



## Report

# Water - its significance in science, in nature and culture, in world religions and in the universe

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**9 . Water in  
World Religions ,  
in Psychology  
and in  
Philosophy**

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## 9.1 Water in World – Religions : General

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### Water in World Religions : Examples

In all world religions , water is of central importance :

- In all world religions , water is **ambivalent** , i.e. it is a symbol for both birth and death .

- Water is associated with purification and spritual force .

- Living water is often associated with running water

- John the Babtist baptizes Jesus in the Jordan

- Holy water is a sign of blessing and is associated with life and purification

- The Flood is the punishment of God for the sins of men

- Hinduism : Purification by a bath in the holy water of the Ganges

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**Water in the five world religions :**

**Judaism , Christianity , Islam ;  
Buddhism and Hinduism**

**In all five world religions , water is of central importance .**

The main reasons are :

• Without water there is no life

• Water possesses a purifying force

• In every religion , water is a sign for both , birth and death .

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**Significance of Water in World Religions**

Because of its natural qualities , water is of high significance in all world religions : it is often associated as being the residence of gods , ghosts and other powers ; it is often even admired as a holy force .

In many religious and mythological narrations about the genesis of world , water symbolizes the state of creation or even the basic source for all beings .

The world's origin is the Sea , which creates the other cosmological elements . As a source of all life , water is considered to constitute a life - generating principle of order .

On the other hand , water is considered to be a power of destructive chaos , which destroys the world catastrophically as the flood , and threatens life . Seas and oceans are viewed as menacing homesteads of the evil .

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## 9.2 Water in Judaism

Ritual purification with vivid water, i.e.  
with flowing water

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Michelangelo: The Creation of  
the Sun and the Moon

402

The first book of Moses , called

## GENESIS



**1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth .



**2** Now the earth was formless and empty , darkness was over the surface of the deep , and the Spirit of God was hovering over the **waters** .

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## GENESIS

**6** And God said , Let there be a firmament in the midst of the **waters** , and let it divide the **waters** from the **waters** .

**7** And God made the firmament , and divided the **waters** which were under the firmament from the **waters** which were above the firmament : and it was so .

**9** And God said , Let the **waters** under the heaven be gathered together unto one place , and let the dry land appear : and it was so .

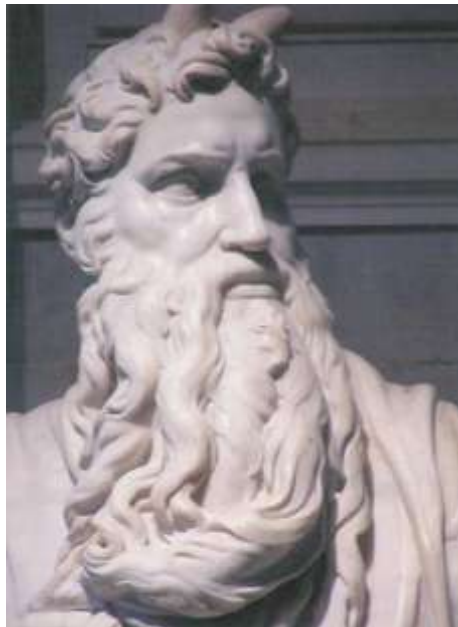
**10** And God called the dry land Earth ; and the gathering together of the **waters** called he **Seas** : And God saw that it was good .

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Moses in the basket at the shore of the Nile

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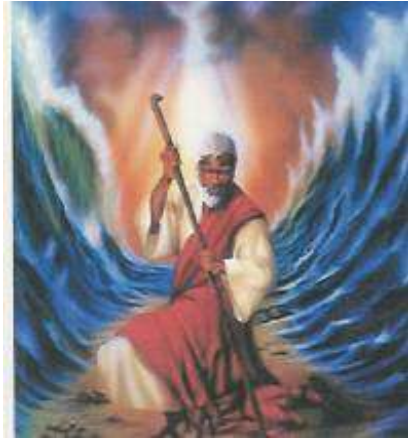


Michelangelo's Moses

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During the escape of the Israeli from the Egyptians



Moses divides the Red Sea

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The Flood



“The Flood“ from Buanarrotti Michelangelo (1475 - 1564)  
In the background is Noah’s ark , the only ship that would survive the Flood

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**“The Flood” : Section from the painting of Michelangelo**

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**The Flood  
Leonardo Da Vinci**

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## Noah's Flood and Reality

Did a great flood once surge into the Black Sea ,  
forming the basis of a Biblical tale ?

Mark Siddall (University of Bern , Switzerland)  
investigates a computer model  
that has added weight to the idea .

Nature , Vol . 430 , 12 August 2004 , p . 718

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„Oceanographers must have a natural interest  
in extreme events“

If we can't resolve the occurrence of such a huge flood ,  
then what can we resolve ?

Mark Siddhal

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See also : W . Ryan and W . Pitman :  
„Noah's Flood : The New Scientific Discoveries  
about the Event that Changed History“

(Simon and Schuster , New York 2000)

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For purification , the **Mikvah** , a font filled with water , is important .  
The water must be composed at least partly of rain water and  
spring water . The latter originates from heaven and represents the  
relation to the primary flood . In the Mikvah , people take an  
immersion bath in order to regain the original spiritual purity .

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During the immersion bath a spiritual force is exchanged

### 9.3 Water in Christianity

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#### Significance of Water - 1

In Jewish and Christian religion **water is a symbol** of the origin of creation. Water is a hierophany (i.e. a physical manifestation of the holy or sacred). It can represent a creative force of life or a destructive force of death.

- The fountains in the desert are similar to the sources in the mountains: a reason of pleasure of the nomads.
- The narration of the „Flood“ (1. Mose 6 ff.) will remain a symbol of destruction as well as of salvation.

Pontius Pilatus' manual ablutions during the trial against Jesus (Math. 27, 24) is of Jewish origin. With his ceremonial protest of hand washing, Pilatus rejects any responsibility for the consequences.

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## Significance of Water - 2

Jesus Christ considered **Water as the Symbol for eternal life** .

Jesus proceeds to say :

“Unless one is born of water and the Spirit , you cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

John 3 : 1 - 13

At the Jacob’s well , Jesus answered to the Samaritan woman :

“Whosoever drinking of this water (from Jacob’s well) shall thirst again ; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life .“

(John 4 , 13 , 14 )

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## John the Baptist



When he was 30 years old , he went into the desert , to Jerusalem , and to the Jordan and declared the arrival of the Messiah .

Many people admired him , and many let have been baptized from him ; Jesus also was baptized from him .

John the Baptist says :

“ Behold the Lamb of God (Jesus) , which takes away the sin of the world .“ .

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**John the Baptist baptizes Jesus**



**John the Baptist baptizes Jesus in the water of the Jordan .  
Two angels are carrying the robe of the Messiah .**



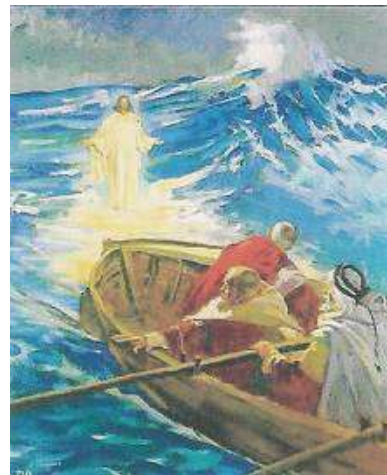
**The Baptism of Jesus  
Fresco de  
Giotto di Bondono  
(1267 - 1337)**

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**Jesus walking on the Sea and the rescuer in storm at high Sea**



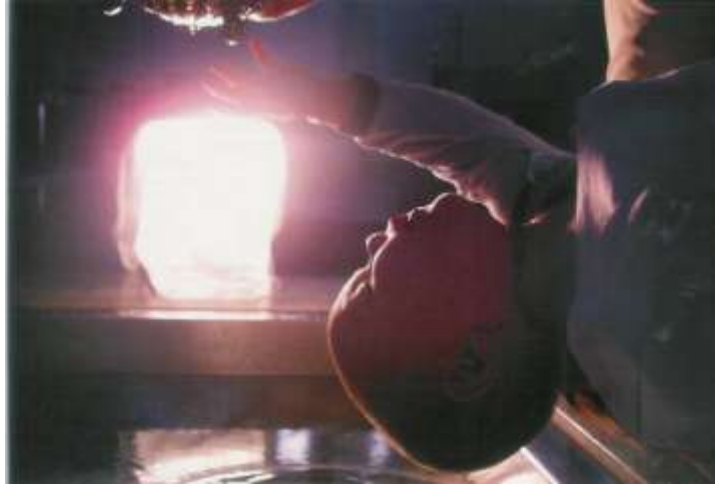
**The physical laws are abolished and replaced by the divine laws !**



**Jesus , the rescuer in storm at high Sea !**

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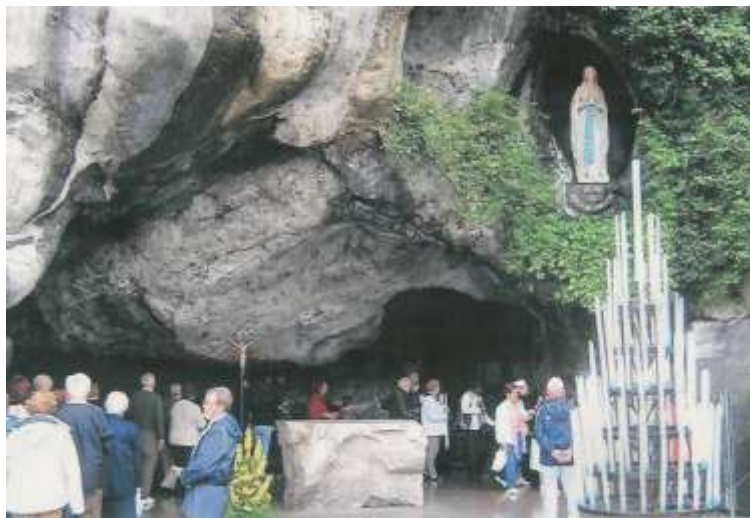
### Baptism of a baby



After the baptism of a baby : his head is still held over the holy water font while his hands are directed against the future life .

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### The Water Source of Lourdes



The Grotto of Massabielle is a place of pilgrimage in Lourdes (France) . For Bernadette Soubirous it was the place of apparition of the Blessed Virgin . With here help Bernadette discovered a water source . Today , the water of this source is believed to possess a strong healing force .

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**Jesus and the Samaritan at the Fountain of Jacob**



Angelika Kauffmann (1741 - 1807)

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**From „The Revelation“ of St. John : 22 , 1 - 2**

And he (one of the seven angels) shewed me a pure river of water of life , clear and as crystal , proceeding out of the throne of god and of Lamb .

In his midst of the street of it , and on either side of the river , was there the tree of life , which bare twelve manner of fruits , and yielded her fruit every month : and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations .

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„Be praised , my Lord ,  
through Sister Water ;  
She is very useful ,  
and precious , and pure .“

From : „The Canticle of the Sun“ ,  
Francis of Assisi

## **9.4 Water in Islam**

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### **Significance of Water**

**Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation), before we clove them asunder? We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?**

**“The Holy Qur’An”  
Surah 21 : Al – Ambija 30 (The Profets)**

**In Islam , water is most important for purification .  
Moslem should be ritually pure , before they are  
approaching God in prayer .**

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### **Ritual washing of hands**



**In Islam , washing one's hands frees oneself from the sins which have been committed by hands .**

**The ritual washing must be performed in running and pure water .**

**Running water signifies vivid water . The pure river carries the sins and dirt away .**

## 9.5 Water in Buddhism

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### Water is a symbol for Life

In Buddhism , water symbolizes life , the purest form of food , and water is the particular element which in nature carries everything together .

Water symbolizes purity , clarity and calmness , and reminds us to cleanse our minds and attain the state of purity .

Water is used to clean away dirt . When everyone sees you (the water) , they are happy and joyful . This is because they are reminded that they can wash away the filth of their minds . They should wash away selfish and unkind thoughts and be clean and pure like you .

“It is as with Ice and Water :  
Without Water there is no Ice ...”

(Hakuins song of meditation)

Water is also most important for funerals (see Reference R.9.5.2)

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**Healing power of Water**



To a weak or indispositioned sick person , water is poored over his head .

The water then causes an energetical purification which improves the illness rapidly .

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**Religious Procession  
under a waterfall  
Japan , 1985**



A Shingon Buddhist practitioner meditates under frigid waterfalls at the Oiwasan Nissekiji Temple in Toyama, Japan. In Shingon, a school of Japanese esoteric Buddhism, waterfall mediation , or „takigyō“, is used to focus the mind and increase self-awareness .

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### Water as Sacrifice to the Gods



Water sustains and makes possible new life .

Since water is given to us and is of such prime importance , it must also be returned .

For this reason it is sacrificed the Gods in beautifully shaped bowls as a sign of admiration , of deep respect and of gratitude .

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## **9.6 Water in Hinduism**

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### **Water as an original force**

**Water is considered to be an original force ; it is the only element which is not assigned to a divinity .**

**The water of the Ganges is holy because its origin is the Himalaya , the highest known source of all , and falls to the valley .**

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### Purification in the Ganges - 1



The purification in the Ganges is a meditation which helps to understand the greatness of god .

A bath in the Ganges can be considered as a search to himself .

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### Purification in the Ganges - 2



Hindu are purifying themselves in the holy river Ganges in order to gain freedom from their sins .

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### Purification in the Ganges - 3



Bath in the  
Ganges

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### Water as a symbol for the circle of Life



Water is offered God as a gift  
before washing themselves .

By this symbol of sacrifice ,  
the gift of God is returned to  
the creator .

Water symbolizes the circle of  
life : everything has its origin  
from water and is created from  
water . After death , the ash is  
retuned into the holy river .

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## 9.7 Water in Psychology and in Philosophy

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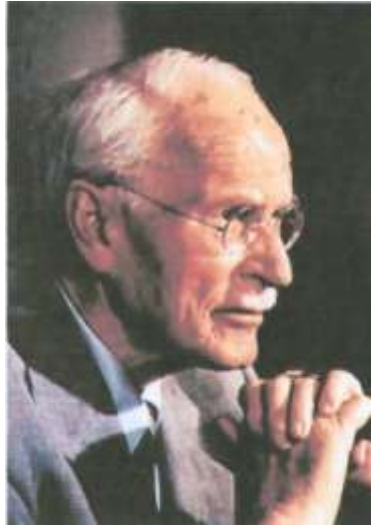
### Water in Psychology

- Water is an **archetype** i.e. a source image of the soul or of the unconscious layers of personality, which are inhabited by mysterious beings (see Carl Gustav Jung, p. 441)

- Water is the basic symbol of all unconscious energy in dreams :
  - positive : for standing and flowing waters :  
pools , lakes , Seas , streams , streams and rivers
  - negative : riptides , torrents , flood

- On the one hand , water is the most well-known life symbol , and on the other hand , water is also a symbol for death .  
Hence , the symbol water is **ambivalent** .

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**Carl Gustav Jung (1875 – 1961)**

**Water is an Archetype :**

Water is a symbol of life, cleansing, and rebirth. It is a strong life force, and is often depicted as a living, reasoning force.

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**Water and greek philosophy**



**Thales of Miletus , 600 BC.**

“The principle of all things is water.”

“Everything is made of water, and everything returns to water.”

Thales of Miletus thought that water is the principle basic substance of all existing things and that everything is imbued by the spirit of the Gods, and therefore, to everything is given a soul to.

“Spirit and matter are same”.

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**Appendix – Chapter 9**

9-A-0



**The washing of the feet of Jesus by Maria Magdalena**

**Johann Christof Haas (1753 – 1829)**

9-A-3-1

The Babtism



Baptism Sainte – Chapelle  
Last quarter of the 12th century  
Scene of baptism. Stained glass, Paris

9-A-3-2



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R-9-0

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- R.9.1.2 Hammond Atlas of World Religions  
by Hammond (Author , Editor) and Stuart Murray (Author)
- R.9.1.3 Atlas of World Religions  
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## 9.2 Water in Judaism

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- R.9.2.3 p. 404 : Water in Genesis\_2 : Holy Byble : King James Version
- R.9.2.3a The Bible – GENESIS : The Creation and the Flood (DVD)
- The Genesis story begins with the creation of Man and Woman, the sin committed by Adam and Eve, and the temptation by the snake, which led to their banishment from Paradise. The story continues with the first crime committed by mankind, Cain's murder of his brother, the condemnation of God, mankind's corruption and evil, and God's regret from having created the Earth. The choice of Noah, a just and upright man, to build the Ark, the flood and its clearing the way for a new mankind, the pact of the eternal Covenant between God and all living beings, are told through the clear and simple words of an old named shepherd.
- R.9.2.4 p. 405 : Moses\_in\_the\_Basket : A Princess finds a Basket  
The Bible story of baby Moses by Linda Sue Pochedzay Edwards  
[www.childschapel.org/biblestories/babymoses.html](http://www.childschapel.org/biblestories/babymoses.html)
- R.9.2.4a According to the Bible : EXODUS : Chapter 2 :
- And there went a man of the house (a slave) of Levi, and took wife a daughter of Levi. And the women conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch (to form a basket) and put the child therein and she laid it in the flags by the river's (the Nil's) spring. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side: and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and behold, the baby wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her. Take the child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the women took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son, And she called his name Moses: and she said, because I drew him out of the water.

### R-9-2

- R.9.2.5 p. 406 : Michelangelo's Moses in Church San Pietro in Rom
- R.9.2.6 p. 407 : Crossing the Red Sea of the Israeli is the Biblical account of the crossing the Red Sea by Moses and the Israelites in their flight from the pursuing Egyptian army and is part of the Exodus narrative on the journey out of Egypt, found in the Book of Exodus, Chapter 13: 17 to 15: 21.  
According to the Book of Exodus, God parts the Red Sea for the safe passage of the Israelites, after which the pursuing Egyptians army is drowned when the waters return. At the end of these events, the Israelites sing the song of the Sea to celebrate their deliverance.
- R.9.2.7 p. 408 : „The Flood“ (Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475 – 1564), painted at 1512).  
The actual details of the Flood are given in Chapters 7 and 8 of Genesis:  
„The Flood continued forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark (of Noah), and it rose high above the earth. ... And the waters prevailed so mightily upon the Earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; the waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits (about 22 feet) deep.“  
„And all flesh died that moved upon the Earth, birds, cattle, beasts, all swarming creature that swarm upon the Earth, and every man; everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. .... Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark. And waters prevailed upon the Earth a hundred and fifty days.
- R.9.2.8 p. 409 : „The Flood“: Detail of the left hand side of p. 408
- R.9.2.9 p. 410 : „The Flood“ of Leonardo Da Vinci (1452 – 1519)  
In 1513 Leonardo Da Vinci was seriously sick - and threatened by mortal agony - created „The Flood“ and over visions of the end of the world.
- R.9.2.10 p. 411 : The flood and reality;  
see also: Mark Siddhal: Nature **430**, 12 August 2004, p. 718 - 719
- R.9.2.11 p. 412 : The purification : „Mikveh“  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikvah>
- R.9.2.12 p. 413 : Spiritual immersion bath in the river  
see in Reference R.9.1.5, p. 33

### R-9-3

### 9.3 Water in Christianity

- R.9.3.1 p. 415 / 416 : Christian Symbols and their Meanings – eBook  
[www.symbols.net/christian/](http://www.symbols.net/christian/)
- R.9.3.2 p. 415 / 416 : Church Symbols – What Do They Really Mean ?  
Rita Green  
[www.epworthsteeble.org/symbols.htm](http://www.epworthsteeble.org/symbols.htm)
- R.9.3.3a p. 415 / 416 : Rudolf Koch : Christian Symbols  
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- R.9.3.6 p. 419 : Jesus walking upon the Lake and rescuer at high Sea  
[http://www.daily-word-of-life.com/DailyWord/Jesus\\_Walking\\_Water1.jpg](http://www.daily-word-of-life.com/DailyWord/Jesus_Walking_Water1.jpg)  
Jesus Walks on Sea : Matt . 14 , Mark 6 , Luke 22  
[virtualreligion.net/primer/Repute/sea-walk.html](http://virtualreligion.net/primer/Repute/sea-walk.html)  
Parallel Texts in Mathew , Mark and Luke (synoptic : presenting or taking the same point of view )

R-9-4

- R.9.3.7 A meditation about Petrus (and Jesus) walking upon the Sea  
(Eine Meditation zum Seewandel des Petrus)  
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<http://www2.ev-theol.uni-bonn.de/relpaed/wunder/mediatseew.html>
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- R.9.3.9 Eugen Drewermann : Taten der Liebe . Meditationen über die Wunder Jesu  
„Meditations about the miracles of Jesus“ , Freiburg 1995  
<http://www2.ev-theol.uni-bonn.de/replaced/wunder/mediatseew.html>
- R.9.3.10 p. 420 : After the baptism of a baby  
Ref . R.9.1.5 , p. 15
- R.9.3.11 p. 421 : Lourdes : A major place of Christian pilgrimage and of alleged miraculous healings .  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lourdes>
- R.9.3.12 p. 422 : Jesus and the Samaritan at the Fountain (see also p. 416)  
Painting from Angelika Kaufmann (1741 – 1807)  
Christ said to the samaritan : „If you knew the gift of God , and who it is that says to you ,  
Give me to drink ; you would have asked of him , and he would give you living water (4:10)“  
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- R.9.3.13 p. 423 : Holy Bible  
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R-9-5

#### 9.4 Water in Islam

- R.9.4.1 In Islam water is important for cleansing and purifying. Muslims must be ritually pure before approaching God in prayer. Some mosques (Moscheen) have a courtyard (enclosed area), often a space enclosed by a building that is open to sky) with a pool of clear water in the centre, but in most mosques the ablutions (Waschungen) are found outside the walls. Fountains symbolising purity are also sometimes found in mosques. In Islam purity (called tahara) is required before carrying out religious duties, especially salat (worship: the adoring acknowledgment of all that lies beyond us - the glory that fills heaven and earth).

There are three kinds of ablutions: the most important is ghusl (an Arabic term referring to the major ablution (ritual washing) requested in Islam for various rituals and prayers), is the washing of the whole body in pure water, after declaring the intention to do so. Muslims are obliged to perform ghusl after sex which incurs a state of major ritual impurity. Ghusl is also recommended before the Friday prayer, the two main feasts, and before touching the Koran. Ghusl must be done for the dead before they are buried -

- R.9.4.2 p. 427: Ritual washing of one's hands : Ref: R.9.1.5: p. 44

#### 9.5 Water in Buddhism

- R.9.5.1 To „Water in Buddhism“ see:  
Zen – Mind – Beginner's Mind  
Shunryu Suzuki  
in: Nirvana; The Water fall (Der Wasserfall)  
[www.torrentreactor.net/torrents/.../Zen-Mind-Beginners-Mind-66%2F24](http://www.torrentreactor.net/torrents/.../Zen-Mind-Beginners-Mind-66%2F24)

- R.9.5.2 p. 429: For Buddhists, symbolism and ritual are less important because they seek spiritual enlightenment that comes from seeing the reality of unreality. Bodhidharma, thought to be the first Zen Buddhist said this in the 5th Century CE.

#### R-9-6

Nethertheless, water is a symbol for life, for the purest form of food, for purity, clarity and calmness.

In Buddhism, Water also features in funerals where it is poured into a bowl placed before the monks and the dead body. As it fills and pours over the edge, the monks recite:

„As the rains fill the rivers and overflow into the ocean, so likewise may what is given here reach the departed“.

- R.9.5.3 p. 430: Ref. R.9.1.5, p. 55; Water is poured over the head of a sick person
- R.9.5.4 p. 431 a: Referenz R.9.1.8. p. 28: Religiöse Prozession unter einem Wasserstrahl in Japan, 1985  
p. 431 b: Meditation unter Wasserfall:  
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/healthyliving/gallery/japan/photo7.html>
- R.9.5.5 p. 432: Water sustains and makes possible new life.  
Ref. R.9.1.5: p. 59

#### 9.6 Water in Hinduism

- R.9.6.1 p. 434: Water is imbued with powers of spiritual purification for Hindus, for whom morning cleansing is an everyday obligation. All temples are located near a water source, and followers must bathe before entering the temple. Many pilgrimage sites are found on river banks; sites where two, or even three, rivers converge are considered particularly sacred.

There are seven sacred rivers: The Ganges, and the Godavari, Kaveri, Narmada, Sarashvati, Sindhu and Yamuna Rivers. According to Hindu beliefs, those who bath in the Ganges or who leave part of themselves (hair, bones of the dead) on the left bank of the river will reach Svarga, the paradise of Indra, storm god.

Funeral rites are always held near rivers; the son of the deceased pours water on the burning funeral pyre so that the soul cannot escape and return to Earth as a ghost.... The ashes are collected three days after cremation, and several days later, are thrown into a holy river

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- R.9.6.2 p . 435 : Purification in the Ganges  
Ref . R.9.1.5 : p . 68
- R.9.6.3 pp 436, 437 : Purification in the Ganges ; Fotos selected by P . Brüesch
- R.9.6.4 p . 438 : Water is a gift which is returned to God  
Ref . R.9.1.5 , p . 77

### 9.7 Water in Psychology and in Philosophy

- R.9.7.1 p . 441 : Carl Gustav Jung : „The Collective Unconscious“  
Photo of C.G. Jung from Internet under „Carl Gustav Jung“ : „Pictures“
- R.9.7.2 According to C.G. Jung , Water is the most well – known symbol for the collective unconscious . The descent into the depth seems always to precede the ascent . In Psychologically , water is therefore a symbol for spirit which became unconscious .
- R.9.7.3 p . 442 : Thales of Miletus  
<http://did.mat.uni-bayreuth.de/~wn/thalesmensch.html>  
It is said that Thales of Miletos , one of the seven wise men , was the first to undertake the study of physical philosophy . He said that the beginning (the first principle) and the end of all things is water .
- R.9.7.4 H<sub>2</sub>O - THE MYSTERY , ART , AND SCIENCE OF WATER  
Chris Witcombe and Sang Hwang  
Sweet Briar College  
<http://witcombe.sbc.edu/water/>

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