

## SCHEDULES FOR DEITIES: MACROSTRUCTURE OF ISRAELITE, BABYLONIAN, AND HITTITE SANCTA PURIFICATION DAYS<sup>1</sup>

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The ancient Israelite Day of Atonement, the fifth day of the Babylonian New Year Festival of Spring (Akītu Festival), and the fourth day of the Hittite Ninth Year Festival of Telipinu featured purification of sacred places and/or sacred objects. In spite of the fact that they belonged to different ancient Near Eastern ritual traditions and varied in such factors as the nature of evils removed, objects of purification, and specific forms of ritual activity, these ritual days had similar approaches to scheduling their major blocks of activities. To show this similarity of overall structure, which suggests some conceptual common denominators, I will analyze the structure of each ritual day and then draw comparisons between the structures.

### *The Israelite Day of Atonement*

The Pentateuch prescribes major blocks of ritual activity to be performed on the Day of Atonement, the tenth day of the seventh month. These blocks, which constituted the macrostructure of the ritual day, were clearly differentiated in that they related to the Israelite cultic calendar in three distinct ways: regular rituals were performed every day of the year, festival rituals were also performed on other festival occasions, and special rituals were unique to the Day of Atonement.

<sup>1</sup>This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the 1994 Society of Biblical Literature national meeting in Chicago entitled: "Macrostructural Comparisons Between Israelite, Babylonian and Hittite Ritual Days of Sancta Purification." The paper was based upon part of my 1992 University of California, Berkeley, Ph.D. dissertation, "Ritual Dynamic Structure: Systems Theory and Ritual Syntax Applied to Selected Ancient Israelite, Babylonian and Hittite Festival Days."

### *Regular Rituals*

“Regular” (*tamid*) rituals were to be performed morning and evening<sup>2</sup> on every day of the year. These rituals included a burnt offering with its accompanying cereal and drink offerings (Num 28:1-8); an independent cereal offering of the high priest (Lev 6:12-16; Eng. verses 19-23); and ceremonies inside the sacred Tent, including an independent drink offering (Num 28:7), an incense ritual (Exod 30:7-8), and a ritual of tending the lamps (Exod 30:7-8).<sup>3</sup> Notice that the twice-daily burnt offering was regarded as “food” (*lehem*) of YHWH (Num 28:2).

### *Festival Rituals*

Festival offerings, supplementing the regular burnt offering, were to be performed on several festival occasions throughout the year (Num 28-29), including the Day of Atonement. On this day, the festival offerings were to consist of nine burnt offerings with their accompanying cereal and drink offerings, plus a purification offering (Num 29:8-11).

### *Special Rituals*

A special complex of rituals prescribed in Leviticus 16 was unique to the day. This complex began with preparatory purification of the high priest's whole body and a lot ritual to determine the respective ritual roles of two goats. Then moral faults and ritual impurities were cleansed from the two apartments and outer altar of the sanctuary by application of blood from two elaborate purification offerings (so-called “sin-offerings”)<sup>4</sup> performed by the high priest. These offerings utilized a bull on behalf of the priestly household and a goat on behalf of the lay community. Elsewhere this pair of sacrifices is referred to as *hatta ĩ hakkippurim*, “the purification offering of atonement” (Exod 30:10; Num 29:11). Following the purification offerings

<sup>2</sup>At twilight, literally “between the evenings” (Num 28:4, 8). Cf. J. Milgrom, *Numbers*, JPS Torah Commentary Series (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 239.

<sup>3</sup>I do not include the “bread-of-the-presence” ritual (Lev 24:5-9), which was performed weekly on the Sabbath. This ritual took place on the Day of Atonement only when the day fell on the seventh day of the week. Neither do I include the blowing of the Jubilee trumpet, which occurred only at the commencement of each 50th year (Lev 25:8-10).

<sup>4</sup>The *hatta ĩ* sacrifices were offered not only for purification from sins, i.e., moral faults (e.g., Lev 4:2,13,22,27), but also for purification from ritual impurities, which were not sins (e.g., Lev 12:6,8). Therefore the translation “sin offering” does not do justice to the semantic range of the word *hatta ĩ*. Rendering “sin offering” in passages dealing with ritual impurity conveys the misimpression that ritual impurities were sins. See J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 253-254; cf. N. Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature: Its Meaning and Function*, JSOT Supplement Series 56 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 161.

and a second purification of the high priest, the moral faults of the Israelites were removed from their camp by the banishment of a goat (so-called "scapegoat") to the wilderness, after which two burnt offerings were performed along with their accompanying cereal and drink offerings. Final activities included burning the suet/fat of the purification offerings on the altar, incinerating the carcasses of the purification offering animals, and personal purification of the ritual assistants who led the scapegoat away and who disposed of the carcasses. On the Day of Atonement, the cleansing of the sanctuary and the camp resulted in the moral purification of the Israelites themselves (Lev 16:30).

The fact that the regular, festival, and special calendric types were to be performed together on the Day of Atonement is confirmed by Num 29:11, which lists festival offerings for the Day of Atonement *milbad*, "in addition to," "the purification offering of atonement" and the daily burnt offering and its accompaniments. The Pentateuch does not explicitly specify the order in which the three types of rituals were to be performed. However, this order can be deduced:

1. The regular morning and evening rituals framed each ritual day. In Lev 6:2 (Eng. v. 9), if the burnt offering which remains on the altar all night is the evening regular burnt offering, the verse implies that this was the final sacrifice of each day. In any case, there is no indication in the biblical texts that any ritual activity at the sanctuary was to take place earlier in the morning or later in the evening than the regular rituals.

2. Festival offerings were to be performed "in addition to" (*al/milbad*), i.e., as a supplement to, the regular burnt offering of the morning (Num 28:23). This implies that the additional offerings came just after the morning burnt offering and its cereal and drink accompaniments. The Mishnah agrees that the more frequent regular offerings preceded the less frequent additional offerings (*Zebahim* 10:1). We can assume that following the additional festival offerings, the remaining regular rituals would have been performed.<sup>5</sup> Thus the festival offerings would have been integrated into the morning block of regular rituals.

3. The rituals special to the Day of Atonement (Lev 16) would have been assigned to the part of the ritual day which was left: between the morning regular + festival block of rituals and the evening regular rituals.

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, the macrostructure of the Israelite Day of Atonement can be represented as follows:

**regular + festival → special → regular**

<sup>5</sup>See Gane, "Ritual Dynamic Structure," 333.

*The Fifth Day of the Babylonian New  
Year Festival of Spring*

Partially preserved Akkadian tablets prescribe the rituals of the Babylonian New Year Festival of Spring (Akītu Festival), which was to take place during the first 11 or 12 days of the month of Nisannu. Although the tablets are late, dating to the Seleucid period, the ritual procedures "may go back to a much earlier time."<sup>6</sup> The text which is relevant to days 2-5 was published in cuneiform, transliteration, and French translation by F. Thureau-Dangin.<sup>7</sup> An English translation by A. Sachs is readily available in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, edited by J. Pritchard.<sup>8</sup> My own translation is included in my 1992 dissertation.<sup>9</sup> Even more recently, M. Cohen has included a translation in his 1993 book entitled *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East*.<sup>10</sup>

Since the text which deals with the rituals of Nisannu 5, the fifth day of the festival, is one of the best preserved portions, the macrostructure of this day is accessible to us. The rituals of the fifth day prepared for the climactic events of subsequent festival days<sup>11</sup> by purifying the sacred precincts of Marduk/Bēl, the city god of Babylon, and Nabû, Marduk's son, and by reconfirming the king's relationship to Marduk. Like the rituals of the Israelite Day of Atonement, the Babylonian rituals of Nisannu 5 were of three types with regard to the ritual calendar: regular, festival, and special.

### *Regular Rituals*

Regular rituals included personal purification of the high priest with water preparatory to his officiation, prayers,<sup>12</sup> and morning and afternoon

<sup>6</sup>ANET, 331.

<sup>7</sup>F. Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels Accadiens* (Paris: Editions Ernest Leroux, 1921), 127-154.

<sup>8</sup>ANET, 331-334.

<sup>9</sup>"Ritual Dynamic Structure," see throughout chapter 5 (229-275).

<sup>10</sup>M. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1993), 441-447.

<sup>11</sup>Having arrived in Babylon on Nissanu 5, the god Nabuû went the next morning to Ehursagtila, the temple of the god Ninurta, where he symbolically slew two rival deities. Then he made his way to the Esagila temple, where his triumph was celebrated. The climax of the festival took place during Nissanu 8-11, when the gods hailed Marduk as their king and went in procession to the *akītu*-chapel on the outskirts of the city of Babylon, where they spent several nights before returning. See K. van der Toorn, "The Babylonian New Year Festival: New Insights from the Cuneiform Texts and their Bearing on Old Testament Study," *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 43 (1991): 335-336.

<sup>12</sup>Contents of prayers varied from day to day.

“meal” ceremonies which were to be performed daily for Marduk and his spouse, Zarpanitu/Bēlet.<sup>13</sup>

### *Festival Ritual*

While the god Nabû was undoubtedly provided with meals at his home temple in Borsippa during the rest of the year, he was fed in Babylon while visiting there on festival days, including the afternoon of Nisannu 5 just after he arrived in Babylon. With regard to the ritual procedure in Babylon, Nabû's afternoon meal on Nisannu 5 can be regarded as a festival offering. Just as the festival offerings of the Israelite Day of Atonement supplemented the regular burnt offering to YHWH (see above), the afternoon meal of Nabû came just after the regular afternoon meal of Marduk and was closely linked to that meal, as shown by the fact that following the meal of Marduk, his table was brought to Nabû (lines 405-406).<sup>14</sup>

### *Special Rituals*

On Nisannu 5, cultic functionaries purified the Esagila temple of Marduk by sprinkling it with water, sounding a copper bell, and carrying around a censer and torch inside the temple. The Ezida, the guest cella of Nabû, was also purified in preparation for his arrival from the town of Borsippa. This purification was quite elaborate, including not only sprinkling holy water and carrying a censer and torch, but also smearing the doors with cedar oil and wiping the cella with the decapitated carcass of a ram. A second phase of purification of the Ezida included setting up a kind of canopy called “the golden heaven” and reciting a “loud cry,” an incantation by which demons were exorcized from the temple.<sup>15</sup> Later the same day, the king purified himself by washing his hands with water and then went before (the image of) Marduk in the Esagila without his crown and royal insignia. The high priest humiliated the king before Marduk by striking his cheek, pulling him by the ears and making him kneel down to the ground. The king affirmed his righteousness, and the high priest expressed the favor of Marduk toward him, following which the king received his crown and insignia and was struck again by the high priest to make tears flow as an omen of Marduk's favor.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. *ANET*, 343-345, on “Daily Sacrifices to the Gods of the City of Uruk” (translation by A. Sachs), and A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 188-189.

<sup>14</sup>Whereas the morning meal of Marduk is only mentioned in the text (lines 338-339), the afternoon table ceremony of this god is presented in detail (lines 385-403), probably because there were modifications conditioned by the special festival context.

<sup>15</sup>Ironically, in Revelation 18:2 a mighty voice (or “loud cry”) announces that “Babylon” is fallen and has become a dwelling place of demons.

In the evening, the king lit a special burnt offering of honey, ghee, and oil, which had been placed in a pit, while a white bull stood in front of the pit. While the offering burned, the king recited a speech addressed to the bull, which apparently represented a heavenly deity.

Because the rituals of the fifth day of the Babylonian New Year Festival of Spring are presented in the order of their performance in a single text, no reconstruction of this order is necessary. The rituals are listed below along with their text line numbers. In some cases the lines listed for a given ritual include preparatory actions relevant to that ritual, e.g., line 287—removing the linen curtain before prayers to Marduk and Zarpanitu, lines 366-368—summoning personnel, and line 414—bringing the king into the Esagila temple.

*Regular*

- personal purification of high priest (lines 285-286)
- prayers to Marduk and Zarpanitu (lines 287-333)
- regular morning meal for Marduk and Zarpanitu (lines 334-339)

*Special*

- purification of Esagila temple (lines 340-345a)
- purification of Ezida cella of Nabû (lines 345b-365)
- second purification of Ezida cella (lines 366-384)

*Regular*

- regular afternoon meal for Marduk (lines 385-403)

*Festival*

- afternoon meal of Nabû (lines 404-412)

*Special*

- personal purification of king (line 413)
- humiliation and restoration of king (lines 414-452)
- burnt offering (lines 453-463—broken off)

On this basis, the macrostructure of the fifth day of the Babylonian New Year Festival of Spring can be represented as follows:

**regular —> special —> regular + festival —> special**

*The Fourth Day of the Hittite  
Ninth Year Telipinu Festival*

The rituals of the Ninth Year Festival<sup>16</sup> of the god Telipinu in the Anatolian

<sup>16</sup>While the festival is referred to as that of the ninth year (see tablet Nr. 3 Obv. I 1), the text does not indicate whether this means that the festival was to be performed every nine years or in the ninth year of a monarch, or something else. See V. Haas and L. J.-Rost, "Das Festritual des Gottes Telipinu in Hanhana und in Kašša: Ein Beitrag zum hethitischen Festkalender," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 11 (1984): 15-16. In any case, there were other Telipinu festivals: those of the third year, those of every year (autumn and spring), and those

cities of Hanhana and Kašha are prescribed on partially preserved Hittite tablets dating to the second millennium B.C.<sup>17</sup> Twenty tablet pieces (Nrs. 1-20) pertaining to the festival, including a considerable amount of duplicate material, have been assembled, transliterated, and translated into German by V. Haas & L. J.-Rost.<sup>18</sup> My English translation of the Ninth Year Festival texts, with some discussion of text reconstruction, appears in Appendix II of my dissertation.<sup>19</sup> Of the points covered in that discussion, two are especially relevant for analysis of the fourth-day rituals:

1. Following Taracha, the order proposed by Haas and Rost for the fragments prescribing the core of the third and fourth days is to be reversed.<sup>20</sup>

2. Tablet Nr. 12 does not pertain to the Ninth Year Festival. However, the side of this tablet tentatively taken by Haas and Rost to be the obverse<sup>21</sup> and by Taracha to be the reverse<sup>22</sup> bears significant similarities to part of the description of the fourth day of the Ninth Year Festival.

The Ninth Year Festival was performed during six days in the autumn and included special cult renewal ceremonies on the third, fourth, and fifth days. On the third day, a fresh evergreen tree was acquired, apparently through a trip to a mountain, to replace a relatively older cultic oak tree. On the fourth day, images of Telipinu and other deities were ceremonially washed in a river. On the fifth day, the roof of Telipinu's temple was ritually plastered.

The fourth day, with which we are concerned here, was like the Israelite and Babylonian ritual days discussed above in that it included rituals of three types with regard to the cultic calendar: regular, festival, and special.

### *Regular Rituals*

Daily offerings constituted the two regular "meals" of the god Telipinu.<sup>23</sup>

of every month (Nr. 5 Obv. 7'-10'; Nr. 7 Rev. IV 10-12).

<sup>17</sup>One tablet belongs to the Old or Middle Hittite period, and the others are from the Late Hittite period, which ended c. 1180 B.C. See P. Taracha, "Zum Festritual des Gottes Telipinu in Hanhana und in Kašha," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 13 (1986): 180.

<sup>18</sup>*Altorientalische Forschungen* 11 (1984): 10-91, 204-236.

<sup>19</sup>Gane, 391-423.

<sup>20</sup>See Taracha, 183.

<sup>21</sup>Haas and Rost, 68-70.

<sup>22</sup>Taracha, 182 n. 9.

<sup>23</sup>Food offerings of various kinds were to be performed on other days of the Ninth Year Festival and it is probable that Telipinu was fed throughout the year on a regular, daily basis. On the daily care and feeding of Hittite gods, see A. Goetze, *Kleinasien* (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1957), 162-163.

In the morning of the fourth day, he received meat and drink. In the afternoon, upon the return of his image to the temple, his meal consisted of meat, bread, and drink.

### *Festival Ritual*

A ceremonial feast at the end of day four, taking place in the presence of Telipinu, honored him and his fellow deities. This feast constituted a separate event; it was not simply an addition to the preceding regular offering to Telipinu. Such feasts also took place at other times, including Telipinu festivals other than that of the ninth year.<sup>24</sup>

### *Special Rituals*

Special to the fourth day was the purification of sancta, including images of Telipinu, H̄atepinu (his consort), the sun god, and the weather god, as well as a cult pedestal. For the purification to be accomplished, several kinds of activity were necessary: first, the sancta were to be carried on a carriage from the temple of Telipinu<sup>25</sup> to a river, with a procession accompanying them. The entourage included the crown prince and musicians playing harp and tambourine in front of the carriage and maidens who sang behind the carriage. Upon arrival at the river, the images and pedestal were washed in the river while some kind of “replicas” were made and a “washing song” was sung in Hattic. Following this, the morning regular food offering to Telipinu was performed (see above). At this point it is possible that some additional ritual activities are lost in the lacuna between Tablet Nr. 7 Obv. I and Nr. 8 Obv. II. After eating the livers and hearts from Telipinu's regular offering, four priests recited a speech to “the lord of Hanhana” (= Telipinu?). Then the sancta were conveyed in procession back to the temple with music and various other activities, including wrestling as entertainment for Telipinu.<sup>26</sup>

Since portions of Hittite text preserved on tablet pieces overlap, it is possible to reconstruct the order in which the ritual events of the fourth day were to be performed. The rituals are listed below in order of performance along with text references. Notice that the regular morning offering to Telipinu took place at the river between the special purification of the sancta and

<sup>24</sup>See Nr. 5 Obv. 7'-12'.

<sup>25</sup>This temple was probably located in Kašha (Nr. 7 Obv. I 5').

<sup>26</sup>The processions on this day were quite similar to the Israelite procession by which David began bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem on a wagon (2 Sam 6:3-5; see M. Weinfeld, “Traces of Hittite Cult in Shiloh and in Jerusalem,” *Shnaton* 10 [1990]: 110-114, Hebrew). However, while a Hittite priest properly held the image of Telipinu in place on the carriage (Nr. 7 Obv. I 4'), Uzzah was smitten by YHWH for attempting to steady the Israelite ark of the covenant on its wagon (2 Sam 6:6-7).



the continuation of special activities, consisting of a speech and the processional return of the sancta to the temple.

*Special*

procession from temple to river (Nr. 6 Obv. I 18'-23'; Nr. 7 Obv. I x+2-16')  
washing of sancta in river (Nr. 7 Obv. I 17'-21'; Nr. 8 Obv. II 4'-6')

*Regular*

offering to Telipinu (Nr. 7 Obv. I 22'-26'; Nr. 8 Obv. II 7'-9'; Nr. 1 Rev. III 14'-15')

*Special (continued)*

speech (Nr. 1 Rev. III 15'-17'; Nr. 8 Obv. II 10'-12')  
procession (Nr. 1 Rev. III 18'-27'; Nr. 8 Obv. II 12'-26'; Nr. 14 Rev. IV x+1-7')

*Regular*

afternoon offering to Telipinu (Nr. 8 Obv. II 27'-30'; Nr. 14 Rev. IV 8'-14')

*Festival*

ritual feast (Nr. 13 Rev. IV 3'-13'; Nr. 14 Rev. IV 15'-22')

On this basis, the macrostructure of the fourth day of the Hittite Ninth Year Telipinu Festival can be represented as follows:

**special —> regular —> special (cont.) —> regular —> festival**

*Macrostructural Comparisons Between the Three Ritual Days*

The above analysis has yielded the following macrostructural outlines of Israelite, Babylonian, and Hittite ritual days of sancta purification:

Israelite Day of Atonement

**regular + festival —> special —> regular**

Fifth day of the Babylonian New Year Festival of Spring

**regular —> special —> regular + festival —> special**

Fourth day of the Hittite Ninth Year Telipinu Festival

**special —> regular —> special (cont.) —> regular —> festival**

Now we are ready to compare the ritual days in terms of their similarities and differences:

*Similarities*

Macrostructural similarities between the three ritual days include the following:

1. Each of the days included two blocks of regular/daily ritual activities.

2. Each of the days included a segment of one or more rituals such as those which were performed on other festival days as well.

3. Each of the days included cyclical sancta purification rituals special to that day.

4. The blocks of regular rituals were separated from each other by special rituals.

5. The festival rituals were close to the regular rituals, either following the regular rituals (Babylonian and Hittite) or integrated with them (Israelite).

The similarities between these structures appear to result from shared ideas and the combination of those ideas. As is well known, ancient Near Eastern peoples believed that a deity should be provided with service, including food offerings, twice every day;<sup>27</sup> should receive additional offerings on festival days;<sup>28</sup> and should have his/her cult purified periodically.<sup>29</sup> Thus, a special sancta purification day necessarily included two segments of regular service, plus festival offerings, as well as rites of sancta purification which comprised the special business of the day. Combining these components, it is logical that morning and afternoon or evening regular service should provide the basic framework of the day, supplementary feast ceremonies should follow one of the regular segments, and special activities should be performed between them. Special activities could also be performed before the first regular segment (Hittite) or after the second regular segment (Babylonian and Hittite).

The kind of schedule just described is not unlike that of a human monarch, who would eat regular meals during a day on which he participated in special events. Like kings, deities did not stop receiving "meals" just because they were involved with other business on a given day. Even YHWH, the deity of Israel, did not stop receiving his regular offerings on the Day of Atonement, in spite of the fact that he commanded the Israelites to practice self-denial, which included fasting, on that day (Lev 16:29,31; 23:27,29,32; Num 29:7).

The basic ritual scheme described here is evident in the three ritual days in spite of the fact that they did not belong to the same ritual tradition and in spite of significant differences between them (see below).

Aside from structural similarities, there are other kinds of similarities. For example:

1. The Israelite, Babylonian, and Hittite cults contained anthropomorphic elements such as the idea that a deity could dwell in an earthly residence and receive service, including "meals," such as was provided for a king.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup>See, e.g., *ANET*, 343-344; Oppenheim, 188-189.

<sup>28</sup>Cf., e.g., Cohen, 411.

<sup>29</sup>Cf., e.g., Cohen, 322.

<sup>30</sup>On this aspect of Israelite cult, see M. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient*

2. The purification of sancta was a serious matter directly involving only cultic personnel.

3. As part of the purification of Nabû's Ezida cella in Babylon, a cultic functionary wiped the cella with the decapitated carcass of a ram (line 354). As is well known, the Akkadian verb "wipe" here is *kuppuru* (D stem), which is the cognate of Hebrew *kipper* (Piel stem), "atone," the verb used in Leviticus 16:16, 18, 20, 33 to describe the cleansing of the Israelite sanctuary on the Day of Atonement.

4. J. Milgrom points out several similarities between the fifth day of the Babylonian New Year Festival of Spring and the Israelite Day of Atonement:

On both occasions, (1) the temple is purged by rites that demand that the high priest rise before dawn (*m. Yoma* 1:7), bathe and dress in linen, employ a censer, and perform a sprinkling rite on the sanctuary; (2) the impurity is eliminated by means of slaughtered animals; (3) the participants are rendered impure; and (4) the king/high priest submits to a ritual of confession and penitence.<sup>31</sup>

### Differences

Macrostructural differences between the three ritual days include the following:

1. Relationships between regular and festival segments varied: Israelite festival rituals were incorporated into a regular segment. The Babylonian festival ritual immediately followed a regular ritual and was linked to it. The Hittite feast followed a regular segment but represented a separate event.

2. The festival rituals occurred at different points: near the beginning (Israelite), near the middle (Babylonian), or at the end (Hittite). Thus, YHWH preferred a bigger "breakfast," but Telipinu feasted in the evening. The Babylonian festival ritual segment did not provide more food for Marduk; it provided a "meal" for his guest, Nabû.

3. Whereas the Israelite day had one special segment, the Babylonian and Hittite days had two special segments. On the Hittite day, the second special segment was clearly a continuation of the first, due to the need for a processional return to the temple after the purification of sancta at the river.

4. Only the Hittite day began with a special segment, so that the first daily offering came *after* the purification of the sancta had already taken place.

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*Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1985), 218-221. On Babylonian cult, see Oppenheim, 186-193. On Hittite cult, see G. Beckman, "The Religion of the Hittites," *Biblical Archaeologist* 52 (1989): 102, 107.

<sup>31</sup>Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1068.

5. The three days ended with different kinds of segments: regular (Israelite), special (Babylonian), and festival (Hittite).

Aside from structural differences, there were other kinds of differences. For example:

1. Whereas the Israelite and Babylonian festival days were to be performed yearly, the Hittite ritual day took place only in the ninth year.<sup>32</sup>

2. The Israelite and Hittite festival days occurred in autumn, but the Babylonian day was in spring.

3. The Babylonian and Hittite days belonged to festivals lasting several days, but the Israelite Day of Atonement stood alone. However, the Day of Atonement may have been regarded as the climax of the awesome ten days which began with the blowing of trumpets on the first day of the seventh month (Lev 23:23-25).<sup>33</sup>

4. Whereas all of the special segments belonging to the Israelite and Hittite days were involved with the purification of sancta, the Babylonian day also included a special reconfirmation of the king to prepare for his role on subsequent ritual days.

5. While the Israelite, Babylonian, and Hittite cults contained anthropomorphism (see above), the Israelite cult was careful to avoid conveying the impression that YHWH is really dependent upon human food. Since his regular offerings at the outer altar were burned, he received them in the form of smoke, hardly a human mode of consuming food. Of the "bread-of-the-presence" offering laid out before him inside the sacred Tent and changed every Sabbath, he appropriated for himself only the incense, assigning the bread itself to his priests (Lev 24:7,9).<sup>34</sup>

6. Whereas plurality of deities and sacred locations was a factor in the multiplication of ritual activities on the Babylonian and Hittite festival days, such plurality did not affect the Israelite Day of Atonement due to the monotheistic nature of the normative Israelite cult.

7. The Day of Atonement and the fourth day of the Telipinu festival appear to have been climactic events within their respective cults, but the fifth day of the Babylonian New Year Festival of Spring was not a climax; it prepared for the climax which came later in the festival.

8. The Israelite and Babylonian prescriptive texts show no evidence of gaiety on their respective sancta purification days,<sup>35</sup> but the Hittite day

<sup>32</sup>On the meaning of the "ninth year," see note 17, above.

<sup>33</sup>Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1069.

<sup>34</sup>See R. Gane, "Bread-of-the-Presence' and Creator-in-Residence," *Vetus Testamentum* 42 (1992): 179-203. Cp. Haran, 221.

<sup>35</sup>However, Milgrom points out that joy would have been appropriate on the Day of

involved persons such as musicians and entertainers in gala processions to and from the river where the purification was performed.

9. Evils removed by purification rituals were not the same.<sup>36</sup> For example: Impurity in Babylon came from nonhuman sources such as demons, and there was no purification/atonement for sins committed by the Babylonian people. The king of Babylon, whose relation with the gods affected the Babylonian people, affirmed his innocence before Marduk (lines 422-428), but he admitted no need of forgiveness. In Israel, on the other hand, impurity came from the people themselves,<sup>37</sup> and it was cleansed from the sanctuary along with moral faults which they had committed (Lev 16:16; cp. verse 21). The Hittite texts prescribing the Telipinu festival do not indicate the nature of the defilement which necessitated the purification of the sancta.

10. Objects of purification differed. The Israelite Day of Atonement was concerned with purification of sacred precincts, sancta, and persons; the Babylonian day with purification of sacred precincts; and the Hittite day with purification of sacred objects.

11. Each ritual day had its own specific forms of ritual activity. Israelite sacred precincts and sancta were purged by sprinkling and daubing blood. The Babylonian sacred precincts were purified by sprinkling water, ringing a bell, carrying a torch and censer, and wiping a carcass. The Hittite sancta were purified by being washed in a river.

12. Impurity resulting from ritual participation varied. Hittite ritual participants were not affected at all. Israelite assistants who led the scapegoat to the wilderness and disposed of the purification offering carcasses contracted minor impurity which lasted only until they laundered their clothes and bathed, after which they could reenter the camp (Lev 16:26,28). Babylonian functionaries who participated in the purification of the Ezida with a decapitated ram were much more severely affected: They had to remain outside Babylon for the rest of the festival, i.e., until the twelfth day of Nisannu (lines 361-363).

### Conclusion

There is no question that the Israelites, Babylonians, and Hittites had distinct ritual and theological systems. However, they shared some basic ideas regarding their obligations to their deities, including the need to provide

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Atonement, particularly when the Jubilee year began on that day every fiftieth year (Lev 25:9; *Leviticus 1-16*, 1066-1067).

<sup>36</sup>For a thorough study of impurities and their removal in the context of Israelite, Hittite, and Mesopotamian cults, see D. Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987).

<sup>37</sup>See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1068-1069.

twice-daily regular offerings and additional offerings on festival occasions and the need to periodically purify sacred objects and/or precincts pertaining to those deities. Furthermore, as shown in this article, the Israelites, Babylonians, and Hittites had a similar approach to scheduling the various components of days on which special sancta purification rituals were performed. Regular "meal" ceremonies took place as usual; additional feast ceremonies followed or were integrated with one of the regular meals; and special purification activities were performed during the remaining part of the day, i.e., between the regular offerings, or before the first regular "meal," or after the second regular "meal."

The parallels analyzed here carry some additional historical significance. Jacob Milgrom has argued for the antiquity of the Israelite Day of Atonement partly upon the basis of parallels with the Babylonian New Year Festival<sup>38</sup>. This argument is strengthened by the fact that the basic macrostructural scheme described in the present article is found not only in the Israelite and Babylonian sancta purification days, but also in the Hittite Festival of Telipinu, which is indisputably dated to the second millennium B.C.

<sup>38</sup>*Lev 1-16, 1067-1071*