"A man may not put on filthy clothes:" Impurity, clothing and ritual agency in the book of the twelve and beyond.

Abstract

What do filthy clothes signify? What does a filthy robe represent and how does it relate to the body wearing it?

The value of metaphorical language as interpretation and reception of purity regulations is easily overlooked. A filthy cloth can mean different things in different contexts, and impurity language in prophetic literature may or may not allude directly to an operative purity system. However, the significance of wearing clean clothes is repeated in the Hebrew Bible and in Qumran, and these regulations and the rituals they apply to seem to have produced conventional ideas and language about impurity. (Some of them are still efficient in religious language of today.)

The Hebrew Bible does not present one coherent purity system, but contains various regulations, as well as stories and imagery that evoke purity language. The latter is found relatively often in the prophetic literature, in particular within moral (and ritual) discourse. Ideas about purity, arguably affect language about ritual in the prophetic literature. Moreover, ideas about purity and ritual produce ideas about bodies. In this way purity language intersects with language about bodies and gender.

This paper examines prophetic literature that makes use of impurity language. Reading with an intersectional lens, I will focus on the intersection of gender and purity in moral discourse. As a case, this paper examines (un)dressing rituals and (un)dressing metaphors in Zech 3:3–5 and Isaiah 3:16–26. How are morality, ritual agency, and bodies represented in these texts?

(Un)dressing rituals and (un)dressing metaphors in Zech 3:3–5 and Isaiah 3:16–26 (–4)

This paper is part of my project "(Im)purity, clothing and ritual agency in prophetic literature and beyond." My overarching questions are: How do ideas about purity affect language about ritual in the prophetic literature? And how do ideas about purity and ritual produce ideas about bodies (in this literature and beyond)?

My method is to do historical exegesis with a lens![1] I have been particularly interested in purity language that intersects with bodies and gender. There has been done feministic studies on both impurity and prophetic metaphors. I want to do both, by looking at prophetic metaphors from an intersectional perspective. Where e.g. Oylan focuses on the intersection of

1. This approach is inspired from Anna Rebecca Solevåg's study *Negotiating the Disabled body* (Solevåg: 2018), where she uses a Disability Studies Lens (e.g. Illness and Eaglyness, Monster theory, Reading the body to reveal the soul, Body and land as topographies of Evil). See also Marianne Bjelland Kartzow on intersectionality in *Destabilizing the Margins, 2012.*

gender and purity in ritual and tolerated impurities (Oylan: 2019,160), my emphasis is on moral impurity, and sin-language. How is impurity embodied, and how does it reflect on the bodies described in the text?

Scholars of the Hebrew Bible, Qumran and New Testament have long been engaged with the interpretation of the purity system, its ideas and functions.[2] In the context of the Hebrew Bible, the Pentateuch (and more specifically Leviticus) presents various purity regulations. Where some scholars see a coherent purity system (e.g Milgrom), others have emphasised its complexity. Most influential is Jonathan Klawans,[3] which makes a clear distinction between two kinds of defilement: ritual and moral impurity.[4] Where ritual impurity results from e.g. contact with objects that are impure, and is only a temporarily defilement (Lev 11–15; Num 19), moral impurity, results from committing abominations that defile the sinner.[5] One can not recover from moral impurity without the intervention from Yahweh. I am mainly interested in how ideas about (im)purity are attested in the prophetic literature, in particular within moral discourse. It can be difficult to categorise the metaphorical language of the prophetic literature, and its value as reception of the purity system is easily overlooked. Klawans only mentions prophetic texts briefly in his book *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism (2000)*, and as examples of what he calls moral impurity (e.g. Ezek 36:17).

Using the term 'metaphorical' in association with impurity texts is not unproblematic, since it has been used to describe and categorise cases of impurity that is not related to ritual purity, such as Lev 18:24–25 (see the debate in Klawans, p. 32–36). I use the term metaphorical in a broad sense, to refer to all texts that use figurative language, and not in order to distinguish moral purity from ritual/real impurity. Jonathans Klawans distinction between ritual and moral impurity has proven to be effective, though there are still reasons to negotiate some of the sharp lines in his paradigm. One of these being the fact that moral impurity is related to bodily defilement, which again triggers the state of being ritual (and temporarily) impure.

---

2. See e.g. Hanna K. Harrington, "Ritual Purity," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Contemporary Culture: Proceedings of the International Conference held at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (July 6–8, 2008)*, ed. A.D. Roitman, L. Schiffman, and S. Tzoref, STDJ (Brill, 2011). See also Susan Haber and Adele Reinhartz, *'They Shall Purify Themselves': Essays on Purity in Early Judaism*, Atlanta: SBL, 2008.

3. The contribution of Klawans has been influential in the recent debate, and most scholars seem to accept his distinction, e.g. Elizabeth W. Goldstein, *Impurity and Gender in the Hebrew Bible* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 3–5; Mira Balberg, *Purity, Body, and Self in Early Rabbinic Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 129. In line with Klawans argument, Wassen underlines that impurity, as regulated in the Torah, is not a sin, and not something one would avoid, Cecilia Wassen, "The Jewishness of Jesus and Ritual Purity," *in Jewish Studies in the Nordic countries today* 27 (2016).

4. Latest in Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 53.

5. Ibid., 55.

E.g. Num 12,9–15. (Kazen 2010). One question that remains is: What does ritual purity has to do with ethics, and what does moral purity has to do with ritual practice?[6]

(Among other things) purity relates to rituals performed by human beings, and their bodies. According to Leviticus the priests must be holy: this implies their bodies, clothes and the way of living. When Haggai–Malachi criticise the priests of being impure, this has to do both with how they perform their rituals, and also their way of living. The idea 'purity' although is mainly associated with the temple and rituals performed there, though its general imagery and language appears to have a wider influence.

This paper is a test case for my project, and presents a first exegetical case study of Isaiah 3–4 and Zech 3. These are texts that make use of impurity language, and convey images of ritual purification. The two textual passages, the commissioning of Joshua (Zech 3:3–5), and the oracle against the daughters of Zion (Isaiah 3:16–26), describe people wearing clothes, and these being removed. Where the daughters of Zion wear fine clothes (מַחֲלָצוֹת), turbans (צָנִיף) and jewellery that are being stripped off (סור) by Yahweh, Joshua wears filthy clothes that are exchanged (סור) with festal robes (מַחֲלָצוֹת) and a clean turban (הַצָּנִיף הַטָּהוֹר). In both texts, the removal of filth, is performed by others than the individual themselves. The angel orders Joshua's filthy cloth to be stripped off (Zech 3:4), and Yahweh himself will wash away the filth of Zion's daughters (Isa 4:4).[7]

This is a preliminary analysis, and the paper can only provide some indications, and at best give directions, for my further research.

Human (Im)purity: More than Metaphors

In the Hebrew Bible, the state achieved by sinning is sometimes described as being filthy, or wearing a filthy rag. The "filth" may symbolise or represent a moral defilement, and thus be self inflicted (e.g Zech 3, Mal 3), or it can be an embodied consequence of Yahweh's punishment (e.g. Isa 3). In both cases, atonement and restoration is associated with purification and cleansing. The filth can be washed away, and a filthy cloth can be exchanged with a clean one.

6. Rogan Wil, "Purity in Early Judism: Current Issues and Questions" *Currents in Biblical Research* 16 (3), 320.

7. Note to self: See also Isa 52– restoration of Sion–dress in fine clothes! בִּגְדֵי תִפְאַרְתֵּךְ (Exod 28:2; Ezek 16:39; 23:26).

Jacob Neusner states that "purity and impurity are not hygienic categories,"[8] yet, sin and impurity are associated in the prophetic imagination. Both Zech 3:3–5 and Isaiah 3:16–26, at least in the context of Isa 1–4, can arguably be read as examples of this:

> "Wash yourself clean" (Isa 1:16) and
> "…. once the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst" (Isa 4:4).
>
> "Take off his filthy clothes." And to him he said, "See, I have taken your guilt away from you, and I will clothe you with festal apparel." (Zech 3:4)

The oracle against Zion's daughters are by most scholars read as a description of the women in Jerusalem (e.g. Kaiser, Watts and Roberts). Their humiliation, Yahweh's punishment, is a consequence of their behaviour, and their eschatological "purification" (4:4) describes Yahweh's future intervention. The vision in Zech 3:3–5 describes the commissioning of Joshua. Joshua is wearing a filthy rag. As a representative for the people, he wears his guilt. In the following I will examine these texts, Zechariah first, and then Isaiah. What does filthy clothes signify? How does it relate to the body wearing it?

A vision. The commissioning of Joshua the high priest

The commissioning of Joshua in Zech 3:3–5, the fourth out of eight visions, presents Joshua, wearing filthy clothes as he stands in front of an angel. The angel orders the removal of his filthy clothes, and says to Joshua: "See, I have taken your guilt (עֲוֹנֶךָ) away from you, and I will clothe you with festal apparel." Thus the festal apparel, by contrast, corresponds to his guilt. Joshua's filthy clothes, as a symbol of his "guilt," are now exchanged with festal robes (מַחֲלָצוֹת) and a clean turban (הַצָּנִיף הַטָּהוֹר). Zechariah has a concern for the priestly role, and the restoration of the high priestly office, and in light of the larger contexts, the removal of Joshuas guilt, also reflects the restoration of the people (Zech 3:9). According to Mark J. Boda, Zech 3:1–10 announces Yahweh's defence of Joshua (3:1–2) and shows how the restoration of his line provides hope for the removal of guilt from the nation as a whole (3:9).[9]

---

8. Jacob Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism. The Haskell Lectures, 1972–1973* (Leiden, Brill, 1973), 1.

9. Boda generally sees influences from Jeremiah, and penitential themes, at least in Zechariah 7. Mark Boda, "Zechariah: Master Mason or Penitential Prophet?". Pages 49–69 in *Yahwism after the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Era, Papers read at the first Meeting of the European Association for Biblical Studies, Utrecht, 6–9 August, 2000*, Edited by Albertz and Becking. Assen: Royal van Gorcum, 2003.

הוֹשֻׁעַ הָיָה לָבֻשׁ בְּגָדִים צוֹאִים וְעֹמֵד לִפְנֵי הַמַּלְאָךְ׃
4 וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָעֹמְדִים לְפָנָיו לֵאמֹר הָסִירוּ הַבְּגָדִים הַצֹּאִים מֵעָלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו רְאֵה הֶעֱבַרְתִּי מֵעָלֶיךָ עֲוֹנֶךָ וְהַלְבֵּשׁ אֹתְךָ מַחֲלָצוֹת׃
5 וָאֹמַר יָשִׂימוּ צָנִיף טָהוֹר עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ וַיָּשִׂימוּ הַצָּנִיף הַטָּהוֹר עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ וַיַּלְבִּשֻׁהוּ בְּגָדִים וּמַלְאַךְ יְהוָה עֹמֵד

Now Joshua was dressed with filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. **4** The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." And to him he said, "See, I have taken your guilt away from you, and I will clothe you with festal apparel." **5** And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with the apparel; and the angel of the LORD was standing by (NRSV)

Zechariah generally does not appear to refer to the Pentateuch (at least its core visions, 1:7–6:15) (Collins 2017).[10] Although the dressing ritual in Zechariah evokes rules for the priestly office (On clothings Exod 28–29; Lev 9), and also (v3:9) ritual for the day of atonement (Lev 16,4), the passage does not allude to the Pentateuch as one might would expect.

The prescriptions concerning priesthood temple service demands cleansing and clean clothes (e.g. Exod 29; Lev 8:6–9, 16:4. See also Ezek 40–48). According to Lev 8, Aron and his sons are washed (רחצ) with water, then dressed, then anointed. There are also ritual for atoning sin (8:14). In Leviticus the sin is represented by the ox. Zechariah 3:4 does not have a concern for cleansing with water, but refers to the removal of "your guilt" (עונך), represented by the filthy clothes that are taken off. Joshua's filthy clothes are then exchanged with festal robes (מַחֲלָצוֹת) and a pure head garment (Zech 3:4–5). The term מחלצות is found only once elsewhere in HB, in the list of headgear that are taken from the daughters of Zion (Isa 3:22). There appears to be also another terminological parallel with Isaiah: Isa 4:4 (צאה). The term "filthy" צאי, repeated in Zech 3:3–4 is a hapax legomenon (צאי)– yet echoed (quoted?) in CD 11:3. Boda suggests that there might be an association with Isa 4:4 (צאה). (Boda:2017, 120–123). The lexical links between Zechariah and Isaiah might suggest that Zechariah alludes to Isaiah. Mark Boda argues that the reuse of Isaiah serves to remind the priest of former fall, and cast as shadow over the priestly investiture event (Boda:2017, 119).[11]

---

10. John J. Collins, *The Invention of Judaism. Torah and Jewish Identity from Deuteronomy to Paul* (California: University of California Press, 2017), 45. Cf. Collins suggest that Haggai refers to a priestly judgment, thus refuting e.g. Meyers note that Haggai 2 anticipates some form of the Pentateuch. See Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 1st ed. (Garden City: The Anchor Bible, 1987).

11. Traces of ideology of temple rebuilding in Achaemenid Judah. Key motifs in Haggai–Zechariah are Yahweh's return to Zion/Jerusalem and Yahweh's kingship. Bedford argues that Haggai and Zechariah draw especially on monarchical traditions and oracles against nations, and are influenced by historical experience of divine abandonment and loss of statehood. See Bedford, Peter R. *Temple Restoration early Achaemenid Judah*, SJSJ (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 261.

How does purity language work within this text? Clothes signal status. In the poetic language of the Hebrew Bible, clothes may also signals moral status. A fine cloth can signify a righteous person, e.g "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban" (Job 29:14) (Isa 61:10). Filthy clothes, on the other hand, can signify guilt (e.g Mal 2:16).[12] (See also Is. 64:6 "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.") In this case, Joshuas clothes symbolises both moral status, and his profession (e.g. priestly dressing). (Cf. Exod 29:21– "both him and his clothes are holy.")

Ritual purity is a prerequisite for sacrifice, and the ritual purity of the high priest is clearly in view here. The festal robes (מַחֲלָצוֹת) and the pure head garment (Zech 3:4–5), which replaces the filthy clothes, signifies holiness. Ultimately, Joshua is honoured. According to Zech 6:9–14, Joshua will also receive a crown of silver and gold. Hence, the dressing ritual is both part of an atonement and a restoration act. The dressing ritual, at least in Zech 6, is also linked to the figure of *Zemah* (Zech 6:12), and the rebuilding of the temple.

The atonement of guilt (עון) is part of a ritual, the commissioning of Joshua the high priest, and ritual language relates to the metaphor "dirt is sin." (Grabbe speaks of a metaphor of ritual purity in the description of the high priest Joshua in Zech 3: "The priest suffers metaphorical impurity because of the exile."[13] The purity language found in Zechariah (Haggai and Malachi) does resemble previous prophets, such as Ezekiel 40–48.[14] Hence, the purity concern can be interpreted (intertextually) in light of the exilic prophets.)

In order to summarise: Ritual and moral purity appears to be in a blend here. The description of Joshua is prompted by the ritual, and imagery is taken from conventional metaphors about sin and purity. In the case of Joshua, there is less emphasis on the body, rather his identity and status is signalled by his clothings. In comparison, the iniquity of the land is represented another time as a woman in the ephah (Zech 5:6). Where Joshua's filthy cloth is exchanged with clean garment, the woman in the ephah jar is flown away.

---

12. Cf. Isaiah 7 and the mouthpiece, Haggai pure hands.

13. On sacrificial system in Persian period, see Lester L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, Library of Second Temple studies (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 219.

14. See e.g the uncleanness of the nation (Ezek 39:24); concerning holy clothes (Ezek 42:14); Linen vestments (Ezek 44:17–19).

Isaiah 3:16–26 (4:3–4) The daughters of Zion

> The LORD said: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, tinkling with their feet; the Lord will afflict with scabs the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will [15]make the front of their heads bald.
> In that day the Lord will take away the finery of the anklets, the headbands, and the crescents; the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarfs; the headdresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and the amulets; the signet rings and nose rings; the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags; the garments of gauze, the linen garments, the turbans, and the veils. Instead of perfume there will be a stench; and instead of a sash, a rope; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a rich robe, a binding of sackcloth; instead of beauty, shame. (NRSV 16–24)

Impurity as punishment

The oracle against the daughters of Zion (Isa 3:16–26) can be read as part of the larger sequence in Isaiah 1–5. It follows descriptions of Judas wickedness (2:6–12; 3:12), an announcement of judgment (3:13–14), and is followed by visions of future restoration (4:4).

Of special interest here, is the prediction: "the Lord will afflict with scabs the heads of the daughters of Zion" וְשִׂפַּח אֲדֹנָי קָדְקֹד בְּנוֹת צִיּוֹן. The term שׂפח (here וְשִׂפַּח piel perf.) "to cause scab," is not found in laws concerning skin diseases (e.g Lev 13), but it evokes Num 12, where Miriam is punished by a skin disease (צרע), and has to remain outside the camp for seven days (v 14). The humiliating punishment of Zion's daughters, first scabs on their heads and baldness, then removal of all jewellery and signs of their wealth, correspond with the reason for judgment: their pride (3:16). It is Yahweh whom will take off (סור) their glory (תפארת). The stripping of their clothes and jewellery is ultimately a disgrace: from perfume to stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-set hair, baldness; instead of a rich robe, a binding of sackcloth; instead of beauty, shame (v. 24)

The new state of the Zion's daughters is not explicitly described as being impure, but skin disease does render one impure (cf. Lev 13:11, Num 12. See also skin disease on the head in Lev 13:29). The stench (v. 24) (of the rotten skin?) also indicates impurity. Most explicit however, is the reference in 4:4, which declares that Yahweh shall wash away the filth of the daughters of Sion. Isa 4:4 appears to combine two motifs from Isa 1–4, first the encouragement to wash up their hands covered with blood (1:16), and also the description of

15. NRSV reads "lay bare their secret parts."

Zion's daughters (3:16). The combination of these two motifs creates a blend in Isa 4:4, which suggests that Sion's daughters represent more than the women of Jerusalem. Their filth, is associated with more than their pride, and one may associate with their wickedness– e.g. exploiting of the poor (Isa 3:14).

Who are the daughters of Zion (בְּנוֹת צִיּוֹן)?

In Isaiah 3–4 the construct phrase with the plural form בְּנוֹת צִיּוֹן is repeated twice in the first passage which describes there pride (3:16), and then their punishment (3:17), and then a third time their purification (4:4). Elsewhere in Isaiah, there is only the singular בת ציון (e.g Isa 1:8, 16:1).

The oracle resembles the oracles against the nations elsewhere in Isaiah (e.g. 47:1, Nahum 3), only the plural reference has made scholars read this as an oracle against the actual women in Jerusalem. On this note, Kaiser explains "From Jeremiah 4:30 we know that Israel women used make–up" (Otto Kaiser, 1972:48), and further: "It must be noted that the prophet is not attacking female beauty culture as such, but the pride of those who practise it, and who allow themselves to be led by their sensual desires (...)" Similarly, Watts does not seem to read this figuratively (Watts, 44). (See also Roberts in Hermeneia "This appears to be a general term for the society women of Jerusalem, young and old alike").[16] Clearly, the oracle describes women, and reflects gendered bias. Yet, according to my reading of the oracle and its the larger context, and more specifically Isa 4:3, indicate that this oracle is directed against all inhabitant of Jerusalem. The humiliation of Zion's daughters is in line with the repeated humiliation motifs in Isa 1–2 (cf. Isa 1:30, 2:9.11 and 17). The city Zion is conceptualised with feminine gender, corresponding to the noun עיר,[17] e.g Lam 1:28 "Jerusalem sinned grievously, so she has become a mockery; all who honoured her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans, and turns her face away." The basic metaphorical blend, the city is a woman, has here created a lower–level metaphorical blend– the inhabitants of the city are Sion's daughters (see Lundhaug on Idealized Cognitive Models (ICM):76). That the figurative language refers to the inhabitants of the city, and not solely its women, is supported larger context. (See the discussion in Kartveit 2013, pp 64, 71).[18]

---

16. Roberts, J.J.M. *First Isaiah: A Commentary,* Hermeneia, Minneapolis: 2015, 60.

17. See Hanne Løland on cities and gender "In HB cities are often portrayed as personified women, mothers, virgins prostitutes, and so on." and "feminisation happens without mentioning the term" (Løland, 82).

18. On Zion/geographical name as nomen rectum, See Kartveit, *Rejoice!* 2013.

Verses 25–26, first remain within the metaphor, adding "your men" (v. 25) and "your gates" (v. 26), then ultimately concludes with the conventional Zion metaphor (cf. Lam).

Purification as atonement?

3 וְהָיָה הַנִּשְׁאָר בְּצִיּוֹן וְהַנּוֹתָר בִּירוּשָׁלִַם קָדוֹשׁ יֵאָמֶר לוֹ כָּל־הַכָּתוּב לַחַיִּים בִּירוּשָׁלִָם׃
4 אִם רָחַץ אֲדֹנָי אֶת צֹאַת בְּנוֹת־צִיּוֹן וְאֶת־דְּמֵי יְרוּשָׁלִַם יָדִיחַ מִקִּרְבָּהּ בְּרוּחַ מִשְׁפָּט וּבְרוּחַ בָּעֶר׃

> **3** Whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, **4** once the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning בָּעֶר.

What is "the filth" of Jerusalem's daughters, and what does this imagery imply? The specific terminology in Isa 4:4a, to wash (רחצ) away the filth (צוא), implies filthy bodies. The term filth (צוא) is associated with filthy clothes in Zech 3 and CD 11:3. Yet, the verb רחצ is generally used to denote the washing of feet and hands (Isa 1:16; 4:4; 28:8; 36:12; Prov 30:12), or the entire body (See e.g Ezek 16:9). The verb כבס is more often used to denote the washing of clothes and garments (c.f. Lev 14,8; Lev 15;5).[19] (Exceptions are Jer 2:2; 4:14). Thus the specific terminology evokes more than the description of Zion's daughters in Isa 3:16. It also includes the larger context, e.g Isaiah 1:15–16 which claims that "Your hands are full of blood (יְדֵיכֶם דָּמִים) and exhorts "wash yourself clean" (רַחֲצוּ הִזַּכּוּ). The gendered imagery, however, may imply female impurity, yet this is only implicit. The reference to אֶת צֹאַת is part of a parallelistic structure, which creates a larger blended imagery. The description of cleansing/purging in Isa 4:4 mentions first "the filth of the daughters of Zion," then "the bloodstains of Jerusalem." The reference to "blood stains of Jerusalem" may generally refer to war (jf Isa 9:5 "garments rolled in blood"), and is best read as a reference to the warriors 3:25. In this way Isa 4:4 summarises the larger passage both Isa 3:16–26.

The "purification" is performed by a spirit of judgment and burning. The term בָּעֶר "burning" (piel inf.) can be understood in the sense "remove" (cf. the vineyard passages Isa 3:13; 5:5), or purge evil out of your midst (e.g. Deut 22:22). There are also other references

19. In the Pentateuch the verb כבס is associated with the washing of garments. Note the used of כבס in the following texts: "But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap כְּבֹרֵית מְכַבְּסִים" (Mal. 3:2), "Wash כבס me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Ps 51:2) "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me כבס, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps 51:7). What images are conveyed by these metaphoric blends? Do the language imply that the subject purifies his/her body or garments?

to purification from impurity within the larger context (Isa 1–5). The imagery in Isa 1:18 implies filthy garments. Their sins (חטא) are like scarlet, and Yahweh will make them white as snow/woll (1:18). Note also the imagery where purification is recovered by heat/fire as in Isa 1:25, Yahweh will purge/rinse Jerusalem (צרף) (cf. Isa 48:10; Mal 3:2).

Disgracing and disabling women

Isaiah 3–4 conveys patriarchal ideology. In the larger context, the idolatry/harlotry motif (city is a whore) is found only once in Isa 1:21. In the oracle against Zion's daughters this is not in view, although the rhetorical strategy resembles it: The daughters are exposed and stripped of their pride and beauty (cf. Nineveh in Nah 3 and wife of Hosea in Hos 2:9–10,13). The descriptions may serve to arouse abasement and disgust– and encourage improved behaviour, such as exhorted in Isa 1:15–16.

Isaiah 3 must be read within the cultural rules that they function within (the cultural model). Evidently this implies ideas about the body. The ancient conception of normate/disability, intersects with ideas about purity and gender etc.[20] The stripping of fine jewellery, clothes, and even the hair, is not mere humiliation acts. The bodies will be inflicted with scab, and the stench implies rotting of the skin. The consequence of the sickness implied, is poverty and isolation. The reference to baldness and burning (v 24), may also imply enslavement.[21] Both scab and baldness are stigmatising, and the oracle functions as disability invective (Solevåg: 2018, 115). Similar kinds of oracles may serve to attack an adversary. Here it seems to act as a warning (cf. Isa 20).

The power of metaphorical language

The two passages (Zech 3 and Isaiah 3–4) are situated in different contexts, both literary and rhetorically, but in their own ways they do reflect conceptions of (im)purity. Both texts use images of ritual purification, and describe bodies and clothes within a world that relates to purity. In what sense do they reflect a purity-system, and what does these filthy clothes signify within this system?

20. Normate: "the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configuration and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authoriry and wield the power it grants them" (Solevåg: 2019, 7).

21. The term 'burning' is lacking in LXX; and Isaa (DSS) reads כי not as a noun, rather "instead of beauty, shame cf. NRSV (Watts: 1985, 44) (cf. Isa 43:2, Prov 6:28).

There have been different ways to understand how texts such as these reflect a purity system. As already noted, Klawans makes a clear distinction between two kinds of defilement: moral and ritual impurity.[22] This distinction between ritual and moral purity, is partly triggered and developed in opposition to those arguing that moral purity is to be regarded as metaphorical or figurative, and thus secondary.[23] This does not mean that Klawans does not categorise some passages, as "figurative in nature." Klawans does not comment upon Zechariah, but he sees Isaiah 1:15–17 as an example where language of ritual purity and purification is used metaphorically to illustrate righteousness or atonement, "the image of ritual purification serves to illustrate the atonement for which the prophet is calling" (2000: 35). Hence, prophetic texts which criticise the cult, and make use of metaphors related to purity (e.g. Hos 5:3, 6:10; Ezek 36:17), fall outside of Klawans' analytic system.[24]).

As a metaphor, Zechariah may attest to how ideas about purity was conveyed in the Persian period, in how it affects the description of Joshua and the ritual of his commissioning as high priest. Isaiah reflect an earlier notion of purity. The oracle's description of impurity as punishment, and purification as atonement, also reflect a symbolic system, formed by rituals (Mary Douglas).[25] There is no reason to suspect that purity, as a symbolic system, is unable of change. Hence, the prophetic literature may reflect competing ideas. However, in both Zech 3 and Isaiah 3, ritual and moral purity seems to be associated (not necessarily conflated!).

Recent theories on metaphors (cognitive science) suggest that blended metaphors may be projected back onto the source (e.g blend: If a sinner (target space) is associated with someone (ritually or morally) impure (source space), the blended meaning is that the sinner is in fact impure. These projections are especially relevant when notions of impurity intersect with gender. Elizabeth W. Goldstein shows how prophetic rhetoric both create and substantiate a negative relationship between the menstruating body and the God of Israel. The term *ndh*, a menstruating woman, even becomes synonymous with being impure (cf. Ezra 9:11; Zech 13:1).[26] A similar argument can be raised concerning the feminisation of Israels enemies (c.f. Nahum 3:5–6), and also Jerusalem's inhabitants in the oracles against Zion's daughters.

---

22. Latest in Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 53.

23. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 32–34, 41.

24. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 36.

25. *"Rituals form symbolic systems that not only articulate ideas, but serves to enforce them*"

26. Goldstein, E., *Impurity and Gender*, 2.

Summary/Conclusion

Initially, I asked the questions: What does filthy clothes signify, and how does it relate to the body wearing it? (I also asked asked: How are conceptualisations of human (im)purity are interrelated with the (ritual and) moral status?)

First of all, both texts associate impurity with Israel's iniquity. Where the filthy clothes that Joshua is wearing represent Israel's former sin which led to the exile, Zion's daughters filthy clothes represent their punishment: humiliation and loss of privilege. Chronologically, one could say that Zechariah remembers what Isaiah anticipates. The two "scenes" describes both undressing and re-dressing. In Isaiah there is humiliation and punishment, and Yahweh is stripping and inflicting their bare heads with skin disease. In Zechariah the angel of Yahweh commands those who stood in front of him, to remove the filthy clothes, and dress him with a turban and clean clothes. The ritual serves to atone guilt, and prepare Joshua for his positions as high priest.

The two conceptualisations of human (im)purity differs on several points. Neither of the two passages mentions the impurity (טָמֵא) of the people (cf. Haggai 2:14), but both texts describe embodied (im)purity and "guilt" manifested as filth on bodies or clothes. Where the oracle in Isaiah uses impurity imagery to describe anticipated punishments, the vision in Zechariah uses impurity imagery to describes Joshua and his people's moral status. Moreover, where the impurity of Zion's daughters is associated with baldness and skin disease, and fine clothes exchanged with rags, Joshua's moral and ritual status only involves his body.

This very brief analysis does not give enough data to say something generally about gender and embodied impurity. Yet, the prophetic imagination is guided by gender roles. Women suffer embodied impurity, whereas Joshua wears a filthy robe. Where Joshua receives a clean garment as a sign of ritual purity, Zion's daughter's are washed.

The two textual cases does not quote purity regulations from the Pentateuch. Neither Isaiah nor Zechariah presuppose the Pentateuch as we know it, but both texts reflect some notion of (im)purity as found within e.g. Leviticus.[27] Both texts regard the uncleanness as a state that needs resolution and intervention from Yahweh.[28] The purity language found in the

27. According to Jacob Milgrom, bodily impurities focus on four phenomena: death, blood, semen, scale disease, see *Leviticus 1–16. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* New York: Anchor, Doubleday, 1991, 1002. See also "The Impurity System" in ibid., 641.

28. Dirt, or uncleanness is a matter out of place. Defilement occurs only in view of a systematic ordering of ideas. see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, Routledge classics (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 44, 51.

prophetic literature both confirm and reformulate cultural ideas about gender and bodies. In this way they do reflect a purity system.

Bibliography

Balberg, Mira. *Purity, Body, and Self in Early Rabbinic Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.
———. "Ritual Studies and the Study of Rabbinic Literature" *in Currents in Biblical Research* Vol.16 (1), 2017, 71–98.

Bell, Catherine. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions.* Oxford: Oxford Unity Press, 1997.

Berquist, Jon L., Alice Hunt, and Douglas A. Knight. *Focusing Biblical Studies: The Crucial Nature of the Persian and Hellenistic Periods: Essays in Honor of Douglas A. Knight*. New York: T & T Clark, 2012.

Boda, Mark. *Exploring Zechariah Vol 1. The Development of Zechariah and Its Role within the Twelve.* Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017.
———."Zechariah: Master Mason or Penitential Prophet?" Pages 49–69 in *Yahwism after the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Era, Papers read at the first Meeting of the European Association for Biblical Studies, Utrecht, 6–9 August, 2000*, Edited by Albertz and Becking. Assen: Royal van Gorcum, 2003.

Breed, Brennan W. *Nomadic Text: A Theory of Biblical Reception History*. Indiana studies in biblical literature. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014.

Chapman, Cynthia R. *The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian Encounter*. Harvard Semitic monographs. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004.

Collins, John J. *The Invention of Judaism. Torah and Jewish Identity from Deuteronomy to Paul*. California: University of California Press, 2017.

Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*. Routledge classics. London: Routledge, 2005.

Edelman, Diana Vikander. *The Origins of the 'Second' Temple: Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem*. 1st ed. London: Equinox, 2005.

Fauconnier, Gilles and Mark Turner, "Conceptual Integration Models," in *Cognitive Science*, Vol 22 (2), 1998, 133–187.

Goldstein, Elizabeth W. *Impurity and Gender in the Hebrew Bible*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015.

Grabbe, Lester L. *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*. Library of Second Temple studies. London; New York: T & T Clark International, 2004.

Harrington, Hanna K. "Ritual Purity." Pages 327–47 in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Contemporary Culture: Proceedings of the International Conference held at the Israel*

Museum, Jerusalem (July 6–8, 2008). Edited by Adolfo D. Roitman, L. H. Schiffmann and S. Tzoref. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

Kaiser, Otto. *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library. 1972.

Kartveit, Magnar, *Rejoice, Dear Zion! Hebrew Construct Phrases with "Daughter" and Virgin as Nomen Regens* BZAW 447, Berlin: Gruyter, 2013.

Kazen, Thomas. *Jesus and Purity Halakhah: Was Jesus indifferent to impurity?* Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010.

Kartzow, Marianne Bjelland (2012), *Destabilizing the Margins: An Intersectional Approach to Early Christian Memory*, Eugene: Pickwick.

———. '"Asking the Other Question': An Intersectional Approach to the Galatians 3:28 and the Colossian Household Codes," Biblical Interpretation 18, Brill, 364–389.

Klawans, Jonathan. *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
———. *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Lundhaug, Hugo. *Images of Rebirth. Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of Philip and the Exegesis on the Soul.* Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Meyers, Carol L. and Eric M. Meyers. *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible. 1st ed. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987.

Milgrom, Jacob. *Leviticus 1–16. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* New York: Anchor, 1991.

Neusner, Jacob. *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism. The Haskell Lectures, 1972-1973*. Leiden, Brill, 1973.

Oylan, Saul M. "Gender-Specific Pollution in the Hebrew Bible" in Bauks, Galor and Hartenstein (Eds.) *Gender and Social Norms in Ancient Israel, Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Texts and Material Culture.* JAJ Sup, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019.

Rogan Wil, "Purity in Early Judaism: Current Issues and Questions" Currents in Biblical Research Vol. 16, 2018, 309–339.

Smith, Jonathan Z. *Relating religion: Essays in the Study of Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Solevåg, Anna Rebecca. *Negotiating the Disabled Body: Representations of Disability in Early Christian Texts* (Early Christianity and Its Literature), Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018.

Wassen, Cecilia. "The Jewishness of Jesus and Ritual Purity." Pages 11–36 in *Jewish Studies in the Nordic countries today* 27 (2016).

Watts, John D. *Isaiah 1–33*, WBC, 1985.

Roberts, J.J.M. *First Isaiah: A Commentary,* Hermeneia, Minneapolis: 2015.