

Perceptions of Oil in Early Judaism and the Meal Formula in *Joseph and Aseneth**

Randall D. Chesnutt

Pepperdine University,
Malibu, CA 90263, USA

Oil of anointing has been thought out of place in the triadic meal formula in *Joseph and Aseneth*. This study addresses the problem by examining certain perceptions of oil in early Judaism and their relationship to Jewish attitudes toward food and drink. In various ancient Jewish sources, oil ranks with food and drink as those items deemed most vulnerable to pagan defilement, and conversely, if used properly, as representative items to express a distinctive Jewish identity. Recognizing these perceptions of oil vitiates *Joseph and Aseneth*'s otherwise problematic placement of right and wrong ointment alongside right and wrong bread and cup in a triadic formula that sets the proper use of these staples over against their usage by outsiders and distinguishes the worshiper of God from the idolater.

The formulaic references to bread, cup, and ointment rank among the most enigmatic elements in *Joseph and Aseneth* (*JosAs*); yet it is precisely to this triadic formula that scholars have most often looked for evidence of the history-of-religions affinities of the work. In the longer of the two major forms of the text,¹ this formulaic language appears six times: three

* This essay is excerpted from a longer study entitled 'The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Meal Formula in *Joseph and Aseneth*: From Qumran Fever to Qumran Light', which was presented at the Jubilee Symposium on the Dead Sea Scrolls at Princeton Theological Seminary in November 1997, and is to be published soon in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (3 vols.; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, in press). I am grateful to Professor Charlesworth for permission to extract and revise a portion of that article for use in the present collection.

1. As reconstructed by C. Burchard and published, among other places, in C. Burchard, *Gesammelte Studien zu Joseph und Aseneth* (SVTP, 13; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), pp. 163-209; and now, at long last, in an *editio critica maior*: C. Burchard,

times in the triad, 'blessed bread of life', 'blessed cup of immortality', and 'blessed ointment of incorruption' (8.5; 15.5; 16.16); and three times in the dyad, 'bread of life' and 'cup of blessing' (8.9; 19.5; 21.21).² Only three of the six appear in the shorter version³ (8.5, 8.11 [= Burchard's 8.9]), and 15.4 [= Burchard's 15.5]), but where the two versions overlap the language is virtually identical,⁴ so that the interpretation of the phenomenon does not hinge on the text-critical debate.⁵ In both major text forms the bread, cup, and ointment are closely related to the equally enigmatic life-giving honeycomb from which Aseneth eats at the command of her heavenly visitor (ch. 16).

Most interpreters have supposed that the meal language refers to some sort of ritual meal and have sought analogies in the sacred meals of various other groups, including the Qumran sectarians, the Therapeutae, the mystical Jewish circles posited by E.R. Goodenough, the mystery religions (especially the Isis cult), and early Christianity. Others have suggested that the reference is not to a ritual meal at all but to the everyday

assisted by C. Burfeind and U.B. Fink, *Joseph und Aseneth kritisch herausgegeben* (PVTG, 5; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003).

2. There are slight variations: the triadic form in 16.16 lacks the word 'blessed', and the dyad in 21.21 has 'cup of wisdom' rather than 'cup of blessing'.

3. M. Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth: Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes* (SPB, 13; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968).

4. In 8.11, as in the parallel in Burchard's edition (8.9), the language is dyadic: 'bread of life...cup of blessing'. The triadic form in 15.4 lacks the adjective 'blessed', as it does in 16.16 in Burchard's text.

5. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations of *JosAs* in this study are my own translation of the longer text reconstructed by C. Burchard. I have also followed the chapter divisions and versification that Burchard inherited and adapted from P. Batiffol and P. Riessler. Recent arguments for the priority of the short version (A. Standhartinger, *Das Frauenbild im Judentum der hellenistischen Zeit: Ein Beitrag anhand von 'Joseph und Aseneth'* [AGAJU, 26; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995]; and R.S. Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph: A Late Antique Tale of the Biblical Patriarch and His Egyptian Wife, Reconsidered* [New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998]) show that the text-critical issue is more complex than is sometimes supposed and that scholars have erred in pursuing the elusive 'original' to the neglect of the various redactors and settings evidenced by the various text forms, but they do not, in my judgment, overturn Burchard's strong case for the priority of the longer text. See most recently Burchard's essay in the present collection. I also remain convinced of the Jewish (i.e. non-Christian) character of the work, *pace* Kraemer's recent contention that it is at least as likely to be Christian as Jewish. See on this issue the article by J.J. Collins in the present collection. The present study both assumes the Jewish character of the work and makes a modest contribution in support of this view.

Jewish meal—which itself had a solemn religious character—and, by metonymy, to the entire life *more judaico*.⁶ This latter view has much to commend it, and in fact I have defended a form of it elsewhere.⁷ However, the admitted problem with this approach—and, to some degree, with all interpretations—is that oil of anointing seems out of place in a meal context. Burchard correctly describes the ointment as the principal *Störenfried*, or trouble-maker, in all attempts to explain the meal formula.⁸ In what follows I propose to address this problem by examining certain perceptions of oil in early Judaism and their relation to Jewish attitudes toward food and drink. I shall argue that these perceptions, which are widely attested in various early Jewish sources and epitomized most succinctly in the talmudic ban on 'the bread, wine, and oil of heathens', shed decisive light on the controversial triad in *JosAs*.

Meal Language and Self-Identity in Joseph and Aseneth

Before turning to the comparative materials, it is important to consider the meal formula in its context in *JosAs*. In the first occurrence, when Aseneth comes forth to kiss Joseph at the suggestion of her father, Joseph spurns her with the following words (8.5-7):

It is not proper for a man who worships God, who blesses with his mouth the living God and eats blessed bread of life and drinks a blessed cup of immortality and is anointed with blessed ointment of incorruption, to kiss a foreign woman, who blesses with her mouth dead and dumb idols and eats from their table bread of strangling and drinks from their libation a cup of deceit and is anointed with ointment of destruction. Rather, the man who worships God will kiss his mother and the sister born of his mother and the sister from his tribe and kinsfolk and the wife who shares his bed, who bless with their mouths the living God. Likewise, it is not proper for a woman who worships God to kiss a foreign man, for this is an abomination before the Lord God.

6. See the views surveyed in C. Burchard, 'The Importance of Joseph and Aseneth for the Study of the New Testament: A General Survey and a Fresh Look at the Lord's Supper', *NTS* 33 (1987), pp. 109-17 (repr. in Burchard, *Gesammelte Studien*, pp. 270-78); and R.D. Chesnutt, *From Death to Life: Conversion in Joseph and Aseneth* (JSPSup, 16; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 20-64, 128-35.

7. R.D. Chesnutt, 'Bread of Life in *Joseph and Aseneth* and in John 6', in J.E. Priest (ed.), *Johannine Studies in Honor of Frank Pack* (Malibu, CA: Pepperdine University Press, 1988), pp. 1-16; and *From Death to Life*, pp. 128-35.

8. C. Burchard, *Untersuchungen zu Joseph und Aseneth: Überlieferung-Ortsbestimmung* (WUNT, 8; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1965), p. 28.

Having already learned that Joseph ate separately from his hosts and 'would not eat with the Egyptians, for this was an abomination to him' (7.1), here we find Joseph's own pointed use of meal language to distinguish the 'worshiper of God' (θεοσεβής) from the outsider and to support the former's separatism from the latter. Four antitheses express a fundamental dichotomy: the one blesses the living God, the other dead and dumb idols; the one eats blessed bread of life, the other bread of strangling from the table of idols; the one drinks a blessed cup of immortality, the other a cup of deceit from the libation of idols; the one is anointed with blessed ointment of incorruption, the other with the ointment of destruction. The contaminating effect of intimacy with idolaters, whose very diet made them agents of corruption and death, posed a serious threat to the distinctive identity of God's people as conceived by this author.⁹ Stated positively, appropriate bread, cup, and ointment, properly blessed, were central to and representative of the identity of those who worship God.

That the ethnic and religious particularism expressed here is not merely literary but quite real in the author's community is suggested by the last sentence in the excerpt quoted above: 'Likewise, it is not proper for a woman who worships God to kiss a foreign man, for this is an abomination before the Lord God'. This interdiction is unlike what precedes it in that nothing in the story line calls for it; there is no woman in the story for whom exogamy is a possibility. The generalization from the specific case at hand to a related situation beyond that actually represented in the narrative betrays the author's interest in clarifying and maintaining the identity of God's people in a pagan environment, especially with regard to the polluting effect of intermarriage and of food tainted by idolatry.

In the prayer that immediately follows the passage just examined, Joseph blesses Aseneth and prays that she be brought from darkness to light, from error to truth, from death to life (8.9 [8.11 in Philonenko's text]). Along with the metaphors of being formed anew, being brought to life, entering God's rest, and being numbered among the people of God, the language of eating the 'bread of life' and drinking 'a cup of blessing' is again used to express the distinctive and exalted status of God's people in which the transformed Aseneth is to participate. Similarly, in 15.4-5 (15.4 in Philonenko's text) the man from heaven assures the convert that her name has been written in the book of the living in heaven and that she will be

9. Here the author of *JosAs* continues a long-standing tradition of associating non-Jewish food with idolatry and juxtaposing dietary restrictions with prohibitions of idolatry (Deut. 13-14; Ezek. 33.25; Hos. 9.3).

'renewed and refashioned and given new life' and—in the next occurrence of the meal formula—that she will 'eat blessed bread of life and drink a blessed cup of immortality and be anointed with blessed ointment of incorruption'.¹⁰ Whether some ritual meal lies behind this formulaic language is difficult to say based on these passages; what is clear is that the language functions within its context to set the people of God apart from outsiders on the basis of their respective food, drink, and ointment.

Following her repudiation of idols, penitent turning to the God of Israel, and prayers of confession and supplication, Aseneth is visited by a 'man from heaven' who provides heavenly acknowledgment of her conversion and describes the blessings that now accrue to her.¹¹ Foremost among these are life and immortality, in which Aseneth participates symbolically by eating from a mysterious honeycomb that is said to be the same immortal food as that eaten by the angels in paradise and is equated with the 'bread of life', 'cup of immortality', and 'ointment of incorruption' (16.16 [not in Philonenko's text]). I have argued elsewhere that a major purpose of *JosAs* was to enhance the status of converts within a Jewish community deeply divided over the perception of converts and especially over the propriety of marriage between a convert and a born Jew.¹² By having Aseneth eat from the honeycomb, the author places her on a par with the Jew by birth, and indeed with the angels of God in paradise, who eat the same immortal food (16.14). The honey not only signifies manna¹³

10. Philonenko's short version reads the same except that it lacks the adjective 'blessed'.

11. D. Sängler, 'Bekehrung und Exodus: Zum jüdischen Traditionshintergrund von "Joseph und Aseneth"', *JSJ* 10 (1979), pp. 11-36 (29-30); and *idem*, *Antikes Judentum und die Mysterien: Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Joseph und Aseneth* (WUNT, 2.5; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1980), pp. 156-57, 182, makes the important point that this heavenly visit is neither the cause nor the occasion of Aseneth's conversion; rather, it functions to provide heavenly confirmation of a conversion that has already taken place and to articulate the benefits of belonging to the elect people of God.

12. R.D. Chesnutt, 'The Social Setting and Purpose of Joseph and Aseneth', *JSP* 2 (1988), pp. 21-48, and *From Death to Life*, pp. 108-15, 256-65.

13. Exod. 16.31 and various post-biblical sources indicate that the manna tasted like honey; see Josephus, *Ant.* 3.1.6; *Sib. Or.* frag. 3.34-35, 46-49; and Targums Neofiti I, Pseudo-Jonathan, and Onqelos on Exod. 16.31. Aseneth's honey is reminiscent of the manna in Exod. 16 in other ways as well: both are compared to dew, and both are said to be white like snow or frost (Exod. 16.13-14; Num. 11.7-9; *JosAs* 16.8). Ps. 78.25 (see also Wis. 16.20; *LAB* 19.5) calls the manna the 'bread of angels', and *JosAs* 16.14 says that the angels of God eat from the life-giving honeycomb.

but was a widely known symbol of immortality in the ancient world.¹⁴ Aseneth's eating of the honey and her full participation in the blessings of life and immortality symbolized thereby, all under the direction of God's chief angel, prove this convert worthy to be received fully into the community of Israel and to be married to the revered patriarch. Whether or not this correctly describes the social setting and purpose of *JosAs*, the explanation that 'all the angels of God...and all the chosen ones of God and all the sons of the Most High' eat from the same honeycomb (16.14) suggests a continual feeding of the people of God rather than a ritual of initiation. Moreover, the miraculous appearance and disappearance of the comb, the angel's strange marking of the comb, and the mysterious appearance and behavior of millions of colorfully clad bees make it unlikely that any repeatable ritual is reflected here at all. If such a ritual lies behind this enigmatic episode, its form and significance are no longer recoverable.

In 19.5 (not in Philonenko's text) the transformed Aseneth identifies herself to Joseph and explains what has transpired in his absence as follows:

I am your maidservant Aseneth; and all the idols I have put away from myself and they have perished. And a man came to me from heaven today, and he gave me bread of life and I ate, and a cup of blessing and I drank...

Once again Aseneth's new status is attributed to her renunciation of idolatry and her eating 'bread of life' and drinking a 'cup of blessing' given her by the man from heaven, when in fact she has not eaten any such bread or drunk any such cup anywhere in the narrative. Meal language—

14. The ancient practice of preserving corpses by encasing them in honey (Herodotus 1.198; Diodorus Siculus 15.93.6; Plutarch, *Agesilaus* 40.3; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.7.4; Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 3.892; and *b. Baba Batra* 3b) evidences such associations. M. Hubbard, 'Honey for Aseneth: Interpreting a Religious Symbol', *JSP* 16 (1997), pp. 97-110, argues that Aseneth's consumption of honey is also a symbol of her new birth; the practice of feeding honey to newborns was widespread, and *Epistle of Barnabas* 6.8-19 combines the same words for renewal used in *JosAs* 8.9 and 15 with a specific reference to eating honey in connection with conversion as a new creation/new birth. Honey also has a long history as an image of the word and wisdom of God (e.g. Pss. 19.10; 119.103; Prov. 24.13-14; Sir. 24.19-20); see K.-G. Sandelin, 'A Wisdom Meal in the Romance of Joseph and Aseneth', in *idem* (ed.), *Wisdom as Nourisher: A Study of an Old Testament Theme, its Development Within Early Judaism, and its Impact on Early Christianity* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1986), pp. 152-57. On the associations of honey in the Septuagint and a wide range of other ancient sources as these bear on Aseneth's honeycomb, see the article by A. Portier-Young in the present collection.

whether or not it echoes some special ritual—is used representatively to set Aseneth's newfound status as a suitable mate for Joseph apart from her polluted and polluting former state when Joseph, as a man of God, would have nothing to do with her.

The final occurrence of a meal formula is in the textually corrupt psalm of Aseneth in ch. 21. Here Aseneth's former idolatrous existence and her current life as one of the people of God are once again expressed antithetically in terms of their respective food and drink (21.13-14, 21 [not in Philonenko's text]). Her confession to having formerly eaten 'bread of strangling' and drunk 'a cup of deceit from the table of death' (21.13-14) is offset by her claim to have received 'bread of life' and 'a cup of wisdom' (21.21). This time Joseph is said to have given her the bread and cup, even though he has given her nothing of the kind and in fact was absent when she ate from the honeycomb to which the same life-giving effects are ascribed. Joseph does kiss Aseneth upon their reunion, and from the three kisses she receives a spirit of life, a spirit of wisdom, and a spirit of truth (19.11 [not in Philonenko's text]). The variety of actions to which the same or similar effects are ascribed tends to devalue the fixed ritual character of any one of them and to highlight what is common to them all—the distinctive benefits that Aseneth now enjoys as a worshiper of God that she did not formerly enjoy.

If the meal formula in these passages was inspired by some ritual, it can hardly have been an initiatory ritual, because in 8.5 it is Joseph—not Aseneth—who is said to eat bread, drink a cup, and be anointed with ointment. Here the formula clearly refers to the continuing experience of those who worship God rather than to an initiatory act.¹⁵ One further fact makes it unlikely that this language refers to a specific ritual at all: Aseneth never actually receives any bread, cup, or ointment anywhere in the narrative. Instead, she eats a piece of honeycomb and is then told by the man from heaven: 'Behold, you have eaten bread of life, drunk a cup of immortality, and been anointed with ointment of imperishability' (16.16; see also 19.5). This explicit equation of eating honey with eating bread, drinking a cup, and being anointed with ointment makes it unlikely that either half of the

15. So also J.J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2nd edn, 2000), p. 233: 'Since the eating, drinking, and anointing are predicated of Joseph as a pious man, they are evidently not, or at least not only, an initiation ritual. Rather, they are the habitual practice of the pious.'

equation refers to a fixed ritual form.¹⁶ Rather, both symbolize that participation in life and immortality which is the unique privilege of the worshiper of God.

Even if the formulaic triad is employed not for its ritual significance but to represent the entire Jewish way of life vis-à-vis a life of idolatry, it is significant that the particular acts chosen as representative are eating, drinking, and anointing. These three verbs express elemental human acts,¹⁷ just as the recurrent biblical triad of 'grain, wine, and oil' summarizes the staples of life.¹⁸ The genitival qualifiers attached to the three staple items in *JosAs*—life, immortality, and incorruption for the people of God, and strangling, deceit, and destruction for the outsider—suggests that the proper use of these items, as distinct from their defiling use by others, provided a definitive boundary marker for the author's community.

That ancient Jewish meal practices often served as consummate expressions of a whole way of life is well known. G. Feeley-Harnik correctly observes:

...food, articulated in terms of who eats what with whom under which circumstances, had long been one of the most important languages in which Jews conceived and conducted social relations among human beings and between human beings and God.¹⁹

16. G. Delling, 'Die Kunst des Gestaltens in "Joseph und Aseneth"', *NovT* 26 (1984), pp. 1-42 (23).

17. 2 Chron. 28.15; *ApAb* 9.7; *m. Terumoth* 6.1; *t. Terumoth* 7.1; and *b. Pesahim* 31b-32a.

18. E.g., Deut. 7.13; 11.14; 12.17; 14.23; 18.4; 28.51; 2 Chron. 31.5; 32.8; Ezra 3.7; Neh. 5.11; 10.39; 13.5; Jer. 31.12; Hos. 2.8, 22; Joel 2.19, 24; Hag. 1.11; Ps. 104.15; see also Jud. 10.5; 11.13; *Jub.* 13.26; 32.12; 1QH 10.24; *T. Jud.* 9.8; *Sib. Or.* 3.243, 745; Josephus, *War* 1.15.6; 7.8.4; Rev. 6.6; and *Didache* 13.5-6. The Tosefta refers to 'wine, oil, and fine flour' as 'things upon which life depends' (*t. Abodah Zarah* 4.1-2). The Temple Scroll's description of a firstfruits festival for oil and another for wine along with the biblical festivals celebrating the firstfruits of grain likewise attests to the recognition of these basic items as indispensable staples (11QTemple 19.11-23.9; see also 4QHalakah^a 5 [= 4Q251] frg. 2).

19. G. Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table: Eucharist and Passover in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), p. 72. On the connection between idolatry and meal customs, see A.F. Segal, 'Romans 7 and Jewish Dietary Laws', in *idem* (ed.), *The Other Judaisms of Late Antiquity* (BJS, 127; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), pp. 167-94 (176-77); and D.E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), pp. 160-61.

Meal practices served as 'social differentials, delimiting the boundaries between the "us" and the "them"'.²⁰ M. Douglas' brilliant analysis of the social function of meals in general is pertinent to Jewish meals in particular:

Each meal carries something of the meaning of the other meals; each meal is a structured social event which structures others in its own image...it distinguishes order, bounds it, and separates it from disorder.²¹

...whenever a people are aware of encroachment and danger, dietary rules controlling what goes into the body would serve as a vivid analogy of the corpus of their cultural categories at risk.²²

Such an understanding of food and meal practices as boundary markers in early Judaism accords well with what we find in *JosAs*. Here the explicit concern to avoid defilement at table (7.1) and the repeated employment of three staple items to contrast the life-giving diet of the pious with the defiling food of idolaters suggest that meal practices were central to the self-identity of the community for which the work was written. However, as noted at the outset, the problem with interpreting the meal formula as a reference to the everyday Jewish meal and a metonym for the Jewish way of life lies in the inclusion of oil of anointing in the triad. To this problem we now turn.

20. A. Brenner and J.W. van Henten, 'Our Menu and What is Not On It: An Introduction', in *idem* (eds.), *Food and Drink in the Biblical Worlds* (Semeia, 86; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), pp. ix-xvi (xi). See 1 Macc. 1.62; 3 Macc. 3.4; *Jub.* 22.16-18; *LetAris* 142; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.6.8, and the numerous other primary sources cited below.

21. M. Douglas, 'Deciphering a Meal', in C. Geertz (ed.), *Myth, Symbol, and Culture* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), pp. 61-82 (69-70).

22. Douglas, 'Deciphering a Meal', p. 79. See further Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966); and *idem*, *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 249-318; and more generally the seminal works of C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked* (trans. J. and D. Weightman; New York: Harper & Row, 1969); and *The Origin of Table Manners* (trans. J. and D. Weightman; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). In Pharisaic tradition, 'every Jew, every Jewish home, every Jewish table, possessed the sanctity of the priest, the temple, and the great altar' (Feeley-Harnik, *Lord's Table*, p. 94). According to a well-known Talmudic statement attributed to R. Johanan and R. Eleazar, '...as long as the Temple stood, the altar atoned for Israel, but now a man's table atones for him' (*b. Berakoth* 55a). See further J. Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (New York: Ktav, 1979), pp. 81-90; and *idem*, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees Before 70* (3 vols.; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), III, pp. 304-306 *et passim*.

Oil and Self-Identity in Early Judaism

Oil was used in a variety of ways in ancient Jewish meals, but as far as we can tell, a meal of bread and wine followed by an anointing with oil is without parallel.²³ However, the Hebrew Bible does rank oil alongside food and drink as God's greatest provisions. Thus Ps. 104.15 places God's gift of oil to make the face shine in parallel with his gifts of wine to make the heart merry and bread to make the heart strong, and Ps. 23.5 has the gracious host Yahweh not only spread a table of food before his guest but also anoint the guest's head with oil. The very recurrence of the triad, 'grain, wine, and oil', attests to the importance of oil as a staple commodity in Jewish tradition and throughout the Near East. Oil served not only as a basic food source, but also as the principal fuel for lighting and as a main ingredient in numerous body care products, including medicines, ointments, soaps, and perfumes. It also figured prominently in sacrifice and ritual, including the anointing of persons and vessels of special distinction.²⁴ Moreover, as we shall now document from a wide variety of Jewish sources, oil was held to be especially susceptible to impurity, and pagan oil was often associated with idolatrous rites. Recognizing these perceptions

23. J. Jeremias, 'The Last Supper', *ExpTim* 64 (1952), pp. 91-92 (91), cites only the anointing of guests before meals implied in Lk. 7.46. Burchard (*Untersuchungen*, p. 128 n. 2) and Collins (*Between Athens and Jerusalem*, p. 233 and n. 104) cite only a few rabbinic references to the use of oil for cleaning the hands after a meal. See *b. Berakoth* 53b, 42a, and 43b. The last passage does refer to this use of oil as an 'anointing'.

24. On the importance, production, storage, transport, trade, and uses of oil in the Mediterranean world, see F.S. Frick, "'Oil from Flinty Rock'" (Deuteronomy 32.13): Olive Cultivation and Olive Oil Processing in the Hebrew Bible—A Socio-Materialist Perspective', in Brenner and van Henten (eds.), *Food and Drink*, pp. 3-17; D. Eitram and M. Heltzer (eds.), *Olive Oil in Antiquity: Israel and Neighboring Countries from the Neolithic to the Early Arab Period* (Padova: Sargon, 1996); E.L. Tyree and E. Stefanoudaki, 'The Olive Pit and Roman Oil Making', *BA* 59 (1996), pp. 171-78; H.A. Hoffner, Jr, 'Oil in Hittite Texts', *BA* 58 (1995), pp. 108-14; R. Frankel, S. Avitsur and E. Ayalon, *History and Technology of Olive Oil in the Holy Land* (trans. J. Jacobson; Arlington, VA: Olearius Editions, 1994); M.-C. Amouretti and J.-P. Brun (eds.), *La production du vin et de l'huile en Méditerranée* (Bulletin de correspondance hellénique Supplement, 26; Paris: École Française d'Athènes, 1993); D.J. Mattingly, 'Oil for Export? A Comparison of Lybian, Spanish and Tunisian Olive Oil Production in the Roman Empire', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 1 (1988), pp. 33-56; and O. Callot, *Huileries Antiques de Syrie du Nord* (Paris: Librarie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1984).

of oil will vitiate *JosAs*'s otherwise problematic placement of right and wrong oil alongside right and wrong food and drink as representative items to distinguish the practice of worshipers of God from that of outsiders.

According to Josephus, the Essenes scrupulously refrained from using oil on their skin:

Oil they consider defiling, and anyone who accidentally comes in contact with it scours his person; for they make a point of keeping a dry skin... (*War* 2.8.3)²⁵

Although this practice is consistent with the sect's general asceticism and avoidance of luxury, J.M. Baumgarten correctly insists that the primary impetus for the taboo is rather the perception of oil as a potent carrier of impurity.²⁶ Oil was certainly used at Qumran,²⁷ but, as in rabbinic tradition, oil and other liquids were considered to be sensitive conductors of contamination and required the utmost caution. Thus the Temple Scroll declares:

...every house in which someone dies shall be unclean for seven days; ... And on the day on which they remove the corpse from the house, they shall clean the house of every stain of oil (תנאולת שמן), wine, and dampness from

25. This and subsequent quotations of Josephus are from H.St.-J. Thackeray *et al.*, *Josephus* (LCL; 9 vols.; London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926-65). In apparent dependence on Josephus, Hippolytus (*Refutation of All Heresies* 9.14) also refers to the Essenes' abstention from anointing with oil.

26. J. Baumgarten, 'The Essene Avoidance of Oil and the Laws of Impurity', *RevQ* 6 (1967), pp. 183-93 (repr. with addendum in *idem*, *Studies in Qumran Law*, pp. 88-97).

27. A number of oil lamps and some olive pits were found in the excavations. See R. de Vaux, 'Fouilles de Khirbet Qumrân', *RB* 63 (1956), pp. 552-53, 558-59; and L. Harding, 'Introductory', in D. Barthélemy and J.T. Milik, *DJD*. I. *Qumran Cave 1*, p. 7. In 1988, a Herodian juglet of oil was found in a nearby cave (J. Patrich and B. Arubas, 'A Juglet Containing Balsam Oil [?] from a Cave Near Qumran', *IEJ* 39 [1989], pp. 43-59), but, of course, a connection with the Qumran settlement cannot be proved. The Temple Scroll envisions the use of olive oil in temple ritual and even a bodily anointing with oil in connection with the feast of Firstfruits of Oil (11QTemple 22.15-16; see also 4QHalakah^a [= 4Q251] frg. 2). Y. Yadin reconciles this with Josephus' indication that the Essenes did not use oil on the body by suggesting that pure oil could be procured only by means of the firstfruits ritual elaborated in the Temple Scroll; thus the anointing that was possible once a year was shunned at all other times because the purity of oil could not be assured (*The Temple Scroll: Hebrew and English* [3 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1977-83], I, pp. 133-34, 140-42).

water; they shall scrape its floor, its walls and its doors; and they shall wash with water its locks, its doorposts, its thresholds, and its lintels. (11QTemple 49.5-13)²⁸

The Damascus Document rules similarly:

And all the wood, stones, and dust which are defiled by human impurity, while having oil stains (גאול'י שמן) on them, according to their impurity shall he who t[ouches] them become impure. (CD 12.15-17)²⁹

In these texts oil and other liquids are the carriers rather than the source of contamination. They adhere to surfaces that have been exposed to some unclean object or person, and they transmit that impurity to anyone who touches them even after the original source of defilement has been removed. 4QOrdinances^b (= 4Q513) frg. 13.4 (see also frg. 12.1) likewise notes the risk of being '[so]iled with oil' (מנ[א]ל'ים בשמן). The fragmentary halakhic text 4Q284a frg. 1, if the restoration by Baumgarten is accurate,³⁰ warns of potential contamination during the process of extracting olive oil. The Temple Scroll indicates that any oil brought into the holy city must be pure (11QTemple 47.5-13). In the War Scroll, even the concern for the purity of priests on the battlefield is couched in metaphorical language suggestive of oil's susceptibility to defilement: 1QM 9.8-9 declares 'they shall [no]t profane the oil of their priestly anointing (שמן משיחה כהונה) through the blood of nations of vanity', and a parallel in 4QM 3.5 reads 'they shall not profane the oil of their priesthood (שמן כהונה)'.³¹

In rabbinic halakah the character of liquids as carriers of impurity receives extensive elaboration. The Mishnah declares that while solid foods transmit impurity only to other foods, unclean liquids contaminate

vessels as well (*m. Parah* 8.5). Moreover, the grade of impurity conveyed by solid foods diminishes with each derivative contact, but liquids, even if touched by someone or something bearing secondary impurity, become unclean to the first degree and transmit that first degree impurity to other liquids without any diminution through the chain of derivative contact (*m. Parah* 8.5-7; *m. Tohoroth* 2.6; 3.1; *t. Tohoroth* 1.5; *b. Berakoth* 52a). Solid foods are rendered susceptible to impurity if they become wet,³² even in the case of fruits and vegetables wet by their own exuding juices (*m. Tohoroth* 9; *m. Eduyyot* 4.6; *b. Shabbat* 17b; *b. Hullin* 36b). Even dampening from rain or dew renders produce susceptible to impurity under certain circumstances (*m. Makshirin*; *t. Makshirin*; *b. Baba Mesia* 22a-b; *b. Qiddushin* 59b).

The sensitivity of liquids to contamination is recognized in the Qumran materials and related texts as well. Thus, according to the Community Rule, neophytes gained access to the community's solid foods (טוהרות) after a novitiate of one year but were excluded from the pure liquid of the sect (משקה הרבים) until the end of a second provisional year (1QS 6.13-22; 7.21-22).³³ 4Q284a frg. 1 likewise refers to those ineligible to touch 'the community's liquids' (משקי הרבים).³⁴ The Temple Scroll makes explicit, as do rabbinic sources, that solid foods on which water has been poured are like liquids in that they are more susceptible to impurity than dry foodstuffs (11QTemple 49.6-9). 4QOrdinances^b (= 4Q513) frg. 13.4-6, though badly mutilated, clearly suggests that oil and other liquids (משקי) transmit impurity more easily than do solids.³⁵ Passages already cited above from both the Temple Scroll and the Damascus Document show

28. This and subsequent quotations from the Temple Scroll are my own translation of the Hebrew text in Yadin, *Temple Scroll*, II.

29. The text and translation of the Damascus Document are from J.M. Baumgarten and D.R. Schwarz, 'The Damascus Document', in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations*. II. *Damascus Document, War Scroll, and Related Documents* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994-). On the reading גאול'י שמן ('oil stains'), as opposed to the emendations proposed by Schechter and Rabin, see Baumgarten, *Studies in Qumran Law*, pp. 88-89; and Baumgarten and Schwarz, 'The Damascus Document', p. 53 n. 188.

30. J.M. Baumgarten, 'Liquids and Susceptibility to Defilement in New 4Q Texts', *JQR* 85 (1994), pp. 91-101 (94).

31. Texts and translations of the War Scroll and related materials are from J. Duhaime, 'War Scroll', in Charlesworth (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, II, pp. 80-203.

32. The entire Mishnaic tractate *Makshirin* deals with items that are rendered susceptible to impurity by wetting. Lev. 11.34-38 provides the biblical springboard for these laws. See also *m. Tohoroth* 3.1-2; *t. Makshirin*; *y. Shebiith* 6.1 (36c); *b. Hullin* 36a-b; and the discussion by J. Neusner, *A History of the Mishnaic Law of Purities* (SJLA, 6; 22 vols.; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974-77), *passim*, esp. XII, pp. 133-60.

33. Very early in Qumran studies, S. Lieberman ('The Discipline in the So-Called Manual of Discipline', *JBL* 71 [1952], pp. 199-206 [203]) recognized the obvious parallel between this distinction and the rabbinic evaluation of משקי, liquids, as more susceptible to impurity than אוכלין נובלין, dry solid foods. See further Schiffman, *Sectarian Law in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 163-65.

34. See Baumgarten, 'Liquids and Susceptibility to Defilement', p. 94.

35. L.H. Schiffman, 'Ordinances and Rules', in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls*. I. *The Rule of the Community and Related Documents*, p. 167 n. 51: 'this frg. clearly assumes that oil is a transmitter of defilement... There can be no question that such was the view of the Qumran sect and some related groups of Second Temple Jews.'

that residue of oil and other liquids on household surfaces were considered to be lingering conductors of defilement after the original source of the impurity had been removed (11QTemple 49.5-13; CD 12.15-17). According to the Qumran halakhic letter known as Some Precepts of the Torah, liquids were such sensitive conductors of impurity that if a stream of liquid flowed in either direction between a clean and an unclean vessel, both vessels were considered unclean (4QMMT^a [4Q394] frg. 3.5-8; 4QMMT^c [4Q396] frg. 1.2.6-9; 4QMMT^d [4Q397] frgs. 3-4.1-2). Other fragmentary texts from Cave 4 give even more stringent rulings than rabbinic tradition regarding the susceptibility fruits and vegetables to defilement by their own exuding juices and by rain and dew (4Q284a frgs. 1-2; 4Q274 frg. 3.1-2).³⁶ Purity concerns related to the properties of liquids impinge not only on dietary matters but also on the water used for lustrations. Josephus implies a grading of water for such purposes when he refers to 'the purer kind of holy water' to which Essene novices were admitted after a probationary year (*War* 2.8.7), and the variety of designations used in the Community Rule ('water for washing' [מי רחץ], 1QS 3.5]; 'water for sprinkling' [מי נדה], 1QS 3.4, 9; 4.21]; and 'water for purification' [מי דוכי], 1QS 3.9]) may reflect such a gradation.³⁷

Because oil was such a staple commodity, because the lengthy process of production constantly exposed it to contamination, and because pagan oil was often associated with idolatrous rites,³⁸ many Jews considered oil an even greater source and medium of contamination than other liquids. As Baumgarten has stated, 'the avoidance of pagan oil was of concern even to those not likely to have been so scrupulous with regard to other sources of defilement'.³⁹ Josephus' report that the Essenes shunned the use of oil on the skin (*War* 2.8.3) should therefore occasion no surprise. Not only would oil from external sources be a potential contaminant, but even pure oil on the skin would increase one's risk of contracting defilement by virtue of the power of liquids to transmit and even amplify impurity. In a community where a person became impure simply by touching someone of lower rank (Josephus, *War* 2.8.10), any substance that would exacerbate the problem was naturally avoided.

In addition to the Qumran qualms about oil discussed above, a wide array of other Jewish sources testify to deep-seated Jewish concerns about

the proper use of oil. The book of Judith preserves intact the exemplary scruples of its heroine by noting that when she was preparing to enter the pagan army camp, she packed her own cruse of oil along with other provisions (10.5). Josephus attributes the following scheme to his rival, John of Gischala:

With the avowed object of protecting all the Jews of Syria from the use of oil not supplied by their own countrymen, he sought and obtained permission to deliver it to them at the frontier. He then bought up that commodity... As Galilee is a special home of the olive and the crop had been plentiful, John, enjoying a monopoly, by sending large quantities to districts in want of it, amassed an immense sum of money. (*War* 2.21.2)

Josephus later reports:

He [John of Gischala] stated that the Jewish inhabitants of Caesarea Philippi, ...having no pure oil for their personal use, had sent a request to him to see that they were supplied with this commodity, lest they should be driven to violate their legal ordinances by resort to Grecian oil... So he sent off all the oil in the place... John by this sharp practice made an enormous profit. (*Life* 13)

In support of his claim that Seleucus I Nicator granted Syrian Jews full privileges of citizenship that were still in effect, Josephus writes:

And the proof of this is the fact that he gave orders that those Jews who were unwilling to use foreign oil should receive a fixed sum of money from the gymnasiarchs to pay for their own kind of oil; and, when the people of Antioch proposed to revoke this privilege, Mucianus, who was then governor of Syria, maintained it. (*Ant.* 12.3.1)

The palpable bias against John of Gischala and in favor of better civic status for Jews in these passages does not vitiate Josephus' testimony to a strong Jewish disdain for pagan oil and determination to use pure oil produced by Jews.⁴⁰ The fact that Josephus can take such scruples for granted and allude to them without explanation suggests that Jewish aversion to gentile oil was widespread and long standing.⁴¹

40. Neither is this point altered if the decree attributed by Josephus to Seleucus I Nicator (312–281 BCE) actually dates to a later Seleucid ruler. R. Marcus, in Appendix C to his Loeb translation of books 12–14 of the *Antiquities*, suggests that the decree should be ascribed to Antiochus III (223–187 BCE). Inscriptional evidence confirms that Seleucid officials made grants of oil in Hellenistic cities. See M. Rostovtzeff in *CAH*, VII, pp. 178–79.

41. The persistence of such ideas in Jewish Christianity is suggested by the tradition that James, the brother of Jesus, 'did not anoint himself with oil' (Eusebius

36. See further Baumgarten, 'Liquids and Susceptibility to Defilement'.

37. Baumgarten, *Studies in Qumran Law*, p. 95 n. 35.

38. S.B. Hoenig, 'Oil and Pagan Defilement', *JQR* 61 (1970–71), pp. 63–75 (64–66).

39. Baumgarten, *Studies in Qumran Law*, p. 97.

In the rabbinic corpus, compunctions about oil, even more than those about liquids in general, are greatly elaborated. Painstaking precautions were required during the production of olive oil to insure its purity (*m. Tohoroth* 9-10). Guards were posted at olive presses to ensure that no unclean person entered (*b. Berakoth* 62a). Even oil produced in purity was subject to contamination from pagan contact during transport (*b. Hagigah* 25a). Whereas other liquids were considered susceptible to second-degree rather than first-degree impurity when they congealed, oil remained susceptible to first-degree impurity when it congealed (*m. Tohoroth* 3.1-2). The purity of oil used in Temple ritual was of special concern (*m. Hagigah* 3.4; *t. Hagigah* 3.30-32; *b. Menahoth* 86b), as is illustrated in the well-known story of the oil defiled by the Seleucids and the miraculous cruse of pure oil found by the Hasmonians when they recaptured the Temple (*b. Shabbat* 21b). Anointing oneself with unclean oil put one in a state of impurity that immersion did not remedy as long as there was residual oil on the skin (*m. Edduyot* 4.6). The Hillelites held that a person who anointed himself even with pure oil and later became unclean could not become clean again by immersion as long as there was oil on his skin (*m. Edduyot* 4.6). The Mishnaic tractate on idolatry prohibits consumption of the 'oil of idolaters' (שמן של עובדי גלולים [i.e. השמן שלהן], *m. Abodah Zarah* 2.6),⁴² and the Babylonian Talmud includes this ban on the 'oil of heathens' (שמן [i.e. שמן של עובדי כוכבים]) in the Eighteen Decrees enacted by the Shammaites as safeguards against idolatry (*b. Abodah Zarah* 35b-36b).⁴³

Hist. Eccl. 2.23, citing Hegessipus), although the motive in this instance may have been ascetic avoidance of luxury rather than scruples about purity.

42. The text and translation of the Mishnah employed in this study is P. Blackman, *Mishnayoth* (7 vols.; New York: Judaica Press, 1964). The remarkable parenthetical statement in *m. Abodah Zarah* 2.6 that 'Rabbi [Judah] and his court permitted the oil' embarrassed the Amoraim and continues to puzzle modern interpreters. The clause fits neither the syntax nor the content of its present context and appears to be a later insertion into the list of forbidden items. See the explanations in *t. Abodah Zarah* 4.8-11; *b. Abodah Zarah* 35b-37a; and *y. Abodah Zarah* 2.8, 41d. For a balanced discussion of the origins of the ban on gentile oil and its later relaxation, see M. Goodman, 'Kosher Olive Oil in Antiquity', in P.R. Davies and R.T. White (eds.), *A Tribute to Geza Vermes: Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History* (JSOTSup, 100; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), pp. 227-45.

43. The text and translation of the Babylonian Talmud employed in this study is I. Epstein (ed.), *The Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud* (London: Soncino Press, 1983-90).

Impure oil thus takes its place alongside unclean food and drink as one of the basic realities of daily life considered by many Jews to be most threatening to Jewish purity and identity. *JosAs*'s 'ointment of destruction' (χρῖσμα ἀπωλείας) finds close analogies in Josephus' 'foreign oil' (ἀλλοφύλον ἔλαιον), 'oil not supplied by their own countrymen' (ἔλαιον μὴ δι'... ὁμοφύλων ἐγκεχειρισμένον), and 'Grecian oil' (ἔλαιον... Ἑλληνικόν), the Mishnaic 'oil of idolaters' (שמן של עובדי גלולים), and the Talmudic 'oil of heathens' (שמן של עובדי כוכבים). All of these, in turn, are functionally analogous to 'the king's food and wine' (פחבג המלך ויין; LXX: τὸ δεῖπνον τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ ὁ οἶνος) refused by Daniel (*Dan.* 1.8), the 'royal feast and wine of libations' (συμπόσιον βασιλέως οὐδὲ... οἶνος σπονδῶν) shunned by Esther (*Additions to Esther* 4.17x; but cf. *Est.* 2.9), 'the bread of gentiles' (οἱ ἄρτοι τῶν ἔθνῶν) avoided by Tobit (*Tob.* 1.10-11), the pagan general Holofernes' 'own food and wine' (τὰ ὀψοποιήματα αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁ οἶνος αὐτοῦ) declined by Judith (*Jud.* 12.1-4, 19), the 'unclean things' (κοινά) that the Maccabean martyrs refused to eat (*1 Macc.* 1.62), the 'grain of the gentiles' (דגן הגוים) which should be banned from the Temple according to Some Precepts of the Torah (4QMMT^a [4Q394] frg. 1.1.6-8), the 'Greek bread' (ἑλληνικὸς ἄρτος) eschewed in the Cologne Mani Codex (87.16-23), the 'bread of strangling' (ἄρτος ἀγχόνος) and 'cup of deceit' (ποτήριον ἐνέδρας) depreciated in *JosAs*, the 'bread of idolaters' (ἄρτος ἰδωλολάτρων [i.e. הפת שלהן]) banned in *m. Abodah Zarah* 2.6, and the 'bread of heathens' (פיתן [i.e. פת של עובדי כוכבים]) and 'wine of heathens' (יין [i.e. שמן של עובדי כוכבים]) forbidden in the Eighteen Decrees (*b. Abodah Zarah* 35b-36b). All represent a concern to maintain distinctively Jewish mores in those areas deemed most vulnerable to pagan corruption.⁴⁴

Of special significance for our study is the fact that several Jewish sources that express scruples about oil mention it not just alone, but together with bread and/or wine, or their near equivalents, in combinations which are similar to that in *JosAs* and which function to set the pure apart from the impure, the holy from the profane, and especially Judaism from paganism. The book of Judith lists the provisions that Judith took with her into the pagan army camp as follows: a skin of wine, a cruse of oil, and a bag filled with parched grain, dried fig cakes, and pure (καθαρός) bread

44. Also related are the 'cup of demons' (ποτήριον δαιμονίων) and 'table of demons' (τράπεζα δαιμονίων) prohibited by Paul (*1 Cor.* 10.21) and the taboo on 'food sacrificed to idols' (εἰδωλόθυτος) in some early Christian circles (see *Acts* 15.29; 21.25; *Rev.* 2.14, 20; but cf. *1 Cor.* 8, 10).

(10.5). The book of *Jubilees* singles out grain, wine, and olive oil as subjects of the heavenly tablets' most stringent requirements for tithing and purity (32.10-15). The Qumran Temple Scroll gives the following regulations for the holy city and its ideal sanctuary:

Everything that is in it shall be pure, and everything that enters it shall be pure: *wine and oil and all food and all drink shall be pure...* In the skins (of the animals) which they slaughter in the sanctuary, in these they shall bring *their wine and their oil and all their food* to the city of my sanctuary. And they shall not defile my sanctuary with the skins of the abominable sacrifices which they offer in their land. (11QTemple 47.5-14 [emphasis added])

Whether oil is for anointing or dietary use in these contexts is a secondary issue. What is important for our purposes is that these and other texts, representing a very broad spectrum of Jewish communities, mention oil together with food and drink as those basic necessities most subject to defilement and, by the same token, if used properly, most symbolic of appropriate Jewish conduct. On the same trajectory, rabbinic law often treats oil and wine together because of their similar vulnerability to defilement during production, transport, and storage (*m. Hagigah* 3.4; *t. Hagigah* 3.30-32; *b. Hagigah* 25a; *m. Middoth* 2.5; *b. Shabbat* 17a). The Mishnah's tractate on idolatry brings together gentile bread and oil as items to be avoided by Jews:

These things of idolaters are forbidden, but it is not prohibited to derive any benefit from them: milk that an idolater milked but no Israelite watched him (and) *their bread and (their) oil*. (*m. Abodah Zarah* 2.6 [emphasis added])

Blessings over oil and wine in the context of a meal are discussed in *b. Berakoth* 43b. Also noteworthy are the instructions given to Abraham in the *ApAb* 9.7 to abstain from eating cooked food, drinking wine, and anointing himself with oil in preparation for his revelatory experience; the vision of priestly investiture in *T. Levi* 8.4-5, where Levi is anointed with holy oil and fed with wine and holy bread; and the Coptic version of the very Jewish liturgical material in *Didache* 9-10, which includes a blessing to be said over the ointment along with those for the bread and cup.⁴⁵

45. The so-called $\mu\upsilon\pi\omicron\nu\nu$ prayer is found in 10.8 in the Coptic version. The parallel with the triad in *JosAs* is striking, and Jewish roots are at least arguable. However, the dating of the prayer is problematic. Some argue that it was a part of the original, while others consider it a late interpolation. It has even been argued that the Coptic word *stinoufi* does not mean 'ointment' but either denotes 'incense' or is a metaphor for the

The most striking parallel to the bread-cup-ointment triad in *JosAs* appears in the Babylonian Talmud. In the gemara to the mishnah cited above from *m. Abodah Zarah* 2.6, the Talmud states:

Behold Bali declared that Abimi the Nabatean said in the name of Rab: *The bread, wine and oil of heathens and their daughters are all included in the eighteen things*. (*b. Abodah Zarah* 36a [emphasis added])

This tradition is repeated verbatim in *b. Abodah Zarah* 36b and with slight variations in *b. Shabbat* 17b, where the order is bread, oil, and wine. It is surprising that this talmudic combination of pagan bread, wine, and oil has not figured in discussions of the meal formula in *JosAs*,⁴⁶ which combines the same three items to distinguish the people of God from idolaters. Not only is the rabbinic formula strikingly similar in content to that in *JosAs*, but the express purpose of the Talmudic prohibition—to safeguard against idolatry—makes it functionally similar as well. Questions of the date of and authenticity of rabbinic traditions are, of course, problematic. However, as we have seen, in this instance the talmudic formula only brings together three items that had functioned, both individually and in various combinations, for a long time and in very diverse Jewish circles, as benchmarks by which to gauge and express one's Jewishness.

'fragrance' of the Spirit in paradise. See the discussions in R.A. Kraft, *Barnabas and Didache* (Apostolic Fathers Series, 3; New York: Thomas Nelson, 1965), pp. 66, 165-69; A. Vööbus, *Liturgical Traditions in the Didache* (Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1968), pp. 46-49; and S. Gero, 'The So-Called Ointment Prayer in the Coptic Version of the Didache: A Re-Evaluation', *HTR* 70 (1977), pp. 67-84.

46. When I first called attention to this parallel in a paper entitled "'Bread, Wine, and Oil of Idolaters": Rabbinic Light on a *Crux Interpretum* in Joseph and Aseneth' at the 1989 annual SBL meeting in Anaheim, I could not discover any discussion of these talmudic passages in published research on *JosAs*. Since then, A.F. Segal has noted one of them (*b. Shabbat* 17b) to show that 'the puzzling objects of Aseneth's rites are known to be symbolic of Judaism in a general way' ('Conversion and Messianism: Outline for a New Approach', in J.H. Charlesworth [ed.], *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992], pp. 296-340 [311]; see also Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990], pp. 91-92). Segal concludes, as I do, that 'the rules of commensality were broadly understood in the Judaism of this period as safeguards against idolatry', and that the eating, drinking, and anointing in *JosAs* 'are apparently symbolic of Jewish life in general, rather than representative of a specific conversion ritual' ('Conversion and Messianism', p. 311; *Paul the Apostle*, pp. 91-92). Other than Segal's brief references and my own in *From Death to Life*, pp. 134-35, I know of no published studies that consider this remarkable parallel to the triadic formula in *JosAs*.

Conclusion

In view of the widely attested Jewish perceptions of oil, as well as bread and wine, and especially the bringing together of these items in such contexts as the Temple Scroll's insistence on the purity of 'wine and oil and all food and all drink' and the Talmud's ban on 'the bread, wine, and oil of heathens', it is not surprising to find a Hellenistic Jewish text using ointment alongside food and drink in a triadic formula that sets the uniquely Jewish use of these staples over against their usage outside Judaism as an expression for the entire life *more judaico*. The possibility remains that the bread-cup-ointment formula in *JosAs* echoes some otherwise unattested ritual meal, but there is little in the text itself to suggest this, and in any case the nature and form of such a meal would be irrecoverable. However, the absence of a discernible ritual meal does not mean that the language of eating, drinking, and being anointed is merely literary and symbolic, as R. Schnackenburg seems to suggest.⁴⁷ Though expressive of the whole Jewish way of life, this language grows out of and represents something very concrete in the Jewish community—the effort to maintain a distinctive way of life in precisely those daily realities where susceptibility to gentile impurity was considered greatest, namely, food, drink, and oil contaminated by idolatry. So symbolic of Jewish identity in a gentile environment was the peculiarly Jewish use of these three staples that the entire life *more judaico* came to be expressed in a formulaic triad or dyad that has been assumed—probably mistakenly and certainly too readily—to refer to a special ritual meal. The representative use of daily food, wine, and oil as identity markers in early Jewish sources sheds more light on the triadic formula in *JosAs* than do the various ritual meals with which comparisons and connections have frequently been drawn.

47. R. Schnackenburg, 'Das Brot des Lebens', in G. Jeremias, H.-W. Kuhn and H. Stegemann (eds.), *Tradition und Glaube: Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt. Festgabe für K.G. Kuhn* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), pp. 328-42 (339 and n. 35).