

# PRIESTHOOD, TEMPLE, DIVINE SERVICE: Some Observations on Institutions and Practices of Worship\*

by

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Although biblical prophecy achieved outstanding pinnacles of morality, biblical priesthood did not lag far behind. Let us not forget that a number of admonitions, appearing in the Pentateuch and expressing a most refined ethical consciousness, were set down by priestly pens (e.g., Lev. 19:17-18, and there are other verses like these). Priesthood's distinctive and defining feature, however, is not morality, but divine service, which fundamentally does not coincide with morality. These are two independent concepts, the connection between which is the outcome, at most, of circumstances in the evolution of human consciousness which periodically result in overlap, by giving religious sanctification to ethics, or imposing moralistic norms on religious and cultic conduct. In just the same manner, prophecy in its essence is not based on moral experience, since its main impulse is not the quest for justice but the mystical-religious feeling of divine mission and the sense of compulsion to speak God's message.<sup>1</sup> Priesthood (the starting-point of the following discussion) has, in essence, even less to do with morality. It too is based on a mystic-religious feeling, a feeling of proximity to the divine and the absolute obligation to serve God. An objective explanation of priesthood, as well as some other institutions and practices bordering on its orbit, had better take its start with this fundamental quality.

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1. The notion that prophecy is an embodiment of the idea of absolute justice, and prophets are men whose activity was mainly based on moral experience, became cornerstones of state (and pre-state) general education in Israel. These much worn coins, which, in this case, derived from the writings of Ahad Ha'am, should have been withdrawn from circulation long ago, as some authorities of Jewish thought have really claimed.

## I

The functions of priesthood, in antiquity, were by no means restricted to cult (cf. Haran, 1962, pp. 22-29). Ancient Israelite priests engaged, among other things, in divination, though, in contrast to the prophets, who foretold the future in ecstatic manner and poetic language, priests would reveal the divine will with the help of "implements" (*'ûrîm* and *tum-mim*, lots), or would perform ordeals to resolve doubtful cases (as is exemplified in the law dealt with in Num 5:11-31). As guardians of ritual purity, priests would also fulfill the role of "physicians;" purity would be achieved through exorcising the demonic powers of defilement, or by apotropaic rites, meant to prevent the return of those powers to a cleansed body.<sup>2</sup> In addition, priests functioned as judges, and they also were instructors of the people, in that they would impart "teachings," (*tôrôt*) to those who inquired. Central to all these activities, however, remained the responsibility of caring for the cult as such, for the constant and orderly service of God. Priesthood, in essence, is the most exalted and fullest manifestation of divine service in ancient Israel. There was no real service of God in biblical times but with the agency of priesthood.

The task to which the priests are singled out from among all other functionaries is indicated by the epithet reserved exclusively for them in the biblical diction: *mešāretê Yahweh*, 'servants [or attendants] of the Lord,' *mešāretê 'elôhim*, 'servants of God' (Isa 61:6; Jer 33:21-22; Joel 1:9, 13 *et al.*). They are also depicted as "standing before the Lord to serve him" (Deut 10:8; 17:12; 18:5, 7 *et al.*), "drawing near to the Lord to serve him" (Ezek 40:46; 43:19; 44:15), "drawing unto his table to serve him" (*ibid.* 44:16). In all these cases the verb *šrt*, "to serve", is employed. This is not merely a stereotyped phrase but an actual expression of the priest's func-

2. Secular medicine was virtually non-existent in biblical times, as healing was considered an act of divine intervention. Thus, the biblical text puts it: "I, the Lord, am your healer" (Exod 15:26), while the verb *rp*, ('to heal') mostly has God as a subject, or the act is explicitly ascribed to him (Deut 32:39; 2 Kgs 20:8; Isa 19:22; 57:18; Jer 30:17; 33:6 *et al.*). God's agent in healing can be the priest, but also the prophet (1 Kgs 17:17-24; 2 Kgs 4:40-41; 5:3-14 *et al.*). In addition, prayer, by a prophet (Gen 20:7, 17; Num 12:10-13; 1 Kgs 13:4-6) or by the patient himself (2 Kgs 20:2-5; Jer 17:14; Ps 6:3 *et al.*), can also be of help. Asa's turn to the physicians (*rôpe'im*), rather than to God, is mentioned as a sinful act (2 Chron 16:12), seeing that those physicians might even have been non-Israelites, inasmuch as Israelite *rôpe'im* are nowhere referred to in the Bible (cf. Gen. 50:2). Non-Israelite medical treatment, however, certainly no less than Israelite treatment, was also undoubtedly magical-ceremonial in character and had a great deal to do with demonology. Moreover, in Israel as elsewhere there was folk-medicine, the practitioners of which availed themselves of special herbs (Jer 8:22; 30:13; 51:8 *et al.*; cf. Harrison, 1966) and incantations (Jer 8:17; Ps 58:5-6; Eccl 10:11 *et al.*).

tional idiosyncrasy - a remnant of a primary historical comprehension of the task as fossilized in linguistic usage.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, priests were considered of a standing higher even than the royal courtiers, for since the reigning king himself was regarded as God's protégé, his servants certainly could not compete for status with those of God.

Indeed, in the view of the priestly source (= P) there is actually no room for the king, nor is he referred to, while the high-priest is adorned with salient royal emblems: his vestments contain blue and purple as well as cords and castings of gold (Exod 28:5-6, 8, 13-15, 22-24 *et al.*). A diadem (*nezer*), also known as a frontlet (*šîš*) (Exod 28:36-38; 39:30-31) and resembling the king's headgear (2 Sam 1:10; 2 Kgs 11:12; Ps 132:18 *et al.*) is put upon his head, while he himself is anointed with oil (Exod 29:7; Lev 4:3, 5, 16; 6:13 *et al.*), as was also customary with kings (1 Sam 9:16; 10:1; 2 Sam 2:7 *et al.*).<sup>4</sup> The fact that this source conceives of the high priesthood as a kind of equivalent of, or substitute for, kingship finds additional expression in the notion that God granted "an eternal covenant of priesthood" to Phinehas son of Eleazar son of Aaron, "to him and his descendants after him" (Num 25:13). This covenant is the direct continuation and climax to the three covenants which God made with Noah and his offspring (Gen 9:8-17), Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:1-14), Moses and Israel at Mount Sinai (Exod 31:13-17). But in the non-priestly sources, the fourth covenant in this series is made with David (2 Sam 7:4-29) and through it the Lord promises that David's royal throne "will be established forever" (2 Sam 7:13, 16; cf. Pss 89:4-5; 132:11-12).<sup>5</sup> The

3. The prophet's conventional epithet is, by contrast, "slave (or servant), 'ebed' of the Lord" (1 Kgs 14:18; 15:29; 2 Kgs 9:33; 10:10; Isa 2:3 *et al.*), which is Moses' title outside the priestly source (Num 12:7 8; Deut 34:5; Josh 1:1 2 *et al.*). Prophets in general are referred to as "my slaves ('*ahādav*) the prophets", "his slaves ('*ahādāw*) the prophets", where the inflected noun for "slaves" is directed to God (2 Kgs 9:7; 17:13, 23; Jer 7:25; 25:4 *et al.*). This epithet, which apparently originated in prophetic circles is also projected upon other figures, such as Abraham (Gen 26:24; cf. 20:7), Caleb (Num 14:24), David (2 Sam 7:5, 8; 1 Kgs 8:66 *et al.*), Job (Job 1:8; 2:3; 42:7 8).

4. As I see it, the fact that P has preference for priesthood over kingship is not necessarily the outcome of the post-exilic date of composition ascribed to this source, but is an inherent quality of P's way of thinking. The regime underlying P's depiction of the desert period is one in which the tribes are headed by their chieftains (*nesīṭim*) while the people of Israel as a whole are led by God's messenger. Moses (not by Aaron the priest, as would have been expected if this source were really to reflect post-exilic conditions). In this respect, the pentateuchal sources are actually not at variance with each other.

5. Nineteenth century scholars denominated the priestly source *Quattuor foederum liber*, 'Book of four covenants', since it conceives of a system of those four divine covenants, the fourth of which is with Phinehas and his descendants. According to the afore-mentioned

covenants which God entered into with various select groups of humanity form a chain and are fitted together like concentric circles leading to the top. The Bible considers this chain of covenants to be the foundation of the national-cosmic order. While P finds the top, then, to be in the high-priesthood, effectuated within the house of Aaron, the non-priestly sources consider the top to be in the kingship of the Davidic dynasty.

Since the function of priesthood is conceived of as a matter of high-ranking nobility in the service of God, the task was the privilege of special families. The functionaries were considered holy, strictly observing ritual purity and reserving special vestments for their ministrations. Under such conditions, their status was regarded as more prestigious than that of prophets. To be sure, over the course of time it was realized that the prophetic writings (namely, those of the late, literary prophets) have preserved unique compositions, of remarkable literary perfection and a message relevant even to the modern reader living in a semi-secular environment. In biblical times, however, it was priesthood that, as a sacral and aristocratic phenomenon, ranked above prophecy. This fact is reflected, among other things, in the usage of the biblical language, where the rule is that whenever the two are mentioned together, the priest comes first (1 Kgs 1:32-38; Isa 28:7; Jer 4:9 *et al.*).<sup>6</sup>

## II

The only place where the priest could carry out his appointed task as a servant of God was the temple. Outside the temple he could perform some of his other duties or attend to certain of the cult objects (such as the ark, the ephod, a censer with incense) which were at times taken out, but his

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suggestion, the non-priestly sources J and E are also, as a matter of fact. "Books of four covenants." (It goes without saying that they, too, know of the divine covenants that were connected with the figures of Noah, Abraham and Moses, and preceded the one with David). I have no doubt that the truth is with those scholars (e.g., Mowinkel, Eissfeldt, Hölischer, Weiser) who claim that the pentateuchal sources continue on into the Former Prophets (cf. Haran, 1972, pp. X-XII). The narrative in 2 Sam 7, in which God promises eternal kingship to David and his descendants, belongs to E, except for a few Deuteronomistic expansions. It will not be wide of the mark to suppose that J, too, had an analogous account about David, only this source is one of those that have come down to us in an incomplete form.

6. In Jer 6:13; 8:10 the order has been chiasmatically reversed, as sometimes happens with parallelism. However, the prophet still corresponds here to "the least of them" and the priest to "the greatest of them" (Segal, 1946, p. 246).

principal role as God's servant could not come to fruition. In biblical Hebrew, however, the institution where the priest performed that basic task and to which we refer in English as temple, bore some descriptive epithets,<sup>7</sup> but its fundamental, defining term was "house of the Lord" (*bêt Yahweh*), "house of God" (*bêt ʔlôhîm*). The most well-known houses of God in Israel were those built in Jerusalem. They became central religious symbols even for later generations. But these two were preceded by about a dozen earlier houses of God of which we know, set up at various sites throughout the country (such as Shiloh, Bethel, Dan, Gilgal in Ephraim, Mizpah in Benjamin, Hebron) and some of which originated in the earliest phases of the Israelite settlement in Canaan (Haran, 1978, pp. 26-42). When Solomon built the First Temple in Jerusalem some early houses of God had already declined and ceased to be.

The term "house of God", now, clearly designates the institution's primary function, which was exactly what the term implies: a house for the god, *domus dei*, his dwelling place. Just as every temporal king, and indeed any man, has his own domicile, so the divine king, in whose shadow the community takes refuge, has a residence of his own. And just as in every luxurious house so in this dwelling place the master of the residence is provided with all his "needs": bread set on the table, incense for smell, lamps for light, meat of burnt- and peace-offerings, grain- and drink-offerings presented on the outer altar - the altar which in the fossilized cultic language is still referred to as "the Lord's table" (Ezek 44:16; Mal 1:7). In this dwelling place, then, the master of the residence has his own servants, the priests, who care for his necessities and keep the house in order - just as any reigning monarch has in his palace servants and retinue surrounding him constantly and performing his orders.

There should be no doubt that biblical religion was long since freed from such a crude comprehension of the nature of God. Even the conception of the divine in the pre-biblical Near Eastern religions had already been rid of such physical limitation. Nonetheless, neither biblical religion nor those that preceded it ever thought of abandoning the cultic clichés and practices associated with the house of God, even though the institution itself had certainly emerged in a most distant past, at a time when man first started to use houses as his abode and to conceive of the divine forces as possessing personal and distinct character. To put it differently, it was not

7. Such as *miqdâš*, '(place of) holiness', *bêt hammiqdâš*, 'house of holiness' (only in 2 Chron 36:17), *bêt zebûl*, 'lofty house', with some other poetic appellations, as well as *hêkal Yahweh*, 'the Lord's palace' (Haran, 1978, pp. 13-15).

biblical religion that invented the house of God; this institution came to it ready-made, with its identifying marks clearly discernible (cf. Nelson, Oppenheim *et al.*, 1944, pp. 44, 58-59, 66-68).<sup>8</sup> It is a good general rule that religions in history do not usually create their institutions *ex nihilo*, but inherit them from earlier stages and mostly try only to infuse them with a new spirit or to afford them a special meaning. After all, the modes of worship associated with the house of God might not be much more anthropomorphic than the practice of prayer, which is also just an inheritance from the hoary past.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the idea that the temple is constitutionally a house of God and the priest is his servant, was virtually a corner-stone in the biblical and the ancient Near Eastern conception of the world, so that the prophets, too, could only share in it. From this perspective there was no real contrast between priest and prophet, for none of them denied the substantiality and the validity of the other. Just as the latter was recognized as the one who makes known the word of God, so the former was unanimously acknowledged as the servant of God. The fact that the two were not regarded as mutually exclusive is proved by the possibility that a priest could also be a prophet (as we see in the cases of Jeremiah and Ezekiel). If prophets sometimes engaged in bitter controversy against the priests (or the king), this is only an expression of their antagonism to the social establishment and is not to be construed as denial of the functional validity or indispensability of the servants of God in an orderly society. Indeed, in prophecies of consolation the prophets do not refrain from exalting the Lord's servants; they envisage Israel's restoration as a re-institution of the temple service no less than as a renewal of the Davidic kingdom. In the glowing vision of a post-exilic prophet, "all the flocks of Kedar" and "the rams of Nebaioth" shall be assembled in the time of Israel's redemption in order to "come up" on the altar (Isa 60:7). Even in the Jewish prayer book, the plea for restoring worship to the temple and reinstating the priests in their service is still one of the central expressions of eschatological expectation.

If prophecy was the "wings" of biblical religion, priesthood was very

8. Houses of God should not be confused with cultic precincts of the open-air type, a few of which achieved high degrees of prominence. Their foundations were mostly associated with the figures of the Patriarchs and are reported in the Book of Genesis (Haran, 1978, pp. 48-57).

9. If the argument is raised that prayer only fulfills a psychological need of the petitioner, then let it be remembered that sacrifice may have had the same quality and could as well remind a person of the existence of a Supreme Being, before whom one should stand in humility and self-denial. Such a feeling has actually been given artistic expression in works of *belles-lettres*.

aptly described as the bedrock of this faith. Though priesthood, in its literary products (the priestly source and the Book of Ezekiel), was also able to be led by imagination and to form utopian visions, on the whole it constituted the firm base upon which biblical religion could rest.

### III

Mention should here be made of the fundamental difference between the temple and the synagogue, which is basically a gathering place of the community for liturgical purposes, that is, for prayer (which, like any religious experience, is preferably a communal matter, though it may also be performed by individuals). In this respect, the other communal activities associated with the synagogue, such as the reading and expounding of the Law, are also stamped with the imprint of non-sacral worship and are liturgical in character. The synagogue is not exactly a "substitute" for the temple, as some scholars would claim, but an entirely new institution, which is duly considered one of the greatest innovations in the history of religions.<sup>10</sup> A layman could come to the house of God only as a guest and linger in the outer court, being denied access to the inner cultic sanctity which remained the sole prerogative of priests. The synagogue, in contrast, is a democratic institution in its character (as far as the concept "democracy" is applicable in this context).

The synagogue's first appearance took place sometime during the Second Temple period, in all likelihood during the first half of this period. The arguments of those scholars (e.g., Weingreen, 1964, pp. 68-84), who trace its beginnings back to the Babylonian exile, let alone to the last stage of the First Temple period, can be disproved with no great effort.<sup>11</sup> On the

10. Cf. Toy, 1913, p. 546; Moore, 1919, pp. 62-63; Elbogen, 1931, pp. 233-234; Filson, 1944, pp. 83-84; also Turner, 1979, pp. 96, 100-101, 260.

11. Some scholarly attempts (and the renderings by Aquila and the targum) notwithstanding, the phrases *mō'ādē ḥ* and *miqdāš me'at*, mentioned in Ps 74:8 and Ezek 11:16 respectively, have nothing to do with the synagogue. Rabbi Yishaq's dictum on the Ezekiel passage that "these are the synagogues and academies in Babylonia" (Bab. Tal., *Megillah*, 29a) is merely a midrash based on the old-time premise that the synagogue is as old as Judaism and it was Moses who initiated it. This premise was shared not only by talmudic sages (Jer. Tal., *Megillah* 4:5; cf. *Yalqūt Sim'oni*, I, par. 408) and the authors of the targum (Pseudo-Jonathan on Exod 18:20) but also by Philo (*Vita Mosis*, 2:215-216), Josephus (*Contra Apionem* 2:17), and the New Testament (Acts 15:21). Needless to say, such a premise cannot be taken as evidence for the antiquity of the institution. The opinion advanced by Rashi and Qimhi, in their commentaries, that the *hēt ha'ām* referred to in Jer 39:8 is a synagogue, likewise is in a midrashic vein (being related to the statement in Bab. Tal., *Shabbat*,

other hand, it is incontestable that well before the Second Temple's destruction, by the Hellenistic times, the synagogue was already a well-established and recognized institution. We know of a synagogue that was on the Temple Mount itself, in the inner courtyard (Mishnah, *Yoma* 7:1-2; *Ta'anit* 2:5; *Sotah* 7:7-8; cf. *Tosefta*, *Sukkah* 4:11), while talmudic traditions speak of three hundred and ninety-four (Bab. Tal., *Ketubot*, 105a) or four hundred and eighty (Jer. Tal., *Megillah* 3:1) synagogues that were in Jerusalem before its destruction. At the same time, some features reminiscent of the synagogue service infiltrated even into the temple ritual itself (Moore, 1927, II, pp. 12-15). In fact, the synagogue was just one of those facets with which Judaism manifested itself in its post-biblical, classical form - the other facets being the canonization of the Torah and the rest of the Scriptures as the holy writ on which the community's life is founded, the concept of oral law, and the religious conversion of gentiles. All of these facets took shape during the Persian period or after (cf. Moore, 1927, I, pp. 235-307, 323-353).

From this point of view, the Second Temple period was one of transition in the history of Judaism. During that time Judaism reached the stage at which it could practically give up the institution of the house of God altogether, something that was impossible after 586 B.C.E., when the synagogue had not yet emerged and restoration of the temple service was still absolutely essential for Israel's survival.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, when the Second Temple fell, Judaism could absorb the blow without collapsing. The temple was thus turned into an eschatological symbol, to be resurrected only

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32a). It was in vain that some moderns tried to rely on this verse (cf. particularly Löw, 1898, pp. 6-11). For a detailed survey of the opinions of former scholars on this matter, see Kraus, 1922, pp. 52-72 (for the latter's own opinion, see pp. 93-102). We have no solid evidence for the existence of synagogues before the Hellenistic period, though this does not eliminate the possibility, despite arguments to the contrary (Rivkin, 1963, pp. 344-348), that the spores of this institution could have emerged towards the end of the Persian period.

12. The Second Temple period as a transitory stage in the history of Judaism was, of late, appropriately seen by Turner (1979, pp. 99-101). However, he wraps up this recognition in additional, inaccurate observations. He argues that theologically the synagogue is a kind of continuation of the tent of meeting and the prophetic movement, and that the Herodian Temple fell entirely under the category of *domus dei* and in this respect was the same as the Solomonic Temple. In fact, it can be shown that the features of *domus dei* were fading away from the Second Temple from its very beginning. Furthermore, he contends that the idea of *domus dei* re-emerged in later Christianity and Islam, and even in certain types of Jewish synagogues, although this confuses tenets of cultus and faith with architectural embellishments. (For instance, some monumental buildings in Christian Europe which were destined for devotional or entirely secular purposes, bear mythological themes as their ornamentation. Yet this does not necessarily testify to pagan beliefs of their builders).

at the end of days, while for the ongoing daily life there were found new frameworks and channels of communal activity, ostensibly provisional but to all intents and purposes permanent, all of them revolving around the synagogue.

Within the context of synagogue liturgy, in contradistinction to temple service, the priest has no real function. All his roles in the synagogue (priestly benediction, certain honors, redeeming the first-born) are only ornamental touches, reminiscent of a historical phase that preceded the emergence of the new institution. Proof of this is the simple fact that when no priest is present, liturgical activity can proceed without him. Historically speaking, with the emergence of the synagogue, let alone with the destruction of the Second Temple, the role of the priest came to an end.

#### IV

Even though the synagogue is mainly a gathering place for praying, prayer itself originated in much earlier periods and, like sacrifice, is one of the earliest manifestations of the human spirit. Prayer was also prevalent in the temple courts, and it is no mere coincidence that the epithet "house of prayer" is, on one occasion, applied by one of the prophets to the temple (Isa 56:7). In Solomon's prayer, a Deuteronomistic casting, the temple is also described as a place of prayer, while sacrifices are not even mentioned (1 Kgs 8:22-53).<sup>13</sup>

In the temple, however, prayer was considered a gesture of secondary order. There it was a substitute for sacrifice, a kind of "offering of the poor." A visitor to the temple was expected to bring an oblation to the Lord - a burnt-, peace- or grain-offering, but in case he came empty-handed he was at least supposed to utter a prayer, which would be in the nature of substitute. Such an understanding of prayer as being secondary to sacrifice finds explicit expression in the Book of Psalms, the collection of the Jerusalem Temple prayers (at least a significant part of which is

13. This is not exactly because the Second Isaiah and the Deuteronomistic author of Solomon's prayer are relatively late (Levenson, 1981, pp. 158-159, 164-165) - though late they are, as both of them are most probably post-exilic. The fact of the matter is that in pre-exilic reality, too, the temple was in the nature of "house of prayer". On the other hand, the post-exilic prophet who designates the temple "house of prayer", does not refrain, in the self-same verse, from promising the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, that "their burnt-offerings and sacrifices shall be acceptable" on the Lord's altar (Isa 56:7). Levenson, however, takes the evidence of the Second Isaiah and Solomon's prayer to be indicative of the emergence of the synagogue (on which cf. above, note 11).

rooted in the conditions of the First Temple period). Thus we find a suppliant asking that his prayer "be taken like incense" before the Lord and his "upraised hands", that is, the palms raised upward in a customary gesture of prayer, "like an evening grain-offering" (Ps 141:2). When the psalmist says "accept, O Lord, the free-will offering of my mouth" (Ps 119:108), he actually awaits that his words will be as acceptable as a free-will sacrifice. When he declares that "sacrifices to God are a broken spirit" and proclaims that God "will not despise" the contrite and crushed of heart (*ibid.* 51:19), he has no intention of renouncing sacrifices as such, but merely indicates the fact that "a broken spirit" is all he can offer and sets forth his hope that this spirit will count for him as if it were a sacrifice.<sup>14</sup>

Within the framework of temple service, therefore, sacrifice could not usually be done without, even though certain offerings were brought as a matter of choice. In contrast, prayer was optional, although in practice it was met with as often as sacrifice.<sup>15</sup> The decisive fact is that, while the bringing of offerings is frequently referred to as a categorical obligation in the Pentateuch, both in the priestly legislation and outside, there is actually no mention of a requirement to pray to God.<sup>16</sup> The rabbis were able

14. Consequently, one cannot argue to the contrary by resorting to the previous verse: "You do not want me to bring peace-offerings, you do not desire burnt-offerings" (Ps 51:18), which seems to renounce burnt- and peace-offerings altogether. The truth, however, is that this is only a kind of preliminary assertion made by the suppliant, who has already said by way of apology that all he intended to do was only to praise his God with mouth and lips. Indeed, the continuation shows clearly that he does not mean to deny the intrinsic validity of sacrifice, for he says: "May it please you to make Zion prosper . . . then you will want peace-offerings offered in righteousness, burnt- and whole-offerings; then bulls will be offered upon your altar" (*ibid.*, vv. 20-21). The petitioner's tendency is to declare the importance of prayer, which is his sole concern at the moment, not to deny the substantiality of sacrifices in themselves. It is in line with this tendency that we must also understand the statements in Pss 40:7-10; 69:31-32 (while in Ps 15; 24:3-5; 50:8-23, in the spirit of Wisdom, moral values are pointed out - again, without the validity of sacrifice as such being denied). The formulation put forward here comes close, then, to that of Kaufmann (1942-6, pp. 510, 671-674), though is not exactly identical with his.

15. Greenberg (1982, p. 53) seems to have left out of account this dialectic aspect of prayer, which was widespread and no less common than sacrifice, but unlike sacrifice, was involved in no explicit duty.

16. Exceptions are the liturgies accompanying the bringing of the first-fruits (Deut 26:1-10) and of the tithe of the third year (*ibid.*, vv. 13-15), and what is said of the high-priest on the Day of Atonement, when he places his hands upon the head of the scapegoat "and shall confess upon it all the sins of the people of Israel . . . and he shall place them upon the head of the goat" (Lev 16:21). But these only serve to sharpen and bring out the general trend of the evidence. According to the plain meaning of the text, moreover, it is rather doubtful whether in the latter case any prayer is really implied, in spite of the interpretation of the rabbis.

to derive such a commandment from the Torah only indirectly, by explaining the verse "and to serve him (*'ûle'ohdô*) with all your heart" (Deut 10:10) as referring to prayer (*Sifrê*, *'eqeb*, 41).<sup>17</sup> In the biblical period itself, that is, at its pre-exilic stage, prayer belonged to the periphery of cult and was not a part of cultic activity. Its place was outside the priestly circle, which held sole responsibility for all cultic matters within the temple precincts. To my mind, then, defining the priestly service in the First Temple period as "a soundless worship" (Kaufmann, 1942-6, pp. 476-477) was certainly right.

In this wise I have also indicated my own position concerning the relation of the temple priestly circle to the psalmodic poetry. In certain psalms one can discern strophes containing what appears to be an answer to the petitioner's pleas, a sort of "divine response" (especially in what Gunkel called *prophetische Liturgien*, such as Pss 60:8-11; 85:9-14; 121:3-8), while in royal psalms there are indications that an oracle has been delivered to the king (e.g., Pss 2:7-9; 20:7; 21:5; 110:1, 4). In some psalms, especially in those designated *Toraliturgien* (such as Ps 15; 24:3-6) we hear the sound of stern moralizing teaching, which, to be sure, does not reach the extraordinary pathos of the classical prophets. Now, there are those who suggest that in such cases we come across intimations, or quotations, of words of "cultic" functionaries, whose task it was to convey divine answers to petitioners and who actually were priests (while others assume that in some cases those functionaries were special cult-prophets, who had their own role in the temple service). As I see it, in all these instances we can speak not of cult in the strict sense of the word but only of liturgical mannerisms, the place of which, as stated, was in the temple courts, outside the actual cultic circle. There does not seem to me to be sufficient proof that some of those functionaries (conjectural in themselves) were in fact priests, and there are no grounds for claiming that under the prevailing conditions of the First Temple period, priests ever engaged in prayer.

## V

What, then, did an Israelite in biblical times do when he wished to worship God?

The highest obligation laid upon him would be to bring an oblation - a free-will, votive, or thanksgiving offering, in the form of burnt- or peace-

17. They took the adverbial phrase "with all your heart" to imply not its qualitative meaning (as it does), that is, "with your utmost devotion", but a sense of instrumentality, i.e., "by means of, through the agency of, your heart".

offering, or at the least a grain-offering. According to biblical concepts, worship, or God's service: *'ăbôdah*, as applied to God, is tantamount to sacrificing.<sup>18</sup> A sacrifice could be offered either at a solitary altar (not attached to any temple) or at an open-air cultic place (where, by the altar, were found some additional objects, such as a pillar or a sacred tree). But it was especially desirable to bring the sacrifice to a house of God. There the worshiper would turn to the priest, lay his hand on the head of the sacrificial animal (cf. Lev 1:4; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4 *et al.*), sometimes performing the slaughtering himself,<sup>19</sup> and with this his part would be practically over. All the activities involved in the execution of the offering on the altar were the concern of the priest. After burning the fats, all that remained for the sacrificer was to consume the meat in ritual purity and to honor the priest with his duly allotted portions (in the case of burnt-offering the latter activities were not applicable, of course).

If the worshiper was unable to bring an oblation and had to come to the temple empty-handed, which might have happened quite often under actual conditions, he would at least be required to utter a prayer. In most

18. Greenberg (1982, p. 53) opines that though in biblical terms the substantive *'ăbôdah*, when applied to (the house of) God, does not refer to prayer, the verb *'bd* does. In fact, however, this verb presents itself with the explicit meaning of making sacrifices not only in Exod 10:26 ("our cattle also must go with us . . . for we must take of it to serve, *la'ăhōd*, the Lord our God"), which Greenberg acknowledges (and to which Exod 5:17-18; 10:8-9; 12:31-32 might also be added), but in quite a few passages throughout the Bible. See, e.g., 2 Sam 15:7-9 (Absalom made a vow to worship the Lord [the verb *'bd* being used], now he is going to fulfill the vow in Hebron, which was a temple city [Haran, 1978, p. 34]); 2 Kgs 10:18-20 (the promise "to serve" Baal materializes in "a great sacrifice" and convoking an *'ăsārah* at the Baal temple [offerings at an *'ăsārah* being also called for]); Zeph 3:9-10 ("serving" the Lord is equivalent to bringing Him *minhāh*, 'offering', from beyond the rivers of Cush); cf. also Isa 19:21; 43:23; 2 Chron 33:22. In just the same manner, when applied to a reigning monarch, the verb *'bd* practically implies bringing him *minhah*, 'gift', 'tribute', which otherwise, in relation to God, means 'offering' (2 Sam 8:2, 6; 1 Kgs 5:1; 2 Kgs 17:3; cf. Ps 72:10-11). When other activities, however, are tacked on to "serving" God, they are possibly not identical in meaning with *'bd*. For instance, Job 21:15, which Greenberg cites, reads: "What is Shaddai that we should serve Him, *and* what profit should we get if we pray to Him?", where the conjunctive *waw* suggests that "serving" Shaddai is not the same as praying to Him. Likewise, in Zeph 3:9 ("that all of them may call on the name of the Lord *and* serve Him with one accord"), the *waw* conjunctive shows that two acts, calling on the Lord's name and "serving" Him, are here referred to (cf. also below, note 23).

19. Judging from the priestly formulation, the slaughtering should be performed by the sacrificer (Lev 1:5, 11; 3:2, 8 *et al.*), which means that, from the formal point of view, it was his own role. The rabbis, too, decided that if carried out by a layman the slaughtering is valid (Bab. Tal., *Yoma*, 27a; *Zebahim*, 32a). Under the actual temple circumstances, however, the sacrificer was undoubtedly assisted in this task, as well as in boiling the meat and other like works, by those who "served in the temple", the Levites. This is explicitly stated in Ezek 44:11; 46:24 and is implied in the duty of the Levites "to stand before the congregation to serve them" (Num 16:9; Ezek 44:11).

cases, however, prayers were recited in formulaic fashion and in poetical language. The suppliant would have to acquire a ready-made version, cast in conventional form, after the pattern of psalmodic poetry, many examples of which were eventually assembled in the biblical Psalter. In all likelihood, it would have been considered improper and disrespectful to utter spontaneous words to God, in his Temple, as they would come to the petitioner's mind on the spur of the moment.<sup>20</sup>

If the worshiper did not even say a prayer, he would at least have to prostrate himself before the Lord, a practice to which the people still adhered at the end of the Second Temple period. At this time it was customary to pay obeisance in front of breaches in the latticed railings surrounding the inner Temple precincts, as well as opposite the gates of the inner court (*Middot* 2:3, 6; *Seqalim* 6:1, 3) and also in the course of the Day of Atonement ceremony (*Mishnah, Yoma* 6:2; *Aḥot* 5:5). Prostration is a practice in itself which became habitual in certain religions,<sup>21</sup> but was never really adopted by the synagogue.<sup>22</sup>

20. Likewise, at most times and in most places, prayer (which primarily sprang from magical formulae) was a matter of fixed stylistic form, not of direct meditation. It seems to me that prose prayers, which biblical authors occasionally put in the mouths of certain figures, can mostly be explained as a prosaic reporting of content which actually had better been expressed in formulaic language and preferably in the solemn form of poetical style (reporting the petitioner's main intention in prose sentences is possibly easier for the author and is also not disruptive of the narrative framework). In any case, the biblical evidence must be brought in line with the general history of prayer, which evolved from fixed forms to free prose and from the formulaic to the spontaneous. Prayer as unintermediated expression is apparently a relatively late phenomenon, which indicates the disintegration of the set form and belongs at the end of the process rather than at the beginning. I, therefore, would hardly concur with the basic idea of Heiler, who postulates (1932, p. 1) that "the free spontaneous petitionary prayer . . . exhibits the prototype of all prayer." For the beginnings of prayer are of necessity rooted in the transitional stage from a magical conception of the world to an apprehension of personal deity (Mowinckel, 1953, pp. 13-30). Indeed, from the historical point of view, as in Mowinckel's system (1953, pp. 115-121), set "cultic" prayer is given precedence over personal free prayer. In this respect, he really seems to have the truth on his side.

21. *Masgid*, the Arabic term for mosque, means literally 'place of prostration'. In fact, the mosque is a kind of "house of prostration," inasmuch as Muslim prayer is mainly based on kneeling and bowing down (the units called *raka'at*, plural of *rak'ah*), and from this aspect the mosque possesses a special quality which is not to be found in the synagogue (cf. Lazarus-Yafe, 1978, pp. 41-43, and the reference there to Alghazzali). Interestingly enough, the combination *byt hšthwt* 'house of prostration' presents itself in the Damascus Covenant 11:22, but its meaning there is ambiguous. The term *msgd'*, occurring in the Elephantine Papyrus No. 44:3 (Cowley, 1923, p. 147) has been rendered 'temple,' but the Jewish temple at that city is elsewhere referred to mostly as 'egōrā', which derives from the Akkadian *ekurru* 'temple' (ultimately from the Sumerian *é.kur* 'mountain house').

22. Except for the prostrations on the Day of Atonement, done as a reminder of the Temple proceeding, and the prostration that embellishes the 'alēnū prayer in the New Year service and has become prevalent mainly in Ashkenazic communities (other communities

In reality, these three acts - sacrifice, prayer, prostration - joined and complemented each other even though they come in descending order of importance. One who entered the temple court would prostrate himself upon arrival and before his departure (cf. I Sam 1:3, 19). He would do the same even if he intended to offer a sacrifice, which, in a like manner, did not eliminate the possibility of reciting a prayer. The prayer itself was also accompanied by prostrations (Pss 5:8; 95:6; 99:5, 9 *et al.*; cf. Isa 44:17; 45:14). Prostration, however, was in the nature of absolute minimum to be expected from anyone who bothered to come to the house of God. Indeed, it seems quite probable that many visitors to the temple court contented themselves with prostration (Jer 7:2; 26:2; Ezek 46:3, 9 *et al.*), as this gesture was taken to be a sufficient expression of paying homage.<sup>23</sup> Thus, one of the prophets promises that those lost and dispersed in Assyria and Egypt will come "and prostrate themselves before the Lord in the holy mountain, in Jerusalem" (Isa 27:13). Still another declares that "on every New Moon and Sabbath day, all mankind will come to prostrate themselves" before the Lord (Isa 66:23).

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contented themselves with bowing the head). It should be pointed out that there is no sign whatsoever that the latter prostration ever had a historical connection with prostrations in the Temple, nor does the *'alenu* prayer have any origins in the Second Temple period, as some scholars believe. The arguments for an undue antiquity of this prayer, propounded by Manasseh Ben Israel (1656, p. 2) and Mendelssohn (1844, pp. 418-421) and repeated by several recent scholars, are indecisive and can be easily refuted (see, however, Heinemann, 1966, pp. 173-175 and the references there).

23. Greenberg (1982, p. 53) suggests that prostration was an inseparable part of the biblical *'ahūdāh* in the sense of serving God, that is, of the cultic activity proper. Yet, the two verbs *'bd* 'serve' (i.e., by bringing sacrifice) - *hšthwh* 'prostrate oneself', both used mostly in reference to God or to gods, constitute a fixed pair in the Bible (Gen 27:29; Exod 20:5 = Deut 5:9; Exod 23:24), a pair which became particularly typical of the Deuteronomistic diction (Deut 4:19; 8:19; 11:16; 30:17 *et al.*; Josh 23:16; Judg 2:19; I Kgs 9:6, 9; 16:31; 22:54 *et passim*). The pair will prove that the two verbs are distinct from each other and do not convey exactly the same meaning. Heaven and earth, as we know, also make up a pair in the biblical language.

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