Second Temple Period Ritual Baths Adjacent to Agricultural Installations: The Archaeological Evidence in Light of the Halakhic Sources*

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Abstract

Ritual baths (miqwaʿot) built adjacent to winepresses and olive-presses have been unearthed at about twenty sites dating to the Second Temple period, most of them in Judea and the environs of Jerusalem. While much has been written in recent years on the form and function of ancient ritual baths in general, little scholarly attention has been paid to miqwaʿot found in agricultural contexts. The presence of these miqwaʿot suggests that the ritual purity of the wine and olive oil processed in these installations was of particular importance. The fact that these ritual baths were situated adjacent to winepresses and olive-presses suggests that agricultural labourers made use of these miqwaʿot immediately prior to commencing work in these installations, a practice which accords with the Pharisaic concept of tevuṭ yom. These finds thus provide rare archaeological evidence for the observance of ritual purity laws based on the Pharisaic system of halakhah.

To date, over 700 Jewish ritual baths (miqwaʿot) have been uncovered throughout the Land of Israel, most of them dating to the Second Temple period.¹ These miqwaʿot appear in various contexts—in private domiciles, in agricultural installations, and in other contexts.¹ The most comprehensive study on ancient Jewish ritual baths to date appears in Ronny Reich’s unpublished PhD dissertation (Miqwaʿot (Jewish Ritual Immersion Bath) in Eretz-Israel in the Second Temple and the Mishna and Talmud Periods, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, 1990, in Hebrew). In this groundbreaking study, Reich singled out detailed criteria for identifying stepped water installations as ritual baths (ibid., pp. 62–81). Reich’s work, which identified 300 stepped water installations as ritual baths, laid the methodological groundwork for the identification of approximately 400 additional miqwaʿot discovered in archaeological excavations and surveys in recent years. Salient archaeological studies which have been undertaken since the appearance of Reich’s study include David Amit’s unpublished Master’s thesis (Ritual Baths (Mikvahot) from the Second Temple Period in the Hebron Mountains, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, 1996, in Hebrew) and Boaz Zissu’s unpublished PhD dissertation (Rural Settlement in the Judean Hills and Foothills from the Late Second Temple Period to the Bar-Kokhba Revolt, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, 2001, in Hebrew). Although some scholars have taken a more minimalist approach in the identification of stepped water installations as miqwaʿot (cf. H. Eshel, ‘A Note on “Miqvaot” at Sepphoris’, in D. R. Edwards and C. T. McLoughlough, eds, Archaeology and the Galille: Texts and Contexts in the Graeco-Roman and Byzantine

¹ I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Dr David Amit of the Israel Antiquities Authority for sharing with me his advice and astute comments in the course of preparing this paper. Needless to say, I take full responsibility for the contents of this article.
next to synagogues, near burial grounds, and in association with the Temple compound in Jerusalem. Many *miqwa*᾿*ot* have also been discovered in close proximity to agricultural installations, specifically winepresses and olive-presses. While much has been written in recent years on the form and function of ancient ritual baths in general,² little scholarly attention has been paid to the *miqwa*᾿*ot* found in agricultural contexts.³ Many of the archaeological finds still await publication, and the questions raised by these finds have never been explored comprehensively. The purpose of this paper is to describe from an archaeological perspective the phenomenon of Second Temple period ritual baths built adjacent to winepresses and olive-presses, and to attempt to interpret the functional purposes of these installations from the viewpoint of Jewish purity laws. Within this framework, we shall explore the possibility that the *miqwa*῾*ot* under discussion were used by individuals who subscribed to a specifically Pharisaic interpretation of *halakhah* with regard to ritual purity laws.

1. *The Archaeological Evidence*

Stepped water installations built adjacent to winepresses and olive-presses have been unearthed at about twenty sites dating to the Second Temple period, most of them in Judea and the environs of Jerusalem. The close proximity between these water installations, identified as *miqwa*῾*ot*, and the adjacent

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² Hermeneutical issues posed by the archaeological finds of ancient *miqwa*῾*ot* have been addressed in numerous articles which have appeared in various forums, mostly over the course of the past fifteen years. Most recently Stuart Miller has suggested that stepped pools were used for ritual ablutions ‘among other things’, positing that these installations may have served both ritual and profane functions at one and the same time, and that ablutions were not always performed in exactly the same ways or for the same purposes as prescribed in rabbinic literature (Miller, ‘Stepped Pools’, as in n. 1).

agricultural installations demonstrates a clear functional association between the two. Many of these miqwa’ot have been found next to winepresses and olive-presses situated in the agricultural fields, geographically removed from residential areas. In many cases the ritual baths under discussion were clearly built as an architecturally integral part of the agricultural installation itself.

Miqwa’ot situated next to winepresses have been found at numerous sites in the vicinity of Jerusalem (at Qalandiya to the north,4 in the Ramot Forest,5 Bayit Ve-Gan,6 and Ramat Denya7 to the west, and at Mar Elias,8 Qiryat Menahem9 and Beit Sefafa10 to the south), in the Judean highlands (Sheluhut Mishlatim,11 Shmurat Shayarat,12 Kh. El Jamia,13 Kh. Beit Sawir,14 Bat ‘Ayin,15 and Kefar ‘Etzion16), in the Judean foothills (Horvat Hermesh17 and Ramat Bet Shemesh18), and at Jericho.19 An additional installation at Kefar ‘Othonai (near Legio) has been recently posited as a possible ritual bath adjacent to a winepress.20

Ritual baths near olive-presses have been unearthed in at Gamla in the Golan,21 north of Jerusalem at Kh. Nisya22 and Qalandiya,23 in the Judean

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12 Zissu, Rural Settlement (as in n. 1), p. 79.
13 Amit, Ritual Baths (as in n. 1), pp. 22–23.
14 Zissu, Rural Settlement (as in n. 1), p. 117.
23 Magen, Qalandiya (as in n. 4).
Ritual baths situated in close proximity to winepresses and olive-presses have been discovered at numerous additional sites, however a direct functional relationship between these *miqwa*’ot and the nearby agricultural installations cannot be determined with certainty due to the fact that private domiciles were discovered nearby, and as such these may have been ordinary ‘household’ ritual baths. Of course, the possibility exists that these installations served multiple functions, both domestic and agricultural. Examples include three sites in the Pisgat Ze’ev neighborhood of modern Jerusalem,28 Sur Baher (south of Jerusalem),29 and Qiryat Sefer (near modern-day Modi’in).30

Ritual baths near winepresses and olive-presses have been discovered at a number of Samaritan sites as well, although these date to the Late Roman and Byzantine periods, and as such will not be dealt with within the framework of this article.31

The discovery of *miqwa*’ot situated next to winepresses and olive-presses suggests that the ritual purity of the products processed in these installations was of particular importance. Concern for ritual purity issues in the wine and olive-oil industries during the Second Temple period must be understood within the broader context of Jewish ritual purity laws, and the economic conditions that resulted from the observance of these laws.

24 E. Eisenberg, ‘Nahal Yarmut’, *ESI* 112 (2000), pp. 91*-93*.
26 Zissu, *Rural Settlement* (as in n. 1), p. 79.
2. Demand for Ritually Pure Food during the Second Temple Period

Biblical law enjoins farmers to tithe all crops, presenting heave-offerings (terumah) to the priest and first tithes (ma’aszer) to the Levite. Terumah was considered hallowed, and rabbinic sources require that care be taken to ensure that terumah is maintained in a state of ritual purity. To this end, farmers were required to ensure the ritual purity of their entire harvest until the terumah had been set aside for the priest.

Even after heave-offerings had been apportioned to the priest, farmers had an economic interest to ensure that their agricultural products remained ritually pure. During the Second Temple period, ritually pure foodstuffs were appreciated as ‘value added’ goods as a result of high market demand for these products. The requirements of the Jerusalem Temple authorities created considerable market demand for ritually pure agricultural goods, as a high state of ritual purity was required for all wine, olive oil, and flour that was used in the various Temple rites. Similarly, all foods eaten as part of sacrificial meals were required to be ritually pure. Second tithe monies brought to Jerusalem by pilgrims were to be used exclusively for the purchase of sacrifices or ritually pure foodstuffs. No doubt that in the environs of Jerusalem, pilgrims’ needs for ritually pure agricultural products resulted in high demand for these goods, particularly during festival seasons.

Even outside of Jerusalem, a distinctive niche market for ritually pure food

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32 Num. 18:21–32.
33 mTer. 8:8–11; mPes. 1:7; tTer. 7:18–19 (ed. Lieberman p. 148); yHal. 59a; bPes. 20b. Ritual impure food products, unlike people and vessels, could not be purified through miqweh immersion. While here we must note the difficulties connected with utilising mishnaic sources as witness to pre-70 CE Judaism, a critical treatment of rabbinic sources can prove invaluable in the study of Second Temple period halakhic practice. While the final redaction of these sources took place only in the beginning of the 3rd century CE, many mishnaic tradents have been shown to be quite early in date, particularly those dealing with temple-related issues and ritual purity law; cf. J. N. Epstein, Introduction to Tannaitic Literature, Jerusalem, 1957, pp. 15–58 (in Hebrew); Y. Sussmann, ‘The History of Halakha and the Dead Sea Scrolls—Preliminary Observations on Miqsat Ma’ase Ha-Torah (4QMMT), Tarbiz 59 (1989/1990), pp. 11–76 (in Hebrew); L. H. Schiﬀman, ‘The Judean Scrolls and the History of Judaism’, in L. H. Schiﬀman, E. Tov and J. C. VanderKam (eds), The Dead Sea Scrolls: Fifty Years after their Discovery, Jerusalem, 2000, pp. 542–557, esp. pp. 551–554. While it would be irresponsible to give mishnaic era compilations interpretive hegemony over pre-70 CE physical remains, to ignore the rabbinic material would be to completely deny the possibility of any continuity between Second Temple era practices and Mishnaic period halakah. The more nuanced approach adopted here utilizes the vast corpus of rabbinic material in seeking possible explanations in the interpretation of earlier archaeological remains. It should be noted that all references to the Babylonian Talmud in this study refer strictly to baraitot, Palestinian tradents from the mishnaic era, which have been retained in the BT. I have not made any reference in this study to the Amoraic or redactional strata in the BT.
34 mA.Z. 4:9; tTer. 3:12 (ed. Lieberman p. 118); tA.Z. 7:1 (ed. Lieberman p. 471); tMakh. 3:7 (ed. Zuckermandel, p. 675); yTer. 42a; yHal. 59a; yA.Z. 44b; bA.Z. 55b–56a.
35 mHag. 2:5–7; tHag. 3:4–18 (ed. Lieberman p. 387–390); bHag. 18b–24b; yHag. 78b–79b.
36 One who ate impure food was rendered ritually impure himself, and therefore could not partake of sacrificial foods. See: mTah. 2:2; 2:8; mZav. 5:12; tTah. 1:6 (ed. Zuckermandel, p. 662).
37 mM.Sh. 3:9–10.
products developed during the Second Temple period. Many people, not necessarily priests, were meticulous in eating all of their food in a state of purity.39 Such individuals, termed haverim in rabbinic literature, required a regular supply of ritually pure foodstuffs for daily consumption throughout the year.

The high demand for ritually pure agricultural products, both in Jerusalem and without, created economic incentive for farmers to ensure that the ritual purity of the agricultural goods which they brought to market was strictly maintained. As we shall see, practical halakhic concerns regarding the purity of agricultural produce affected primarily the wine and olive-oil industries, and hence the need for easily accessible ritual baths for those working in these industries. In any event, the miqva’ot built adjacent to agricultural installations were clearly built in order to facilitate maintenance of ritual purity of the agricultural products processed in these installations, and thus provide archaeological evidence for the centrality of ritual purity concerns with regard to foodstuffs during the Second Temple period.

3. Ritual Purity in the Wine and Olive-Oil Industries

According to the halakhah reflected in rabbinic literature, crops are not subject to ritual impurity until the moment of harvest.40 Even after harvesting, agricultural products remain unsusceptible to ritual impurity until they have been brought into contact with liquids.41 During the historical period under discussion, wheat and other grains were taken to market prior to milling,42 and were assumed to have not come into contact with any liquids at the time of market.43 As a result, no special efforts were required to ensure the ritual purity of grain. Similarly, most fruits and vegetables were not washed before being brought to market, and as such remained unsusceptible to ritual impurity.44 On the other hand, wine and olive oil—liquids by their very nature—became susceptible to ritual impurity perforce from the very outset.45 As such, products developed during the Second Temple period. Many people, not necessarily priests, were meticulous in eating all of their food in a state of purity.39 Such individuals, termed haverim in rabbinic literature, required a regular supply of ritually pure foodstuffs for daily consumption throughout the year.

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40 Sif., Shemini 11, 3 (ed. Weiss p. 56b); cf. m.Ugs. 3:8; b.Hul. 118b.

41 An entire tractate of the Mishnah and Tosefta—Tractate Makhshirin—has been dedicated to this issue. This law is deduced hermeneutically in b.Hul. 36a: ‘Come and hear, [it is written]: “All the food therein which may be eaten, [that on which water cometh, shall be unclean]” (Lev. 9:34)—that is to say, food which has been moistened by water is susceptible to uncleanness, but food which has not been moistened by water is not.’


43 t.Makkh. 3:4 (ed. Zuckermandel, p. 675); cf. m.Makkh. 6:2; b.Pes. 40a.


45 Grapes harvested for wine are susceptible to impurity from the moment of harvest: b.A.Z. 39b; cf. m.A.Z. 4:9; b.Shab. 15a; 17a; b.Hul. 36b; Olives harvested for oil production are susceptible to impurity from the moment liquid begins to seep from the fruit: m.Tah. 9:1–6.
great care had to be taken throughout the entire production process in order to ensure that the wine and oil were not rendered impure. The most immediate potential threat to the purity of wine and oil during the various stages of production was the ritual impurity of the agricultural labourers in these industries. Bodily ritual impurity was so easily contractible that, as a matter of course, the common agricultural worker was considered to have been ritually impure.\textsuperscript{46} Workers were apt to have contracted ritual impurity from one or more of a number of sources of biblically ordained impurities, such as: contact with vermin or with an animal carcass (Lev. 11:29–40), sexual contact (Lev. 15:16–18), contact with a menstruant woman, with her clothing or with furniture that she sat upon (Lev. 15:19–24), and contact with a person who has contracted corpse-impurity (Num. 19:22).\textsuperscript{47} Rabbinically ordained sources of ritual impurity included: contact with a gentile,\textsuperscript{48} eating ritually impure food,\textsuperscript{49} and showering or bathing (other than \textit{miqweh} immersions).\textsuperscript{50}

In order to allow workers in the wine and olive oil industries to engage in their labours without danger of rendering impurity to the wine and oil, labourers in these industries were required to immerse in a ritual bath before commencing work:

> ‘Olive-press workers and grape-harvesters—it is sufficient once they are brought into the cave [where the ritual bath was situated],’ so says Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yose says: ‘He is required to stand by them until they [actually] immerse themselves’ (m\textit{Tah.} 10:3).

Even after workers had undergone ritual immersion, care had to be taken to prevent labourers from contracting ritual impurity during the course of the day’s work:

> [Olive-press workers] who have left the entrance of the olive-press in order to relieve themselves behind the fence—remain ritually pure. How far may they go and still remain pure? As long as they stay within sight (m\textit{Tah.} 10:2).

It would seem most logical to interpret the archaeological evidence of ritual baths located adjacent to winepresses and olive-presses within the context of these rabbinic traditions. Indeed, R. Reich has already suggested that \textit{miqwa}’\textit{ot} were situated as close as possible to agricultural installations in order to minimize the danger of ritual impurity contaminating the wine or olive-oil produced in these installations.\textsuperscript{51} Situating a \textit{miqweh} in close proximity to the

\textsuperscript{46} m\textit{Ter.} 3:4; m\textit{Tah.} 10:1–3; cf. m\textit{Hag.} 2:7.
\textsuperscript{47} A more severe form of ritual impurity affected one contaminated by a corpse itself, and required a seven-day waiting period and purifications with ashes of the red heifer (cf. Num. 19:14–21). It appears, however, that this form of ritual impurity was of less concern on a regular basis (cf. b\textit{Hag.} 22b).
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{tZav.} 2:1 (ed. Zuckermandel, p. 77); cf. m\textit{Tah.} 5:8; \textit{tKip.} 3:20 (ed. Lieberman p. 248); b\textit{Shab.} 127b; b\textit{Nid.} 34a. For the early date of this enactment, and for extra-rabbinic sources on the subject, see: Alon, \textit{Jews} (as in n. 38), pp. 146–189.
\textsuperscript{50} m\textit{Zav.} 5:12. For the early date of these enactments, see: y\textit{Shab.} 3c; b\textit{Shab.} 13b; cf. Alon, \textit{Jews} (as in n. 38), pp. 156–159.
\textsuperscript{51} Reich, \textit{Miqwa}’\textit{ot} (as in n. 1), pp. 122–125. See also n. 60 below.
agricultural installation provided the added benefit of allowing close supervision of the workers to ensure that they properly undergo the prescribed ablutions prior to commencing work, as suggested in the mishnaic traditions cited above.

In theory, agricultural labourers could immerse themselves in a ritual bath located in the village before leaving to the fields for work, and in fact nowhere do the Talmudic sources state that workers were required to immerse themselves in a *miqweh* situated specifically next to the winepress or olive-press. Nevertheless, Reich has already noted that the regular presence of ritual baths near winepresses and olive-presses is in fact alluded to in the Mishnah, which discusses a case where: ‘wine or olive fluid fell into [the ritual bath] and changed its colour’ (*mMiq. 7:4*). A situation of wine or olive fluid (the juice of the olive extracted together with the oil during pressing) accidentally falling into a ritual bath is most readily understandable if the said *miqweh* was situated adjacent to the winepress or olive-press. Similarly, the Mishnah describes a case where a person rinsed baskets of olives or grapes in a ritual bath, a situation readily understandable if *miqwa’ot* were commonly located near wine and oil installations.

4. **Ritual Immersion and the ‘Sunset Requirement’**

As we have seen, the archaeological evidence for the practice of building ritual baths near winepresses and olive-presses can be most easily understood as a practical answer to the halakhic requirement for agricultural labourers in these industries to undergo *miqweh* ablutions in order to ensure the ritual purity of the wine and oil.

Upon further study, however, it is unclear how the presence of ritual baths next to agricultural installations would accord with observance of the biblical injunction that ritual immersion effects purification only in the evening after the ablution has taken place: ‘and he shall remain unclean until the evening’ (e.g. Lev. 11:24–40; 15:5–27; 17:15; 22:6). According to this caveat, workers who immersed themselves in *miqwa’ot* situated next to agricultural installations would have remained impure until nightfall. As these workers would not have commenced work until the next day, what was the point of placing these *miqwa’ot* next to the agricultural installations? Workers could more easily immerse themselves in one of the *miqwa’ot* located near their homes, within the village or town, rather than trekking out to the field to immerse in the *miqweh* located next to the agricultural installations. If the workers had indeed immersed themselves the day before, there would have been no reason to immerse a second time the following day when they would actually begin work in the winepress or olive-press.

I would like to suggest that the answer to this problem lies with the concept of *tevul yom* (*תבול יומ*) appearing in rabbinic literature. While a sim-

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52 Reich, *Miqwa’ot* (as in n. 1), p. 122.
53 *mMiq. 7:3*.
A pot filled with liquid that has been touched by a *tevul yom*, if the liquid was *terumah*—it is rendered impure . . . but if the liquid was *hullin*—it remains pure. (mT.Y. 2:2)56

Accordingly, an agricultural labourer would be able to commence work in a winepress or an olive-press immediately after immersion in a ritual bath without fear of defiling the wine or oil, since at this stage these are still considered *hullin*.57 A passage in the Tosefta refers to this situation explicitly:

A *tevul yom* [who has immersed to purify himself] from corpse-defilement or from impurity rendered through cohabitation with a menstruant woman58 is permitted to work in an olive-press. (tTah. 1:3, ed. Zuckermandel, p. 661)59

It would appear that the ritual baths uncovered near winepresses and olive-presses were built for this exact purpose—to allow the workers in the wine and olive-oil industries to purify themselves from a severe status of impurity to an intermediate status of *tevul yom*, which would have allowed them to begin work in the adjacent agricultural installations immediately after immersion, without need to await sunset.60

5. Agricultural Miqwa’ot as Evidence for the Observance of Pharisaic Halakhah

As we have noted, the concept of *tevul yom* appears only in rabbinical literature, and would appear to stand at variance with a simple understanding

55 The issue of *tevul yom* is the subject of an entire tractate in both the Mishnah and Tosefta—Tractate Tevul Yom.

56 Cf. mKel. 1:5; mNeg. 14:3; mPar. 11:4; Sif., Shemini 8:9 (ed. Weiss p. 53c).

57 This produce is considered *hullin*, and hence unsusceptible to impurity at the hands of a *tevul yom*, even though *terumah* will eventually be apportioned from it: cf. mT.Y. 4:1–2; tT.Y. 2:14 (ed. Zuckermandel, p. 686). My thanks to R. Azariah Ariel for referring me to these sources.

58 Corpse-defilement and menstrual impurity are examples of the most severe forms of ritual impurity; one may infer, a fortiori, that a *tevul yom* who had immersed in order to purify from a lesser form of impurity would certainly be permitted to work in an olive-press.


60 Reich (*Miqwa’ot*, as in n. 1, p. 124) has suggested that these *miqwa’ot* were used by priests who came to the agricultural installations in order to collect the *terumah* offerings allotted to them. This suggestion does not stand up to critical examination, for as we have seen, a *tevul yom* renders *terumah* impure through contact (mT.Y. 2:2; cf. n. 55).
of the biblical laws of ritual purity. During the Second Temple period, the legal status of *tevul yom* stood at the center of a bitter controversy between the Pharisees on the one hand, and sectarian groups such as the Sadducees and the Qumran sect on the other. Numerous scholars have already noted that while the Pharisees accepted the notion of *tevul yom*, as familiar from later rabbinic literature, the Sadducees and Qumran sectarians vehemently objected to the concept, adopting a literal understanding of the scriptural injunction that ritual ablation does not affect any degree of purification until the onset of evening.\(^61\) Notably, this controversy came to a head with the public ceremony of the burning of the red heifer, the rites of which had to be performed by ‘a man who is clean’ (Num. 19:9). While the Pharisees understood the scriptural injunction to include even a *tevul yom*, the Sadducees and Qumran sectarians held that the red heifer rites could not be performed by one who had immersed and awaited sundown.\(^62\)

The individuals who made use of the ritual baths built adjacent to agricultural installations apparently followed the Pharisaic ruling on this matter of ritual purity law. As we have shown, the presence of ritual baths in direct proximity to agricultural installations indicates that these *miqwa*’ot were used immediately prior to commencement of labours in these installations. Such a practice accords with the Pharisaic concept of *tevul yom*, and stands at variance with the halakhic position of groups such as the Sadducees and Qumran sectarians.\(^{61,62}\)

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H. K. Harrington has suggested: ‘some of the Qumran authors concur with the principle, if not the term, of *טבול יום*’o deficient defilement (4Q514 states that the corpse-contaminated person is allowed back into the city once he bathes even though he remains impure to a lesser degree for an entire week’ (H. K. Harrington, ‘The Rabbinic Reception of Leviticus’, in R. Rendtorff and R. A. Kugler, eds, *The Book of Leviticus: Compilation and Reception*, Leiden / Boston, 2003, pp. 383–402, esp. p. 386). How Harrington came to this understanding is unclear; the text of 4Q514 (published in M. Baillet, *Qumrán Grotte 4 III*, *DJD* VII, Oxford, 1982, pp. 295–298) makes no reference at all to the admittance of corpse-contaminated persons into the city, but rather states that one whose impurity lasts for more than one day must bathe and launder his clothes at the onset of the purification period before he is allowed to partake of food. As Jacob Milgrom has correctly explained, this ordinance does not contravene the well documented Qumranic rejection of the Pharisaic *tevul yom* concept, but rather refers to a Qumranic stricture which forbade the eating of *any* food (i.e. one must fast) before undergoing preliminary ablutions. This first-day purification procedure thus allowed one who’s impurity lasted for an extended period of time to sustain himself by eating profane food until the purification process was complete (J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, vol. 3, New York, 1991, pp. 975–976; idem, ‘Purification Rule (4Q514 = 4QOrd)’, in J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Texts with English Translations*, vol. 1, Tübingen, 1994, pp. 177–179). Recently, it appears that Harrington herself has backtracked somewhat from her original claim (cf. H. K. Harrington, *The Purity Texts*, London / New York, 2004, p. 81).

the Qumran sectarians. The discovery of these *miqwa’ot* thus provides rare archaeological evidence for the observance of halakhic practice particularistic to the Pharisees during the Second Temple period.63

6. **Summary**

The discovery of Second Temple period ritual baths built adjacent to wine-presses and olive-presses presents a unique opportunity to enhance our understanding of Jewish ritual purity laws as they were actually observed during this historical period. This paper has surveyed the most up-to-date archaeological evidence of such ‘agricultural *miqwa’ot*’ at approximately twenty sites in Israel. These *miqwa’ot* were apparently used by agricultural labourers in order to insure the ritual purity of the wine and olive-oil that they produced in these installations, a phenomenon which attests to the importance attached to ritual purity laws with regard to foodstuffs during the Second Temple period. The presence of these ritual baths adjacent to winepresses and olive-presses suggests that those who made use of these *miqwa’ot* did so immediately prior to commencing work in these installations, a practice which accords with the Pharisaic concept of *tevul yom*. These finds thus provide rare contemporary archaeological evidence for the observance of ritual purity laws based on the Pharisaic system of *halakhah*, heretofore known to us only from later rabbinic tradents and sectarian documents from Qumran.

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