragment 2: Purification of a Corpse-Contaminated Person” in *Legal Texts and Legal Issues* (eds. M. Bernstein, F. García Martínez and J. Kampen; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 8.

⁹⁹ See Jacob Milgrom, “Studies in the Temple Scroll,” *JBL* 97 (1978): 501-523, esp. 512-518; idem, “First Day Ablutions in Qumran” in *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid 18-21 March 1991* (eds. J. T. Barrera and L. V. Montaner; 2 vols.; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992) 2.561-570; idem, *Leviticus 1-16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991) 968-976; cf. Joseph M. Baumgarten, “The Purification Rituals in DJD 7” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research* (eds. Devorah Dimant and Uriel Rappaport; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 199-209; Eshel, “4Q414 Fragment 2,” 3-10.

¹⁰⁰ Regev, “Non-Priestly Purity,” 227-228.

¹⁰¹ Reich, *Miqwa’ot*, 243-246.

¹⁰² Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 8-9, 59-61.

¹⁰³ Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs*, 295-296.

¹⁰⁴ Hachlili positively identifies the use of the name *Yeho’ezer* once in the first generation, once in the second generation and three times in the third generation (*Jewish Funerary Customs*, 294, fig. VI-40).

¹⁰⁵ Regev contends that the presence of *mikvaot* in tomb complexes dating to the late Second Temple period indicates that Jews were immersing themselves immediately after contact with corpse impurity rather than waiting until the seventh day (“Non-Priestly Purity,” 235).

In summary, the evidence indicates that in the late Second Temple period there were several interpretations of the law pertaining to purification from corpse contamination. Some would have practiced the rites prescribed in Num 19:14-20 every time they contracted corpse contamination. Those who did not have access to the purificatory waters, however, would have only performed the prescribed rituals prior to entering the temple or partaking of the paschal meal. Finally, there was a stricter interpretation of the law which required additional ablutions, but allowed for a gradual purification process in which successive layers of impurity were removed.

4. Jesus the Jewish Pilgrim

Direct evidence for Jesus' travels to Jerusalem can be placed within the context of our analyses of Jewish pilgrimage and purity practices in the first century. We know that there were Jews from the rural areas who went up to Jerusalem prior to Passover to purify themselves (John 11:55). We are also certain that Jesus and his followers came from a rural context. If the rural population took part in pilgrimages to the temple, it is likely that Jesus did so as well.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the synoptic traditions record that Jesus made one journey to Jerusalem prior to Passover (Mark 11:1-11 [Matt 21:1-11 || Luke 19:28-40]). The Johannine tradition offers more information regarding Jesus' travels, recounting at least four pilgrimages: twice for Passover (John 2:13; 11:55), once for Tabernacles (7:10) and once for an unspecified feast (5:1). There is no indication that Jesus made the pilgrimage for every feast, although it is a possibility. It is more likely, however, that his pilgrimage practices resembled those of other Galilean Jews, who placed particular emphasis on attending the Passover feast.

4.1 Jesus on the Road to Jerusalem

It is evident that Jesus made pilgrimages to Jerusalem, but there is little direct evidence to indicate his travel itinerary. The evangelists were not interested in the roads upon which Jesus travelled, nor were they necessarily familiar with the geography of the land.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, there are traditions about the places Jesus visited on his way from Galilee to Jerusalem, and these can be used to reconstruct the most likely routes taken by Jesus.

In the synoptic tradition's depiction of Jesus' pilgrimage, he travels from Capernaum (Mark 9:33) to the region of Judea (Mark 10:1 [Matt 19:1 || Luke 9:51]).¹⁰⁸ On the road "going up to Jerusalem" (Mark 10:32-33 [Matt 20:17-18 || Luke 18:31]), Jesus passes through Jericho (Mark 10:46 [Matt 20:29 || Luke 18:35]), eventually drawing near Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives (Mark 11:1 [Matt 21:1 || Luke 19:29]). Two vital details can be discerned from this account. First, Jesus is said to have started his pilgrimage on the northwest shores of the Galilee. Second, the final leg of his journey was on the road ascending from Jericho through the Judean hills to Jerusalem. Given this information, it is most probable that Jesus travelled to Jerusalem via the rift valley alongside the Jordan River.

Of the four pilgrimages depicted in John, it is the two Passover pilgrimages that offer information about Jesus' travels. In the first instance Jesus departs from Capernaum (2:12), making his way to Jerusalem (2:13) either travelling through Samaria or along the rift valley by

¹⁰⁶ One would need explicit evidence to prove that Jesus did not follow general customs.

¹⁰⁷ It is noteworthy that Luke's interpolation of the story of the cleansing of the ten lepers is introduced with an erroneous depiction of Jesus passing between Samaria and Galilee on the way to Jerusalem (Luke 17:11).

¹⁰⁸ Capernaum is mentioned only in the Markan tradition.

the Jordan River. The second Passover pilgrimage begins in the wilderness near the town of Ephraim (11:54). From this location Jesus likely made his way through the foothills of Mount Ephraim, passing by Kefar Othnai to Antipatris and then to Jerusalem.

Prior to the festivals, the roads were undoubtedly crowded with pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. Jesus' travelling companions on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem included "his disciples and a great multitude (ὄχλου ἰκανοῦ)" (Mark 10:46 [Matt 20:29 || Luke 18:35-36]). The reference to this large crowd is informative, for it indicates that it was Jesus' followers who were travelling with him on the road to Jerusalem.¹⁰⁹ The synoptic tradition thus makes it clear that the crowd, together with Jesus' disciples, constituted the pilgrimage caravan in which Jesus was travelling.¹¹⁰ When the caravan finally reached its destination several days before Passover was to begin, the pilgrims celebrated their arrival as they ushered Jesus into Jerusalem (Mark 11:7-10 [Matt 21:7-9 || Luke 19:35-38]; cf. John 12: 13-19).¹¹¹

4.2 Jesus in Jerusalem

While visiting Jerusalem, Jesus and his disciples found lodgings in nearby Bethany (Mark 11:11 [Matt 21:17 || Luke 21:37]).¹¹² During the days leading up to the festival, Jesus went to Jerusalem where he taught in the temple, probably in one of the porticos surrounding the Court of the Gentiles. His audience, no doubt, consisted of other pilgrims who were in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. On the day when the festival was about to begin, one of the disciples went into town to make arrangements for them to eat the paschal meal within the city of Jerusalem (Mark 14:12-16 [Matt 26:17-20 || Luke 22:7-14]).¹¹³ Without giving specific details, the text clearly assumes that one of their number went to the temple to make the required Passover sacrifice.¹¹⁴ In the evening Jesus and his disciples sat together around a table in the upper room of a Jerusalem householder eating the paschal meal.

4.3 Jesus, Purity and Pilgrimage

As demonstrated, there was a fundamental concern for issues of impurity within the socio-historical context in which Jesus lived. Testimony to the purification rites associated with pilgrimage is evident in John 11:55, which indicates that "many went up from the country (ἐκ τῆς χώρας) to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves." We may consider that the

¹⁰⁹ The political significance of Jesus and his followers travelling from Galilee to Roman-ruled Judea should not go unnoticed. Safrai correctly contends that the very gathering of Jews in Jerusalem heightened the religious and national fervour, as well as the resentment against foreign rule. A feast – especially Passover, with its nationalistic overtones – would have afforded an opportune time for anyone who had a message for the people to find an audience ("Temple," 899). In this instance, Jesus took advantage of the nationalistic fervour associated with pilgrimage to declare himself as the messiah. His gathering of followers on the road to Jerusalem thus climaxes in his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey, a staged prophetic enactment of this role.

¹¹⁰ Jeremias also cites Mark 10:46 when he suggests that Jesus travelled in a pilgrimage caravan (*Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 59). Contrast this pilgrimage with the one depicted in John 7. Here, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem for the festival of Tabernacles "not publicly, but in private (ἐν κρυπτῷ)." The implication is that Jesus was not part of a pilgrimage caravan, but travelled alone.

¹¹¹ At the core of the story of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem is the arrival of a pilgrimage caravan at their final destination. This is recognized by Fredriksen, who contends that the "pilgrims account for the celebrating crowds who usher Jesus into Jerusalem" (*Jesus of Nazareth*, 206).

¹¹² Luke refers to the Mount of Olives.

¹¹³ Tsafrir highlights the fact that Jesus celebrated Passover eve within the city, according to the law ("Jewish Pilgrimage," 370).

¹¹⁴ So Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 206.

administration of the purificatory waters was a public rite requiring the ministry of a priest. Any abstention on the part of Jesus would certainly have been noticed by his followers, as well as other members of the Jewish community.¹¹⁵ At the very least, his departure from the norm would have been viewed as strange; more likely it would have been considered a sacrilege. Indeed, we would expect that a deviation from the law of this magnitude would have been reported in the gospels.

Given the evidence, it is probable that Jesus, like his fellow pilgrims, arrived in Jerusalem several days before Passover in order to undergo the purification rites for corpse contamination. Yet, if Jesus was impure during this period, how could he have been teaching in the temple? An important clue to resolving this conundrum comes from Josephus, who indicates that,

persons afflicted with gonorrhoea or leprosy were excluded from the city altogether; the temple was closed to women during their menstruation... Men not thoroughly clean were debarred from admission to the inner court, from which even priests were excluded when undergoing purification (*B.J.* 5.227).

While men were required to be pure according to levitical standards in order to gain access to the sacred precincts (Court of the Israelites), they could still enter the outer court (Court of the Gentiles) even if they were not thoroughly pure, provided that they were free from two major classes of impurity: genital discharge and scale disease. Seemingly, the criteria for purification were not as strict in the outer court.¹¹⁶ What is curious is that Josephus makes no reference to the most serious of the impurities, corpse contamination. Logic dictates that if those afflicted with other major forms of impurity were prohibited from entering the temple or even the city, then the corpse impure would also be excluded. But, that is *not* what Josephus states.

I would argue that Josephus offers an accurate description of the purity requirements in the temple. Those who were “thoroughly clean” (καθάπαι ἡγνευκότες) from all impurities, including corpse contamination were permitted to enter the inner court. This implies that individuals who were partially clean – that is, those who had performed their first day ablutions – only had access to the outer court. If Josephus doesn’t mention corpse impurity in connection with the temple it is because it is not an issue. He understood that immediate immersion in the *mikveh* would remove a layer of impurity, enabling the afflicted to gain access to its outer court.

In positing the use of first-day ablutions at the temple, we not only gain a better understanding of our text from Josephus, we also resolve the apparent discrepancy in Jesus’ purity practices. In accordance with the synoptic traditions, Jesus arrived in Jerusalem about a week prior to Passover, presumably to undergo the purification rite for corpse contamination. After he entered the city, he probably would have immersed in one of the numerous *mikvaot* in the area of the temple mount, thereby initiating his gradual purification. Upon completion of this

¹¹⁵ This is the exact situation that is described in the Gospel of John, when Jesus does not arrive in time for the purificatory rites (John 12:1, 12). The evangelist emphasizes Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem five days before Passover, indicating that the other pilgrims had been looking for him and speculating as to whether or not he would come to the festival (John 11:55-56). Jesus’ tardiness is part of the altered timeline of the Fourth Gospel, in which Jesus’ crucifixion coincides with the offering of the paschal lamb. In this theological framework, Jesus does not prepare for the paschal sacrifice; he *is* the paschal sacrifice. In light of this insight, we must discount the historical accuracy of the narrative. Kazen, however, offers a different perspective, suggesting that Jesus’ late arrival for the seven-day purification period can be seen as part of a Johannine tendency to portray Jesus as opposing the purity laws (*Jesus and Purity*, 249 and esp. n. 219).

¹¹⁶ It would have been impractical to impose stringent purity standards in the outer court of the temple, since this was an area in which economic transactions took place, assemblies were held and judicial bodies met. On the temple and its courts, see Levine, *Jerusalem*, 243.

first-day ablution, Jesus would have had access to the outer court of the temple where he taught during the days leading up to the festival.

5. Conclusion

The historical Jesus was a Galilean Jew living in the first-century land of Israel. The Judaism of his time was characterized by its diversity in its interpretation of the laws of Israel. Yet, underlying the disputes between the various factions were basic tenets of practice and belief that were agreed upon by the populace as a whole. The temple figured prominently in the lives of all Jews, even those who lived far afield. In spite of the hardship, Jewish peasants from the rural communities in Galilee made pilgrimages to the temple as often as their circumstances allowed, especially for the feast of Passover. Purity practices were also a prominent feature of Jewish existence, as evidence by the archaeological remains from the cities, towns and villages in which there was a Jewish presence. The existence of *mikvaot* combined with the pervasive use of stone vessels indicates a substantial concern with ritual purity. It is within this socio-religious milieu that Jesus made his pilgrimages to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the festivals. We can trace his path from Galilee to Jerusalem, travelling with his disciples and followers in a pilgrimage caravan and taking refuge in towns and villages along the way. Arriving with the other pilgrims several days before the festival, he stayed in Bethany and spent his days teaching at the temple. As was the custom, he also arranged for a place within the city of Jerusalem where he and his disciples could partake of the paschal meal.

An essential component of the pilgrimage was the purification rites that were associated with it. Jews could not enter the temple, nor could they partake of the paschal meal unless they were in a state of ritual purity. Thus pilgrims arrived in Jerusalem at least a week before the festival so that they could undergo the seven-day purification rites for corpse contamination. While there is no direct evidence to indicate that Jesus participated in this rite, there is significant support for this assumption. First, it is evident that Jesus made the pilgrimage with other members of the rural Galilean community and arrived well before the onset of the festival. Second, both the archaeological and textual evidence point to a direct connection between pilgrimage and purity practices at the temple. Given that Jesus counted himself among the Jewish pilgrims from rural Galilee and that he participated in all the other rites of pilgrimage, it is probable that he also participated in this rite of purification, which included ritual immersion as well as sprinkling with purificatory waters.¹¹⁷ The first-day ablutions removed a layer of his impurity, giving him access to the outer court of the temple where he taught, while his immersion on the final day completed the purification process, enabling him to enter the sacred precincts and participate in the paschal meal. It is evident that Jesus, as a Jew of his time, upheld the purity laws that were associated with the most central Jewish institution, the temple.

¹¹⁷ The burden of proof rests with those who would argue otherwise.

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