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The impact of repetition on cultural memory in Ancient Israel

Worship is never a case of a single act. To worship deities needs continuous exercise as well as well-rehearsed rituals for getting and staying in contact with the godly sphere (Klingbeil 2010). In terms of resonance, the vertical axe has to be cultivated by rites and periodical practices.

In biblical religion, for this reason we have on the one hand cultic practices in context with offerings and sacrifices at holy places, after the late 7th century BC at the only holy place, Jerusalem. On the other hand, we find the practices of the daily ritual of prayer, the weekly ritual of the 7th day, of Shabbat, and the annual recurrence of the great feasts and pilgrimage events. Although of different origins, some of agricultural, some of historical events, the great biblical feasts were underwritten with theological narratives. The tradition of reading certain biblical books, the so-called Megilot, at special feasts is of course a later development, but has its beginning already in biblical times. E.g. the book of Ester offers not only the legend of a feast, but orders also to celebrate it. Repetitive rites in special intervals of time, at special places, most probably with a special diet, specific participation also for children (e.g. the famous question of the youngest at Pesach or the custom of carnival costumes at Purim) provoke strong resonance – for religious traditions at best: lifelong resonance (Fischer 2019). Especially in Deuteronomy and deuteronomistic literature the impact of learning is to be highlighted (Finsterbusch 2005).

As religious experience is not at all restricted to repetitive practice but may be even stronger by unique events in real life (e.g. vocations), it is interesting to consider what role repetition plays (Gertenbach – Laux 2019), particularly repetition of rites and practices (like sacrifice and prayer) for resonant relationships. In which aspect do they maintain resonant self–world relations? Which impact do they have on social cohesion? Do they also have resonant effects on the importance of historical events, ancestors, or famous figures of the past (Sax 2018)? What role does the space play in which rites are performed? Under which conditions would it be possible to change them (e.g. the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem)? What factors extend resonant spaces or eschatologically important religious figures in time and space (e.g. the heavenly Jerusalem or the messianic son of David)?

This project should bring light in the relationship of repetitive practice (Klingbeil 2007) and resonance as it is reflected in Old Testament texts and handed down to us as cultural memory (Assmann 1992; Fischer 2014) of the ancient people of Israel.

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