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Ritual Anointing with Olive Oil in Ancient Israelite Religion

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Ritual Anointing with Olive Oil in Ancient Israelite Religion

Donald W. Parry

Ancient Israelite religion possessed a significant collection of rituals, as attested in the Hebrew Bible. One ritual, which was intimately connected to the Israelite temple system, consisted of the use of olive oil accompanied with a ritual gesture called an anointing. The ritual anointing played a vital role in temple theology. Two principal questions regarding ritual anointings will be answered: What persons and what objects were anointed with olive oil, and what was the religious symbolism of the anointing?

THE RITUAL ANOINTING OF OBJECTS AND THINGS

We do not know very much concerning the anointing of objects and things before the Mosaic period of Israelite history. The anointing of the pillar by Jacob is an exception. The book of Genesis makes it clear that Jacob was in a temple-like setting. It was at Bethel (Hebrew, “House [temple] of God”) that the patriarch anointed a pillar with oil, vowed a vow, and received a vision of Yahweh and the gate of heaven (Genesis 28:11–18; 31:13).

Numerous references describe the anointing of objects and inanimate things during the period of Moses and the Tabernacle. Moses was commanded by the Lord to anoint all the vessels, appurtenances, and items that belonged to

the Tabernacle (Numbers 7:1). This included the altar, the ark of the covenant, the work table with its vessels, the seven-branched lampstand with its vessels, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering, the wash basin, and other instruments belonging to the temple system (Exodus 30:26–33; 40:9–10). On a regular basis, unleavened wafers were also anointed with oil (Exodus 29:2; Leviticus 2:4; 7:12; Numbers 6:15). It is probable that all non-natural items, or all artificial things touched by human hands that were located within the precinct of the Tabernacle, were anointed with oil.

To heighten the import of the actual day of anointing of the Tabernacle and its appurtenances, a twelve-day “dedication of the altar” celebration was planned. Coinciding with the twelve days, each of the twelve tribes donated items for the Tabernacle. On the first day, for instance, the tribe of Judah presented their offerings of silver, gold, and sacrificial animals. The second-day offerings were presented by the tribe of Issachar, who was followed on subsequent days by the tribes of Zebulun, Reuben, Simeon, Gad, Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin, Dan, Asher, and on the twelfth day, Naphtali. In this decreed manner each tribe participated in the twelve-day rites, thus underscoring the primacy of the anointing ceremonies (Numbers 7). The gifts and offerings of the twelve tribal families were considerable. According to Numbers 7:88, “all the oxen for the sacrifice of the peace offerings” were twenty-four bullocks, sixty rams, sixty he-goats, and sixty lambs, and the amount of gold and silver donated as offerings was great.

THE RITUAL ANOINTING OF PRIESTS, PROPHETS, AND KINGS

Three groups of persons were recipients of the ritual

anointing: priests, prophets, and kings. Each of these groups will be briefly examined.

Priests

Aaron and his sons participated in an elaborate ritual that qualified them for temple service. The ritual, outlined in Exodus 29, comprised a four-part ceremony: (1) ritual ablutions, or the washing with water (Exodus 29:4); (2) the vesting rite, wherein Aaron was given eight sacred garments, including a breastplate, an *ephod*, a robe of the *ephod* (or robe of approach), a tunic, a turban, a sash, a golden plate of the turban, and “undergarments of plain linen”¹ (Exodus 29:5–6; the sons of Aaron were also vested); (3) the anointing ceremony with “the anointing oil,” which was first poured upon the recipient’s head and then smeared (Exodus 29:7); and (4) the sprinkling of oil mixed with the blood of a sacrificial victim (Exodus 29:21). Leviticus 8 records the active role played by Moses, the prophet of Israel, in the anointing ceremony of Aaron and his sons. Moses “washed them [Aaron and his sons] with water” (Leviticus 8:6); “He placed upon” Aaron the sacred vestments (Leviticus 8:7–9); afterward Moses “took the anointing oil and anointed the Tabernacle” and all of its vessels and appurtenances, including the altar (Leviticus 8:10–11). This ritual act was followed by the anointing of Aaron. The record states that Moses “poured of the anointing oil upon the head of Aaron, and anointed [or smeared] him with oil” (Leviticus 8:12). These procedures were followed by the vesting of Aaron’s sons and an elaborate sacrificial procedure where a bullock was slaughtered (Leviticus 8:13–29). Finally, Moses took the anointing oil, mixed it with the blood of the sacrificial victim, and sprinkled this substance

upon Aaron and his garments and upon the sons of Aaron and their garments (Leviticus 8:30).

Those who received the anointing were sanctified and set apart from the profane world and were thus required to adhere to certain responsibilities. For instance, during the time of his ministry the anointed high priest was forbidden to touch a corpse, rend his clothes, uncover his head, go forth from the sanctuary, or profane the sanctuary, "for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him" (Leviticus 21:10–12). Specific privileges also accompanied the anointing. Eleazar, the son of Aaron, was given responsibility for overseeing the daily meat offering, the oil for the light, the incense, and the anointing oil (Numbers 4:16). It was due to "the anointing" that Aaron and his sons were given responsibility for the hallowed things (Numbers 18:8). Special sacrifices were required to atone for the sins of an anointed priest (Leviticus 4:3–12) and a unique sacrificial offering was presented to the Lord for a priest on the day that he was anointed (Leviticus 6:20–22). The greatest duty of all for the anointed, vested high priest, both in terms of privilege and responsibility, took place on the Day of Atonement: "And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year" (Leviticus 16:32–34).

Prophets

Very little is written in the scriptures concerning the anointing of prophets. The Chronicler identifies the Patriarchs as prophets who had been anointed (1 Chronicles

16:22; cf. Psalm 105:15), and the author of 1 Kings 19:16 records that Elisha the son of Shaphat was to be anointed by Elijah. The actual anointing of Elisha, however, is not recorded in the Bible. It was Zechariah who metaphorically identified “two olive trees” as “two anointed ones” (Zechariah 4:11, 14).² John the Revelator, building upon the symbols of Zechariah, called the “two olive trees” witnesses who would prophesy in Jerusalem (Revelation 11:4), and according to latter-day revelation the two witnesses are “two prophets” who will “prophesy to the Jews after they are gathered and have built the city of Jerusalem” (D&C 77:15). Incidentally, the Zechariah 4 and Revelation 11 pericopes are set in a temple setting.³

Kings

The ritual anointing of kings within the biblical world is well attested.⁴ King Saul was anointed by the prophet Samuel. Samuel told Saul, “The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel” (1 Samuel 15:1). Taking “a flask of oil,” Samuel poured it upon Saul’s head (1 Samuel 10:1). David was first anointed king over Judah (2 Samuel 2:4), and then again was anointed king over Israel (2 Samuel 5:3), in accordance with the word of the Lord through Samuel (1 Chronicles 11:3). Solomon, the third king of Israel, was anointed king by Zadok the priest under the direction of Nathan the prophet. A horn of oil, removed from the Tabernacle, was used for the anointing. Following the anointing, the trumpeteers blew the trumpet and all the people exclaimed, “God save king Solomon” (1 Kings 1:39, 45). A similar exclamation was uttered at the anointing ceremonies of kings Saul (1 Samuel 10:24), Jehoash (2 Kings 11:12), Absalom (2 Samuel 16:16; 2 Samuel 19:11), Adonijah (1 Kings 1:25), and Joash (2 Kings 11:12; 2 Chronicles 23:11).⁵

Other Israelite kings who received the anointing included Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23:30) and Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, who was anointed king by an unnamed prophet under the direction of Elisha. After the oil was poured over the head of king Jehu, the unnamed prophet declared, “Thus saith the Lord, I have anointed thee king over Israel” (2 Kings 9:3; cf. 6–10). The fact that the prophet or high priest took part in the ceremonial anointing emphasized the divine nature of the process. When a prophet anointed the king, it was as if the Lord himself had performed the anointing (2 Samuel 12:7; 2 Kings 9:3; cf. 2 Corinthians 1:21; Psalm 23:5; D&C 124:76).⁶ Further, the king of Tyre was called an “anointed cherub” (Ezekiel 28:14) and the author of the Parable of the Trees tells of several trees (persons) attempting to anoint a king to rule over them (Judges 9:8–15).

The Book of Mormon also evidences the anointing of kings. During the Jaredite period, Orihah, Jared, Emer, Coriantum, Morianton, and Corom were each “anointed to be king over the people” (Ether 6:27; 9:4, 14, 22; 10:10, 16). Centuries later Nephi, shortly before his death, anointed a man “to be a king and a ruler over his people” (Jacob 1:9).

The anointed king served as a theocratic servant of the Lord (1 Samuel 9:16; 10:1; 16:3; 24:6, 10–12; 2 Samuel 6:21)—he is called “the anointed of the Lord” (1 Samuel 24:6; 26:9, 11; 2 Samuel 1:14, 16).⁷ In a limited way, the anointed king possessed authority to participate with the priests and other temple officiants in the ministrations of the temple.⁸ King David built an altar and offered sacrifices (1 Chronicles 21:26; 2 Samuel 24:25), wore a linen ephod (1 Chronicles 15:27; 2 Samuel 6:14), and participated with Samuel in the ordinations of the Levite porters (1 Chronicles 9:22). David’s successor-son, King Solomon, offered sacrifices upon the

altar of Gibeon (1 Kings 3:4) and sanctified the temple courtyard with sacrificial burnt offerings (1 Kings 8:64). The same king, standing before the temple's altar, raised his hands toward heaven and offered the dedicatory prayer on behalf of the newly built temple that would bear his name (1 Kings 8:22–63).

THE ANOINTING RITE

The anointing rite was accorded to four separate groups: temple objects, priests, prophets, and kings. Through a close reading of the same biblical writings it is possible to discover several commonalities that appear to be present at the anointing rite of the four groups. While it must be admitted that the scriptural accounts of the anointing ceremonies are at best sketchy and oftentimes reflect subordinate goals of the individual writers, the following commonalities seem apparent.

1. The prophet of God held a prominent position in the anointing process. The biblical text makes it clear that the laws or instructions regarding ritual anointings with olive oil were established through the word of the Lord to his prophet. "Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear" regarding the anointing of Saul (1 Samuel 9:15–16). Later Samuel explained to Saul, "The Lord sent me to anoint thee" (1 Samuel 15:1). Concerning the anointing of David, "the Lord said unto Samuel . . . fill thine horn with oil" (1 Samuel 16:1; 1 Chronicles 11:3). Elijah was explicitly commanded by the Lord to anoint Jehu to be king of Israel and to anoint Elisha to be a prophet. The "Lord said unto him . . . thou shalt anoint [Jehu] to be king over Israel" (1 Kings 19:16). The Lord also spoke to Moses concerning the anointing of Aaron and his sons (Exodus 29:1–7). Perhaps it is more than coincidence that many of the prophets involved in the

anointing rite were entitled "Man of God." Such was the case with Samuel (1 Samuel 9:7), Elijah (1 Kings 17:18; 2 Kings 1:9), and Elisha (2 Kings 4:7; 5:8; 6:6; 7:2; 13:19).

2. The administration of the anointing rite was carried out by a prophet or by an individual acting under his direction. Moses himself anointed the sacred objects and vessels of the Tabernacle (Numbers 7:1). Moses also performed the anointings of Aaron and the sons of Aaron (Exodus 30:30); the prophet Samuel anointed Saul with his own hands (1 Samuel 10:1); Zadok the priest anointed Solomon with a horn of oil under the direction of Nathan the prophet (1 Kings 1:38–39, 45). Samuel anointed David king of Judah (1 Samuel 16:13) and later David was anointed by the Elders of Israel under the direction of Samuel (1 Chronicles 11:3).

3. The anointing rite included a ritual gesture. The person administering the anointing first poured oil from a horn upon the head of the recipient. This act was followed by the "anointing" or "smearing" of the oil upon the head. The Lord told Moses, "Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him" (Exodus 29:7; Leviticus 21:10). Subsequent prophets apparently followed the same process (see, for example, 1 Samuel 10:1). The use of the hand in the anointing process is significant. The Hebrew word for "hand" (*yād*) carries the symbolic meaning of "power."⁹ Conceivably, when a person is anointed, power symbolically flows through the hands of the anointer to the head of the recipient of the anointing.

4. The anointing act was frequently a participatory ritual, involving two or more individuals. The person conducting the ritual and the recipient of the anointing, of course, were present. Often, others witnessed the ceremony as well. Moses washed, vested, and anointed Aaron and his sons in the presence of an assembly "gathered together unto

the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation" (*Leviticus 8:3–12*). David was anointed king "in the midst of his brethren" (*1 Samuel 16:13*). Compare also the anointing rites involving other Israelite kings, where the text indicates that other individuals were present at the ceremonies (*1 Kings 1:39, 45; 1:25; 2 Kings 11:12; 1 Samuel 10:24; 2 Samuel 16:16; 19:11*).

5. The ritual anointing with olive oil followed an ablution ritual (a ritual washing with water).¹⁰ Aaron and his sons were first washed with water and immediately afterwards were vested and anointed (*Exodus 40:12–15; 29:4–7*). On one occasion King David prepared himself to worship the Lord in the temple. *Second Samuel 12:20* records the order of his preparations: washing, anointing, changing his clothing, and finally entering into the temple. "Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped" (*2 Samuel 12:20*). No explicit mention of ritual ablutions is made at the anointing of King Solomon, but the fact that the ceremony took place at the Gihon Springs outside of the walls of the temple suggests that Solomon was indeed washed with water (*1 Kings 1:33, 38, 45*). Similarly, the Talmud teaches that King Adonija was anointed king at the Rogel Springs.¹¹ Interestingly, Ruth's preparations for approaching her future husband Boaz comprised a ritual process that included washing herself, anointing herself, and finally clothing herself (*Ruth 3:3*). Metaphorically, the city of Jerusalem was washed with water and anointed with oil by the hand of the Lord (*Ezekiel 16:9*).

6. It may appear superfluous to mention, but the ritual anointing required a physical substance—olive oil. The symbols involved with olive oil will be discussed below.

7. The locale of the ritual anointing was significant. The setting for Aaron and his sons was at the “door of the Tabernacle of the congregation” (Exodus 40:12–15; 29:4–7). Solomon was anointed at the Gihon Spring, outside of the temple walls. The import of these locales will be discussed later.

8. Anointed individuals potentially acquired several heavenly boons. For instance, persons who received the anointing were protected by God (1 Chronicles 16:22; Psalm 105:15; 89:20–23; D&C 121:16), were taught from on high (1 John 2:27), and gained salvation (Psalm 20:6; 28:8; D&C 109:80). In addition, the Lord showed mercy to his anointed (2 Samuel 22:51; Psalm 18:50). Similarly, it was forbidden for souls to speak out against the anointed of the Lord (1 Samuel 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 23; 2 Samuel 19:21).¹²

THE RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM OF THE ANOINTING

Similar to all rituals and ceremonies, the anointing of the objects and persons held symbolic religious significance. Although the symbols attached to the anointing rite are numerous, they may be categorized into four groups: (1) The anointing sanctified an object or person for divine service; (2) the anointing represented a “gesture of approach,” allowing the anointed person to approach sacred space; (3) olive oil signified the Holy Ghost; and (4) the anointing rite was Christ centered—persons who received the anointing became a type or shadow of Jesus Christ, who is the Anointed One.

The Anointing Sanctified an Object or Person for Divine Service

One of the primary goals of the ritual anointing was to

sanctify an object or individual for divine service to the Lord. The well-attested expression “to sanctify” seems to be a motive clause both showing result and answering the question, “Why are temple objects and persons anointed?” In the following passages, note the manner in which the motive clause “to sanctify” follows the anointing of an object or person:

“And thou shalt *anoint* it [the altar], to *sanctify* it” (Exodus 29:36).

“And thou shalt *anoint* the altar . . . and *sanctify* the altar (Exodus 40:10).

“And thou shalt *anoint* the laver . . . and *sanctify* it” (Exodus 40:11).

“And *anoint* him [Aaron], and *sanctify* him” (Exodus 40:13).

Moses “*anointed* it [the Tabernacle], and *sanctified* it” (Numbers 7:1).

Moses “*anointed* them [the altar and vessels], and *sanctified* them” (Numbers 7:1).

Moses “*anointed* the Tabernacle and all that was therein, and *sanctified* them” (Leviticus 8:10).

Moses “*anointed* the altar and its vessels, both the laver and his foot, to *sanctify* them” (Leviticus 8:11).

Moses “poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron’s head, and *anointed* him, to *sanctify* him” (Leviticus 8:12).

“*Anoint* them [Aaron’s sons], and consecrate them, and *sanctify* them” (Exodus 28:40–41).

It is necessary to discuss the meaning of the Hebrew root *qdš*, which in English is translated “to sanctify.” In the Hebrew Bible¹³ the principal root from which the English word *temple* originates is also *qdš*, which has the basic meaning of “separation” or “withdrawal” of sacred entities from profane things.¹⁴ The term has reference to many aspects of the sacred, all of which are directly connected to

its root meaning, the separation of the sacred from the profane. Specifically, *qdš* has reference to:

1. God, his name, and his divine actions (Exodus 15:11; Leviticus 20:3).

2. The set-apartness and sanctity of holy places connected with Deity, such as the Tabernacle (Exodus 38:24; 40:9), the Jerusalem temple (2 Chronicles 29:5), the Ezekielian temple (Ezekiel 42:14), the city of Jerusalem (Isaiah 48:2), and the land of Israel (Zechariah 2:12).

3. Things directly associated with sacred places, such as the temple furniture (Exodus 30:29; 2 Chronicles 35:3), the altar (Exodus 29:37; Deuteronomy 9:24), anointing oil (Exodus 30:25), incense (Exodus 30:35), priestly vestments (Leviticus 16:4), and the bread of the presence (1 Samuel 21:5).

4. Persons directly associated with sacred places, such as the priests (Leviticus 21:6) and the people of Israel (Jeremiah 2:3; Psalm 114:2).

5. Holy days and festivals (Isaiah 58:13; Exodus 35:2).¹⁵

All of the five items listed above—God, sacred places, temple vessels and appurtenances, persons, and holy days—have direct or indirect connections with the Israelite temple system. All are to remain separate and distinguished from profane deities, places, instruments, and persons. A summary of the holinesses attached to God and God's things is found in the Purity Code (Leviticus 11–17; Numbers 19) and the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–26), essential sections of the Pentateuch. These sections outline the manner in which Israel is to remain pure and free from profane things. On more than a dozen occasions Yahweh explicitly commands Israel to be holy as he is holy. Leviticus 11:44–45, for instance, states, "For I am Yahweh your God. You will therefore sanctify yourselves, and you will be holy,

for I am holy. . . . Because I am Yahweh that has brought you from the land of Egypt, to be your God. You will therefore be holy, because I am holy.”¹⁶

The verbal forms of the Hebrew root *qdš* also demonstrate a relationship with the temple. By way of an overview of the various Hebrew verbal forms, the Qal verbal form of *qdš* denotes something that is “holy” or “withheld from profane use.” The Niphal form refers to showing or proving “oneself holy.” In the Hiphil verbal form, the root letters *qdš* have reference to the dedication or sanctification of a person or thing to be sacred. The Piel verbal form is utilized in the examples listed above. This form is a factitive (causative) type and essentially speaks of placing a thing or person “into the state of holiness” or declaring something holy.¹⁷ The motive clause cited previously, “to sanctify,” originates from the Piel verbal form of the root *qdš* and is therefore intimately connected to God and his temple. Hence, after the anointing with olive oil, the recipient of the anointing is declared holy and considered to be in a state of holiness. That is to say, at least in a theoretical sense, the recipient is now worthy to stand before God in sacred places, participate in sacred time, and to interact with the other sacred persons and objects in the temple setting. The recipient, like the temple itself, is “set apart” and “wholly other”¹⁸ from the profaneness of the world. In short, the anointed person or object is sanctified.

Naturally, if the consecrated oil possesses (symbolic) powers to create a uniquely holy (sanctified and set apart) individual, it too must retain a quality of otherness and uniqueness. Repeatedly the oil is called holy. It shall be a “holy anointing oil . . . it is holy, and it shall be holy unto you . . . it shall be unto you most holy . . . it shall be unto thee holy for the Lord” (Exodus 30:31–32, 36–37). Further-

more, the Lord instructed Moses not to “make any other [ointment] like it, after the composition of it” for “whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people” (Exodus 30:32–33, 38).¹⁹ So uniquely powerful was the anointing with the consecrated oil that even the objects or persons who received the smearing of oil were able to communicate this holiness to others. This concept, recorded in Exodus 30:29, states that whosoever or whatsoever thing that touched an anointed thing would also become holy.

The Anointing Represents a “Gesture of Approach”

Inasmuch as the concepts of sacred and profane have reference to two antithetical powers—the profane that contaminates, the sacred that sanctifies—the two must be strictly separated.²⁰ Profane dust and unholy articles and temporal clothing must not enter the sacred. Man must not mix the mundane with the holy. Recently healed lepers, men and women with fresh uncleannesses, and hands that have touched a corpse must not enter into holy space without heeding the laws of approach. Similarly, the sacred must not be taken out into profane space. The two cannot be fused. “Any attempt, outside the prescribed limits, to unite sacred and profane brings confusion and disaster.”²¹ Therefore, those who wish to leave profane space in order to approach sacred temple space must participate in a purifying ritual, a gesture²² or rite of approach; for example, the removal of shoes, the washing of hands, the anointing with oil.

The gesture of approach is vital to a temple society.²³ It is a rite or ceremonial act that symbolically cleanses the person and prepares him for entry into the sacred. The person prepares not only to enter sacred time, where sacred acts

take place and where man's religious ideals are celebrated, but he prepares for entry into sacred space, where even the airspace about his head is considered to be holy. He leaves behind him the sphere of profane time, the mundane events of common life, and the ordure of the world. The conditions of the rite of approach must be clearly defined and adhered to, the rites of purification must be well described, and the transition from profane to sacred must be marked.

The entry into the sacred is potentially dangerous. Those who enter or serve in the sacred arena when unprepared are subject to death by the hands of man or the power of God. At the very least, the trespasser will be flogged. The trespass laws apply to everyone—the *zār* (stranger or foreigner), the layman, and members of the priesthood.²⁴

A few late examples will clearly identify the gestures of approach. The Israelites of the Second Commonwealth²⁵ adhered to specific rites or “gestures of approach”²⁶ as they approached the temple. Four aspects regarding the rites of approach will be examined. All worshipers were required to participate in (1) the removal of profane items and (2) ritual ablutions—immersion (Hebrew *tevilah*) and the cleansing of hands and feet. In addition, it was requisite for members of the priesthood (3) to dress in the vestments of the priesthood and (4) to be anointed with oil.

1. *The removal of personal profane items.* A vital aspect of the rite of approach included the removal of items that were unclean, profane, or temporal. The prescription of the Second Temple period to remove one's shoes before entering sacred space is based upon Exodus 3:1–14. This pericope provides a quintessential example of an approach ritual. Moses was commanded by God to remove his shoes: “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5). Joshua, the suc-

cessor to Moses, participated in a similar experience (Joshua 5:15).²⁷

2. *Ritual ablutions—immersion (Hebrew *tevilah*) and the cleansing of hands and feet.* The cleansing of the hands and feet of the priest was a positive commandment based upon Exodus 30:19. It was incumbent upon a priest to wash his hands and feet ritually lest he incur the death penalty by the hand of heaven (Exodus 30:20).²⁸

Strategically, the ritual immersion pools that belonged to the laypersons were located immediately outside of the walls of the temple precinct.²⁹ In this manner persons who approached any of the sacred zones of the temple could move from the cleansing pool directly onto the holy mount. There is both archaeological and literary evidence that there existed two separate paths to the *mikveh* (ritual immersion pool) to prevent contact between a ritually pure person exiting the bath and an unclean person entering into the bath.³⁰ The pools of immersion for members of the priesthood were located beneath the temple.³¹ According to the Talmud, the cleansing pool was required of one "who moves from profane ground into holy ground."³²

3. *Dressing in the vestments of the priesthood.* A final rite of approach applicable to members of the priesthood pertained to the sacred vestments. The ordinary priestly vestments consisted of four parts: breeches, a headpiece, a girdle, and a tunic. The four garments were stored in four separate cupboards so that they would not be mixed one with another. The order of dressing himself in the vestments was as follows: first the breeches were put on, followed by the tunic; then the girdle, which was wound around the body and then tied; finally, the mitre was placed upon the head of the priest. The high priestly vestments consisted of eight pieces, the four belonging to the priest plus an ephod,

robe, breastplate, and frontplate. The high priest wore four vestments on the Day of Atonement. The vestments, white in color, included a girdle, tunic, mitre, and breeches.³³

The sacred vestments were an integral part of the temple setting. High priests and priests who were divested of their sacred vestments were permitted to exit the temple after their services were performed. One could not take the priestly vestments around town.³⁴ If a high priest exited the Temple Mount with his priestly vestments the law dictated that he receive forty stripes.³⁵ The priestly vestments were to remain stored within the temple precinct when not in use. Even worn or soiled garments of the priests were not discarded in a profane manner but were used as the wicks of the lights for the temple.³⁶

4. The rite of anointing. This rite played an integral role in the various rites of approach. As noted previously, the rite succeeded the ritual ablutions with pure water, but preceded the vesting rite. The rite of anointing sanctified the individual and prepared him for entrance into the temple. The locale where the anointing rite took place was significant. For the priests of the Mosaic law, the anointing rite took place at the door of the court of the people, outside of the temple proper. For Solomon, the anointing rite was administered near the temple, but outside of its walls. Hence the gestures (for example, the pouring of oil upon the head of the recipient followed by the smearing of the oil) associated with the anointing prepared the individual outside of the temple to approach the holinesses located within the walls of the temple. The moment of anointing in the sequence of temple rituals was also significant, for both ablutions and anointings preceded the temple's sacrificial ceremonials. It is only after the gestures of approach have transpired that individuals are permitted to approach Deity.

Olive Oil Signified the Holy Ghost³⁷

A number of scriptures symbolically connect olive oil with the Holy Ghost. At the moment of the anointing of King Saul the “Spirit of the Lord” came upon him causing him to “be turned into another man” (1 Samuel 10:1, 6, 9). Sometime later David was anointed by the prophet Samuel and immediately (“from that day forward”) “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David. . . . But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul” (1 Samuel 16:13–14; cf. 1 Samuel 18:12).³⁸ In these verses the Spirit of the Lord came upon the anointed king (first Saul) and remained with him until his successor (King David) received the anointing. At that moment the Spirit left Saul.

Speaking messianically, Isaiah wrote, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek” (Isaiah 61:1). While preaching in the synagogue of Nazareth Jesus read this passage and applied it to his own messianic station, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:18, 21). Note the resultant nature of the conjunction “because.” Why is the Spirit of the Lord resting upon the Messiah? Because he has received the anointing.

The New Testament writers employed similar olive oil/Holy Ghost typology in their writings. In the parable of the ten virgins, the five virgins who are prepared to meet the bridegroom are those whose lamps are full of oil or whose lives are full of the Holy Ghost. These are they who are “wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide” (D&C 45:56–57; Matthew 25:1–14). The connection between oil and the Holy Ghost in these passages is both direct and instructive.

Luke identified olive oil as being representative of the Holy Ghost when he wrote, “God anointed Jesus of

Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts 10:38). John associated the anointing of oil with the Holy Ghost or with receiving divine truth and being taught from on high (JST, 1 John 2:20–27). Paul also made a direct connection between the two when he wrote that he who "hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 1:21–22).

Additional references make implicit connections between olive oil and the Holy Ghost. The connection between the anointing and sanctification (for example, the Holy Ghost is the sanctifier) has already been discussed previously. Perhaps the fact that olive oil was employed in the temple's lamps for lighting purposes (Exodus 27:20) points to the Holy Ghost, who provides light to individuals.³⁹ Similar symbolism is found in the two prophetic witnesses of the last days who are called lamps (Revelation 11); in King David, who is referred to as the "lamp of Israel" (2 Samuel 21:17); and in righteous individuals, who are metaphorically called the "light of the world" (Matthew 5:14–16).⁴⁰ These individuals receive their light from the Holy Ghost.⁴¹ The New Testament ordinance of anointing the sick with oil was performed to bring about both a physical and a spiritual healing (James 5:14–15). Certainly the Holy Ghost plays a vital role in the spiritual recovery of sinful souls.

Finally, the relationship between the baptismal rite and the anointing rite deserves investigation.⁴² Many similarities exist between the two. The ordinance of baptism, representing a ritual washing, is followed by the reception of the Holy Ghost (baptism by fire), and the ordinance of ritual ablutions (washings) is followed by the anointing with olive oil (for example, the Holy Ghost). Both rites are connected with the idea of an entrance through a gateway. The bap-

tismal rite represents a gateway into the kingdom of God (2 Nephi 31:9, 18); the anointing rite is a gesture of approach that permits the recipient of the rite to enter through the entrance hall of the temple. In connection with the gateway, it is interesting to note that Jesus metaphorically signifies the “door” (John 10:7, 9), and he is called the “keeper of the gate” (2 Nephi 9:41). Both the baptismal and anointing rites transform the recipient into a new person, a new creation. After the anointing of King Saul, for instance, it is written that Saul was “turned into another man,” for “God gave him another heart” (1 Samuel 10:1, 6, 9). Similarly, those who are baptized “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). And both provide a sanctification from sin and worldliness (1 Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 10:22). Concerning the sanctifying powers that come from the combination of ritual ablutions and reception of the Holy Ghost, Titus wrote, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).

The Anointing Rite Was Christ-Centered—Priests, Prophets, and Kings Were Types of Christ

A number of scriptural references evidence the fact that Jesus Christ received the sacred anointing. In Psalm 45, a royal wedding hymn authored by an anonymous poet, Yahweh is represented as being anointed with oil by God. Psalm 45:7 reads, “Therefore Yahweh,⁴³ thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy companions.” Paul, speaking of the Father and the Son, quoted the same scripture in his epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 1:9). Two citations in the Acts of the Apostles further indicate a divine anointing of Christ by God (Acts 10:38; 4:27).

The significance of two well-known titles of Jesus—

Christ and *Messiah*—is instructive. *Messiah* is a transliteration of the Hebrew *māshîah*, a term meaning “anointed one.” Similarly, *Christ* is a transliteration of the Greek *christós*, which also denotes “anointed one.” Both terms were employed by John when he wrote “the Messias [Messiah], which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:41; see also 4:25). The names are often used in the scriptures and attest to the fact that Jesus was the Anointed One who was set apart to perform the service of the Father in the temple. Jesus was “a high priest . . . a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle” (Hebrews 8:1–2). He was in many respects similar to the high priest of the Mosaic system, who appeared before God in the Holy of Holies. Jesus, however, appeared in the heavenly temple (Hebrews 9:24). Further, Jesus, as the anointed one, offered a “great and last sacrifice” (Alma 34:10) on behalf of the community of Israel, which offering consisted of “the sacrifice of himself” (Hebrews 9:26).

It has been noted that priests, prophets, and kings were ritually anointed with olive oil. Each worthy priest, prophet, and king who received the anointing imitated the anointing of Jesus and also became a *messiah*, or an anointed one. As such, each became an archetype (from Greek, *typos*, meaning a blow, impression, model), a figure, or image of Jesus, who, as the antitype, was the Messiah.⁴⁴ The ministerial duties of the priest, the prophetic role of the prophet, and the royal authority of the king reside in an integral way with Jesus. Priests, prophets, and kings represent the shadow; Jesus signifies the character that creates the shadow. This concept of types and shadows becomes more conclusive when it is realized that Jesus was denominated “Priest” (Psalm 110:4),⁴⁵ “Prophet” (Deuteronomy 18:18;

John 6:14; Mark 6:4), and “King” (Moses 7:53; Psalm 48:1–8)⁴⁶ by a number of prophetic writers.⁴⁷

SUMMARY

It is evident from the biblical writings that both animate objects (priests, prophets, and kings) and inanimate objects (vessels and instruments belonging to the temple) were anointed with olive oil as part of an Israelite religious ritual. The religious symbolism of the anointing rite had four parts. (1) The anointing rite served to sanctify and set apart an object or person for divine service. (2) The anointing was part of a “gesture of approach” rite that qualified the anointed person to approach sacred space. (3) Olive oil, the material utilized in the anointing ritual, signified the Holy Ghost. Those who received the anointing were sanctified through the agency of the Holy Ghost, enabling them to enter the presence of Deity. (4) Anointed priests, prophets, and kings were types or shadows of Jesus Christ, who is the Anointed One. Their anointing echoed the anointing of the Messiah. Certainly the anointing ritual was Christ centered. Metaphorically, Jesus is the “Horn of Salvation” (Luke 1:69), a reference to the horn of oil that is poured upon recipients of the anointing (1 Samuel 16:1; 1 Kings 1:39, 45).

Notes

1. John I. Durham, *Exodus* (Waco: Word Books, 1982), 385. The subject of sacred priestly vestments is discussed on pages 384–90.
2. Or “sons who press out oil,” Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: Brill, 1953), 796. For a comparsion of Zechariah 4 and Revelation 11, see Kenneth A. Strand, “The Two Olive Trees of Zechariah 4 and Revelation 11,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 20 (1982): 258.
3. It is clear that in this dispensation, Joseph Smith, similar to the prophets of old, was also anointed (see D&C 124:57).
4. Regarding the royal anointment of kings in Mesopotamia and Egypt, see Anton Schoors, “Isaiah, the Minister of Royal Anoint-

ment," *Oudtestamentische Studien* 20 (1977): 88–91; Z. Weisman, "Anointing as a Motif in the Making of the Charismatic King," *Biblica* 57 (1976): 382–94; C. R. North, "The Religious Aspects of Hebrew Kingship," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 50 (1932): 14; and Ernst Kutsch, *Salbung als Rechtsakt im Alten Testament und im Alten Orient* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1963), 40–51. For the anointment of kings among the ancient Syrians, see A. M. Hocart, *Kingship* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 86. According to Hocart, the anointing rite belongs to coronation ceremonies of many cultures (70–71).

5. Hocart, *Kingship*, 30, believes that the exclamation "God save the King," a common regal expression connected with modern societies, "has been handed down to us" from an "ancient theology." The expression "can be traced directly or through Byzantine rites to the coronation of the Roman Emperors or of Joash, King of Judah."

6. This concept that the Lord himself is performing the ordinance by the hand of one of his representatives is also found in D&C 36:2, where the Lord states, "And I will lay my hand upon you by the hand of my servant Sidney Rigdon."

7. Compare also the expressions "my anointed" (1 Samuel 2:35) and "his anointed" (1 Samuel 2:10), where the personal pronouns refer to the Lord.

8. Regarding the religious nature of Hebrew kingship, North, "The Religious Aspects of Hebrew Kingship," 10, wrote, "Speaking generally, kings . . . exercised important priestly functions."

9. Koehler and Baumgartner, eds., *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, 363.

10. Compare, however, the ceremony involving Levi, where the anointing ritual precedes the ablutions. Recorded in the *Testament of Levi* 8:1–11, the account states that Levi was first anointed by a man dressed in white, a rite which was followed by a washing with pure water by a second person dressed in white.

11. TB *Keritot* 5b, and TB *Horayot* 12a.

12. It was a serious crime to speak out against or to act against one of the Lord's anointed. We are reminded of a certain Amalekite man who slew Saul. The Amalekite was in turn slaughtered by King David. Such a strong measure was meted out by David because the Amalekite had slain the Lord's anointed (2 Samuel 1:6–16).

13. See Yehoshua M. Grintz, "*bēt hamiqdāš*" (in Hebrew), in B. Natanyahu, ed., *Encyclopedie Hebraica* (Jerusalem: Encyclopaedia Printing, 1957), 8:555, where the different names of the temple as they appear in the Hebrew Bible are listed, *bēt Yhwh*, *bēt Elōhîm*, *hēkāl qōdeš*, *hēkāl Yhwh*, and *miqdāš*. The usual name in the Mishnah and

related literature, i.e., the Tosephtha, is *bēt hamiqdāš*. Of this name the encyclopedia states, "This name is found only one time in the Bible" (555). The *Targum of Jeremiah* calls the temple the "house of the Shekinah" (2:7; 3:17; 7:15; 14:10; 15:1).

14. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. Edward Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 871.

15. Ibid., 871–72. Roger Caillois, *Man and the Sacred*, trans. Meyer Barash (Westport: Greenwood, 1980), 20, summarizes the sacred as being "related as a common property, solid or ephemeral, to certain objects (the instruments of the cult), to certain beings (kings, priests), to certain places (temple, church, mountain peak), to certain times."

16. Deity is always the ultimate source of holiness in a temple setting—"The holy or the Holy One are simultaneously that which awakens fear and that which draws to itself"—as Sigmund Mowinckel has shown, *Religion and Cult*, trans. John F. X. Sheehan (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 1981), 54–55. The work was originally written under the title *Religion og Kultus* (Oslo: Land og Kirke, 1950). For a definition and treatment of the concept of holy, see Rudolf Otto's classic work, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1958).

17. Koehler and Baumgartner, eds., *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, 825–26.

18. The concept of the holy as being "wholly other" was introduced by Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 25–30.

19. *Pseudo-Philo* states that Moses himself consecrated the holy anointing oil (*Pseudo-Philo* 13:1).

20. Speaking of sacred and profane space, J. G. Davies writes, "The one is potent, full of power, while the other is powerless. They cannot therefore approach one another without losing their proper nature: either the sacred will consume the profane or the profane will contaminate and enfeeble the sacred." Davies, "Architecture," in Mircea Eliade, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 16 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 1:384.

21. Ibid., 1:385.

22. Mayer I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East*, 2 vols. (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 1:22–49, treats the subject of ritualistic gestures of worship and supplication in Hebrew and Ugaritic settings.

23. The rite of transition is common to many religions, says Raglan. "This ritual gradually dwindles, but people still mark their transition from the profane to the sacred sphere by removing their

hats—or their boots.” Fitzroy R. S. Raglan, *The Temple and the House* (New York: Norton, 1964), 31.

24. The laws regarding trespass as outlined in the Pentateuch are oftentimes not well defined. The rabbinic literature is helpful in this regard. For instance, when a ritually impure priest ministered, he was not taken to a court of law but “young priests” took him from the courtyard and with clubs broke his head (*M Sanhedrin* 9:6; 10:1). Likewise, if a non-priest served in the temple he was killed either by strangling or by “the hands of Heaven” (*M Sanhedrin* 9:6; 10:1; see also *TB Sanhedrin* 81b). Furthermore, if a priest lacked atonement or was a *tebul yom* and deliberately entered the temple court, he incurred the penalty of excommunication. On a prescription based upon Leviticus 16:2, a priest who stepped across the prescribed boundaries of his zone (beyond the first eleven cubits of the entrance to the tripartite building, cf. *TB Yoma* 16b) incurred forty lashes or if he entered within the veil of the Holy of Holies he incurred death at the hands of heaven (*TB Menahoth* 27b; cf. *T Kelim* 1:6), meaning no human punishment would be rendered. Foreigners who trespassed the temple precinct were also liable to death (*TB Sanhedrin* 83b).

25. We will momentarily look at a historically late temple community, for the rabbinic writings provide a comparatively clear picture of several gestures of approach.

26. It is difficult to ascertain who first coined the phrase “gestures of approach.” Certainly it is now a common expression, utilized by many. See, for example, Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), 370-71, and Baruch M. Bokser, “Approaching Sacred Space,” *Harvard Theological Review* 78/3-4 (1985): 279-80, 299.

27. *Exodus Rabbah*, making reference to Exodus 3:1-14, observes that one must always remove his shoes before the Divine Presence, and that is the very reason that the priests ministered barefoot (*Exodus Rabbah* 2:6). Apparently the symbolic purpose of removing the shoes was so that profane dust would not be carried onto sacred ground and sacred dust would not be carried out into profane space. The law regarding the removal of shoes before entering the temple is repeated many times within the Mishnah, Talmud, and other literatures (*TB Yebamoth* 6b, 102b; *M Berakot* 9:5; *TB Berakot* 61b-62b; *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 4:14). The same references require that the dust on the feet be removed before entrance, and *Sifre on Deuteronomy Pisqa* 258 warns against even the carrying of the shoes by hand upon the Temple Mount.

28. The rite of cleansing the hands and feet has been summarized by Maimonides, *Yad* VIII, 3, 5.

29. For photographs of the ritual baths and commentary, see Benjamin Mazar, "Herod's Temple/Functions of the Outer Walls and Gate of the Temple Mount," in Benjamin Mazar et al., eds., *The Mountain of the Lord* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), 146–47.

30. R. Reich, "Mishnah, Sheqalim 8:2 and the Archaeological Evidence" (in Hebrew), in A. Oppenheimer, U. Rappaport, and M. Stern, eds., *Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period, Abraham Schalit Memorial Volume* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1980), 225–56, produces archaeological evidence. His paper contains drawings of the baths. Literary evidence is found in the *Letter of Aristeas*, which states: "There are steps leading to the thoroughfares. Some people make their way above them, others go underneath them, their principal aim being to keep away from the main road for the sake of those who are involved in purification rites, so as not to touch any forbidden object," verse 106, R. J. H. Shutt, trans., "Letter of Aristeas," in James A. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), 2:20.

31. *M Tamid* 1:1.

32. *TB Yoma* 30a.

33. The garments of the priesthood were holy (Exodus 28:2–3) and therefore the rules regarding them were strict. Priests who slept within the walls of the temple did not sleep in their sacred clothing but placed them under or opposite their heads (*TB Tamid* 26a). If any member of the priesthood tore the vestments (cf. Exodus 28:32), he was punished by flogging. According to Leviticus 16:4, one must not allow any unclean thing to enter between his flesh and the vestments. Dirt, a single hair, a dead gnat, or other items were not allowed to come between the flesh and holy garments. If by chance anything was found there the service of that priest would be declared invalid. Nor was the priest permitted to place his hand under his vestments or allow a loose thread to hang from the vestments. When a priest or high priest was "lacking in vestments," meaning he was wearing less than the four prescribed vestments while ministering, or the high priest was wearing less than eight vestments, then his ministerial services were considered to be invalid, and his punishment was death by the hand of heaven. Equally so, if the priest or high priest wore too many vestments he was liable to die by the hands of heaven.

34. *TB Tamid* 27b.

35. *Numbers Rabbah* 19:19.

36. *TB Shabbath* 21a; Maimonides, *Yad* VIII, 7, 5.

37. Several scholars have recognized a symbolic connection between olive oil and the Holy Ghost. Sebastian Brock, "The Syrian Baptismal Ordines," *Studia Liturgica* 12 (1977): 177–83, for instance, states, "The oil is always very closely associated with the Holy Spirit" (181). Kenneth A. Strand, "The Two Olive Trees of Zechariah 4 and Revelation 11," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 20 (1982): 258, also believes that oil represents the Holy Spirit.

38. Hocart, *Kingship*, 86, states that "the theory is clear: after the unction the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul. . . . The Spirit of the Lord also came upon David after his anointing."

39. Compare 2 Enoch 22:6, where Enoch describes the oil as being greater than the "greatest light."

40. It is well known that many peoples in the world of antiquity utilized oil lamps for lighting both domestic and public buildings. See, for example, Varda Sussman, "Lighting the Way through History: The Evolution of Ancient Oil Lamps," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 11 (March/April 1985): 42–56, which identifies a variety of oil lamp shapes and sizes and details the history of lamp making in Palestine.

41. Once individuals receive the anointing they have the ability to see spiritual things by the light of the Holy Ghost (Revelation 3:18; Moses 6:35).

42. A number of early Christian groups possessed rituals wherein the baptismal candidate was anointed immediately before or after baptism. See, for example, Sebastian Brock, "The Syrian Baptismal Ordines," *Studia Liturgica* 12 (1977): 177–83; Gabriele Winkler, "The History of the Syriac Prebaptismal Anointing in the Light of the Earliest Armenian Sources," in A. Vööbus et al, eds., *Symposium Syriacum*, 1976 (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1978): 317–24; Gabriele Winkler, "Original Meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing and Its Implications," *Worship* 52 (January 1978): 24–45; Bernard Botte, "Postbaptismal Anointing in the Ancient Patriarchate of Antioch," in J. Vellian, ed., *Studies on Syrian Baptismal Rites* (Kottayam: C.M.S., 1973), 63–71.

43. Some Hebrew manuscripts read "Yahweh" rather than "God."

44. See Bruce V. Malchow, "The Wisdom of the Anointed," *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (1976): 70–82. The author compares the anointing of the Israelite kings with the anointing of Jesus.

45. Besides being called a "priest," Jesus is also known as "high priest" (Hebrews 3:1; 4:14) and "minister" (Hebrews 8:2, 6).

46. Several other deific titles identify Jesus as the king: "King of glory" (Psalms 24:3–7), "King of Kings" (Revelation 19:16), "King of

the Jews" (John 19:14–22), "King of Zion" (Moses 7:53), "Messiah the Prince" (Daniel 9:25).

47. See Joseph Fielding McConkie and Donald W. Parry, *A Guide to Scriptural Symbols* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990), 139, 154–55.