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Acumen

2013

Jokiranta , J 2013 , Ritual System in the Qumran Movement : Frequency, Boredom and Balance . in I Czachesz & R Uro (eds) , Mind, Morality, and Magic : Cognitive Science Approaches in Biblical Studies . Bible world , Acumen , Durham , pp. 144-163 .

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/156551>

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Chapter 9

RITUAL SYSTEM IN THE QUMRAN MOVEMENT: FREQUENCY, BOREDOM, AND BALANCE

Jutta Jokiranta

The Dead Sea Scrolls have brought us an enormously rich corpus of ritual texts to study. The Qumran evidence is particularly interesting for the study of ritual, since it is a collection preserved by coincidence, (mostly) not transmitted to us through centuries, and yet it preserves documents of a movement within Judaism that lasted for some generations. The “Qumran movement” signifies here the socio-religious movement whose members most probably lived in several locations in Judaea around the turn of the era and were responsible for transmitting the manuscripts that were then discovered in the Qumran caves. My interest lies in the ritual life of the Qumran movement as a whole. Such a “system” has to be reconstructed from the corpus that includes both texts deriving from the Qumran movement and texts copied and preserved by the movement. I will not attempt to reconstruct the full ritual system here (see Kugler 2002; Arnold 2006; Regev 2003), but will attempt to raise new questions by employing perspectives from the cognitive science of religion, in order to appreciate the significance of rituals and ritual life for a religious tradition. Two perspectives in general are important. First, aspects of rituals can be explained as a reaction to the existing ritual life in the society at large. Secondly, internal tendencies and dynamics can reveal the direction into which the system was developing over time.

A significant aspect of a ritual system is the frequency of rituals and its effects on the system: on its participants and on the wider role of rituals in the religious tradition. Cognitive scientists of religion have paid attention to this and suggested that frequency or repetition of a ritual has consequences on how the ritual is represented in the memory. Harvey Whitehouse (2000) has used the term “tedium effect” to speak about boredom in the face of repetitious rituals. I will address this particular issue for two reasons: first, the possibility of the tedium effect has not yet been discussed regarding the ritual life in the Qumran movement, and secondly, there is a need to scrutinize what exactly the theorists have to say about frequency and tedium and why.

FREQUENCY AND INTENSITY IN THE QUMRAN EVIDENCE

The Qumran ritual system seems to have been very intensive and characterized by frequent rituals, or, as some scholars express it, life in the Qumran movement was in some way “fully ritualized” (Collins 2008).¹ Purity rules, Sabbath observance, prayer life, study of Scriptures, structured hierarchical meetings, and adherence to the specific 364-day calendar marked life in the movement as prescribed, predictable, and sequential. Moreover, Qumran scholars tend to follow the standard social-scientific view that ritualized life or rituals were an important factor in creating social cohesion in the group. We may consider this quotation from Robert Kugler:

The evidence of ritual density at Qumran appears overwhelming. ... By promoting communal submission to priestly authority, standards for initiation and expulsion, patterns of feasting and fasting, carefully-delineated constructions of time, and strict purity requirements, the rituals entangled community members inextricably with God’s will for the cosmos and drew them away from the profane world of their Jewish and non-Jewish neighbors. As a result, ritual at Qumran was hegemonic, making every aspect of their experience religious in Durkheim’s sense of the word. (Kugler 2002: 149, 152)

To assume that rituals strongly contributed to the creation of social solidarity seems a reasonable assumption but it is not sufficiently argued for. Certainly other results from ritual practice can be imagined as well: tension between personal desires and communal rules, conflict over correct conduct in ritual events, boredom and lack of interest, mechanical performance without learning, for example.

Useful information is now available in the new cognitive science of religion. As is shown below, many theorists have claimed that ritual frequency and emotional intensity are, in a way, exclusive properties. If a ritual is frequently repeated, it is difficult to maintain high emotional intensity. And if emotional arousal is reduced, the belief in the ritual’s efficacy is threatened (cf. Pyysiäinen 2004b: 99). Frequency is one way of ensuring that traditions are learned, internalized, and transmitted, but, at the same time, frequency and repetition is seen as a threat to emotional involvement, motivation and commitment.

1. John Collins has discussed the fully “ritualized life” in the Dead Sea Scrolls (Collins 2008), comparable to structured, ascetic life in the monastic setting. In this view, study of certain individual rituals might distort our view from the fully ritualized life (see also Collins 2012).

Are we thus contradicting ourselves if we envision in the Qumran movement a strong feeling of closeness to God, and, at the same time, repetitive, routinized performance of rituals?² Have we misinterpreted the Qumran evidence and need to revise our readings, or does the evidence present a challenge to the cognitive theories? The third alternative is, of course, a combination of these. It will be argued below that cognitive theories of religion should be more precise about the repetition and about the role of emotions in frequent rituals, and that the Qumran evidence benefits from the cognitive perspective by identifying in detail the mechanisms involved in ritual action, thus providing a framework for studying the ritual life and raising new hypotheses.

WHITEHOUSE: TEDIUM EFFECT

Most centrally, ritual frequency has emerged as an important variable in Harvey Whitehouse's (1995, 2000, 2004a) theory of two modes of religiosity, the doctrinal and imagistic. He seeks to explain polarization, so often found in central religious traditions, by different codification types in the memory system.

When the rituals are frequently repeated,³ the participants have a clear schema of the event, stored in semantic memory, ascertaining the transmission of the tradition (doctrinal mode). The repetition reduces the possibility that people rely on personal theories of rituals and increases the possibility that people accept the religious authorities' explanations of rituals (what is told often enough becomes a fact).⁴ It is also possible to include a greater number of people in a system where emotional bonds between the members are not tight. The disadvantage of repetition is that people may become bored with it, lose their motivation, and interaction and social

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2. Compare these two statements by Kugler (2002: 152): "Their vigorous observance of their rites of communion reminded them at every turn just how close they were to their God by virtue of their ritually patterned life," and "The religiosity that came from this sort of ritual practice was not ecstatic, fervent, or fanatic; it was rather a religion expressed by a life conformed to God's will through the hegemony of ritual."
 3. Repetition connected to rituals is of many kinds. Maurice Bloch (2004) mentions repetition of certain words or gestures during one ritual, repetition of a similar ritual over a short period of time, and repetition (imitation, "quotation") of other people's past actions by the present participants. Whitehouse is mostly dealing with the second type, repetition of a similar ritual over time. Repetition of words and gestures during one ritual would deserve further investigation. For observations on "mantras," see Yelle (2006), and for the repertoire of repeated actions generally found in "ritualized behavior," see Boyer and Liénard (2006).
 4. A related variable that has been suggested to be important in the ritual system is the participants' interpretations of the ritual either as magical or symbolic (Sørensen 2005).

bonds between people become looser. This presents two options: people may participate less frequently, or the very repetitive ritual acts will disappear (and people create more emotionally charged, less frequent rituals).

If a ritual, on the other hand, has a high degree of emotional intensity (imagistic mode), often including stressful situations and surprise elements such as in initiation rites in Papua New Guinea, it creates a strong bond between participants and appeals to their emotions so that details are remembered (stored in episodic memory). At the same time, such a ritual demands a lot from the participants and cannot be repeated very frequently. Whitehouse (2004a: 99) expresses his “hunch” that emotional “arousal varies inversely with frequency of ritual repetition.”

Yet a religious system typically includes both types of rituals. Whitehouse bases his theory on his studies in Papua New Guinea where he encountered both religious modes in relatively pure forms in the Pomio Kivung tradition. Theodore Vial summarizes Whitehouse’s fundamental finding in the following way:

The ritual calendar was demanding and tedious: daily temple offerings; twice weekly offerings at a second temple; weekly offerings at a family temple; fortnightly garden meetings; and twice weekly public community meetings at which three different orators rehearsed the Pomio Kivung doctrines.

(Whitehouse 1995: 67, 75, 76, 79, 81)

This regimen of ritual practice during which the “logically coherent, orally transmittable, rhetorically persuasive body of teachings” was rehearsed led to what Whitehouse has termed the tedium effect. It accomplished well the first necessary task of a tradition, which is to be inscribed in memory. But motivation was notably low among Pomio Kivung supporters, most of whom seemed bored. In this context a millennial splinter group emerged. This group centered on an innovative set of rituals that were, in comparison to the Pomio Kivung regimen, very imagistic, and increasingly so as they continued to try to bring about the return of the ancestors. When the ancestors failed to return, despite the increasing emotionality of the splinter group’s rituals, the group collapsed. Most members returned to the Pomio Kivung. But, Whitehouse claims, they returned recharged, with greater motivation. He has found evidence that such splinter groups break off every five years or so among the Pomio Kivung. This seems to be the pattern by which the Pomio Kivung maintains both memory and motivation over time.

(Vial 2004: 296)

Since we are interested in the repetition, let us take a closer look at what Whitehouse reports about the tedium effect that rises from the “hum-drum” rituals. In his *Arguments and Icons: Divergent Modes of Religiosity*, Whitehouse describes it as follows:

A problematic side-effect of such extensive repetition is that rituals may eventually become boring to some people, especially where competent performance of sacred tasks consists merely of the enactment of entrenched habit. The body goes through the motions automatically and the mind wanders or is numbed by the predictability and familiarity of it all.

(Whitehouse 2000: 44)

The result was, for example, that many participants dropped out of the conversion instruction. Furthermore, “Members of both movements [Pomio Kivung and Paliau movements] stood in line or sat in their meeting houses with glazed eyes, scarcely participating or else speaking somewhat automatically, reiterating formulaic phrases and parables” and these rituals were “undertaken much of the time without conscious thought” (*ibid.*: 115). People’s investment in such a repetitious movement could be very high but the cohesion in the movement would tend to be low.

What we are dealing with in this example is highly complex teachings. Pascal Boyer (2002b) has paid attention to the difference between cognitively costly and cognitively optimal forms of information. Cognitively optimal knowledge is easy to pass on since the mind is nuanced to that kind of information, for example, minimal counterintuitiveness. A talking donkey is a catchy idea in a narrative, whereas a donkey which can talk and read thoughts and fly violates too many intuitive expectations of what donkeys do.

In combining Whitehouse’s theory to the idea of optimal form of tradition, it can be noted that doctrinal (repetitious) tradition faces two kinds of *threats*. One is the *tedium effect* and loss of motivation and interest in participation, which may result in imagistic revitalization groups. The other is reduction of repetition and allowing more variation, which may result in *cognitively optimal forms* of religion. If so, there will emerge other kinds of reform groups, those that tend to *restore* the former cognitively costly doctrinal forms (Whitehouse 2004a: 130–31; cf. Pyysiäinen 2004b).

LAWSON AND MCCAULEY: RITUAL FORM AND BALANCE

E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley’s theory is similar to Whitehouse’s in that it suggests two major attractor positions where the frequency and the amount of emotional arousal (or rather “sensory

pageantry”) in rituals constitute two opposite poles. This similarity, however, is the result of their attempt to integrate Whitehouse’s observations into their own theory. More fundamentally, the theory (Lawson & McCauley 1990; McCauley & Lawson 2002) is about the *representation* of ritual in the human mind—a theory of religious ritual competence, intuitive knowledge of the ritual act (see also Chapter 8 in this volume). Ritual is action (rather than event) where someone does something to someone, resulting in a change in the religious world—a definition which is narrower than many other ritual theorists would allow. In their 2002 book, McCauley and Lawson claim to go *beyond* the frequency variable and explain *why* some rituals are frequent and others are not: this has to do with the *ritual form*.

Lawson and McCauley identify two major principles about the ritual form that explain why a ritual is unique (rather than frequent), why it can be reversed (e.g., an ordination or marriage can be reversed—but not a sacrifice) and why it does not permit substitution (e.g., baptism must be performed in Catholicism with sanctified water, not other liquids). The principle of superhuman agency claims that those rituals where “culturally postulated superhuman” (CPS) agents are connected to the agent of the ritual (special agents rituals, such as initiation, baptism, wedding) are more central (and infrequent) than those rituals where CPS-agents are connected to the instruments or patients of the act (special instrument/patient rituals, such as sacrifices, Catholic communion, parishioner’s blessing). Special agent rituals are capable of provoking strong emotions since CPS-agents (gods) are active. This is also the reason why such rituals are not repeated for the same individual; when gods act, the results are permanent. Special agent rituals are typically infrequent but have a high amount of sensory stimulation whereas other types of rituals are frequent but are low in sensory pageantry.

The principle of superhuman immediacy holds that the mental representation of a ritual is different depending on the number of enabling rituals required to connect an element to the CPS-agent (e.g., priest who baptizes is closer to God than the baptism water since the water is sanctified by the priest).

Originally, Lawson and McCauley were not concerned about the consequences of repetitious rituals on a religious system. Later, they introduce the idea of *balance*: in a balanced religious system, there would be both special agent rituals and special instrument/patient rituals. Lawson (2005) identifies tedium and habituation as threats for the system:

Tedium is the consequence of doing the same thing again and again and again. Habituation opens the door to sensory overload. It is the consequence of having too much of a good thing. ... The moral is that good things come in small doses, but if

you have to do some things repeatedly, you had better have an outlet to balance the repetition with occasional surprises that either delight or terrify. (*Ibid.*: 61–2)

Lawson explains that the system Whitehouse studied initially contained only special patient rituals. The consequence was an unbalanced system where boredom and excitement oscillated in short periods of time. Lawson suggests that tedium and habituation has to be “either avoided or held to the minimum” (*ibid.*: 62)—thus repetition is a matter of balance. Special agent rituals contribute primarily to the motivation whereas special patient/instrument rituals contribute to memorability.

In light of these suggestions, one avenue to proceed along is to search in the Qumran evidence for markers of balance or unbalance. Judaism is generally thought to involve only special patient/instrument rituals (Ketola 2007; see Chapter 8 in this volume for problems in applying to Judaism the theory of Lawson & McCauley 1990). My preliminary observation is that the initiation into the Qumran movement might involve elements that can be interpreted as special agent rituals (see below).

BOYER AND LIÉNARD: COMPELLING NATURE OF RITUALS

Any discussion of repetition has to recognize one specific feature: people may not become bored but rather people feel *compelled* to act in ritualized ways. Pascal Boyer and Pierre Liénard make an important distinction between routinization and ritualization. Routinization involves automatic behavior which can be performed “without thinking” (Boyer & Liénard 2006: 606, 611). In contrast, Boyer and Liénard are interested in the other type of behavior, ritualization, which is characterized by compulsion, rigidity, internal repetition and apparent lack of rational motivation. It requires focused attention, cognitive control, and explicit emphasis on proper performance. Such ritualized action is present in many rituals but is also found as part of children’s developmental stages, in obsessive-compulsive disorder, and as part of certain life-stage-related intrusive thoughts. Ritualized action derives from cognitive mechanisms evolved to detect and react to threats to fitness (hazard-precaution system) and to focus on varying levels of actions (meta/medium/micro-level; action-parsing system).

The mechanisms can be briefly described in the following way. Certain clues or information in the environment activate the hazard-precaution system, creating feelings of threat and an aroused state of anxiety, which demands action. Whereas the hazard-precaution system normally results in the satiety signal (“no alarm any more,” “everything is all right”), closing the anxiety state, in ritualized behavior this feedback loop is somehow disturbed and the ability to evaluate the situation fails. Doubts about

continuing danger produce repetition of certain types of actions. In search of the proper action, attention is focused on smaller units of actions than is normally the case. This creates a heavy load on working memory systems, which then temporarily pushes away the intrusive ideas and provides a relief from anxiety (cf. Atran 2002). Focus on detailed performance typically involves actions that are not directly related to the overall goal (“goal-demotion”). Disturbing thoughts are repressed, but after the performance they become even more salient, and this makes the ritualized behavior again more compelling.

The theory is in need of further testing; yet the general possibility of a cognitive mechanism producing compelling disorders and compulsion to act in ritualized ways is intriguing (for a general discussion on mental modules/systems, see Barrett & Kurzban 2006). The perspective is important to bear in mind in all ritual theories: humans may have cognitive mechanisms which make ritualized action compelling and persistent. Boyer and Liénard’s theory also reveals that what Whitehouse and also Lawson and McCauley may be describing when they speak of the tedium effect can in fact be routinization (automatic behavior which frees resources for other cognitive operations) other than ritualized action (in which the sense of awareness is very topical). The effects of routinization and ritualization on memory and on motivation need to be distinguished.

“TEDIUM,” EMOTIONS, AND COGNITION

As discussed above, even though Whitehouse and Lawson and McCauley have both suggested that ritual frequency and emotional intensity can be found on opposite attraction poles, it appears to be wrong to associate the tedium effect with any *lack* of emotions *per se* (and in fact, neither of the theories does so). Indeed other theorists see emotions as being essential in all rituals. Emotions characterize, according to Ilkka Pyysiäinen (2001), both special agent rituals and special patient/instrument rituals. Pyysiäinen suggests that it is rather the intimate relationship between the participant and the counterintuitive agents that provokes emotions, not the form of the ritual.⁵ Furthermore, he thinks that emotions characterize

5. Pyysiäinen (2001) has rightly noted the double role that emotions play in the Lawson and McCauley theory. On the one hand, emotions are the *consequence* of perceiving the CPS-agents at work in the ritual (something important is happening). On the other hand, emotions are triggered (by sensory pageantry) through the ritual *in order to* highlight the importance of the event. It is rather the unique nature of some events and rituals (e.g., rituals related to birth, becoming a full member of a community, death) that make people attach special importance to them; “the presence of counterintuitive agents is merely a consequence” (*ibid.*: 91–3).

both religious beliefs (Whitehouse's doctrinal mode) and religious experiences (Whitehouse's imagistic mode). Religious beliefs in the doctrinal mode are "emotional commitment to schematized religious representations" (*ibid.*: 140).

It is not difficult to think of effects of repetitious actions on emotions and behavior *different* from those predicted by Whitehouse's boredom (for example, a sense of security in bedtime stories or daily prayers, or altered states of consciousness in meditation). First, Whitehouse himself holds that, "when actions can be carried out without any need for conscious reflection about *how* to perform them, the urge to consider *why* we perform them... is somewhat diminished" (Whitehouse 2004b: 194). Routinization, can, in other words, safeguard against questioning the relevance of the tradition for one's own life. Whitehouse (2004a: 100–102) finds one possible explanation for commitment in the participants' tendency for "analogous thinking": the participants are motivated since they are able to create analogies of the repetitive traditions in their everyday lives and since they believe that the source of the original teaching, the truth, lies somewhere *beyond* the repeated forms of rituals (since it is repeated for centuries, it is not similarly submitted to processes of questioning and updating). In a similar fashion, Atran (2002) explains that frequent rituals synchronize the participants' emotions and actions and thus create a sense of belonging as well as give a signal to others of one's commitment.⁶

Second, Whitehouse admits that routinization can be found comforting and assuring by participants. However, he questions whether the participant's explanation of their experiences tells the whole story. He notes how signs of boredom are found everywhere, ranging from "fidgeting and glazing of the eyes through to daydreaming and even slumber," but routinized traditions do not approve of expressions of boredom in their rituals (Whitehouse 2004a: 98–9). Whitehouse does not explain when such negatively defined tedium occurs or if there is a certain critical point when repetition turns into tedium, with a negative impact on transmission and the positive effects of repetition being lost.

Scholars have criticized the overemphasis on repetition as merely mnemonic aid and paid attention to its function as persuasion (Yelle 2006). According to Maurice Bloch (2004), all rituals involve "quotation" of others before us, and usually these others are seen as authoritative in some respects, be it merely their ancestral status. This leads to "reliance on the authority of others to guarantee the value of what is said or done" ("deference"; *ibid.*:

6. One natural explanation for commitment is the cost people have invested in participating: people remain committed, since they have invested a lot of their time, energy, and other resources in the participation (Whitehouse 2004b: 192). Alles (2004) explains in economic terms that people tend to prefer a small but certain gain as opposed to a larger, riskier one.

69). Such *deference* does not require that someone understands what one is doing in the ritual, at least fully or in explicit ways, but rather holding the words as true for the speaker's sake. Other theorists have stressed the *efficacy* of ritual: the doing matters, not the symbolic meanings. Pyysiäinen (2004b: 142) suggests that "rituals can be efficacious only to the extent everyone agrees to their efficaciousness," and thus rituals are arranged in order to create this common knowledge. Jesper Sørensen (2005) remarks that if the symbolic interpretation of the frequently performed rituals is over-emphasized at the cost of causal efficacy (in the form of perceptual causal assumptions), there is danger of a "triviality effect." Ritual will be seen to have no consequences and thus be trivial and irrelevant.

One additional aspect concerns *what* is repeated and what kind of experiences the ritual promotes. István Czachesz (2008b, 2012a) challenges Whitehouse's model by entering at the level of neuroscience and by paying attention to different *kinds of religious experiences*: experiences differ as regards to their patterns of brain activation. Czachesz (2008b; but cf. now a revised form: Czachesz 2012a) suggests four main types of religious experiences. In meditation, the sense of self (parietal lobe) decreased whereas the focused attention (frontal lobe) increased, and emotional arousal (temporal lobe) remained unchanged. In an ecstatic experience, the situation was the opposite: emotional arousal was high but the attention and sense of self remained unchanged. Speaking in tongues, on the other hand, was similar to ecstatic experience in high arousal but showed decrease in attention. Lastly, pietistic Bible reading activated only the frontal lobe (attention). In the end, Czachesz suggests two kinds of religious movements, one in which frontal lobe experiences are preferred over other types, and the other in which temporal lobe experiences are the most preferred ones. Without going into the details of this theory, we may note that some types of religious experiences might be more vulnerable to the tedium effect than others; not all religious experiences in rituals are the same either.

An additional aspect of interest in looking into this in more detail is the relation between *emotions and memory*. If repetition increases memory recall, which can be risked by the loss of attention or motivation, does emotional arousal then always increase retention of traditions? Here another contribution by Czachesz (2010a) is important. He shows precisely that memory is selective and not all emotional elements (e.g., shocking visual stimulus) directly correlate to the enhancement of memory of every detail. Such findings help us to think of the possibilities for remembering in frequently occurring rituals when narratives or stimuli are repeated. Emotionally laden elements in narratives possibly do not suffer from being repeated since new emotions can be created. Furthermore, people's previous emotional memories can be aroused by repetition (Lüddeckens 2008).

If *tedium* in light of these suggestions is not to be connected to the lack of emotions or the incapability of learning as such, can it be related to

specific kinds of emotions or cognitions? Charles Nuckolls (2007) criticizes Whitehouse for not bringing sufficient evidence for the tedium effect. Participants in Whitehouse's research did not admit being bored when asked. Instead, Nuckolls suggests a psycho-analytical interpretation: tedium is rather a *repression* of desires that cannot be achieved. When one cannot reach a desired aim, boredom is rather a solution to the problem; repression of feelings helps one to orientate in the face of frustration and feelings of aggression. In the Pomio Kivung case, the splinter group became aroused from the frustration that the ancestors did not return, despite the frequent ritual activity. Tedium (as emotion) would be repression of frustration and aggression.

Before we turn to the Qumran material, we may sum up and briefly evaluate the suggestions so far. There appears to be cognitively optimal traditions that are easily transmitted, but the cognitively costly traditions are the ones in which religions are suggested to favor one of the two options for facilitating their transmission: either frequent repetition or high emotional arousal. We have been interested in frequent repetition, which enables the procedural, even automatic type of behavior without reflecting on the teaching, which again makes, according to Whitehouse, these participants receptive to authoritative teaching from above. Learning cognitively challenging knowledge gives the people the motivation to participate and continue to participate. Whitehouse (2005: 219) explains: "Much of my work on modes of religiosity is geared to showing that the complex, explicit religious knowledge that arises from doctrinal and imagistic forms of transmission has considerable motivating force." However, when the challenge is too high, people have to deal with the situation somehow. Often the cost to leave is too high.

The tedium effect can jeopardize the commitment of some, who then either defect or seek to change the rituals. The suggested tedium effect, it seems to me, should not be connected to ritualization (cf. Boyer & Liénard 2006) or the lack of emotional arousal as such, since people's emotional experiences may also be intensified by the repetition of the same rituals and since many frequently repeated rituals may also involve deliberate emotionally arousing elements, such as visual and auditory stimuli (pictures, music), or elements of stress and its release. Rather, the tedium effect has to do with the cognitive complexity and demanding nature of the instruction to be learned, which easily leads to *frustration* unless one is made to believe in a clear goal and rewards for participation or sanctions for not. Other suggestions remain more speculative. Tedium that leads to failure in one's motivation would need to be shown to involve a *change* in the participant's *cognitive perception*: absence of analogous thinking, absence of appreciation of the truth value beyond the present ritual situation (e.g., not accepting the given rationale; cf. Bloch 2004: 75–6), or absence of causal perceptions (appreciating the efficacy of the ritual). If commitment to a

ritual practice followed from the perception that it was too risky to give up, even a slight change in that perception (seeing the giving up as less risky and more attractive) might also contribute to tedium (Alles 2004: 279).

IDENTIFYING FREQUENT RITUALS IN THE QUMRAN MOVEMENT

The Qumran corpus contains evidence of different kinds of frequent rituals. We may make a rough distinction between rituals that were organized according to calendar times, rituals which occurred regularly but the timing of which varied from one individual to another, and rituals which, in theory, did not have to take place at all, but if they did, were connected to crisis situations and offences (Table 9.1).⁷

Table 9.1 Times of rituals in the Qumran Movement.

Set, calendrical times (periodic)	Regular (but different from individual to individual)	Occasional
Meals? Assemblies? Prayers? Sabbaths	Purification Coming-of-age	Divination, exorcism Penalties (exclusion/ expulsion)
Festivals, covenant renewal	Admission, oath? Vows?	Reproof?

Preliminary candidates for frequent (daily or weekly) rituals for an individual in the Qumran movement include the following: ritual baths and purification, communal meals, sessions, prayers, Sabbath service, and possible sacrifices if there were any.⁸ I will discuss three cases: purification, Sabbath, and the meals and study. What does the evidence tell about their frequency and practice, and can we theorize anything about the possibility of “tedium effect”?

Ritual purification

Purification serves as an example of frequent rituals which are not similarly prone to the tedium effect that Whitehouse envisioned. It is by its essence a kind of ritual where efficacy is the most important: an impure person purifies him/herself and thus restores his/her normal state in order

7. In Lawson and McCauley’s definition, not all of these would count as rituals but would be “religious acts.” Ritual density would fade away in the ritual as an action pattern.

8. Arnold (2006) provides a helpful survey of different ritual practices.

to be in the company of others and run one's daily business. In view of the cognitive mechanisms that are specialized in detecting and reacting to life-threats, as described by Boyer and Liénard (see above), purification rituals include an element of undefined danger (invisible contamination) and thus have a compelling nature. Repetition is an integral part of these (e.g., washing yourself once is often not enough).

Purification from semen and menstrual bleeding or contact with a corpse or an impure person must have been fairly frequent occasions. We also have reason to assume that purification could have been a daily event in the Qumran movement—if the term “purity” in the central rule texts (e.g., 1QS VI 16, 25)⁹ is interpreted to mean a daily gathering with a meal and required washing of oneself. Furthermore, the evidence testifies to the proper measure of the purification water (CD X 10–13), and to liturgical words to be used while immersing oneself:

And afterwards he will enter the water [and wash his body and bless.] He will recite and say: Blessed are y[ou, God of Israel,...] by what comes of Your lips [the purification of all (people) has [been required. To be separated(?) from all] impure people according to their g[uilt, they could not be purified in water of purification ...].

(4Q414 (4QRitual of Purification A) 2 ii,3,4 4–8.)¹⁰

The place for purification was, according to 1QS, reserved to members only and made the boundaries between insiders and outsiders visible, as is indicated in this passage:

None of the perverse men is to enter purifying waters used by the Men of Holiness and so contact their purity. Indeed, it is impossible to be purified without first repenting of evil, inasmuch as impurity adheres to all who transgress His word.

(1QS V 13–14.)

These rituals did not pass on any explicit elaborate teaching by themselves but presumed this knowledge and establish the learned order of what is impure and how the state of purity is re-established. Most of this system governed in one way or the other the lives of all Judean people. The knowledge needed for following the system was gained by one's upbringing and education and by observing others. The Qumran evidence suggests that

9. I will use the abbreviation “S” for the Community Rule and “D” for the Damascus Document, both of which are central rule documents and are extant in several copies. The best preserved copies are 1QS (for S tradition) and CD (for D tradition).

10. All translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls follow Tov (2006).

such knowledge grew more elaborate and complex during this time, as the often scant or imperfect rulings of the Torah were supplemented, systematized and made explicit, the different cases of impurity were related to each other, and the lesser and graver levels of impurity were introduced.¹¹ Studying these rules and guiding members to follow them was demanding.

Another innovation, found in the Qumran movement, bears relevance to our question. The covenant renewal, described most extensively in 1QS I 16–II 12, is prescribed to be an annual event with a liturgical form. New members entered by committing themselves to obedience. They listened to God's great works being told and joined in the confession of sins. The priests blessed the lot of God and the Levites cursed the lot of Belial. The hierarchies among the members were re-established. This kind of entering in the covenant appears in the Community Rule to be an enabling ritual for purification to be effective, as is stressed about anyone who refuses to enter the covenant:

Ceremonies of atonement cannot restore his innocence, neither cultic waters his purity. He cannot be sanctified by baptism in oceans and rivers, nor purified by mere ritual bathing. Unclean, unclean shall he be all the days that he rejects the laws of God, refusing to be disciplined in the *Yahad* of His society.

(1QS III 4–6)

In Lawson and McCauley's terms, initiation into the movement had less enabling rituals than purification; purification was denied any effectiveness unless one submitted oneself to communal authority of the movement, thought to have derived from God, and went through initiation. By tying the efficacy of purification to the covenant renewal which had special importance, repetitious purifications gained special importance too. This novelty was a claim towards the wider society, demanding monopoly of ritual purification.¹² Frequency of purifications gave the secure feeling of belonging and helped one in one's everyday life to rely on the boundaries that were otherwise faint or fuzzy.

Furthermore, it is even possible to conceive the covenant renewal ceremony as including *special agent rituals* since the blessings and curses that the priests and the Levites uttered were eventually realized by God and

11. For example, Leviticus 15 includes rules about the *niddah* (menstruant) and the *zav* (man with discharge), which are compared and supplemented in 4Q274 (e.g., by prohibition of contact *between* the menstruant and the *zav*; see Noam 2011: 253–8).

12. It is of course possible that the majority in the society did not pay much attention to purification and that the Qumran system was a revitalization and expansion of the practice. However, the great number and distribution of *miqva'ot* in Judaea speak against this.

his work (this conclusion requires, however, that speaking actions are rituals, *pace* McCauley & Lawson 2002: 13; see Chapter 8 in this volume). By pronouncing a blessing on a person, the person became a chosen one; by pronouncing a curse, that person became damned, but this might become apparent only later (1QS II 11–18). The result of the ceremony was a fixed place in the hierarchical order of the movement (1QS II 19–25), until the hierarchy was re-evaluated and established anew the following year; yet the blessings and the curses affected permanent results according to the secret divine plan. Affirming the type of these ritual elements needs to be compared to Biró’s argument in this volume that priestly blessings pronounced by *kohanim* as part of the synagogue service would qualify as special agent rituals. This conclusion, however, requires a revision of Lawson and McCauley’s structural description of ritual, since *kohanim* in rabbinic Judaism do not undergo any enabling ritual which would turn them into “priests” (for further discussion, see Chapter 8 in this volume).

Sabbath

Sabbath is another frequent event with several ritual practices. Most of the evidence deals with Sabbath rules and violations (e.g., CD X–XI). In the Damascus Document, a gathering during Sabbath is also mentioned:

No one who enters the house of worship shall enter in a state of impurity but with laundered garments. When the trumpets for assembly are blown, let him go earlier or later so that they need not stop the whole service. The Sabbath is holy.

(CD XI 21–XII 1)

The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice might be further evidence of the Sabbath worship. This is a collection of 13 Sabbath songs for a quarter of the 364-day year, possibly the first quarter of the year, preserved in nine copies (Newsom 1997). These songs describe a heavenly angelic worship in the heavenly temple. We have no firm evidence of their use in the movement—but nothing speaks against their liturgical use either. Songs for the sixth, seventh and eighth Sabbath are different from others. Number seven is strikingly pronounced in this section. The following excerpt from the sixth song gives an idea of the repetitive language:

vacat Psalm of [praisesong by the to]ngue of the seventh of the [chief] prin[ces,] a mighty praisesong to [the Go]d of hol[iness] with i[ts] se[ven] w[on]drous [praisesongs. And] he will sing praise[to] the Kin[g of holi]ness seven times with [seven wo]rds of [wondrous] praise[songs. Sev]en psa[lms of His blessings;

sev]en [psalm]s of the magnification[of His righteousness, seven psalms of the] exaltation of [His] kingship; [seven]psalms of [the praise of His glory; sev]en ps[alms of thanksgiving for His wonders; seven psalms of re]joi[cing] in His strength; seven[psalms of prai]se for His holiness.

(4Q403 [4QShirShab^{b-d}] 1i 6–9)

The seventh song is a climatic focus in the middle of the composition. The usual call to praise is expanded into a series of increasingly elaborate calls to praise. The second half of the song describes the way in which the heavenly temple bursts into praise.

This kind of Sabbath service shows the most potential for monotonous mystical experience, where one definitely could look absent-minded but yet be involved in the drama. If each Sabbath had a different song, the variation obviously prevented one from becoming completely accustomed to the worship. Could one become distracted by the repetitive language during one Sabbath worship? What does the repetition do to the participation? The emotional arousal created each Sabbath did not fall into the category of infrequent imagistic rituals of Whitehouse but it was probably motivating for the members in other ways. Either they felt an ecstatic experience in which emotional arousal was the main thing, or they turned toward a meditative state, with a focused mind and a loss of their sense of self (cf. Czachesz 2008b). The meditative state would be easier to maintain in the long run; weekly ecstatic experiences might grow milder. Nevertheless, knowledge of participation in the heavenly realm contributed to the members' motivation to follow the rules also outside the Sabbath: for example, the rationale for purity rules was that angels were in their midst (1QSa II 3–10).

Meals and study

Communal meals were a central institution in the Hellenistic and Jewish world. Gatherings became an important activity in various religious groups in Judaism (e.g., D. E. Smith 2003: 133–72). Before discussing the question about the tedium, we must first discuss the frequency of this practice. It is uncertain, how often exactly the members of the Qumran movement met to have a meal, or to study and pray together. The traditional picture would have envisioned a permanent settlement at Khirbet Qumran, and relied also on Josephus to outline the daily program of such sectarians, including a meal twice a day (Josephus, *War* 2.128–33). Such a meal and prayers replaced the Temple worship (J. M. Baumgarten 1977). In more recent scholarship, the classical sources are not regarded as an equal testimony of the Qumran movement, similar to Qumran documents (e.g., A. I.

Baumgarten 2004), and the question about the Khirbet Qumran lies open in the face of much unpublished archaeological material and debates about their meaning (Galor *et al.* 2006). My viewpoint prefers the perspective of a wider religious movement in different locations (Elgvin 2005; Schofield 2009; Collins 2009), irrespective whether Khirbet Qumran was one of the locations or not (or perhaps even a special location).

In this recent perspective, there has been discussion on the place of 1QS VI 1–8 in the Community Rule composition, which mentions communal gatherings “wherever they dwell,” and of its meaning in the Qumran movement as a whole. Whereas some scholars see the passage as reminiscent of life in the parent movement, before the establishment of a more coherent community (Metso 2008; Hempel 2003, 2008), I align with those scholars (Collins 2006, 2009) who take it as an important evidence of the small-group character of the Qumran movement in general (Jokiranta 2009). Yet, it is possible that various rules from various times were here collected in this short passage (cf. Hempel 2003):

By these rules they are to govern themselves wherever they dwell, in accordance with each legal finding that bears upon communal life. Inferiors must obey their ranking superiors as regards work and wealth. They shall eat, pray and deliberate communally. (1QS VI 1b–3a)

Wherever ten men belonging to the party of the *Yahad* are gathered, a priest must always be present. The men shall sit before the priest by rank, and in that manner their opinions will be sought on any matter. When the table has been set for eating or the new wine readied for drinking, it is the priest who shall stretch out his hand first, blessing the first portion of the bread or the new wine.¹³ (1QS VI 3b–6a)

In any place where is gathered the ten-man quorum, someone must always be engaged in study of the Law, day and night, continually, each one taking his turn. (1QS VI 6b–7a)

The general membership (*rabbim*) will be diligent together for the first (?) third of every night of the year, reading aloud from the Book, interpreting Scripture and praying together. (1QS VI 7b–8a)

13. The last sentence is repeated, probably by mistake: “The priest who shall stretch out his hand first, blessing the first portion of the bread or the new wine.”

In my view, it is indeed possible to interpret that the frequent small-group gatherings were the norm in the movement. This is supported by the penal codes found both in the Damascus Document (D) and the Community Rule (S), in which the penalties included food-portion reductions for different periods of time, varying from ten days to one year (Hempel 1997). Such penalties would not make sense unless one's daily portion could be controlled. Furthermore, the insistence in the S tradition that members should separate themselves from the "people of injustice" suggest that the members were in the position of exchanging knowledge or goods with these people (Hempel 2003).

Much of the evidence that has been interpreted to speak about one single community at Qumran can now be read to speak about multiple groups gathering (e.g., 1QS V 1–20a; V 24b–VI 8a; VIII 1–19; IX 12–XI 22). Yet, some of the rules may also speak, or be adapted to speak, about larger and infrequent gatherings, especially on an annual basis. Most probably the final approval and ranking of members took place in the annual covenant renewal ceremony (1QS I 16–III, 12; 4QD^a 11 17–21).¹⁴ According to the Rule of the Congregation (1QSa) I 25–26, members had to consecrate themselves for three days before the assembly of the entire congregation, including the "council of the *yahad*." In this document, assembling together was not an everyday event but rather took place on special occasions (for judicial decisions, for counsel, and for military activities).

Hempel (2003: 67) argues that the simple statement of eating, praying and exchanging counsel in 1QS VI 1b–3a (see above) was elaborated by two other statements, one elaborating the hierarchical order of the counsel and meal (1QS VI 3b–6a) and the other elaborating the importance of studying (1QS VI 6b–8a). Indeed, it is possible that the studying element grew stronger later on (the penal code refers to the practice in passing: "while he is reading a book or praying," 1QS VII 1).

Now we may present the question of what the gatherings did to their participants. Besides the prayers, the studying and reading aloud were probably somewhat vulnerable activities for a kind of tedium effect. The penal codes both in S (VI 24–VII 25) and in D (4Q266 10–11; 4Q269 11, 15+11; 4Q270 7; and also 4Q265 4) clearly show that potential *signs* of boredom are not allowed: sleeping and dozing, leaving the meeting without permission, interrupting a fellow's speech, and laughing aloud. Our observations above bring forward the intriguing possibility that the hierarchical system and dependence on one's superiors, too abstract teaching, or too demanding rules brought about *frustration*, which however was controlled by penalties. To me this seems as the most likely source for tedium as regards the meetings. An alternative is to think of the lack of *deference*.

14. For various admission rules, see (Collins 2006: 88; VanderKam 2009).

If members did not conceive of the activity of the Torah study as having truth value in itself and being based on an authoritative tradition of doing so, they could find it difficult to continue to dedicate themselves to extensive study. This could happen, for example, if the study requirements were changed, meetings made longer (possibly reflected in “the third of nights” in 1QS VI 7), or novel elements introduced in them. One possible solution to solve the problem would be to form a smaller group of experts—development which well suits Whitehouse’s doctrinal mode and of which Qumran scholars believe to have found evidence.¹⁵ Also the teaching of the most important laws could have been private rather than take place in communal sessions.

CONCLUSION

We might assume that a small group of people is able to maintain an intensive religious experience over a long period of time—not ecstatic (cf. Kugler 2002: 152) but vigorous and lively. However, people develop a routine and get used to doing things in a certain way. If the “religious hegemony” in the Qumran movement was dependent on preserving a certain *sense* of being close to God through the patterned life, this sense might very well become threatened over time. But even this brief look at the most likely frequent ritual practices suggests that there were many balancing elements in the movement, contributing to the result that the members did not easily lose their motivation and commitment.

First, the meals probably functioned on a daily basis and included the settling of various questions and concerns. If the communal study was added, or rather, if the counsel developed into a more elaborate and systematic practice of reading and studying the scriptures, this could be a potential source for frustration, and further, for a development of further hierarchies and specialization within the movement. The annual covenant renewal had the potential to function as an establishment of these hierarchies but also as an imagistic event since, in it, the novices were accepted as full members and the ranking of the members was reordered. The divine presence and authority was thus made more pressing and fatal; it has features of special agent rituals in that the authority of drawing the boundaries came from God through the priest and Levites.¹⁶

15. Collins (2009) envisions an elite group within the movement. However, one does not need to go that far to find evidence of a hierarchical structure and leaders (e.g., wisdom teachers), who could take the responsibility to guide the inferiors and relieve these from their burden of study.

16. Cf. Tamás Biró’s discussion on circumcision, Chapter 9 in this volume. Circumcision in Judaism can be seen as a special agent ritual in popular perception, but not

Second, Sabbath services, in the light of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, created a sense of heavenly participation and included elements that contributed to emotional arousal or meditative states, in other words, religious experiences that focused, to varying degrees of intensity in each Sabbath, on the synchronization of participants' emotions or on the loss of their sense of self and thus could increase the receptiveness to the communal sense of reality. The whole view of the world was changed through the ritual rather than added to their specific knowledge of holy traditions. Repetition could weaken some of the most ecstatic experiences.

Third, purification was connected to the other frequent events in that it took place before every communal assembly and Sabbath service. Purification is an example of ritualization: a practice which is associated with life-threats and has a compelling nature. Adding to its frequency added to a sense of assurance and also signaled commitment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to thank the editor Risto Uro for his most helpful comments and suggestions for bibliography in the preparation of this chapter. I would also like to thank John Collins for sharing his unpublished paper (see note 1, page XXX) with me and Tamás Biró for sharing early versions of his contribution to this volume.

according to the rabbinic halakha since its performance by the rabbi is not mandatory and the rabbi's ordination is not represented as an unbroken chain going back to divine authority. Yet in the Qumran case, the priests and Levites might be seen as true representatives of the special agent.