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Source: *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Autumn, 1998, Vol. 117, No. 3 (Autumn, 1998), pp. 401-414

Published by: The Society of Biblical Literature

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3266438>

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THE BIBLICAL TRADITION OF ANOINTING PRIESTS

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Mainstream biblical scholars of the current generation have generally accepted without question the old idea that, before the exile of Judah, priests were not anointed at their installation. According to Martin Noth, who last formulated the main outlines of this hypothesis, the frequent mention of this practice in the Priestly traditions of the Pentateuch reflects rather a postexilic development from a rite applied only to kings through the monarchies of Israel and Judah.¹ The process is derived through the separation of an intermediate stage in the evolution of this postmonarchic cultic system, the single “anointed priest,” the high priest who would follow Aaron.²

Noth’s work is now several decades old, but his treatment of the anointing of priests has neither been advanced nor challenged directly during the interval.³ This paper contends first of all that the ancient Near Eastern evidence

¹ M. Noth, “Office and Vocation in the Old Testament,” in *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967) 237–38; see also R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961) 105, 347; L. Schmidt, *Menschlicher Erfolg und Jahwes Initiative* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970) 186; R. Péter-Contesse, *Lévitique 1–16* (Geneva: Labor & Fides, 1993) 141 (on Leviticus 8). According to B. A. Levine, the Holiness Code argues that only the high priest could be anointed (Lev 21:10; cf. 8:12), but he does not commit himself to any history of development (“Priests,” *IDBSup*, 688). A recent example of the acceptance of Noth’s position without comment is found in J. Blenkinsopp’s study of Israelite religious leadership: “Anointing was added [to priestly installation] only in the post-exilic period, being one indication that the priesthood had acquired some of the aura and trappings of the monarchy, now a thing of the past” (*Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1995] 80).

² Noth considers anointing to be one part of the expanding prominence of priests in postexilic Judean society, in contrast to their relatively minor role in preexilic Israel and Judah (Noth, *Laws*, 230, 234).

³ Clearly the advocates of a preexilic date for the Priestly Torah adopt an entirely different point of view, which will be sympathetic to the analysis undertaken here, even though I do not argue for actual preexilic texts. See, e.g., J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1991) 553–55 (“The Purpose of Anointing”).

does not sustain a late evolution from the preexilic anointing of kings to the postexilic use of the rite for priests. Such a development assumes an unlikely isolation of the practice in a single office. Furthermore, pentateuchal scholarship's preoccupation with the innovations of the exilic crisis has permitted the relative neglect of other explanations for the variety of religious practice recorded in the Priestly instruction commonly identified as P and H.⁴ Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8 merge the customs for anointing the high priest and all the sons of Aaron in one narrative for their installation, and these texts preserve two very dissimilar rites. The high priest is anointed by pouring oil on the head, while the priest family as a whole is anointed by splashing oil and blood on men and garments together.

The supposed evolution of these rites from the anointing of kings treats the second as a development from the first, but the considerable contrast between the two methods suggests that they did not originate by a linear process of this sort. Instead, we should suspect that the Jerusalem cult tradition had incorporated side by side two independent procedures for anointing that probably came from separate origins. Neither the specific settings nor the dates of these origins can be retrieved from current evidence, but there is no reason to insist that either anointing rite came into Jewish practice only after the Babylonian exile.

I. The Improbable Evolution: Ancient Near Eastern Evidence

It has long been acknowledged that some form of anointing priests is indicated by temple personnel identified as "anointed" in the Mesopotamian GUDU₄/pašišu and the Hittite *tazzelli*.⁵ Nevertheless, the argument that the

⁴ This focus on exilic innovation was a key contribution of J. Wellhausen (*Prolegomena to the History of Israel* [Edinburgh: Black, 1885], esp. the first section). One recent extension of this perspective is found in the study of Exodus 25–40 and Leviticus 8–9 by H. Utzschneider, who fits these sanctuary and consecration texts into the first century of the Persian restoration, with the establishment of a new public cult (*Das Heiligtum und das Gesetz. Studien zur Bedeutung der sinaitischen Heiligtumstexte (Ex 25–40; Lev 8–9)* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988], esp. 296–97). With a written artifact like the Bible, known only from copies long after composition, historical certainty remains ever elusive, but the conservatism of ancient Near Eastern temple institutions by itself suggests that change is built on a substantial foundation of continuity. Even when the Bible preserves no evidence for many cultic requirements outside the Priestly instruction, these should not be identified as idealistic fictions or novel Second Temple procedure until a First Temple setting is disproved. Of course, the historical origins of many individual religious practices will have to remain hypothetical or unknown unless excavation or datable epigraphic finds provide further data. In some cases, an argument for postexilic innovation has been bolstered by the apparent absence of independent evidence for a practice in the earlier Near East. Even when new comparisons are discovered, the Bible remains an artifact adrift from its context, but the weight of probability may shift.

⁵ On the GUDU₄/pašišu, see J. Renger, "Untersuchungen zum Priestertum in der altbabylonischen Zeit," *ZA* 59 (1969) 143–63; *AHu*, s.v. pašišu(m), "'Gesalbter' (ein Priester)." The Akka-

biblical tradition reflects a postexilic development has been more easily left unchallenged because Syria-Palestine offered no evidence for the custom.⁶ The collection of ritual tablets from thirteenth-century Syrian Emar now changes the situation and itself provokes reevaluation of the biblical data.⁷

In rites for ordaining the NIN.DINGIR or high priestess of the storm god (Emar (VI.3) 369), the very first act after designation by lot is anointing by oil placed on her head. She has oil poured on her head again at the end of the Shaving Day, the second day of the nine-day festival:

- 369:3–4 Ì.DU₁₀.GA iš-tu É.GAL-lì ù iš-tu É dNIN.KUR i-laq-qu-mi
They take fine oil from the palace and from dNIN.KUR's temple

a-na SAG.DU-ši i-šak-kán-nu⁸
and put (it) on her head.
- 369:20–21 Ì.DU₁₀.GA ša É dNIN.KUR ù É.GAL-lì i-le-qu-nim-ma
They take the fine oil of dNIN.KUR's temple and of the
palace, and

a-na KÁ dIM lúHAL i-[na SAG.DU] ša NIN.DINGIR i-tab-
bu-uk⁹
at the gate of the storm god the diviner pours (it) on the
NIN.DINGIR's [head].

dian term belongs particularly to southern Mesopotamia, and is not definitely attested in the Assyrian system (see *pašišu(m)* 3, one Middle Assyrian text?; but B. Menzel finds no example in her Assyrian text base [*Assyrische Tempel* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1981)]). Hittite scribes identified their *tazzelli*-cult personnel as equivalent to the Mesopotamian type by use of the alternate logographic spelling LUGUDÚ, “anointed” (see A. Goetze, review of S. Alp, *Untersuchungen zu den Beamtennamen im hethitischen Festzeremoniell*, JCS 1 [1947] 84 and n. 15).

⁶ As will be noted, anointing is attested in Syria-Palestine, but not the anointing of priests.

⁷ Emar's rituals come from a single site, the diviner's temple M₁, and are published in D. Arnaud, *Recherches au pays d'Aštata: Textes sumériens et accadiens, texte* (Emar VI.3; Paris: Editions Recherches sur les Civilisations, 1986) nos. 369–535. The rituals are written in Akkadian but represent no attested Mesopotamian text or custom. Pantheon, sacred geography, and the variety of newly attested terms and technique show that the bulk of the collection records deeply rooted local practice. See D. E. Fleming, *The Installation of Baal's High Priestess at Emar* (HSS 42; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), esp. 280–93; idem, “The Rituals From Emar: Evolution of an Indigenous Tradition in Second-Millennium Syria,” in *New Horizons in the Study of Ancient Syria* (ed. M. W. Chavalas and J. L. Hayes; Malibu, CA: Undena, 1992) 51–61.

⁸ One Amarna anointing reference, EA 51:6, uses the verb *šakānu* with the same procedure: “when Manahpiya, the king of Egypt, your ancestor, made [T]a[ku], my ancestor, a king in Nuḥašše, he put oil on his head” (Ìmeš a-na SAG.DU-šu iš-ku-un-šu); translation from W. L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) 122.

⁹ Both versions appear to describe the same procedure, and it is likely that the lúHAL/diviner performs both anointings, based on the parallel texts and on the payment of silver to the diviner in line 5. The verb *tabāku*, “to pour,” offers a more precise definition of the act than *šakānu*, “to place.”

The explanation for the repeated anointing appears to lie in the construction of the festival as a composite of two events left partially independent. Emar festivals begin with preparation of the city gods by offerings called the *qaddušu*, or “consecration.”¹⁰ The NIN.DINGIR installation is the only festival with two *qaddušu* rites because each principal element receives separate preparation.¹¹ The Shaving (*gallubu*) marks the woman’s submission at entry into service, like slaves and male temple functionaries in Mesopotamia.¹² The rest of the festival is called the Installation (*malluku*).¹³ Each anointing of the new priestess accompanies the respective *qaddušu* rites for the Shaving and the Installation, to prepare the woman for each event, as the gods are prepared by offerings.

Both the Shaving and the Installation appear to serve ordination for sacred office as such.¹⁴ Although the NIN.DINGIR is the female head of the god’s household, a relationship that has in its Mesopotamian origins some aspects of marriage, the Syrian institution evidently treats those as secondary. Above all, Emar mentions another NIN.DINGIR who serves the goddess Aštart, so that the metaphor of marriage cannot be intrinsic to the position.¹⁵ To be sure, when the new NIN.DINGIR for the storm god leaves her father’s house for the last time to move into her temple residence, her departure is compared explicitly to a bride’s.¹⁶ Such similarity to wedding custom may derive from marriage overtones still preserved in the office itself, but may be better explained as simply appropriate to a young woman leaving her family for a new home. Unlike the *pašišu*, “anointed,” the rite does not represent the very characteristic that dis-

¹⁰ Fleming, *Installation*, 158–62.

¹¹ Consecration for the Shaving Day is described in line 6, while preparation for the Installation proper is treated in expanded form in lines 22–28.

¹² See Fleming, *Installation*, 180–82; CAD s.v. *gullubu*. The form *gallubu* is a D infinitival noun, with Assyrian vocalization.

¹³ See Fleming, *Installation*, 182–83. The word *malluku* is a D infinitive, like *gallubu*, and appears to derive from a West Semitic use of the verb *malāku*, “to rule (become king),” rather than Akkadian “to advise.” This application to a supreme role in temple rather than palace hierarchy appears to be a new use of the root, applied also to the *mašartu* priestess of Aštart, Emar 370:20 and 41.

¹⁴ Mesopotamian shaving of temple personnel is particularly associated with their installation; see CAD s.v. *gullubu* 2, “to consecrate a priest or a craftsman connected with the temple (by shaving the hair of his head and body, NA, NB only).” The Emar text would provide new attestation in the second millennium, uniquely applied to a woman. It is not clear what was shaved, though the whole body is possible.

¹⁵ Emar 276:8, NIN.DINGIR *ša dIšg-tár*. D. Frayne emphasizes the centrality of the marriage image in this office, but observes that some early texts do show *entus* for goddesses such as Baba, Gatumdug, and Ninisinna (“Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite,” *BO* 42 [1985] 19). Even in Mesopotamia, then, the marriage aspect may sometimes lose its intrinsic connection to her role.

¹⁶ They cover her head with a colorful sash (*túgIB.LÁ bi-ir-mi*) “like a bride” (*ki-i É.GI₄ .A, kī kallati*), and her two maids embrace her like a bride (*ki-i-ma É.GI₄ .A/ka-al-la-ti*). See the discussion of the final day in Fleming, *Installation*, 186–92.

tinguishes one group of temple personnel and thus supplies its identifying title. As with the biblical priests, the NIN.DINGIR's anointing is treated rather as only one element of her consecration for sacred service.

Emar thus provides an example of anointing priests in late-second-millennium Syria, placed in an ordination ritual. Continuity in ritual practice between inland northern Syria and the Israelite hill country is evident in the related consecration of upright stones for identification with the divine presence. The NIN.DINGIR anoints an upright *sikkānu* stone to stand for the goddess Ḫebat in the storm god's temple precincts (lines 35A, cf. B[31–36]c), and Jacob anoints the stone he used for a pillow at Bethel to be a *מצבה* shrine for Yahweh (Gen 28:18). Both rites are performed by oil poured on the “top” (literally, “head”) of the stone.¹⁷

Anointing observes a variety of transitions in status through the ancient Near East.¹⁸ Amarna letter EA 34 speaks of oil sent by the king of Alašiya (Cyprus) to the Egyptian king, “seeing that you have sat down on your royal throne,” perhaps reflecting Cypriot rather than Egyptian custom.¹⁹ EA 51, from the king of Nuḫašše in northern Syria, refers to the anointing of his ancestor Taku by the king of Egypt, here in vassalage.²⁰ Hittite kings may be anointed at accession, and a New Kingdom Hittite prayer has the king Tudḫaliya anointed as priest at the provincial cities of Ḫakmiš and Nerik, underlining the sacred aspect of royal vocation and ritual function.²¹

¹⁷ Emar 369:35A, NIN.DINGIR Ḳ.DU₁₀.GA *a-na* SAG.DU ^{na4}si-ṛka-ni šaṛ dḪē-bat i-tab-ba-ak, “The NIN.DINGIR pours fine oil on the top of the upright stone of Ḫebat”; Gen 28:18, יָשָׁם וַיִּצֶק שָׁמֶן עַל רִאשָׁהּ, “Jacob set it up as an upright stone and poured oil on its top.” Identification of the stone as the very shrine is indicated in v. 22, “This stone which I set up as an upright stone shall be the shrine of God [בֵּית אֱלֹהִים].” The similarity between these ritual practices does not exhaust the continuity between Emar and biblical custom, but it provides a particularly striking example. For further discussion of potential comparisons between Emar and biblical religious practice, see Fleming, “More Help From Syria: Introducing Emar to Biblical Study,” BA 58 (1995) 143–46.

¹⁸ The following discussion only sketches evidence that is gathered and evaluated more completely elsewhere. The overview provided here is intended to emphasize the common and diverse use of the rite in ancient Near Eastern life. See especially the monograph by E. Kutsch, *Salbung als Rechtsakt im Alten Testament und im Alten Orient* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1963) and the review by K. R. Veenhof, BO 23 (1966) 308–13; S. Dalley, “Anointing in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *The Oil of Gladness* (ed. M. Dudley and G. Rowell; London: S.P.C.K., 1993) 19–25; T. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (Lund: Gleerup, 1976) 208–28.

¹⁹ The translation follows Moran, *Amarna Letters*, 106–7, lines 50–53, with n. 11. If Moran correctly considers the enthronement a completed event, the anointing gift has been disconnected from its attested occasion, at the accession itself. Also, the rite is mentioned as one familiar to the Egyptian ruler.

²⁰ Noth suggests that this represents practice in Syria and Palestine, not in Egypt (*Laws*, 239). Mettinger, following Kutsch, de Vaux, and others, emphasizes the use as a rite of vassalage, proper to Egypt under that function (*King and Messiah*, 209).

²¹ Kutsch lists for the anointing at accession KUB 34 5:Vs19ff + KUB 9 13:Vs7ff and Bo.

Various changes in legal relationships in Mesopotamia and Syria may be marked by anointing: women upon betrothal, both parties in property transactions, a woman released from status as a prostitute, and merchants from royal obligations.²² If the rite comes to accomplish purification, as commonly understood, anointing in everyday life is notable less for what it removes than for what it adds—soothing comfort, beautiful luster, and simple pleasure.²³ In one property transaction, the parties together eat, drink, and anoint themselves.²⁴ Enkidu completes the civilizing process in the *Gilgamesh Epic* by eating bread and drinking beer, the products of human culinary technology, and then by anointing himself with oil, not evidently for cleansing but as the final adornment of a Mesopotamian man-about-town.²⁵ Amos 6:6 conceives a similar luxury in attacking those who drink wine and anoint themselves with the best of oils.

1318/C = KUB 36 119:4' (*Salbung*, 36–37). Noth refers to A. Goetze, in *Kulturgeschichtliche des alten Orients*, Ser. III, pt. I, 1933, p. 84 n. 2 (Noth, *Laws*, 239 n. 29). The anointing at Ḥakmiš and Nerik is found in KUB 36 90, pp. 15–18; see J. Friedrich, “Ein Sonderfall partitiver Apposition beim hethitischen Personal Pronomen,” *AfO* 18 (1957–58) 127.

²² This statement combines a wide range of uses and texts. For women upon betrothal, see KAV 1 vi:15, 19 (Middle Assyrian law); EA 29:22–23 (diplomatic correspondence, Mitanni/Egypt); EA 31:11–14 (same, Arzawa/Egypt); KUB 3 63 Vs2:15–16 (same, Ḫatti/Egypt); cf. KUB 3 24 + 59:5–7. Veenhof suggests also KAR 66 3v (Assyrian incantation) and EA 1:96 (diplomatic correspondence, Egypt/Babylon) (review, 310–11). In Old Babylonian marriage ritual it is the groom's family who bring the marriage gift (*biblum*) who anoint themselves, not the bride (UET 5 636:9–11; S. Greengus, “Old Babylonian Marriage Ceremonies and Rites,” *JCS* 20 [1966] 56). For both parties in property transactions, see *JCS* 9 92 No. 59:10 (Old Babylonian legal document), and ARM 8 13:r.13' (Mari letter). For release from status as a prostitute (*ḫarimūtu*), see Syria 18 253 RS 8.208:8 (legal document, Ugarit). For release of merchants from royal obligations, see Tukulti-Ninurta Epic Col. II:9'–10' (Veenhof, review, 310); cf. KUB 13 8 (Kutsch, *Salbung*, 20).

²³ Interpretation as purification is based at least in part on T. Jacobsen's identification of the Sumerian GUDU₄ sign as U₄H (louse) + IŠIB (anointed, Akkadian *pašišu*) (*Toward the Image of Tammuz and Other Essays on Mesopotamian History and Culture* [ed. W. L. Moran; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970] 325–26 n. 11). D. Pardee suggests that anointing is a purification rite used to prepare for a change in status, where ritual purity is a safeguard against disaster (“A New Ugaritic Letter,” *BO* 34 [1977] 17–18). By contrast, Veenhof argues that the purifying function is poorly attested for daily life and emphasizes rather what anointing adds to a person (review, 309). Dalley suggests that anointing may be considered to purify gods but not humans (“Anointing in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 21), though this sort of dissimilarity between divine and human application is unexpected.

²⁴ ARM 8 13:r.13'; Veenhof (review, 309) argues against Kutsch, who understands this as a renunciation of mutual claims by purification, that anointing “established a community between them and thus created a sphere in which the sale could take place.” Dalley observes that food, drink, and oil were often involved in rituals accompanying promises, and she suggests that by sympathetic magic a potential curse is laid on these materials that is activated by any breach (“Anointing in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 22).

²⁵ *Gilgamesh* Penn. iii 24–25, *ša-am-nam ip-ta-ša-aš-ma a-wi-li-iš i-wi*, “he anointed himself with oil and so became a true man.” Anointing similarly marks human achievement in the Amarna Adapa myth, where the hero may clothe and anoint himself in heaven, but is warned by Ea not to eat or drink (EA 356:32, 64). Oil makes the body supple (Kraus, *RA* 65 30, Old Babylonian letter to

In its positive aspect, anointing should retain some element of the common practice, potentially an act of communion, like eating and drinking, and a gift of good will.²⁶ It should mark new bonds as well as perhaps purify from ritual danger.²⁷ With such roots in daily life, anointing naturally serves diverse ritual purposes, so that it should not be necessary to derive all from one ritual context or function.²⁸

As Enkidu displays, anointing was an essential part of everyday life in the ancient Near East.²⁹ Based on the variety of ritual and symbolic legal use outside Israel, it should not be surprising if in that land both kings and priests were anointed for their new status, as the rite likewise may have been applied to prophets (1 Kgs 19:15–16; Isa 61:1; Ps 105:15), brides, or others taking on obligations or released from them.

Noth begins his treatment of “Office and Vocation” by stating that “the more ancient Old Testament tradition never once recognizes a special act in the conferring of the priestly office.”³⁰ If we are to conclude from this that priests themselves had none, such a failure would be quite incredible in an ancient Near Eastern setting. The priests’ own biblical contributions supply one in anointing, and Emar provides the first attestation of such a practice in early Syria-Palestine.³¹ The hypothetical development from anointing Israelite kings

a god; with *labāku*, “to soften”), and it soothes the muscles (Maqlû VII 31ff., IX 141f., incantation; with *pašāhu*, “to calm”; cf Lyon Sar. 7:41). A penance involves abstinence from wearing jewelry or new clothing, using aromatics or perfumed oil (*AnSt* 8 46:23, *šamnu tābu*). For these uses of oil, see *CAD* s.v. *šamnu* d, “as lotion or ointment.” Common use of oil is not as a bath to cleanse but as a final accoutrement. Even in medical use, oil has its virtue as a vehicle for healing preparations rather than for any cleansing properties; see *CAD* s.v. *šamnu* i, “in med. use,” 1’ “as salve, lotion, lubricant,” 2’ “as vehicle in preparation of potions and medications.”

²⁶ Mettinger notes that, as a diplomatic symbol, oil represents peace and friendship and that it creates a sense of fellowship and hospitality in all contractual relations (*King and Messiah*, 212). Mettinger’s analysis of the Akkadian evidence is helpful, though his application of the contractual significance to biblical occurrences such as Genesis 28 and royal anointing seems unnecessarily limited.

²⁷ The positive function of anointing might also appear in the common offering of oil to the gods. Whether or not this oil is ever actually applied, it should be for their pleasure as with human use, just as the food provided in offerings is for their sustenance.

²⁸ If anointing in daily life originates in this positive function rather than for purification, rubbing the body might conceptually represent the original rite and pouring on the head the derivative limitation, though both exist side by side in our earliest evidence. With such diverse practical use, it is perhaps dangerous to conclude a single method or purpose.

²⁹ Enkidu demonstrates the essential ingredients in civilized human life by his transformation, and the anointing of the body is therefore given particular prominence in Mesopotamian life by this location in the *Gilgamesh Epic*.

³⁰ Noth, *Laws*, 231. He argues that “filling the hand” (e.g., Judg 17:5, 12; Exod 32:29; 1 Kgs 13:33; and priestly law) refers generally to appointment and indicates no ritual act (p. 232).

³¹ Noth looks north to Hatti for origin of the Israelite anointing of kings, with transmission through Canaan (*Laws*, 239); de Vaux proposes rather that Israel’s custom comes from Egypt by the Amarna rite for vassals (*Ancient Israel*, 104). The Emar evidence for anointing a priestess need

to unction for all Second Temple priests forces evidence for a widespread ancient custom into Israelite cult through the narrowest of passages, an unlikely scenario. From a purely theoretical perspective, furthermore, the particular association of royal anointing with designation by God, however early, may itself be rooted in the old practice of consecrating “priests” for divine service, set apart as sacred to the god.³²

II. The Anointing Traditions of Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8

The preceding discussion of the ancient Near East is intended to suggest that the anointing of Israelite priests before the Babylonian exile is intrinsically probable. Leviticus and the related professional lore in Exodus and Numbers displays this procedure imbedded in priestly custom at least by the time of the restoration under the Persians.³³ If the rite does precede this period, its heritage in Israel must be conceived along new lines. I would like to pursue one facet of the biblical material in particular, the instructions for and execution of the priests’ installation in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8. These offer the only detailed elaboration of anointing procedure, and this detail indicates two quite distinct ritual traditions that do not appear to be directly related.

In his developmental model, Noth placed special emphasis on pentateuchal texts that speak of a single anointed priest.³⁴ These references contrast

not be made to serve any hypothesis of foreign origin. Whether or not the Israelite rite derives ultimately from some distance, its direct antecedents should more likely be sought in the long-held custom of Syria and Palestine.

³² Schmidt suggests that the postexilic anointing of priests developed from a new understanding of royal anointing as consecration for divine service (*Menschlicher Erfolg*, 186). If the idea of consecration indeed were first attached to kings and not priests, Schmidt’s proposal might as easily suit a monarchic rather than a postexilic transmission of the custom.

³³ This statement simply acknowledges the latest historical horizon commonly attributed to this priestly instruction in the Pentateuch. Comparison with the temple vision in Ezekiel 40–48 shows the general continuity of the pentateuchal material with Jerusalem-centered practice of the sixth century. See, e.g., R. Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994) 2.427 and n. 61. The biblical lore of a professional public cult has long been separated into “Priestly law” (P) and the Holiness Code (H, Leviticus 17–26), with the latter defined as the older collection. Whether this order is correct, or the reverse, both sets of material appear to derive from the same “Priestly” institutions that are eventually associated with Jerusalem. On the proposed dependence of H on P, see I. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

³⁴ Noth, *Laws*, 237–38. Exod 29:29–30; Lev 6:15; and Lev 16:32 speak of one priest anointed to succeed Aaron, said in Lev 21:10 to be greater than his brothers (גִּדְּלֵי כֹהֵן), so the high priest (הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדֹל) in Num 35:25. This is perhaps the “anointed priest” who leads the congregation of Israel in expiation of sin in Lev 4:3, 5, and 16. Lev 21:10 distinguishes him as the priest who has anointing oil poured on his head, a designation in the Priestly instruction that does not deny the rite of anointing to other priests, who are still anointed by splashing (נִזְחַק). See also de Vaux, *Ancient*

with a second stream that applies Aaron's anointing to all his sons, as opposed to one only (e.g., Exod 40:13–15; Num 3:3). The apparent point of reference for the dominant anointed priest is the installation tradition in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8.³⁵ Priority in both versions of this extended description is given to Aaron's anointing, which takes place before any animal is sacrificed. After investiture with the distinctive garments of the high priest, he is anointed by oil poured (יָצַק) on the head (Exod 29:5–7 and Lev 8:7–9, 12).

The specific clothing and the method of anointing together suit an Israelite leader. The long robe (מַעֲטָלָה, Exod 28:31–35; 29:5; Lev 8:7) is worn by kings (e.g., 1 Sam 24:5, 12), though not exclusively. Turban (מִצְנֶפֶת, Ezek 21:31) and crown (כִּוֶּן, 2 Sam 1:10; 2 Kgs 11:12; Pss 89:40; 132:18) otherwise serve only kings. Oil is poured on the heads of kings, beginning with Saul in 1 Sam 10:1.

Because anointing by this method is not restricted to consecration of leaders in the wider ancient Near East, there would be no reason to treat it as further identification of Aaron's unique status, except that the installation texts themselves do so.³⁶ Outside of Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8, anointing primarily pertains to Aaron and his high priestly successors, with the remaining sons anointed simply by extension from their chief. Cast as a review of the preceding commands, Exod 40:13–15 requires Moses to anoint Aaron first and then his sons "just as you anointed their father."³⁷ Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8, in contrast, isolate the unique anointing of the high priest with the pouring procedure and introduce a new rite for anointing all of Aaron's sons.

This second element is separated within the installation texts by both method and timing. Aaron has oil poured on his head before any sacrifice is made on his behalf. After the slaughter of the last animal, a combination of oil and the sacrificial blood is sprinkled (נָזַף) not on the heads but on the men and their garments as one (Exod 29:21; Lev 8:30). Unlike the anointing by oil alone, use of the blood sets the second anointing within the sacrificial rite, with separate associations. Blood is taken from the very altar of sacrifice and splashed on the priests in their identifying garments so that they will always wear before Yahweh the symbol of life that committed them to his service.³⁸ The distinct

Israel, 105, 347. Schmidt adds that the phrase הַכֹּהֵן הַמְּשֻׁחַ (for הַכֹּהֵן הַמְּשֻׁחַ*) represents a frozen form that shows derivation from the king's title (*Menschlicher Erfolg*, 186 n. 3).

³⁵ This offers the simplest reading of Leviticus, in spite of the old idea that the Holiness Code must predate the rest of the Priestly Torah. Lev 21:10 should be dependent on the installation tradition in some form, rather than the reverse.

³⁶ The NIN.DINGIR of the storm god at Emar is anointed by this method, as mentioned previously. Among my other Akkadian citations, this method appears also in anointing for marriage, in property transactions, and on the release of slaves (see CAD s.v. *qaqqadu* 1a4'). Dalley incorrectly limits the technique of pouring on the head to betrothal and to selection of vassal kings ("Anointing in Ancient Mesopotamia," 19, 23).

³⁷ See also Exod 30:30; Lev 6:13; 7:36; 10:7; Num 3:3.

³⁸ While oil can represent the sophisticated pleasures of urban life, a finishing touch after

nature of the second rite is confirmed by the fact that Aaron can be anointed twice in the narrative as it now stands.³⁹

Unlike the pouring of oil on the high priest's head, which parallels the procedure for kings, the combination of oil and blood in an anointing rite matches no other biblical practice. Exod 24:8 records the confirmation of the Sinai covenant by splashing (זרק) blood on the people, in one other identification of those consecrated with the life taken in sacrifice.⁴⁰ To my knowledge, the first evidence for anointing with oil and blood together now comes from Emar's *zukru* ritual, applied to a constellation of upright stones gathered as an arcane sacred site outside the city walls. At the first full moon of the year, the *zukru* celebrates Dagan as Emar's ultimate divine sovereign, and the stones appear to represent the collected gods as Dagan passes between them to receive their homage. The application of oil and blood is usually identified by the standard Akkadian term for "anointing" (*pašāšu*), but a distinct method is specified in one version, as "rubbing" (*tarū*).⁴¹ There is no reference to the top or "head" of the stones, unlike when the high priestess pours oil on the "head" of Ḫebat's stone.⁴² Emar's single ritual archive, like the Priestly Torah, preserves two

gods or humans were bathed and dressed, blood was not a substance commonly applied to temple statues or ritual participants in Mesopotamian urban religious practice. This element may originate instead in a setting outside the major cities and their temples.

³⁹ The text of Lev 8:30 reads literally, "and (Moses) sprinkled (it) on Aaron, on his garments, and on his sons, and on the garments of his sons with him, and (so) he consecrated Aaron, his garments, and his sons, and the garments of his sons with him." The repeated list corresponds closely to that of Exod 29:21, except that the conjunction is omitted after Aaron in both sections of Lev 8:30. It is not necessary to conclude from this slight difference that the writer of Leviticus 8 wished to avoid having the high priest anointed twice in his version of the installation (so Milgrom, "The Consecration of the Priests: A Literary Comparison of Leviticus 8 and Exodus 29," in *Ernten, was man sät* [ed. D. R. Daniels et al.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991] 280). Contrast the more straightforward reading of B. A. Levine, *Leviticus* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989) 54.

⁴⁰ W. Burkert proposes that blood binds through death and underlines the value of life by taking an animal life. "The power to kill and respect for life illuminate each other" (*Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983] 21).

⁴¹ See *AHW* s.v. *ṭerū(m)*, ass. *ṭarā'u(m)*, esp. 4, "(Salbe mit einem Tuch od. Lederlappen) einmassieren." Veenhof argues that the verb *pašāšu* itself is not simply a general term but also has as its primary meaning, "to apply a liquid to, by smearing or rubbing" (review, 311).

⁴² Emar's *zukru* ritual is attested in two contrasting forms, a short text for an annual celebration (Emar 375) and a long festival tablet for an event that occurs every seven years (Emar 373). The relevant descriptions appear as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 373:34(32) | NA ₄ meš <i>gāb-ba iš-tu</i> ḫmeš ū ūšmeš <i>i-tar-ru-u</i>
They rub all the stones with oil and blood. |
| 373:60–61
(57–58) | na4.meš _{si} -ka-na-ti ḫmeš ūšmeš [<i>i/ū-pá-š</i>]-a-šu
They anoint the upright stones with oil and blood. |
| 373:167(172) | [ḫmeš (?) ūšmeš NA] ₄ meš <i>i-pá-ša-šu</i>
They anoint the stones with oil and blood. |

anointing procedures in its ritual repertoire, with a similar differentiation of materials and method.⁴³

This distinctive character of the anointing by oil and blood should carry more weight in a discussion of historical development than any solution to the literary tensions between Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8, but it is impossible to avoid the literary problem. It has long been observed that the accounts of instruction and performance depict somewhat different versions of events, and opinion is divided over which is derivative.⁴⁴ In narrative terms, Leviticus 8 is carefully constructed to bring closure to the divine commands not only in Exodus 29 but also in Exod 40:2–15. In the instruction from the last passage, the installation of the priests (40:12–15) is to conclude the larger consecration of the new tabernacle, which in this version involves no mention of sacrifice.

The actual installation in Leviticus 8 is strongly colored by the perspective of Exodus 40, in spite of the obvious repetitions from Exodus 29. Although the order of Aaron's installation ritual in Lev 8:6–12 coincides with the procedure commanded in Exod 29:4–7, the actual anointing of the high priest is made to culminate the larger consecration of the tabernacle and its accoutrements, not mentioned in Exodus 29 (Lev 8:10–12 and Exod 40:9–13). When Leviticus 8 moves to the installation of the whole priestly family, it frames the long sacrificial rites in an envelope of their investiture and anointing (vv. 13 and 30), so that the anointing is again made the distinct apex of their installation, recalling Exod 40:14–15. This narrative presentation wrenches the anointing with oil and blood from its ritual home in the sacrificial sequence, where it accompanies the other applications of fresh blood to the bodies of the priests and to the altar (Exod 29:20–21).

375:14

na⁴šī-ka-na-ti ūšhi.a ì.GIŠ ú-pa-ša-šu

They anoint the upright stones with blood and oil.

The three *zuku* festival (373) texts occur at the same point at the end of three major festival days, and the same ritual act should be represented. All the examples should involve the same stones, sometimes identified more precisely by the Syrian term *sikkānu*, similar to Hebrew מצבה. Extensive discussion of the *zuku* constitutes chap. 3 of my forthcoming book on Emar calendar ritual, tentatively titled *The Ritual Rhythms of Emar* (Mesopotamian Civilizations; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns). See also Fleming, *Installation*, 229–55.

⁴³ All the ritual texts found at Emar come from the one archive that belonged to a religious official who called himself “the diviner of the gods of Emar.” For extended treatment of this figure and his archive, see Fleming, *Ritual Rhythms*, chapter 2.

⁴⁴ Leviticus 8 has often been considered older because it is shorter in places that are viewed as expansions in Exodus 29, and its distinctive material is believed to be original (see B. A. Levine, “The Descriptive Tabernacle Texts of the Pentateuch,” *JAOS* 85 [1965] 311–12; K. Elliger, *Leviticus* [HAT; Tübingen: Mohr, 1966] chap. 8; K.-H. Walkenhorst, *Der Sinai im liturgischen Verständnis der deuteronomistischen und priesterlichen Tradition* [Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1969] 34–37). Milgrom has argued at length that Exodus 29 is older, based in part on observation of the same discontinuities in Leviticus 8 that I elaborate here (“Consecration of the Priests,” 273–86; cf. *Leviticus* 1–16, chap. 8).

The combination of rites in Exodus and Leviticus probably reflects the narrative concern for beginnings rather than normal ritual performance, because priests were not likely installed en masse but rather as needed, especially after the deaths of previous officeholders.⁴⁵ These should not be regarded as ritual texts in the sense of having full correspondence to actual practice, whether on one occasion or as a standard, but they are the work of professionals familiar with both ritual and its recording. Both anointing rituals appear to be recalled more precisely in the first text, Exodus 29, without the intrusions brought about by the narrative concerns of chap. 40.⁴⁶ This conclusion does not require any isolation of multiple literary strata, and there is no reason to imagine separate historical settings for different parts of the rendition of priestly anointing found in these texts.⁴⁷ Likewise, these texts do not offer any ground for identifying older or later ritual among the practices presented.

If the two anointing procedures in the existing ordination narratives are meant to perform fully separate functions, these are not entirely clear. Leviticus 8 states that both anointings serve to consecrate the priests (verb שָׁחַט, vv. 12, 30).⁴⁸ The repetition most naturally follows the expansion of the ordination to Aaron's sons, the other priests, and the sharply divergent procedures suggest ultimately independent origins for the two anointing rites.

These distinct roots may perhaps be explained most easily as deriving from truly separate cultic offices. Both Aaron's garments and the method of his anointing show that the high priest stands apart from the others, not simply the first among equals.⁴⁹ Whereas the anointing with oil and blood declares the high priest an heir to a tradition of priesthood that is not limited to one person, the pouring of oil on the head sets him apart for a unique calling, just as kings hold a solitary office. The similarity of procedures need not provoke us to assume that the cultic office derives from the royal, or that the high priest's

⁴⁵ The two Emar installation rituals appear to be performed after the death of the previous officeholders, who are honored with sacrificial portions on the feast days of each festival. See Fleming, *Installation*, 65–66, 192–95.

⁴⁶ This analysis contrasts with that of Levine, who concludes that Leviticus 8 is the original ritual, based in part on the limitation of anointing to Aaron in Exod 29:7, a custom that he proposes belongs to a later practice than the “normative” Exodus tradition of anointing all priests, the reverse of Noth's approach (Levine, “Descriptive Tabernacle Texts,” 311–12).

⁴⁷ In this analysis, I am inclined to agree with E. Blum (*Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990] 229–332) and R. Albertz (*History*, 2.482), against the common definition of separate layers in this part of the narrative for ritual governance.

⁴⁸ There is no reason to restrict the designation “anointing” to only one of the rites. “Anointing oil” (שֶׁחַט הַמִּשְׁחָה) is used in both procedures (Exod 29:7, 21; Lev 8:10, 30), the material ordered for production in Exod 30:22–33. The last text is one of those that assumes the anointing of both Aaron and his sons (v. 30). In Akkadian texts, anointing can be accomplished by a variety of specific actions, from pouring to rubbing, and the sprinkling method does not remove the rite from this rubric.

⁴⁹ See also Levine, “Descriptive Tabernacle Texts,” 311.

anointing imitates the king's. Emar shows the method of pouring oil on the head to be used for a high priestess in the thirteenth or twelfth centuries BCE, in a text that describes her installation by the term *malluku*, from a Semitic root most often reserved for political rule in ancient Syria-Palestine.

Various narratives from the Deuteronomistic History display dominant priests whose political power allows them to dabble in the affairs of kings, but perhaps these should not be regarded as simple puppets in a state cult. According to the succession narrative of 1 Kings 1, the leading priests Abiathar and Zadok choose sides without regard for David's intent, and they ally themselves with the alternative heirs as independent players (vv. 7–8). The Jerusalem Temple and its chief priest Jehoiada play a similar political role when the queen Athaliah is deposed in favor of her young son Joash (1 Kings 11). Amaziah, "the priest of Bethel," may occupy a similar position at this northern sacred sanctuary, though the account in Amos 7:10–13 shows him entirely concerned with service to the Israelite king. It should not be necessary to interpret the high priesthood of Aaron and the procedure for his anointing as developments from a defunct kingship, when other biblical traditions present figures such as these, with sole cultic primacy over leading temples.

III. Conclusion

Outside the Priestly law, only one biblical text refers to the anointing of priests, and this has been interpreted as postexilic commentary. 1 Chr 29:22 observes that Zadok was anointed as priest at the same time that Solomon was anointed as מלך over Israel.⁵⁰ In fact, the absence of references to the anointing of priests outside the Priestly Torah should not be surprising, because that narrative instruction represents the principal repository for cult as cult in the Bible. This is the one tradition that values the details of ordination to sanctuary service.

The practice of anointing priests is not best explained as a postexilic pilfering of royal prerogative and stature. Anointing was performed for many occasions in the ancient world, including the consecration of priests. The NIN.DINGIR festival from Emar provides the first instance of anointing for divine service in an actual installation text. Introduction of anointing into Israelite society through kingship alone is unlikely against this background.

The Bible's own texts for the installation of priests distinguish radically dif-

⁵⁰ De Vaux finds no certain evidence for anointing priests in the Bible before the Hellenistic period. Probably the מלך in Dan 9:25 is the high priest Onias III (*Ancient Israel*, 105). See also Schmidt, *Menschlicher Erfolg*, 186 and n. 3, who compares 1 Kings 1. The fulfillment of the command to anoint Jehu comes in Elisha's time (2 Kgs 9:1–13), which leads some to suggest that the anointing tale originally belonged to that prophet's traditions, and all of 1 Kgs 19:15–16 is added to the Horeb episode; see J. Fichtner, *Das Erste Buch von den Königen* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1964) 289; cf. J. Gray, *I and II Kings* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 366.

ferent procedures for anointing the high priest as such and for anointing the larger class of priests who are legitimized by their lineage from Aaron. If the latter practice represented a simple extension of the former, the method of their anointing should be the same. On the contrary, the divergent methods of anointing flag two separate priestly heritages that are subsumed into one tale of origins. The office of high priest indeed shares the perquisites of kingship in a society that holds the masters of temples in high regard, but the similarity of investiture and anointing need not be borrowed directly from the monarchy. If it were, the transfer would take place as naturally during the time of living kingship in Israel and Judah, as in the period after its demise.

The anointing of priests with oil and blood, in contrast, is not associated with the institutions of urban centers and their palaces and temples. Our one ritual parallel from Emar derives from a city archive but locates the anointing with oil and blood at an archaic shrine outside the city walls. Where the anointing of Aaron suggests a natural origin in the Jerusalem Temple heritage of the Priestly Torah, the anointing of his sons may have roots in a more widespread practice from the old towns, villages, and shrines of the countryside.