

LEVITICUS

Chapter 12

Purification After Childbirth

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,[a] 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.”

12:2 *unclean.* The uncleanness came from the bleeding (vv. 4–5, 7), not from the birth. It is not clear why the period of uncleanness after the birth of a baby boy (40 days) was half the period for a girl (80 days). (CSB)

After seven days, the new mother could resume normal family life. (TLSB)

12:4 *blood of her purifying.* She was not ritually unclean, but not yet ritually clean. Discharge during the first week or two after a birth was known as “the blood of purity. (TLSB)

12:5 *unclean two weeks.* As throughout the Law, male and female are distinguished in God’s order. However, no explanation is given for the doubling of the purification time between male and female babies. The weeks may mark the boundaries for postnatal discharge as the Israelites typically experienced them. (TLSB)

12:6 *burnt offering.* These sacrifices purified the new mother from the impurity of her blood flow. Menstruation was not regarded as sinful, but the flow of blood made people ritually unclean (15:19–24). (TLSB)

12:7 *clean from the flow of her blood.* Through the ritual burning of the lamb on the altar, the woman was accepted by God and readmitted into the community. (TLSB)

12:8 (Mary’s offering for Jesus). (CSB)

cannot afford a lamb. Lk 2:22–32 records the account of Mary’s sacrifice when Jesus was born. (TLSB)

Ch 12 Childbirth made a woman ceremonially unclean. These rules would exempt the new mother from the rigors of the Law and her typical role in family/community life. They also promised cleansing and restoration. In these ways, the Lord acts mercifully toward His daughters, even as He remembers us with kindness. • Merciful Father, we thank You for the rich blessings we find in Your Word. There we see how You placed Your Son under the Law, that we might have rest and peace. Amen. (TLSB)

