

## Purity System

The central social structure of the society was organized with purity as the core value. Purity systems generate a class of untouchables and outcasts. Purity was the core value structuring the society:

- Purity was not an individual virtue
- Purity was political
- It was the ideology of the temple elites
- The Jerusalem temple was geographically and symbolically the center of the purity system

In general the pure/impure or clean/unclean social structure got attached to other central contrasts:

Pure	Impure
clean	unclean
righteous	outcasts, sinners (sin is a matter of being unclean, not behavior)
male (generally but not automatically pure)	female (automatically impure)
rich (generally but not automatically pure)	poor (conventional wisdom said the poor hadn't lived right)
Jew (generally but not automatically pure)	gentile (impure by definition)
well/healthy/whole	ill/maimed/diseased (social meaning of being impure)
agricultural produce on which taxes were paid	agricultural produce on which taxes were not paid (declared unclean, boycotted by the righteous)

*The purity system creates a society with very sharp social boundaries.*

The **temple** elites were also the **economic** elites and the **purity** elites.