

Leviticus Chapter 15

Verses 1-33: The literary structure of this chapter balances two types of discharge, chronic and intermittent, dealing with both sexes, making four specific cases. Verses 2-15 relate to a chronic discharge in the male, a “running issue out of his flesh”. The verb means “to flow” and is taken to mean from the organs of generation, although the exact nature of the disease is not known. Some suggestions have been hemorrhoids or gonorrhoea. The latter is based upon the Greek version of the Old Testament (Septuagint), and most commentators accept this diagnosis. The striking thing about the uncleanness associated with these discharges is that not only the affected person became unclean, but also people and objects that came in contact with him, and these in their turn could become secondary sources of uncleanness.

Thus, it was much more “infectious” than the uncleanness of skin diseases dealt with (in chapters 13 and 14), or unclean animals (in chapter 11). For example, any “bed” (verse 4-5), chair (verse 6), or “saddle” (verse 9), became unclean and also a source of secondary pollution. The phrase “under him” (verse 10), indicates something he has sat upon. “Spit” (verse 8), also polluted. It seems he was still able to live at home and was not driven out into the wilderness like those afflicted with serious skin disease (in 13:45-46), nor did he have to undergo the elaborate cleansing rituals described (in chapter 14). When he recovered, he simply had to wait “seven days ... wash ... and ... offer” the two cheapest sacrifices. One for a “sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering”. Verses (16-18), contain regulations governing an occasional emission of semen. The “seed of copulation” (Literally “outpouring of seed”), in intercourse (verse 18), or at other times (verses 16-17), also caused pollution (compare Exodus 19:15; Lev. 22:4; Deut. 23:10-11; 1 Sam. 21:5; 2 Sam. 11:11). No sacrifice was required, but the man and woman had simply to wash and wait until evening (verse 16-18). The practical effect of this legislation was that when a man had religious duties to perform, whether this involved worship or participation in God’s holy wars, sexual intercourse was not permitted. Verses (19-24), relate to women and the intermittent discharges associated with menstruation. Then certain rules governing a chronic emission are dealt with in (verses 25-30).

The last section relates to a discharge of blood outside the normal period of menstruation (verse 25), such as that which the woman mentioned in the Gospels suffered (Mark 5:25; Luke 8:43). Sacrifices are required here because, like childbirth (chapter 12), skin disease (chapters 13 and 14), and gonorrhoea (15:2-12), the uncleanness lasted more than a week. The purpose is cited in (verse 31): “Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness”. The precise verb form used here occurs only five other times, each referring to the vows of the Nazarite (Num. 6:2; 3, 5, 6, 12). Those who were unclean could not participate in divine worship in the tabernacle (compare Exodus 19:10, 12, 15, 21; Lev. Chapter 10; 17:16; 19:8; 20:18; 22:9).

Leviticus 15:1 "And the LORD spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying,"

Aaron is spoken to as well Moses, because some of these purifications, after mentioned, depended on the priest. As the affair of profluvial men and women as Gersom observes.

"Saying": As follows.

Verses 2-15: Males could become unclean through a discharge. The discharge describes something unusual, likely stemming from some sort of disease or illness. Whatever the afflicted man touched or spat on was also unclean.

These verses describe secretions related to some disease of the male sexual organs. After he became well, he was required to make both a sin and a burnt offering (verse 15).

Leviticus 15:2 "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When any man hath a running issue out of his flesh, [because of] his issue he [is] unclean."

From whence we learn, says the above mentioned writer, that these uncleannesses were only usual among the children of Israel, not among the Gentiles. That is, the laws respecting them were only binding on the one, and not on the other.

"And say unto them, when any man": Which the Targum of Jonathan paraphrases, a young man, and an old man.

"Hath a running issue out of his flesh": What physicians call a "gonorrhoea", and we, as in the margin of our Bibles, "the running of the reins".

"Because of his issue, he is unclean": In a ceremonial sense, though it arises from a natural cause. "But if not from any criminal one, from a debauch, but from a strain, or some such like thing. The man was not defiled, otherwise he was; the Targum of Jonathan is, "if he sees it three times he is unclean;" so the Misnah.

We are told in Scripture that out of the issue of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Matthew 12:34 "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

Luke 6:45 "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh."

I mentioned these Scriptures, because it appears to me, this sin is a sin of the inner man. The issue that comes from the man is unclean, so he is unclean. In the physical sense, this would be caused probably by some sexually transmitted disease. In the spiritual sense, this would be a sin involving the Holy Spirit of God. The thing that makes sex sin so bad for the believer, is that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit of God. This would be classed as ceremonial uncleanness and would cause this person not to be able to come into the temple of God.

Leviticus 15:3 "And this shall be his uncleanness in his issue: whether his flesh run with his issue, or his flesh be stopped from his issue, it [is] his uncleanness."

Or the sign of it, by which it may be judged whether he is unclean by it or no.

"Whether his flesh run with his issue": Or salivates, or emits a flow of matter like a saliva, or in the manner of spittle.

"Or his flesh be stopped from his issue": With it, or because of it; because it is gross, as Jarchi says, it cannot come forth freely.

"It is his uncleanness": Whether it be one or the other, he is reckoned on account of it an unclean person. This was an emblem of the corruption and vitiosity of nature. And of all evil things that are in or flow out of the evil heart of man, which are defiling to him (see Matt. 15:18).

This is a highly contagious disease. Sin is highly contagious as well. The strong message I get here, is this is a disease within his body.

Leviticus 15:4 "Every bed, whereon he lieth that hath the issue, is unclean: and every thing, whereon he sitteth, shall be unclean."

Which he constantly makes use of. So the Targum of Jonathan, which is peculiar to him, and appointed and appropriated for him to lie upon. Jarchi says, every bed that is fit to lie upon, thou is appropriated to another service. But, he adds: meaning is, which he shall lie upon (or continue to lie upon). For it is not said, which he hath laid upon, but which he lieth upon, and is used by him continually. According to the Misnah, a man that has an issue defiles a bed five ways, so as to defile a man, and to defile garments; standing, sitting, lying, hanging, and leaning:

"And everything whereon he sitteth shall be unclean": Which is appropriated to sit upon. And so the Targum, as before, what is his proper peculiar seat? What he is used to sit upon, and is fit for that purpose. And it is observed by some Jewish writers that a vessel that is not fit to sit upon is excluded. As if a man was to turn up a bushel, or any other measure, to sit upon it (see Titus 1:15).

We see in this, that any contact with anything would pass on this disease. The sinner contaminates everything around him. He spoils everything he has anything to do with.

Leviticus 15:5 "And whosoever toucheth his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe [himself] in water, and be unclean until the even."

Is unclean. According to the Misnah, a bed defiles a man seven ways, so as to defile garments. standing, sitting, lying, hanging, and leaning, and by touching, and by bearing.

"Shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water; in forty seahs of water, as the Targum of Jonathan.

"And be unclean until the even": Be unfit for conversation with other men till the even, though both his body and clothes are washed.

In the physical sense, a person could catch this type disease by casual contact. In the spiritual sense, to fellowship with someone, who is deep into sin, could cause the person to be a sinner by association. We are cautioned not to fellowship with those of unbelief.

2 Corinthians 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

Ephesians 5:11 "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove [them]."

If we make contact with these things unaware, we should clean ourselves up immediately. This is for the physical and spiritual.

Leviticus 15:6 "And he that sitteth on [any] thing whereon he sat that hath the issue shall wash his clothes, and bathe [himself] in water, and be unclean until the even."

Shall be unclean, even though he does not touch it. Jarchi says, though there should be, as he adds, ten things or vessels one upon another, they all defile because of sitting, and so by lying.

"Shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even": As in the preceding case (see notes on Lev. 15:5).

This disease in the physical, is many times transmitted by using the same bathroom facilities. In the spiritual sense, to sit would indicate that you remained a while. We must be careful to choose our friends. Many problems we find ourselves in, are caused by following someone we thought was a friend. In crime, this would be called being an accessory to a crime.

Leviticus 15:7 "And he that toucheth the flesh of him that hath the issue shall wash his clothes, and bathe [himself] in water, and be unclean until the even."

Shall also be unclean, even any part of his flesh, or member of his body. The Jewish canon is, he that toucheth one that has an issue, or he that has an issue touches him, or anyone moves him that has an issue. Or he moves him, defiles food, and drink, and washing vessels by touching. But not by bearing; and particularly touching the issue itself is instanced in, and such a man's spittle, etc. are defiled.

"Shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even": As before (see notes on Lev. 15:5).

It would be even more possible to take this disease, because of the direct contact of touching.

Leviticus 15:8 "And if he that hath the issue spit upon him that is clean; then he shall wash his clothes, and bathe [himself] in water, and be unclean until the even."

Not purposely, which is not usual for a man to do, and whenever it is done, nothing is more affronting. But accidentally, when, as Aben Ezra expresses it, he spreads his spittle, and it falls

upon a clean person. And under this, as Gersom observes, is comprehended whatever is brought up by coughing, as phlegm, or flows from the nose, or is pressed out of it. And so Maimonides: and this may denote all corrupt communication which proceeds out of the mouth of evil men. Whether immoral or heretical, which not only defiles the man himself, but those he converses with; for evil communication corrupts good manners.

"Then he shall wash his clothes": etc. As in the foregoing instances (see notes on Lev. 15:5).

This would not only be spitting, but coughing or any other way of transmitting fluid from the infected body to the uninfected. The disease mentioned here could be transmitted by kissing as well. You can see the seriousness of this, in that he not only washes his body, but also his clothes.

Leviticus 15:9 "And what saddle soever he rideth upon that hath the issue shall be unclean."

When he rides upon any beast, horse, ass, or camel, whatever is put upon the creature. And he sits upon it, the saddle, and whatever appertains to it, the housing and girdle.

"Shall be unclean": And not fit for another to use, but be defiling to him, as follows.

Leviticus 15:10 "And whosoever toucheth any thing that was under him shall be unclean until the even: and he that beareth [any of] those things shall wash his clothes, and bathe [himself] in water, and be unclean until the even."

Either when lying along, or sitting, or riding (as in Lev. 15:4). Various are the traditions of the Jews concerning these things. If one that has an issue and a clean person sit together, in a ship, or on a beam, or ride together on a beast, though their garments do not touch, they are unclean.

"And he that beareth any of those things": That carries any of the above things from place to place, as his bed, his seat, his saddle, or anything on which he has lain, sat, or rode.

"Shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even" (see notes on Lev. 15:5).

You can easily see from this, that anything that came in contact with this issue of infection could be a carrier for the disease. In our day, the great fear is AIDS. They tell us it is not transmitted by casual contact. There has not been time to do sufficient testing to determine that beyond a shadow of a doubt. We do know that many people have caught the disease through blood transfusions. Nurses giving shots, and taking blood samples wear gloves to prevent getting the disease. I believe this would be classified as a plague. It also appears that God has sent the plague. The original cases were sexually transmitted. Most of the early patients were homosexuals and lesbians. God calls this an abomination before him. He rained fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah for this same abomination. What makes us think that this is not a judgement of God?

Leviticus 15:11 "And whomsoever he toucheth that hath the issue, and hath not rinsed his hands in water, he shall wash his clothes, and bathe [himself] in water, and be unclean until the even."

Not only he that touched him that had the issue, but whomsoever, and indeed whatsoever he touched. As the Targum of Jonathan, the Septuagint, and Arabic versions, were unclean (see notes on Lev. 15:4).

"And hath not rinsed his hands in water": Which is to be understood, not of the man that is touched, but of him that toucheth. And is interpreted by the Jewish writers, generally, of bathing the whole body. According to Aben Ezra, the simple sense is, every clean person, whom he that hath an issue touches and hath rinsed his hands, he is indeed unclean, but not his garments. And if his hands are not rinsed his garments are unclean. And this is as he that touches all that is under him. Wherefore it follows:

"He shall wash his clothes": that is, if a man is touched, as the Targum of Jonathan, and not a thing, as directed and prescribed in the above cases instanced in. All which are designed to instruct men to abstain from conversation with impure persons in doctrine and practice.

We know the seriousness of this, because of God going into such detail here. The best way to get away from any infection is to wash with soap and water.

Leviticus 15:12 "And the vessel of earth, that he toucheth which hath the issue, shall be broken: and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water."

That it might not be made use of afterwards. Which was ordered, that they might be careful what they touched who were in such circumstances. According to Gersom an earthen vessel received no uncleanness but from the middle, though he owns the law does not distinguish between the middle and the outside. Wherefore Jarchi is of opinion, that if the back or outside of it was touched, it was unclean, and to be broken.

"And every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water": And after that be used. What should be the reason why an earthen vessel defiled by touching should be broken, and a wooden vessel defiled in the same way should not, but be rinsed and cleansed. When an earthen vessel might as well be rinsed and fit for use as that, is not easy to say. It depended upon the will of the lawgiver. According to Ainsworth, the one may signify the destruction of reprobate persons, the other the cleansing of penitent sinners.

An earthen vessel would retain the infection, because it would have penetrated into the vessel. It must be broken to stop the spread of infection. It appears it could be safely washed off of a wooden vessel.

Leviticus 15:13 "And when he that hath an issue is cleansed of his issue; then he shall number to himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean."

That is, it is ceased from him, as the Targum of Jonathan and Jarchi explain it. For otherwise, according to the ceremonial law, he was not yet cleansed, until he had done everything next prescribed. But when he perceived there was an entire stop put to his disorder.

"Then he shall number to himself seven days for his cleansing": By which time it would appear whether he was thoroughly rid of it or not. And these seven days, as Jarchi observes, must be seven pure days, quite free from pollution, and continued in a constant course, without interruption. For, as Gersom says, if he saw any impurity in anyone of these days it did not come into the account. Nay, according to Maimonides, he must begin to number again from the day of the last appearance.

"And wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water": Typical of the fountain opened in Christ to wash in for sin and uncleanness. Even the fountain of his blood, which cleanses from all sin; and in which both the persons and garments of the saints are washed and made white.

"And shall be clean": In a ceremonial sense. As all that are washed from their sins in the blood of Christ are clean in a spiritual and evangelical sense.

This seven days of separation is to make sure he is rid of the infection.

Leviticus 15:14 "And on the eighth day he shall take to him two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, and come before the LORD unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and give them unto the priest:"

Having on the seventh done as before directed.

"He shall take to him two turtledoves, or two young pigeons": Of his own, or purchase them. This was the meanest offering that was brought, and of the least expense. And which, in other cases, the poorer sort was allowed to bring, but here it was the offering of poor and rich.

"And come before the Lord unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation": Not into the tabernacle, where he was not admitted till the sacrifice was offered, and atonement made; but he was to stand at the door of the tabernacle, at the eastern gate. And so fronting the west, where stood the Holy of Holies, the place of the divine Majesty. He is said to come before the Lord, presenting himself to him to be cleansed.

"And give them unto the priest": The two doves or pigeons, to be offered for him according to the usual rites.

This person has been as good as dead. The community would have nothing to do with him for fear of taking the disease. Now on the eighth day he has a new beginning. He is preparing to re-enter society. This disease was caused by sin, so he must sacrifice to get back into fellowship with God and man.

Leviticus 15:15 "And the priest shall offer them, the one [for] a sin offering, and the other [for] a burnt offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the LORD for his issue."

As in the case of a new mother who is poor, and of a poor leper (Lev. 12:8).

"And the priest shall make atonement for him before the Lord for his issue": Which, though not in itself sinful, yet might be occasioned by sin, for which the atonement was made. Or, however, it was a ceremonial uncleanness, and therefore a ceremonial expiation must be made for it. Typical of the atonement by the blood and sacrifice of Christ, by which all kinds of sin are expiated and removed.

We have gone into this several times, so I will not repeat the meaning here. We do know that the only way to get free of sin is by the shedding of blood. That is done here. The 2 fowls are his substitute for his sin.

Leviticus Chapter 15 Questions

1. When a man has a running issue out of his flesh, he is _____.
2. Out of the issue of the _____ the mouth speaketh.
3. Where can we find the Scripture that tells us the above?
4. This sin seems to be a sin of the _____ _____.
5. In the physical sense, this issue is possibly what kind of disease?
6. What is the terrible thing about sex sin of a believer?
7. What kind of uncleanness are we talking about here?
8. What is the strong message we are seeing here?
9. What happens to the bed he lies on?
10. What would happen to you, if you touched his bed?
11. What does this show us about catching this disease?
12. To associate with a person this deep in sin could cause you to be a sinner by _____.
13. If we come in contact with them unintentionally, what should we do?
14. To sit on something contaminated would indicate what?

15. Touching the person with the issue would be worse because of the _____ contact.
16. Besides spitting, what does verse 8 include?
17. How could a person become a carrier for this disease?
18. In our society today, what is the great fear?
19. How were the first cases of AIDS transmitted?
20. What is the best way to get this infection off your hands?
21. Why would it be necessary to break the earthen vessel?
22. When he that has the issue is clean and washed, how many days must he wait?
23. What is this waiting period for?
24. What does this eighth day symbolize?
25. What is the only way to get free from sin?