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**Holiness and sanctification, granted and  
becoming (in the light of the Holiness Code -  
Lev 17-27)**

**Doctoral Thesis**

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key words : *tôra; kadoš; bēriṭ; seper tôrat Mošeh; mâqôm; admat-qōdeš; tô 'ēbâ; šeqeš; ἁγιος; dikaiosynē; Holiness Code; demut.*

## Summary

The doctoral thesis entitled "Holiness and sanctification, granted and becoming (in the light of the Holiness Code - Lev 17-27)", tackles the issue of sanctification from the perspective of the Torah - the Holiness Code (H). Holy and source of sanctification is God through excellence. The man, being created in the image and likeness of God has an ontic quest for holiness. Holiness is not a work of God directed towards a passive object, but it responds to an aspiration of the human subject. Holiness remains a desire for the believer that can be realized only through the process of sanctification. God is the Source of Holiness and the one who sanctifies, holiness is a conformity of man with himself and with the supreme Self. The theme of holiness and sanctification self-imposes in the Scripture the idea of separation and consecration of the individual/nation.

For a thorough and in-depth information on the subject I have resorted to recognized scriptural editions of the biblical text such as: *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1967-1977 edited by Karl Ellifger and W. R. Kittel; *Septuaginta: id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1982 edited by Alfred Rahlfs, *The Peshitta*, Peshitta Institute - Brill, Leiden, 2008.

Likewise, I chose to use newer versions of the biblical text from editions such as: *Traduction Oecumenique de la Bible (TOB)*, Cerf/ Société Biblique Française, Paris, 2004; *Septuaginta*, translation into Romanian by Cristian Bădiliță, Francisca Băltăceanu, Monica Broșteanu and Dan Slușanschi in collaboration with pr. Ioan-Florin Florescu, *The College Noua Europă/Polirom*, Iași, 2004, respectively the volumes *Biblia după textul ebraic Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* edited by Maria Francisca Băltăceanu and Monica Broșteanu.

The biblical quotations in Romanian appear in the thesis from various scriptural editions specific to the Orthodox space such as: *Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură*, Cluj-Napoca, Ed. Renașterea, 2009, by His Beatitude †Bartolomeu Anania; *Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură/tipărită cu binecuvântarea Preafericitul Părinte Daniel, Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe, cu aprobarea Sfântului Sinod*, București, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă, 2019.

In chapter 1 related to the current state of research I listed both Western studies and those specific to the Romanian environment, that is to say: volumes, studies/articles and patristic sources translated by various Romanian theologians which constitute an important tool for theological study available to any researcher who strives to broaden the horizon of biblical thinking in the area of Leviticus. A first priority in the elaboration of the theme were the writings of Romanian biblical scholars dedicated to the theme/study on the book of Leviticus; writings that in the last decades have had a slight growth and have constituted a real interest. The doctoral theses that were based on the book of Leviticus in the Romanian environment are those of Prof. Dr. Petre Semen and Prof. Dr. Mihaiță Popovici. Pr. Semen in his thesis entitled "The Teaching on the Holy and

Holiness in the Books of the Old Testament" (1990) has brought into discussion Old Testament texts, following how the Hagiographers emphasized the teaching on the holy and holiness until their fulfilment in the person of the Savior Jesus Christ. Pr. Mihaiță Popovici in his thesis entitled "The Holiness Code from the Book of Leviticus. Considerations and Applications to Today's Christian Life" published by Papirus Media (2013) presents a partial synthesis of the Mosaic Sinaitic revelation in which the Law actually signifies a treasure offered not only to the Jews but to all mankind, its purpose being "the deification of His entire creation".

Western/international studies on the books of the Pentateuch, especially the book of Leviticus, are to be found in a considerable proportion, a fact which led me to browse through the most significant and of interest to the chosen theme, opting for those in English. In addition to the brief presentation that I have transposed in the thesis on Western studies, a considerable number of these are further to be found in the footnotes.

Chapter 2 focuses on three conceptual delimitations of the terms *tôra* – "law", *kadoş* – "holy" and *bērîṭ* – "covenant", taken from the Torah that reflect a retrospective view, in which the issue of holiness is hypostatized. Hebrew *Tôra* which is improperly rendered as "law", the term also signifies "teaching" or "direction". The term appears in sequences such as "the Book of the Law" (*seper hattôrâ*) and also "the Book of the Law of Moses" (*seper tôrat Moşeh*) with a common meaning. The translation of the Hebrew term *tôra* by *nomos* in the LXX would, according to some scholars, distort the meaning and thus would lose the essence of the basic word.

Another term under discussion was (*kadoş*) – "holy" which stems from the Hebrew root "*qds*" meaning "to be holy, to sanctify"; *kadoş* appears as either a verb, noun or adjective in over 850 OT references. Some scholars are of the opinion that holiness is not inherent of creation, but comes by God's command, thus Yahweh sanctifies/ sets apart the Sabbath, Israel and the priestly company.

The Hebrew term *bērîṭ*, which has the meaning of "covenant or covenant", was also chosen in the outline of the theme of holiness-sanctification proposed for the research. The term similar to covenant in Greek is *diathēkē*. Between nations the term *bērîṭ* meant treaty/covenant of friendship, between individuals it appears in the form of an agreement/treaty; it also appears in the sense of obligation (vassalage) between the monarch and his servants. Yahweh's covenant illustrates and demands sanctity.

In the third chapter we delved into the meaning of "Holy" and "holiness" not only in the Pentateuch but also in the New Testament view. The act of creation designates Yahweh – the initiator of sanctification – from the very beginning. God decides to make one day of the seven days of creation unique, through blessing and sanctification. The book of Genesis (Genesis 2:1) summarizes God's work during the six days of creation, the creation stage ends, leaving room for another stage in human history, that of procreation. Yahweh consecrates the seventh day to reflect on all his accomplishment – in fact, this cessation of his activity is nothing other than a continuation of his daily reflection (Acts 1:31). All the works of God instill holiness – all His works express perfection. The sanctification of the seventh day during the passage from the book of Genesis where creation takes place, instills the idea of separation. In the endeavor of comprehending the

meaning of the seventh day, the two actions of the divinity - the pronouncing of the blessing and the actual sanctification must be seen as a whole.

The original purpose of the Sabbath was emphasized by Jesus the Savior himself in the Gospel of Mark, namely that "... The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" - Mk 2:27. The succession of the days of creation up to the seventh day anticipates the steps of holiness that man should go through during the six days, so that on the seventh day he may consecrate himself to the sanctification originally decreed. The life of the faithful man is a continuous process of sanctification. All days are special, but the day of the Lord's rest has a special place in that through it man receives rest, blessing and the possibility of sanctification.

The language of holiness is conspicuously absent in the book of Genesis; it occurs only when God sanctifies the Sabbath (Genesis 2:3). No one in the Book of Genesis is called holy or even challenged to be holy. Noah is "righteous" (*šaddîq*) and "blameless" (*tāmîm*), but not "holy" (*qādōōš*) (Fac 6:9). Yahweh calls Abraham to be blameless (*tāmîm* - Fac 17:1), but He never expects him the virtue of holiness by saying "be holy".

Throughout the book of Exodus the word *holy* appears as an attribute of places, objects, days, actions. When it is stated that human beings (Exodus 13:2), garments (Exodus 29:5), objects (Exodus 29:44), festivals (Exodus 12:16) or places (Exodus 3:5) are holy, it means that they are set apart to the divine sphere. In Yahweh's dialogue with Moses two terms appear which directly underline holiness: *mâqôm* and *admat-qōdeš*. The former is a technical term which in Hebrew conveys the meaning of "sanctuary" or "holy place" (Genesis 28:11, 19), while the latter, signifies "holy ground", signaling the idea of sacred space. More literally, the Hebrew phrase *admat-qōdeš* should be rendered as "land of holiness". Sanctification and redemption (*pādâ*) are two themes that are present throughout the books of *the Torah* (Exodus 13:2; Num 3:12-13; 8:17-18; 18:15-18; Deut 15:19) and raise various problems of interpretation. Sanctification or consecration is found in the divine requirement concerning the firstborn of Israel.

The theme of sanctification/consecration is recurring in the book of Exodus in the context of the enactment of the Sabbath as an official holiday as reflected in the giving of the Law of Sinai, the Sabbath thus becoming the only holiday commanded in the Decalogue with roots in the history of the Genesis. The Covenant of Sinai legislated that the seventh day was to be a day of rest consecrated/sanctified to the Lord in which both Israelite and gentile were forbidden physical activity on that particular day. The normative statement "Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it" (*zākōwr 'et- yōwm haššabbāt ləqaddāšōw*) emphasizes that remembrance is not merely a mental act, but entails the physical participation of any person in a ritual appropriate to the commemoration.

The various rites and ceremonies meticulously presented in Leviticus are intended to set the social and moral framework for the life of the Jewish people. From the multitude of sacrifices brought by the people to the tabernacle of the congregation (burnt sacrifice, food offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings, atonement offerings) we conceptualize the idea of ways in which the people could access sanctification. All the sacrifices offered to Yahweh had to respect divine directives.

Priests in Holy Scripture are represented by a separate group of divinely chosen men, whose status is determined by oracular means and divine decree (Num 17). The priestly body had to guard themselves from anything that could defile them; they themselves had to be of irreproachable moral behavior so as not to defile the tabernacle/holy items. The tabernacle of the congregation was defiled if the priestly service was not according to the pattern of the priestly law; the good of the nation also depended on how the law was disseminated to the people by the priests.

The revelation of divine holiness comprises two stages, the first of the OT in which Yahweh revealed his holiness in various circumstances/ways to Israel, and the second of the NT in which holiness is embodied in the person of the Savior Jesus Himself, receiving an absolute dimension; through Christ humanity has received a new eschatological opening of existence, a perspective of resurrection.

Holiness in The New Testament becomes a process of subjective transfiguration of the believer through an personal participation in the life of Jesus Christ. The New Testament terminology suggests the distinction between holiness whose source is God himself and holiness which indicates the character of God's people. In the New Testament, holiness is characterized by specific terminology. The word *ἅγιος* in the Gospels is attributed both to the Savior Jesus Christ and to persons in his entourage (Mk 6:20) and to things (Mt 23:17, 19). The language of holiness does not occur uniformly in the Gospels; in Matthew the conduct of believers is not rendered by "holiness", but a specific Greek term *δικαιοσύνη* - *dikaïosynē* (righteousness) is used.

In the book of Acts there are several occurrences of *ἅγιος* in reference to the Holy Spirit (41 out of 53 occurrences). It is the attribution of the Spirit's holiness that distinguishes the terminology of the New Testament from that of the Old. The Pauline concept abridges the term *holy* as meaning "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph 5:27). Writing to the believers in Corinth, Ap Paul ("To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ") calls them saints. *The* perfect passive participle *hēgiasmenois* - "being sanctified", used by the apostle indicates an action in the past, with Christ Jesus as the agent and with a continuing effect in the present, *hagiois* (*holy*) indicates the following of the process of sanctification. "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." (Heb 12:14) is a calling to holiness and at the same time a warning for the future.

The NT search on holiness ends with the Petrine perspective. Inspired by the Jewish tradition that Peter knew, Peter writes to his addressees, "Be holy, for I am holy", motivating believers to live a life of holiness.

In chapter 4 the subject of holiness is showcased from the rabbinic perspective. The rabbis considered God as the "One and only Holy One" (blessed be He!). The word holiness addressed to the divinity has an exceptional meaning. God remains the One - the only holy One, He is a perfection inaccessible to any human being. The Law in the rabbis' understanding is also a source of holiness. Every new commandment which Yahweh gives to Israel signifies an addition to the holiness of his people. Regardell of how much a Jew may sanctify himself, he will have to be aware that Yahweh's holiness is superior and above the degree of holiness he could attain. In the

face of this objective reality of Yahweh's perfection and holiness the rabbis insist that every Jew must refrain from any activity that might bring prejudice and dishonor to Yahweh. Israel is the guardian of His reputation in the world; any action may honor Him or cause *hil Hashem* (profanation of Yahweh's name)

Chapter 5 illustrates holiness in the patristic literature of Origen and Cyril of Alexandria. In Origen's teaching "being holy" starts from the idea of detachment/separation from the world and "from the brother who walks in disorder and not according to apostolic practices". For Origen, detachment means a particular way of living "in regard to deeds", in other words the power to distinguish yourself from those around you. Like the apostolic teaching, Origen attributes the work of sanctification to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is that sanctifying power "which will be offered to those who have been granted sanctification by grace". The Spirit has a renewing work in the lives of those who obey the call of Christ; he has the purpose of creating himself a new nation and the power to renew the face of the earth; by the gift of the Spirit the believer will "undress himself from the old man together with all his past deeds" and receive the gifts of the new life. Origen reckons that the life of the sanctified will acquire an inestimable value in the face of death; death is nothing but a passing of the faithful, a gateway to the eternity of God; the holiness of the faithful will always encourage them to a supreme sacrifice - that of martyrdom; the common death is of little value - "devoid of piety", while death "for the sake of piety and holiness" grants the faithful a happy eternity with God.

Cyril's teaching on holiness is glimpsed in the way he raises the question in various situations which entail theological clarification; holiness is like a background against which his whole study is based. His exegetical work creates a theological universe with a semanticism extremely difficult to illustrate. The texts of his study are part of various exegetical works in order to capture as faithfully as possible the idea of what for Cyril is resembling holiness. According to his conceptualization, holy works are attributed to holy men and believers by God Himself. St. Cyril considers the work of preaching the Gospel ("the holy ministry of the saving preaching") a holy ministry, holy men like the disciples of Jesus are entrusted with ministries according to their renewed character. The Church is the most suitable place for "holy practices" because "in it the sacrament of Christ is necessarily accomplished". The Church is the place of holy practices, the New Testament legislative framework offerer by God to all believers through Christ (Mt 16:18). Fellowship with the life of holiness means acceptance of the Son of God and his saving work, the Eucharistic framework which makes this possible. The life of holiness is the true life whose end lies in happiness.

In chapter 6 of this thesis I delved into those prescriptions for practicing holiness as they appear in the Holiness Code. The section in Leviticus 17-27 is called the Holiness Code by Scripture scholars because it is distinguished from the rest of the book both in its language and in its specific concerns. In all of these chapters of Leviticus the concern for a holy life of the people occupies a central position, the sacrificial/ritual purity systems mentioned earlier remain in the background.



Sacrifice and blood are elements of sanctification within the Code; they are cornerstones in establishing the human-God relationship in Old Testament iconography. In contrast to other faiths, the Hebrew creed/practice displays another facet of blood as a universal purifying and preserving agent. The seal of the Sinai covenant was exclusively with blood, the blood of animals being considered pure, hence the laws in the prologue of the Holiness Code all converge into one pivot: the ingestion of blood. The prohibition of the consumption of blood was regulated by Yahweh in the noahic covenant (Genesis 9:4), but it is the Levitical law that validates and reinforces the commandment previously enunciated in the book of Genesis.

In contrast to the holiness called-for by Yahweh to His people is the uncleanness/abomination that the people will have to avoid. An abominable act according to Yahwistic law must always be regarded with disgust or hatred. Abomination occurs both among ethnic groups contrasting in diversity, but it also occurs in contrast to Yahweh's requirements for His chosen people Israel. The Hebrew terms describing abomination in the OT are *tô'ēbâ*, *šeqeš* and *pigull*. The most ocurent term of the three is *tô'ēbâ*; the term appears in the Hebrew Bible in 116 occurancies as a noun and in 23 other as a verb - *taab*, *tô'ēbâ* occurs in a variety of contexts ranging from food prohibitions (Deut 14:3), references to idolatrous practices (Deut 12:31; 13,15), but expresses disgust also in magic as a divinatory means of knowing the future (Deut 18,12); *tô'ēbâ* continues with those series of offenses pertaining to sexual immorality (Lev 18,22) and touches towards the end those ethical deviations from the Torah (Deut 25,14-16). The abominable aspect is illustrated in Holy Scripture before Sinai and appears as a result of interactions between various nations (Egyptians-Jews), but also after the stage of revelation the concept appears clearly outlined by specific laws.

The dietary laws laid out in chapter 11 of the book of Leviticus was intended to avoid contaminating the nation with things considered unclean. The dietary laws accomplished/conceived two purposes for Israel. First the dietary laws are related to creation, designating that power over created life remains the attribute and prerogative of the Creator; and the second purpose of these laws denotes separation, basically a unique aspect that will set Israel apart from all the nations of the earth, the goal being that Israel would become a unique inheritance of Yahweh. The Israelites by resisting the eating of unclean food was on the other hand also a protection against the cultic ways of the gentile nations with which it was surrounded. The removal of all that is considered unclean and which would cause Yahweh disgust by consumption denotes holiness.

Departure from the pagan practices of immorality is the first step on the path to holiness for Israel (Lev 18). The Israelite's reverence for the divine is outlined by his obidience for the holy commandments of God's law. Chapter 18 of Leviticus captures those commandments that concern the conjugal life of the individual - as an expression of God's will, of an order that Yahweh the Maker had placed in Eden for the first people specially created and blessed to be fruitful. In the blessing spoken by God in the days of creation is also included the demographic aspect, to our forefathers God spoke the blessing to procreate. Theologians are unanimous in their interpretation of the blessing in primary history: 'the blessing is the power of fertility'. The blessing to procreate

distinguishes the "living creatures" humans and animals, from the elements of the universe: sun, moon, stars. The ability to reproduce is the fundamental definition of what it means to be a 'living creature'.

Any kind of "ritual" or "moral" impurity practiced by Israel from the practices of the neighboring nations constitutes a direct affront to Yahweh's Law. An accumulation of some type of impurity would cause Yahweh to leave His later camp/temple and withdraw His blessings; the worst case scenario, however, for the Israelite nation was the possibility of being poured out (driven out) from their land. Israel would be cast out as worthless if they did not keep the commandments addressed to them. The literal meaning of the Hebrew term *wattāqi* (Lev 18:24) is "to vomit" and exemplifies how Israel would be cast out as a nation from the land Yahweh had prepared for them as their inheritance if they committed those pagan practices.

The (casuistic/apodictic) laws for a life of holiness in the Code (Lev 19) come to clarify the typical framework of communal holiness summarized in Yahweh's call to Israel (v.2). According to Scripture and the whole Jewish/Christian tradition holiness is another attribute of deity, proven by creation, and all that flows from it; God's being is the *raison d'être* for all the laws of purity, ritual and moral. Lev 19:2 summarizes better than any other text the most profound requirement of biblical tradition - holiness. God is the Holy One, demands holiness and also graciously bestows it. Moses was commanded that chap. 19 shall be declared "to all the congregation of the children of Israel." The rabbis are of the opinion that this holiness is bestowed not only on the priests, but also to the Levites and the whole Israelite community. In Leviticus 19, 18 the commandment to love one's neighbor constitutes the most remarkable sequence, the most profound apophthegm ever enunciated in Leviticus; love of neighbor is the epicenter and at the same time the scriptural topos of the Pharisaic doctrine, the commandment expresses the underlying principle of Scripture, the coordinate of the relationship between God and man. Holiness means love of neighbor. Love of neighbor is expressed by the Hebrew vb. *ahab*- "to love". The chapter encompasses religious duties, ethical obligations as well as other duties aimed at establishing a climate of holiness.

Chapter 7 presents God as the one and only spring of holiness. God has neither quantitative nor qualitative comparative terms by which to be evaluated; it would be sheer foolishness for man to find His equal in the universe because He is distinguished from all that is common by His transcendence and immanence. The proximity of the Lord to man through the revelation of His holiness enables him to sanctify himself; basically, a right of sanctification is conferred upon him, a *grant* for becoming in conformity with Him. When we speak of God as the one source of holiness, we are in fact speaking of the three persons of the God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the content of the dogma of the Holy Trinity we learn that God is one in being and three in Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; this great truth has a mystical profundity without equal and a theological weight impossible to quantify. The OT Scriptures reveal to us predominantly the Father, but it is clear from the Old Testament texts that the Holy Spirit was with the Father at creation and with them was the great mystery (Col 1:26) foretold at the Creation (Genesis 3:15) and revealed "in the last days" - the promised Son (In 1:10; Rom 11:36). If the Father is "the Holy

One of Israel" (*kī'ēlōhīm qədōšīm hū*) the one who comes from the Father will have the same *ousia* (οὐσία). The Holy Spirit came to continue the work of the Father that was accomplished in his Son Jesus Christ. The triune perichoresis expresses unity as well as absolute holiness.

Another aspect highlighted in chapter 7 is to outline holiness from the perspective of biblical history. To place holiness in the three major units of time (past, present and future) presupposes having a partial picture of the theme in each biblical epoch. The first stage is specific to Abraham as the first representative of the future Israelite nation; Abraham's calling implies the idea of separation as the first aspect; being followed by another stage of sanctification which opens in the context of the Sinaitic revelation, here sanctification is enunciated as a commandment to be fulfilled. Israel is commanded to sanctify itself, and the way in which sanctification is to be fulfilled is specified. The Law is of divine origin, and its rigorous fulfillment granted to the individual at that time the state of holiness.

The teaching on holiness and sanctification of the Christian community in the first century has as its point of reference the Old Testament texts; the early Christians considered the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) as the only book whose authority they fully assumed, the prophetic dimension of the OT occupied a special place. Holiness and sanctification remain topical themes in Gospel teaching. The coming of the Savior Christ into the world marks another stage of divine revelation, Christ being the fulfiller of the Law in the deepest sense. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Savior spoke of the perfection (τέλειός) that the Father God has; the perfection that can be assimilated by all who follow him. The Son's testimony about the Father does not complete the picture of the Father but is a confirmation of what He is.

Sanctification is also the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who consecrates man in his kingly dignity, guiding him to his original vocation, to obey the Father. The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost is the proof of the Son's mediation before the Father, it is conditioned by the return of the Son to the Father (In 16:7). Pentecost appears as the ultimate goal of the divine plan on earth. Those who partake of the Spirit partake of his holiness, enjoy his grace as much as their earthly nature is able to, not as much as he could give them. For the attainment of the unification between the Holy Spirit and man, he must distance himself from the corruption that has contaminated him. In order for the Holy Spirit to work the holiness, the man has to forsake his sinful life and cleave to the Lord, so he may be one spirit with him.

Holiness is the inherent characteristic of divinity which He also shares with man. Holiness involves two hypostases under the aspect of *grantness* and the effect of *becoming*. The notion of *Grantness* expounds the idea that in the nature of created man there is the potential of sanctification; it is presupposed by the concept of likeness - *demut* (ebr.). Becoming implies the human side; fallen man rediscovers the possibility of sanctification through the adhesion of himself to Yahweh and in the OT it is expressed by the concepts enunciated in the Torah; Berith; the Holiness Code.

The originality of the thesis lies in the coagulation of ideas that make up the subject of the theme of "holiness and sanctification" starting from the basic biblical text of the Torah (Leviticus) and the search for their valences throughout the Old Testament corpus. The theme of

holiness/holiness varies with the stages of revelation; each historical stage possesses a certain gradient of complementarity.

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