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Leviticus 15

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Leviticus 15.

FOCUS: MALE AND FEMALE DISCHARGES FROM THE BODY

Topics.

- The law for a man who has a discharge from his body.
- The law for a man who has an emission of semen.
- The law for a woman during her menstrual cycle.
- The law for a man and woman who lie together.

INTRODUCTION: the book of Leviticus is about ceremonial rules and civil laws that God gave to Moses after He had given him the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

- These are the statutes and rules and laws that the LORD made between him and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. (Lev. 26:46).

Either on Mount Sinai or when he met with him in the Tabernacle (also called the tent of meeting) when they were in the wilderness near the Mountain. Moses was to give these ceremonial laws to the Levitical priesthood, they embrace rules concerning sacrifices, offerings and worship; the ordination of Aaron and his sons and their ceremonial cleanness; the Day of Atonement; feasts and holy days and the Year of Jubilee. The civil and social laws and laws of justice he was to give to the government of Israel to implement within their society. The ceremonial and civil laws were not given to the secular world but are laws God gave to the nation of Israel. The central message is that God is holy and requires His people to be holy. The book also shows that God graciously provides atonement for sin through the shedding of blood. Most Jews and Christians recognise Moses as the author, writing sometime after the giving of the Law (about 1445 B.C.).

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

The previous chapter: covers lepers living in caves or tents in camps and colonies outside the city; laws for cleansing lepers; events to take place on the eighth day; blood placed on the ear, the thumb and the toe of the one being cleansed; lepers wave offerings for atonement and the LORD putting a plague of leprosy in a house.

DISCHARGES FROM A MAN'S BODY

LEVITICUS 15:1-3

The Law for a Man's Uncleanness for a Discharge from His Body.

- **Leviticus 15: 1-3:** 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 (running issue out of his flesh in KJV), his discharge is unclean. ³And this is the law of his uncleanness for a discharge: whether his body (flesh in KJV) runs with his discharge, or his body is blocked up (stopped) by his discharge, it is his uncleanness.

The final verses of this chapter show us that the focus of this chapter is upon the following four laws:

1. The law for a man who has a discharge from his body.
2. The law for a man who has an emission of semen.
3. The law for a woman during her menstrual cycle.
4. The law for a man and woman who lie together.

LAWS FOR BODILY DISCHARGES OF A MAN

Discharge (running issue in KJV): comes from the Hebrew word (*zuwb*) and means to flow freely (as water), to gush out or overflow. Specifically, to have a sexual flux and figuratively to waste or pine away.

When any man has a discharge from his body: (v2) (running issue out of his flesh in KJV), his discharge is unclean. The previous chapter ended with the words, "This is the law for any case of a leprous itch, and a leprous disease in a garment, a house, a swelling, an eruption or a spot in the body to show when a leper is unclean and when they are clean. (Lev. 14:50-57). Now in this chapter other forms of uncleanness concerning men and women are described.

The very stringent rules prescribed for the separation of the person with the discharge are no doubt set in place to avoid any chance of contamination and prevent contagion from anything connected with the discharge. Discharges in this context can refer to any form of discharge from the body such as:

- Puss from bursting boils, open sores, abscess, ulcers, cysts, carbuncles caused by bacterial infection.
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STD) infectious such as gonorrhoea, chlamydia, trichomoniasis, herpes etc., which are caused by bacterial virus' and germs transmitted during sexual activity and result in a clear, white, or yellow thick or thin fluid oozing from the tip of the penis. Generally caused in men who have multiple sexual partners or who engage in high-risk behaviours such as not using condoms and practise anal intercourse.

If his body is blocked up (stopped) by his discharge: (v3) meaning some obstruction prevents the discharge from running freely, such as a blood clot or the flowing infected fluid and diseased discharge has dried up leaving a solid infectious sore on the skin.

LEVITICUS 15:4-12

Whoever Touched the One with the Discharge would be Unclean.

- **Leviticus 15:4-12:** Every bed on which the one with the discharge lies shall be unclean, and everything on which he sits shall be unclean. ⁵And anyone who touches his bed shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. ⁶And 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. ⁷And 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. ⁸And 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. ⁹And any saddle on which the one with the discharge rides shall be unclean. ¹⁰And 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. ¹¹Anyone 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. ¹²And an earthenware vessel that the one with the discharge touches shall be broken, and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water.

- If the one with the discharge sat or laid on a bed or sat on a saddle or anything else, it would be unclean.
- If the one with the discharge spat on someone or anyone touched their body or anything that was under them or carried things they had touched, they were to wash their clothes and bathe themselves in water and be unclean until evening.
- If the one with the discharge touched an earthenware vessel it was to be broken, and any vessel of wood that they touched was to be rinsed in water.

LEVITICUS 15:13-15

Two Turtledoves shall be Offered for a Sin and Burnt Offering.

- **Leviticus 15:13-15:** "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. ¹⁴And on the eighth day he shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and come before the LORD to the entrance (door in KJV) of the tent of meeting and give them to the priest. ¹⁵And 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.

Some of these infirmities may take two to three weeks to heal maybe even longer since they did not have antibiotics as we do today, so the cessation of the issue did not make the person clean, they were required to wait another seven days (like a leprous person) to make sure they were completely healed after the discharge had ceased before the priest could make atonement for them.

On the eighth day: (v14) if after the bathing on the eve of the seventh day no sign of the infirmity was seen, the one with the discharge was on the eighth day to come before the LORD to the entrance of the tent of meeting and give to the priest:

- Two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a sin offering the other for a burnt offering, and the priest would make atonement for them.

It is very striking that whilst in other cases it was only the poor who, out of consideration for their lack, were permitted to offer two turtledoves or two young pigeons (Lev. 5:7) (Lev. 12:8) (Lev. 14:22), here in the case of bodily discharges the same offering was prescribed for all who suffered from this infirmity regardless of whether they were rich or poor.

NOTICE: standing before the entrance (door in KJV) of the tent of meeting (the tabernacle of the congregation in KJV) (Lev. 15:14) was counted as standing before the LORD. Both the one making the offering and the priest would stand looking toward the Holy of Holies the place of the LORD's divine majesty, and it was counted as, "standing before the LORD." The atonement the priest made for the one with the discharge pardoned their sins and removed their ceremonial defilement. For atonement to be made, the one with the discharge had to be healed of the discharge and offer two turtledoves, or two young pigeons of their own or that they had purchased. Two birds were the least expensive offering that was brought before the LORD, in other offerings there was an offering for the rich and the poor, but here the rich and the poor were to offer the same offering.

LEVITICUS 15:16-17

If a Man has an Emission of Semen, He is Unclean until Evening.

- **Leviticus 15:16-17:** "If a man has an emission of semen (seed of copulation in KJV), he shall bathe his whole body in water and be unclean until the evening. ¹⁷And every garment and every skin on which the semen (seed of copulation in KJV) comes shall be washed with water and be unclean until the evening.

Copulation comes from the Hebrew word (*sh^ekabah and shakab*). In this context they carry the idea of lying down for the sexual act, a sexual connection, and to carnally copulate and lay seed. The English Dictionary, says it carries the idea of the male engaging in sexual intercourse with a female. However, the following verse (v18) introduces a new topic saying, "If a man lies with a woman and has an emission of semen," (v18) clearly showing that the focus of the following verse is upon a male engaging in sexual intercourse with a female, which means that the focus of the verse we are now looking at is not upon sexual intercourse with a woman, but upon involuntary emissions of semen, spoken of in the following the book of Deuteronomy:

- If any man among you becomes unclean because of a nocturnal emission, then he shall go outside the camp. He shall not come inside the camp. (Deut. 23:10).

Such emissions that are caused through a dream or any lustful imagination are commonly referred to as nocturnal pollutions. The man who had such an emission was to immerse his whole body in water the following morning and remain unclean until sundown. During his uncleanness he was not to approach the sanctuary until after he had immersed himself in water and evening had come. Most of the ancient religions made a similar recognition of impurity and of the need of purification. When Egyptian priests were defiled by a dream, they purified themselves by bathing their bodies; and, according to the directions of the Koran, any faithful Mahomedan who meets with such an accident must not perform his prayers until he has made the prescribed offerings. (Koran. 4:46).

LEVITICUS 15:18

Both Man and Woman are Unclean if He has an Emission of Semen

- **Leviticus 15:18:** 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.

Both a man and a woman who had intercourse were considered unclean even though they were lawfully married and for this reason both were required to immerse their whole bodies in water and remain unclean until sundown. This statement must be understood in the full context, it does not mean that every time a married couple had intercourse, they were unclean, since that would be contrary to reason and what is natural and the whole current of Scripture, which 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. (Heb. 13:4)

Verse thirty-one shows us that these statements are made in the context of the people of Israel defiling the LORD's tabernacle. Those with any of the infirmities mentioned were prohibited from the privileges of entering sanctuary while in their state of uncleanness. The abstinence from conjugal intercourse was regarded as a necessary preparation for the performance of sacred duties. When the LORD was about to descend on Mount Sinai on the third day Moses said to the people: -

- Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman. (Exod. 19:9-15).
- The priest answered David, "I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread—if the young men have kept themselves from women. (1 Sam. 21:5-6).

When David hungered, he asked the priest to give him five loaves of bread, and the priest answered David saying:

- I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread—if the young men have kept themselves from women." ⁵And David answered the priest, "Truly women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition. The vessels of the young men are holy even when it is an ordinary journey. How much more today will their vessels be holy?" ⁶So the priest gave him the holy bread, for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence, (1 Sam. 21:3-6).

The law of pollution was not designed to put a check upon marriage, since matrimony is a divine institution as the following verses show:

- God blessed them (male and female) and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth. (Gen. 1:27-28).
- Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." ²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Gen. 2:23-24).

Intercourse in marriage, is honourable, holy and lawful but, because of our human fallen sinful nature no act is performed without a certain level of pollution and for this reason an abstinence or a ceremonial cleansing was required prior to performing sacred duties or entering the temple.

A WOMANS DISCHARGE OF BLOOD

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LEVITICUS 15:19-33

A Woman in her Menstrual Impurity shall be Unclean Seven Days.

- **Leviticus 15:19-33:** "When a woman has a discharge (issue in KJV), and the discharge in her body is blood, she shall be in her menstrual impurity for seven days (put apart for seven days in KJV), and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. ²⁰And everything on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean. Everything also on which she sits shall be unclean. ²¹And whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. ²²And whoever touches anything on which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. ²³Whether it is the bed or anything on which she sits, when he touches it he shall be unclean until the evening. ²⁴And 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.

Some feel that (v19) contradicts the laws concerning a woman's menstrual cycle spoken of in Leviticus chapter twelve since chapter twelve says that, when a woman has a child she shall be unclean for two weeks (i.e., 14 days) as at the time of her menstruation (Lev. 12:2), yet here in (v19) it says she shall be unclean for only seven days, however, if we jump to (v28), we read, if she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count for herself seven days (Lev. 15:28), which means that total time of her uncleanness is counted as fourteen days (two weeks) both in this chapter and in chapter twelve.

If a woman has a discharge (issue in KJV) of blood: (v19) having legislated for cases in connection with men as well as for one case in which both the husband and the wife are concerned, the Law is now laid down for two cases affecting women.

She shall be put apart seven days: though as a rule a women's menstrual cycle ceases after three or four days, yet she was to be set apart for seven days, not that she was to go out of the camp as lepers were required to do, but that she would be set apart from sacred duties, entry to the House of God and from any holy festival or function.

Whoever touches her shall be unclean: (v19) whoever touched a woman during her menstrual impurity or touched anything she had laid or sat on was to wash their clothes and bathe themselves in water and be counted as unclean until the evening.

Superstitions amongst the ancients: among the ancients there were many gross superstitions concerning women in this condition, and cruel treatments to which wives and daughters were subjected and, in some countries, still are subjected to such superstitions.

It was believed that if a woman in this condition:

- Sat under a tree all its fruit fell off and copper utensils developed a putrid smell
- At her approach meat got sour and the edge of a tool became blunt.
- If the wind which came from where she was and blew upon anyone, they became polluted and a thousand other bizarre things.
- It was considered contagious and had to be removed by an appointed method of ceremonial deliverance.

The LORD most likely ordained these rules for the people of Israel for the following two reasons:

1. To restrain the Jews from sharing these superstitions, and from resorting to any inhuman acts against woman.
2. For sanitary and hygienic purposes. Ponder for a moment, they did not have flushing toilets, or access to healthy and safe tampons as women do today.

LEVITICUS 15:25-27

Laws for a Woman's Discharge of Blood that Extends Her Time.

- **Leviticus 15:25-27:** "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. ²⁶Every 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. ²⁷And whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening.

If a woman has an issue of blood that is not at the time of her menstrual impurity, meaning, beyond the normal time of her monthly cycle or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her normal monthly cycle the same rules concerning uncleanness are to be applied until her blood stops flowing.

LEVITICUS 15:27-30

On the Eighth Day the Priest Shall Make Atonement for Woman.

- **Leviticus 15:28-27:** But if she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. ²⁹And 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.

Once the woman's flow of blood ceases, she was still not permitted to partake in any sacred duty or enter the House of God, but rather continue as she was for another seven days, then on the eighth day take to the priest at the entrance of the two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting. This is the same sacrifices that are prescribed for the man who was cured of an issue (v14).

CONCLUSION

LEVITICUS 15:31-33

Israel was Not to Defile God's Tabernacle with Uncleaness.

- **Leviticus 15:31-33:** "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. (Lev. 15:1-33).

If a woman has an issue: (v19) though this, like the leprosy is a natural occurrence, it was, like leprosy, considered a ceremonial defilement which typified a moral impurity and like leprosy, had to be cleansed by an appointed method of sacrifices and ceremonial purification.

Lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle: (v31) those who were counted as unclean could defile the LORD's tabernacle in the following two ways:

1. Ceremonially pollute it by entering-into it in their uncleanness.
2. Morally pollute it by contempt, by ignoring the ceremonial laws for cleansing and entering the temple against His express command, not to enter it until they had cleansed themselves.

Three of the main reasons for these laws was:

1. To prevent any form of disease spreading though the camp.
2. To impress upon the minds of the people that God is Holy.
3. To inspire the Israelites to have a profound reverence for holy things.

Should any of the children of Israel defy these laws and enter the House of God in their uncleanness they could suffer death (v31), so the punishment was severe, but such severe punishment shines the spotlight upon the truth that God is Holy. Forbidding those who were ceremonial unclean and those who were polluted by any kind of uncleanness natural, mental or physical from entering the tabernacle manifested to the surrounding nations that Israel's God was Holy, and Israel was His peculiar people. When its kept in mind that during this ancient era, the people did not have medicines and antibiotics we take for granted today, nor did they have flushing toilets, instant running fresh water and hot and cold showers for every household, it is easy to see that God took every hygienic precaution to prevent any disease spreading in Israel's camp.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
