

A Gendered Reading of Purity and Boundaries: 4QTohorot A (4Q274) as a Case Study

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Abstract

To understand purity from both the male and the female perspective within the Qumran communities, this article will be using 4QTohorot A (4Q274) as a case study to: review the formation and function of gender within the manuscript; permit a broadening of the critique of purity to include a range of gender issues; enable a discussion of the position of women in relation to female purification laws; and permit exploration of the male perspective and experience from a masculinist perspective. By concentrating on the functionality of this particular scroll, further insights will be gained to understand the gendered and identity politics at play behind such strict purity regulations in order to discern—and to imagine—what it actually meant to be a constant threat of potential pollution within communities where purity ruled all aspects of everyday life, and how such regulations worked on a gendered level.

Keywords

purity – impurity – gender – 4QTohorot A (4Q274) – masculinities

1 Introduction

This article will take 4QTohorot A (4Q274) as a case study to review the formation and function of purity within the manuscript and permit a broadening of the construction of gender issues, which will not only enable a discussion of the position of women in relation to female purification laws, but will also enable an exploration of the male perspective and experience which is,

arguably, poorly understood and reported.¹ To understand purity from both the male and the female perspective within the Qumran communities, I will be focusing specifically on 4QTohorot A (4Q274). The communities behind 4QTohorot A (4Q274) can be significantly contrasted with, for example, the *yahad* who are, amongst other things, instructed to be “set apart as holy within the council of the men of the community” (1QS 8 10–11).² The communities behind 4Q274 appear to be of a lower socio-economic position and permitted a certain amount of leniency in relation to the expected purity laws. As an illustration, it is explicitly demanded in the text that there is an alternative rule made for the semen-emitter who “does not have the means” (4Q274 2 i 6–7) to change to another garment that has not been in contact with semen.³ By concentrating on the functionality of this particular scroll, further insights can be gained to understand the gender and identity politics at play behind the purity regulations in order to discern—and to imagine—what it actually meant to be a constant threat of potential pollution within communities where purity ruled all aspects of everyday life, and how the purification rulings worked on a gendered level.

The official publication of the fragmented manuscripts 4QTohorot A–C was produced in 1999 by Joseph Baumgarten.⁴ Baumgarten does not enter a discussion as to whether the fragments belonging to 4QTohorot A–C can be classified as sectarian. In contrast, Emanuel Tov has stated that scrolls which belong to the genre of *halakha*, such as 4QTohorot A–C, could be seen as sectarian,

- 1 The ideas and formation of the argument of this journal article are also explored in Jessica M. Keady, *Vulnerability and Valour: A Gendered Analysis of Everyday Life in the Dead Sea Scrolls Communities*, LSTS 91 (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).
- 2 John J. Collins, “Beyond the Qumran Community: Social Organization in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *DSD* 16 (2009): 351–69 (363).
- 3 J. M. Baumgarten, “4QTohorot A–C,” in *Qumran Cave 4. XXV: Halakhic Texts*, ed. J. M. Baumgarten and Józef Tadeusz Milik, DJD 35 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 80.
- 4 Baumgarten, DJD 35:79–122; Plates VIII–IX. Baumgarten named the texts 4Q274 (4QTohorot A), 4Q276 (4QTohorot B^a), 4Q277 (4QTohorot B^b), and 4Q278 (4QTohorot C). 4Q275 was originally assigned 4QTohorot B^a but it has now been entitled 4QCommunal Ceremony as the manuscript describes the entry into the Covenant, known from the Community Rule (1QS), and alludes to the festival the Feast of Weeks of Pentecost. For recent works relating to 4QTohorot A (4Q274), see Thomas Kazen, “4Q274 Fragment 1 Revisited or Who Touched Whom? Further evidence For Ideas of Graded Impurity and Graded Purifications,” *DSD* 17 (2010): 53–87; Cecilia Wassén, “The (Im)purity Levels of Communal Meals within the Qumran Movement,” *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 7/1 (2016): 102–22, which includes a lengthy analysis on 4Q274, and eadem, “Purity Laws for Men and Women in the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Comparison of Ideals and Praxis,” in *Frauen im antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum*, ed. Jörg Frey and Nicole Rupschus, WUNT 2/489 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 57–84, which discusses male and female impurities in particular with regard to 4Q274.

although too little is known about them to give a definitive answer.⁵ This article will be based on the content of 4QTohorot A (4Q274). Baumgarten has stated that the script of 4Q274 is written on relatively small strips of leather and can be dated to the early Herodian period.⁶ Tov has listed 4Q274 as an example of a “small composition” as it contains only 9 lines.⁷ Drawing upon the small size of this manuscript may give an indication of the possible purpose of 4Q274: it could be small enough to be a “pocket size” edition, perhaps for a member belonging to the Qumran communities who may need reminding of the purity rules, or procedures, and what to do when one becomes impure, or it could be a study copy to learn the rules.

2 What is Gender and Why Should We Study It Alongside Purity Issues?

Purity concerns the preservation of prime values. Gender, sexual ethics and status reflect the sources of power in society and it is these values which are regularly bounded by purity rules. The issue of cultic, moral and social purity figured prominently within the consciousness and literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls communities. From an anthropological perspective, numerous societies designated women as distant from culture and closer to nature because of the natural procreative functions specific to women alone, including fertility, maternity and menstrual blood.⁸ Although this perception is a human

5 Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert*, STDJ 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 90.

6 J. M. Baumgarten, “274. 4QTohorot A,” in DJD 35:99–109; Plate VIII. The details relating to the measurements and reconstruction of the manuscripts are based on the plates from this volume. The manuscripts have been dated by Baumgarten to the end of the first-century BCE. The references made to the measurements of the various fragments relating to 4Q274 are based on the editio princeps from DJD 35. Although I agree with Baumgarten in relation to the date of the composition, my physical reconstruction of the four fragments belonging to 4Q274 contradict with Baumgarten in relation to the margin rulings. It is apparent from the editio princeps that Baumgarten's text mistakenly reports the size of the margins in cm, while the numbers should be in mm. The only fragment where column height and width can be measured according to the rules Baumgarten lays out, c.10 cm wide by c.4.5 cm height, is fragment 1 column i. The other fragments, in my opinion, are too damaged to give an accurate guise. However, if we do take 10 cm to be the average width for each column, then the manuscript, based on the extant fragments available, could be up to c. 70 cm in length.

7 Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 272.

8 Judith Baskin, “Jewish Private Life: Gender, Marriage and the Lives of Women,” in *The Cambridge Guide to Jewish History, Religion and Culture*, ed. Judith Baskin and Kenneth Seeskin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 348–62 (358).

construct, it is often reflected in established structures and barriers that reinforce this vision of the female as an essentially physical being.

Increasingly, anthropologists are beginning to study gender rather than women and while the two were often thought synonymous, gender no longer routinely equates with female, or sex with women's bodies.⁹ Gender studies tends to focus on the way in which the organization and structure of society, and the formation of culture and knowledge, are gendered. The term "gendered" within this context relates to the division of men and women and the social aspects that these correlations create within and amongst a society. It has been argued by such scholars as Mary Evans, Kathy Davis, and Judith Lorber that "gender is a system of power which privileges some men and disadvantages most women."¹⁰ The definition and more complete understanding of gender is still very much debated, but there is a consensus amongst certain scholars to see gender as a "culturally constructed system," which alters the perceptions of biological difference.¹¹ Consequently, gender is usually taken as a social construction that ultimately defines the person's place amongst the communities, while sex is generally understood biologically.¹²

The conceptions of gender and sex interact throughout a person's life, since gender in itself embodies "cultural attributes and definitions" that relate in themselves to male and female.¹³ It is therefore becoming more common to see masculinity as being composed of "masculinities" since religious, historical and cultural factors all affect the ways in which masculinity are understood within societies.¹⁴ These different masculinities are not equal but form a network of power relations. For the sociologist Raewyn Connell, a historical account of masculinity cannot be understood as linear and she proposes that the

9 Fiona Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 101.

10 Kathy Davis, Mary Evans, and Judith Lorber, "Introduction," in *Handbook of Gender and Women's Studies*, ed. Kathy Davis, Mary Evans, and Judith Lorber (London: SAGE Publications, 2006), 1–11 (8).

11 See Ross Shepard Kraemer, "Women and Gender," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 465–93.

12 See Geraldine Pratt, "Gender," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, ed. Derek Gregory Ron Johnston, Geraldine Pratt, Michael Watts, and Sarah Whatmore (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2009), 268–78. See also, James K. Beggan and Jill M. Harbison, "Sex," in *International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities*, ed. Michael Flood, Judith Kegan Gardiner, Bob Pease, and Keith Pringle (London: Routledge, 2007), 552–53.

13 Helen Hatchell, "Gender," in *International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities*, ed. Michael Flood et al. (London: Routledge, 2007), 232–35 (232).

14 John Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002), 1.

relationships constructing masculinities are dialectical; consequently, there needs to be recognition of different types, and transgressions of masculinity must be made to adjust the existing “fixed categories of gender.”¹⁵ The interplay between different forms of masculinities is a key aspect of how a patriarchal social order works and, for Connell, there are four types of masculinities, which are each positioned hierarchically in relation to one another: hegemony, subordination, complicity and marginalization.¹⁶ In the following, I will introduce and discuss one at a time.

2.1 *The Hegemonic Position*

Hegemonic masculinity has a threefold purpose in Connell’s work; it is a position in the system of gender relations; it is the system itself; and it is also the current ideology that serves to reproduce masculine domination. The hegemonic position is the accepted “male ideal” and this image changes over time and place.¹⁷ Drawing on Antonio Gramsci’s hegemonic analysis of class relations, Connell defined hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.”¹⁸ In other words, the characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity have allowed society to understand how men and women are positioned differently in communities and the extent to which this has affected social structure in everyday life. The models of hegemonic masculinity express ideals, fantasies and desires that men construct, which in itself is revealing and also reveals that “the most visible bearers of hegemonic masculinity are not always the most powerful.”¹⁹

15 R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 54.

16 Connell, *Masculinities*, 54.

17 Connell, *Masculinities*, 77.

18 Connell, *Masculinities*, 77.

19 Connell, *Masculinities*, 77. See also R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender Society* 19 (2005): 829–59 (840). In this review of the use and function of hegemonic masculinity over the past few decades, Connell and Messerschmidt assess the application of hegemonic masculinity in a variety of disciplines. For example, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been used in education studies as a way of understanding how the dynamics of a classroom have affected bullying, achievement and friendship groups. See W. Martino, “Boys and Literacy: Exploring the Construction of Hegemonic Masculinities and the Formation of Literate Capacities in the English Classroom,” *English in Australia* 112 (1995): 11–24. The use of hegemonic masculinity has also proven insightful in the field of criminology where the concept has helped to theorize the relationship among masculinities and crime, including rape and murder. See J. W. Messerschmidt, *Masculinity and Crime: Critique and Reconceptualization of Theory* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993).

The masculine ideals and constructs that are often portrayed, especially in relation to purification issues, are quite unrealistic for ordinary male sectarians, which demonstrates the male's vulnerability in relation to impurity. Hegemonic masculinity embodies an accepted strategy and when conditions for the defence of patriarchy change, the "bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded."²⁰ The argument is that hegemonic masculinity as a system becomes built into social institutions so as to make it appear normal and natural for men's subordinate position to be maintained. As an ideological construct, hegemonic masculinity provides the justification through which patriarchy is maintained and structures the manner in which all people experience and know their world.²¹

2.2 *The Subordinate Position*

Men who find themselves in the subordinate position run the risk of being subordinated when they do not practice gender that is consistent with the hegemonic position and ideology.²² Connell used contemporary European/American culture to demonstrate the subordinate position through the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men, and also the ways in which some heterosexual behaviour may exhibit "symbolic blurring with femininity."²³ This notion of "symbolic blurring with femininity" is an idea I want to explore in relation to ritual impurity and the potential gender equalizing effect of ritual impurity on men and women, since the impurity status takes precedence over gender in the constructions of identity in the text.

2.3 *The Complicit Position*

Most men fall within the third category, complicit masculinity. As Connell argues, normative definitions of masculinity face the problem that not many men meet the normative hegemonic standard.²⁴ Although the number of men practising the hegemonic position in its entirety may be quite small, the majority of men gain from its hegemony and benefit from the patriarchal dividend.²⁵ The men who fall within that category participate in the wider system of hegemonic masculinity for three reasons: firstly, men are able to enjoy the physical

20 Connell, *Masculinities*, 77.

21 Levy, "Hegemonic," 254.

22 Levy, "Hegemonic," 254.

23 Connell, *Masculinities*, 78.

24 Connell, *Masculinities*, 79.

25 Connell, *Masculinities*, 79.

and symbolic benefits of the subordination of women; secondly, through fantasy experiences, men are able to experience the sense of hegemony and learn to take pleasure in it; and, thirdly, by being in the complicit position, men are able to avoid subordination.²⁶ Masculinities constructed in ways that realise the patriarchal dividend, without exhibiting hegemonic masculinity characteristics, become complicit in the patriarchal order.²⁷ Men who are within this category have often made extensive compromises with women with issues of marriage, fatherhood and communal life and show respect to their wives and mothers.²⁸

2.4 *The Marginalization Position*

The men belonging to the fourth category, marginalization, are described as being unable to aspire to hegemony and include men with disabilities and men belonging to subordinated racial groups.²⁹ The interplay of gender with other structures, such as class and race, creates further relationships between masculinities.³⁰ As Connell argues, marginalization is always relative to the “authorization of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group.”³¹ As Martti Nissinen has recently argued, masculinities are always performed within a setting, social as well as literary, and from a contemporary, modern perspective, it is possible to compare the different ancient constructions of masculinities within the sources that we have available.³² In relation to rabbinic texts, Miriam Peskowitz has argued that throughout Jewish religious history, women have constantly been the Other which describes a gendered and sexualized status that is socially constructed.³³ However, the masculine aspects of purity rules also need to be assessed, since masculinity/masculinities have tended not to be thought of as gendered.³⁴ That, in turn, demonstrates

26 Levy, “Hegemonic,” 254.

27 Connell, *Masculinities*, 79.

28 Connell, *Masculinities*, 80.

29 Levy, “Hegemonic,” 254.

30 Connell, *Masculinities*, 80.

31 Connell, *Masculinities*, 81.

32 Martti Nissinen, “Relative Masculinities in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament,” in *Being a Man: Negotiating Ancient Constructs of Masculinity*, ed. Ilona Zsolnay (London: Routledge, 2016), 221–47 (225).

33 Miriam Peskowitz, “Spinning Tales: On Reading Gender and Otherness in Tannaitic Texts,” in *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity*, ed. Lawrence J. Silberstein and Robert L. Cohn (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 85–101 (91).

34 Todd Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 8.

the uncontrollable and problematic issues (social and religious) surrounding seminal fluids and the vulnerable position that impure men can find themselves in whilst living amongst the communities, especially while impure. To take this analysis further, it is possible that the loss of semen may have been equated with a loss of masculinity, since the male was unable to partake in war, prayer, or sex, which reinforced the subordinate and marginalized position of his masculinity in relation to the hegemonic ideal (see below for more discussion on this).

The celibate nature of the Qumran communities is still a topic of debate in the field.³⁵ The recent works of Cecilia Wassén are paving the way for a more inclusive reading of the Dead Sea Scroll material, which includes a model of sectarian self-understanding that includes families.³⁶ The move away from a stringent line of scholarship that conveys celibacy as the norm for the Qumran communities allows for a gendered engagement that encompasses familial structures, including women and children, as a given part of daily life. This new line of thought counteracts scholarship that takes the argument that the men of Qumran lived in an “exclusively male community far removed from any contact with the pollution of the world, especially women,” or suggests that the menstrual rules in the Dead Sea Scrolls are purely utopian.³⁷ As can be seen in 4Q274, while women were either impure during their menstruation or impure through excessive bleeding, they were required to bathe, they were required to take action if they came into contact with other bearers of impurity, and they were required to be pure before food / meals; women did pose a threat to men and their purity and women knew how to perform the correct rituals with regards to purification.³⁸

35 I am in agreement with those who, as well as accepting the identification of the Qumran communities to be Essene, also consider marriage to be the common way of life while there were some participants who renounced marriage altogether, cf. Cecilia Wassén who takes this argument in her essay “Women, Worship, Wilderness, and War: Celibacy and the Constructions of Identity in the Dead Sea Scrolls” in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy*, ed. Joel Baden, Hindy Najman and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, JSJSup 175 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 1361–85, and Maxine L. Grossman’s article in this issue, “Sectarian Marital Practice: Rethinking the Role of Sexuality in the Dead Sea Scrolls.”

36 See for example, Wassén, “Women, Worship, Wilderness, and War,” 1385.

37 Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Menstruants and the Sacred in Judaism and Christianity,” in *Women’s History and Ancient History*, ed. Sarah B. Pomeroy (London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 273–99 (278).

38 For further ideas related to the commonality of purification practices in the Dead Sea Scrolls see, Wassén, “Purity Laws for Men and Women.”

3 The Portrayal of Gender and Impurity in 4Q274: Separation or Equality Amongst the Sexes?

3.1 *Exegesis of 4Q274 Fragment 1*

The subject of the first four lines of 4Q274 fragment 1 has been a matter of much debate and reconstruction amongst Dead Sea Scrolls scholars who have either taken the reconstruction of Jacob Milgrom or that of Joseph Baumgarten. Milgrom believes the subject of lines 1–4, although not mentioned by name, to be “unmistakably” one afflicted with “scale disease.”³⁹ This is based primarily on the scriptural allusion to Lev 13:45 in 4Q274 1 i 3 where one afflicted with “scale disease” is instructed to cry out “Unclean, unclean! all the days that the affliction is upon him.” However, Baumgarten has argued that Lev 13:45 is extended here by analogy to the *zav*, since both the seat and the bed (4Q274 1 i 1) are discussed and it is the *zav*, in the biblical tradition, who transfers defilement to the bed upon which he sits (Lev 15:4).⁴⁰ It is of interest that 1QS 3:4–5 also draws upon “Unclean, unclean” in relation to members of the communities who had not truly repented inwardly (1QS 3:4–5).⁴¹

Hannah Harrington, following Milgrom’s argument, takes fragment 1 to be a stringent example of the sectarians’ homogenization of scripture.⁴² For Harrington, the Qumran sectarians have interpreted the biblical instruction for the one afflicted with “scale disease” to “live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp” (Lev 13:46), to mean that the one with scale disease should dwell apart from all other impurity bearers as well (4Q274 1 i 1–2). Thomas Kazen adapts Milgrom’s argument to suggest that the beginning of the fragment is giving instructions for how to handle a healed “leper,” rather than one with “scale disease,” during his seven day purification period.⁴³ Kazen draws upon 4QMMT B 64–72 as stating a similar concern. However, whereas 4QMMT B 67 states the biblical requirements expected from a purifying “leper”

39 Jacob Milgrom, “4QTohora^a: An unpublished Qumran text on Purities,” in *Time to Prepare the Way in The Wilderness: Papers on the Qumran Scrolls by Fellows of the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1989–1999*, ed. Devorah Dimant and Lawrence H. Schiffman, STDJ 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 59–68 (59).

40 J. M. Baumgarten, “The Laws About Fluxes in 4QTohora^a (4Q274),” in *Time to Prepare the Way in The Wilderness: Papers on the Qumran Scrolls by Fellows of the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1989–1999* ed. Devorah Dimant and Lawrence H. Schiffman, STDJ 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1–8 (1).

41 J. M. Baumgarten, “The Purification Rituals in DJD 7,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research*, ed. Devorah Dimant and Uriel Rappaport, STDJ 10 (Brill: Leiden, 1992), 199.

42 Hannah K. Harrington, *The Impurity Systems of Qumran and the Rabbis: Biblical Foundations*, SBLDS 143 (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1993), 62.

43 Kazen, “4Q274 Fragment 1 Revisited,” 70.

(cf. Lev 14:8), 4Q274 does not mention any. To me, this is evidence that the person is still afflicted with the disease and, as such, cannot have begun the purifying process: “all the days that the affliction is upon him” (line 4). In any case, both the Temple Scroll and 4QMMT insist that the impure person remains unclean until his purificatory period is declared over at sunset on the last day (11QT^a 45:9–10; 51:3; 4QMMT 13–17).⁴⁴

Ian Werrett follows Baumgarten’s reconstruction and takes 4Q274 1 i 1–4 to be concerned with the notion of bodily discharges rather than skin diseases.⁴⁵ I am inclined to follow Baumgarten’s reconstruction, which assumes a negative before יחל, and state that the beginning of 4Q274 1 i 1–4 is portraying a *zav*, “[Let him not] begin to cast his sup[plica]tion. In a bed of sor[ow] shall he li[e and in a] seat of sighing shall he sit,” which would restrict a *zav*’s recitation of prayers during his time of uncleanness (cf. 4Q512 fragments 10 and 11).⁴⁶ Although the terms bed and seat are being applied metaphorically within the Qumran fragment (“bed of sorrow” and “seat of sighing”), they may be an indication of how the man afflicted with the disease was feeling and how he was viewed by others within the communities. The biblical command that, “All who touch the body of the one with the discharge shall wash their clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening” (Lev 15:7) has been interpreted by the scribe of 4Q274 1 i 3 to mean that even those who are amongst the unclean, “shall bathe in water and wash his clothes and afterwards he may eat.” Perhaps the most convincing evidence that the beginning of the fragment refers to a *zav* is in line 4b of 4Q274 which instructs that a woman with a blood flow for seven days should not “touch the man who has a discharge (*zav*) or any vessel [t]hat he has lain upon” (4Q274 1 i 4). That strongly suggests that the *zav* was the subject of the previous lines, especially since a woman during her menstrual period is referred to just after the *zav* in the biblical tradition (cf. Lev 15:19–24).

4Q274 1 i 5–6 is centred upon the menstruant during her seven days of impurity and what she should do if she encounters a *zav* before she may eat. The menstruant is specifically instructed in this section of the text to bathe if she has touched a *zav*, which is a stipulation not found in the Leviticus purity rulings and emphasizes the Qumran communities’ stringent expectations in relation to the pure meal. A menstruant begins purification at the onset of the menstrual blood and, if she touched a *zav*, their impurity would inflict a more severe type of impurity upon her.⁴⁷ It is not only the *zav* whom the menstruant

44 Harrington, *The Impurity Systems*, 34.

45 Ian Werrett, *Ritual Purity and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, STDJ 72 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 251.

46 Baumgarten, “The Laws About Fluxes,” 3.

47 Kazen, “4Q274 Fragment 1 Revisited,” 70.

is instructed not to touch, she is specifically instructed not to “mingle” with the pure in order to avoid further pollution (4Q274 1 i 5). Contrary to common understanding that the purification rules in 4Q274 are built on Leviticus,⁴⁸ 4Q274 1 outlines a ruling that I have not come across in any biblical (or later rabbinic material), which is related to two females, as lines 5–6 instruct that menstruant is not to “mingle during her seven days that she might n[o]t defile the camps of the hol[y ones of] Israel. Nor may she touch any woman [who has had a discharge] of blood lasting man[y] days” (4Q274 1 i 5–6). On the one hand, Kazen has argued that the menstruants’ transitional state of impurity within this fragment is lower than the other purifying discharges.⁴⁹ On the other hand, Harrington argues that 4Q274 1 i 6 supports the view that at Qumran the impurity of a *zava* and the impurity of a menstruant is equated with that of a *zav*.⁵⁰ I am in agreement with Harrington and would argue further that there also does not seem to be a difference in status between the *niddah* and the *zava*, since women of either impurity are expected not to touch each other (4Q274 1 i 7–8). There is no explicit gender difference being stated in relation to the status of men and women in 4Q274 while either are impure, since they are specifically referred to as being equally defiling, “whether male or female, shall not touch one who has an unclean flux or a menstruating woman” (4Q274 1 i 8).⁵¹

In 4Q274 1 i 8–9 it is instructed that “if [a man ha]s a flow of semen, contact with him is defiling. A [man who to]uches any one of these unclean people during the seven days of impurity, let him not eat; just as if he had been defiled by a corpse ...” For Milgrom this instruction implies that without the seminal emission the touch of the *zav* in his purificatory period would not defile, which is, as he comments, “more lenient than the rule which can be deduced from scripture that the *zav* does indeed defile during his purificatory period.”⁵² That translation is also adopted by Harrington and her explanation for this leniency is that “the Scrolls distinguish between one who touches the purifying person and one whom the purifying touches: the former is made impure, the latter is

48 See for example Russell Arnold, who states that the rules of purification which discuss the menstruant in 4Q274 1 are built on the biblical passages and therefore they treat situations mentioned therein, Russell C. D. Arnold, *The Social Role of Liturgy in the Religion of the Qumran Community*, STDJ 60 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 170.

49 Kazen, “4Q274 Fragment 1 Revisited,” 70.

50 Harrington, *The Impurity Systems*, 87.

51 Based upon 4Q274 1 i 6 and the Temple Scroll, it is probable that since the *niddah* is contaminating to the members of the community she is probably quarantined for the full seven days of her impurity, “In every city you shall set aside areas for those ... who suffer from a flux; and for menstruating women, and women after childbirth, so that they may not cause defilement in their midst by their impure uncleanness” (11QT^a 48:14–17).

52 Milgrom, “4QTohora^a,” 67.

not.”⁵³ In my own reading, I do not think that the Qumran communities would allow the leniency to occur in relation to the *zav*, especially as the biblical instruction is so explicit in Lev 15:10.⁵⁴

While there are only a few words which have survived from the fragmentary 4Q274 1 ii, it can be surmised, based upon the physical aspects of the column and the reference to יִאכֹל (4Q274 1 ii 1), that it is a continuation of the discussion belonging to column i and the subject is likely to be the eating of the pure meal.

Following Hannan Birenboim’s argument relating to 4Q274 1, it is apparent that the fragment implies that the impurity—of those men with a discharge, of those women discharging blood, and of the menstruant during their periods of discharge—spreads when there is a real possibility of physical contact between the discharge and those people or objects to be defiled by it.⁵⁵ This is in contrast to rabbinic literature which, as Birenboim demonstrates, takes the stance that men and women are deemed impure because of their halakhic categorization as unclean people and consequently their impurity is not, as we see in 4Q274, spread through their discharges.⁵⁶ Therefore the impurity of the unclean in rabbinic distinction is less severe than the impurity of their discharge.

In 4Q274, the male and the female are to be equally positioned as impure, regardless of gender, which reinforces the position of people within the communities that are affected when people find themselves to be in a state of impurity. There is a sense of social and gender collapse when a person takes on a state of impurity since neither sex can function as they normally would within communal life.

3.2 *Bordering the Impure Male Body in 4Q274*

Nicole Ruane places her discussion of women and impurity in the realm of male dominance by stating that since the only people in priestly law who are not said to bathe are women experiencing the specific female impurities of

53 Harrington, *The Impurity Systems*, 86.

54 According to Baumgarten’s reconstruction of 4Q274 1 i 8, the ruling is in reference to another impure person touching an already impure male, which eliminates the leniency, “And when [a man has] an emiss[ion] of semen his touch is defiling.” Following on from this, line 9 insists that a man who touches any person from among these impure ones during his seven day purificatory period shall not eat and must רָחַץ וּבָשָׁ. See Baumgarten, DJD 35:58.

55 Hannan Birenboim, “Expelling the Unclean from the Cities of Israel and the Uncleanliness of Lepers and Men with a Discharge according to 4Q274 1 i,” *DSD* 19 (2012): 28–54 (53).

56 Birenboim, “Expelling the Unclean,” 53.

menstruation, childbirth and excessive bleeding, women are to be characterized as having inferior cultic status and as being related to the low status of impurity.⁵⁷ Ruane has discussed how priestly bathing rites foster community and hierarchy and that, in some of these cases, such as the creation of the Red Heifer ashes, the social construct of gender is also affected.⁵⁸ Ruane argues that in Leviticus 15 the purificatory rites, which are based according to the sex of the person, reinforce gender distinctions by emphasizing bathing rites for men and omitting such bathing rites for women, especially in parallel circumstances as that of the *zav* and the *zava* in Leviticus 15.⁵⁹ In contrast, 4Q274 applies a Qumran ritualization which not only extends the biblical notion of bathing, but also implies gender equality in relation to purity rules. For example, if a *niddah* has come into contact with a *zav* during her seven days of impurity, she is instructed to “wash her clothes and bathe, and afterwards she may eat” (4Q274 1 i 5).

Moving beyond the argument that blood symbolism in the context of bodily fluids renders women as the inferior sex, Leslie Cook looks at blood as part of priestly sacrificial systems rather than a system of fluids.⁶⁰ She argues that proper contextualization of *niddah* and *zava* impurity demonstrates that in Leviticus, this set of ritual practices does not constitute a system in which women are devalued in relation to men.⁶¹ The loss of menstrual blood and semen are related to death and, as such, purification through bathing symbolizes a renewal of the life forces which had been lost and such purification was considered a privilege, not a burden.⁶² As seen in 4Q274 1 i 7, “menstruation in itself has no bearing on the topic of women’s personal status but only on that of cultic purity.”⁶³ Blood in the proper context, as seen in the purification-offering of the Red Heifer ashes (4Q277 1 ii 4–5), purifies those who have come into contact with corpse-impurity, whereas blood out of context, such

57 Nicole J. Ruane, “Bathing, Status and Gender in Priestly Ritual,” in *A Question of Sex? Gender and Difference in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond*, ed. Deborah W. Rooke, Hebrew Bible Monographs 14 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 66–81 (76).

58 Ruane, “Bathing, Status and Gender,” 67.

59 Ruane, “Bathing, Status and Gender,” 69.

60 Leslie A. Cook, “Body Language: Women’s Rituals of Purification in the Bible and Mishnah,” in *Women and Water: Menstruation in Jewish Life and Law*, ed. Rahel R. Wasserfall (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1999), 40–59 (49).

61 Cook, “Body Language: Women’s Rituals of Purification,” 49.

62 Blu Greenberg, “Female Sexuality and Bodily Functions in the Jewish Tradition,” in *Women, Religion and Sexuality: Studies on the Impact of Religious Teachings on Women*, ed. Jeanna Becher (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 1–44 (26).

63 Judith Romney Wegner, *Chattel or Person? The Status of Women in The Mishnah* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 163.

as menstrual blood (4Q274 1 i 8), which is contaminating to others and to the sanctuary of God, renders both the female and male impure; in the instance of purity rules, gender has no boundaries.

As Todd Reeser has demonstrated, the male body has a significant connection to culture and to discourse and as such it is revered as one of the main ways in which culture has attempted to construct and reconstruct masculinity.⁶⁴ In relation to impurity, there seems to be two perspectives being taken in 4Q274. Firstly, there is an equalizing element related to impurity, where the impure male body is performed and placed on an equal status of the female body—both men and women are equally defiling and unclean to those around them. Secondly, within this shared equality there is also cultural disconnect and subordination from the impure male's perspective as 4Q274 also seems to add another societal layer to the rules for impure men. For example, the metaphorical use of “bed of sorrow” and “seat of sighing” in 4Q274 1 i 1 indicates the isolation of the male, which is not evident in the remaining texts that we have in 4Q274 in relation to the impure female. This could be constructed from a gendered perspective as a desire to border the male body and may reveal an underlying anxiety about the possibility of the unbounded.⁶⁵

3.3 *Exegesis of 4Q274 Fragment 2*

Baumgarten has stated that 4Q274 2 i 1 is evidence that the Qumran legists extended the use of the sprinkling water for purification from corpse impurity (cf. Numbers 19) to include the impurity from genital discharge (4Q274 2 i 1).⁶⁶ To corroborate his theory, Baumgarten draws upon 4Q514 as referring to the initial impurity before washing “and he shall bathe and wash his clothes on the day of his purification” (1 i 8). 4Q274 2 i 3 insists that the one who needs sprinkling on the Sabbath should avoid doing so and as such cannot touch any pure article until he repeats the sprinkling. The restriction of sprinkling on the Sabbath is also discussed in the halakhic composition 4Q265 which Baumgarten reconstructed to read as follows, “On the day of the [Sabbath] ... [Let n]o man of the seed of Aaron sprinkle w[ater for purification]” (4Q265 7 i 1, 3). In his comments on 4Q265, Baumgarten links the fragment just cited with 4Q274 2 i 1–3 as “referring both to the sprinkling of the purification water and the bathing and washing of garments associated with it.”⁶⁷ However, I do not think that there is enough evidence in either of these fragments to

64 Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory An Introduction* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 91.

65 Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, 107.

66 Baumgarten, “274. 4QTohorot A,” 104.

67 J. M. Baumgarten, “265. 4Q Miscellaneous Rules,” in DJD 35:56–78; Plates V–VIII (70 in particular).

maintain that the *mei niddah* was extended to the use from corpse impurity to all genital discharges, especially since Baumgarten has reconstructed both of them to be read this way.

The sprinkling cannot refer to, as Baumgarten maintained, “all genital discharges,” since the impurity described at the beginning of 4Q274 2 i is in relation to those lasting seven days (line 2) and as such cannot include semen impurity which lasts for three days (11QT^a 45:7).⁶⁸ Since semen emission is a lesser impurity in relation to *days* than the rest of the discharges, the remainder of fragment 2 i is concerned with the people and garments who are made impure by semen. As such, the text describes the purification procedures which are needed for those who are both emitting semen and those who come into its contact, “Whatever comes in contact with semen, whether a person or any vessel, shall be immersed; and whoever bears it shall immerse” (lines 4–5). However, the severity that the impurity of semen conveys has been extended by the Qumran sectarians to be on par with the discharge of the *zav*, since he makes those impure not only by contact, but also through touching (4Q274 2 i 8).⁶⁹ As with 4Q274 1 i, the importance of purity before הקודשים is also illustrated within this fragment, “and for all הקודשים a man is to wash” (4Q274 2 i 9).

The ritualization of purification is centred upon the body, touch and avoidance of contamination, for both the female and male. There is an equality of the bodily fluids amongst the two sexes demonstrated throughout the fragmentary manuscript; both men and women are treated as equally impure and defiling to those who meet them. As has recently been argued by Wassén, matters relating to purity and impurity were a part of life for all Qumran sectarians, both male and female alike, and the “observation of purity laws was a significant identity marker that joined them together.”⁷⁰ One of the ways in which I would like to develop that thought from a masculinist perspective is to explore the potential collapse of masculine / patriarchal hierarchy when both men and women are in an impure state.

3.4 *Subordinate Impure Masculinities and the Collapse of Masculine Hierarchy*

In 4Q274 it appears that at the textual level both male and female impurities were dealt with in an equal manner, since purification was systematized to

68 This is an example of a Qumran stringency since Leviticus prescribes a man who has had an emission of semen to “bathe his whole body in water and be unclean until the evening” (Lev 15:16).

69 Harrington, *The Purity Texts*, 59.

70 Wassén, “Purity Laws for Men and Women in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 84.

make it clear that males and females were active agents in washing, being diligent and waiting, but from a social and gendered level there can also be an argument made that these rules could be seen to make further demands on the male body. It is possible that the impure state was experienced as a threat to one's masculinity. For instance, when the male was impure, he was isolated alongside the impure female body this equality with the female may been unsettling and/or worrisome and created a subordinate version of masculinity. The cultural construction of masculinities through bodily performances means that gender is itself vulnerable when, for instance, "sexual performance cannot be sustained."⁷¹ The content of 4Q274 1 ii is concerned with the impurity of semen which, on the one hand, might embody masculinity since it provides the "male contribution to reproduction."⁷² However, semen could also be viewed as distinctly anti-masculine, as on par with the loss of menstrual blood and lack of useful function, it is "viscous fluid without border" and is caught in a "position of ambivalence between bound and unbound."⁷³ In the Qumran communities a *zav*, reflecting on the practices prescribed in 4Q274 and realising the extent of his socially debilitating sexual status, may well have felt isolated and inferior. In turn, this may have affected his masculine ideals and identity as a man and a husband.

I disagree with Kirsten Hastrup's conclusion that since men are the generalized sex, "men are just men all the time" and as such their identification is not tied up with their sexual states. In looking at the vulnerable position that Qumran men may have felt when they were impure, they are not just men all the time, they produce unfertilized semen, they are isolated, and they are under pressure to conform to God's will. Following the four masculine positions put forward by Connell (see above), the role of the *zav* in 4Q274 could be taken to demonstrate the position of the subordinate male,⁷⁴ since he is no longer able to compete with the hegemonic ideal; his impurity has left his masculinity vulnerable and closer to the feminine social space, there has been a "symbolic blurring" with the feminine position and order.⁷⁵ From a purification and ritualization perspective, that may be discussed in relation to the potential gender-equalizing effect of ritual impurity amongst men and women, since the *impurity* status takes precedence over gender in the constructions of identity in the text.

⁷¹ Connell, *Masculinities*, 54.

⁷² Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, 109.

⁷³ Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, 109.

⁷⁴ Connell, *Masculinities*, 58.

⁷⁵ Connell, *Masculinities*, 78.

4 Conclusion

Taking a gendered look at 4Q274 demonstrates that the Qumran communities did not seem to segregate female blood to the realm of immorality or abnormality, rather the practice of separation of both the female body and the male body while impure, was a means for maintaining the sanctified order. In looking at the affects that the purity laws could have had on both men and women in 4QTohorot A, the purity rules of Qumran collapses gender roles and boundaries. Both sexes are constructed in 4QTohorot A as subordinate and disempowered whilst impure, and from a gendered perspective there is a symbolic blurring between masculinity and femininity; men and women have become *equally* defiled, defined and positioned within society as problematic. This gendered equality in impurity reveals the impure male's vulnerability since his perspective, his societal power, his patriarchy and his gendered performance have become subordinate to the hegemonic masculinised ideal and are now on par with the female body. Consequently, there is a dynamism at play here: just as the fluidity and dynamic nature of purity and impurity change within certain social and cultural settings, so too does the fluid and dynamic nature of gendered performance and masculinities.

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