

Leviticus

Lesson 11

I must admit, I have read chapter 15 of Leviticus more times than I can remember, but I have not taught a single lesson on the contents of this chapter. I have read every commentary available to me of the famous commentators as well as the lesser-known scholars. Not one of them has discussed the content in these chapters satisfactory to my understanding. Therefore, I have forgone any attempt to explain the contents of the chapter altogether. Yet, I am here, and it would be a disgrace to skim over the intended message to disregard its sensitive and personal topic. I have thought long and hard about this text considering what the scholars have said before me and determined in my heart and mind that the others have restricted their attention too quickly to the private parts of a man or woman and missed the real intent of the passage. I contend that this law concerning a man or woman with a discharge deals with general places where these diseased discharges can occur. Then the LORD discusses the specific natural functions of the body that are not diseases. With that, let us delve into this sensitive yet significant instruction that can be applied in 1464 BC and might well be truthful today.

X. The Law Concerning a Man or Woman with a Discharge

A. For the Man in General

1. The Person of the Man with a Discharge

As we open our Bibles to Leviticus 15, we find ourselves facing the LORD's law concerning a man or woman with a discharge from the body. First, the LORD will issue His instruction for the man in general. Verse 1. *"The LORD also spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, 'Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'When any man has a discharge from his body, his discharge is unclean. This, moreover, shall be his uncleanness in his discharge: it is his uncleanness whether his body allows its discharge to flow or whether his body obstructs its discharge. Every bed on which the person with the discharge lies becomes unclean, and everything on which he sits becomes unclean.'"* (15:1-4).

While most commentators have immediately directed their attention to the most private parts of the man's body, I contend that that is not the specific intent in this passage. Before I delve into that, let us deal with the subject of this instruction. The text says, *"When any man...."* If the word for man is the Hebrew *adam*, this passage would address men and women. But the word "man" here is the Hebrew word *'is*. It means *male*. Factually, the Hebrew text uses the word twice in the phrase. *"When any 'is 'is"* It reads, *"When any male male ..."* There must not be any confusion about this opening passage in chapter 15 dealing with males. It means men – males.

Now I want to ask the question. "How many natural places on a man's body can a discharge come from in times of sickness?" Count them on your head first. Did you count seven on your head? Two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and one mouth. Are there not seven natural, normal, God-designed places on the head where in times of sickness, nasty discharges can ooze? Now, when you evaluate the rest of man, down below the neck, you will find two more natural, normal, God-designed places where nasty discharges can ooze in times of sickness. For now, in this passage, let us leave it at that. A male has nine bodily places where diseases can ooze discharges on his body.

Now in case you might think that I am wrong in expanding the intent of this passage to the head instead of focusing solely on the below, I ask this question. "Where else in the Bible does the LORD discuss the discharges of diseases of the ears, eyes, nose, and mouth?" If not here, then where? It is my contention that the LORD begins this passage with the available openings wherewith diseases can naturally ooze as signs of sickness, be it at the head or below. One reason for this opinion is found in the words *"...whether his body allows its discharge to flow or whether his body obstructs its discharge...."* As soon as our nose begins to flow or our nose stops up, it is an immediate sign that we are sick. The Bible, in the context of Leviticus, would call it *unclean*. We are unclean with an illness of the

nose. The same occurs with the eyes, the ears, the mouth, and from the openings down below. The LORD has already dealt with the diseases of the general flesh that break open in the unnatural places, and He called it leprosy – which means *disease*. In this text, the LORD moves to discuss the disorders of the natural places that are open orifices.

The passage we read ends with, *“Every bed on which the person with the discharge lies becomes unclean, and everything on which he sits becomes unclean.”* Is that not true that the signs of flue begin with a runny nose, itchy eyes, draining ears, and flehm coughed up from the mouth? We must go ahead and add that which often accompanies the cold is diarrhea and thick dark urine. It is God’s natural design of the body’s functions to tell us when we are sick. But in our sickness, is it not true that everything we touch while in a disease of this kind contaminates everything we touch, lay on, sit on, eat on, lean on, sneeze on, and cough on? We contaminate everything - unclean as the Bible would say. And everything that we make sick can make others sick.

2. The Nurse of the Man with a Discharge

Then we hear the LORD address the “anyone” who comes near such a sick man. In our minds, we can imagine this as the doctor or nurse of the man with a discharge. Verse 5. *“Anyone, moreover, who touches his bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening; and whoever sits on the thing on which the man with the discharge has been sitting, shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. Also whoever touches the person with the discharge shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening.”* (15:5-7).

In general, sick people with issues that come from the orifices of the body need the assistance of some kind of nurse to tend to their needs of food, water, medicines, and clean linens. Whomever that person is, with any sickness whatsoever puts themselves in the dead center of the bullseye for contracting the disease too. Simply by being around the sick, one makes them unclean also. Thus, everything they touch that has been touched by the sick may transfer the sickness to the nurse. What is the answer? It is the universal cleaning agent given by the LORD – water. Wash, wash, wash, wash, we see over and over in this passage. Wash everything touched by the sick man. What is the prescription to keep yourself from catching the illness? You are to bathe and wash your clothing if you have touched anything touched by the sick man.

a) The Spit of the Sick

But colds and diseases often come with a cough and a sneeze. With the cough or a sneeze comes spit. When spit comes, so does the contagious disease. Verse 8b. *“Or if the man with the discharge spits on one who is clean, he too shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening.”* (15:8a).

In 2020 AD, the world we live in shut down by necessity because of a disease called Covid 19. As we know it, the infection spreads by airborne contagious particles coming from the infected mucus glands of the infected person. What does the LORD prescribe for the healthy person if he or she has been in the vicinity of a sick person with a cough or sneeze? It is the same prescription given by our doctors now three thousand years later, wash and bathe. Notice that even with the wash and the bath, the nurse or attendant must *“... be unclean until evening.”* We know that as quarantine. It is for the protection of others. The LORD set this barrier to give the body time to show symptoms if the infection transferred during contracted with the sick person.

b) The Seat of the Sick

People help sick people. At times, the need to transfer the sick for medical help occurs. In that transfer process, sickness spreads. Even the seat of the sick can infect others. Verse 8b. *“Every saddle on which the person with the discharge rides becomes unclean. Whoever then touches any of the things which were under*

him shall be unclean until evening, and he who carries them shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening.” (15:8b-10).

As before, the only preventable solution for a healthy person comes with a wash and a bath. Then, as before, a quarantine time gives the helper time to show symptoms of infection.

c) The Spread of the Sick

The helpers' problem is not touching the sick; the helper can control the amount of handling of the sick. The problem occurs with the ill person touches the helper. This problem brings us to the spread of the sick by the sick. Verse 11. *“Likewise, whomever the one with the discharge touches without having rinsed his hands in water shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening.” (15:11).*

Once again, we come to the universal answer to control the spread of sicknesses. Rinse the hands, wash the clothing, take a bath, and quarantine until evening. In all cases, “until evening” would naturally mean until the next day. In those days, when nightfall came, the ordinary, trustworthy people returned to their homes and remained there until the break of light in the morning when they went back to work.

d) The Saucer of the Sick

But sick people need to eat too. Clay and wooden vessels held the prepared foods and drink. The ill person touched these vessels as they partook. Then, the LORD gave the instruction for the saucer of the sick. Verse 12. *“However, an earthenware vessel which the person with the discharge touches shall be broken, and every wooden vessel shall be rinsed in water.” (15:12).*

Clay, earthenware, vessels were porous and could not be adequately cleaned. Repeatedly, in the past chapters, when items were cooked in clay pots, the destruction of the pots was mandatory. But that is not the case with wooden or brass utensils that can be cleaned appropriately. The point of the LORD’s message here indicates that humans need to know that the items touched by a sick person, especially those used for food and drink, can transmit disease.

Before we move on to the atonement of the man once he is clean, we must address all mentioned too this point concerning the man and, by reason, apply it to the woman also. The LORD will not make these same points concerning diseases that occur in these same nine natural orifices with a woman, but the woman is just as prone to have these diseases as a man. Can these warnings be applied to the woman too? I think so. Here is the reason. Throughout the Bible, when a man and woman unite in marriage, the two become one. Factually, in all the common law that came to America through England, the biblical standard concerning marriage stands as the statute that when the two become one, the one is the man. In the history of most nations, a married woman could not own anything of value in the marriage in her name until the death of her husband. Of course, there are exceptions in every nation, especially among royalty, but that is not common among the regular people. The same is true in the Nation of Israel during the days of the Exodus. In forty years from the giving of this message, the details of how to divide the Promised Land to each family's patriarch occurred. However, five sisters who had no male counterparts to own the new land complained (Numbers 27:1-7). The decision rendered by the LORD and Moses gave them land in their dead father’s name. With that, the sisters could live on their own land. I believe that the general instruction concerning the flow and blockage of the natural male openings that arise at the first signs of disease can, and should, apply to the man's wife and, by extension, to all women. Why? The nine natural openings on a male have the same counterparts on the female; therefore, there would be no need to repeat the instruction concerning these openings' diseases. More will come for this reasoning when we reach a woman's disorders in this chapter's following passages.

3. The Atonement of the Man with a Discharge

The human body is amazing, and with time and care, healing often comes, and a diseased man can be declared clean. With what we already know about the holy ceremony upon the healing of any disease, we can almost predict what Moses is about to say. Verse 13. *“Now when the man with the discharge becomes cleansed from his discharge, then he shall count off for himself seven days for his cleansing; he shall then wash his clothes and bathe his body in running water and will become clean. Then on the eighth day he shall take for himself two turtledoves or two young pigeons, and come before the LORD to the doorway of the tent of meeting and give them to the priest; and the priest shall offer them, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf before the LORD because of his discharge.”* (15:13-15).

Once the discharge stopped, the seven-day waiting period presents no surprise. The washing and cleanings present no surprise. The eighth-day celebration presents no surprise. The two turtle doves or two young pigeons presents no surprise. The sin and burnt offerings present no surprise. The atonement by the priest presents no surprise. Nothing is a surprise in this atonement of the man with a discharge. It is all expected if, and only if, you have learned all that has come before in this book of laws. For the Jewish, it was mandatory.

B. For the Man in Specific

1. Of the Man

After addressing the needs for cleanliness during sicknesses that can spread through the natural openings in the man's body for which a religious ceremony always concluded the healing process, the LORD turns to address the regular and normal specific emission for the man that does not require a religious ceremony. It is a function that only a man can have and not a woman. Verse 16. *“Now if a man has a seminal emission, he shall bathe all his body in water and be unclean until evening. As for any garment or any leather on which there is seminal emission, it shall be washed with water and be unclean until evening.”* (15:16-17).

The LORD does not address an illness in this passage; He addresses the regular operation of a male's bodily function. When this emission occurs from a man in everyday life, the remedy requires the washing of any item touched by the sick and the body's bathing. And as usual in all cases, the man needs to seclude himself that day after the cleaning. This cleansing does not require a holy ceremony down at the Tabernacle. It is normal. It is how the LORD created a man's body.

2. Of the Man with a Woman

The LORD made the man's body to connect with a woman's body to bring babies into the world. The LORD made man for that purpose. As a man interacts with his wife in the marriage routine, the LORD gave instructions for both following the union. Verse 18. *“If a man lies with a woman so that there is a seminal emission, they shall both bathe in water and be unclean until evening.”* (15:18).

The seminal emission from a man to a woman in the marriage relationship often results in a child's birth. Such is the LORD's plan for man and woman. However, after the union together, both need to wash and be separated from the world around them; no religious ceremony required.

C. For the Woman in General

1. The Person of the Woman with a Discharge

The LORD then addresses discharges of the woman in general. When we count the natural openings in a man's body, the number was nine. When we count the natural openings of the woman, there are ten. The nine found in the male have the same counterparts in the female. But the tenth in a woman does not have a counterpart in the male. It is that particular part of the woman's body that the LORD address. All the illnesses that we addressed with the male's nine parts can be associates with the counterparts found in the woman. Therefore, the LORD did not need to cover those possible illnesses in the female. Here, the LORD addresses the person of the woman with a

natural normal discharge in her unique organ. Verse 19. *“When a woman has a discharge, if her discharge in her body is blood, she shall continue in her menstrual impurity for seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening. Everything also on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean, and everything on which she sits shall be unclean.”* (15:19-20).

First, the LORD addresses the regular monthly time for the woman. The LORD made her organ function with a monthly cleansing naturally induced by her body. I wonder if you have ever thought about the cleaning process of anything? In the cleaning process, something must become dirty for something to become clean. The washcloth becomes dirty when we use it to clean our bodies. We find the same truth with the woman's body. The seven-day flow of the blood causes other things to become unclean in the body's process of becoming clean. Whatever the woman touches during her monthly time becomes unclean to everyone around her.

2. The Man of the Woman with a Discharge

A woman can care for the normal discharge from her body without help during her regular time of the month. For a single woman, her time of uncleanness should not affect anyone. But for a married woman, marital relationships occur, and her monthly uncleanness will affect her husband. Verse 21. *“Anyone who touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. Whoever touches any thing on which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. Whether it be on the bed or on the thing on which she is sitting, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until evening. If a man actually lies with her so that her menstrual impurity is on him, he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.”* (15:21-24).

The man, touching anything during the time of his wife's regular uncleanness, needs only to wash and bathe each day. If the man and woman have a marital union during her seven days of natural body cleaning, the man becomes unclean for seven days. Every pallet he sleeps on during that seven days also becomes unclean. However, the LORD does not mention a need for an atonement ceremony with the priest because of this interaction between a husband and wife in the course of their marriage relationships and the normal functions of the woman's body.

3. The Illness of the Woman with a Discharge

The woman's standard monthly body cleaning does not cover all the issues that can discharge from her unique organ. Verse 25. *“Now if a woman has a discharge of her blood many days, not at the period of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond that period, all the days of her impure discharge she shall continue as though in her menstrual impurity; she is unclean. Any bed on which she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her like her bed at menstruation; and every thing on which she sits shall be unclean, like her uncleanness at that time.”* (15:25-26).

When a general sickness in the woman's unique organ occurs, the first order of business requires the same treatment of that discharge as in the manner of the monthly body's cleaning, but they are not the same. This disease makes her unclean for the entire time of the infection in the same way her monthly body's cleaning makes her unclean, but they are not the same. No doubt, with an illness such as this, a doctor, or nurse at the least, would attend to her needs.

4. The Nurse of the Woman with a Discharge

Just as the nurse or doctor who attended the male with an infectious discharge became unclean, so, too, the same applies to the female. Verse 27. *“Likewise, whoever touches them shall be unclean and shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening.”* (15:27).

The LORD's prescription repeats what we found in the instruction for the man. In short, the law requires the washing of the clothing, the bathing of the body, and the segregation from clean persons.

5. The Atonement of the Woman with a Discharge

Just as with the male, the atonement of the woman with a discharge agrees. It is the same. Verse 28. *“When she becomes clean from her discharge, she shall count off for herself seven days; and afterward she will be clean. Then on the eighth day she shall take for herself two turtledoves or two young pigeons and bring them in to the priest, to the doorway of the tent of meeting. The priest shall offer the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. So the priest shall make atonement on her behalf before the LORD because of her impure discharge.”* (15:28-30).

This atonement offering for the woman with an infectious discharge of her unique organ is the same as that of the man. No difference at all. The two required turtle doves or the two young pigeons become the sin and burnt offerings on the eighth day following the woman’s healing.

D. For the Ceremony in General

Uncleanness from a discharge of a person’s body and all associated with that person brings deathly consequences at the Tabernacle with the presentation of offerings. Verse 31. *“Thus you shall keep the sons of Israel separated from their uncleanness, so that they will not die in their uncleanness by their defiling My tabernacle that is among them.”* (15:31).

Someone may hide illnesses from the public, but no one can conceal conditions from the LORD. Anyone who tries to approach the LORD with a regular offering without declaring to the priest a hidden disease will die. Outside the normal bodily functions of a man and woman, illnesses would defile the LORD’s Tabernacle, and the penalty would result in immediate death before the LORD. A sickness of an abnormal discharge from the body required the oversight of the priest. The normal functions of marital life that made a person unclean did not require the priest. Both had their times of uncleanness; both had their times of cleanness. The LORD forbids any unclean person from approaching Him in His Tabernacle.

E. For the Man and Woman in General

Ending this portion of the law, the LORD concludes with His statement of the statute for the man and woman in general. Verse 32. *“This is the law for the one with a discharge, and for the man who has a seminal emission so that he is unclean by it, and for the woman who is ill because of menstrual impurity, and for the one who has a discharge, whether a male or a female, or a man who lies with an unclean woman.”* (15:32-33).

Notice that the stated law agrees with my interpretation of this chapter. First, the LORD addresses the discharge of a man in general. He does not specify where the disease discharges from on the man. He is not specific, and neither should we be. The created male has nine places that can discharge fluids associates with an illness. Illnesses can also block the normal healthy discharge from those nine places on the body. Then, the LORD addresses the regular specific emission of the male body. It does not call it a discharge, which would assume an illness.

With the women, the LORD addressed the regular specific body’s cleaning of her unique organ and then addresses general discharges that are not normal, but infectious. Finally, the LORD addresses the state of uncleanness the man and woman find themselves in when interacting with one another. All of this agrees perfectly with this commentary on this chapter. It is by far the most extensive explanation found among the commentaries for this chapter.

With the cleansing from the infectious diseases of the male and female, both required an atonement offering before coming in the presence of the LORD. That thought offers a natural transition to the atonement offerings. The next topic in the LORD’s instruction deals with the once-

a-year Day of Atonement for the sins of the people. That chapter is long; therefore, we will end this lesson and begin anew with the Day of Atonement in our next session.