

Leviticus Bible Study #13

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

Leviticus 11:1-47

1 And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, **2** “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, These are the living things that you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth. **3** Whatever parts the hoof and is cloven-footed and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat. **4** Nevertheless, among those that chew the cud or part the hoof, you shall not eat these: The camel, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. **5** And the rock badger, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. **6** And the hare, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. **7** And the pig, because it parts the hoof and is cloven-footed but does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. **8** You shall not eat any of their flesh, and you shall not touch their carcasses; they are unclean to you.

9 “These you may eat, of all that are in the waters. Everything in the waters that has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers, you may eat. **10** But anything in the seas or the rivers that does not have fins and scales, of the swarming creatures in the waters and of the living creatures that are in the waters, is detestable to you. **11** You shall regard them as detestable; you shall not eat any of their flesh, and you shall detest their carcasses. **12** Everything in the waters that does not have fins and scales is detestable to you.

13 “And these you shall detest among the birds; they shall not be eaten; they are detestable: the eagle, the bearded vulture, the black vulture, **14** the kite, the falcon of any kind, **15** every raven of any kind, **16** the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind, **17** the little owl, the cormorant, the short-eared owl, **18** the barn owl, the tawny owl, the carrion vulture, **19** the stork, the heron of any kind, the hoopoe, and the bat.

20 “All winged insects that go on all fours are detestable to you. **21** Yet among the winged insects that go on all fours you may eat those that have jointed legs above their feet, with which to hop on the ground. **22** Of them you may eat: the locust of any kind, the bald locust of any kind, the cricket of any kind, and the grasshopper of any kind. **23** But all other winged insects that have four feet are detestable to you.

24 “And by these you shall become unclean. Whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening, **25** and whoever carries any part of their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. **26** Every animal that parts the hoof but is not cloven-footed or does not chew the cud is unclean to you. Everyone who touches them shall be unclean. **27** And all that walk on their paws, among the animals that go on all fours, are unclean to you. Whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening, **28** and he who carries their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening; they are unclean to you.

29 “And these are unclean to you among the swarming things that swarm on the ground: the mole rat, the mouse, the great lizard of any kind, **30** the gecko, the monitor lizard, the lizard, the sand lizard, and the chameleon. **31** These are unclean to you among all that swarm. Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until the evening. **32** And anything on which any of them falls when they are dead shall be unclean, whether it is an article of wood or a garment or a skin or a sack, any article that is used for any purpose. It must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the evening; then it shall be clean. **33** And if any of them falls into any earthenware vessel, all that is in it shall be unclean, and you shall break it. **34** Any food in it that could be eaten, on which water comes, shall be unclean. And all drink that could be drunk from every such vessel shall be unclean. **35** And everything on which any

part of their carcass falls shall be unclean. Whether oven or stove, it shall be broken in pieces. They are unclean and shall remain unclean for you. **36** Nevertheless, a spring or a cistern holding water shall be clean, but whoever touches a carcass in them shall be unclean. **37** And if any part of their carcass falls upon any seed grain that is to be sown, it is clean, **38** but if water is put on the seed and any part of their carcass falls on it, it is unclean to you.

39 “And if any animal which you may eat dies, whoever touches its carcass shall be unclean until the evening, **40** and whoever eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. And whoever carries the carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening.

41 “Every swarming thing that swarms on the ground is detestable; it shall not be eaten. **42** Whatever goes on its belly, and whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet, any swarming thing that swarms on the ground, you shall not eat, for they are detestable. **43** You shall not make yourselves detestable with any swarming thing that swarms, and you shall not defile yourselves with them, and become unclean through them. **44** For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. **45** For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.”

46 This is the law about beast and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms on the ground, **47** to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten.

Introduction

Here our Lord gives dietary restrictions for the Israelites to follow, what they can and cannot eat. He addresses Moses and Aaron together, as Aaron has been charged with educating the people: he and his sons are expected to instruct and catechize Israel so as to perfect their living before our Lord. This begins with food just as Leviticus itself began with the sacrificial system. The priests must eat and so shall the people; as the priesthood eats holy food, the people must also have a diet that is set apart in some sense.

The dietary regulations have caused some debate. Various thinkers have posited that these rules provide a healthier diet, as the prohibited animals include disease-ridden creatures like vultures and dung beetles.¹ Others have claimed that the food laws were intended to mark Israel as *distinct* from their pagan neighbors.² The latter is more accurate, as the intended distinction between Israelites and Gentiles is plain from this chapter's command to be holy (and therefore *separate*).³ At the same time, God did not command these differences for differences' sake, as though accidents in description were sufficient. To the contrary, the unique diet had a *point*, a message preserved by a lifestyle in line with the principle of *Shalom*. Shalom is not just peace but wholeness as well. When a place is sacred to God, the intent is for things to be the way they ought to be: no conflict, disease, oppression, or death. Though the Israelites lived under the same curses as everyone else (death, pain in childbearing, toil),⁴ the way they lived was intended to *show* the other nations that worshiping the true God and living righteously resulted in greater outcomes for everyone involved, a kind of mitigation for the curse on creation.

1 One notable proponent of the “hygienic” view is theonomist R.J. Rushdoony:

<https://www.thechristianphilosophyoffood.com/2012/12/rushdoony-on-dietary-laws.html>

2 This is the standard, majority view. Popular “Bible Questions” websites forward this view flatly and plainly:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-foods.html>

3 The command is revisited more than once. Leviticus 19:2, 20:24

4 These are of course the curses on mankind from Genesis 3.

Vs.1-12

1 And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, **2** “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, These are the living things that you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth. **3** Whatever parts the hoof and is cloven-footed and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat. **4** Nevertheless, among those that chew the cud or part the hoof, you shall not eat these: The camel, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. **5** And the rock badger, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. **6** And the hare, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. **7** And the pig, because it parts the hoof and is cloven-footed but does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. **8** You shall not eat any of their flesh, and you shall not touch their carcasses; they are unclean to you.

When it comes to eating the meat of mammals, the Israelites find their choices limited to that which would appear on the altar for sacrifice. It is no coincidence that the chapters concerning animal sacrifice include goats, rams, and bulls: by commanding Israel to only eat those mammals which chew the cud and have cloven hoofs, they express communion with the God who consumes the same animals on the altar. While God is not *actually* eating the animal sacrifices,⁵ it illustrates a kind of relational connection between our Lord and the Old Covenant people, as if He were to say “you eat what I eat.”

An animal that “chews the cud” is a *ruminant* eater. The plant matter they eat goes to a special organ to ferment, from which they regurgitate to re-chew and absorb more nutrients. Since most ruminants have hoofs, the hoof requirement helps to identify such animals as safe for consumption. As they are herbivores whose digestive system maximizes the nutrition of their own food, ruminant animals like cows and goats call back to the Edenic state, when Adam was capable of living on fruits and vegetables alone.⁶ As Eden was briefly the epitome of *Shalom*, such animals are prized for being able to live this way.

The stipulations are strongly stated, allowing for no confusion nor half-measures. The requirement for a full split to the hoof prevents camels from being legitimate meat livestock. Pigs, which have only one stomach, do not chew the cud as they are omnivorous; this takes away from the purity of the animal. While hares and hyraxes do not chew the cud in the same fashion as cows, their distinctive digestive practices “count” in the eyes of the Law but their unhoofed paws make them prohibited. All this is to say, the requirements force the Israelites to pay attention to what they are slaughtering so they may be more diligent to obey the Law.

Vs.9-23

9 “These you may eat, of all that are in the waters. Everything in the waters that has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers, you may eat. **10** But anything in the seas or the rivers that does not have fins and scales, of the swarming creatures in the waters and of the living creatures that are in the waters, is detestable to you. **11** You shall regard them as detestable; you shall not eat any of their flesh, and you shall detest their carcasses. **12** Everything in the waters that does not have fins and scales is detestable to you.

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All fish are permitted for consumption but not all aquatic life. The Israelites are commanded to see amphibians, mollusks and crustaceans as detestable, most likely on account of their scavenging

⁵ Psalm 50:12-15

⁶ Genesis 1:29

living. Such creatures do not, in the mind of an ancient Israelite, truly have *meat* on their bodies so much as they have collected detritus, sediment, mucus, and shells. A fish however has an actual portion of meat to its body: even if one of them might have a “bottom feeder” diet, they still produce the plenty that is proper to right eating and a life of *shalom*.

Regarding fowl however, diet is a larger factor than what is seen with fish. All birds that eat other living things and carrion are prohibited, including the omnivorous ostriches and sea gulls. Bats are included, as it is a list of flying creatures, not specific to birds themselves. This effectively restricts eating fowl to those who eat insects and plants, giving them a similar *clean* quality to cud-chewing mammals and meat-bearing fish, while also sharing characteristics with the birds sacrificed on the altar. The only insects permitted are those who eat plants exclusively as well. With the exception of fish, all of the permitted food animals are herbivores: if the Israelites are to embody *Shalom* to their neighbors, then the animals they dine on must be those which live close to an Edenic state.

Vs.24-38

24 “And by these you shall become unclean. Whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening, **25** and whoever carries any part of their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. **26** Every animal that parts the hoof but is not cloven-footed or does not chew the cud is unclean to you. Everyone who touches them shall be unclean. **27** And all that walk on their paws, among the animals that go on all fours, are unclean to you. Whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening, **28** and he who carries their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening; they are unclean to you.

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“Unclean” does not just mean unsanitary. Someone who is unclean has participated, whether knowingly or not, in the detritus of the fallen world around them. If there wasn't a fall, there would be no need of scavengers or carrion feeders, creatures whose very existence reminds us of decay and death. The Israelite by contrast must stand for life, detesting such reminders. As the New Testament will explain, death is an enemy to be defeated, meaning it was not even intended to be a feature of creation:⁷ the current manifestation of the created order reflect adaptations that never should have happened.

To *eat*, let alone to touch these animals then, is to present as someone who accepts and promotes these dour changes to creation. St. Paul explains that to eat is to proclaim,⁸ and the proclamation of ancient Israel was a fellowship with God rather than death. This is not to be taken as a condemnation of the animals themselves, whom God created in the first place. Christ declared all foods clean,⁹ meaning that it was never about health or curse that those under the Law were so restricted. It was more that,

⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:26

⁸ 1 Corinthians 10:14-25

⁹ Mark 7:19

since eating is a symbolic gesture of fellowship, the people preached. Meat is just meat, but when meat is offered to an idol and a believer publicly takes some of it, that is a declaration of acceptance toward idolatry. In the same way under the Old Covenant if an Israelite were to eat pork or carrion, then his conscience was made unclean by the association with death and curse. Now that Christ has redeemed us from sin, death and the devil, we have the freedom to associate with and even befriend those animals which were once considered detestable.

To be unclean is to live or act apart from God's initial design for humanity, thus disrupting sacred space. The children of Israel are here instructed to wash in order to *regain* that pure state of affairs in accordance with *shalam*, the principle of restoration. Theologically this means that they were always striving to be in right relationship with God and one another. Practically, this entailed having a highly hygienic culture, one in which men, tools and storage were all regularly washed. Yet more importantly, this use of washing to regain a right relationship with God prefigures Baptism.

Vs.39-47

39 “And if any animal which you may eat dies, whoever touches its carcass shall be unclean until the evening, **40** and whoever eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. And whoever carries the carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening.

41 “Every swarming thing that swarms on the ground is detestable; it shall not be eaten. **42** Whatever goes on its belly, and whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet, any swarming thing that swarms on the ground, you shall not eat, for they are detestable. **43** You shall not make yourselves detestable with any swarming thing that swarms, and you shall not defile yourselves with them, and become unclean through them. **44** For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. **45** For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.”

46 This is the law about beast and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms on the ground, **47** to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten.

Continuing with the general theme of rejecting death and curse, the people are forbidden from eating that which dies naturally (although permission seems to be granted for emergencies). More curiously, God also includes a peculiar reference. Before they are given reasonable commands to abstain from eating “swarming things” on the ground (e.g., ants, vermin, termites), the children of Israel are forbidden from consuming “whatever goes on its belly.” Doubtless, He refers here to the serpent, which was cursed to go on its stomach.¹⁰ To eat this would make the believer as detestable as a madman who decided to eat millipedes or maggots. In other words, they are not just bound to avoid the trappings of a cursed world, but in addition they reject eating snakes who represent the dread *source* of the curse, the tempter in the Garden.

The chapter is summarized with the simple command, “You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” The tribes of Israel were intended to represent God to the rest of the world in every facet of their lives. A pagan visiting the land should be able to learn about the true God by seeing the behavior of His followers, from what they ate – having similar foods to the animals on the altar – to how they treated one another. To be a people set apart, they were to function as appointed image-bearers to an ignorant world enslaved to sin.

¹⁰ Genesis 3:14

Leviticus Bible Study #14

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

Leviticus 12:1-8

1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **2** “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. **3** And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. **4** Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying. She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed. **5** But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation. And she shall continue in the blood of her purifying for sixty-six days.

6 “And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering, **7** and he shall offer it before the LORD and make atonement for her. Then she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, either male or female. **8** And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.”

Introduction

The laws concerning cleanliness began with food. People typically eat every day, so a proper ceremonial diet is a priority. Before tackling other matters, the children of Israel are taught to proclaim to their Gentile neighbors, “we eat at God's table.” Another common aspect of daily life is procreation; for all of humanity's faults, the command to “be fruitful and multiply”¹ appears to be the only law in Scripture which mankind does a decent job of fulfilling. Yet when considering how sin and death have corrupted the world, human procreation is not left untouched by the curses brought on creation. Thus childbirth too must be attended by ritual observances and purification, which themselves will prefigure Baptism.

Vs.1-5

1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **2** “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. **3** And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. **4** Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying. She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed. **5** But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation. And she shall continue in the blood of her purifying for sixty-six days.

Childbirth, like menstruation, renders a woman ceremonially unclean in the eyes of the Mosaic Law. God has made clear that a creature's blood is effectively its life,² which means a theological aspect to menstruation and childbirth. A woman gives of her own life as her body maintains its fertility; in childbirth, she sheds her own blood – again, her life – to ensure that the infant may take their first breaths. This means that during such times as she has discharges of blood, she is “unclean” in the sense that she may not be present at religious observances, especially not sacrifices. Her status is not a moral judgment against her, but rather a strong message about sacrifice itself: the only lifeblood to be shed by

¹ Genesis 1:28

² Genesis 9:4

the altar is that of the *animal sacrifices*, so as to keep the focus on redemption and relationship with God. Again, we understand this to not be a “sin” issue, as the New Covenant has fulfilled the Old; now, no one is considered ceremonially unclean,³ so all may approach our Lord with boldness.⁴ Contrary to what some church bodies may proclaim today, menstruating women are not prohibited from taking Communion or participating in daily religious life.

There are different programs of purification for mothers here based on whether they bear male or female infants. This is most likely done with the sanctification of the child in mind. Males were expected to be circumcised in accordance with the covenant of circumcision given to Abraham,⁵ wherein a male born into the house was circumcised as a physical marker of belonging to God. While there were other cultures which utilized forms of circumcision, those cultures typically did so to mark priests, slaves, or functionaries;⁶ having the men of Israel circumcised provides a distinct witness to pagan nations that these men belong to *God*, not their pharaohs or landowners. Since females cannot be circumcised (so-called “female circumcision” today is an unholy abomination), they are kept in occlusion with their mother for a longer time to make up for it.

In the New Testament it is revealed that Baptism replaces circumcision, and both males and females are Baptized.⁷ The Sacrament shares with the old rite that one who has not undergone it ought not be considered part of God's people; an uncircumcised Israelite is no Israelite, and an unbaptized believer is not to be considered a Christian. This means that the rite is what brings the child *into* God's people, making both sacramental. As the male Israelite child is sanctified by the act of circumcision, the mother's time of purification is a little longer than a month. It bears repeating, since the female cannot be circumcised, the longer period of “impurity” serves the same purpose as circumcision. A girl who has gone through that two-month process is for all intents and purposes a daughter of Israel the same way that a boy who has been circumcised is officially an Israelite, just as all who receive Baptism may be considered Christians.

Vs.6-8

6 “And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering, 7 and he shall offer it before the LORD and make atonement for her. Then she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, either male or female. 8 And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.”

Women shed blood as part of their unique life-giving ability. When pregnant, her lifeblood imparts the nutrients which build up the life of a child as God knits the infant together.⁸ The blood of a woman's travail in childbirth is not a sinful thing. However, without the Fall in Eden there would not have been any blood *shed* during the procreative process, nor any pain.⁹ The burnt offering then is not an atonement in the sense of forgiving any sin she committed, but rather a *recognition*. By offering the lamb, she proclaims her purification complete and renders thanks to the Lord for her recovery.

A woman is not sinning by fulfilling her unique maternal habitude. However, during those first crucial months of the child's life, she may have sinned while still being barred from access to the altar. The turtledove or pigeon covers these sins as a matter of insurance, since Moses has already written on

3 Acts 10:28

4 Hebrews 4:16

5 Genesis 17:1-14

6 Egypt is the most famous example of this practice outside of ancient Israel.

7 Colossians 2:11-12

8 Psalm 139:13

9 Genesis 3:16

the concept of unintentional sins. Interestingly, this single dove covers *all* of her sins committed during this time. Typically a single sin was warrant enough for a sin offering; if that logic was applied equally here, the mother would have to offer many sacrifices since human beings sin every day. Yet here, the turtledove presents a complete atonement for her. This foreshadows the universality of the Atonement won by Christ on the Cross for us, just as much as the annual Day of Atonement does; by His one death, all sins have been paid for, just as one animal died for the people every year in ancient Israel. Presumably, since the mother will have her infant with her when she offers up the pigeon to the priest, the sin offering will be the first time that child is exposed to the Gospel in its veiled Old Covenant form, experiencing a kind of Day of Atonement in miniature.

Leviticus Bible Study #15

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

Leviticus 13:1-59

1 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, **2** “When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a case of leprous disease on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests, **3** and the priest shall examine the diseased area on the skin of his body. And if the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a case of leprous disease. When the priest has examined him, he shall pronounce him unclean. **4** But if the spot is white in the skin of his body and appears no deeper than the skin, and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall shut up the diseased person for seven days. **5** And the priest shall examine him on the seventh day, and if in his eyes the disease is checked and the disease has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall shut him up for another seven days. **6** And the priest shall examine him again on the seventh day, and if the diseased area has faded and the disease has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only an eruption. And he shall wash his clothes and be clean. **7** But if the eruption spreads in the skin, after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he shall appear again before the priest. **8** And the priest shall look, and if the eruption has spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a leprous disease.

9 “When a man is afflicted with a leprous disease, he shall be brought to the priest, **10** and the priest shall look. And if there is a white swelling in the skin that has turned the hair white, and there is raw flesh in the swelling, **11** it is a chronic leprous disease in the skin of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. He shall not shut him up, for he is unclean. **12** And if the leprous disease breaks out in the skin, so that the leprous disease covers all the skin of the diseased person from head to foot, so far as the priest can see, **13** then the priest shall look, and if the leprous disease has covered all his body, he shall pronounce him clean of the disease; it has all turned white, and he is clean. **14** But when raw flesh appears on him, he shall be unclean. **15** And the priest shall examine the raw flesh and pronounce him unclean. Raw flesh is unclean, for it is a leprous disease. **16** But if the raw flesh recovers and turns white again, then he shall come to the priest, **17** and the priest shall examine him, and if the disease has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce the diseased person clean; he is clean.

18 “If there is in the skin of one's body a boil and it heals, **19** and in the place of the boil there comes a white swelling or a reddish-white spot, then it shall be shown to the priest. **20** And the priest shall look, and if it appears deeper than the skin and its hair has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a case of leprous disease that has broken out in the boil. **21** But if the priest examines it and there is no white hair in it and it is not deeper than the skin, but has faded, then the priest shall shut him up seven days. **22** And if it spreads in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a disease. **23** But if the spot remains in one place and does not spread, it is the scar of the boil, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

24 “Or, when the body has a burn on its skin and the raw flesh of the burn becomes a spot, reddish-white or white, **25** the priest shall examine it, and if the hair in the spot has turned white and it appears deeper than the skin, then it is a leprous disease. It has broken out in the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a case of leprous disease. **26** But if the priest examines it and there is no white hair in the spot and it is no deeper than the skin, but has faded, the priest shall shut him up seven days, **27** and the priest shall examine him the seventh day. If it is spreading in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a case of leprous disease. **28** But if the spot remains in one place and

does not spread in the skin, but has faded, it is a swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him clean, for it is the scar of the burn.

29 “When a man or woman has a disease on the head or the beard, **30** the priest shall examine the disease. And if it appears deeper than the skin, and the hair in it is yellow and thin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is an itch, a leprous disease of the head or the beard. **31** And if the priest examines the itching disease and it appears no deeper than the skin and there is no black hair in it, then the priest shall shut up the person with the itching disease for seven days, **32** and on the seventh day the priest shall examine the disease. If the itch has not spread, and there is in it no yellow hair, and the itch appears to be no deeper than the skin, **33** then he shall shave himself, but the itch he shall not shave; and the priest shall shut up the person with the itching disease for another seven days. **34** And on the seventh day the priest shall examine the itch, and if the itch has not spread in the skin and it appears to be no deeper than the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean. And he shall wash his clothes and be clean. **35** But if the itch spreads in the skin after his cleansing, **36** then the priest shall examine him, and if the itch has spread in the skin, the priest need not seek for the yellow hair; he is unclean. **37** But if in his eyes the itch is unchanged and black hair has grown in it, the itch is healed and he is clean, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

38 “When a man or a woman has spots on the skin of the body, white spots, **39** the priest shall look, and if the spots on the skin of the body are of a dull white, it is leukoderma that has broken out in the skin; he is clean.

40 “If a man's hair falls out from his head, he is bald; he is clean. **41** And if a man's hair falls out from his forehead, he has baldness of the forehead; he is clean. **42** But if there is on the bald head or the bald forehead a reddish-white diseased area, it is a leprous disease breaking out on his bald head or his bald forehead. **43** Then the priest shall examine him, and if the diseased swelling is reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, like the appearance of leprous disease in the skin of the body, **44** he is a leprous man, he is unclean. The priest must pronounce him unclean; his disease is on his head.

45 “The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’ **46** He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.

47 “When there is a case of leprous disease in a garment, whether a woolen or a linen garment, **48** in warp or woof of linen or wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin, **49** if the disease is greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin or in the warp or the woof or in any article made of skin, it is a case of leprous disease, and it shall be shown to the priest. **50** And the priest shall examine the disease and shut up that which has the disease for seven days. **51** Then he shall examine the disease on the seventh day. If the disease has spread in the garment, in the warp or the woof, or in the skin, whatever be the use of the skin, the disease is a persistent leprous disease; it is unclean. **52** And he shall burn the garment, or the warp or the woof, the wool or the linen, or any article made of skin that is diseased, for it is a persistent leprous disease. It shall be burned in the fire.

53 “And if the priest examines, and if the disease has not spread in the garment, in the warp or the woof or in any article made of skin, **54** then the priest shall command that they wash the thing in which is the disease, and he shall shut it up for another seven days. **55** And the priest shall examine the diseased thing after it has been washed. And if the appearance of the diseased area has not changed, though the disease has not spread, it is unclean. You shall burn it in the fire, whether the rot is on the back or on the front.

56 “But if the priest examines, and if the diseased area has faded after it has been washed, he shall tear it out of the garment or the skin or the warp or the woof. **57** Then if it appears again in the garment, in the warp or the woof, or in any article made of skin, it is spreading. You shall burn with fire whatever has the disease. **58** But the garment, or the warp or the woof, or any article made of skin from which the disease departs when you have washed it, shall then be washed a second time, and be clean.”

59 This is the law for a case of leprous disease in a garment of wool or linen, either in the warp or the woof, or in any article made of skin, to determine whether it is clean or unclean.

Introduction

The Aaronic priests were not doctors. The first priority of this chapter is *not* public health and safety, but rather the fulfillment of the command given after the death of Nadab and Abihu: “You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean.”¹ Unclean animals were marked by their diets consisting of death: scavengers, carnivores, and most omnivores. Women were unclean during their menstrual cycles and for a time after childbirth, as their blood (which is their life) was being shed.² Thus far the priests are being instructed to declare things as unclean which are the result of the fall in Eden: the nature of animals changed to adjust to the imposition of death, and woman's travails in childbearing became more difficult.

When it comes to the matter of skin conditions, leprosy, infections, and other maladies, the matter is one which represents the presence of the curse on creation assailing mankind. The individual Israelite in good health may occasionally be unclean from touching a corpse, giving birth, handling an unclean animal or having reproductive emissions, but he or she is not *permanently* marked by these signs of the fall. In his or her body, the only sign of the fall would be that of aging, or perhaps the occasional injury leaving scars. But a skin condition is something which *marks* the believer as having been touched by the curse, making them a physical, living reminder of death and suffering. Since Israel, and especially the Tabernacle, was supposed to be the closest to Eden that one could get on earth, those who are so afflicted must necessarily be deemed unclean.

We must not forget the Edenic ideal to which the Law is pointed. When Adam and Eve were first brought up in the Garden, there was no death, there were no unclean animals, and disease was nonexistent. The animals which the Israelites are permitted to eat are almost universally observed eating plant matter, just as animals did in Eden. Those pagans to whom Israel was witnessing were to *see* a place like paradise, and the Israelites should generally *feel* like they are living in such a place. Yet the continued presence of various diseases must be dealt with, and in this case those afflicted were placed in occlusion; if they could not, then they must cover themselves to the best of their ability, and announce their presence to others so as to prevent the spread of their condition. While it is explored more in the next chapter, these conditions become typologically connected to sin itself. Nevertheless, these regulations include with them certain protections for laymen as well, so that the land itself is not seen as being cursed.

Vs.1-17

1 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, **2** “When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a case of leprous disease on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests, **3** and the priest shall examine the diseased area on the skin of his body. And if the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a case of leprous disease. When the priest has examined him, he shall pronounce him unclean. **4** But if the spot is white in the skin of his body and appears no deeper than the skin, and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall shut up the diseased person for seven days. **5** And the priest shall examine him on the seventh day, and if in his eyes the disease is checked and the disease has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall shut him up for another seven days. **6** And the priest shall examine him again on the seventh day, and if the diseased area has faded and the disease has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only an eruption. And he shall wash his clothes and be clean. **7** But if the eruption spreads in the skin, after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he shall appear again before the priest. **8** And the priest

1 Leviticus 10:11

2 Genesis 9:4

shall look, and if the eruption has spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a leprous disease.

9 “When a man is afflicted with a leprous disease, he shall be brought to the priest, **10** and the priest shall look. And if there is a white swelling in the skin that has turned the hair white, and there is raw flesh in the swelling, **11** it is a chronic leprous disease in the skin of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. He shall not shut him up, for he is unclean. **12** And if the leprous disease breaks out in the skin, so that the leprous disease covers all the skin of the diseased person from head to foot, so far as the priest can see, **13** then the priest shall look, and if the leprous disease has covered all his body, he shall pronounce him clean of the disease; it has all turned white, and he is clean. **14** But when raw flesh appears on him, he shall be unclean. **15** And the priest shall examine the raw flesh and pronounce him unclean. Raw flesh is unclean, for it is a leprous disease. **16** But if the raw flesh recovers and turns white again, then he shall come to the priest, **17** and the priest shall examine him, and if the disease has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce the diseased person clean; he is clean.

The word translated “leprosy” covers a wide range of afflictions beyond standard Hansen’s disease, only some of which are deadly.³⁴ Thus the regulations present here are not just teaching for the priests to make proper distinction. They also constitute *protective* rules on behalf of the people, lest anyone be declared unclean who should not be. The Lord goes to great lengths to be specific in His descriptions of what constitutes problematic and mundane skin conditions. Not all changes to one’s skin are necessarily *leprosy*. The requirements for a proper diagnosis are white hair and a deeper presence of change than surface skin at the start. Such a prerequisite prevents the priests from going “overboard” and pronouncing anyone with freckles, acne or liver spots as unclean.

Another protection is found in the required periods of occlusion. A potential misdiagnosis or panicked pronouncement of uncleanness would be ruinous for the average Israelite, who would be barred long-term from appearing in corporate worship and normal fellowship. Thus a seven day period of occlusion gives the afflicted time to recover: if it does not get worse, then they have another seven days to see if the affliction heals entirely. Thus the declaration of any long-term “unclean” status is rendered a *rare* occurrence, lest Israelite society be paralyzed by common afflictions.

If someone *is* afflicted with a skin condition and it is verified, there may yet be hope for them. There are diseases which simply turn one’s skin pale, removing the melanin pigmentation from the body. Such an individual, if they are made entirely pale, does not have the kind of condition which would result in a permanent unclean status, for there is no open sore. For some individuals, skin conditions simply need time to clear up, while others are more injurious. Here our Lord instructs the priests to look for “raw flesh,” or active lesions which consistently harm the afflicted.

Vs.18-44

18 “If there is in the skin of one’s body a boil and it heals, **19** and in the place of the boil there comes a white swelling or a reddish-white spot, then it shall be shown to the priest. **20** And the priest shall look, and if it appears deeper than the skin and its hair has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a case of leprous disease that has broken out in the boil. **21** But if the priest examines it and there is no white hair in it and it is not deeper than the skin, but has faded, then the priest shall shut him up seven days. **22** And if it spreads in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a disease. **23** But if the spot remains in one place and does not spread, it is the scar of the boil, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

24 “Or, when the body has a burn on its skin and the raw flesh of the burn becomes a spot, reddish-white or white, **25** the priest shall examine it, and if the hair in the spot has turned white and it appears deeper than the skin, then it is a leprous disease. It has broken out in the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a case of leprous disease. **26** But if the priest examines it and there is no white hair in the spot and it is no deeper than the skin, but has faded, the priest shall shut him up seven days, **27** and the priest shall examine him the seventh day. If it is spreading in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a case of leprous

³ As opposed to leprosy as we know it today, also known as Hansen’s disease.

⁴ <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/6883.htm>

disease. **28** But if the spot remains in one place and does not spread in the skin, but has faded, it is a swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him clean, for it is the scar of the burn.

29 “When a man or woman has a disease on the head or the beard, **30** the priest shall examine the disease. And if it appears deeper than the skin, and the hair in it is yellow and thin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is an itch, a leprous disease of the head or the beard. **31** And if the priest examines the itching disease and it appears no deeper than the skin and there is no black hair in it, then the priest shall shut up the person with the itching disease for seven days, **32** and on the seventh day the priest shall examine the disease. If the itch has not spread, and there is in it no yellow hair, and the itch appears to be no deeper than the skin, **33** then he shall shave himself, but the itch he shall not shave; and the priest shall shut up the person with the itching disease for another seven days. **34** And on the seventh day the priest shall examine the itch, and if the itch has not spread in the skin and it appears to be no deeper than the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean. And he shall wash his clothes and be clean. **35** But if the itch spreads in the skin after his cleansing, **36** then the priest shall examine him, and if the itch has spread in the skin, the priest need not seek for the yellow hair; he is unclean. **37** But if in his eyes the itch is unchanged and black hair has grown in it, the itch is healed and he is clean, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

38 “When a man or a woman has spots on the skin of the body, white spots, **39** the priest shall look, and if the spots on the skin of the body are of a dull white, it is leukoderma that has broken out in the skin; he is clean.

40 “If a man's hair falls out from his head, he is bald; he is clean. **41** And if a man's hair falls out from his forehead, he has baldness of the forehead; he is clean. **42** But if there is on the bald head or the bald forehead a reddish-white diseased area, it is a leprous disease breaking out on his bald head or his bald forehead. **43** Then the priest shall examine him, and if the diseased swelling is reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, like the appearance of leprous disease in the skin of the body, **44** he is a leprous man, he is unclean. The priest must pronounce him unclean; his disease is on his head.

Normal acne is not a cause for priestly examination of a pustule, but a boil might be. After a boil heals, there could be a larger issue which is producing it. Here the Israelites learn to go to their priests for examination whenever they experience the symptoms laid out: red skin, white hair, difficulty in healing. Though the Israelites did not have the scientific framework to discuss or diagnose the bacterial infections that can lead to chronic carbuncles or boils, they were not *ignorant* of the phenomenon: anyone with eyes could see the difference between a single boil occurring and one which spreads. The colors of wounds are the clearest indicators for the priest, especially in the case of burns: the skin of a burning injury typically has a yellowed and mottled appearance while healing, making a pure white appearance concerning. The protocol for these is the same: seven days of isolation with a regular follow-up.

The regulations concerning the “itch” disease demonstrate a hygienic point of view. Someone having a reaction to dandruff or lice will not experience the hair-yellowing concerns that Moses writes of here. But a true disease of the scalp or disastrous reaction could lead to other problems over time, so the same care is taken to ensure a truthful diagnosis as the other conditions. It bears repeating that these rules err on the side of caution such that true “unclean” persons, being more rare, are actually identified in a fair and just way. God does not want the priesthood to *want* people being unclean. It is for this reason that even further clarification is made. Leukoderma, a localized depigmentation of the skin, is a typical warm-climate condition and is thus not categorized as leprosy. Baldness affects a large portion of the male population, also being natural, and is thus not leprosy either. Nevertheless, while the people are encouraged that their general conditions are mostly harmless, they are still instructed to exercise diligence so as to go to the priest and report it when something is amiss, e.g., a diseased area on a bald head.

Vs.45

45 “The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’ **46** He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.

The fate of a leper – or anyone deemed unclean for the long term from similar conditions – is a tragic one. He must cover his face and announce his presence *as one unclean* when in the vicinity of others. This is first a practical consideration, as whatever contagious condition he has may result in others being unclean as well. He covers his face so as to limit the exposure of the curse on others, maintaining the proximate Edenic lifestyle of the Israelites. That said, given that it is this very uncleanness which barred him from the congregation and represents a curse making an intrusion, there is a typological connection here to sin itself. The leper cannot offer sacrifices to God, not even for a peace offering; so too does indwelling sin prevent man from communion with our Lord.

Similar to the regulations concerning childbirth and the menstrual cycle, the Law is not presenting a moral judgment on the leper himself. The typological connection to sin must not be overextended to say that men are held accountable for that over which they have no control. It *would* be sinful if the leper did not observe the law of separation weighed upon his shoulders, but carried on as though he were not afflicted. But it is that very restriction which assures the victim of such afflictions that he is still a beloved member of God's Israel, and thus may still camp with them – albeit *outside* the main residence of the people.

Vs.47-59

47 “When there is a case of leprous disease in a garment, whether a woolen or a linen garment, **48** in warp or woof of linen or wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin, **49** if the disease is greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin or in the warp or the woof or in any article made of skin, it is a case of leprous disease, and it shall be shown to the priest. **50** And the priest shall examine the disease and shut up that which has the disease for seven days. **51** Then he shall examine the disease on the seventh day. If the disease has spread in the garment, in the warp or the woof, or in the skin, whatever be the use of the skin, the disease is a persistent leprous disease; it is unclean. **52** And he shall burn the garment, or the warp or the woof, the wool or the linen, or any article made of skin that is diseased, for it is a persistent leprous disease. It shall be burned in the fire. **53** “And if the priest examines, and if the disease has not spread in the garment, in the warp or the woof or in any article made of skin, **54** then the priest shall command that they wash the thing in which is the disease, and he shall shut it up for another seven days. **55** And the priest shall examine the diseased thing after it has been washed. And if the appearance of the diseased area has not changed, though the disease has not spread, it is unclean. You shall burn it in the fire, whether the rot is on the back or on the front. **56** “But if the priest examines, and if the diseased area has faded after it has been washed, he shall tear it out of the garment or the skin or the warp or the woof. **57** Then if it appears again in the garment, in the warp or the woof, or in any article made of skin, it is spreading. You shall burn with fire whatever has the disease. **58** But the garment, or the warp or the woof, or any article made of skin from which the disease departs when you have washed it, shall then be washed a second time, and be clean.” **59** This is the law for a case of leprous disease in a garment of wool or linen, either in the warp or the woof, or in any article made of skin, to determine whether it is clean or unclean.

Wool, linen, and animal skins may be spotted with various strains of bacterial or fungal infections. Examination goes as far as observing any discoloration in the “warp or woof,” that is, the threads of a garment or the weaving strips in cloth. Animal skins used for wine skeins or tentmaking are especially vulnerable, as exposure to moisture from weather or infected strains of yeast may lead to spreading molds which spoil the structure for which they are made. This is treated in the same fashion as the various skin conditions that afflict humanity, only with the caveat that part of a cloth may be severed and burned if the infection is localized. This has typological importance for the Covenant later on, as Christ will use imagery of an old cloth being replaced (instead of having new cloth sewn in to fix a tear or infection) to signal the replacement of the Old Covenant itself.⁵

5 Matthew 9:16-17

Leviticus Bible Study #16

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

Leviticus 14:1-57

1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **2** “This shall be the law of the leprous person for the day of his cleansing. He shall be brought to the priest, **3** and the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall look. Then, if the case of leprous disease is healed in the leprous person, **4** the priest shall command them to take for him who is to be cleansed two live clean birds and cedarwood and scarlet yarn and hyssop. **5** And the priest shall command them to kill one of the birds in an earthenware vessel over fresh water. **6** He shall take the live bird with the cedarwood and the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, and dip them and the live bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. **7** And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed of the leprous disease. Then he shall pronounce him clean and shall let the living bird go into the open field. **8** And he who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes and shave off all his hair and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean. And after that he may come into the camp, but live outside his tent seven days. **9** And on the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair from his head, his beard, and his eyebrows. He shall shave off all his hair, and then he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and he shall be clean.

10 “And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb a year old without blemish, and a grain offering of three tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, and one log of oil. **11** And the priest who cleanses him shall set the man who is to be cleansed and these things before the LORD, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. **12** And the priest shall take one of the male lambs and offer it for a guilt offering, along with the log of oil, and wave them for a wave offering before the LORD. **13** And he shall kill the lamb in the place where they kill the sin offering and the burnt offering, in the place of the sanctuary. For the guilt offering, like the sin offering, belongs to the priest; it is most holy. **14** The priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering, and the priest shall put it on the lobe of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. **15** Then the priest shall take some of the log of oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand **16** and dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand and sprinkle some oil with his finger seven times before the LORD. **17** And some of the oil that remains in his hand the priest shall put on the lobe of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot, on top of the blood of the guilt offering. **18** And the rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed. Then the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD. **19** The priest shall offer the sin offering, to make atonement for him who is to be cleansed from his uncleanness. And afterward he shall kill the burnt offering. **20** And the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar. Thus the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean.

21 “But if he is poor and cannot afford so much, then he shall take one male lamb for a guilt offering to be waved, to make atonement for him, and a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and a log of oil; **22** also two turtledoves or two pigeons, whichever he can afford. The one shall be a sin offering and the other a burnt offering. **23** And on the eighth day he shall bring them for his cleansing to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, before the LORD. **24** And the priest shall take the lamb of the guilt offering and the log of oil, and the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before the LORD. **25** And he shall kill the lamb of the guilt offering. And the priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the lobe of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. **26** And the priest shall pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand, **27** and shall sprinkle with his right finger some

of the oil that is in his left hand seven times before the LORD. **28** And the priest shall put some of the oil that is in his hand on the lobe of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot, in the place where the blood of the guilt offering was put. **29** And the rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed, to make atonement for him before the LORD. **30** And he shall offer, of the turtledoves or pigeons, whichever he can afford, **31** one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering, along with a grain offering. And the priest shall make atonement before the LORD for him who is being cleansed. **32** This is the law for him in whom is a case of leprous disease, who cannot afford the offerings for his cleansing.”

33 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, **34** “When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a case of leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession, **35** then he who owns the house shall come and tell the priest, ‘There seems to me to be some case of disease in my house.’ **36** Then the priest shall command that they empty the house before the priest goes to examine the disease, lest all that is in the house be declared unclean. And afterward the priest shall go in to see the house. **37** And he shall examine the disease. And if the disease is in the walls of the house with greenish or reddish spots, and if it appears to be deeper than the surface, **38** then the priest shall go out of the house to the door of the house and shut up the house seven days. **39** And the priest shall come again on the seventh day, and look. If the disease has spread in the walls of the house, **40** then the priest shall command that they take out the stones in which is the disease and throw them into an unclean place outside the city. **41** And he shall have the inside of the house scraped all around, and the plaster that they scrape off they shall pour out in an unclean place outside the city. **42** Then they shall take other stones and put them in the place of those stones, and he shall take other plaster and plaster the house.

43 “If the disease breaks out again in the house, after he has taken out the stones and scraped the house and plastered it, **44** then the priest shall go and look. And if the disease has spread in the house, it is a persistent leprous disease in the house; it is unclean. **45** And he shall break down the house, its stones and timber and all the plaster of the house, and he shall carry them out of the city to an unclean place. **46** Moreover, whoever enters the house while it is shut up shall be unclean until the evening, **47** and whoever sleeps in the house shall wash his clothes, and whoever eats in the house shall wash his clothes.

48 “But if the priest comes and looks, and if the disease has not spread in the house after the house was plastered, then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, for the disease is healed. **49** And for the cleansing of the house he shall take two small birds, with cedarwood and scarlet yarn and hyssop, **50** and shall kill one of the birds in an earthenware vessel over fresh water **51** and shall take the cedarwood and the hyssop and the scarlet yarn, along with the live bird, and dip them in the blood of the bird that was killed and in the fresh water and sprinkle the house seven times. **52** Thus he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird and with the fresh water and with the live bird and with the cedarwood and hyssop and scarlet yarn. **53** And he shall let the live bird go out of the city into the open country. So he shall make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean.”

54 This is the law for any case of leprous disease: for an itch, **55** for leprous disease in a garment or in a house, **56** and for a swelling or an eruption or a spot, **57** to show when it is unclean and when it is clean. This is the law for leprous disease.

Introduction

To be afflicted with a leprous disease (of whatever variety) was more terrifying in Moses' day than it is in the modern era. There were no antibiotics, sanitizing soaps, or anti-fungal medications that could clear conditions with ease; thus if a man was declared unclean by the priest he knew that he was

going to experience great hardship. But being pronounced unclean meant something worse than just being itchy or in pain; since the unclean man or woman was quarantined, they were cut off from normal life entirely. The unclean man could not make sacrifices, spend time with family, or even grow his own food on Israelite land. He was cut off from a normal relationship with God, cut off from a normal relationship with family and friends, and cut off from the normal means of earning wages for himself. If a victim of these conditions happened to have gangrene or Hansen's disease, then the sight of his body parts rotting off would only remind him of the far worse separations that happened by the pronouncement which rang through his ears, "unclean!" It was a living death.

For this reason, a man who recovered from an unclean skin condition would receive a drastic and intentional ceremony of recovery. It was a rite and process which proclaimed "welcome back" to the man formerly afflicted, as though he was resurrected from the dead – and in a sense, he was. While the people who underwent this rite were understandably overjoyed, to a modern reader the process is curious. Cedarwood and yarn and lots of blood were involved, but for what purpose? What message is being communicated to the reader? If we were in the Old Testament era, all we could do was shrug. But living in the New Testament era, under which we understand that Christ is the chief subject of all holy writ;¹ the rite of cleansing for lepers is no different, and in fact procures one of the strongest Gospel typologies in the entire ceremonial Law. When Christ says that Moses wrote about Him,² it is passages like these which most strongly resonate with that statement.

Vs.1-9

1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "This shall be the law of the leprous person for the day of his cleansing. He shall be brought to the priest, 3 and the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall look. Then, if the case of leprous disease is healed in the leprous person, 4 the priest shall command them to take for him who is to be cleansed two live clean birds and cedarwood and scarlet yarn and hyssop. 5 And the priest shall command them to kill one of the birds in an earthenware vessel over fresh water. 6 He shall take the live bird with the cedarwood and the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, and dip them and the live bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. 7 And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed of the leprous disease. Then he shall pronounce him clean and shall let the living bird go into the open field. 8 And he who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes and shave off all his hair and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean. And after that he may come into the camp, but live outside his tent seven days. 9 And on the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair from his head, his beard, and his eyebrows. He shall shave off all his hair, and then he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and he shall be clean.

Before there can be a ceremony of cleansing, there must first be an inspection. Being unclean was bad enough of a fate that surely a temptation would be present to fake a recovery. Thus the leper is treated as still unclean until such time as the healing can be verified. Once this is verified, note that the rest of the actions are performed by the priest and the *camp* – that is, people who know the leper or can act on his behalf. Though he might be free from the disease, he is still declared unclean, and thus does not have the right to kill animals for sacrifices. This thoroughness is also the likely reason for shaving the hair from his body, lest there be a spot of leprosy previously missed by the priest on account of hair hiding the infection. The man shaves again on the off-chance that some irritation of hair or skin would cause another outbreak if he were still infected.

The initial rite of cleansing is highly symbolic and typological. The scarlet yarn is the same yarn used in the construction of the Tabernacle curtains and veils,³ showing that the cleansed man has access to the Tabernacle grounds once more. The cedarwood, from which Israelites often built their homes and tent structures, shows that the cleansed man has his home with his kin once more. Hyssop, a medicinal

1 Revelation 19:10

2 John 5:46

3 Exodus 26:1, 26:31

herb, was often used for bathing and cleaning things. The sevenfold sprinkling, after which he is declared clean, matches the seven days of Creation; the man is as clean before God as he would be right after the sixth day in Genesis 1.

The two birds though send the strongest message. One is killed and its blood is mixed with water, and the other – which clearly represents the former leper – is covered in the fluid and set free. This is Christological. Christ shed His blood for our cleansing from sin, and the way in which someone is normally covered by His atoning sacrifice is in the waters of Baptism.⁴ Since the first bird dies and the other bird is covered in its blood, the message is clear: Christ died so that we, being covered by His Blood, may enter the congregation of God's people and live free from the affliction of sin. It is this very cleansing rite that seems to connect with St. John, who comments multiple times concerning the water and blood which flowed from Christ's side at the Crucifixion – which also included Him drinking from a *hyssop branch*.⁵ Though the former leper experienced a great deal of suffering and isolation during his period of uncleanness, he is privileged with being party to an explicit proclamation of the Gospel for future generations to come.

Vs.10-32

10 “And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb a year old without blemish, and a grain offering of three tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, and one log of oil. **11** And the priest who cleanses him shall set the man who is to be cleansed and these things before the LORD, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. **12** And the priest shall take one of the male lambs and offer it for a guilt offering, along with the log of oil, and wave them for a wave offering before the LORD. **13** And he shall kill the lamb in the place where they kill the sin offering and the burnt offering, in the place of the sanctuary. For the guilt offering, like the sin offering, belongs to the priest; it is most holy. **14** The priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering, and the priest shall put it on the lobe of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. **15** Then the priest shall take some of the log of oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand **16** and dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand and sprinkle some oil with his finger seven times before the LORD. **17** And some of the oil that remains in his hand the priest shall put on the lobe of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot, on top of the blood of the guilt offering. **18** And the rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed. Then the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD. **19** The priest shall offer the sin offering, to make atonement for him who is to be cleansed from his uncleanness. And afterward he shall kill the burnt offering. **20** And the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar. Thus the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean.

21 “But if he is poor and cannot afford so much, then he shall take one male lamb for a guilt offering to be waved, to make atonement for him, and a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and a log of oil; **22** also two turtledoves or two pigeons, whichever he can afford. The one shall be a sin offering and the other a burnt offering. **23** And on the eighth day he shall bring them for his cleansing to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, before the LORD. **24** And the priest shall take the lamb of the guilt offering and the log of oil, and the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before the LORD. **25** And he shall kill the lamb of the guilt offering. And the priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the lobe of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. **26** And the priest shall pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand, **27** and shall sprinkle with his right finger some of the oil that is in his left hand seven times before the LORD. **28** And the priest shall put some of the oil that is in his hand on the lobe of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot, in the place where the blood of the guilt offering was put. **29** And the rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed, to make atonement for him before the LORD. **30** And he shall offer, of the turtledoves or pigeons, whichever he can afford, **31** one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering, along with a grain offering. And the priest shall make atonement

⁴ Galatians 3:27

⁵ John 19:28-35, 1 John 5:6

before the LORD for him who is being cleansed. **32** This is the law for him in whom is a case of leprous disease, who cannot afford the offerings for his cleansing.”

While the former leper has been declared clean, he must now meet with God and be declared clean from on high. This begins with a guilt offering under the assumption that during his time of uncleanness the leper committed sins (as we all do) as he presumably missed the Day of Atonement, and a sin offering is made which demonstrates that the man has been atoned for twice over: this seems to foreshadow the later pronouncement of Isaiah that the children of Judah will receive “double for all her sins.”⁶ The grain offering makes up for any lost peace offerings or grain offerings the afflicted would have made. The burnt offering makes a declaration that the believer's relationship with God is in good standing. These sacrifices for well-to-do and poor lepers alike serve the same function despite the varied animals used. The use of blood and oil on the ear, thumb and foot represents an anointing similar to that of the priests themselves;⁷ this is not to say that the former leper is now a priest himself, but rather that he is now brought back to the ranks of the priestly nation as God first proclaimed after the Exodus.⁸

Vs.33-57

33 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, **34** “When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a case of leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession, **35** then he who owns the house shall come and tell the priest, ‘There seems to me to be some case of disease in my house.’ **36** Then the priest shall command that they empty the house before the priest goes to examine the disease, lest all that is in the house be declared unclean. And afterward the priest shall go in to see the house. **37** And he shall examine the disease. And if the disease is in the walls of the house with greenish or reddish spots, and if it appears to be deeper than the surface, **38** then the priest shall go out of the house to the door of the house and shut up the house seven days. **39** And the priest shall come again on the seventh day, and look. If the disease has spread in the walls of the house, **40** then the priest shall command that they take out the stones in which is the disease and throw them into an unclean place outside the city. **41** And he shall have the inside of the house scraped all around, and the plaster that they scrape off they shall pour out in an unclean place outside the city. **42** Then they shall take other stones and put them in the place of those stones, and he shall take other plaster and plaster the house.

43 “If the disease breaks out again in the house, after he has taken out the stones and scraped the house and plastered it, **44** then the priest shall go and look. And if the disease has spread in the house, it is a persistent leprous disease in the house; it is unclean. **45** And he shall break down the house, its stones and timber and all the plaster of the house, and he shall carry them out of the city to an unclean place. **46** Moreover, whoever enters the house while it is shut up shall be unclean until the evening, **47** and whoever sleeps in the house shall wash his clothes, and whoever eats in the house shall wash his clothes.

48 “But if the priest comes and looks, and if the disease has not spread in the house after the house was plastered, then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, for the disease is healed. **49** And for the cleansing of the house he shall take two small birds, with cedarwood and scarlet yarn and hyssop, **50** and shall kill one of the birds in an earthenware vessel over fresh water **51** and shall take the cedarwood and the hyssop and the scarlet yarn, along with the live bird, and dip them in the blood of the bird that was killed and in the fresh water and sprinkle the house seven times. **52** Thus he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird and with the fresh water and with the live bird and with the cedarwood and hyssop and scarlet yarn. **53** And he shall let the live bird go out of the city into the open country. So he shall make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean.”

54 This is the law for any case of leprous disease: for an itch, **55** for leprous disease in a garment or in a house, **56** and for a swelling or an eruption or a spot, **57** to show when it is unclean and when it is clean. This is the law for leprous disease.

6 Isaiah 40:2

7 Leviticus 8:24

8 Exodus 19:5-6

Wool and hide could be made unclean by the imposition of a leprous disease. So too could homes. Unlike wool or skins, which are afflicted by the misfortune of encroaching decay and disease, God says specifically that in the land of Canaan He reserves the right to put such diseases in their brick and mortar homes. We are not given here a reason *for* the imposition of such misfortune, but it is something our Lord can choose to do. Perhaps a building which houses sinners is afflicted so as to reflect their iniquities, spurring them to repentance. Perhaps it is a means of getting people to *move* from one place or another according to purposes the people may not understand. Regardless of the motivations our Lord might have for such an act, it is clear that when He does it He wants the residents *out* on account of the way entering the building after it has been declared unclean makes one unclean.

A rite is carried out for the cleansing of the house, one not dissimilar to the rite for cleansing lepers. While this does not have the same meaning to it as the rite for lepers, it is related. The same birds, wood, yarn and hyssop are utilized, meaning that the home is now fit for people who enjoy the benefits of being Israelites. The house is *sanctified* for those who benefit from the cedars of building, the scarlet yarn of the Tabernacle, and the hyssop of regular washing and blessing from our Lord. Further still, it points to the day in which Christ redeems all of the world, all which God has created – which even as of today groans as in birth pangs for its redemption.⁹ Since St. Paul writes that creation groans for the revealing (that is, the Resurrection) of the sons of God, it is only fitting that the cleansing for homes would reflect a *return* of the saints to the places God gave them. Here we see further why our Lord might afflict the house of an Israelite in such a way; not to claim any responsibility for moral evil – that would be blasphemous – but rather to remind the Israelites that one day the Lord will redeem and cleanse creation the same way He redeemed and cleansed their residence.

9 Romans 8:20-23

Leviticus Bible Study #17

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

Leviticus 15:1-33

1 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, **2** “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any man has a discharge from his body, his discharge is unclean. **3** And this is the law of his uncleanness for a discharge: whether his body runs with his discharge, or his body is blocked up by his discharge, it is his uncleanness. **4** Every bed on which the one with the discharge lies shall be unclean, and everything on which he sits shall be unclean. **5** And anyone who touches his bed shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **6** And whoever sits on anything on which the one with the discharge has sat shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **7** And whoever touches the body of the one with the discharge shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **8** And if the one with the discharge spits on someone who is clean, then he shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **9** And any saddle on which the one with the discharge rides shall be unclean. **10** And whoever touches anything that was under him shall be unclean until the evening. And whoever carries such things shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **11** Anyone whom the one with the discharge touches without having rinsed his hands in water shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **12** And an earthenware vessel that the one with the discharge touches shall be broken, and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water.

13 “And when the one with a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count for himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes. And he shall bathe his body in fresh water and shall be clean. **14** And on the eighth day he shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and come before the LORD to the entrance of the tent of meeting and give them to the priest. **15** And the priest shall use them, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD for his discharge.

16 “If a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body in water and be unclean until the evening. **17** And every garment and every skin on which the semen comes shall be washed with water and be unclean until the evening. **18** If a man lies with a woman and has an emission of semen, both of them shall bathe themselves in water and be unclean until the evening.

19 “When a woman has a discharge, and the discharge in her body is blood, she shall be in her menstrual impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. **20** And everything on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean. Everything also on which she sits shall be unclean. **21** And whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **22** And whoever touches anything on which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **23** Whether it is the bed or anything on which she sits, when he touches it he shall be unclean until the evening. **24** And if any man lies with her and her menstrual impurity comes upon him, he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.

25 “If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. As in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. **26** Every bed on which she lies, all the days of her discharge, shall be to her as the bed of her impurity. And everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her menstrual impurity. **27** And whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the

evening. **28** But if she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. **29** And on the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting. **30** And the priest shall use one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her before the LORD for her unclean discharge.

31 “Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst.”

32 This is the law for him who has a discharge and for him who has an emission of semen, becoming unclean thereby; **33** also for her who is unwell with her menstrual impurity, that is, for anyone, male or female, who has a discharge, and for the man who lies with a woman who is unclean.

Introduction

The “cleanliness laws” of Leviticus¹ finish with this chapter. There is a kind of logic to their ordering which provides a simple determination for when a man or woman may approach the altar. First is the dietary code, which contain similar meats to those offered on the altar;² by this the Israelites learn to proverbially eat “at God's table,” rather than creatures particularly marked by the curse from Adam's fall. Then the rules are laid out for cleanliness regarding childbirth, namely the purification of infant sons and daughters,³ as well as the mothers who shed blood to birth them. If diet has to do with which animals are dying, the birthing code regulates the manner in which children are first made alive in the material realm before being made alive to God. Then comes the law concerning skin conditions, visible signs of the curse on humanity; in a clear comparison between sin, death and the later cleansing of Baptism by the Blood of Christ, these laws form the central message of Leviticus. The people were to live out the closest they could to the Edenic ideal, but rely on cleansing which prophecies the Gospel in order to return when they were unclean.

Now the conclusion of the cleanliness laws is found in the matter of bodily discharge. If the matter of skin conditions afflicted one from the *outside*, this chapter covers those afflictions which occur from the *inside*. Yet a distinction is made between discharges of affliction and those which are a normal part of life, the latter consisting of male and female procreative fluids; in neither case is a moral judgment being made, but rather an emphasis on the proper treatment of the altar and what sort of presence people have before it.

Vs.1-15

1 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, **2** “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any man has a discharge from his body, his discharge is unclean. **3** And this is the law of his uncleanness for a discharge: whether his body runs with his discharge, or his body is blocked up by his discharge, it is his uncleanness. **4** Every bed on which the one with the discharge lies shall be unclean, and everything on which he sits shall be unclean. **5** And anyone who touches his bed shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **6** And whoever sits on anything on which the one with the discharge has sat shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **7** And whoever touches the body of the one with the discharge shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **8** And if the one with the discharge spits on someone who is clean, then he shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **9** And any saddle on which the one with the discharge rides shall be unclean. **10** And whoever touches anything that was under him shall be unclean until the evening. And whoever carries such things shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **11** Anyone whom the one with the discharge touches without having rinsed his hands in water shall wash his clothes and

¹ Chapters eleven through fifteen.

² The exception being *fish*, which appears to be a concession to the tribes with coastal territory.

³ Infant circumcision for males, extra time of purification for females.

bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **12** And an earthenware vessel that the one with the discharge touches shall be broken, and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water.

13 “And when the one with a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count for himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes. And he shall bathe his body in fresh water and shall be clean. **14** And on the eighth day he shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and come before the LORD to the entrance of the tent of meeting and give them to the priest. **15** And the priest shall use them, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD for his discharge.

The exegete must make an interpretive decision with this passage. The word translated “discharge” is זָוַה,⁴⁵ which quite literally means “flow.” While subsequent verses will touch on the topics of menstruation and male emissions, these verses could apply just as easily to a runny nose, coughing up mucus, urinary incontinence or diarrhea. The interpreter may restrict this to genital discharges on account of the close verses detailing procreative discharges, but in so doing the application of the text becomes more difficult. With no requirement for priestly examination for these conditions, how was an individual Israelite supposed to discern whether his “discharge” is different from normal nocturnal emissions? How shall a woman determine various discharge as being unclean or part of having a normal bodily function? While the texts concerning skin conditions were instructive regarding the exact nature of the leprosy one may be afflicted with, here there is no guide to distinguishing, say, yeast infections from ovulatory discharge. It is more likely that God is speaking of self-evident *problematic* symptoms, something that the Israelites would already understand and could not mistake for something else. Discerning the nature of a particular “flow” might occasionally be difficult; everyone knew to be wary of the man who is vomiting from a stomach virus. Furthermore, the eighth verse (regarding spitting/sneezing) makes little sense if the uncleanness is only in the genital area.

The regulations presented here, if understood to mean the standard discharge symptoms of illness, are best understood as standard hygienic precaution. The sick man may still perform his labors, but now everything and everyone he touches becomes unclean and must be washed. The restrictions are not as drastic as those of the leper, most likely on account of the common nature of such sicknesses. Living in this world, everyone has had to deal with colds, food poisoning, and other conditions. To combat this, hygiene becomes the priority.

The afflicted must abstain from sacrifices until seven days after the discharge of his illness has ceased, after which he must offer two doves: one for atoning for any sins he committed during his period of uncleanness, the other as an offering to God. The customary burnt offering, like those offered by women after their occlusion from childbirth, is an expression of *Shalam*, the legal principle of restoration; by offering the dove, one declares that he has fulfilled the requirement of cleansing and seeks the approval of our Lord.

Vs.16-24

16 “If a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body in water and be unclean until the evening. **17** And every garment and every skin on which the semen comes shall be washed with water and be unclean until the evening. **18** If a man lies with a woman and has an emission of semen, both of them shall bathe themselves in water and be unclean until the evening.

19 “When a woman has a discharge, and the discharge in her body is blood, she shall be in her menstrual impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. **20** And everything on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean. Everything also on which she sits shall be unclean. **21** And whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **22** And whoever touches anything on which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in

4 Transliterated “zuv,” Strong's #2100

5 <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/2100.htm>

water and be unclean until the evening. **23** Whether it is the bed or anything on which she sits, when he touches it he shall be unclean until the evening. **24** And if any man lies with her and her menstrual impurity comes upon him, he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.

Not all discharges are “equal” in terms of their impact on a person's cleanliness. Someone who is producing unnatural discharges from sickness must be subject to a stricter hygienic process and abstain from the altar. But if the discharges are natural products of reproductive systems, the Law is more understanding: after all, God *designed* these aspects of human biology and the vast majority of people experience them. When they do experience them though, they are rendered ceremonially unclean for a short period of time.

Why are such normal aspects of life unclean? Sexual activity and the menstrual cycle have to do with two parts of the human experience, namely procreation and the marital bond. Such matters must remain holy (that is, separate) from the rest of our lives. As the author of Hebrews states, “let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.”⁶ This is to say, even after the fulfillment of the Law by Christ, procreative acts and functions are to be private even if one is not rendered “unclean” by them anymore. All aspects of human procreation are to be private, almost secretive, both in terms of sexual function (e.g., ejaculation) and fertility (menstruation).

While Israel was to present the closest thing a people could get to Eden in this fallen earth, and much of the Law reflects that in the demands of purity and appearance, sexual matters are the exception. When Adam and Eve started their marriage, Moses records “the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”⁷ He writes this to an audience that is *used to* nudity being shameful. On account of the fall, we are exhorted to see the matter as private; those who engage in it publicly are shameful, and those bearing the discharges associated with it were rendered unclean – even if a husband and wife's consummation lacks shame or guilt by the act itself.

Vs.25-30

25 “If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. As in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. **26** Every bed on which she lies, all the days of her discharge, shall be to her as the bed of her impurity. And everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her menstrual impurity. **27** And whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **28** But if she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. **29** And on the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting. **30** And the priest shall use one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her before the LORD for her unclean discharge.

Our Lord further clarifies the Law's stipulations here. The discharges of ailments are distinguished from the normal discharges of human function, but in the case of women both may happen in a single condition. Known as menorrhagia, prolonged uterine bleeding is relatively common: nonetheless it is an affliction which *ought not* happen. The Mosaic distinction between normal procreative function and discharging illness is blurred here, as what is natural extends in time through an unnatural time period. Therefore, the Law treats it as an unnatural condition: she is unclean until the flow stops. Since such an extended menstrual flow renders a woman unclean in the long term, unable to participate in the religious observances of the Tabernacle, we have a greater appreciation for the woman with the flow of blood from the Gospels. She touches the hem of Christ's robe so as to not make Him ceremonially unclean, making her action not just a gesture of faith, but of faithfulness to the Law.

⁶ Hebrews 13:4

⁷ Genesis 2:25

Christ refers to her as a daughter of Israel on account of her piety and faith surpassing her desperation.⁸

Vs.31-33

31 “Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst.”

32 This is the law for him who has a discharge and for him who has an emission of semen, becoming unclean thereby; **33** also for her who is unwell with her menstrual impurity, that is, for anyone, male or female, who has a discharge, and for the man who lies with a woman who is unclean.

In the thirty-first verse, our Lord mentions death being a result of unclean persons approaching the Tabernacle. This hearkens back to the reason for these laws being imposed in the first place: Nadab and Abihu's death after offering unauthorized fire. The priesthood received a new task, that of catechesis, so as to prevent the people from being punished directly for presumptuous sins. While uncleanness is not a moral judgment nor punishment, defying the Law concerning it results in both. If a man has a discharge or leprosy and still approaches the altar, God says plainly that he will be punished. The Tabernacle is for one thing and one thing only: mediating the relationship between God and man. Animals are sacrificed there for the peoples' sins, for their restoration, for fellowship with our Lord, and for petition. To bring something or someone unclean before the Lord is to present the curse to Him. He does not tolerate the presence of sin or its effects, so He punishes those who would dare to knowingly bring it to Him. While sexual discharges are not impure or sinful in themselves, bringing one's procreative fluids to the altar means engaging in a sort of category error which God does not countenance either. The Tabernacle oversees the death of creatures for maintaining the relationship between God and man; human procreation has to do with making more humans, something unrelated entirely. Here God not only commands *moral* and *ceremonial* purity, but also a purity of focus, lest the people learn to treat His Tabernacle as something common.

⁸ Mark 5:24-34