

Introduction to Tractate Horaiot

Tractate Horaiot is an appendix to the Order *Neziqin*; its arguments mostly are more appropriate for the Fifth Order, *Qodashim*. In the introductory part of *Leviticus*, containing the rules of private sacrifices, the rules for private purification offerings (*Lev.* 4:27-35), discussed at length in Tractate *Zevahim*, are preceded by rules for the official purification offerings of the anointed High Priest (4:1-12), the Synhedrion as representatives of the people (4:13-21), and the Prince (4:22-26). They are followed by the rules of public or private purification offerings for compromising Temple purity (5:1-13); the same rules apply to private offerings for unintended breaches of obligations affirmed by oaths. The detailed explanation of the rules preceding and following those for private purification offerings are the topic of *Horaiot*. The discussion of the rules for the High Court which became aware that it had ruled wrongly in a practical case can qualify as appendix to *Sanhedrin*, those of atonement for breaches of oaths as appendix to *Ševuot*.

The conditions which trigger the obligations for these sacrifices and their consequences are treated in the first two Chapters, with special emphasis on the implications of erroneous High Court rulings on individuals in the first and breaches of Temple purity in the second Chapters. The third Chapter starts by noting that in *Lev.* 4:1-12 the High Priest is called the Anointed Priest. It is inferred from *Ex.* 30:34 that the only person empowered to compound the anointing oil was Moses. The High Priests of the Second Temple were invested, not anointed; the rules of *Lev.* 4:1-12 did not apply to them. Similarly, the rules for the Prince did apply only those who were kings with divine (prophetic) sanction. The rules for the *Sanhedrin* apply only to the High Court sitting in the Temple compound. Therefore, it is likely that the only part of the discussion of the first two Chapters which refers to practices in force during the Second Temple period were the rules developed in interpretation of *Lev.* 5:1-13.

Most of the third Chapter is devoted to the rules of precedence in religious ceremonies. These rules are of practical importance. The Tractate closes with a homily in praise of the study of Torah.

In addition to the Leiden ms., the text of the Tractate was printed, from a different source, in the original Venice edition of the Babli. This is treated as a separate source and its (sometimes superior) readings are noted in the text. The text is much shorter than the Leiden text since as a rule it does not copy passages which appear elsewhere in the Yerushalmi; it only contains remarks which direct the reader to the parallel occurrences, and also is lacunary at other places. In later editions the text was completed (and otherwise changed) following the Venice print of the Yerushalmi; these texts cannot be used as independent sources. For a small part of Chapter Three there also exists a Genizah fragment. The text from the Babli is noted B if there are other texts to be considered; otherwise its readings are noted following the quotes from the Leiden text without indication of the source.