



Carl S. Ehrlich, Anders Runesson, Eileen M. Schuller, eds.. *Purity, Holiness, and Identity in Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Memory of Susan Haber.*

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Susan Haber (*z”l*) passed away in 2006, while pursuing a PhD at McMaster University. Scholars interested in purity in ancient Judaism should already have made acquaintance with Haber’s work. While only a few pieces were published in her lifetime, Adele Reinhartz edited a compilation of Haber’s essays, which the Society of Biblical Literature published in 2008.[1] The volume under review offers a different kind of tribute, bringing together essays by her teachers, colleagues, and friends—clearly, in many cases, these are overlapping categories. Altogether the contributors comprise an international assembly of the first order. The present work is therefore not only a fitting tribute to its dedicatee, but a contribution in its own right to one of Haber’s main interests, purity in ancient Judaism.

Following a brief preface by the editors, the book begins with a biographical essay written by Rabbi David C. Seed—Haber’s rabbi during her last years of life. The rest of the volume is structured chronologically, and grouped into three parts. Part 1 focuses on ancient Israel, and in-

cludes three essays: “*Miqra’ Qodesh* and the Structure of Leviticus 23,” by Baruch J. Schwartz; “Everyman’s Judgment Cometh from the LORD: Popular Perception of the Primary Purpose of the Cult,” by Eric Grossman; and “Purity Matters in the Book of Chronicles: A Kind of Prolegomenon,” by Ehud Ben Zvi.

Part 2 is entitled “Classical Antiquity.” This is the largest section of the book, containing eight of the fifteen academic essays and taking up two-thirds of the total page count. This is appropriate, for this section treats Haber’s own primary time frame of interest. The essays in this section include: “Do You Have to Be Pure in a Metaphorical Temple? Sanctuary Metaphors and Construction of Sacred Space in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Paul’s Letters,” by Cecilia Wassen; “Is Nothing Sacred? Holiness in the Writings of Paul,” by Stephen Westerholm; “The Temple Cleansing and the Death of Jesus,” by Adele Reinhartz; “Jesus and the *Zavah*: Implications for Interpreting Mark,” by Thomas Kazen; “Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew’s Narrative World,” by

Anders Runesson; “Pollution and Purification in Josephus’s *Judean War*,” by Steve Mason; “‘The days seemed like years’: Thessalos Prepares to Encounter the God Asklepios,” by Philip A. Harland; and “The Impact of Social and Economic Status on the Experience of Martyrdom: A Case Study of Perpetua and Felicitas,” by Lily Vuong. This last essay is the only one in the volume largely unrelated to the theme of purity; but women martyrs too were among Haber’s interests (see “*They Shall Purify*,” 75-91).

Part 3 (“The Mediaeval and Modern Periods”) includes three essays, tracing reverberations of purity concerns beyond antiquity. It includes: “Is Holiness Contagious,” by Martin I. Lockshin; “Sanctification and Shame: Bialik’s *In the City of Slaughter* in Light of Leviticus and Ezekiel,” by Yedida Eisenstat; and “Biblical Texts about Purity in Contemporary Christian Lectionaries,” by Eileen M. Schuller. The end matter includes a list of contributors, as well as indices of sources, authors, subjects, and foreign terms (Greek, Hebrew, and Latin). These helpful tools are followed by fourteen additional pages (unpaginated), providing an alphabetical index of the WUNT series in which this book appears.

Because of its thematic coherence, the volume holds together well, and therefore constitutes a much better read than the average memorial volume or festschrift. Yet because of its chronological sweep, only purity buffs will maintain the same level of interest throughout. Those willing to stretch will find the volume helpful in this regard: while biblical knowledge is presumed, readers are provided with extensive quotations from non-biblical sources, in both translation and original languages (e.g., from the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* in Vuong’s contribution; from Bialik’s *City of Slaughter* in Eisenstat’s). At the same time, the book is produced well for those with selective interests: footnotes are at the bottom of each page, and every chapter is followed by its own self-contained bibliography. So purity enthusiasts,

adventure-seekers, and cherry-pickers will all find this volume eminently usable for their needs.

The level of scholarship runs high throughout the volume, though the contributions are in other ways uneven. Some of the essays are in-depth studies of purity by leading experts in this topic (e.g., Schwartz, Kazen). Others are (admittedly) first-time probings into this topic by scholars known primarily for other things (e.g., Ben Zvi, Mason). Some of the essays are rather up-to-date (e.g., Kazen, Runesson). A few others seem to have been completed earlier in this book’s period of production (e.g., Mason). While most run the expected fifteen to twenty pages, the essays by Wassen, Kazen and Runesson run thirty pages or more. It is likely no coincidence that these three are among the four essays that engage Haber’s work most thoroughly (the fourth is Schuller’s). And all four of these writers touchingly refer also to unfinished conversations about these matters with Haber (Wassen, p. 55, n. 1; Kazen, p. 113, n. 5; Runesson, p. 145, n. 4; Schuller, p. 283).

Wassen’s essay (“Do you Have to be Pure in a Metaphorical Temple?”) dialogues extensively, and productively, with Haber’s essay, “Metaphor and Meaning in the Dead Sea Scrolls” (in “*They Shall Purify*,” pp. 93-124). One of Haber’s contributions was to call attention to the fact that the community-as-temple analogy—in evidence at Qumran and the New Testament—is first and foremost a metaphor, not a literal identification. Reviewing the evidence and arguments—and accepting Haber’s overall approach with regard to purity and metaphor—Wassen answers the question posed in her title with a yes: one must indeed be literally pure (ritually and/or morally) in these metaphorical temples.

Kazen’s essay on the *zavah* (a woman with an irregular menstrual flow) is an extended and productive dialogue with Haber’s essay, “A Woman’s Touch: Feminist Encounters with the Hemorrhaging Woman in Mark 5:24-34” (in “*They Shall Purify*,” pp. 125-141). Kazen finds points of agreement

to be sure, but by the end he questions, politely and respectfully, Haber's efforts to relegate the role that ritual purity plays in this story of healing.

Runesson's essay productively engages yet other aspects of Haber's work. In arguing for the significance of Jerusalem and the temple for Matthew, Runesson appreciatively cites Haber's essay, "Going up to Jerusalem: Purity, Pilgrimage, and the Historical Jesus" (in *"They Shall Purify,"* pp. 181-206). Runesson lends further support to those, like Haber, who believed Jesus did in fact follow purity laws. Runesson argues, moreover, that some of these interests remained important, in various ways, subsequently as well.

Schuller's essay on Christian lectionary texts may seem like an odd fit for the volume when judged by its title alone. That is until one begins reading it and learns that in 2005 Haber reviewed a work bearing the title *Preaching the Gospels without Blaming the Jews*.^[2] Even some experts may not know that various purity texts—including the Mark 5 passage that is the main subject of Kazen's essay (and Haber's own essay before that)—are included within contemporary Christian lectionaries. In addition to engaging with Haber's work, Schuller's essay reminds us all that attitudes toward purity remain unsettled topics within religious communities. Haber's own work, therefore, is not only academically important, but significant in broader ways as well.

I have focused here on these four essays for they include the most sustained engagement with Haber's work. Other essays on offer here are clearly inspired by Haber's purity interests, even when they lack engagement with or citation of her published work. Yet a number of the essays do acknowledge Haber's work in one way or another. Index browsers beware: there are many more references to Haber and her work within the volume than the author index would suggest.

There is no editorial conclusion or afterword. Upon reaching the end of the book, readers will

do well to reread Rabbi David Seed's essay, pausing on the last line: "Even in death, Susan's words and deeds will continue to speak to many for generations to come, and we are the better for it" (p. 6). This statement—the volume's thesis—is indisputable.

Notes

[1]. Susan Haber, *"They Shall Purify Themselves": Essays on Purity in Early Judaism*, ed. Adele Reinhartz, *Early Judaism and its Literature* 24 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008).

[2]. Haber's review was published in the online *Review of Biblical Literature* in June 2005, and can be found at: http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/4308_4288.pdf. The volume Haber reviewed is R. J. Allen and C. M. Williamson, *Preaching the Gospels without Blaming the Jews: A Lectionary Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004).

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