

# CONSECRATION AND SACRILEGE IN EARLY RABBINIC JUDAISM

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## Introduction

One of the distinctive elements of the Restoration is the law of consecration.<sup>1</sup> We often identify this law as one of the highest given as part of the Restoration.<sup>2</sup> We find, however, that consecration is not just a modern concept but has its roots in the Lord's covenant path in every dispensation, including the Sinai covenant and the law of Moses.<sup>3</sup> The word *consecrate* means "to make holy."<sup>4</sup> The King James Version of the Hebrew Bible uses the word *holy* to translate words coming from the triliteral root Q/D/Š.<sup>5</sup> The core concept of this Hebrew root is to be set apart or dedicated, with the primary subject of that dedication being the God of Israel.<sup>6</sup>

The achievement of holiness was one of the primary goals of the Sinai covenant and the law of Moses. In his introduction to the law in Exodus, the Lord promises Israel, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."<sup>7</sup> In Leviticus, the Lord prefaces his commands to Israel with the commandment, "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy."<sup>8</sup> The Lord's covenants were designed to push Israel to greater consecration and separation from the things of the world. Within the Bible, notions of holiness are inherently tied together with notions of the temple and the ordinances practiced therein.<sup>9</sup>

According to the scriptures, both people and things can be made holy, and a person or object that has been set apart as holy can be made unholy or desecrated.<sup>10</sup> The misuse of sacred objects

in non-set apart contexts is known as *sacrilege* and is a violation of God's privileges. Consecration and sacrilege are two sides of the same coin. Both the Old Testament and later rabbinic sources connect consecration and sacrilege with a violation of God's covenant path. The rabbinic sages were articulate thinkers on the law of Moses, and an examination of their perspective can make some notions of the law clearer not just from the biblical perspective but also from a Latter-day Saint perspective. This paper explores the biblical and rabbinic laws of consecration to come to a clearer picture of the ancient background for Latter-day Saint consecration. In the interest of space, this article focuses on the Bible and the Mishnah, the earliest collections of rabbinic law, and does not address the Talmuds.<sup>11</sup>

### Consecration and Holiness in the Bible

The impulse toward holiness is behind the building of the tabernacle and the giving of temple and sacrificial ordinances. Although Exodus 19 makes it clear that the Lord intended all Israel to be holy, he set apart certain spaces and people to teach his covenant people what holiness means.<sup>12</sup> In the world of the Old Testament, these holy things include the Aaronic priests and the temple with its furniture. In Exodus 28:41, as part of the commands regulating the creation of the ancient tabernacle, the Lord commands Moses to make special clothing for Aaron and his sons.<sup>13</sup> Moses is then commanded to "put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office."<sup>14</sup>

The consecration of Aaron and his sons as described in Exodus 29 turns them into holy people.<sup>15</sup> Consecration is also the point of the gold plate affixed to the forehead of an Aaronic high priest, with its inscription proclaiming, "Sanctified to Yahweh." Aaron and his priestly descendants were made holy and given over to God's service. These Aaronic priests were set apart and, in a sense, belonged to God. In many ways, the process of consecration is the process of transferring ownership of a person or thing back to God.

Their sanctification as priests made Aaron and his descendants responsible for the holy things that formed ancient temple practice: they became responsible for teaching Israel about holiness and

for protecting holy things from unholiness. In Leviticus 10:10–11, the Lord tells Aaron and his sons to avoid unholiness “that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.”

Priests were responsible for making the distinction between holy and unholy and for passing that distinction on to Israel. In fact, according to a passage in Numbers, “And the Lord said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy father’s house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood.”<sup>16</sup> *Iniquity* in this passage likely refers to the responsibility for ensuring the sanctity of the priesthood and the temple with its accoutrements. Aaron and his ancestral house were to serve as mediators between the profane and the sacred.<sup>17</sup> According to the same passage in Numbers, the priests, along with other members of the tribe of Levi, were to “keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar: that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel.”<sup>18</sup>

After placing the responsibility of keeping the temple holy on the priests, Numbers 18 proceeds to discuss the responsibilities and privileges that were due the priests. The privileges include various parts of sacrificial offerings.<sup>19</sup> They also include the tithes of the firstfruits, which were the privilege of the priests because they did not possess an inheritance of land in Israel.<sup>20</sup> In addition to these food items, the Lord also gave the Aaronic priests responsibility for the property that had been devoted or pledged to God—these were holy, according to Leviticus 27:28–30. As in this dispensation, agents of the Old Testament Aaronic priesthood were responsible for the management of property dedicated to the Lord.<sup>21</sup>

The laws concerning items pledged to God are vital for understanding consecration, ancient and modern. The Hebrew verb referring to the devotion of items to God in Leviticus 27 is חָרַם (*H/R/M*), a verb that has a core meaning of “devote” or “place under a ban.” It is also, however, the verb used when discussing the total destruction of Canaanite cities and property.<sup>22</sup> In the cases of Leviticus and the destruction of the Canaanites, the core concept remains the same: the person dedicating gives possession to God.<sup>23</sup> According to Leviticus 27:29, once this property is handed over to

God, it cannot be redeemed or bought back. There are places in the King James Version of the Bible where things that have been devoted in this fashion are described as “cursed” or “accursed,” such as in Joshua 7:1 or Isaiah 34:5. These translations are unfortunate because the problem with the misuse of consecrated items is not their negative nature. It is, rather, that these items have been devoted to God, and the use or retention of them is a misuse of his property. The book of Joshua tells the story of Achan, who was punished because he took treasures from donations. It is not the taking that is the most problematic part of the story. Achan’s sin is, like Ananias and Sapphira’s in the New Testament, holding back from God what was rightfully His.<sup>24</sup>

### Sacrilege

After something is sanctified and made holy, it becomes subject to specific rules for handling and use. The laws governing sacrilege deal with questions about how one should interact with holy objects and people. Sacrilege is especially concerned with the various ways that holy objects can be misused. In addition to the practical concerns of interacting with sacred objects and people, the law of sacrilege has a covenantal aspect. From a biblical perspective, it is just as possible to misuse commandments and covenants as it is to misuse sanctified vessels. Indeed, misusing temple objects and misusing the Lord’s blessings are both violations of the laws against sacrilege because they are a misuse of God’s property.

As noted, the process of consecration in the biblical text is, at its core, a transfer of ownership or, perhaps more correctly, a movement of an object from humanity’s ownership back to God’s ownership. Sacrilege is fundamentally the misuse of things that properly belong to God.

The early rabbinic sages called sacrilege *meilah*. Like so many rabbinic concepts, *meilah* has its root in the Hebrew Bible. Its root in Hebrew, מעל (*M’/L*), refers to betrayal or turning aside.<sup>25</sup> It also has a transferred meaning referring especially to covenant betrayal. This meaning is evident in one of the many marriage laws in the law of Moses, which begins with, “If any man’s wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him.”<sup>26</sup> The King James Version translates

*meilah* as “commit a trespass against him” and refers to the breaking of covenant loyalty.

In his magisterial commentary on Leviticus, Jacob Milgrom makes it clear that the biblical law of sacrilege applies not just to manipulation and misuse of the various aspects of the cult but also to a betrayal of the covenant loyalty owed to God. He notes that this kind of forbidden activity falls into “two major categories: the sacrilege against sancta and the violation of the covenant oath.”<sup>27</sup> Milgrom points out a very important fact about the biblical law of sacrilege: his two “forbidden activities” actually stem from the same place. They are both essential violations of Israel’s covenant relationship with the Lord. They are infringements of the Lord’s attempts to show Israel what holiness means. Thus, in ancient Israel, notions of consecration, sanctification, and sacrilege were closely tied to the proper relationship that Israel was to have with God. It was through this process that Israel could fulfill its covenant mission to become a “holy nation” and a “kingdom of priests.”

### **Consecration and Sacrilege in Early Rabbinic Literature**

Like most of what we find in the law of Moses and the Sinai covenant, the rabbinic sages thought closely about the implications of the law of consecration and its consequences. The Mishnah, the earliest rabbinic law-code, is divided into various tractates arranged topically.<sup>28</sup> A number of tractates are dedicated to the discussion of the process of consecrating and sanctifying property, as well to the circumstances for the misuse of that property. These tractates are part of various orders in the Mishnah. Tractate Nedarim, in the order governing laws concerning women, covers the making and annulling of vows and statements of consecration and sanctification of property. Tractate Arakhin deals with consecrated property designed to support the building of the temple.<sup>29</sup> Arakhin is part of Qodashim, the Mishnaic order governing holy or sanctified things and the temple. Also part of Qodashim, tractate Meilah deals with sacrilege or the misuse of sacred things.

The rabbinic laws about consecration place a heavy emphasis on the verbal part of the sanctification because the sages took consecration very seriously. They did not want to end up in situations where someone accidentally gave their goods over to God or, worse,

dedicated their goods and then changed their minds. Mishnah Arakhin 3:5 warns, “Thus we find that the one that speaks with his mouth has a more stringent punishment than the one who performs an act. We further find that the decree of judgment sealed was not sealed against our ancestors in the desert except on the cause of evil speaking, as it is written: **They have tempted these ten times.**”<sup>30</sup> Speaking is emphasized because, for the sages, it is in the speaking of the dedication that the transference of ownership moves from the Israelite to God. Similar ideas are likely behind Jesus’s prohibitions about swearing in Matthew 5:34–37.

Connected to the idea of vows as transference, Mishnah Nedarim begins with a reminder that it is not possible to get out of a vow of consecration on purely semantic grounds: “All synonyms for vows count as vows. Likewise, all dedications count as dedications, those for oaths count as oaths, and those for Nazirite vows count as Nazirite vows.”<sup>31</sup> The Mishnah then proceeds to list various colloquial synonyms that qualify as the verbal aspect:

Anyone who says to his companion, ‘Qonam, Qonah, Qonas: indeed these are synonyms for Qorban [the term for an offering]. Hereq, Herekh, Hereph: indeed these are synonyms for Herem [the term for something that could not be redeemed]. Naziq, Naziḥ, Paziḥ, indeed these are synonyms for a Nazirite vow. Ševutah, Šequqah, Nadar Bemutah: indeed these are synonyms for Ševua’ [the term for an oath].<sup>32</sup>

Again, this Mishnaic passage illustrates the importance of speech from a rabbinic perspective and the desire to make clear what keeps speech in the realm of the individual and what gives it over to God. Using the Hebrew equivalent of something like substituting “gosh” for God does not clear one of the obligation incurred by making a vow of consecration.

In fact, Mishnah Nedarim 2:5 discusses what happens when someone makes a vow of consecration but then says that he or she ascribed different meanings to the words than the words’ votive meanings. R. Meir essentially suggests a policy wherein as long as the person making this claim does not attempt to get a formal annulment of his or her vow from the authorities, those authorities let it slide. If the person who made the vow tries to get it annulled,

that person faces the consequences of a frivolous oath and the vows interpreted strictly.

The Mishnah, however, offers a different opinion from R. Meir. It says, "They open for them a door [for repentance] from another place, and teach them in order that they may not treat lightly matters of vows." The phrase "open [a door for repentance]" is a rabbinic expression meaning that it is possible to annul a vow. Both R. Meir and the Mishnah agree that vows are of the utmost importance, but they disagree about the best way to encourage that importance. Consecration and oaths were of such importance to the sages because they were very conscious of the dangers of misusing the privileges that belonged primarily to God.

The discussion in tractate Meilah picks up the other side of consecration and giving oneself over to God. This tractate discusses what qualifies as sacrilege within the early rabbinic worldview. Much of Meilah deals with the rabbinic desire to explore and explain edge cases and contains discussions about when various sacrificial offerings and dedications qualify as sacrilege. In the fifth chapter, Mishnah Meilah picks up the question of what happens when someone uses property that has been dedicated to the temple.

The first tradition in this chapter states, "The one who has derived even a *perutah*'s benefit from consecrated things, even if he has not diminished its value, is guilty of sacrilege. This is the opinion of R. Aqiva."<sup>33</sup> What the Mishnah calls a *perutah* was a small copper coin of the lowest value. In other words, if someone uses consecrated property and gains any amount of monetary benefit, that person has misused God's property.

The Mishnah then records a slight disagreement with R. Aqiva's position: "But the sages say, 'Anything that can be devalued through use only counts as sacrilege if it actually is devalued, while anything that cannot be devalued as soon as he has derived benefit from it is guilty of sacrilege. How is this so? If a woman placed a [consecrated] necklace on her neck or a [consecrated] ring on her hand, or if one drank from a golden cup, as soon as that one derived benefit, it is sacrilege.'"<sup>34</sup> These examples make it clear that the sages do not exclusively view gaining benefit in monetary terms. Wearing consecrated jewelry or drinking from a consecrated cup qualify as

benefit and, therefore, make one guilty of sacrilege in spite of the fact that there is no monetary gain.

The reference to drinking from a golden cup suggests that the sages had in mind the story of Belshazzar from Daniel 5. Belshazzar, the eldest son of the last Babylonian king Nabonidus, brings gold and silver vessels looted from the Jerusalem temple to a party that he is throwing.<sup>35</sup> Belshazzar, who is not a follower of the God of Israel, uses sanctified vessels for his own benefit. As Daniel 5:4 KJV states, "They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." Not only was Belshazzar using temple vessels at his party, but this party was put in honor of gods apart from the God of Israel, making it a double offense. This misuse of sacred materials leads to the famous writing on the wall; and, according to Daniel 5, this biblical allusion gives the sages precedent for their readings and understanding of sacrilege.

Daniel 5 also illustrates that the entire discussion of consecration and sacrilege hinges on a question of ownership. In the Bible and subsequent rabbinic literature, consecrated property belongs to God. Sacrilege is offensive to God because it uses God's property in ways that are contrary to his will.

### **Idolatry and Sacrilege**

Because consecration and sacrilege were tied together with notions of holiness and being like God, these ideas are not simply about property. This is evident even in the Daniel passage alluded to by the sages in Mishnah Meilah 5. In Daniel 5:23 KJV, Daniel accuses Belshazzar, "[Thou] hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." Belshazzar's crime is not just that he used the vessels for nonsacred purposes, although that is present. His crime is exacerbated because these sacred vessels were used to praise other gods. He doubly committed sacrilege by giving what rightfully belonged to God to others.



This can be further seen in an examination of the early Jewish laws on idolatry. The early rabbinic sages drew on biblical examples and understood the commandment to have no other Gods from Exodus 20:3–6 in connection to the laws of consecration and sacrilege.

The Mishnaic definition and exploration of the activities that count as idolatry is found in Mishnah Sanhedrin 7:6 as part of a larger discussion on capital punishment. The law of Moses states that one who commits idolatry is subject to death by stoning, but this statement begs the question: What counts as the commission of idolatry? Mishnah Sanhedrin 7:6 sets forth a list of activities that count as idolatry: “The one who commits idolatry [is liable, whether] he worships,<sup>36</sup> sacrifices, burns incense, pours out libations, prostrates, receives it as a god, [or] says to it, ‘You are my God.’” According to the Mishnah, each of these ritual activities qualify as breaking the commandment of idolatry and make one subject to the prescribed penalty of stoning.

The Mishnah goes on to describe some other ritual activities that do not make a person legally guilty of idolatry: “But the one who embraces, kisses, sweeps, sprinkles, washes, anoints, clothes, or shoes [of an image, merely] transgresses a negative commandment.” All the activities in this list actually involve interacting with the image of a god or deity. The acts of embracing, clothing, or washing an image point to a certain physicality involved in interacting with these images. Here, however, the physical interaction with an image is not as great a crime as something like bowing down to an image. According to the sages, manipulating an image does not qualify as idolatry and does not make one subject to the death penalty. To a modern reader, this may look very strange, but it is the ideas of consecration and sacrilege that make the rabbinic concept of idolatry make sense. Idolatry is a violation of both sacred objects and the covenant oath to only worship the God of Israel. Thus, idolatry satisfies both of Milgrom’s categories of sacrilege and *meilah*. According to the sages, if an action does not violate the Sinai covenant and give to other gods privileges that are God’s alone, it does not count as idolatry.

In fact, the activities that count as idolatry are ritual activities that were performed to the God of Israel as part of the temple cult

and the law of Moses.<sup>37</sup> For example, sacrifice is specified in Exodus 20:24–26, Leviticus 1:3–9, and in numerous other places within the Pentateuch. Sacrifice’s frequent references are unsurprising since sacrifice was the ordinary mode of religious worship among both Israelites and other ancient peoples. Incense-burning is discussed in Exodus 30:1–8—where it is called a “regular incense offering”<sup>38</sup>—Leviticus 16:12–13, Deuteronomy 33:10, and many other places.<sup>39</sup> These examples are sufficient to show that the rabbinic sages understood idolatry as a kind of sacrilege.

Thus, as it was understood in ancient Judaism, idolatry was defined as performing acts to other gods instead of to the God of Israel. It was, building from the biblical definition of sacrilege, a violation of the covenant loyalty required by Israel. It involved giving those privileges that belonged to Yahweh alone to other gods. Notions of holiness, including notions of sacrilege and consecration, were a vital part of both the biblical law of Moses and the rabbinic interpretation of it.

### Conclusion

The conceptual connection between covenants, commandments, and consecration is not simply a biblical or rabbinic idea—it is at the core of Latter-day Saint notions of consecration and holiness. Like in the Sinai covenant, the Lord’s purpose for his people in the latter days is to make them holy.<sup>40</sup> We are sanctified through covenant commandments that require our absolute loyalty and our promise to not misuse things that the Lord has reserved for himself. In a revelation given to Joseph Smith in 1834, the Lord said, “And all moneys that you receive in your stewardships, by improving upon the properties which I have appointed unto you, in houses, or in lands, or in cattle, or in all things save it be the holy and sacred writings, which I have reserved unto myself for holy and sacred purposes, shall be cast into the treasury as fast as you receive moneys, by hundreds, or by fifties, or by twenties, or by tens, or by fives.”<sup>41</sup> Note here that the Lord mentions sacred things he “reserved to [him]self for holy and sacred purposes,” showing that even in this dispensation, the core notion of consecration is based around the idea that God himself is the owner of consecrated property. This section, and others in the Doctrine and Covenants,

refers to the United Firm and the physical law of consecration as parts of the Lord's attempts to make us more holy. As in the ancient world, the Lord requires his Saints to sanctify themselves by giving of their property and helping the materially less fortunate.

It also applies to something like the law of chastity. As with property dedicated to the Lord, the problem with sexual relations outside of marriage is not that sex is bad. The problem is that sex is something that God cares deeply about, so he has guarded it with covenants and protections. As Jeffrey R. Holland expressed it when he was the president of Brigham Young University,

Now, once again, I know of no one who would, for example, rush into the middle of a sacramental service, grab the linen from the tables, throw the bread the full length of the room, tip the water trays onto the floor, and laughingly retreat from the building to await an opportunity to do the same thing at another worship service the next Sunday. . . . Nor would anyone here violate any of the other sacramental moments in our lives, those times when we consciously claim God's power and by invitation stand with him in privilege and principality.

But I wish to stress with you this morning, as my third of three reasons to be clean, that sexual union is also, in its own profound way, a very real sacrament of the highest order, a union not only of a man and a woman but very much the union of that man and woman with God.<sup>42</sup>

The law of chastity is, therefore, part and parcel with the law of consecration, and the violation of chastity is a misuse of divine prerogatives and, hence, a kind of sacrilege.

Rather than being an obscure part of the law that Latter-day Saints can safely ignore, the biblical discourse on dedications and sacrilege provides the theoretical underpinning of the Latter-day law of consecration. The rabbinic articulation of the law of consecration illustrates that consecration does not have to be understood only in terms of dedicated property (although that will always be part of it). Instead, the Mishnah illustrates the key notion behind consecration in every dispensation—*consecration* literally means to make something or someone holy and fundamentally involves transferring ownership back to God. Sacrilege is the misuse of God's property and privileges and is treated by God as such. On

the other hand, as we consecrate our behavior and property to the Lord, we learn to use those consecrated items in ways that he himself would use them, including sharing them with the poor and the needy. Sacrilege and consecration are, therefore, two sides of the same coin in our process of becoming like God.

### Notes

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 42:30–39; Steven C. Harper, “All Things Are the Lord’s: The Law of Consecration in the Doctrine and Covenants,” in *The Doctrine and Covenants: Revelations in Context*, ed. Andrew H. Hedges, J. Spencer Fluhman, and Alonzo L. Gaskill (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2008), 212–28; Hugh W. Nibley, “Law of Consecration,” in *Approaching Zion*, ed. Don Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989).
2. Harper, “Law of Consecration,” 212.
3. Nibley, “Consecration,” 423–33.
4. “Consecrate, Law of Consecration,” *Guide to the Scriptures*, lds.org /scriptures/gs/consecrate-law-of-consecration?lang=eng.
5. Michael B. Hundley, “Sacred Spaces, Objects, Offerings, and People in the Priestly Texts: A Reappraisal,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 4 (2013): 749–67.
6. Francis Brown, Samuel Driver, and Charles Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (BDB)* (1906; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), “שקד”, 871–73; Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), “שקד”, 1072–74; Hundley, “Sacred Spaces,” 752–54.
7. Exodus 19:5–6 King James Version (KJV).
8. Leviticus 19:2 KJV.
9. Avram R. Shannon, “‘Come Near unto Me’: Guarded Space and Its Mediators in the Jerusalem Temple,” in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament* (2013 Sperry Symposium), ed. Jeffrey R. Chadwick, Matthew J. Grey, and David Rolph Seely (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2013), 66–84; Hundley, “Sacred Spaces,” 751–52.
10. Hundley, “Sacred Spaces,” 750–51.
11. For an accessible introduction to rabbinic literature, see Robert Goldenberg, “Talmud,” in *Back to the Sources*, ed. Barry W. Holtz (New York: Touchstone Books, 1992), 129–75. See also Avram R. Shannon, “Torah in the Mouth: An Introduction to the Rabbinic Oral Law,” *Religious Educator* 19 (2018): 161–79.

12. Donald W. Parry, "Demarcation between Sacred Space and Profane Space: The Temple of Herod Model," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 413–39; Hundley, "Sacred Spaces," 755–59.
13. On the importance of clothing in the process of setting apart and making holy in ancient Israel, see Alonzo L. Gaskill, "Clothed in Holy Garments: The Apparel of the Temple Officiants of Ancient Israel," in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament* (2013 Sperry Symposium), ed. Jeffrey R. Chadwick, Matthew J. Grey, and David Rolph Seely (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2013), 85–104.
14. Exodus 28:41 KJV. The phrase the Authorized Version translates as "consecrate" is the Hebrew phrase "fill the hand," an idiom that seems to refer to part of the ritual associated with the making of a priest in ancient Israel. See Lynne M. Hilton, "The Hand as a Cup in Ancient Temple Worship," *Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.* 152 (March 1983): 1–5.
15. Hundley, "Sacred Spaces," 759–61.
16. Numbers 18:1 KJV.
17. Shannon, "Guarded Space and Mediators," 73–75.
18. Numbers 18:5 KJV.
19. See Numbers 18:8–10 KJV.
20. See Deuteronomy 10:8–9 KJV.
21. *History of the Church*, 1:364–65.
22. *BDB*, "הָרַם," 355. Additionally, the sages use this verb to discuss their laws about excommunication and removal from the community.
23. See Richard Neitzal Holzappel, Dana M. Pike, and David Rolph Seely, *Jehovah and the World of the Old Testament: An Illustrated Reference for Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2009), 154.
24. See Acts 5:1–11.
25. Marcus Jastrow, "מַעַל," in *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Treasure, 2004).
26. Numbers 5:12 KJV. For a discussion of marriage and its connection to the covenant with God and each other, see Markus Zehnder, "A Fresh Look at Malachi II 13–16," *Vetus Testamentum* 53 (2002), 224–59; Gary Hall, "Origin of the Marriage Metaphor," *Hebrew Studies* 23 (1982), 169–71; Gordon P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Leiden: Brill, 1993).
27. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 346.
28. Shannon, "Torah in the Mouth," 161–65.
29. The name comes from the fact that the value of the vows being governed is established according to a fixed schedule.

30. All translations of rabbinic literature are my own. Hebrew text for the translation is from Sefaria.org, with reference to the edition prepared by Hanoch Albeck, *Six Orders of the Mishnah*, 6 vols. (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and Devir Publishing House, 2011).
31. Mishnah Nedarim 1:1.
32. Mishnah Nedarim 1:2.
33. Mishnah Meilah 5:1.
34. Mishnah Meilah 5:1.
35. See Daniel 5:2–3 KJV.
36. Hebrew: *oved*, literally “serves.”
37. This idea, with its rabbinic implications, is further developed in Avram R. Shannon, “Making Ritual Strange: The Temple Cult as the Foundation for Tannitic Discourse on Idolatry,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 24 (2017), 339–55.
38. Hebrew: *qetoret tamid*.
39. Kjeld Nielsen, *Incense in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 68–88. Paul Heger makes a diachronic study of the ancient Israelite incense cult in *The Development of the Incense Cult in Israel* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997). There he argues that there was an increase in the importance of the burning of incense that corresponded to the rise of priestly power. Certainly, by the time one gets to the Second Temple period, the incense offering is an important part of the Jerusalem temple cult. See Luke 1:9.
40. See Doctrine and Covenants 60:7.
41. Doctrine and Covenants 104:68. See also Doctrine and Covenants 104:60–68.
42. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments,” (Brigham Young University devotional, June 12, 1988), [speeches.byu.edu/talks/jeffrey-r-holland\\_souls-symbols-sacraments/](https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/jeffrey-r-holland_souls-symbols-sacraments/).