

LEVITICUS

Chapter 15

Laws About Bodily Discharges

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.

15:1–33 The chapter deals with (1) male uncleanness caused by bodily discharge (vv. 2–15) or emission of semen (vv. 16–18); (2) female uncleanness caused by her monthly period (vv. 19–24) or lengthy hemorrhaging (vv. 25–30); (3) summary (vv. 31–33). (CSB)

15:2–15 Abnormal male or female genital discharges are addressed. (TLSB)

15:2 *discharge from his body*. Probably either diarrhea or urethral discharge (various kinds of infections). The contamination of anything under the man (v. 10), whether he sat (vv. 4, 6, 9) or lay (v. 4) on it, indicates that the bodily discharge had to do with the buttocks or genitals. (CSB)

15:3 *uncleanness*. Infections disqualified individuals from contact with holy things, making them ritually impure. (TLSB)

15:4–12 Uncleanness could be transferred through contact with an infected person’s bed or chair (vv 4–6), body (v 7), spittle (v 8), saddle (v 9), or vessels (v 12). Those made unclean remained unclean until their ritual bath at sundown. (TLSB)

15:4 *bed*. Something like a mat (cf. 2Sa 11:13). (CSB)

Perhaps an actual bed; most likely padding for sleeping on a dirt floor. (TLSB)

15:12 Porous nature of earthenware retained infections. Breaking the object and removing it from the camp could prevent a transfer of the infection. Wooden vessels could be thoroughly cleansed, removing any infection. (TLSB)

15:13 *cleansed*. God brought about the healing; the priest could only ascertain that a person was already healed. (CSB)

15:14–15 The eighth day marked a new beginning in the purification process. For information on sin offerings and burnt offerings. (TLSB)

15:16–18 Any emission of semen during sexual intercourse made both the man and woman ritually unclean, requiring the washing of themselves and their bedding. After sexual intercourse, normal daily functions could occur without contaminating others, unlike the rules for an infectious skin disease (14:1–9). After intercourse, the couple was required to bathe, and they remained unclean until their ritual evening bath. (TLSB)

15:16 *semen*. Normal sexual activity and a woman’s menstruation required no sacrifices but only washing and a minimal period of uncleanness. (CSB)

15:19–24 Menstruation made a woman ritually unclean and unable to come into God’s presence in worship. If a man had sexual intercourse with a woman during her monthly period, her menstrual blood made him ritually unclean for seven days. These rules did not prevent women from their normal work

routines, but placed restrictions on items that could come in contact with menstrual blood. No rite of purification is presented in this text, which implies that she need only count off seven days after the beginning of the issue of blood and take a ritual bath on the eighth day to become clean again. (TLSB)

15:19 *seven days*. This regulation is the background of 2Sa 11:4 (Bathsheba). (CSB)

15:24 A case of the woman's period beginning during intercourse. This is different from 18:19 and 20:18. (CSB)

menstrual impurity. During her period a woman was protected from sexual activity. No offering was required for uncleanness contracted by a man in this way, but the uncleanness lasted seven days. (CSB)

15:25–30 Abnormal menstrual blood flow is addressed in these verses. Once the abnormal flow ceased, the woman was to mark off seven days. On the eighth day, she presented the required doves or pigeons to the priest. (TLSB)

15:25 *discharge of blood for many days*. As, e.g., the woman in Mt 9:20. (CSB)

beyond the time of her impurity. An unnatural discharge, possibly caused by disease, was treated like a sickness and required an offering upon recovery (vv. 28–30; see vv. 14–15). (CSB)

15:29 Under normal circumstances, a woman did not bring a sacrifice at the end of her monthly flow. Women performed these sacrifices when an abnormal menstrual flow ended. (TLSB)

15:31 Addressed to the priests, thus emphasizing the importance of the regulations. Since God dwelt in the tabernacle, any unholiness, symbolized by the discharges of ch. 15, could result in death if the people came into his presence. Sin separates all people from a holy God and results in their death, unless atonement is made (see the next chapter). (CSB)

In grace, God provided ordinances to prevent deaths like those experienced by Nadab and Abihu when they brought “unauthorized fire” into the Lord's presence. Cf 10:1–2. (TLSB)

Ch 15 Ritual impurity separates God from His people. God's declaration that semen and menstrual blood cause uncleanness prevents His people from engaging in ritual prostitution. Lv 15 provides specific examples of how God provides a means to remove impurity and to make His people clean again. His Word, which threatens by the Law, also cleanses hearts by faith in the Gospel. • Lord, You alone have the power to make us clean in Your sight through the washing of Holy Baptism. Renew us by Your grace. Amen. (TLSB)